

Murad warrants issued

MALKAND (APP): A local in Dargai on Thursday issued an arrest warrant for PTI leader Murad Saeed in a sedition case. The case against Murad Saeed was registered at Levies police station Dargai on April 28. The judicial magistrate civil 2 released a bailable arrest warrant for Saeed under section 204. Murad Saeed approached the LHC to provide details of the cases registered against him, avoid arrest and obtain security.



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GOA: Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov shaking hands with Bilawal Bhutto Zardari prior to a meeting on the sidelines of SCO Foreign Ministers Summit in India.

Participation in CFM reflects Pakistan's commitment to SCO charter

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said that Pakistan's decision to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's Council of Foreign Minister's meeting in India reflected its commitment to the SCO Charter and multilateralism.

On Twitter, the prime minister said Pakistan was committed to playing its part to advance the shared values of peace and stability in the region.

"We are all for win win understandings based on connectivity, trade and mutually advantageous cooperation," he commented. The prime minister's statement came as Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari arrived in Goa, India to attend the meeting and expressed confidence that moot would lead to a successful outcome.

Marriyum asks 'veiled lady' to face courts for her wrongdoings

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Thursday said the "veiled lady" Bushra Bibi should appear before the court to answer for her wrongdoings instead of sending a legal notice to Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Chief Organizer Maryam Nawaz.

She, in a tweet, said Maryam Nawaz had exposed all the "imposters" who looted the country ruthlessly. Marriyum Aurangzeb said all the cases related to the wife of Imran Khan were in the courts and it was better for her to face them. She said the "veiled lady" did not confine herself to her home, but also remained involved in receiving five carrots diamond and land as corruption and linking political opponents with treason on social media.

Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb also said that a person (Imran's) use of a wheelchair to skip court cases was divine retribution as he used to ridicule others for their diseases in past.

In a statement, referring to Imran Khan without naming him, she said a person who made fun of Sharif's family members' illnesses was lying in a wheelchair today. The minister asked the PTI Chairman instead of indulging in the blame game he should appear in the courts and provide evidence.

Marriyum said Imran has constantly been changing his get-up and script according to the situation. She said Imran in fear of bail cancellation was using a wheelchair as a tactic. "If the court calls him, he has the excuses of plaster, disability, canister and now wheelchair", she remarked.

Bilawal, Lavrov vow to boost relations

GOA (APP): Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Thursday met his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov here on the sidelines of the meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's Council of Foreign Ministers being held in Goa, India.

During the meeting, they discussed bilateral, regional and international matters of mutual interest. Foreign Minister Bilawal assured to work closely for further deepening cooperation in food security, energy and people-to-people contacts. He said that the SCO opened new vistas of cooperation and coordination with Russia.

After landing in India, Bilawal, while speaking to the media, said: "I am happy that I have reached here in Goa to attend the SCO meeting. I hope that the SCO CFM will be a success." Bilawal is leading

the country's delegation at the SCO's Council of Foreign Ministers meeting scheduled to be held from May 4-5 in Goa.

"Our participation in the meeting 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 FO spokesperson had said in a statement.

In addition to deliberating upon important regional and international issues and signing some of the institutional documents, the council will finalise the agenda and decisions to be adopted by the 17th SCO Council of Heads of State Meeting scheduled to take place in New Delhi on July 3-4, 2023.

The meeting will also witness the signing of memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with five countries namely Bahrain, Maldives, Myanmar and UAE to become Dialogue Partners of SCO. Besides Pakistan, SCO member states include China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and India.

SCO's major objectives include promoting mutual confidence and good, neighbourly relations among member states, strengthening regional peace, security and stability, and creating a framework for effective cooperation in the fields of politics, trade and economy, culture, science and technology, education, energy, transportation, tourism, and environmental protection etc. Since becoming a member in 2017, Pakistan has been actively and constructively contributing to all SCO activities to realise its multi-sectoral aims and objectives in a mutually beneficial manner.

5 teachers among 8 killed in Kurram firing incidents

F.P. Report

PARACHINAR: As many as eight teachers were killed in different incidents while emergency has been imposed in hospitals across Kurram district. According to police sources, in the first incidents a man named Muhammad Sharif was shot killed by unknown persons while traveling on Shlozan Road in Upper Kurram, on Thursday.

The other incident took place within staffroom of Government High School Teri Mengal while deceased were identified as Jawad Hussain, Naveed Hussain, Jawad Ali, Muhammad Ali, and Ali Hussain, all of whom were teachers belonging to the Tori Bangash tribe who were performing examination duties at Teri Mangal High School.

The teachers, who were at the school to perform examination duties, were inside the staffroom when unknown assailants opened fire on them. The motive behind the killings remained unclear. The circumstances remained shadowy, as not many people were able to see what had transpired, how many attackers were involved, or what their motives were behind the killing.

District Police Officer Upper Kurram Muhammad Imran told media personnel that the first shooting incident took place on a road near the Shalozan area and the second at Teri Mengal School. He said one person died in the first incident and seven in the shooting at the school.

However, Kurram district headquarters hospital deputy medical superintendent Qaisar Abbas put the staff on emergency duty and take concrete steps to

ensure quick aid to victims while death toll at eight, saying that only seven "teachers" were killed in the school shooting.

Local police said they were gathering more information and investigating the incident. Following the incidents, transportation routes across the district were closed due to security concerns, and the matric exams organized by the Kohat Education Board, which were scheduled to

she said. The chairperson further informed that board examinations in the rest of Kurram district and areas will be held as per schedule.

Meanwhile, President Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians, Asif Ali Zardari has paid rich tributes to the martyrs of the security forces in North Waziristan.

President Zardari said that those who attacked the security forces should be



begin on April 28, have been postponed for an unknown period.

Inayat Hussain, the president of Tehreek Hussaini, Allama Syed Tajumal Hussain, has condemned the killing of innocent teachers, calling it a heinous act. He further stated that such incidents are aimed at destroying the peace of Kurram district, and strict action must be taken against those responsible.

Board examinations have been deferred for an indefinite period in Parachinar for now, announced the chairperson of Kohat's education board, Samina Altaf. "The students inside the examination centre remained safe,"

pursued and brought to justice. The nation will never forgive the killers of its brave children, President Zardari said. Asif Ali Zardari expressed his sympathies and condolences to the families of the martyrs. Former President Asif Ali Zardari also expressed deep regrets and sorrow over the killing of seven teachers in Parachinar.

Killing of teachers who are fulfilling their duty is an unforgivable act. Criminals involved in the killing of teachers should be brought to justice. He prayed for the high ranks of the martyred teachers and strength and fortitude to the bereaved families to bear the irreparable loss with equanimity.

Punjab polls on May 14 verdict 'remains unchanged': SC

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Supreme Court Thursday clarified that negotiations between the ruling Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to end the political deadlock on the general election's timeframe were initiated in a volunteer capacity and that the top court did not issue any direction in this regard.

In a three-page verdict of the April 27 proceedings of the Punjab election delay case, the apex court said its April 4 verdict directing the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to hold Punjab elections on May 14 "remained unchanged".

"The Court appreciates the efforts of all parties to try to end the current political impasse and in particular their voluntary agreement to enter into negotiations to choose a single date for holding General Elections to the National Assembly and the four Provincial Assemblies," read the verdict issued by a three-member bench led by Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial. The apex court also clarified that the "negotiations between the two sides were entirely to be their own effort, without any direction or order of the Court in this regard in any manner".

"It was also made clear that the order of 04.04.2023 in Const. P.5 of 2023 remained unchanged," the ver-

Apex court to hear plea for holding elections simultaneously today

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): A three-member Supreme Court bench will hear a petition on Friday (today), requesting the top court to order that elections be held on the same day across the country. The bench will be headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial and comprising Justice Ijaz Ul Ahsan and Justice Munib Akhtar.

The petition filed by a citizen, Sardar Kashif Khan, nominated the federal government, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), and major political parties as respondents. The petition states it would be "in the interests of justice and equity as well as fulfilment of the constitutional imperatives (and balancing of competing constitutional requirements) if the general elections of National Assembly and all four provincial assemblies were held together rather than in piecemeal". If elections across the country were held on the same day, they would be done under caretaker setups which would "ensure that the general elections are carried out honestly, justly, fairly and in accordance with law". "Having political governments in power in the provinces when general elections are being held for the National Assembly has the potential to adversely affect the National Assembly election more than in the inverse situation since provincial governments have operational control of all day-to-day affairs in the respective NA constituencies (other than those in ICT)," the petition added. Moreover, holding elections simultaneously would save billions of rupees and the expenses could be included in the budget for the upcoming year. The armed forces and police would also only be required once instead of multiple times, allowing them to devote more time to their principal duties, it stated. The move would free up law enforcement agencies to focus on improving the country's law and order situation instead.

dict added. The development came a day after the ECP moved the Supreme Court against its directives to hold elections to the Punjab Assembly on May 14, urging it not to intervene in

its matters. In a 14-page petition, the electoral body said that the apex court should review its decision as the judiciary "doesn't have the authority to give the date of elections".

6 soldiers embrace martyrdom, 3 terrorists killed in fire exchange

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Six soldiers of Pakistan Army on Thursday embraced martyrdom during a fire exchange took place between terrorists and security forces in Dirundi area of North Waziristan District, where the Army troops effectively engaged the terrorists at their location.

During the incident, three terrorists were killed, while another two were injured. According to the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), during the intensive exchange of fire, six brave soldiers having fought gallantly and embraced shahadat (martyrdom).

The martyred soldiers were identified as Havaladar Saleem Khan, age 36 years, resident of District Tank, Naik Javed Iqbal, age 37 years, resident of District Kohat, Sepoy Nazir

Khan, age 26 years, resident of District Bannu, Sepoy Hazrat Bilal, age 25 years, resident of District Mardan, Sepoy Syed Rajab Hussain, age 22 years, resident of District Orakzai and Sepoy Bismillah Jan, age 22 years, resident of District Khyber. It added that the screening of the area was being carried out to eliminate any terrorists found in the area. "The Security Forces of Pakistan are determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve," the ISPR said.

Two terrorists killed, DSP injured in DI Khan police encounter: Police shot dead two terrorists in an encounter in Dera Ismail (DI) Khan, police said Thursday. According to police, some terrorists fired shots at police, leaving Deputy

Superintendent of Police (DSP) Aqid Iqbal seriously injured.

The police fired back in retaliation, killing two terrorists. The shootout between the police and terrorists continued in the jurisdiction of University police station till the filing of the report. The injured DSP was shifted to DI Khan District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital.

Meanwhile, President Dr Arif Alvi expressed grief over the martyrdom of personnel of Pakistan army in North Waziristan. In a statement, he paid tribute to the martyred who sacrificed their lives for the country. He saluted the martyrs for their dedication to duty and patriotism. The President expressed sympathy with the bereaved families and prayed for grant of patience to them. He also prayed for the elevation of ranks of martyrs in heaven.

SCO Summit: Fire for the hawks, Olive branch for the Doves

Taimur Banday

It will not be prudent to not see Mr. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's visit to India for the 2023 SCO summit in the light of the legacy he will carry with him for this visit. The young Pakistani foreign minister also represents a political party and political family that has believed and propagated engagement, talks and deliberations as an ideology. From Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to Benazir Bhutto, the art of negotiations, open door policy and discussions have reaped major successes for them as statespersons individually and for Pakistan in general. Such a policy has become a guiding tool for any foreign policy framework of Pakistan. The young Mr. Bhutto carries that belief in his veins and his army.

Shanghai Cooperation Organization represents a multilateral platform that hosts key players at the global as well as the regional level. The SCO is a platform that stands as

a voice against terrorism, extremism and separation and both Pakistan and India can use the forum to discuss these matters of mutual concern and create a new chapter towards a much needed and largely evasive dialogue. Both Pakistan and India accuse each other of fostering cross-border terrorism and supporting separatist groups. In this regard, SCO summits provide Pakistan and India with opportunities to proceed with counterterrorism and intelligence sharing dialogues as per the specified guidelines of SCO counter terrorism mechanism. This summit has the potential to ignite a potential basis for dialogue between the two South Asian rivals.

Historically it was the SCO summit back in 2015, where the Indian PM Modi and Pakistan's PM Nawaz Sharif met informally and created a foundation for resumption of dialogue and a working mechanism to talk between the two countries. The current SCO summit has a somewhat similar potential after last year's SCO summit and the ones before that were

wasted as an opportunity by Pakistan and India.

One of the reasons many are focusing and talking about a possible Indo-Pak talks is because the impact of this transcends local or regional levels and has a global significance. The two nuclear states potentially represent almost 25% of the world's population. They represent a vibrant market of a billion plus population that has a plethora of issues gazing at it on a daily basis. From environment to education. From health to food. From water to housing. The issues are of giant proportions and have made lives of the suffering and marginalized millions a daunting daily experience. In the light of such major concerns, any idea of resumption of talks or engagement between the two countries brings hope to millions across the region. It has a major impact on the economy, politics and society of both the South Asian giants.

However, with hope comes despair too. Pakistan and specially India has

been a major case study of intolerant politics, nightmare for minorities and fascism. India has been on a genocide watch and now thousands of non-Hindus and liberals are fleeing the country for more moderate countries and healthy social environments. Dubai alone grated 80K golden visas to Indians in 2022 alone. Indian Muslims and Indian Christians are now top applicants for foreign passports and PR cards abroad. All of this due to the ruling BJP's hindutva policy of destroying anything remotely secular in the country.

In Pakistan too till last year the Imran Khan led Government became a pinnacle of hostility towards dissenting voices and Pakistan's ranking towards free media and journalism hit an all-time low. Imran's Pakistan Tehrik e Insaaf (PTI) clamped down on all political rivals and the country's foreign and domestic policies were seen as incomplete, poor and short sighted. The previous Government's pandering to the right wing politics became a hallmark for

hawkish politics in the country.

In the light of the above facts what the region at large needed was a sane, moderate and far sighted Leader. It was the need of the hour for a Zulfikar Ali Bhutto type statesman to lead the region towards a more enlightened and a progressive future. In the midst of war mongering hawks in India and Pakistan, only Bilawal Bhutto Zaradri fits that role of a peace loving dove in the region. He is the perfect voice to be heard in the SCO summit in India this year. He is the kind of mindset that needs to lead Pakistan's efforts to normalize and cool down temperatures and push forward a new era of stability and harmony in the region. While he can only represent Pakistan today, he may get to positively influence the frenzied Indian media and the right wing bigot brigade of Indian politicians. His charm, intelligence, poise and potency may resemble that of his charismatic Grandfather and brilliant mother, but his own personality has the vibrancy that may be able to

shake the seemingly rigid and hard-core India's ruling regime.

From water issues to cricket, everything and anything has been held hostage due to this animosity between the two countries. Added to that hatred, prejudice, fake news and misrepresentation of facts has not helped anything or anyone in the region. It has perhaps only helped right wing politicians win elections and that too in India only as anti-India tirade has little to no takers in Pakistan. Perhaps it is time not just for Pakistan but for India too to listen to a secular and calm voice of reason, empathy and logic. This is the educated interjection and trajectory that will bode well for the success of the SCO summit and for any little hope of resumption of basic normality between Pakistan and India. Bilawal Bhutto as a dove will present an olive branch to all those who are hostile and alien to an educated and mature approach towards resolving bilateral issues. This precisely is what is needed today. Good luck to you sir!



Matt Kinsey visit to ICMA Lahore Campus

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Mr. Matt Kinsey, DTM President Toastmasters International made a visit to ICMA Lahore Campus Mr. Matt Kinsey was very impressed by the availability of highly skilled human resources in Pakistan, he was particularly impressed by the hospitality of the people of Lahore, its rich culture & delicious food.

Mr. Matt Kinsey stressed the need to advance the scope of Toastmasters in Punjab and thanked the collaboration of ICMA in helping the team in promoting the objectives of Toastmasters by providing infrastructural & administration support.

Mr. Zia ul Mustafa, Chairman Strategic Board ICMA thanked Mr. Matt Kinsey for taking the time out & making a visit to ICMA Lahore. Mr Zia ul Mustafa briefed Mr. Matt Kinsey about the scope of ICMA and the role of the institution in the regulation & promotion of the profession of management accountancy in Pakistan.

Mr. Muhammad Shahid, Vice Chairman LBC, Mr. Tahir Iqbal President Toastmaster Lahore Chapter, Mr. Muhammad Asif, Toastmaster Lahore Chapter, Ms. Munaza Elahi Director MARCOM, Mr. Ayaz Mustafa Campus In-charge, Mr. Muhammad Sarfraz, Joint Director ICMA were also present on the occasion.

PAC organizes Ustad Daman's literary reference

RAWALPINDI (APP): Punjab Arts Council (PAC) in collaboration with Punjab College of Commerce Rawalpindi, here on Thursday organized a literary reference titled "Ustad Dama Ka Sareer Nama".

The reference was jointly presided over by Jalil Aali and Prof Dr Maqsood Jaffari while Dr Shazia Akbar performed the duties of host in the reference.

Speaking on the occasion, Jalil Aali said that as long as Punjabi literature will live, the name of Ustad Daman will also live.

He said that Ustad Daman was the king of the stage and his poetry was fluid. Ustad Daman was a great poet and Qalandar in the true sense and expressed his love for the Punjabi language through poetry in the Punjabi language, he added.

Dr Maqsood Jafari, a famous writer, said that Ustad Daman experimented with all kinds of political, romantic and funny poems. In his poems, there was always a glimpse of love for the country, he said adding that Ustad Daman always raised the slogan of philanthropy in his poetry.

Director of Arts Council Waqar Ahmad said that Ustad Daman's poetry was rich in realism and naturalism and was a good reflection of human life. Qayum Tahir, Prof Dr Ravish Nadeem and other writers also highlighted various aspects of Ustad Daman's life and poetry. A large number of people from twin cities attended the event.

Murad decides to focus on restructuring of damaged infrastructure

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Thursday presiding over a meeting to shape up Annual Development Program (ADP) for the next financial year-2023-24, has directed his planning & development team to prioritize the rehabilitation of flood-affected people, repair and maintenance of infrastructure devastated by the recent floods, prepare a plan for the development of agricultural and industrial sectors.

"We have to resolve the transport issue of Karachi by completing different BRT projects in the next financial year," he said and directed his team to make necessary financial allocations accordingly.

The meeting was held at CM House and was attended by Chief Secretary Sohail Rajput, Chairman P&D Hassan Naqvi, Secretary Finance Sajid Jamal Abro, Secretary to CM Rahim Shaikh, Member P&D Fatah Tunio, and others concerned.

It was pointed out that during the current financial year (2022-23) 4158 schemes, including 2506 ongoing and 1652 new were launched for Rs 332.165 billion and then the allocation was revised to Rs 267.652 billion against which Rs 181.8 have been released. The expenditures against the released amount have been recorded at Rs 126.228 billion.

The chief minister directed the PD to complete at least 800 schemes by the end of the current financial year.

The chief minister giving c guidelines to the P&D for finalizing the ADP for the next financial year said priority would be given to the schemes of infrastructure damaged by the devastating floods. "I want to repair and reconstruct the school buildings, hospitals, roads, and irrigation network so that they could be made functional," he said.

Syed Murad Ali Shah said that the ongoing and new transport schemes for Karachi have to be completed and launched during the next financial year to resolve the transport issue of the city. "The P&D must propose the allocation of funds as local share for such foreign-funded transport schemes," he said. Chairman P&D Hassan Naqvi briefing the CM Sindh said that six new foreign-funded schemes of the World Bank and one of the Asian Development Bank have been approved.

They include WB- Sindh Flood Emergency Rehabilitation Project for Rs 48 billion, Sindh Flood Emergency Housing Reconstruction Project for Rs 110 billion, Sindh Water & Agriculture Transformation Project of Rs64 billion, Sindh Integrated Health & Population Project Rs 55 billion and Strengthening the Social Delivery Protection System for Rs 42 billion and Sindh Flood Emergency Assistance Project by Asian Development Bank for Rs 43.9 billion. The chief minister directed the P&D dept to expedite the completion of the required formalities of the Rs 600 billion Karachi Water & Sewerage Service Improvement project so that water board services could be improved.

He also discussed foreign-funded projects in the pipeline such as (WB) Sindh Transformation Accelerated Rural Services (STARS), the Sindh Livestock & Aquaculture Development (SLAD) project, and of Asian Development Bank's projects, including the Sindh Secondary Cities Improvement Project, Phase-II, Katchi Abadi's project, Sindh Coastal Resilience Project, Provincial Road Improvement Project, Sindh Health System Strengthening Project and Integrated Transport Improvement Project of Hyderabad.

Tarar terms Khan's medical report 'fake'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Interior Attaullah Tarar on Thursday termed medical report of infection in leg as 'fake' and has urged all courts to reject it.

"Why's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan preparing medical reports from his own medical institute 'Shaukat Khanum' and why didn't he go to proper medical checkup from government hospitals or other well reputed private medical labs," he said in a press conference here.

He said that Imram Khan was playing different types of tactics on medical grounds from a long time to get relief from the courts.

Tarar was also of the view that PTI

workers had launched an organized social media campaign against state institutions and government officers. In this regard a fresh case has been registered against Chairman PTI.

Former Prime Minister Imran Khan also pressurized the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) as to get relief in the foreign funding case, he added.

Tarar said that the public was blaming some senior Judges of the apex court for giving Imran Khan favour in court cases. Imran Khan has divided the national institution for the sake of his own will and interest. He's getting bail from courts without appearing before them which is totally against the law and constitution, he said.

PHC Job Fair & Education Expo 2023 held

KARACHI (APP): The PHC Job Fair and Education Expo 2023 held here at Expo Centre Karachi on Thursday caught attention of hundreds of students and job aspirants. The PHC Job Fair and Education Expo was organised under the theme of 'Connect- Communicate-Compete' by Pakistan Hindu Council (PHC) in collaboration with Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC).

State Bank of Pakistan, different banks, universities, government departments and organisations and a number of multinational and national companies set up their stall in the fair to provide information about employment opportunities and receive curriculum vitae from the job seekers and students of more than 50 universities. Patron in Chief of PHC MNA Ramesh Kumar Wankwani, Executive Director HEC Dr. Shaista Sohail and Director HEC Javid Memon inaugurated the job fair and education expo by cutting the ribbon.

Dr. Ramesh Kumar Wankwani, speaking at the occasion, expressed his gratitude to HEC, SBP and other government and corporate entities for their participation in the fair and making it a success.

He said that more than 15000 students

and job aspirants having educational background and degrees in various disciplines of study have got themselves registered at the fair.

Such events play an important role in assisting students to get opportunities to advance in their respective fields of study and opening employment opportunities for them, he noted and hoped that the job fair would help students getting job and internship opportunities in reputable and established corporate sector entities.

Pakistani youth is blessed with a vast potential and immense talent that need to be explored and mobilised in right direction for development of the country, he said and vowed that PHC would organise such events in future as well.

Wankwani informed that PHC was working to start an internship program for fresh graduates in collaboration with HEC and different universities to enable the students of acquiring professional training and working experience. Though overseas employment is a major driver of brain drain, it also provide talented youth opportunities to get jobs abroad and contribute in economic development through precious foreign exchange in form of remittances, he stated.

IN THE COURT OF SPECIAL JUDGE (CUSTOM & TAXATION), KARACHI

Special Case No. 34-A/2020
FIR# ASO-P-01/2020-E.W
P.S. CUSTOMS, KARACHI.

