

Terrorist killed in operation
F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: The military's media affairs wing said on Thursday that a terrorist was killed during an intelligence-based operation in Panjgur district. Security forces conducted the operation last night. "During the conduct of operation, own troops effectively engaged the terrorists' location and resultantly terrorist Chakar Liaquat was sent to hell while two terrorists got injured," the ISPR said.



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Pakistan needs another IMF bailout: Shehbaz

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said the government was going to take tough economic decisions to steer the country out of crisis assuring to protect downtrodden segments of the society.

He said that the burden of these measures would primarily fall on the wealthy and elite, with safeguards in place to protect the interests of the poor and vulnerable. Addressing the meeting of the Apex Committee of Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) here, the prime minister said the International Monetary Fund (IMF) had concluded the review for issuance of the last tranche of US\$1.1 billion that hopefully be received by next month.

After this, he said Pakistan also wanted to start another programme with the IMF for a period of three years during which the government will take strict measures to bring deep-rooted structural reforms in the country. With the reforms, he said "we will succeed to gradually break the begging bowl and come out of debt trap".

The prime minister sought support of all political parties and the provincial governments to successfully implement the agenda of macro economic stability in the country. "For this we will have to work together. With the support of all the provinces, we will together resolve all the challenges and difficulties faced by the country", he added.

PM Shehbaz said the presence of chief ministers of all the provincial governments, Army Chief, and other concerned officials from across the country conveyed a clear message to the nation that all had gathered here for the cause of the country's development, prosperity and integrity. He said the SIFC was formed in June 2023 to remove bottlenecks in the investment process and since then nine meetings of the Apex Committee had been held besides more than 200 relevant meetings. Consequent to the meetings, he said a number of important decisions had been taken and implemented under the umbrella of the Council.

The prime minister pointed out

21 killed in Kandahar suicide bombing

KANDAHAR (BBC / AFP): At least 21 people were killed and several others injured in a suicide blast outside a bank in Afghanistan's Kandahar city on Thursday, BBC quoted a doctor at the regional hospital as saying.

However, local police put the death toll at three and the number of injured at 12. The blast mostly killed civilians who had gathered in front of the bank to withdraw cash, the Kandahar police department said in a statement. "A suicide attack occurred in which three compatriots were killed and 12 others were wounded," he told AFP. "Commonly our compatriots gather there to collect their salaries," he said, adding that the "victims were civilians". The dead and about 50 injured people were shifted to Mirwais hospital, the region's largest, a doctor from the hospital told BBC on the condition of anonymity.

Afghanistan's capital is Kabul but Supreme Leader Hibatullah Akhundzada lives in Kandahar city, in the southern province of the same name that is the birthplace of the Taliban movement. Taliban authorities had surrounded the area outside the bank and did not let journalists close to the site.

However, an AFP journalist saw what appeared to be unconscious people or dead bodies being loaded into ambulances in the wake of the blast. Firefighters and security personnel were clearing the area, where blood, scraps of clothes and shoes littered the ground.

Hospitals did not respond to requests for information, saying they had been told not to speak to the media. The number of bomb blasts and suicide attacks in Afghanistan has markedly declined since the Taliban ended their insurgency after seizing power in August 2021, ousting the US-backed government. However, a number of armed groups — including the regional chapter of Daesh — remain a threat.

Govt given free hand to profiteers: PHC observes

Court orders Additional Chief Secretary to monitor prices of edible items

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A two members bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprised Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Waqar Ahmad ordered submission of detail report on hike in edible items' prices as well as actions taken against illegal profiteers till 28th March, on Thursday.

The counsel Abbas Sangeen advocate, Additional Chief Secretary Abid Majeed, Advocate General Shah Faisal Ottomankhel Additional CS Planning & Development Khayyam Hassan and Secretary Food Zareef-ul-Mani along with other concerned officials appeared before PHC.

The provincial government has provided free hand to hoarders and illegal profiteers for looting public in the holy of Ramzan because prices of edible items up twice which has led common men for starvation, the lawyer argued.

The counsel Abbas Sangeen advocate added that unfortunately we are living in a country in which inflation up twice in the holy month despite rest of the world decreases prices of edible items in Ramzan. Advocate General KP agreed with the petitioner regarding price-hike and inflation during Ramzan but informed that as many as 52 thousand inspections conducted across the province while fines are imposed as well as shops were sealed.

However, Justice Waqar Ahmad remarked that data has been collecting as well as cases are registered but to no veil and directed for establishment of proper mechanism for the welfare of public while Justice Ijaz Anwar observed that Officers may go to market to obtain beef on Rs750 per kg and mutton on Rs1500 as it isn't available on official prices in the bazaars. Additional Chief Secretary Abid Majeed agreed with the bench's

High Court orders govt to submit reply on blocking 'X'

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Waqar Ahmad has issued notices to federal government, Pakistan telecommunication authority (PTA) and sought response on blocking 'X' till next hearing, on Thursday.

The counsel for petitioner asked that 'X' was blocked but the reason was not told that why it happened and stopped the people from gaining information. Justice Waqar Ahmed inquired that why was 'X' blocked when the Sindh High Court (SHC) issued an order regarding that matter now what do you want. Applicant's lawyer replied that SHC's order is within the limit of province. PHC should also issue order in this regard. Justice Waqar said that this was done by federal government and the SHC's order is for all the country. However, PHC's divisional bench comprised of Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Waqar Ahmad sought response from the government and concerned officials in this matter while adjourned further hearing.

observation and informed that a comprehensive plan was established 15 before Ramzan which has curtail inflation from 28%-31% as compared with previous year. The hike in prices of edible items especially meat, onion, sugar and etc., due to highest demand and lower supply which ultimately cost with inflation, he argued.

Additional CS Abid Majeed informed that recommendation has been forwarded to the federal government for collective efforts to control market prices of food items in the country especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He also argued consumers for rational attitude towards purchase of items facing shortfall and shortage in supply chain.

The public servants are committed for public services delivery despite shortage of human resource in several departments, Abid Majeed claimed. He added that Food department along with competent official of Halal Food Authority deciding prices of vegetable early in the morning in Vegetable & Fruit Mandi (market). He added that the prices of imported items can't be fixed as per local market value as a fact of the day. However, Justice Ijaz

Anwar observed that now a days, everything is inflating and ordered Additional Chief Secretary Abid Majeed to monitor it personally as the public passing through hard time.

In the meanwhile, Justice Waqar Ahmad remarked that the provincial government should legislate in this regard because fines and sealing of shop didn't work till today. Because the traders open their outlet next day after seizure and fine, Justice Waqar Ahmad observed.

Justice Waqar Ahmad further observed that shop must be closed permanently as a person proved guilty of hoarding. However, Abid Majeed informed that the administration going through multiple challenges during