The State.....Versus.....Habib Jan & Others PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON UNDER SECTION 87 Cr. PC.

Whereas, complaint has been made before me that namely Habib Jan S/o Wahab Jan CNIC No. 16102-3039431-1 passport No. FD8794311 Nationality Pakistani, has committed an offence of smuggling and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused person cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the above mentioned accused person absconded to avoid the service of the said warrant.

2. Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused is required to appear on 09.05.2023 at 09:00 am before this Hon'able Court to answer the said complaint.

Given under my hand and seal of the Court this 02.05.2023

--sd--
Special Judge
Special Court (Custom & Taxation)
Karachi



KARACHI: MNA Ramesh Kumar Wankwani and Executive Director HEC Dr. Shaista Sohail cutting ribbon to inaugurate PHC Job Fair and Education Expo 2023 at Expo Centre Karachi.

CM pays tributes to martyred constable

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi has paid tributes to Constable Ghulam Qasim who made ultimate sacrifice of his life during an operation in Kacha against anti state elements.

The CM noted that Constable Ghulam Qasim fought bravely against miscreants and was elevated to the rank of a martyr.

In a statement issued on Thursday, the CM stated that the entire nation is proud of the great sacrifice by Constable Ghulam Qasim. He expressed his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and assured them that the Punjab government would provide all possible support to help them through this difficult time.

Mohsin Naqvi also commended the brave men and women of the Punjab Police, who have set a high standard of courage and dedication.

Their unwavering commitment to maintaining peace has earned them a reputation for valor and bravery that will be remembered for generations to come, he concluded.

CM pays tributes to martyred security personnel:

Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi has paid tribute to the great sacrifice of six security personnel on embracing martyrdom due to firing of terrorists in the area of South Waziristan. Mohsin Naqvi said that the brave sons of the homeland foiled the nefarious designs of the terrorists by sacrificing their lives. The CM saluted the immortal sacrifices of the martyrs and added the nation admires the sacrifices of the martyrs.

Mohsin Naqvi remarked that the sacrifices of the martyred personnel would never be forgotten. Caretaker CM expressed his heartfelt sympathies and condolence with the families of the martyrs.

CM offers condolence:

Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi visited deceased Ghulam Miran and other members of a family here on Thursday who were drowned after their vehicle plunged into the river in Azad Jammu & Kashmir.

The CM expressed his heartfelt condolences to the heirs of the deceased Ghulam Miran and inquired about the well-being of the injured Muhammad Fahad. The CM directed the authorities to provide the best treatment to the injured and ordered a team of divers from Rescue 1122 to be dispatched to the incident site immediately. Mohsin Naqvi also consoled the bereaved families and prayed to Allah Almighty to give them courage, hoping for the safe return of the missing youth.

It may be added that eight members of a family including Ghulam Miran, Walid Ibrar, Hasan Safdar, Bilal Maqbool, Azhar Ashraf, Rahim Khan, Raheel, and Shah Nawaz Maqsood were drowned in the incident. The body of Ghulam Miran was recovered while the search for the missing youth was underway. Muhammad Fahad, Moin, and Hasnain Shehzad were receiving medical treatment.

Commissioner, DC, CCPO and other officials were also present.

Treatment of congenital brain diseases will soon be started at PINS: Minister

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Provincial Health Minister Prof. Dr. Javed Akram has said that the treatment of children suffering from congenital brain diseases will soon be started at PINS.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of the Pediatric Neurosurgery Department at Punjab Institute of Neurosciences (PINS) here on Thursday, he expressed his happiness over the establishment of the Pediatric Neurosurgery Department at PINS.

He said that the doctor serves his patients regardless of their caste, religion, color and race. In the past, senior politician Javed Hashmi was

provided with the best treatment facilities in case of stroke, he added. He said that, earlier, brain surgery for children in Punjab was a dream which has now come true. He said that patients from Iran and Afghanistan also came to the PINS for brain surgery.

Discussing about the brain injury, he said that regrettably, parents give motorcycle to their young ones and send them on the road which is highly irresponsible behavior, adding that due to the road accident, innocent children have to face life-long disabilities. Later, Dr. Javed Karam visited various wards of PINS and inquired

about the quality of medical facilities on the patients.

On the occasion, Executive Director PINS Professor Dr. Khalid Mahmood said that every patient in the hospital is being provided international level medical facilities and the PINS is serving patients through 500 beds. He said that patients would be provided 24-hour treatment facilities in the newly established pediatric neurosurgery.

Professor Asif Bashir, MS Dr. Khalid bin Aslam, Dr. Hasan Zahid, Dr. Asad Shah, Nursing Superintendent Razia Shamim and others attended the inaugural ceremony.

International Firefighters Day

RAWALPINDI (APP): Emergency Rescue Service Department Rawalpindi, Rescue-1122 here on Thursday organized an event at central Rescue Station Chandni Chowk to pay tribute and show solidarity with the firefighters who take risks to provide a sense of safety to the community. Fire Fighters and Rescuers participated in the event. Another event was also organized at Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry to mark the day.

Austrian Ambassador, delegation call on Chairman WAPDA

ISLAMABAD (APP): Austrian Ambassador to Pakistan Andrea Wicke, along with a delegation comprising representatives of Austrian firms, here on Thursday called on Chairman WAPDA Engr Lt Gen (Retd) Sajjad Ghani.

Welcoming the Austrian Ambassador and the delegation, the Chairman briefed them about WAPDA's mandate, its development portfolio, financial strength and expertise to implement mega projects successfully in water and hydropower sectors, said a press release.

He apprised the delegation that WAPDA is constructing eight multi-purpose mega projects including Diamer Basha Dam, Mohmand Dam, Dasu Hydropower Project, Tarbela 5th Extension etc. Scheduled

for completion one after the other from 2024 to 2029, these projects will add 9.7 million acre feet (MAF) to the gross water storage of the country and about 10,000 mega watt (MW) clean, green and low-cost hydel electricity to the National Grid.

The delegation was also informed about Thakot, Pattan and other ready-for-construction projects. WAPDA's under-construction as well as ready-for-construction projects have tremendous business opportunities, the Chairman said and added, Austrian firms may also benefit from these opportunities through international competitive bidding. Later, the Member Finance gave a run-down of the innovative financial plans for the construction of WAPDA projects.

Appreciating the contribution of WAPDA for developing a sustainable and no-carbon energy economy in Pakistan, the Austrian Ambassador said that she is pleased to know details of WAPDA's development portfolio. Austrian firms, known for their expertise in financing and manufacturing of electro-mechanical equipment for hydropower projects, have been working with WAPDA since long. We desire to expand the partnership between Austrian firms and WAPDA in the days to come. The Austrian Embassy is keen to play its role for the purpose, the Ambassador said. WAPDA's Member Finance Naveed Asghar Chaudhary, Member Water Javid Akhtar Latif and Member Power Jamil Akhtar were also present on the occasion.

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INVITATION TO E-BID THROUGH SAP ARIBA DISCOVERY

Oil & Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) is the largest Exploration & Production Company listed on Pakistan and London Stock Exchange. Details about the company can be obtained from website <http://www.ogdcl.com>. Sealed E-Bids are invited through **SAP-Ariba Discovery** for the service/material given below under competitive bidding procedure as per Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) rules:

SR #	TENDER ENQUIRY NO.	DESCRIPTION	BID SUBMISSION DATE & TIME	BID OPENING DATE & TIME
1	OGDCL-SCM-SERVICES-CB-EXPL-180154234-2023	HIRING OF SERVICES FOR 2D SEISMIC DATA RE-PROCESSING UPTO PRE-STACK TIME AND DEPTH MIGRATION IN KALCHAS EXPLORATION LICENCE (E.L)	22.05.2023 AT 1030 HRS.	22.05.2023 AT 1100 HRS.
2	OGDCL-SCM-SERVICES-CB-EXPL-207739530-2023	HIRING OF 2D SEISMIC DATA PRE-STACK TIME MIGRATION REPROCESSING SERVICES IN GWADAR EXPLORATION LICEINCE (E.L)	24.05.2023 AT 1030 HRS.	24.05.2023 AT 1100 HRS.
3	OGDCL-SCM-FA-CB-PANDP-WALI-208399411-2023	PROCUREMENT OF MEMBRANE ELEMENT FOR WALI FIELD F.R. LAKKI MARWAT, KPK PROVINCE	06.06.2023 AT 1100 HRS.	06.06.2023 AT 1130 HRS.

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

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

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

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

EXTENSION

Reference to our Press Tender Notice published in national newspapers on 11.04.2023, it is notified that the bids submission/opening date is extended as follows:

SR #	TENDER ENQUIRY NO.	DESCRIPTION	FROM	TO
1	SERVICES-CB-SYSTEM-6000000186-206832475-2023	RENEWAL OF IBM SECURITY IAM & QRADAR LICENSES	DATE: 04.05.2023 SUBMISSION: 1100 HRS OPENING: 1130 HRS	DATE: 12.05.2023 SUBMISSION: 1100 HRS OPENING: 1130 HRS

2. Bid submission/opening time and all other terms & conditions shall remain unchanged.

3. Bidders are requested to contact **Manager Supply Chain Management (SCM) Foreign** at Phone # +92-51-92002-3652 and **In-Charge Supply Chain Management (SCM) Services** at Phone # +92-51-92002-3750 for further queries / information.

4. This advertisement is also available on PPRA website at www.ppra.org.pk and OGDCL website at www.ogdcl.com.

GENERAL MANAGER (SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT)
OIL & GAS DEVELOPMENT COMPANY LIMITED
OGDCL HOUSE, JINNAH AVENUE, ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN.
Phone No. 92-51-920023540; Fax No. 92-51-9244139

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

PHC orders Secretary health to implement recommendations

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Waqar Ahmad ordered Secretary's health to implement committee report prepared on court's order within 15 days in case regarding delisting of 15 private hospitals from provision facilities on 'Sehat Card' while ordered to submit report, on Thursday.

Barrister Masood Kausar informed that petitioner hospitals were registered with State Life Insurance while started provision of facilities to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa population after government extension of 'Sehat Card' facility to private hospitals due to rush on public sector hospitals.

The private hospitals providing health facilities on 'Sehat Card' for several years while latterly the petitioner's facilities were delisted while it is found that neither filling of complaint nor evidence produced against the hospitals but they were deprived of manipulated inquiries, the counsel argued.

The counsel argued that State Life Insurance has no jurisdiction to delist hospital from 'Sehat Card' but Health's department is competent authority for the purpose and added that latterly a committee was constituted which had visited hospitals and submitted the report.

The report declare that the petitioner's hospitals are more equipped than standard set for 'Sehat Card' for obtaining the facility but the private hospitals didn't enlisted which has created financial problems, the counsel informed.

Earlier, PHC has constituted committee on similar petition while its recommendations do not implemented in its spirit. However, PHC ordered secretary's health to implement the recommendation within 15 days and submit report while disposed off writ petition of the private hospitals.



PESHAWAR: Advisor to Prime Minister Engr. Ameer Muqam listening issues of a party delegation lead by Fazalullah Daudzai. — F.P. photo

ANP condemns killing of teachers in Upper Kurram

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial President Awami National Party (ANP), Aimal Wali Khan has condemned killing of teachers in Upper Kurram and said that elements involved in the incidents have nothing to do with humanity.

According to a press release issued from Baacha Khan Markaz here on Thursday, Aimal Wali perpetrators are the enemies of education and want to disturb peace of the province.

He said that incident would negatively impact ongoing education process and spread ignorance in the society.

He demanded action against elements involved in the brutal incident and said that ANP stands beside the affected families in this hour of distress.

Cloudy weather with chances of scattered rains predicted in KP

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

However, scattered rain-wind/thunderstorm (with isolated heavy rainfall/hailstorm) is likely to occur over Chitral, Lower & Upper Dir, Swat, Buner, Malakand, Shangla, Kohistan, Torghar, Battagram, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Swabi, Mardan, Nowshera, Peshawar, Charsadda, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Kurram, Hangu, Orakzai, Karak, Kohat, Lakki Marwat, Bannu, Tank, D. I. Khan, North & South Waziristan districts.

During the last 24 hours mainly partly cloudy and dry weather prevailed over most districts of the province. However, thunderstorm-rains occurred at isolated places in Mansehra, Mardan and Nowshera districts.

The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in centigrade at different stations of KP were Peshawar City 30/23, Chitral 30/11, Timergara 27/15, Dir 27/11, Mirkhani 27/09, Kalam 20/05, Drosh 29/14, Saidu Sharif 26/14, Pattan 29/17, Malam Jabba 14/07, Takht Bhai 30/18, Kakul 22/10, Balakot 25/13, Parachinar 22/08, Bannu 32/19, Cherat 21/13, D. I. Khan 31/21.



PESHAWAR: A view of bumper to bumper traffic jam at Khyber Road.

Peshawar's beautification: Still a distant dream

PESHAWAR (APP): Once known as the city of flowers, Peshawar is nowadays engulfed by a thick- smoke emanating from a tsunami of rickshaws and brick kilns, forcing the residents to inhale the polluted air.

Rather enjoying fragrance of red roses, jasmine and others seasonal flowers of spring season, Peshawarties are exposed to inhale the polluted air mostly caused by the smoke emanating from tsunami of unregistered rickshaws, taxis and wagons leading to increase in cases of ENT, cough, chest and other seasonal infections.

Even, the thick black smoke could be seen with a naked eyes by the visitors while standing on top of the Surey Pul bridge near Balahisar fort due to axing of canopy trees and bulldozing of green belts by the PTI rulers to pay way for construction of an ill-planned BRT corridor, thus causing traffic jams during peak hours.

"The wrong planning for BRT and bulldozing of green belts for its corridor by the then PTI government had aggravated air pollution and traffic jam problems in Peshawar's Dabgari gardens, Firdus and Hastnagari," said Riazul Haq, a former Education Department PST teacher and a resident of district Nowshera while talking to APP on Thursday.

The doctors, teachers, students and the government's servants were also suffering to reach their respective destinations on time due to traffic jams and air pollution due to presence of dozens of bricks kilns operating in the Peshawar's peripheries.

Patients in ambulances with their blaring sirens were also being stranded on GT road and Sher Shah Suri road besides others link roads leading to Lady Reading Hospital (LRH) and Dabgari gardens in the unruly traffic were adding to their mental agony and psychological problems.

"Last week, I had visited LRH for treatment and was trapped for one hour in the traffic mess at Firdus amid complaints of breath, ENT, cough and heart problems," said Riaz Khan. "It was my worst and nerve breaking experience I had in Peshawar since my retirement a few years ago. My knees started to hurt due to excessive use of clutch and brakes while driving in a massive traffic jam," he added.

"BRT buses are often overloaded after scrapping of old buses and wagons on its route, resultantly most of passengers in BRT have to travel from Peshawar City to Hayatabad without a seat due to shortage of buses."

He said widening of GT road near Hastnagari and Firdus, ban on smoke emitting rickshaws and without permit taxis and increasing BRT buses would help address the problem of traffic congestion and combat



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali presiding over a meeting of Peshawar City beautification development schemes.

KP govt urged to make Azakhel dry port functional

PESHAWAR (APP): Chairman, Railways/Dryport Standing Committee of Sarhad Chamber Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Peshawar, Ziaul Haq Sarhadi here Thursday said Pakistan Railways dry port at Azakhel in district Nowshera was situated in important location and urged the government to make it functional to bolster exports.

He said its function would greatly help facilitate Pak-Afghan trade, generate employment opportunities and promote business as well as industrialization in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with its close to CPEC route.

In an exclusive interview with APP here, Ziaul Haq Sarhadi said that about Rs600 million were spent on Azakhel dry port established on 28 acres land in Nowshera district on main GT Road and its full operationalization would enable Khyber Pakhtunkhwa investors to showcase their products at local and international markets.

He said that KP's was blessed with an abundance of natural resources including gems, marble, honey, carpet and furniture and Pakistan's economic issues could be addressed if these resources were fully tapped by exploring new markets and granting incentives to its traders.

KP is exporting items like furniture, mineral, marbles, matches and honey but exporters were facing lots of problems owing to lack of bonded carriers in Peshawar to carry the exported goods to Karachi port for onward destinations.

At the time of its inauguration by Prime Minister Imran Khan, the businessmen were assured that one window operation service would be provided besides other modern facilities at the new dry port and a special export cargo train would be started between Peshawar and Karachi.

Ziaul Haq Sarhadi, who is also the President of Frontier Customs Agents Association (FCAA) said that Azakhel dry port was located near Islamabad-Peshawar Motorway, Rashaki Special Economic Zone and Bacha Khan International Airport, which could prove a game-changer to increase trade volume among Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asians Republics (CARs).

He said former Chief Minister Sardar Mehtab Abbasi has announced Rs20 million for Azakhel dry port, however, after his government the project was put into cold storage by the successive previous governments. He said Pakistan Railways can earn up to Rs5 billion per year from trade after operationalization of Azakhel dry port.

He said coal trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan has increased in recent years and there was a need to jack up its volume between the two countries especially in gems, marble, honey, carpet and furniture sectors for mutual benefits.

Due to wrong policies of the past government, he said the countries could not take advantage of this wealth.

He said demands of Pakistan's gems have increased manifold in international markets due to its unique quality, however, we could not take advantage of it due to lack of expertise and machinery besides poor investment.

Ziaul Haq Sarhadi said Gems and Gemological Institute of Pakistan (GGIP) Peshawar was an important institution in training of manpower in identification, cutting and polishing of the gems and during his chairmanship 270 students trained by the GGIP.



PESHAWAR: Vehicle passing through accumulated rainwater after rain in City.

Admin to frame new SOPs for restaurants, fast-food outlets

PESHAWAR (APP): District administration has decided to review the existing standard operating procedures (SOPs) for restaurants and fast-food outlets and then frame new ones.

The purpose of framing SOPs for restaurants and fast-food outlets is to ensure quality and hygienic food dishes to people in a good environment.

In this connection, a meeting was held here on Thursday with Deputy Commissioner (DC) Peshawar, Shah Fahad in the chair.

Besides, district administration, the officers of Food Safety & Halal Food Authority, the representatives of food department and police also attended the meeting.

Matters relating to dishes and the situation of kitchens were discussed in detail and it was decided that a committee comprising officers of the district administration, food authority and food department would be formed to bring further improvement in the standard operating procedures (SOPs) of the restaurants.

The committee will review the existing SOPs of the restaurants in Peshawar and submit a report for bringing improvement in them.

After framing of the new standard operating procedures (SOPs), the Restaurants' Association will also be taken on board to ensure their implementation and passage of a deadline legal proceeding will also be initiated against the violators.

Out of 121.7 kanal of reclaimed land, as many as 39.75 kanal was included in Shahi Bagh and 83 kanal allocated for developing Ladies Park with all modern facilities including indoor and outdoor gyms, jogging tracks and separate playing area for children.

Old fountain tiles have been replaced with super white marble and electricity wires and motors concealed underground to enhance the beauty of the fountains.

Work on improvement of jogging track, lawns and plantations have been completed and wooden benches, dustbins and new lighting system were put in place in the park besides development of a three kilometers soft jogging trail for senior citizens.

Subsequently, work on Peshawar Revival Plan was launched for the uplift of the provincial capital including restoration and face uplift of Shahi Bagh. According to the Local Government and Rural Development Department, all encroachments were removed from the historical Shahi Bagh.

Over 121.75 kanal encroached lands of Shahi Bagh were reclaimed. The reclaimed lands includes 24 kanals of Pardah Bagh and a wedding hall, 34.75 kanal land of the Funland and 63 kanal used by Traffic Police for parking of impounded vehicles and the total area of Shahi Bagh has now increased to over 205 kanal.

air pollution.

To counter air pollution and ensure beautification of Peshawar, officials in Planning and Development Department told APP that the government expedited work on 150 beautification projects costing Rs5 billion at Hayatabad, University Road and Palosi near Peshawar Zoo and University Town to make Peshawar's clean and neat besides make it again the city of gardens and flowers.

The official said under phase-I, work on the Rs1.22 billion beautification project was underway at Hayatabad triple bridge, Rs171 million Palosi Road, University Town besides others adjoining localities.

In phase-II, he said the government would launch



In brief

DPO visits check posts F.P. Report

SWABI: District Police Officer Swabi, Najam-ul-Hasnain here Thursday visited police check posts of Tordher, Kalu Khan, Jehangeera and Khanda and inspected record. He also inspected lock-up, store room, front desk and reviewed security measures of check posts. He also directed In-charge of check posts to ensure proper monitoring of adjacent areas to avert any untoward incidents and launch crackdown on anti-social elements to control street crimes. He directed police force to do duty with dedication and professionalism and come up to expectations of people.

Govt Girls School reopened F.P. Report

KHAR: The efforts of Frontier Corps North to promote education in Bajaur are continue. In this regard, to ensure that female students should continue the studies uninterrupted, the Frontier Corps North took important step and reopened the Govt Girls School Jani Shah, Bajaur which was closed for the past two months due to non-payment of salaries to the female teachers. Furthermore, the assurance given to the school management regarding the construction of a class room on an immediate basis is a positive step towards improving the infrastructure of the school and providing better facilities for the students. Overall, the efforts of FC North to promote education in Bajaur are highly appreciated and commendable by the locals and they said that such initiatives will continue so that the youth of Bajaur have access to quality education and can contribute positively to the development of their communities.

Three killed as van overturns

HYDERABAD (INP): At least three people were killed and 10 others injured when a passenger van turned turtle due to over speeding here on Thursday. According to details, the accident took place on Indus Highway near Manjhand area of Hyderabad where a reckless driven passenger van overturned. Three passengers were killed on the spot in the accident while 10 others sustained injuries. The bodies and injured were shifted to hospital where condition of five wounded passengers was stated to be critical and it was feared that death toll could raise further.

Three held, drugs recovered

QUETTA (INP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) arrested three suspects and recovered heroin and hashish during raids conducted in Quetta and Chaman area of Balochistan. The ANF spokesperson said on Thursday, the staff of Anti-Narcotics Force, on receiving a tip-off, arrested two women residents of Sukkur while conducting an operation at the bus stop on Saryab Road in Quetta. A total of 7 kg 200 grams of hashish was recovered from his possession.

Drug trafficking attempt foiled

HANGU (INP): Police in the Hangu district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa carried out a major operation in the wee hours of Thursday, foiling an attempt to smuggle drugs. According to the authorities, during a major operation by the Kurez police, an attempt of drug smuggling was thwarted, resulting in the recovery of 82 kilograms of Marijuana.



QUETTA: A vendor displaying mosquito net tops at his roadside setup.

Rehabilitation works in flood hit area continue

F.P. Report

TIMERGARA: Tehsil Timergara Chairman Mufti Irfan Uddin has said that the restoration work in Petu Dara, an area affected by heavy rains, hail and flood, is going on rapidly despite the freezing of funds with limited resources. Rehabilitation and relief activities are continuing inside, he expressed these thoughts while speaking to the media in his office. On this occasion, TOR Hanifur Rehman and Chairman of Village Council Peto Dara Maulana Muhammad Nabi Shah were also present. Chairman Mufti Irfanuddin said that he visited the affected Petu Dara yesterday and got aware of the damage caused by the people and started the work on the restoration of the affected area and four excavators have been installed for the restoration of the roads and the public transportation routes will be restored soon.

Mufti Irfan-u-Din said that the Deputy Commissioner Lower Dir did not take him into confidence on the Timergara Khor beautification project and opposed and said project even when the funds were less and The project was started in a big way, the

results of which were that today, due to non-availability of funds, the work on the project of Timergara Khor beautification has been stopped. They will use their skills because they understand the problems and problems of the people.

Journalists rejects non-technical DGIPR: Journalists of District Press Club Timergara have demanded that DG Information Muhammad Imran Khan should be immediately restored to the post of Director Information. A meeting was held at District Press Club Timergara in which the President of Timergara Press Club Ismail Anjum, General Secretary Rahmatullah Swati, Syed Anjad Ali Shah, Hanifullah, Bahramand Syed, Abdullah Madani, Nawab Badshah, Zia-ur-Rahim, and others. Addressing the participation meeting, President Ismail Anjum said that remove the Director of Information and replaced him with an unrelated person.

He strongly condemned the appointment and said that an unrelated person does not understand the problems and problems of journalists. We will be forced to start the movement, all the responsibility

of which will be on the concerned authorities.

Al-Khadmit foundation works to complete soon: The construction work on the third floor of Al-Khidmat Foundation Zawal Baba is going on rapidly and with the timely completion of this project, more treatment and treatment facilities have been made available to the patients in the area, due to which the problems of the patients have decreased.

Sahibzada Muhammad Yaqoob Khan the delegation, headed by The construction of the third floor of the hospital was discussed and the work reviewed in the delegation, Haji Anwaruddin, President traders Timergara Bazar, Deputy President Al-Khidmat Dir Lower, Haji Fazl Maula, Haji Majidullah Khan, Malik Dilawar Khan, Qaim Jamaat-e-Islami Dir Lower Engineer Yakub Rahman participated in the delegation.

Majidullah Director of Al-Khidmat Hospital Zawal Baba welcomed the guests and gave a detailed briefing about the hospital and said that patients are being treated and treated according to the modern requirements of Al-Khidmat Foundation Zawal Baba Dir lower Hospital.

Inquiry into alleged paper leak sought F.P. Report

TANK: Governor Model School paper leak case has sparked public outrage, with demands for a forensic inquiry to be conducted, on Thursday.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Elementary and Secondary Education Department (KP E&SED) and Nazim Examinations Dera Board have issued a press release claiming that the viral MCQs paper on social media is completely fake. However, the Chairman Dera Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BSIE) himself has admitted to the leak in an interview with the media. This has led to widespread skepticism about the authorities' claims.

According to the official statement of Chairman Board BISE DI Khan given to media on spot that the students of class 10th were delayed in receiving their papers because the superintendent handed over the paper of class 9th which was scheduled for day next, and that the said superintendent has been relieved of duty immediately. He also added that the focal person appointed by the board in the bank has also been removed, and an inquiry will be conducted against him.

Social circles have criticized the authorities' handling of the situation and called for a forensic inquiry to be conducted by all investigating agencies, including the FIA and Anti-Corruption Establishment. They argue that the involved characters must be brought to light and removed immediately to restore public trust in the education system.

The public is demanding justice and transparency in this matter. The Chairman Dera Board's admission of the paper leak has exposed the authorities' claims as baseless, and it is clear that a cover-up is underway. It is imperative that a thorough investigation be conducted to restore public trust and ensure that those responsible for the leak are held accountable. The public demands that the authorities take swift action to restore confidence in the education system and prevent future instances of corruption and malpractice.

Unhygienic ice-cream factory sealed F.P. Report

MARDAN: Admin has sealed illegally established factory of unhygienic Ice Cream in Par Hoti on the directives of Deputy Commissioner Mardan while Additional Assistant Commissioner Headquarters Junaid Khalid raided the outlet.

According to the details, the Additional Assistant Commissioner Headquarters visited the ice cream manufacturing factory in Par Hoti and checked the implementation of hygienic health principles as well as registration with the relevant institutions. The illegal ice cream factory has been sealed against which further action will be taken.

DPO lauds media role for transparency in public's services



F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: District Police Officer (DPO) Khyber has said media plays a role of bridge between government departments and the people and no one can deny the positive role of media in the progress of the country. All facilities will be provided to the local police officials to enhance their efficiency while executing their official duties.

DPO praised the police officials for their affirmative performance and said they have rendered matchless sacrifices to maintain peace in the area. The views were expressed by the DPO Saleem Abbas Kulachi while talking to media persons on his visit

to Landi Kotal press club here on Thursday.

He added that necessary and useful training sessions have been planned to technically equip the local police. As compared to other tehsils of Khyber, peace was maintained in Landi Kotal, however police patrolling was increased on Pak-Afghan highway and other link roads, he remarked.

One cannot ignore punishment and reward practice in police development, he added and said preference is given to post local police officials in their own areas but non-locals will also be deployed as per need. Police official further said that all postings were conducted on merit basis and talented local police

officials were posted in the investigation wing.

Efforts were made to impart knowledge of modern policing to the educated youth to enroll them in various sections of police, DPO remarked. He was accompanied by Station House Officer (SHO) Ishrat Ali, Public Relation Officer, district police Zaeher Afridi appreciated the role of the journalist community in development and retaining of peace in Landi Kotal and urged them to continue their positive role. DPO also offered prayers for the departed souls of the deceased Khyber media persons. Prior to it, President Landi Kotal press club Khalil Jibran welcomed him.

RPO assures assistance to traders during visit to MCCI

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Regional Police Officer (RPO) Mardan Mohammad Ali Khan Gandapur and District Police Officer Mardan Najibur Rehman visited to Mardan Chamber of Commerce and Industry on the special invitation of Mardan Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Zahir Shah. On this occasion Inam Jan Khan, DSP City Mardan, the presidents of the central organization of traders, general secretary, members executive committee Mardan Chamber, print, electronics and social media representatives of Mardan Press Club participated in large numbers with zeal.

Zahir Shah elaborated and said that the process of establishment of Mardan Chamber was brought in 1997 which is benefiting the traders and industrialists of Mardan because before that the traders and industrialists of this area were members of chambers of other districts or province due to which they were facing many problems.

He said that after going through many stages since the establishment of the Chamber, today Mardan Chamber has earned a name in a domestic and foreign market because Mardan Chamber has always raised its voice in every forum for the welfare of businessmen and industrialists in order to further expand the business of this region.

RPO said further that Mardan Chamber has signed memorandum of understanding by conduct-

ing business visits to various countries including USA, Spain, Ukraine, China, Central Union countries, India, which has proved significantly increased the promotion of business. Zahir Shah said that the aim of Mardan Chamber is to work with institutions for the welfare of traders in the society, to which various standing committees have been formed according to the law. He said that these all institutions and industrialists are fully in contact with the institutions. He said that the performance of Mardan Police is very encouraging and appreciating by providing sustainable security and safety to traders in the market.

He said that the steps taken by the Mardan police to stop the crimes which were threat to traders are fully controlled by the police now and the trust of Mardan people and businessmen on the police has become even stronger. Zahir Shah also made suggestions to the Regional Police Officer and District Police Officer regarding the problems faced by the traders, including the inappropriate and unfriendly attitude of the concerned police stations towards the traders, if a trader faces any problem the police should solve it with mutual understanding because the traders have always acted as the vanguard of the Mardan police on every occasion.

He said that the law and order situation in the area will be better if there is strong relationship between the police and the traders. The deteriorating law and order situation, disorderly traffic system, daily happenings with the traders are included, said Zahir Shah. Regional Police Officer (RPO) Mardan Mohammad Ali Khan Gandapur said that unless the police, people and businessmen work together, it is not possible to eliminate crimes and unnecessary elements from the society because it is possible to eliminate unnecessary elements only on the identification of people and businessmen. The guests complained about mismanaged traffic system, in response RPO said that a comprehensive plan is being drawn up to control the disorderly traffic and also issued orders on the spot to solve the problem of disorderly traffic in the area apart from numberless motorcycles.

Actions are also being taken against because this will also be able to significantly increase the control of crimes. In addition to this, security cameras have also been installed in various squares and markets, which is also helping to control crimes, said RPO. District Police Officer Mardan Najibur Rahman said that strict measures are being taken to prevent drugs, for which your cooperation and help is very important.

At the end of the program, Mardan Chamber President Zahir Shah thanked the all guests, participants, traders and media persons and told the while presenting the shield and gifts, announced the cash reward for the best performance of the police and assured full cooperation with the police.

Rural development key to reduces poverty

Rafiullah Mandokhail

ZHOB: 'Rural development empowers communities, reduces poverty, increases food security, improves nutrition and strengthens resilience. Moreover, it enables the rural poor and particularly the youth and women folk to realize their development potential,' said the officials while speaking at an event to discuss the development progress in a remote part of northern Balochistan, on Thursday.

A delegation comprises of the representatives of International Fund for Agriculture Development, Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety and Balochistan Rural Support Programme visited the rural organization Omzha Wyal Development Organization in Pasta village in the north of Zhob city. The delegation reviewed the development plan of the rural area under the National Poverty Graduation Programme financed by the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

Program Officer IFAD Fida Muhammad, Programme Analyst IFAD Sumeera, Programme Director NPGP Muhammad Fazil, Grant Manager Fawad Khan, General Manager Programme BRSP Niamat Jan Miryani, Dr. Shah Nawaz Khan, Project Manager Rajab Ali and District Program Manager BRSP Quttab Khan met the rural community. The community members warmly welcomed the guests upon their arrival and presented them traditional turbans.

The officials of the rural organization briefed the delegation regarding their performance, development works, coordination and projects completed with the financial support of various departments. The delegation asked various questions from the members of the rural organization during an interactive session and said, IFAD invests in rural people, empowering them to reduce poverty, increase food security, improve nutrition and strengthen resilience. The National Poverty

Graduation Programme is funded by the International Fund for Agriculture Development that is being implemented under the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety in 21 poverty-hit districts of the country. The programme is aimed at assisting the poor in graduating out of poverty on a sustainable basis.

It also enables the rural poor, particularly women and youth, to realize their development potential and attain a higher level of social and economic wellbeing through a proven, flexible, and responsive menu of assistance. IFAD is an international financial institution and a specialized UN agency that works with poor rural people to enable them to grow and sell more food, increase their incomes and determine the direction of their own lives. Since 1978, IFAD has invested over US\$12 billion in grants and low-interest loans to developing countries, empowering more than 350 million people to break out of poverty.

Prioritization of edu sector in Kurram sought

F.P. Report

PARACHINAR: Education is the backbone of any developed and prosperous nation. However, it seems that the tribal areas of Pakistan have been overlooked in this regard, and among them, Kurram District has been the most neglected. This is a serious concern that needs to be addressed urgently.

In a recent meeting of the Pak Youth Moment in Kurram District, it was discussed that there is not a single girls' primary school for 11 thousand families in most areas of the district. Moreover, the existing schools lack teachers and necessary facilities, further adding to the education crisis in the area.

During the tenure of former President Pervez Musharraf, a network of cadet colleges was established all over the country,

However, the tribal areas of Kurram District were deprived of this facility. It is ironic that despite the district's significant contribution to the war against terrorism, it remains neglected at the educational level.

The government has built dozens of cadet colleges in Balochistan, but Kurram District continues to be ignored. We strongly urge the current Army Chief General Asif Munir to prioritize the education and development of Kurram District by constructing a cadet college in the area. It is high time that the authorities take action to ensure that the youth of Kurram District receive quality education and training, and are given the opportunity to contribute to the development and prosperity of Pakistan.

In conclusion, it is crucial for the government and relevant authorities to focus on

the education crisis in Kurram District and take urgent steps to address it. The establishment of a cadet college in the area would be a significant step in the right direction and would provide much-needed opportunities for the youth of the district.

Liquor recovered

MUZAFFARGARH (INP): City police claimed to have recovered a huge quantity of liquor during a crackdown on Thursday.

According to the spokesman, a drug peddler named Munawar Lohar was arrested with a large number of wine bottles under his custody from the area of old Sabzi Mandi road, near Taj marriage club in the limits of civil lines police Station.



Thais look for change as election nears

BANGKOK (Agencies): As Thais celebrated the Songkran festival last month by soaking each other in a barrage of water fights, Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha was hoping the occasion would help rescue his lack-lustre campaign for re-election.

Donning a bright Hawaiian shirt and armed with a massive blue water gun Prayuth, the army chief-turned-politician who overthrew Yingluck Shinawatra's government in a 2014 coup, made a surprise appearance at Bangkok's Khao San Road, joining startled revellers in the traditional water fights that mark the festival. Thailand's May 14 elections will determine the Southeast Asian country's political and foreign policy over the next few years, as the quasi-military government faces growing domestic discontent, security pressures from neighbouring Myanmar and increasing rivalry between the United States and China.

Under Prayuth, Thailand has moved closer to China, abstained on the United Nations resolution condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine and embraced Myanmar's coup leaders. But all could change if he is replaced. Opinion polls show Prayuth, 69, trailing far behind his younger rivals - Pheu Thai (PTP) party leader Paetongtarn Shinawatra, 36, and Move Forward (MFP) leader Pita Limjaroenrat, 42. Paetongtarn, who this week gave birth to a baby boy, is Yingluck's niece and the daughter of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who was also removed in a coup. Despite continued crackdowns on opposition parties, Pheu Thai and Move Forward, have proved remarkably resilient and ana-



lysts are anxious about a big political showdown. But reports that PTP, which grew out of previous Thaksin-linked parties, might be prepared to do a deal with the military parties has caused alarm among some young, progressive voters. "I'll vote for the MFP because they stand firm with democracy and won't collude with those involved in coup d'états. They have a proper policy manifesto that seeks to address many problems in Thai society," Sirikanda Jariyanukoon, a 26-year-old public relations consultant from the southern Thai city of Nakhon Si Thammarat, told Al Jazeera.

Jariyanukoon, who is going to cast the second vote of her life, said she would not vote for PTP because "it's time to have new people, new parties, and a new way of conducting politics," adding that "the old style no longer fits".

That thirst for change was clear in the 2019 election when the Future Forward Party, founded by charismatic entrepreneur Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit, stunned Thailand's ruling elite by coming third. Following the elections, the authorities moved to ban Thanathorn from politics and break up the party, which eventually led to the creation of MFP with a similar reform plan. Meanwhile, young people continued to agitate for change, leading large-scale protests in Bangkok that challenged the traditional elite and confronted once-taboo issues such as reform of the monarchy.

Rawipa, a Bangkok resident in her mid-20s, also said she would be backing the MFP. "I'm rooting for MFP and support Pita as PM. I used to support the PTP but their policies and communications are too desperate. MFP has taken over as the bearer of

progressivism," Rawipa told Al Jazeera. "Thai people have been more active in politics over the past few years. I doubt Prayuth and his comrades could deny the will of the people forever," she said, adding that there was widespread resentment against his governance. Rawipa also wants to reform the political system to guard against future coups and populist leaders.

"This is also why I switched to back MFP. Thailand doesn't need personality-driven politics," she said, referring to the dynastic politics of Thaksin and his family. With PTP and MFP campaigning energetically for votes, it is easy to forget that Thailand's military is a crucial element in the country's parliamentary arithmetic. The outcome of the poll will be decided not only by the 500 people elected to the House of Representatives but also by the 250 military-appointed Senators. That means the two main pro-democracy parties and their allies may need more than 75 percent of the seats (376) to be in a position to form a government. That is based on the premise that opposition politicians and parties will not be dissolved or barred from taking their seats by the authorities post-election.

Prayuth is chief of the royalist United Thai Nation Party, while Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwan, also a former army commander-in-chief, is leading the Palang Pracharath (PPRP), the military party that Prayuth set up as a vehicle for his 2019 campaign. Both men have denied rumours of a rift. Speaking in an interview with Thai PBS last month, Prayuth said, "I am confident that we will win at least 25 seats", referring to the minimum number of seats required for a party to

nominate a candidate for the top job. Earlier, the prime minister said his next administration would continue the work of its predecessors. "The most important thing is to defend the country and protect the nation's main institution. Please trust me as you've always done," Prayuth said. Prawit, meanwhile, has touted his party's commitment to eradicating poverty and resolving land and water problems.

"People will face no droughts. They will have land where they can make a living... We'll do everything to eradicate poverty. If the PPRP wins, we'll lift 20 million people out of poverty," he was quoted as saying by the Bangkok Post at a policy launch in February. The vote will determine if the kind of military-royalist conservative rule epitomised by Prayuth is deepened or whether a compromise can be reached between democratic forces and the military establishment to usher in much-needed governance reforms, warned Thitinan Pongsudhirak from Chulalongkorn University. "If this election is subverted again and Thailand ends up with a similar military-backed administration - in a fashion like the 2019 polls - there will be further erosion of public trust in the political leadership," Thitinan, an influential expert on Thai and regional politics, explained. "Look at the crisis in neighbouring Myanmar. It's not inconceivable that a similar crisis can take place in Thailand," he added, referring to the February 2021 coup in the neighbouring country.

Many worry a divided Thailand, at risk of another military power grab, will struggle to deal with the issues facing the country and the region. Thailand

has accumulated a rising public debt of more than 5 trillion baht (\$148bn) during Prayuth's administration, which will run on as the nation focuses on slow, labour-intensive growth, Thitinan said. If the election leads to Prayuth's departure, there could be a shift in Thailand's international relations, former Thai foreign minister and ambassador Kasit Piromya told Al Jazeera. "There will be changes because the policy will no longer be based on a personal relationship like the one between Prayuth and Min Aung Hlaing," he said, referring to Myanmar's coup leader and army chief. He added that foreign policies were currently defined by the "avoidance of [a] foreign policy stand and commitment or doing nothing in order to not rock the boat domestically and internationally".

With the campaign now in its final stages, the reformist parties look set to win the most votes. Zach Abuz, a professor at the National War College in Washington, DC, said it was likely the Senate would vote en bloc to prevent Paetongtarn and the Pheu Thai from forming a government. "The military hand-picked the senators for one purpose only: to exorcise the Thaksins from Thai politics," he said. But analysts say the military will need to accept the outcome to help heal the rifts that have plagued the country for so many years. "Denying the winning parties the right to govern will exacerbate the already-deep divisions. Young people in particular will feel more and more disillusioned with the establishment. This is dangerous for Thailand," Michael Ng, the former deputy head of the Hong Kong government's office in Bangkok, told Al Jazeera.

Blinken says skeptical of Moscow claims

WASHINGTON (AFP): US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said he is highly skeptical of any allegations made by Russia, after Moscow claimed Kyiv had launched a drone attack on the Kremlin. "I've seen the reports. I cannot validate them, we simply don't know," Blinken said at an event in Washington. "I would take anything coming out of the Kremlin with a very large shaker of salt."

Russia said that two drones had targeted President Vladimir Putin's Kremlin residence overnight, describing it as a Ukrainian "terrorist attack" ahead of the important May 9 holiday, when Russians celebrate victory over Nazi Germany in World War II. Kyiv denied the claim, suggesting the attack was "staged" by Moscow. "Ukraine has nothing to do with drone attacks on the Kremlin," presidential spokesman Mikhailo Podolyak said.

Blinken, at the event hosted by the Washington

Post for World Press Freedom Day, reiterated calls for the release of US journalist Evan Gershkovich, who is being held in Russia on charges of espionage and whom Washington considers a hostage. Blinken said wrongful detentions of foreign citizens by Moscow only serve to further isolate it. "Increasingly, the message is, don't come here, don't travel," Blinken said. "Whoever you are, you risk being pulled off the street, thrown in jail." Blinken also discussed the recent embarrassing leak of top-secret US documents, which revealed Washington's unease about a coming Ukrainian counteroffensive against Russian troops as well as concerns about the nation's air defenses. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky complained in a Washington Post interview published that his government had not been warned about the leak, calling it "a bad story."

Blinken said he told his

Ukrainian counterpart Dmytro Kuleba at the time that "we very much regretted the unauthorized exposure of these documents, that we took very seriously our obligations and responsibility to protect information." The top US diplomat also spoke positively about last week's telephone call between Chinese leader Xi Jinping and Zelensky. "It's vitally important that China and other countries that have been seeking to advance peace hear from the victim, not just the aggressor," he said. At one point during Blinken's appearance, activists briefly interrupted the discussion and called for the release of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange. The Australian activist has been imprisoned for four years in London and is awaiting an appeals hearing against an order to extradite him to the United States. The activists were promptly escorted from the room by security personnel.

Peru crackdown may qualify as 'massacre'

LIMA (Agencies): A human rights commission has stated that the Peruvian government committed abuses as it cracked down on widespread unrest following the arrest of former President Pedro Castillo in December. In a report released, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) said that the state's response to nationwide protests could be classified as a "massacre".

"There were serious human rights violations that must be investigated with due diligence and an ethnic-racial approach," IACHR President Margarette May Macaulay said in a report. "The deaths could constitute extrajudicial executions." Peru has continued to grapple with a political crisis, sparked on December 7, when Castillo attempted to dissolve Congress and rule by decree as he faced a third impeachment hearing. Those actions led to his arrest and subsequent protests, which called for his release, new elections and a revised constitution. Reuters reported that more than 60 people have been killed in clashes between police and protesters since December, the overwhelming majority of them protesters.

But the administration of Castillo's successor, President Dina Boluarte, has dismissed the violence as the product of "terrorists" and agitators, and called for a national "truce". Peruvian authorities have denied committing abuses, despite criticism of the government's response. IACHR said that a large number of those killed and injured in the protests had been targeted with firearms. It also found that many of the harshest responses took place in rural Andean regions such as Ayacucho and Puno, both of which have large Indigenous populations. A previous report by the human rights group Amnesty International called the government's crackdown "systemically racist" for disproportionately targeting Indigenous populations that have already endured a history of neglect, disenfranchisement and state violence. In a statement on, Amnesty called on the Canadian government to halt weapons exports to the Peruvian government.

before the quake, some 2 million people in Syria needed assistance, including 1.8 million people who live in camps. Of those, some 800,000 are in tents that need replacement. "The earthquake has exposed populations to much more vulnerabilities," Mutai said, adding that 1.1 million people in Syria are in need of shelter. The immediate plan is to help the most affected with "dignified shelters, medium term kind of shelters that provide better privacy, security as well as structural stability."

Idris Elrasheed, who heads northwestern Syria operations from the World Health Organization's office in Gaziantep in southern Turkey, said more medical equipment will be brought to Syria, which would reduce demand for moving those critically ill to Turkey for treatment along blocked roads and across a border has been closed since the earthquake.

restricted building and disorderly conduct.

Wise was captured on closed-circuit TV footage entering through the US Senate wing door and raising his arms "in triumph", according to a sworn statement filed in federal court. In body-worn camera footage captured by DC Metropolitan Police, Wise addressed the officers directly, saying, "You guys are disgusting. I'm former - I'm former law enforcement. You're disgusting. You are the Nazi. You are the Gestapo. You can't see

it. "Shame on you! Shame on you! Shame on you!" The camera footage also captured Wise's reaction as other surrounding protesters began to attack police officers trying to defend the Capitol, the filing added. In the video, he can be heard egging them on by shouting: "Kill 'em! Kill 'em! Kill 'em!"

An lawyer for Wise could not be immediately reached for comment. Until last June, Wise resided in New Braunfels, Texas, but he has since moved to Bend, Oregon. A

spokesperson for the FBI declined to comment beyond what is contained in public court filings. More than 1,000 people have been charged to date for their roles in storming the Capitol on January 6, 2021, in a failed bid to keep Republican then-President Donald Trump in power by blocking Congress from certifying Democrat Joe Biden's 2020 election victory. Five people died during and shortly after the riot, and about 140 police officers were injured.

US Senate launches effort to take on China

WASHINGTON (Agencies): Legislators in the United States Senate have launched their latest attempt to counter China, including a bill that top Democrats say aims to limit the flow of technology to Beijing, deter China from initiating a conflict with Taiwan, and tighten rules to block US capital from going to Chinese firms.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer announced that he will begin crafting the major legislative push, which follows the passage of a bill last year that sought to boost Washington's competition with Beijing in semiconductors and other technology. "The Chinese government is not constraining itself in its pursuit to dominate the 21st century," Schumer, a Democrat, said in a speech opening the Senate.

"And if we in America would rest on our laurels, if we let the CCP [Chinese Communist Party] beat us, it would have serious consequences for the world's democratic nations." Schumer spoke shortly after US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced plans to reschedule what was meant to be his first official visit to China in February. That trip was postponed after a Chinese high-altitude balloon was detected - and subsequently shot down - over US territory. American officials have said the balloon was a surveillance device, a claim China denied. "I think it's important ... that we re-

establish regular lines of communication at all levels and across our government," Blinken said in an interview with the Washington Post, adding he hoped the trip could be rescheduled this year. "We're in a competition with China; there's no secret about that. But we have a strong interest in trying to make sure that that competition doesn't veer into conflict," he said.

US climate envoy John Kerry also told the Reuters news agency that China had invited him to visit and meet with Chinese leader Xi Jinping "in the near term" to discuss the global climate crisis. "This has to be cooperative, notwithstanding other differences that do exist," said Kerry. "This is not a bilateral issue. This is a universal global threat to everybody in every nation." The administration of President Joe Biden has increasingly made countering China's growing economic and military influence a top priority. Nevertheless, Washington has denied it is seeking a "new Cold War" amid criticism from Beijing and others over its approach. The US president has also sought to shore up support from allies in the Asia-Pacific region, recently meeting with the leaders of Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines at the White House. Biden in March also hosted the leaders of Australia and the United Kingdom, with whom the US has formed the so-called AUKUS partnership.

Guantanamo prosecution asks for 2025 date in Bali bombing trial

JAKARTA (Agencies): Military prosecutors at Guantanamo Bay have suggested that the full trial of Hambali, detained over attacks that killed hundreds in Indonesia, start in March 2025, even though he and his two co-accused have been in detention for 17 years. Hambali, an Indonesian whose real name is Encep Nurjaman, has been held at Guantanamo since 2006 along with his co-accused, Malaysian nationals Mohammed Nazir Bin Lep and Mohammed Farik Bin Amin.

Hambali is accused of involvement in the Bali bombings in 2002, which left more than 200 people dead, including United States citizens, and the JW Marriott hotel attack in 2003 in Jakarta, in which 11 people died. The Indonesian's lead counsel James Hodes told Al Jazeera his client was doing "as good as can be" considering this prolonged detention and that the proceedings went "as well as we could expect and the judge and observers got to hear a lot about the problems we are facing". Those problems include issues with interpreters, which Hodes said took up almost all of the third day of proceedings, as well as the testimony of Imam Samudra, one of the original masterminds of the Bali attack who was executed in 2008 in Indonesia. According to Hodes, US authorities failed to interview Samudra while he was still alive, and his testimony could have meant that his client was exonerated.

"Imam Samudra seemed to be the mastermind of the bombing and was available to be interviewed by the FBI, yet he wasn't. That is not the way crimes are supposed to be investigated. The authorities are supposed to look at all possibilities," Hodes told Al Jazeera. In addition to the challenges around missing exculpatory witness testimony, Hodes said the lack of a speedy trial was troublesome to the defence team, which has always maintained Hambali's innocence. "We are now two years post-arrestment and 20 years after the fact and the prosecution is still not complete with discovery," Hodes said. The discovery process is when both sides exchange documents ahead of a trial and usually, the prosecution would provide such material to the defence as soon as a case begins. For Hambali, the official process to bring him to trial began in 2019 but has yet to be completed some five years later. During the most recent hearings, the prosecution asked for a trial date of March 2025 with the judge still to make a ruling.

Former FBI agent charged in US Capitol attack

WASHINGTON (Agencies): A former agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has been arrested for his alleged role in the attack on the United States Capitol on January 6, 2021, according to court filings. Jared Wise, 51, who served as an FBI agent and a supervisory agent from 2004 to 2017, was taken into custody and released home with conditions. The court filings indicate he was charged with four misdemeanour counts, including unlawfully entering a

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World Press Day and role of the media

ON the eve of World Press Day, the United Nations Chief, Antonio Guterres has warned that the media is under attack in every corner of the world and all nations must stop the targeting of truth and the journalists who report it. Guterres expressed worry over the 50% increase in the killing of media workers in the previous year and stressed that freedom of the press is the foundation of democracy and justice. According to him, truth is threatened by disinformation and hate speech seeking to blur the lines between fact and fiction, between science and conspiracy.

Nations across the world, journalists, civil society, media organizations, and human rights activists have observed World Press Day on May 3rd. The rallies, debates, and talk shows have been arranged to discuss the freedom of media, challenges confronting press freedom, and risks attached to sane criticism and constructive critique in the contemporary world. Modern technological innovations had brought an unimaginable revolution in the information and media industry that put an amazing impact on scholarly work and public life. Digital platforms have empowered the media men, provided new ways of expression, and enhanced public access to information. However, the states' suppression, and curbs on free media, as well as intimidation and harassment of journalists by the state organs, terrorist groups, and criminal gangs continued over the past decades. The collapse of the media industry has led to the closures of local news outlets and the consolidation of media into the hands of the few influential, which promoted cartelization in the media industry and threatened freedom of the press and expression. Despite tremendous development, comforts, and technical resources, journalism had been one of the riskiest, and most insecure professions, whereas reporters remained at the aim of the powerful elite, and state institutions, along with facing vague regulatory laws and discrimination throughout the past.

Media acts as the fourth pillar of a state and plays an important watchdog role in educating and shaping public opinion in the country. It also strengthens society, promotes democracy, and fights against social evils, transnational crimes, and corruption in the world. However, the non-democratic authoritarian regimes, autocratic rulers, and totalitarian governments in different parts of the world consider the free press a threat to their rule and resultantly introduce dual-purpose laws, and strict regulations to brutally deal with free media, suppress freedom of expression, and reduce space for sane criticism. At the same time, a planned misinformation campaign and character assassination of journalists and anchorpersons had become proven tools for aggressive political groups, and rogue regimes in third-world countries across the world. According to statistics, at least 67 media workers including Pakistani investigative journalist Arshad Sharif were killed cold-blooded in the previous year and their families are still awaiting justice from the states. The targeting and harassment of media workers both on and offline are common and numerous journalists had been detained, and prosecuted by dictatorial regimes around the world. As said, nearly three-quarters of women journalists have experienced violence online and one-quarter have been threatened physically. According to the UN report, 85% of the world's population lives in those countries where media freedom has declined over the past five years, while 180 nations need to work to provide a conducive working environment for the media.

Currently, press freedom is in a dreadful condition in a majority of nations, while artificial intelligence, disinformation, and hybrid reporting pose serious threats to professional journalism. Historically, journalists and media organizations had always sought and reported the truth and faced serious repercussions in the line of their duty throughout history. The battle between good and bad, lies and truth continues while the press always raised its voice against the dictatorial regimes and supported the oppressive and disadvantaged communities, and paid a heavy price for the poise profession. The 30th anniversary of First World Press Day reminded governments around the globe of their duty to preserve freedom of expression and encourage the masses to support media workers in the fulfillment of their duty. At the same time, world press day strengthens the resolve of reporters and media persons across the globe to carry forward their mission of fearless and fact-based journalism to make this world a peaceful, just, and liveable place in the universe.

US politicians' Israel visits signal start of election season

Ray Hanania

THE next US presidential election will be held on Tuesday, Nov. 5, 2024, and once again most Arab Americans will be bystanders with little influence - and, more likely, the victims of a resurgence of electoral politics gone wrong. President Joe Biden, a Democrat, announced last month that he will seek reelection. Meanwhile, long-time conservative Democrat and COVID-19 vaccine conspiracy theorist Robert F. Kennedy Jr. plans a challenge and will be a strong wildcard. Kennedy comes from a once politically powerful family that has suffered numerous tragedies. His uncle, President John F. Kennedy, was assassinated in 1963, while his father, Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, suffered the same fate while running for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1968.

There will be many Republican challengers, led by former President Donald Trump, former Vice President Mike Pence and several leading officeholders. November 2024 may seem like a long time away, but it is not really as the process that leads to the presidential election begins this autumn, when petitions must be filed to run in the primary elections of each of the nation's 50 states.

The Republican candidates, aiming to strengthen their position against Biden, have already started on the one issue that usually domi-

lates US presidential elections: defending Israel. Issues like rising crime, ineffective school education, rising taxation and senior citizens' concerns all fall behind Israel's needs. Presidential candidates always line up and blindly pander to Israel. In return, the pro-Israel lobby and political action committees channel millions of dollars to help fund their campaigns. And the pro-Israel

believe when he is silent in the face of Israel's apartheid regime and its persecution of Christian Palestinians, who continue to have their lands confiscated, churches vandalized and basic rights denied. But Christian Palestinians do not have a lobby group or PAC to make big campaign contributions, so why would DeSantis care?

slightly better than Republicans, also pander to Israel and receive large pro-Israel campaign donations. Previously, in February 2015, Republican House Speaker John Boehner invited Netanyahu to deliver a speech to a joint session of Congress. At the time, Boehner was looking ahead to the 2016 presidential election and was hoping to

Like Arabs, American Jews are not monolithic and are very diverse. And recent polling shows that many Jewish voters are agnostic at Netanyahu's turn to the extreme right. The real target for the pro-Israel pandering is the powerful Christian fundamentalists and evangelicals who thrive on anti-Muslim calumny. They constantly, and falsely, accuse Biden of ignoring Israel by trying to focusing

Arab Americans who support Palestinian rights. Arab Americans are under siege, targeted in 27 states by anti-Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions laws and constantly facing accusations of antisemitism for simply criticizing Israel, a foreign government. In contrast, Arab Americans are always last in line when it comes to enjoying the benefits of US citizenship. Of course, you cannot blame everything on Israel, just because it has organized a powerful political lobby or masterfully funded and influenced the production of Hollywood films that exaggerate criticism of Arabs and Palestinians while erasing any criticism of Israel. You have to blame Arab Americans themselves. Everything pro-Israel activists do to influence American politics, Arab Americans could do too. But they do not. It is easier to play the role of victim rather than to take a chance to awaken true Arab American empowerment.

In the coming months, you will see a steady stream of members of Congress from both parties flocking to Israel to show their support. Israel maintains a well-funded and coordinated communications strategy that effectively spins the perception that Israel is the victim of Palestinian and Arab violence. Never mind that Israel kills 10 times more Palestinians than Palestinians kill Israelis. In America, perception is reality and politics is all Israel.

DeSantis boasts often that he is a Christian. But that is hard to believe when he is silent in the face of Israel's apartheid regime and its persecution of Christian Palestinians, who continue to have their lands confiscated, churches vandalized and basic rights denied. But Christian Palestinians do not have a lobby group or PAC to make big campaign contributions, so why would DeSantis care? In another Republican effort to weaken Biden's reelection bid, House Speaker Kevin McCarthy of California this week vowed to ensure Netanyahu received an invite to address Congress.

lobby does not just pick one candidate to support, it supports many in an effort to ensure that no one who opposes Israel's policies gets any traction.

Last week, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis visited Israel and met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. While DeSantis praised Israel, Netanyahu and the Jewish people - the three pillars of pro-Israel PAC funding - he said nothing about the violence carried out by Israeli soldiers and illegal settlers against Palestinians, both Muslims and Christians. DeSantis boasts often that he is a Christian. But that is hard to

In another Republican effort to weaken Biden's reelection bid, House Speaker Kevin McCarthy of California this week vowed to ensure Netanyahu received an invite to address Congress. McCarthy was the first House speaker in 25 years to address the Israeli Knesset, where he stressed the deteriorating relations between Netanyahu and Biden. Republicans tend to champion Israel above the Arab world and use Israel to turn the screw on their Democratic rivals.

However, Democrats, who tend to weigh up Palestinian freedoms and human rights

shore up the Republicans' chances of succeeding Barack Obama in the White House. A Republican did win in 2016, but not the one Boehner or many others in the party expected - instead, it was Trump.

Four years later, in 2020, Biden took the White House from Trump and the Republicans. The Republicans now want it back. They will do it the way they always do, by building a campaign that starts by pandering to the pro-Israel vote. You might think that pandering to Israel builds up Republican strength among Jewish voters. But that is not the case.

on Palestinian concerns.

Biden has strengthened Arab Americans' presence by recognizing April as National Arab American Heritage Month and by appointing many Arabs to roles in his administration, including Hady Amr as special representative for Palestinian affairs since November 2022. Amr has been very active in reinforcing among Palestinian leaders that Biden cares about their interests, opposes the rise of extremism in Israel and supports the implementation of a two-state solution. However, unaddressed by anyone are the domestic restrictions and penalties on

Why the world must take a firm stance against Dagalo

THE international community needs to understand the reality of military confrontations in Sudan and take note of the heinous crimes against humanity committed by the mutineer Rapid Support Forces. Since April 15, the RSF has been committing grave atrocities against civilians, diplomats and public amenities. To put the crisis into perspective, it is important to look into how this militia came into existence and why it became a threat to the survival of Sudan.

The issue of integrating the RSF into the national army has been a contentious one since the signing of the Framework Agreement on Dec. 5, 2022. The RSF leadership insisted on remaining a separate army parallel to the Sudanese Armed Forces for at least 10 years, while the military wanted to complete the merger within two years. The RSF, in an act of defiance, began to mobilize large numbers of its forces without the approval of or coordination with the military command. On April 13, the Sudanese army warned against the deployment of the RSF in the capital

Khartoum and the town of Merowe without its consent. On April 15, the RSF began an unprovoked attack on the residence of Gen. Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, the president of the Transitional Sovereign Council and commander-in-chief of the Sudanese Armed Forces, which is located within the headquarters of the General Command of the Armed Forces. This is clear evidence of the premeditated plan by the RSF and its leader, Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, who is known as Hemedti, to seize power and take control of the national army. The army was left with no option but to respond with full force to the aggressors, driven by their national duty and responsibility to provide security for the population. Al-Burhan has issued a decree to dissolve the RSF due to its insurgency, declaring it an anti-state rebel group that will be dealt with on that basis.

Due to its lack of sufficient training in the fields of international humanitarian law and the internationally agreed rules of engagement, and in light of its hasty and massive enlargement, the mutineer RSF has committed

Ali Mohamed Ahmed Osman

ted an incredible number of serious violations against civilians. Here are just a few examples: Detaining the families of senior officers, state officials and university professors as hostages and using them as human shields. At Khartoum Airport, the RSF attacked civilian aircraft and passengers, killing some and taking others hostage. It occupied hospitals and turned them into military bases, forcing medical staff to treat their wounded fighters while ignoring ordinary patients. Breaking into citizens' homes and expelling them in order to use the buildings for military purposes, while detaining the residents as human shields and using rooftops as sites for snipers - these were seen as military victories, with the RSF falsely claiming they were the residences of members of the Transitional Sovereign Council. Militia members stole citizens' cars and private property. They established random and illegal checkpoints, targeting certain groups of citizens, confiscating government vehicles and kidnapping and killing medical staff.

The RSF looted banks, stores and private and public companies, occupied hotels, clubs, halls and police stations, and attacked prisons and released detainees. And the group targeted basic service centers, such as water, electricity and communications stations, hospitals and an oil refinery with the intentional strategy of inflicting maximum suffering on civilians.

Though protected by international law and the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, diplomatic missions in Khartoum have not been exempt from the mutineer RSF's atrocities. Its militia-men assaulted the EU ambassador in his residence, attacked the French Embassy evacuation convoy, killed the assistant administrative attaché at the Egyptian Embassy, shot at a US Embassy vehicle, and assaulted the Malaysian ambassador and stole his car. Other attacks on diplomatic missions, including the shooting of bullets at the Indian Embassy, have been reported. Rebel militia forces have reportedly been stationed near several embassies. As a result of

these irresponsible acts, the humanitarian situation has deteriorated, especially in parts of the capital. The clashes have caused a large number of civilians to move from their homes to other, safer cities and regions in Sudan. Living conditions in general have also worsened due to food shortages, insecurity and the lack of medical supplies, electricity and potable water.

Currently, as the government observes the latest ceasefire, the relevant authorities in Sudan are working tirelessly to improve the humanitarian situation by providing assistance to those affected, restoring and improving basic services such as healthcare, electricity and drinking water, and enhancing security. It is pertinent to indicate that the government of Sudan, including the Sudanese Armed Forces, has taken serious and pivotal measures to address the humanitarian suffering since the first day of the confrontations. These measures include: The adoption of a combat strategy aimed at minimizing casualties and damage among civilians and private and public properties, even if this

delays the complete defeat of rebel forces; Al-Burhan issuing a decision pardoning all officers and soldiers of the RSF who lay down their arms; and the army, in cooperation with various national institutions, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, successfully evacuating foreign nationals and diplomatic missions from more than 40 countries.

I would like to conclude by quoting a Foreign Policy article by Yasir Zaidan, which was published last week: "The best outcome of the ongoing war would be the Sudanese Armed Forces eliminating the RSF to prevent a second Somali scenario - where militants have long vied with the state for control - in a volatile region. Therefore, the international and regional actors should avoid addressing the fight in Sudan as a fight between two generals. Instead, it is a fight between the remains of national state institutions against a tribal, corrupt militia founded by the Bashir dictatorship." This is obviously in line with the Japanese initiative for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, of which Sudan is an integral part.

The struggle against mega-basins is a struggle for life

Morgan Ody, Masa Koné & Juan Pablo Gutierrez

ON March 24, 25 and 26, more than 25,000 people gathered in the commune of Sainte-Soline, western France, as part of an international mobilisation against the construction of one of the largest water reservoirs for irrigation and other water-grabbing projects. Faced with this unprecedented turnout, the French government decided to ban the demonstration and deploy more than 3,000 armed police to protect the construction site, which spans some 162,000 square metres (1.7 million square feet).

The use of violence against the protesters was by all accounts disproportionate. More than 200 people were injured, some quite seriously, as the police charged at the crowd and fired more than 5,000 tear gas canisters. One demonstrator is still in a coma, as of the time of this writing. After the violent crackdown, the French government announced the "dissolution" of Les Soulèvements de la Terre (The Earth's Uprisings), one of the organisations behind the demonstrations.

These very brutal scenes remind us of the sad reality that we are experiencing in our lands. We are witnessing the resurgence and reinforcement of authoritarianism, growing repression of environmental protests, and intensifying criminalisation of those who oppose this ongoing ecocide, as well as the capitalist, imperialist,

and colonialist structures that preside over it. But in the face of this ecological violence, a global movement is emerging that builds on solidarity to protect water rights for all.

In France, the construction of giant retention basins for agricultural irrigation started in the late 1990s, but has accelerated since 2010 due to the massive droughts the country has experienced as a result of climate change. According to the French government, there are around 100 mega-basin projects for agricultural irrigation in the country. However, the associations Bassines Non Merci (Basins No Thanks) and Le Soulèvement de la Terre have mapped nearly 300 projects, many of which are still under study. These huge craters are filled by drawing from underground water, which often leads to the degradation of water resources in the affected area. These mega-basins only benefit a small minority of big farmers who are linked to big agro-industrial interests, while small-scale farmers suffer from ever-decreasing access to the overexploited water resources.

The construction of these basins undermines the right to water and the such plans embody a flawed policy of maintaining the current agro-industrial model at any cost, which crushes small-scale farmers and destroys ecosystems. Although many complaints have been filed against

these projects, many are still under construction. Movements opposing mega-basins have emerged in France since the 2000s, and in recent years, they have increasingly taken on a nationwide and international dimension. The construction of large water reservoirs elsewhere has already demonstrated that such projects have devastating effects on the environment and local communities. For instance, in Chile, in the province of Petorca alone, eight mega-basins have been built since 1985. They have mostly benefited the wealthy owners of large avocado farms, who use the water from the basins to irrigate a water-intensive monocrop that is almost entirely destined for export to the Global North. Meanwhile, surrounding villages have been left without water. The government has had to spend millions of dollars to buy water - often from these same avocado farms - to distribute through trucks to the local communities.

Locals have come up with an accurate description of their reality: "no es sequia, es saqueo!" (it is not drought, it is looting!). This has become a slogan often repeated at protests across Latin America, as peasants and Indigenous peoples from Chile to Mexico are fighting against the privatisation of water. The large water reservoir projects are part of the systematic abuse of freshwater across the

world. Pollution, overexploitation, commodification, and hoarding have disrupted the Earth's water cycles. As a result, water scarcity has reached frightening proportions, affecting 40 percent of the world's population, and causing upheaval across the planet. These constant violations over the years have also seen pushback from communities and social movements. In 2000, residents of Cochabamba, Bolivia's fourth-biggest city, fought the so-called "water war" against attempts to privatise their water. Since then, there have been a growing number of conflicts and social unrest, as people fight over shrinking water resources and struggle to defend their rights.

Public mobilisations and people's water summits held over the last two decades in many parts of the world have demanded access to water and its protection, especially for impoverished and socially excluded populations. In 2010, the United Nations finally recognised the right to water as a human right. Yet, the aggressive privatisation and financialisation of water have continued. Large corporations such as Danone, Nestle, and Coca-Cola have been pumping spring water from Indigenous lands in Mexico, the United States and Canada to sell it at high prices in plastic bottles, while local communities have struggled with access

to water. Elsewhere, in line with capitalist injunctions to "decarbonise" economies, water-intensive mining and the construction of large dams are accelerating, destroying territories still populated by peasant and Indigenous communities. In 2020, water was even listed on the stock exchange in the US.

In the face of this ecological offensive on water, land, and our livelihoods, people involved in the struggle for water are not only growing in number but also connecting across the globe. In late March, some of us travelled far to join local activists, peasants, and farmers in their protest against France's mega-basins in Sainte-Soline. Included in this crowd were activists from Chile fighting against the destruction of our ecosystems by authoritarian neoliberalism; activists from Mali fighting against land grabs; Kurdish activists opposing the relentless water war waged by Turkey; Yukpa Indigenous activists from Abya Yala and Mohawk activists from Turtle Island fighting for the self-determination of our nations in the face of a colonial and extractivist system; and activists from the Lakota Nation and the social centres of Northeast Italy. No government can ignore global solidarity; no government can dissolve the peoples' water movement,

a vital revolt that grows and resonates across borders and languages.

This is why we, actors of the struggle for life, peasants, human rights and environmental defenders, public figures, trade unions, collectives, and organisations from different continents, call for massive international support for the struggle for water and against mega-basins in France. We call on people to denounce the French government's repression of social and environmental movements. We also call for respect for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP). Our support extends to all those who are struggling around the world against water grabbing, privatisation, and pollution, and for the fair sharing and protection of water as an inalienable common good.

From the water that flows through our veins, the rivers of the watersheds that sustain our lands and that connect our geographies, we call for the strengthening of internationalist alliances to defend water, land, and the commons that sustain life. In the face of all forms of repression and authoritarianism, our solidarity is like flowing water: it brings life and freedom and knows no borders.

Aljazeera

The Trump factor that looms over Ukraine

UKRAINE'S fate depends on many factors, but to hear some tell it, one looms large: former US President Donald Trump's 2024 political campaign. The last time the words "Trump" and "Ukraine" were associated prominently, the then-president was being impeached for allegedly threatening to withhold military aid from Kyiv while seeking a political favor. Trump has strenuously denied wrongdoing.

Five years later, much has changed - and much has not. But to some, Trump's return to office would be a determining factor in Europe's first major war since the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s. Given Trump's publicly friendly relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin and his administration's chaotic nature, some wonder if he would slow or stop the supply of US arms that is keeping Ukraine in its fight for survival. Taking into account Trump's unpredictability, apparent skepticism of NATO and history with Ukraine, it's difficult to say anything with certainty. His past impeachment saga only complicates the calculation. "We don't forget that in Europe, by the way," said Polish Member of European Parliament and former Foreign and Defense Minister Radosław Sikorski of Trump's impeachment over his dealings with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. "My working assumption is if Donald Trump were president now, he would make a pilgrimage to Moscow instead of to Kyiv," he told CNN. "I'm scared," said one member of the European Parliament's defense subcommittee, speaking on condition of anonymity, of the danger Trump's 2024 campaign could pose to Ukraine and to European security writ large.

The US commentariat hasn't said much on the topic. But "they're talking about it in the rest of the world," as one former senior US military commander put it. "And of course, it's not just about Ukraine; it's about everything. Is there going to be continuity" in US foreign policy, "or is there going to be ... this sort of unpredictable chaos and volatility?" Indeed, they are talking. Conversations with senior European officials from across the continent reveal varying degrees of concern that Trump could return to office and yank US support from Ukraine, leaving it to rely almost solely on help from Europe. That would put Kyiv in a very difficult spot: US weaponry is playing a determinative factor on the battlefields of eastern and southern Ukraine, as military experts see it. Without US weapons, Ukraine could face a 10-year conflict and 2 million casualties, retired Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges, who formerly commanded US Army Europe, suggested to CNN. (For what it's worth, Javelins-the weapons Trump stalled before later delivering-attained folklorish status in Ukraine's successful defense of Kyiv from Russia's onslaught last February and March.) Elsewhere in the Republican Party, others have questioned an open-ended US commitment to Ukraine. Last October, House Speaker Kevin McCarthy said there should be no "blank check" on US military aid to Ukraine, though he has also said he strongly supports helping Kyiv and will back military aid as long as he leads the US House.

For his part, Trump has not

shied away from commenting about Russian President Vladimir Putin's war. His campaign did not respond to a request for comment for this piece, but Trump himself told Fox News' Sean Hannity in a late-March interview that Putin would not have launched his full-scale invasion of Ukraine had Trump been reelected. "I used to talk to him about it. I'd say, 'Better not do it,'" Trump said. "We had a very friendly conversation about it. I said, 'Hey, Vladimir ... you can't go into Ukraine.'" In a March radio interview with Hannity, Trump pointed out that Russia seized parts of Georgia during the US presidency of George W. Bush, Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula during the tenure of former President Barack Obama, but nothing during Trump's first term. Under Biden, "it looks like they're going to take over everything. The whole thing. They're going to go for the whole enchilada," Trump said. Trump also suggested to Hannity that he could've negotiated a deal that "at worst" would have seen Ukraine cede some predominantly Russian-speaking territory to Moscow. "You could've worked a deal, and now Ukraine is just being blown to smithereens, and people are dying," Trump told Hannity in the same interview. As CNN's Stephen Collison notes, Trump responded to a questionnaire from (now-former) Fox News host Tucker

Chris Good

Still, from the perspective of some US allies, Trump's administration was a disconcerting mess. Typically, the US national-security bureaucracy moves deliberately. Public statements of any importance are usually "cleared" by multiple layers of staff. Foreign policy is set by a process in which the State Department, Pentagon and White House National Security Council debate and coordinate. Where matters of diplomacy and international security are concerned, predictability, consistency and engagement are prized. Trump's administration, by contrast, involved constant policy whiplash. For instance, Trump reportedly surprised GOP congressional leaders and his defense secretary, who was on vacation, by announcing on Twitter that transgender people would be banned from military service (President Joe Biden later overturned the ban). And, memorably, a nuclear standoff with North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un played out, again, on Twitter. As importantly, Trump questioned America's commitment to NATO. The transatlantic alliance is built on a charter that stipulates all members must respond to an attack on any member. Having called NATO "obsolete" before taking office, Trump only later publicly endorsed NATO's Article 5 collective-defense pact in June of that year. Last month, Trump told a

weak and then-German Chancellor Angela Merkel she was "stupid." The White House responded to Bernstein's report by touting Trump's negotiating skills. "It was impossible to deal with them," said the member of European Parliament who spoke on condition of anonymity. For one, allies didn't know where shared information might end up. For another, the EU lawmaker said the Trump administration "didn't even care" about European allies and their concerns. As a coup de grâce, Trump maintained a friendlier stance toward Putin than his critics would have liked. His joint appearance with Putin in Helsinki in 2018, where Trump suggested he took Putin's word about 2016 US-election meddling over that of the US intelligence community, also has not been forgotten in Europe. Later, Trump tweeted that he had great confidence in US intelligence while stressing the need to get along with Russia. Then there's Trump's history with Ukraine, specifically. Having stalled weaponry once, can we expect him to do it again, if he reenters the White House? "I do," said Sikorski, the Polish MEP and former minister, "because there is, objectively speaking, a groundswell of isolationist views in the US, particularly on the right side of the aisle, and he is the spokesman for it." All of this produces unease. Luxembourgian Defense Minister François Bausch doesn't think Trump will return to the White House. But, Bausch said to CNN, "It would really be a nightmare" if the US elected a president who would depart from US-European solidarity and recent steps to jointly support Ukraine. Bausch expects Trump might well do so, were he to secure a second term in the White House. For its part, Europe has held together in the face of Putin's aggression. But it has also struggled, as it has for much of its existence, to consolidate defense policy and prove itself capable of acting meaningfully without US weapons, money and leadership. In light of Putin's war, Europe has grown more interested in defense spending. Countries now all have "national shopping lists" for weaponry, said German Member of European Parliament Hannah Neumann. But without better coordination, Neumann told CNN, bidding and procurement can see Europe's countries work at cross purposes.

Those less concerned about Trump voice several views. One is that he probably won't win in 2024. Another is that if he does, he'll be constrained by subordinates and a strong bipartisan consensus on backing Ukraine. Others point out that Trump did ultimately approve lethal aid for Ukraine, including Javelins, when he was president. Then there's the possibility that Ukraine's military will turn the war decisively in its favor before American politics enter the conversation. "I wouldn't put odds that [the war in Ukraine is] over by the election or January [2025], but you could have a sense of what's possible," the senior former US commander said. That success could mitigate any temptation, by any future president, to wind down US support. "Of course, we hope that something [like that] happens," Sikorski said. "That gives us some time to hopefully sort it out."

CNN



At last, England's dying rivers are an election issue

George Monbiot

I CAN'T help feeling a small surge of gratitude every time an environmental issue breaks the surface. That the state of England's rivers seems at last to have become an election issue feels slightly miraculous, after so many years in which campaigners have swum against the political flow. In wards across the country, people who are furious about the pollution of their rivers and coasts seem prepared to vote accordingly in Thursday's local elections. The Labour party has at last smelled blood in the water. Keir Starmer has promised "real action on this scandal", but the action doesn't yet extend even to renationalising the water companies, though this policy would be overwhelmingly popular.

While I'm glad to see this flood of public concern, there is a danger here: of reducing the issue to sewage pollution. This problem, in turn, is reduced to the malfeasance of the water companies. Sewage pollution is a massive and disgusting cause of river-cide in the UK. But if it were eliminated entirely our rivers would still be dying. The assaults extend from source to sea. They start with the extreme mismanagement of our uplands. As they are burned, drained and overgrazed, their capacity for retaining water is reduced. Instead of acting as giant sponges that gradually release the water they contain, the degradation of the uplands ensures that water levels fluctuate violently: one day a river might be in flood, soon afterwards its flow might be dangerously low.

As rivers descend from the hills, they come under further assault. Last month, a farmer called John Price was jailed for a year and told to pay more than £1.2m in court and restoration costs for his massive vandalism of the River Lugg in Herefordshire. He had sent an 18-tonne earth-mover into the river to dig out gravel, uproot trees and reprofile the banks, destroying the spawning beds of fish, trashing a 1.5km stretch of the river and polluting a further 7km. As the judge remarked: "He has turned a traditional, tree lined, meandering river, full of wildlife, into a canal void of most life." He continued in the face of repeated warnings to desist and chased an official in his car for 12 miles, then hemmed him in, blocking the carriageway. Price claimed he was controlling flooding, but as the judge pointed out, his "actions have made matters worse. The channel is deeper, wider and straighter, which increases flow rate and volume as it approaches the road bridge which still provides a choke point for the water." The praise Price had received from some local people "arises out of a total ignorance of the true impact of his actions". But total ignorance rules. On the Farming Forum, a popular chat site, opinion is overwhelmingly in Price's favour. He is portrayed as a salt-of-the-earth type just trying to make a living, though the court documents reveal that he has assets worth between £21m and £25m.

A farmer called Olly Harrison, with a substantial following on social media and YouTube, made a video supporting Price, in which he compared rivers to blocked toilets that needed "cleaning out". He demanded that our rivers be "manicured", using a photo of a razor-straight channel in the Netherlands to show what he wanted: "the water gets to the sea as fast as possible". Speeding up rivers increases the flood risk: to reduce flood peaks, you need to slow the flow. He claimed that "nature has recovered" on the Lugg, as a sprinkling of grass has returned to the devastated banks. A petition on change.org insisting that Price "did the most amaz-

Devon and one in east Devon. It found that in north Devon, almost 90% of farms (mostly dairy) were not complying with the rules on storing and spreading slurry, while two-thirds were polluting rivers on the day the inspectors visited; in east Devon the figures, respectively, were 95% and 49%. In Wales and the English borders, chicken farming is pushing rivers towards total ecological collapse. The first hopeful sign I've seen is a warning by the National Farmers Union that this disgusting industry could be about to fold. Yet Powys county council, ignoring both ecological and economic failure, has continued to grant planning permission for new chicken factories in the catchment

But total ignorance rules. On the Farming Forum, a popular chat site, opinion is overwhelmingly in Price's favour. He is portrayed as a salt-of-the-earth type just trying to make a living, though the court documents reveal that he has assets worth between £21m and £25m. A farmer called Olly Harrison, with a substantial following on social media and YouTube, made a video supporting Price, in which he compared rivers to blocked toilets that needed "cleaning out". He demanded that our rivers be "manicured", using a photo of a razor-straight channel in the Netherlands to show what he wanted: "the water gets to the sea as fast as possible". Speeding up rivers increases the flood risk: to reduce flood peaks, you need to slow the flow. He claimed that "nature has recovered" on the Lugg, as a sprinkling of grass has returned to the devastated banks. A petition on change.org insisting that Price "did the most amazing job clearing the banks and dredging the bottom of the River Lugg" has so far gathered more than 13,000 signatures. It's bad enough that the extreme concentration of land-holding in the UK means an extreme concentration of daily decision-making.

ing job clearing the banks and dredging the bottom of the River Lugg" has so far gathered more than 13,000 signatures. It's bad enough that the extreme concentration of landholding in the UK means an extreme concentration of daily decision-making. It's even worse when some landowners seem performatively ignorant of the most basic facts of ecology and hydrology. It's worse still when they insist on being treated as the "guardians of the countryside". A healthy river is one that can meander and braid; is connected to wetlands throughout its course, into which it can safely flood; and whose changing topography - pools, rapids, riffle runs, islands, backwaters - creates an endless variety of habitats, each of which supports a different assemblage of life. The featureless drains with which some farmers and England's Internal Drainage Boards (rotten boroughs in urgent need of reform) would replace them are inimical to most of the life they should support. Farming is the top cause of river pollution in the UK, a greater threat even than sewage pollution. As far as we know, there have been only two regional surveys by the Environment Agency, one in north

of the River Wye. Though the farming rules for water have been in force since 2018, Price's case was the first prosecution under them. Blatant lawbreaking is either ignored by the authorities or farmers are given "guidance", which they merrily ignore.

Building sites are another regulatory black hole. They are the source of many of the PFAS and other persistent organic chemicals entering the water system. Yet there is almost no monitoring or enforcement: everything goes down the drain. Our open sewer of a government has done as little as possible to hold polluters to account or clean up our rivers. As for sewage pollution, yes, there is an urgent need to take the water companies back into public ownership. Their split incentives - profits v public service - are lethal to our rivers. But even if Labour grew a spine and did so, we would still need a massive programme of new works. The underinvestment goes back decades, beginning long before the disaster of privatisation. This government may have calculated that fish and otters and kingfishers don't vote. Now we have a chance to vote on their behalf. Don't let it float by.

The Guardian

The war on cash poses an existential threat to our financial independence

SHOPS that refuse cash? Councils that require maddening parking apps? Traders who demand bank transfers? I'm part of the problem, dear reader. The virtual penny finally dropped when I flew to the Middle East recently without first bothering to visit a bureau de change, or even to withdraw local currency from an ATM. Every shop, taxi and restaurant accepted contactless payments; there was no need to fumble through my wallet trying to decipher unfamiliar notes. My smartphone's mobile payment service was sufficient, a physical credit card largely unnecessary.

Next time, I will also make sure to take foreign currency. The global war on cash made my life easier on this occasion, but far from paving the way towards the liberating, borderless techno-utopia portrayed by a naive, self-interested alliance of Silicon Valley and Wall Street types, it is fast turning into the stuff of nightmares. A cashless society is discriminatory, facilitates crime and hands dangerous powers to busybody officials, technocrats and woke pseudo-capitalists. Rishi Sunak is cracking down on fraud, launching a new squad with 500 prosecutors, but this will achieve little unless the Government finally grasps the need to protect cash from extinction.

A cashless economy compels everyone to carry a smartphone all the time, and to have access to at least one payment card. It requires the use of multiple apps, and substantial levels of technological literacy. This discriminates against the elderly, and anybody who finds technology difficult. It is a disaster for those on the margins of society,

without a bank account or who lack a good credit score. Many older voters are incensed at the way their choices have been curtailed. The hit is often two-fold. Take the compulsory shift towards electric cars: it is controversial in and of itself, and of course charge points, unlike petrol stations, don't accept cash. One of the great selling points of the cashless world was that it would reduce robberies and cut tax evasion. It has achieved the latter, as evidenced by a surprisingly large rise in the tax to GDP ratio, but it has also triggered an epidemic of fraud, with one in 15 people victimised annually by scams such as phishing or dodgy emails.

Many of us now log into bank accounts by showing our faces, presenting our fingerprints or through voice recognition. But impersonation is getting easier: artificial intelligence (AI) can clone our appearance and produce deepfakes - videos that look and sound exactly like us - to fool automated, or even human, identification protocols. Digitisation can be greatly fragilising. Imagine the power of a hacker, turbocharged by AI, sponsored by a crime syndicate, a hostile state or terrorist organisation who was able to delete bank account records, rub out transactions or plant incriminating, fake records of payments? Our society is a mere step away from chaos. Brett Scott, author of Cloudmoney: Cash, Cards, Crypto and the War for our Wallets, defines the cashless society as "a euphemism for the 'ask-your-banks-for-permission-to-pay society'". Cash permits decentralised, private transactions between par-

ties; electronic money requires intermediaries, including credit card companies and banks, and navigating their bureaucracy. Unlike cash transactions, electronic transactions can be overridden centrally.

They can be declined because of glitches or because of malign interference. What if a phone runs out of battery or is stolen, or the payment infrastructure crashes? More perniciously, what if politicians decide to flex their newfound muscles? In one of the most despicable power grabs of the pandemic, Justin Trudeau, the execrable Canadian prime minister, froze the bank accounts of people protesting against a law stipulating that all truckers must be vaccinated to cross the US-Canada border. There also appears to be a trend across English-speaking countries for financial institutions or tech companies to cut off or refuse to trade with those with unfashionable opinions. This is an abominable abuse of power, and a threat that will only grow as cash is phased out. Imagine the next pandemic in a cashless world: some politicians might consider enforcing a centralised ban on "non-essential" transactions to impose a perfect lockdown. This is why financial privacy matters, and why the authorities mustn't be allowed to monitor every single transaction everybody makes in real time and to track every citizen. It is why cryptocurrencies have boomed, even if for now they remain catastrophically volatile. As Ron DeSantis, the Governor of Florida who understands all of this, argued in my interview with him last week, abolishing cash would "empower unac-

countable elites": "Covid should have taught us, you give these people an inch, they are going to take a mile," he said.

Keynesian-style central bankers have long disliked cash because they want the ability to enforce negative interest rates during deflationary periods - to get banks to charge depositors for the privilege of looking after their savings. This would encourage people to start spending, kick-starting demand. Negative rates can only "work" if all money is electronic: otherwise people empty their accounts and stick notes and coins under their mattress to avoid being hammered. In practice, further empowering central bankers would guarantee even more inflation. So what should be done? Businesses must continue to give customers the choice to pay in cash. The Government must stop discouraging it. The Bank of England should be blocked from pursuing its Britcoin, and other monetary authorities prevented from launching their central bank digital currencies. The private sector should be allowed to develop and use crypto-currencies, but not the state. Britain should learn from Florida, which has banned the use of "social credit scores" in banking and lending. Nobody should be allowed to use the payment system to discriminate on the basis of political views, religion or other legal beliefs. Above all, we urgently need a dose of techno-realism. This certainly isn't a plea to reverse progress, or to ban digital payments, or any such nonsense, merely a reminder that physical notes and coins serve a hugely useful social purpose. They are not just a means of payment or store of value. Those who want to phase cash out may not realise it, but they are playing with fire.

The Telegraph

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VP FPCCI, Ambassador to Japan discuss bilateral ties

ISLAMABAD (INP): Vice President Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) & Chairman Capital Office, Islamabad Mr. Amin Ullah Baig and the Ambassador of Pakistan to Japan Raza Bashir Tarar discussed Pakistan-Japan bilateral trade and the holding of an exhibition of Pakistani products in Japan, highlighting the investment & tourism opportunities in Pakistan.

In his meeting with the ambassador held at Pakistan Embassy in Tokyo, Japan, the Vice President FPCCI said that Pakistan has great potential for economic growth, strategic location, fertile land, manpower and natural resources such as copper and coal are also available. With these available

resources and favourable conditions, Pakistan has a big potential for development in the future, he added.

Amin Ullah Baig emphasized that Pakistan and Japan both possess huge natural resources which can be utilized for the enhancement of bilateral trade. He also told that there is huge potential for the export of Pakistani rice, textile, seafood, sports goods, agro-based products and there is a need for direct interaction between the traders of both countries.

Ambassador of Pakistan to Japan Raza Bashir Tarar praised the role of the FPCCI in the promotion of trade between the two countries, saying, "There are excellent trade relations between Pakistan and Japan

and have scope for further growth. He expressed that the Pakistani mission in Japan works for the enhancement of trade between the two countries. He also highlighted the trade potential and focused on person-to-person interaction between two countries for the enhancement of bilateral trade.

The Ambassador told that they have successful meetings with the officials of Suzuki Motors and Suzuki Motor Corporation Japan last month regarding the issues and prospects of Pakistan Suzuki's operations in Pakistan and hoped that it will bring positive results very soon. Similarly, progress is being made on manpower agreements between Pakistan and Japan. The Pakistani mission in Tokyo is constantly

looking for job opportunities in Japanese companies for Pakistani talents who know the Japanese language. In this regard, the Japanese company Cooperative Rerise has signed a technical intern training agreement with the Overseas Employment Corporation of Pakistan.

Raza Bashir Tarar also emphasized on activation of Joint Business Councils and the exchange of delegations. According to the Ambassador, Pakistani Embassy is playing its full role in promoting Japanese investment in Pakistan, access of Pakistani products to Japanese markets, cooperation in industrial and commercial sectors, cooperation in various fields including technology, and promotion of tourism in every forum.

PSX's 100-index witnesses bullish trend, gains 5.87 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bullish trend on Thursday, gaining 5.87 points, with a positive change of 0.01 per cent, closing at 42,093.80 against 42,087.93 points on the previous day.

A total of 255,265,402 shares were traded during the day as compared to 289,835,016 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 9.268 billion against Rs 10.178 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 372 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 169 of them recorded gains and 181 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 22 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were Maple Leaf with 23,414,897

shares at Rs 28.66 per share, Fauji Foods Ltd. with 17,085,828 shares at Rs 6.55 per share, and WorldCall Telecom with 13,596,029 shares at Rs 1.22 per share.

Rafhan Maize XD witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 592.50 per share price, closing at Rs 8492.50, whereas the runner-up was Nestle Pakistan with a Rs 396.37 rise in its per share price to Rs 5681.38.

Khyber Textile witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 59.62 per share closing at Rs 735.38, followed by Indus Motor CoXD with a Rs 54.65 decline to close at Rs 886.41.

Rupee gains 05 paisas against Dollar

Pakistani rupee gained 05 paisas against the Dollar in the interbank trading on Thursday as it closed at Rs283.82 against the previ-

ous day's closing of Rs283.87.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of Dollars in the open market were recorded at Rs285.75 and Rs288.65, respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by 23 paisas to close at Rs313.71 against the last day's closing of Rs313.48, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen went up by 01 paisas to close at Rs 2.10; whereas an increase of Rs1.10 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs 356.59 as compared to its last day's closing of Rs355.49.

The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham the Saudi Riyal came down by 02 paisa each to close at Rs 77.28 and Rs 75.67, respec-

tively.
Gold prices increase by Rs 2600 to Rs 225,300 per tola

The per tola price of 24-karat gold increased by Rs 2600 and was sold at Rs 225,300 on Thursday against its sale at Rs 222,700 the previous day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold also surged by Rs 2229 to Rs 193,158 from Rs 190,929, whereas the price of 10 grams of 22-karat gold went up to Rs 177,062 from Rs 175,019.

The price of per tola silver increased by Rs 120 to close at Rs 2870 and that of ten-gram silver also rose by Rs 102.88 to close at Rs 2357.68.

The price of gold in the international market rose by \$ 29 to close at \$2044 against the sale of \$2015, the association reported.

Ambassador designate to KSA calls on Qamar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador-designate to Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Ahmed Farooq on Thursday called on Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar and discussed ways and means to further strengthen bilateral relations between both countries, besides enhancing trade ties for the mutual benefit.

During the meeting, the minister stressed the need for evolving mechanisms to enhance bilateral cooperation in field agriculture sector development and technology transfer to promote exports from Pakistan to Saudi Arabia, said a press release issued here.

He emphasized that Pakistan had immense potential to export agricultural products and technology to Saudi Arabia and both countries needed to work together to identify new areas of cooperation and also assured Ahmed Farooq of his full support and cooperation in that regard.

The Ambassador-designate hailed the efforts of Syed Naveed Qamar to improve the trade ties between the two countries and expressed his desire to work closely with the Ministry of Commerce to explore avenues for mutual investment.

FBR may re-impose regulatory duty on imported cars, phones

KARACHI (INP): Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) Chairman Asim Ahmad on Thursday hinted at re-imposing regulatory duties on the import of vehicles and mobile phones.

In a statement, the FBR chief said that the regulatory duty on the import of mobile phones and used cars of up to 1,800cc expired on March 31, 2023 and could be resumed by the government at any time.

"The regulatory duties on the import of mobile phones and vehicles were imposed up to the period of March 31, 2023," he said.

FBR chief further said that there was no need to issue a notification for re-imposition of the regulatory duty as currently there was a ban on import of cars and mobile phones.

He said the decision about imposing taxes was taken by the Ministry of Trade and would be resumed any time after approval from the ministry.

Shell Pakistan announces financial results F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Board of Directors of Shell Pakistan Limited (SPL) announced the first quarter results for the company on 4th May. The company posted a loss after tax of PKR 4,762 million compared to the profit after tax of PKR 2,079 million made in the same period last year.

The period witnessed devaluation of the Rupee, rising inflation and macro-economic uncertainty. Continued economic challenges resulted in slow-down in economic activity, decrease in demand and risks to supply security for the company. Finances and profitability of the company also continued to be impacted. However, SPL was able to maintain its market share.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Japan Mitsuhiro Wada meeting with Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar at Finance Division.

Japan's Ambassador calls on Ishaq Dar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan Mitsuhiro Wada Wednesday called on Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar and discussed ways and means to enhance cooperation in improving the trade, investment and economic relations between the two countries.

Shinji Yanagi, Vice Chairman Toyota Company, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Finance Tariq Bajwa, Secretary Finance and senior officers were also present on the occasion, said a press release.

The minister briefed the ambassador about the economic challenges and priorities of the present government.

He apprised the ambassador of the economic policies and reforms being implemented by the government to lead the economy towards growth and stability.

The minister also expressed his views on the cordial relations between Pakistan and Japan and appreciated Japan's investments in Pakistan.

He said that the two countries enjoyed sound friendly relations which had been getting stronger with each passing day.

The minister said that Japan was one of the major development partners of Pakistan and he firmly believed that the cooperation would further strengthen in multiple fields for the mutual benefit of both the countries.

He further highlighted potential opportunities of investment in Pakistan and welcomed investment plans of Japanese companies in Pakistan.

Ambassador of Japan Wada Mitsuhiro praised the pragmatic policies and actions being taken by the government and said that Japan greatly valued its bilateral relations with Pakistan.

He expressed confidence in the economic policies of the current government and assured that business, investment and economic linkages between the two countries would further strengthen in coming days.

Implementation of agreement signed

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Commerce on Thursday said that implementation of an agreement signed between Pakistan and Türkiye about "Trade in Goods" last year in August, had started from May 1, which would further cement bilateral business relations between both countries.

"The Trade in Goods Agreement between Pakistan and Türkiye has come into force on May 1, 2023, as per the mutual agreement, which brings

into effect reciprocal tariff concessions extended to selected exports of both countries," said a press release.

"Under the Agreement, Pakistan has gained preferential access to the Turkish market under 261 tariff lines covering traditional as well as non-traditional sectors such as leather, rice, dates, mangoes, cutlery, sports goods, seafood, processed agricultural products, rubber tubes and tires, plastics, and engineering goods."

"Whereas concessions on

130 tariff lines have been extended to Türkiye, including products such as black tea, processed food products and flavorings, industrial raw materials and parts of machinery, and parts of electronic equipment."

"The Trade in Goods Agreement signifies a notable milestone in the historic brotherly relations between Pakistan and Türkiye and envisages further integration of the markets and business communities of both countries," it added.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Six ships namely, Lana, EM Astoria, 3D Destiny, Isaveri, Central Park and Calypso Gas scheduled to load/offload Containers, Bitumen, Palm oil, Chemicals and LPG, berthed at Container Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal, Engro Terminal and SSGC Terminal respectively on Wednesday.

Meanwhile two more ships, Al-Thakhira and Talara carrying LNG Mogas also arrived at outer anchorage of the Port Qasim on Thursday morning.

A total of 09 ships were engaged at PAQ berths during the last 24 hours, out of them, two container ships, Lana and Astoria left the port on Thursday morning, and three more ships, Corona, Al-Salam-II and Calypso Gas are expected to sail on the same day.

Cargo throughput of 120,147 tonnes comprising 92,383 tonnes imports cargo and 27,764 tonnes export cargo including containerized cargo carried in 2,670 Containers (1,092 TEUs Imports and 1,578 TEUs export) was handled at the Port during the last 24 hours.

There are 09 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them, two ships, Mild Bloom and Al-Thakhira& another ship Seaspam Beacon carrying Palm oil, LNG and Containers are expected to take berths LCT, EETL and QICT respectively on Thursday

ICCI to cooperate with PBFI in resolving key issues of traders

ISLAMABAD (INP): President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari has said that he will continue to serve the business community with sincerity and enthusiasm to provide them with maximum facilitation in promoting business activities.

This was stated by him while addressing the swearing-in ceremony of newly elected office bearers of Pakistan Business Forum Islamabad (PBFI) here on Thursday. Chaudhry Tahir was elected as President, Raja Imtiaz Abbasi General Secretary, Aziz ur Rehman and Tahir Ayub Senior Vice Presidents, Saeed Khokhar Patron-in-Chief, Zahid Qureshi Chairman, Khalid Abbasi Vice Chairman, Imran Bukhari Chief Organizer and Babar Chaudhry Deputy Secretary General of Islamabad Business Forum.

Ahsan Bakhtawari said

that serving the business community was his mission and Allah SWT was providing him with new opportunities for this purpose. He hailed the announcement of Chairman CDA to give representation to ICCI in CDA board and said that it would help in resolving the key issues of the business community and the citizens more effectively. He congratulated the newly elected office bearers of IBF and assured that the Chamber will fully cooperate with them in resolving the issues of traders.

Ch. Muhammad Tahir, President and Raja Imtiaz Abbasi Secretary General Pakistan Business Forum Islamabad said that the positive announcements of Chairman CDA in ICCI have created new hopes in the traders of the Capital. They said that PBFI will closely work with ICCI to solve the important problems of traders and the

Chamber will play a leading role in this regard.

Group Leader ICCI, Khalid Iqbal Malik administered oath to the newly elected office bearers of Pakistan Business Forum Islamabad and expressed good wishes for them. He said that under the leadership of Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, ICCI is taking revolutionary steps for the betterment of the business community and assured that the Chamber will also fully cooperate with PBFI for the welfare of trading community.

Former President ICCI & Secretary General UBG Zafar Bakhtawari said that the Chairman CDA has announced important decisions during visit to ICCI, which has increased the goodwill of the current government among the business community. He said that ICCI is working on many important projects for the welfare of the business community, including the construction of an Expo Centre in Islamabad, the establishment of a business school, college and university to provide quality education to the children of businessmen, establishment of a hospital to provide better treatment facilities and acquisition of a ground to promote sports activities.

He said that the inclusion of President ICCI in the CDA Board will lead to positive progress for the completion of these projects as the CDA has announced to provide land to ICCI for these projects while the Chamber will complete these projects with its own financial resources.

Asif Luqman Qazi, leader of Jamaat-e-Islami said that the Pakistan Business Forum would contribute to strengthen business linkages among Islamic countries and improve trade between them.

Dollar gains, euro dips after cautious European Central Bank

SINGAPORE (Reuters): The dollar gained against the euro after the European Central Bank eased its pace of rate hikes, a day after the Federal Reserve hiked rates by 25 basis points and indicated that it may pause further increases.

The ECB's 25-basis-point increase was the smallest since it started lifting them last summer, but the bank also signalled that more tightening would be needed to tame inflation.

"The ECB was relatively dovish, the tone is a little more cautious, and there is a bit more focus on the past effects of tightening and the fact that these are being transmitted forcefully to the euro area economy," said Sebastian Vismara, global macro economist and strategist, BNY Mellon Investment Management.

The Fed on Wednesday dropped from its policy statement language saying that it "anticipates" further

rate increases would be needed.

The dollar index was last up 0.30% on the day at 101.52.

The index is holding just above a one-year low of 100.78 reached on April 14, and has fallen from a 20-year high of 114.78 on September 28.

The euro fell 0.52% to \$1.1004. It reached a 13-month high of \$1.1096 last week. The dollar also fell 0.33% to 134.18 Japanese yen.

The single currency has gained against the greenback in recent months as investors priced for the dollar's interest rate advantage over the single currency to continue to decline.

But analysts said that much of that expected move may already be priced in, with the next focus likely to be when the US central bank will start cutting rates.

"The monetary policy dynamics are more or less fully priced in here at this

point in terms of the tightening cycle, now it's going to be a focus on the bets on when the Fed starts to ease, how much it eases and how that relates to what (other) central banks are doing," said Shaun Osborne, chief FX strategist at Scotiabank in Toronto.

Money markets are now pricing in around a 15% chance the Fed will begin cutting rates in June, and expect roughly 80 basis points of rate cuts through the end of the year.

Adding to the argument that the Fed will soon begin easing monetary conditions were lingering fears of banking sector turmoil, intensified by news that PacWest Bancorp (PACW.O) is exploring strategic options. The Los Angeles-based lender said it has been approached by several potential partners and investors.

The greenback also got a boost on Thursday after data showed that US Unit labor costs - the price of

labor per single unit of output - surged at a 6.3% rate in the first quarter, after increasing at a 3.3 percent pace in the fourth quarter.

"That gave the dollar a bit of a push up because it came in quite a bit higher than expected and it's not really commensurate with the Fed on hold story," said Osborne.

This week's main US economic focus will be Friday's jobs report for April, which is expected to show that employers added 180,000 jobs during the month, while average earnings are expected to have increased at an annual rate of 4.2%.

Sterling dipped 0.06% to \$1.2561 after hitting \$1.2593 earlier on Thursday, the highest since June 2022.

The greenback was last down 0.17% against the Norwegian crown at 10.73 after Norway's central bank raised interest rates by 25 basis points as expected.



In brief

Wahab greets Pak cricket team

LAHORE (APP): Adviser to Punjab Chief Minister on Youth Affairs and Sports Wahab Riaz has congratulated Pakistan cricket team for taking an unassailable 3-0 lead and winning 5-match ODI series against the visiting New Zealand cricket team. It is pertinent to mention here that Pakistan defeated New Zealand cricket team by 26 runs in the third ODI match at Karachi. In a greeting message on Thursday, Wahab Riaz, himself a international cricketer said the Pakistan cricket team exhibited wonderful teamwork and fighting spirit against a strong guest team. He showered praise on in-form skipper Babar Azam, Fakhar Zaman, Imamul Haq, pacers Naseem Shah, Haris Rauf and Shaheen Afridi for their excellent performances in the series victory. He said that the national cricket squad and team management deserved huge appreciation for their magnificent performance. He expressed his hope that the national cricket team will maintain its winning sequence in the remaining two ODI matches against the same opponents.

Boston beat Philadelphia

BOSTON (BBC): The Boston Celtics thrashed the Philadelphia 76ers 121-87 to level the Eastern Conference semi-final at 1-1. Jaylen Brown scored 25 points and Malcolm Brogdon 23 from the bench, including six three-pointers, for the Celtics at TD Garden in Boston. Sixers centre Joel Embiid, the 2022-23 NBA Most Valuable Player, returned from injury after two weeks out. "We knew they were going to respond after the first game and we just weren't ready enough," said Embiid. "They beat us to every loose ball. They played with more desperation than us. We didn't execute what we wanted to. We've got to be better." Embiid scored 15 points and James Harden, who scored 45 in the Sixers' thrilling 119-115 win in game one on Tuesday, missed all six three-pointers and managed only 12 points. Eight Celtics players contributed to their tally of 20 three-pointers, while the Sixers made six from 30 attempts. The third game of the seven-game series takes place in Philadelphia on Friday, which you can watch live on BBC One, BBC iPlayer and the BBC Sport website (Saturday 00:35 BST).

Javi defends record

LONDON (BBC): Javi Gracia has defended his record as Leeds manager following his sacking. Gracia was replaced by Sam Allardyce this week with four games of the Premier League season remaining. Leeds were 19th in the table when Gracia took over from Jesse Marsch in February, and are currently 17th - above the relegation zone on goal difference. "We got 11 points in my 11 matches," Gracia told the Athletic. "Everton got eight points, Leicester and Southampton took six and (Nottingham) Forest five. So everyone else down there got fewer." Gracia, who was also in charge for an FA Cup fifth-round defeat by Fulham, earned wins against Southampton, Wolves and Nottingham Forest in his first six league games. However, Leeds lost four of their next five matches, including a 5-1 defeat by Crystal Palace, a 6-1 loss to Liverpool and 4-1 defeat by Bournemouth.

Alcaraz reaches Madrid Open semis in final match as teenager

MADRID (AFP/APP): Defending champion Carlos Alcaraz on Wednesday moved into the Madrid Open semi-finals with a straight sets victory over Karen Khachanov in his final match as a teenager, while Iga Swiatek reached the women's last four.

US Open winner Alcaraz, who turns 20 on Friday when the last-four ties are played, overturned 4-1 and 5-2 deficits in the second set to defeat 12th-ranked Khachanov, 6-4, 7-5. "Winning this match will give me a lot of confidence, Karen was at a great level and took me to the limit," said world number two Alcaraz who unleashed 31 winners.

"It was decided by small details and I am

very, very happy to be able to get through this round."

The top seed triumphed in one hour and 52 minutes and will next face Borna Coric of Croatia who eased past German lucky loser Daniel Altmaier 6-3, 6-3.

"It was pretty tough. The first set as well, it was close," added Alcaraz whose record on clay this year now stands at 17 wins against one defeat.

"I was in trouble in the second set, a break down and he had two break points to have the second break. So it was really tough for me to come back and he had his chances to win the second set.

"Luckily I knew I was going to have my chances. I just tried to take my

opportunities and I'm really happy to get through."

If Alcaraz lifts the trophy on Sunday in the Spanish capital, he will knock Novak Djokovic from top spot in the rankings simply by playing a match at the Italian Open in Rome next week.

Djokovic missed the Madrid Open with an elbow injury.

Alcaraz blew away Alexander Zverev on Tuesday in a repeat of last year's Madrid final, but Khachanov put up stiffer opposition.

The Russian, who knocked out compatriot Andrey Rublev this week and also reached the Australian Open semi-finals, showed no fear in the first set despite his opponent's form.

FIH to join CSHR as Engaged Organisation

ISLAMABAD (APP): The International Hockey Federation (FIH) on Thursday announced that it has joined the Centre for Sport and Human Rights (CSHR) as an Engaged Organisation. "It is the first International Sports Federation to join CSHR under this new membership category," the FIH said in a press release.

"Engaged Organizations have been created to facilitate participation in CSHR activities among a broader network of committed organizations looking to embed commitments to human rights standards in their business."

"Formal participation in CSHR's work has up to now been through the multi-stakeholder Advisory Council which supported the establishment of CSHR. New Engaged Organisations will be able to develop knowledge and capacity and secure access to CSHR's networks and expertise." "FIH joins CSHR as an Engaged Organisation to uphold and promote its commitment to

universal humanitarian values including diversity, inclusion and non-discrimination, across its governance, operations, activities and events. As part of its new sustainability strategy, FIH has set out specific commitments to follow the UN Strategic Framework on Human Rights. As such, FIH seeks the support of the Centre for Sport and Human Rights to identify risk areas related to human rights and work on appropriate measures to address them," it added.

Mary Harvey, CEO of CSHR said, "The Centre for Sport and Human Rights exists to convene all actors in sport to address common human rights challenges and create opportunities for knowledge to be exchanged and developed. This multi-stakeholder approach is core to who we are and we are extremely proud to welcome FIH, Airbnb and McDonald's to the Centre as the first members of our new Engaged Organisations category. All three play important roles

in governing, supporting and growing sport. Becoming an Engaged Organisation will help many actors in sport to further their journeys in integrating respect for human rights into how sport and its events are delivered."

FIH President Tayyab Ikram said, "On behalf of FIH, I'd like to extend our sincerest thanks to the Centre for Sport and Human Rights for welcoming hockey's world governing body as an Engaged Organisation. Being the very first International Sports Federation to enter this new membership category of CSHR is an honour. But it also comes along with an important responsibility for FIH and our global hockey community that we are fully committed to assuming. Sport unites. Sport provides hope. Sport inspires. As such, sport has the power to act as a catalyst for positive change in society. We're looking forward to engaging with and collaborating with CSHR."

Tennis players need financial support: Qudusia

ISLAMABAD (APP): International Tennis Umpire Qudsia Raja on Thursday said that there was no shortage of talent in the country, but financial support was needed for players, to pursue their careers in tennis.

"There is immense tennis talent in the country but the game of tennis is a very expensive game. The tennis racket and ball are beyond the reach of the common player, so it is difficult to attract players to this

game," she said while talking to APP. She said, "The private sector, departments, institutions, etc need to come forward for the development of tennis, institutions will have to work."

"Departments will have to form their own teams and then the government and private sector will join hands in the development of this sport and organize tournaments from the grassroots to higher level. This way good quality players will come to the

fore." To a question, Qudousia Raja replied, "Pakistan has won many medals at the international level in the game of tennis. "Not only as a normal player, but special wheelchair players have also won medals in the world championships."

She was of the view that many tournaments should be organized in educational institutions to bring out the immense talent of tennis and to improve the game in the country.

KP Women Softball trials begin in Peshawar, 22 female players turn-up

PESHAWAR (APP): A trial to select the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Women Softball team got underway here at Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) Coaching Center on Thursday.

Talking to APP, President KP Softball Association Shahid Khan Shinwari along with three members selection committee comprising Miss Sumayyah (Swat), Miss Sana Liaquat (Peshawar) and Asim Khan (Swabi) have thoroughly monitored the performance of the players before short-listing them to the camps. The female players from Swat, Haripur, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Nowshera, Charsadda, Swabi, Mardan turned up for the trials on their own expenses.

The players expressed their concern over inclusion of players of Peshawar in the different teams and said that despite talented players of other districts attending the trials on their own expenses, they are not given any chance to be part of the team, representing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The organizers mostly preferred players from Peshawar and ignored the talented players from other districts in the selection for the forthcoming National Games. "How can we record the protest? Even though we have more talent than the players they have given preference in selection, we are mostly ignored in the team selection."

"We went through different newspapers and turned up for the trials from far flung districts but we could not find a place in the selection," the players told this agency when contacted. "We we can record our protest and to whom," they said. There should be a proper committee to see the performance of the players on merits before selection, the protesting players told APP.

When contacted, President of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Softball Association Shahid Khan Shinwari assured that they would hold a trial purely based on merits instead of selecting play-

ers only from Peshawar. He said a proper selection committee, headed by him, has been announced, who would see the performance of the players during the 10-days camp to be starting from Friday (May 5) at PSB Coaching Center or Jinnah College for Women, University of Peshawar. The place for the camp would be decided on Friday. It is good that players from other districts have turned up for the trials and the association have given travelling expenses and accommodations to the players even during the trials, which is happening for the first time. He said a good and strong team would be selected for the 34th National Games instead of selecting players only from Peshawar district and giving the name of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa team has representation of all districts even from the merged areas could also participate in the trials, Shahid Khan said.



BAHAWALPUR: Bahawalpur Vs. Yazman cricket match was held at Stadium.

National Games KP Tennis trials

PESHAWAR (APP): A trials to select Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Tennis team for the forthcoming coming 34th National Games got underway here at Synthetic Courts of the Qayyum Sports Complex wherein male and female players took part.

The trials under the supervision of the General Secretary (GS) KP Tennis Association Umar Ayaz Khalil, coaches Ruman Gul, Nauman Khan, Zakirullah, Shahriar Khan, Shah Hussain and Israr Gul held wherein a total of eight players have short-listed for the camp and among them four would be selected in the final stages to represent the province in the games.

Umar Ayaz Khalil said, "The best players were included in the camp for the Quetta National Games, who will be trained for two more weeks under the supervision of qualified coaches, and it is hoped that the KP team will win medals by showing their best performance in the National Games. The Tennis Championship of the Games will be held from May 23-29 at Tennis Courts of the Ayub Complex, Polo Ground and Brown Gynkhana Ground in Quetta."

Tigre continue to impress in Copa Sudamericana

VALENCIA (Xinhua/APP): Argentina's Tigre secured their second consecutive Copa Sudamericana victory on Wednesday with a 3-0 rout of Venezuelan side Puerto Cabello. Mateo Retegui opened the scoring by converting a penalty before Lucas Menossi and Lucas Blondel added second-half goals at Estadio Misael Delgado in the Venezuelan city of Valencia.

The result leaves Tigre second in Group D with six points from three outings while Puerto Cabello are last, having yet to pick up a point.

In other Copa Sudamericana fixtures on Wednesday, America Mineiro drew 1-1 at Millonarios, Guarani were held to a 1-1 home draw by Emelec and San Lorenzo drew 0-0 at Palestino.

Omar scores unbeaten 250 as Shaheens declare on 521 against Zimbabwe A

ISLAMABAD (APP): Omar Bin Yousuf returned unbeaten on 250 as Pakistan Shaheens declared their first innings on 521 for three in 115.3 overs against Zimbabwe A on the second day of the first four-day match at the Kwekwe Sports Club in Kwekwe on Thursday.

At stumps, Zimbabwe A were 112 for four in 41 overs with captain Roy Kaia returning unbeaten on 12, according to information made available here by Pakistan Cricket Board.

Dion Myers, coming to bat at number three was the notable run-getter for his side, scoring 56 off 92 deliveries, which included eight fours and one six. He and opening batter Tanunurwa Makoni (21, 59b, 2x4s) knitted

64 runs for the second wicket. Both batters fell to left-arm spinner Mehran Mumtaz, who completed the day with figures of two for 32 in 11 overs.

Both Joylord Gumble (1,11b) and Westsly Madhevere (15, 26b, 2x4s) were run-out.

Earlier, resuming their first innings at the overnight score of 352 for two, with Omar Bin Yousuf on 161 and Kamran Gulam on five, Pakistan Shaheens lost right-handed Kamran (26, 70b, 4x4s) in the 88th over with 388 runs on the board.

After the departure of Kamran, vice-captain Hussain Talat joined Omar and the pair stitched an unbroken 133 runs for the fourth wicket. Over the course of the partnership, the

24-year-old Omar brought up his maiden first-class double-century.

His previous best first-class score of 174 was made playing for Sindh against Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in September 2019 at the UBL Sports Complex in Karachi.

When Imran Butt called the declaration in the 116th over of the innings, Omar was unbeaten on 250 off 342 balls, smashing 27 fours and one six. Talat returned undefeated on 51 off 90 deliveries, hitting six fours and a six.

Scores in brief: Pakistan Shaheens 521-3 d, 115.3 overs (Omar Bin Yousuf 250 all out, Mohammad Huraira 178, Hussain Talat 51 not out)

Zimbabwe A 112-4, 41 overs (Dion Myers 56; Mehran Mumtaz 2-32)

Imam: ‘We don’t have time to do experiments now’

KARACHI (Agencies): With only a few ODIs left to play ahead of the 50-over World Cup, Imam-ul-Haq has advised against experimenting with Pakistan's underperforming middle order, even though the team has taken an unassailable 3-0 lead in their five-match series against New Zealand. Imam, the player of the match in the third ODI, was especially not convinced by the option of playing Iftikhar Ahmed or Mohammad Haris as power-hitters in the middle overs. "To be honest I don't think so because we don't have time to do experiments," he said. "With Agha [Salman], Shadab [Khan], and [Mohammad] Nawaz, we have enough power-hitting to improvise. It's just a matter of giving them confidence. Their stats aren't as big as we have in the top three and it's tough for them because they get five to six overs but their chip-in is impactful and useful."

Pakistan have largely relied on their top three, consisting of Imam, Fakhar

Zaman and Babar Azam, who have scored 62.6% of the team's runs - the highest among all nations - since the 2019 ODI World Cup. They average 19 runs per dismissal more than the rest of their batting - which is also the highest for any team. The Imam-Babar partnership reaped an average of 89.83 including six hundred-run stands; Fakhar-Babar and Fakhar-Imam, meanwhile, have put on 817 and 812 runs respectively.

On the other hand, Pakistan's middle order has failed to consistently build on the platform set by the top order. The batters between No. 4 and No. 7 have averaged 26.9, marginally lower than West Indies, whose middle-order batters average 26.2. While Imam said he preferred to have a settled line-up with the bat given there's an ODI World Cup around the corner, he noted that their bowlers needed to strike more often in the middle overs.

"Both Nawaz and

Shadab are outstanding all-rounders so we have to give them the confidence," Imam said. "Babar might be thinking differently but that is what I feel. We have only two games left and it's really very important to go into a bigger tournament, you have to be settled as much as you can with your main players. We have very less cricket and I don't think we have enough time to find a workaround."

"But I feel within 11 to 35 overs we need to take wickets in them and we aren't able to fetch enough. Sometimes, I feel this is missing and if our spinners in the middle start taking wickets then the match will be a lot more in our control. Today [last night], we took wickets in middle overs hence we managed to reduce them to under 270. So going forward I think fielding and fitness is another department we should make a difference. Catches on crucial stages become very important."

Alex Carey on the Ashes

‘We’ll do it differently, we’ve had some serious success’

Stuart Broad would like nothing more than to have Steven Smith caught at mid-off, but Alex Carey does not believe that Australia will be drawn into trying match England's aggressive style when the Ashes commences next month.

Broad's recent comments kicked-up the traditional pre-Ashes chat a few levels and will be followed this week by Smith beginning his short stint with Sussex. Meanwhile, Ben Stokes has called for "flat, fast" pitches to aid England's scoring rate while there was a report that the boundaries could also be pulled in.

There are still six weeks to go before the opening match at Edgbaston and before then Australia have the small matter of trying to topple India in the World Test Championship final, but Bazball will continue to dominate the lead-up.

"We've heard some stuff in the media what the wickets might be like, the boundaries etc, [and] the way [England] are playing at the moment it is eye-catching," Carey told SEN radio. "I'd like to think we aren't surprised now [with] the way they'll

come out and play.

"The tactical stuff will start to take place over the next couple of weeks but I don't see us falling into our batters going out and trying to score the same rate. We'll do it differently, we've had some serious success in the last 18-24 months playing the style we want to play in different conditions and lucky enough to be rewarded with a spot in the World Test Championship [final]. So we are excited to come over to their backyard and take on a team that's playing some really eye-catching cricket. As a player it's going to be hot contest and I'm smiling just thinking about that first Test." Carey is one of ten members of the Ashes squad who are currently in Australia with the others spread across the IPL and county cricket. Training will ramp up this month for those at home with a camp in Brisbane before they depart for the UK in late May, leaving around 10 days to prepare for the WTC final at The Oval on June 7.

"We'll all come together before that World Test Championship and have our focus solely on that game

but with an eye to the first [Ashes] Test match," Carey said.

On a personal level, the tour will be Carey's first experience of Test cricket in England having taken the Australia role at short notice ahead of the 2021-22 Ashes although he was very impressive during the 2019 ODI World Cup and scored his first one-day hundred there in 2020. He has a small amount of first-class experience in the country having played one match for Sussex in 2019 where he made 56 and 69 not out then was drafted into the Ashes squad to keep wicket in a tour match against Derbyshire.

Carey, who scored a maiden Test century against South Africa at the MCG last season, is confident of being able to adjust his game to conditions as required but admitted that the wicketkeeping could provide some challenges with the 'wobble' that can often happen to the red Dukes ball when it passes the batter. "It's hard to train [for] the wobble that we as keepers know comes down and we make it look a bit silly at times if we don't get a hand on it," he said.



In brief

IRSA releases 133,500 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 133,500 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 138,100 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1439.84 feet and was 41.84 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 32,600 cusecs while outflow as 30,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1122.15 feet, which was 72.15 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 47,000 cusecs and 45,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 44,500, 52,800, 37,200 and 9,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 32,400 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 17,200 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

CTP launch campaign

RAWALPINDI (APP): City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi on the directives of City Traffic Officer, Tamoore Khan has launched a campaign against one-way violators. According to a CTP spokesman, CTP Civil Line circle on the orders of the CTO kicked off the campaign and issued 60 challan tickets to the violators here on Thursday besides impounding seven vehicles in police stations. He informed CTO had directed the Incharges of different circles to take strict action in accordance with the law against traffic rules violators. In order to ensure the safety of the road users and to keep the roads free from accidents, all possible efforts are being made by the CTP, he said adding, CTP would continue their ongoing operation against the one-way violators. The purpose of the traffic police was not to issue challan slips but to provide better travelling facilities to the citizens to make their lives safe, he said. Strict action would be taken against those found violating traffic laws particularly one-way rules and negligence on the part of the officials concerned would not be tolerated, he added.

Police recover smuggled wheat

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) on Thursday foiled an attempt of smuggling wheat. The spokesmen of NHMP said that the Motorway Police during an operation against the wheat flour smugglers, intercepted a suspicious trawler near Balkasar interchange on Lahore-Islamabad Motorway and recovered 45 tonnes of wheat. The wheat was being smuggled from Multan to the northern part of Pakistan. The truck driver along with the recovered wheat was handed over to Food Department Chakwal after completing preliminary legal proceedings. In another incident, a truck driver got down near Havelian to check the water in the radiator of the truck. During patrolling the motorway police officers found the mobile set on the road, which was delivered to the owner.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman NDMA, Lt. General Inam Haider Malik Presiding Summer Contingencies conference with stakeholders at NDMA Main Hall in Federal Capital.

Saudi govt ensures full rights to workers: Ambassador

ISLAMABAD (APP): Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki, highlighting the crucial role of workers in the development of societies has said it was the basis for urban, industrial and commercial renaissance for all nations on the globe.

Addressing an event organized by the Saudi Embassy in connection with 'International Workers' Day' the other day, he expressed appreciation for workers all around the world and congratulated all hardworking individuals who had made sacrifices in building and developing societies. The ambassador said the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, both the government and its people, looked upon workers in all fields with appreciation and

respect. He said the leadership of Kingdom was committed to implementing laws that protected workers and ensured that they received their full rights.

Citing the example of the nearly two million workers from Pakistan who are currently working on development projects in the Kingdom, Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki highlighted that their presence was a testament to the depth of relations between the two countries and their mutual respect for each other.

He emphasized that the Pakistani workers' presence had been critical in supporting the Pakistani economy through financial transfers to their home country.

The workers' contributions had been highly valued by the leadership and

people of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, reflecting the close ties and mutual interests between the two nations, he maintained.

Overall, the ambassador's statement highlighted the significance of workers' contributions to society and their importance in shaping the course of nations' development.

It also underscored the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's commitment to protecting workers' rights and supporting their contributions to society. Meanwhile, Saudi Labor Attaché Majid Bakr bin Idris Bakr, in a welcome address, thanked the distinguished guests for the participation and screened a short video on the rights of workers in Saudi Arabia.

Police net 11 drug peddlers on recovery of over 10 kg charras

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi police in an action against suspected drug peddlers conducted raids in different areas and rounded up 11 accused on recovery of over 10 kg charras. According to a police spokesman, Waris Khan police held Saleem for having 1700 grams charras and Babar for possessing 1710 grams charras.

Rattamral police rounded up Niaz Ahmed for having 1350 grams charras while Sadiqabad police nabbed Husnain for having 1260 grams charras.

Wah Cantt police apprehended Kabir with two kg charras and Rawat police arrested an accused namely Mohsin on recovery of 1260 grams charras. Other accused were sent behind the bars on recovery of charras. Separate cases have been registered against all accused while further investigations are underway. City Police Officer, Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani had directed the police officers to accelerate ongoing operations against drug peddlers, bootleggers and other lawbreakers, he added.

WASA launches campaign to clean sewerage lines

RAWALPINDI (APP): Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) Rawalpindi on the directives of Caretaker Punjab Provincial Minister Barrister Syed Azfar Ali Nasir has launched a special campaign to clean sewerage lines.

According to a WASA spokesman, special arrangements had been made following Meteorological Department's warning of above normal rains during monsoon.

He informed that WASA had kicked off an emergency operation to clean sewerage lines with the help of modern winch machines which were introduced to fully clean the sewer lines.

The spokesman informed that Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chhatta and Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi Hasan Waqar Cheema on Wednesday night visited Fuji Colony and inspected the ongoing cleaning of sewage lines work.

Senate body shows concerns over leasing housing ministry's properties

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Senate Standing Committee on Housing Thursday expressed reservations regarding leasing the ministry's commercial properties in Karachi below market value and at nominal rates. The Secretary of the Ministry of Housing and Works apprised the committee that the ministry could not do anything during the lease period as the lessees approach courts and take stay orders.

Chaired by Senator Haji Hidayatullah Khan, the committee recommended that action should be taken against officers who undertook the lease agreements far below market value.

The ministry informed that fresh lease agreements will be carried out as per the market value and for five years.

A new lease policy will be implemented after the expiration of the existing lease period. At the outset, Senator Saifullah Abro questioned the number of officers on deputation in the Ministry of Housing and Works and its attached departments and the chair directed to provide detail in the next meeting. The committee also recommended the appointment of a permanent Director General (DG) of the Estate Office as soon as possible.

The committee was informed that only 57 officials and officers submitted affidavits regarding non-ownership of any flat or house in Islamabad and their assets, out of the 241 officers and officials from the ministry of housing and works, PHA, FGEHA, Estate Office, and Pak PWD who were asked to provide such affidavits.

The chairman directed to expedite the process and issue a final notice to non-compliant officials.

The committee also discussed the Inquiry Report pertaining to Sector F-6/1 with particular reference to illegal constructions/encroachments outside the premises and inside of the government residential properties.

The ministry informed that a comprehensive campaign was started to remove encroachments from the government properties and footpaths, and five thousand notices were issued in this regard.

However, the process was halted after facing severe resistance.

DG FGEHA gave a detailed briefing on the land acquisition and tendering process of the Supreme Court Bar Association Park Enclave project.

The committee members questioned the

bidding process followed by the FGEHA, and the chair directed to provide complete details of the bidding process and criteria followed for prequalification of firms.

The committee was also directed to provide details of allottees of plots as per the quota policy and criteria.

The department was directed to provide details of land acquisition and actual land under possession of the department.

The committee was also briefed on the payment made against land acquisition and built-up area in Sectors F-14 and F-15 property-wise.

The committee was informed that a firm was hired to determine the built-up area, and payments were made as per the survey and Google markings.

Later, as per the directions of the Islamabad High Court, a revised agreement and rates were submitted before the court, which was declared as binding.

IHC also changed the cut-off date for the determination of the built-up area, which caused consideration of the additional built-up area. Lastly, the committee discussed the recruitment process followed in the case of Col (R) Imtiaz ul Haq Khattak, Chief Engineer, FGEHA.

The committee was informed that due to dismal performance, the concerned officer was relieved of his duties, and a new chief engineer was appointed on contract for three years. The chairman was of the view that the ministry should not remove any officer without following any due process as no show cause of explanation was issued to the officer for bad performance. Moreover, he was given good performance certificates for the first two years. The Secretary ministry of Housing and works was of the view that the concerned officer was not doing his job diligently owing to which he was removed. Senator Bahramand Khan Tangi said that the concerned officer should have been given the chance to present his explanation before his removal. The chair decided to discuss the matter further in the next meeting of the committee. The committee meeting was attended by Senators, Saifullah Abro, Fida Muhammad, Khalida Ateeb, Dr. AfnanUllah Khan, Molana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri, Falak Naz, Bahramand Khan Tangi, Muhammad Qasim, Secretary Ministry of Housing and Works, DG FGEHA and officials from the concerned ministry.

ANF recovers over 74 kg drugs; arrests nine

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in six operations managed to recover over 74 kg drugs and arrested nine accused including two women, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday. He said in an operation near Taramari Chowk in Islamabad, ANF recovered 850 grams charras and rounded up an accused resident of Islamabad.

In another operation near Peshawar Hayatabad Tatar Park, ANF intercepted a car and recovered 45.6 kg charras from secret cavities. Two accused residents of Attock were also netted during the operation. The spokesman informed that in a third operation conducted near Haripur Railway Road, ANF recovered 600 grams

charras and arrested an accused resident of Haripur.

In the fourth operation near the Faisalabad Amirpura area, eight kg heroin was recovered from the possession of two drug smugglers residents of Peshawar netted during the operation.

12 kg heroin was recovered from the Chaman Friendship Gate Check Post area and a resident of Chaman was nabbed.

In the sixth operation near the Quetta-Sariab road bus stop, 7.2 kg charras was recovered from the possession of two women residents of Sukkar.

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

Coalition government to complete its constitutional term: SAPM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to Prime Minister Muhammad Ahmed Khan Thursday said that all institutions

need to work within the constitutional limits and a coalition government will complete its constitutional tenure as the general election will be held on time.

Talking to a Private news channel, he said that the ruling coalition had shown all the flexibility that was needed and showed their respect for a

constitution, adding, through dialogue, the government wanted to make things acceptable to all.

He stressed that a well-functioning judiciary is the need of the hour in the country to restore the confidence of the people, and safeguard democracy.

Replying to a question, he said flexibility in dialogue is the only way forward to bring the country out of the crisis, adding, it was the stance of the government that the National

Assembly, Sindh and Balochistan assemblies should not be dissolved before the time.

He said that PML-N set aside its differences and took all the political forces on board to bring the country out of the current challenges.

To another question, he replied the dissolution of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies was a strategy to escape from Toshakhana cases against him.



ISLAMABAD: A massive traffic jam on Islamabad Expressway near Faizabad.

Strict action taken against Jinnah Garden for gross irregularities in LOP: NA told

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Javed Abbasi on Thursday informed the National Assembly that strict action was taken against Jinnah Garden Housing Society for gross irregularities and violation of the layout plan (LOP) and Non-Objection Certificate (NOC) approved by the Capital Development Authority (CDA) in 2006.

Replying to various supplementary questions during Question Hour, he said that cases were also sent to Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to probe the issue and take appropriate action. The CDA had already suspended the LOP of the Jinnah Garden Housing Society, he added. The minister said as per the joint survey report conducted on the directions of Chairman CDA, it was appraised that out of the total agreed 12 parks, 6 were developed, 4 mosques were constructed out of 9 while no community Centre was yet developed. Even, areas designed for parks and community centres were converted into plots and sold, he added.

He said Jinnah Garden encroached 1100 kanal land of the National Assembly Housing Society. Under

Joint-Venture (JV) with the National Assembly Housing Society, it was agreed that 1100 developed plots would be given to file holders of the National Assembly Housing Society. However, possession of only 400-450 plots was given in 2017 but failed to hand over possession of the remaining plots.

He said the NA House and Library committee had also made 29 observations but no action was taken against Jinnah Garden Housing Society. He urged the Chair to give a ruling and direct FIA to take action in this regard.

The Deputy Speaker said that name of NA was wrongly being used by society. However, he said due rights would be provided to the file holders.

To another question, the minister said Miyawaki forest was planted in Aiwan-e-Sadr and also in other sectors of Islamabad. Miyawaki forests have been developed at other places in Islamabad, he added. He said there were 28 Miyawaki Forests in Environment Wing, CDA at different locations. There was no cost incurred on the purchase of trees for Miyawaki forests and all plants for Miyawaki forest was planted through CDA Nursery and donations.

More tourists visit Balkh

BALKH (Agencies): The number of foreign and domestic tourists visiting Balkh has increased due to the improved security situation in the country and the province's historical and cultural heritage. The director of Balkh's Information and Culture department stated that in addition to thousands of local tourists, there has been an increase in visitors from American, European, Asian, and Australian countries. Balkh is home to nearly 200 registered archaeological sites.

The Frontier Post

Shawwal 14, 1444 — Friday, May 05, 2023

Police issued warning

BADGHIS (Agencies): The police of Badghis has warned motorcyclists who drive over speed will face legal actions in that province. Lately, the over speeding of motorcyclists in Badghis has caused heart-breaking traffic incidents in that province said, local officials. The Security forces have collected dozens of motorbikes whose drivers were driving over speed from all corners of the city, said the Police Spokesman of Badghis, Sediquallah Seddiqi.

MCIT sets prices for internet packages, calls

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MCIT) set fixed prices for Internet packages and telephone calls for telecommunication networks.

According to information provided by the ministry, a telephone call costs 1.85 afghani per minute for subscribers of a single network and 2.2 afghani for customers of other telecommunication networks, and the cost of 1GB of internet has been set at 110 afghani.

"The price of 1 GB of Internet access is set at 110 afghani, while off-net calls cost 2.2 afghani and on-net calls cost 1.85 afghani. Previously, 1 MB of Internet in Afghanistan cost more than 1 Afghani; as of right now, the cost is 0.11 Afghani," said MCIT spokesperson Enayatullah Alokozay.

However, residents of Kabul said the price is set too high and they urged the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology to do something to reduce the prices.

"There are many problems. Because you don't understand how the credit is used it runs out very quickly. Sometimes the network takes the money before we use it for the call," said Bilal, a resident of Kabul.

"When we recharge fifty Afghani balance in our phone, we talk for a few minutes and the call is cut off after a few minutes and the balance runs out," said Jamshid, another resident of Kabul.

Residents of Kabul also complained about the low quality of the Internet.

"Internet consumption is very high. In the past, if we activated three GB, it

would last for ten days, but now ten GB does not last for ten days," Shamsullah, a resident of Kabul, told TOLONews.

Some economists believe that telecommunications companies should provide offer more services at a more affordable price.

"In terms of the operations of telecommunications businesses in Afghanistan, improving quality and lowering prices are two crucial factors that might have a unique impact. The telecommunication companies should pay serious attention to these two important issues," Shakir Yaqoobi, an economist told TOLONews.

In Afghanistan's major cities, most people have access to the internet and telecommunications services, however, in the country's remote regions, access to these services is limited.

Residents seek facilities for treatment of drug addicts

PUL-I-ALAM (Pajhwok): A number of residents and drug addicts in central Logar province have demanded rehabilitation facilities increased for drug addicts in the province.

Officials say that efforts are underway to provide better treatment for drug addicts. Rahimullah, 45, who was addicted to narcotics in Iran 13 years ago, told PAN that he had been admitted to quit addiction in the Arsalama Jamal hospital for the past one month, but facing problems due to lack of suitable space and facilities in the hospital.

He asked the Ministry of Public Health and Logar provincial administration to build a specific rehabilitation centre in this province.

He said: "I have been addicted to drugs for 13 years. I was encouraged by bad friends. Currently, I have been arrested by the security forces and I'm undergoing treatment, but this time I have a firm intention to give up drugs and live my normal life."

Haji Rohullah, a resident of Logar, called the campaign to collect the and rehabilitate addicts a positive step, but insisted on providing a suitable place and facilities for the treatment of addicts in this province. He said many people become addicted to drugs due to unemployment, and the government should reduce the unemployment rate.

"The government should work to completely prevent drugs, because more young people get addicted to drugs, most of the addicted youths are educated, but they are used to drugs," he added.

Fahimullah Lodin, a spokesman for the public health department, told PAN that a 30-bed hospital had been opened in Pul-i-Alam City for the treatment of addicts and dozens of addicts are currently admitted there. He added that there was no exact number of addicts at the public health department of Logar. Since the beginning of this year, 100 addicts had been treated.

He added: "Arsalama Jamal Hospital is located near the police headquarters; it has 30 beds. We treat addicts in these stages. First, we take the history of the addict and separate him from his friends. Second, we give advice on how to avoid drugs. Consume less and in the third phase, we carry out the basic treatment in the hospital for 45 days."

Quality control lab opens in Kandahar

KANDAHAR (TOLONews): A food quality control laboratory was opened in Kandahar province on Wednesday.

Officials of the food and drug administration of Afghanistan said that in addition to Kandahar, similar food safety laboratories will be constructed in three other zones of the nation.

"All the equipment of this laboratory is worth \$200 to \$250 thousand, and our aim is to activate such laboratories in big zones and cities of the country," said Abdul Bari Omar, chairman of the medical and food department.

"This laboratory was created for two purposes: one is to determine and verify the quality of low-quality food, and the second purpose is to make it easier for traders," said Naser Faqiri, the head of the laboratory.

The second deputy prime minister, Abdul Salam Hanafi, speaking at the opening of the center, pledged to punish those traders who import poor quality food to the country. "If someone does that, we will cancel his license, consider him a national traitor, and punish him severely," Hanafi noted.



"Anyone who imports poor quality food and medicine to Afghanistan is not a businessman, and also he is not a friend to Afghanistan," said Yunus Momand, head of the

Chamber of Commerce and Investment. The officials of the laboratory said they would set up this facility and soon open similar laboratories for the oversight of medicine throughout the nation.

Karimi dismisses concerns voiced in meeting of terrorist presence

KABUL (TOLONews): The Islamic Emirate deputy spokesperson said that the concerns of participants at the UN meeting in Doha regarding the presence of the terrorists in Afghanistan are baseless.

Speaking at a press conference, the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres said that the participants of the Doha meeting are worried about the stability of Afghanistan and "they have expressed those serious concerns; they relate to the persistent presence of terrorist organizations' risk for the country, the region and further... the lack of inclusivity which importantly includes human rights, particularly those of women and girls, severely undermined by recent Taliban decision."

The deputy spokesman of the Islamic Emirate, Bilal Karimi, said that Afghan soil is secure and no one should be concerned. "These remarks and allegations are baseless. No side should be worried about the security in Afghanistan," Karimi said.

Political analysts gave various opinions in this regard. "There is no hope until they accept the legitimate wishes of the world and UN," said Torilalai Zazai, a political analyst.

"The focus of the Doha meeting is more about forming a framework regarding Afghanistan but I think there were expectations from the Doha meeting to seriously solve the issues of Afghanistan, and I don't think we will reach that result," said Nematullah Bizhan, a political analyst.

Guterres also said that the UN will convene a similar meeting in the future. This comes as some citizens interviewed by TOLONews urged the international community to

take practical actions regarding the issues of Afghanistan. "The schools should be reopened, so that everyone can be educated," said Nabi, a resident of Jawzjan. "The representative of the Islamic Emirate should be invited so that they can form a national consensus," said Safiullah Aziz, a resident of Uruzgan.

The meeting in Doha was held for two days and attended by representatives of more than 22 countries and organizations.

ANSA shuts down over 400 fuel stations, depots



KABUL (Agencies): The Afghanistan National Standards Authority (ANSA) said Thursday that a strict monitoring process of the quality of fuel is underway at gas stations and storage facilities across the country.

He said so far more than 400 fuel stations and storage facilities have been ordered to close down due to poor quality fuel.

According to ANSA the purchase and sale of sub-standard fuel in the country has been stamped out.

"A serious monitoring process is underway at the fuel pump stations and fuel storages across the country

to seize the sale and purchase of substandard goods on the country's markets," ANSA tweeted.

According to ANSA, so far, more than 1,000 fuel pump stations and fuel storage facilities have been checked across the country, of which more than 400 pump stations and fuel storages have been closed.

Afghanistan National Standards Authority requests all traders to refrain from manufacturing, supplying and importing substandard goods.

On Wednesday at least nine tankers carrying low quality fuel from Iran were

turned back at the Farah port, the Afghanistan National Standards Authority (ANSA) said.

ANSA said laboratory tests were conducted on the fuel, which was found to be sub-standard.

The latest returns come after another 10 fuel tankers were sent back to Iran at the border crossing in the past three days.

This comes amid ongoing efforts by the authority to ensure that commercial grade fuel standards are adhered to. ANSA once again appealed to traders to ensure the fuel they import meets the criteria set by the authority.

Female media workers dropped by 64% in past two years: ANJU

KABUL (TOLONews): The Afghanistan National Journalists Union (ANJU) reported that the presence of women in the nation's media has dropped by 64% compared in the past two years.

According to Ahmad Shah Fana, chief executive of the union, there are no female journalists working in 22 of the provinces of the nation right now, and their activity is very low in 12 other provinces.

"According to the statistics that we received, there are no female journalists working at all in 22 provinces, and of the seventeen media outlets that were previously exclusively for women, only seven remain

operational today, and the recent ones have been shut down," Fana noted.

Only seven of the seventeen media outlets related to women are currently active, Fana said.

In the meantime, some female journalists in the nation urged the current government to provide women more employment opportunities.

Obida Nikofar a journalist working in Badghis province, expressed concerns over the low presence of female journalists in the country's media.

"Freedom of speech should be respected in Afghanistan and women should be supported more,

and a favorable working environment should be provided for them," Nikofar noted.

"If the situation continues like this, we won't have female journalists in Afghanistan to do journalistic activities," Marjan Wafa, a journalist in Herat province told TOLONews.

"We are facing numerous economic challenges. Every day we come here and work freely, we are not given salaries," said Ainoor Zaki, a female journalist from Badakhshan.

Local officials in some provinces of the country acknowledged the low presence of women in media.

"During the previous government, there weren't many female reporters working for the Uruzgan media. We are currently facing a lack of female reporters," said Agha Wali Qureshi, the director of information and culture of Uruzgan.

"Currently, we do not have female employees in the media. If the Islamic Emirate allowed it if hijab was observed, and a suitable environment was created for them, there are professional reporters here," said Janat Gul Feda, head of the information department of the ministry of information and culture of Kunar.

Afghan journalist released

KABUL (Khaama Press): Organizations supporting media confirm that Khairullah Parhar, an Afghan sports journalist, who was detained on anonymous charges by the Taliban intelligence unit four months ago has been released on bail.

Afghanistan Journalists Center (AFJC) on Thursday (May 4), reported that Parhar was detained by the Taliban's General Directorate of Intelligence on January 9, on unknown charges in Kabul.

Parhar has been released on bail, however, further details about his release is not known, and the Islamic Emirate authorities have yet to comment in this regard.

Furthermore, Afghanistan Journalists Center has reported that 23 years old Khairullah Parhar has previously served as a sports journalist for the local media in eastern Nangarhar province, including 'Hameesha TV' station. The young reporter is the only breadwinner in his family, who lives with his mother and wife in Jalalabad.

This comes as Subhanallah Subhani, a lecturer at a private university was released after spending two months in the Taliban prison.

Since the return of the Taliban to power in August 2021, the group has been accused of violating human rights, including the arbitrary detention of journalists, civil society activists, university lecturers, former military officials, and those who oppose the group's policies.

Despite the pressure from the journalists' advocacy groups and the international community, the Taliban's crackdown on independent and critical reporting in Afghanistan continues, affecting journalists and media workers the most.

Traffic plans to make cabs bright turquoise in color



KABUL (TOLONews): The Kabul Traffic Directorate said that it plans to change the color of city taxis from yellow to bright turquoise.

The director of planning and policy of the Kabul Traffic Directorate, Abdul Wadood Khairkhwah, said that the Cabinet of the Islamic Emirate approved the plan to alter the color of taxis and will soon put it into action.

"All the cars that are now yellow will be changed to bright turquoise, and then they will go through technical inspections once more and have their licenses renewed," Khairkhwah noted.

However, some owners of taxis said they lacked the resources to change the color of their cars. "I don't think people can afford to paint their cars," Abdul Mateen, a taxi driver said.

"When the business goes well. We will be happy if the color of the taxi changes and becomes clear," said Mohammad Wali, a taxi driver in Kabul. Kabul residents shared

differing opinions over the changing of the color of taxis. "This will reduce criminal offenses and security disturbances," said Jamshid, a resident of Kabul.

"Taxis pay more taxes than private cars, so taxis should be the ones to operate," said Nasratullah, a resident of Kabul.

Currently, private cars also transport passengers alongside taxis in the city, and the number of these vehicles has grown in Kabul over the past two years.

UN: Afghanistan one of 7 hungry countries in world

KABUL (Agencies): According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's report on food crises, Afghanistan is among the seven countries whose citizens are facing acute poverty and hunger.

The report published by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations states that for the fourth consecutive year in 2022, the number of people who were acutely food insecure and in need of urgent food, nutrition and livelihood assistance has increased.

This report shows that about 258 million people in 58 countries and regions

faced acute food insecurity of phases three to five in 2022, while this figure was 193 million people in 53 countries and regions in 2021.

It has been said that this statistic is the highest figure in the seven-year history of this report. In this report prepared by a network of global institutions, including the United Nations, it is stated that the people of seven countries faced poverty and hunger at some point in 2022.

According to the Global Report on Food Crises, in 2022, the severity of acute food insecurity has increased from 21.3% in

2021 to 22.7%.

The report stated 57 percent of the hungry were in Somalia, while such extreme conditions also occurred in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Haiti, Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen.

The findings of this report confirm that the impact of the war in Ukraine has had an adverse effect on global food security due to the major participation of Ukraine and Russia in the production and global trade of fuel, essential food commodities, especially wheat.

Also, the corona pandemic has negatively affected food security.

Four killed in road accident

PAKTIA (Khaama Press): In a road accident in the eastern Paktia province, at least four people were killed, and ten others were injured.

According to provincial administration spokesperson Monib Zadran, the incident occurred Tuesday evening in the Halim Kala close to the west of the

provincial capital, Gardez City, when a car overturned due to technical issues, killing four people, including two women and injuring ten others.



A similar incident occurred in the province; two people were killed, and four others were injured.

Recently, there has been an increase in incidents in the country.

The World Health Organization estimates that 6,033 people died in road accidents in Afghanistan in 2020, accounting for 2.6% of all fatalities. As a result, the country stands in terms of accidents spot, at number 76 globally.

The officials said that hundreds of individuals die yearly due to reckless driving, congested roads, inadequately constructed roadways, lack of rule of law, and poorly maintained vehicles.



PESHAWAR: Students and faculty members of universities laid a floral wreath at the Yadgar-e-Shuhada monument and offered fateha during visit to Corps Headquarters.

KP Assembly election: PHC adjourns hearing till 10th

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Sahibzada Asadullah adjourned hearing till 10th May due to absence of Governor's lawyer on holding elections for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly while declared that all parties should be heard on next proceedings, on Thursday.

Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Amir Javeed, Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Lawyer Mohsin Kamran Sadiq and counsels for Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Barrister Gohar Ali Khan appeared before court.

PTI's counsel argued that Governor's lawyer has submitted application for adjourned of hearing

despite importance case which constitutional obligation to hold election within 90 days which has already ended.

Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Amir Javeed informed that provincial government has submitted reply in this regard while Mohsin Kamran Advocate told that ECP's comments are ready for submission before PHC.

In the meantime, Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim remarked that court has granted last chance for submission of reply on last hearing while directed to submit comments within two days before court.

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has engaged Tariq Afridi Advocate in the petition while can't able to appear before court due to his busy schedule for election campaign as presidential candidate of Peshawar High Court

Bar Association (PHCBA) and requested for adjournment of hearing, PHC informed.

PHC has adjourned hearing till 10th May while declared that all parties will be heard on next proceedings while further adjournment shouldn't be entertained. It is worthy to mention that PTI has filed writ at PHC seeking holding of election for provincial assembly within 90 days after its dissolution and stated that Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa continuously violating constitution and Supreme Court of Pakistan decisions.

Although, constitutional timeframe of caretaker government also ended on 17th April while Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and ECP has change election scheduled as announced as 28th May then changed to 8th October which is unconstitutional.

Acting Afghan FM due today

ISLAMABAD (APP): Acting Afghan Foreign Minister Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi is scheduled to visit Pakistan from May 5 to 8, along with a high-level delegation.

The delegation will include the Acting Afghan Minister for Commerce and Industry Haji Nooruddin Azizi, and senior officials from the Afghan ministries of foreign affairs, transport, and trade, a Foreign Office statement said. Apart from holding bilateral meetings, the acting Afghan foreign minister will also participate in the 5th China-Pakistan-Afghanistan Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Dialogue on May 6, 2023.

State Councilor and Foreign Minister of China Qin Gang will also participate in the Trilateral Foreign Minister's Dialogue. The visit of the Acting Afghan Foreign Minister is a continuation of Pakistan's political engagement process with Afghanistan, which, inter alia, included a visit of Pakistan's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs to Kabul on November 29, 2022, and visit of a high-level delegation led by the Defence Minister of Pakistan to Kabul on February 22, 2023.

During the visit, the two sides will review the entire spectrum of bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan in the political, economic, trade, connectivity, peace and security, and education domains. Pakistan is desirous of a peaceful, prosperous, stable and connected Afghanistan and reiterates its commitment to pursue continuous and practical engagement with the Interim Afghan Government, the statement added.

Rana for effective border management

ISLAMABAD (APP): Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah on Thursday directed the concerned to take all-possible measures to improve border management system for preventing illegal entry and exit from the country. He issued these directives while presiding over a meeting, held to review the ministry's performance.

Secretary Interior Syed Ali Murtaza and other senior officials of the Ministry of Interior were present in the meeting, said a news release. The minister also directed to fast track reform process in the ministry and its attached departments for improving their efficiency. He also called for taking all necessary measures to make the Islamabad Capital Territory police more efficient.

Rana Sanaullah said special attention should be given to cleanliness in the Federal Capital in line with the directives of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. The regulatory framework should be completed at the earliest to bring cleanliness in Islamabad at par with the international standards, he added.

The minister directed to simplify the process of getting fingerprints of those who wanted to obtain arms licenses from the ministry. Arms training for people and certification procedures in this regard should also be devised, he added. The meeting also reviewed progress on the establishment of the Private Security Service Regulatory Authority.

Gandapur freed from jail

SUKKUR (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Ali Amin Gandapur has been released from central jail Sukkur. As per details, the PTI and former federal minister Ali Amin Gandapur going back with a convoy to Punjab from Sukkur.

The administration of Sukkur Central Jail had earlier refused to release Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Ali Amin Gandapur despite his protective bail. The Sukkur Central Jail's administration said that the accused politician was wanted by Punjab police in different cases. A case was registered against the PTI leader for delivering hate speech against state institutions.

It is pertinent to mention that the Lahore police took custody of the PTI leader soon after a court in Bhakkar granted bail to a firebrand politician in a case related to opening fire on a police checkpoint.

IHC approves extension in PTI chief's bail

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday approved the extension in the bail of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's bail in nine different cases. The former premier appeared before the two-member bench headed by IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq, amid tight security over its warning of bail revocation over his continuous absence from court, on the previous hearing.

At the outset of the hearing, Khan's lawyer Barrister Safdar maintained that 140 cases had been registered against the PTI chief so far and the petitioner had sought bail in all the cases in his knowledge. While extending Khan's interim bail in seven terror cases for 10 days, the court directed Khan to approach the trial court.

CJ Farooq remarked that a medical report from a government hospital should be submitted to seek an extension in future and ordered to provide material on the plea seeking permission to appear through a video link. Meanwhile, the court also extended Khan's interim bail in two other cases related to threatening officers of the armed forces and the attempted murder of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Mohsin Shah Nawaz Ranjha, till May 9.

Moreover, the IHC CJ also ordered fixing Khan's plea for staying the action on cases against Khan on May 9. At one point during the hearing, the PTI chief came to the rostrum and revealed that he has informed the five-member bench at Lahore High Court about the person who can harm him.

"If I take his name, none of the newspapers will publish that," he said, accusing the person of running the caretaker government. In an informal conversation after the two-member bench left the courtroom, Khan replied to a journalist's question regarding meetings with American diplomats. "We want good relations with everybody," he said.

His remarks came days after PTI Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry met US Ambassador to Pakistan Donald Blome. Khan, in a lighter yet sar-



castic tone, said that the number of cases registered against him will soon hit a double century.

"In cricket I only managed to score 170; however, in politics I'll score a double century," Khan lamented. Taking a jibe at the former chief of army staff General (ret'd) Qamar Javed Bajwa, Khan revealed: "During several briefings, Bajwa said that there is no oil in tanks." "I was surprised that what kind of an army chief is he who is talking about such things," he said.

During the conversation, he also condemned Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari's trip to India. In response to a question regarding the rifts among the puisnes, Khan said the reference against Justice Qazi Faiz Isa was initiated from people in positions above General (ret'd) Faiz Hamid. "We were told that the law is equal for everybody, therefore we also gave answers," he said, adding that they [the PTI] were told the answers need to be taken from Qazi Faez Isa. "Later we realised that there was some other intention behind all this," he added.

Earlier on Thursday, the PTI chief said he would appear before the court despite "pain and swelling" in his leg because he "respects the court". Sitting in a wheelchair to be moved to the car before leaving for Islamabad, Khan — in a brief video statement released on social

media — said: "[We] respect the courts, so will appear [before the court] despite pain and swelling in the leg." The PTI chief further added that he was not like "those who create propaganda against the judges" if they don't get a favourable decision.

In the statement, Khan also claimed that he had informed the Lahore High Court (LHC) that a bid was made to assassinate him. "Once in Wazirabad and the second time in the Judicial Complex on March 18," he added. Khan appeared before a two-member bench which had warned the former prime minister, of bail revocation over his continuous absence from court, on the previous hearing.

Ahead of his visit to the federal capital, security around the court was tightened and a heavy contingent of police was deployed. Barbed wires and containers were also placed to ensure law and order in the area. The police also banned the entry of unrelated persons into the IHC.

To ensure Khan's safety, the district administration has made strict security arrangements, while the lawyers and journalists will be allowed to enter courtroom no 1 through a special pass. Only 15 lawyers will be allowed to accompany Khan inside the court and 10 lawyers from the attorney general and advocate general's office will be allowed to attend the hearing.

SC seeks parliamentary debate record on Bill

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The top court on Thursday decided to continue its stay order against implementation of the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Act, 2023 till further orders and sought complete record pertaining to debate over the legislation in the concerned forums by May 08.

It is pertinent to mention that earlier, during hearing of the matter on May 02, an eight-member larger bench of the top court has resumed hearing of the pleas and being head of the bench, the Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial observed the court's latest order suspending the act was provisional in nature.

Issuing a four-page order on Thursday relating to hearing of the matter on May 02 in response to identical pleas challenging constitutionality of the Act, the top court directed attorney general for Pakistan to submit record pertaining to debates of the National Assembly, of the joint sitting of the two houses and of the relevant standing committee in which the provisions of the act were discussed.

The bench directed the federation through attorney general for Pakistan saying, "The learned Attorney General shall place on record before the next date of hearing the debates of the National Assembly, of the Joint Sitting of the two Houses and of the relevant Standing Committee in

which the provisions of the Act were discussed". The bench also issued notices to respondents in response to three identical petitions filed in the matter saying, "We are informed that three fresh constitution petitions (No.10 to 12 of 2023), seeking essentially the same relief as constitution petitions no.6 to 8 of 2023, have also been filed. In the interest of justice, notices are issued to the respondents in these petitions".

The court's order did not mention the objection of the Pakistan Bar Council regarding the eight-member bench. However, the court has directed both parties to submit a comprehensive response by May 08.

SAPM flays judiciary over interference in politics

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) Malik Ahmed Khan on Thursday criticized the superior judiciary for what he called the last six years' "lopsided judgments" that he claimed demonstrated favouritism and interfered with the country's politics.

Speaking to the media, he cited 16 specific cases, including those involving Hanif Abbasi and Zulfi Bukhari, and argued that the decisions delivered in the last six years have had a significant impact on the political history of the country. He referred to a tweet by senior journalist Talat Hussain, who asserted that certain judgments of the superior judiciary have had a negative impact on the country's politics.

According to Khan, the purpose of some of these judgments was to remove

former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif from power while benefiting the leaders of the PTI. He called on the Chief Justice to form a larger bench to review and possibly overturn certain decisions. SAPM contended that Nawaz Sharif was unfairly disqualified for life in the Panama case on weak grounds, and criticized the court's remarks as being inadequate. He further alleged that Shahzad Akbar and NAB were tasked with removing Nawaz Sharif from the political arena to make way for Imran Khan and that Saqib Nisar cleared Imran Khan of any wrongdoing and helped him attain power.

He claimed that Saqib Nisar's son was caught selling PTI party tickets and that the Supreme Court appeared to have favoured one player to attain power. He criticized

the PTI for turning Punjab into a desert and diverting funds to Taunsa Sharif, the former Chief Minister's constituency. Khan compared Imran Khan to former US President Donald Trump and asserted that he would pay the price for his alleged crimes. He also called for a suo moto action against PTI for their attacks on the courts and police, claiming that the state had been held hostage and that their crimes were unforgivable.

According to Malik Ahmed Khan, Imran Khan dissolved the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies as part of a conspiracy to erode people's confidence in democracy, create controversy surrounding elections, and disrupt the election cycle. He further alleged that PTI had an agenda of promoting anarchy in the country.

Press Freedom Index: Pak's ranking improved

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's ranking improved by seven places in the 2023 World Press Freedom Index released by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) as the country was placed at 150th position among 180 countries.

While citing the reason for the improvement in Pakistan's position from 157 in 2022 to 150 this year, RSF noted that Pakistan achieved the improved ranking because, after the change of government in 2022, constraints on the media were loosened.

It is a significant achievement as compared to last year when Pakistan came down to 157 in 2022 from its ranking of 145 in 2021 and the then prime minister Imran Khan was declared a press freedom predator along with Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi. This year India's position on the Press Freedom Index further worsened as it dropped from 150 last year to 161 in 2023, losing 11 points.

Citing reasons for slip in the ranking of India, RSF stated, "The violence against journalists, the politically partisan media and the concentration of media ownership all demonstrate that press freedom is in crisis in the world's largest democracy."

The RSF report further noted that Modi has an army of supporters "who track down all online reporting regarded as critical of the government and wage horrific harassment campaigns against the sources. Caught between these two forms of extreme pressure, many journalists are, in practice, forced to censor themselves."

LG by-polls on 56 seats to be held on Sunday

KARACHI (INP): The local government by-elections on 56 seats of Sindh province will be held Sunday (May 07, 2023).

Sindh Chief Secretary Dr. Muhammad Suhail Rajput informed this while presiding over a meeting in Karachi on Thursday. The Provincial Election Commissioner said polling will be held at 449 polling stations in Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur, Shaheed Benazirabad and Larkana.

Bushra Bibi serves legal notice to Maryam Nawaz

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Bushra Bibi, the wife of former prime minister Imran Khan, on Thursday served a legal notice on Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Chief Organiser Maryam Nawaz for defamation over corruption allegations.

The former first lady sent a legal notice through her counsel, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Advocate Faisal Farid. In the notice, an unconditional apology has been sought from Maryam for allegedly defaming Bushra Bibi within seven days.

The notice stated that the ruling party leader made false and baseless allegations against the ex-premier's wife in Lahore on May 1. The legal notice warned that a criminal case would be initiated against the PML-N stalwart if she did not retract her allegations against the former

first lady. The text of the speech, wherein Maryam allegedly hurled allegations, has also been made part of the legal notice.

The notice said Maryam is running a "malicious campaign" to defame Bushra Bibi and her family. The development comes two days after PTI senior leader Fawad Chaudhry announced that Bushra Bibi had decided to lodge a criminal case against the PML-N leader over bribery allegations. The PTI's senior vice president, in a press conference in Islamabad, had said the ruling party leader alleged that Bushra Bibi was taking bribes for getting official documents signed by the authorities during the previous PTI-led government.

"She has never participated in any political activities [...] she was only seen visiting panahgahs [shelter homes]," the PTI leader remarked. Despite the fact that the former first lady is

an apolitical person, Fawad said, Maryam continued to hurl allegations against her. "Therefore, Bushra Bibi has decided to send a legal notice to Maryam Nawaz for making baseless allegations," he said, adding that the notice will be followed by the filing of a criminal case against the PML-N leader.

Maryam, who is also the senior vice president of the PML-N, has time and again accused the former first lady of receiving bribes — including a diamond set in return for using her influence in official decision-making during the tenure of the Imran Khan-led government. The PML-N leader had alleged that Farhat Shezadi, a close of Bushra Bibi, remained actively involved in running the day-to-day affairs of the Usman Buzdar-led Punjab government and would also receive bribes for official transfer and postings of the officials.

President emphasises robust trade with S Arabia

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday underscored the need for robust economic and trade relations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) for the mutual benefit of two brotherly countries.

The president expressed these views while talking to the Ambassador-designate of Pakistan to Saudi Arabia Ahmad Farooq, who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr here. Talking to the ambassador-designate, the president stated that Pakistan attached special significance to its relations with Saudi Arabia, which were based on common faith, shared history and people-to-people contacts.

He highlighted that Pakistan wanted to further consolidate the existing bilateral ties into a strategic economic partnership for the mutual interest of the two countries. President Alvi asked the ambassador-designate to highlight the Jammu and Kashmir dispute and the persecution of Muslims in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) as well as other parts of India at various fora.

He asked the ambassador-designate to convey his warm regards to His Majesty King Salman bin Abdulaziz, and the Saudi Crown Prince/Prime Minister, His Royal Highness Mohammad

bin Salman. He also congratulated the ambassador on his appointment as Pakistan's ambassador to Saudi Arabia and expressed the confidence that he would do his best to further strengthen and enhance bilateral engagements at all levels in the interest of the two countries.

Meanwhile, President Dr Arif Alvi has called for the implementation of the disability quota for persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the public and private sector jobs to make PWDs financially independent. He said that almost 12-14% of Pakistan's population suffered from some form of disability and the government and private sector needed to provide them employment for their financial empowerment. These views were expressed by him while speaking during a follow-up meeting on the framework for the classification of disabilities, at Aiwan-e-Sadr on Thursday. The meeting was attended by senior officials of the Ministry of Human Rights and the Government of Pakistan.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Arif Alvi said that disability quota should be implemented as per its actual spirit, adding that chambers of commerce and industries, banks, multi-national corporations, trade bodies, and other private sector organizations needed to employ differently-abled

people (DAPs) as per their skill sets and nature of disabilities. He said that Pakistan must focus on providing DAPs with skill-based education to help them secure jobs and ensure their inclusion in the mainstream of socio-economic activities.

The President highlighted the need to develop close coordination among relevant stakeholders to impart skills to PWDs as per their special needs as well as market requirements. He underscored that training institutes and relevant government organizations should accelerate their efforts to equip PWDs with marketable skills and link them with potential employers in the private sector to provide them suitable jobs in accordance with their skills and quota.

President Alvi also urged the need to provide disability certificates to PWDs in a quick, easy and hassle-free manner enabling them to benefit from different schemes and facilities being offered by the government. Director General/Secretary of the Council on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Mr Abdul Sattar, informed the meeting that CRPD in coordination with different federal ministries was working to ensure the implementation of the disability quota.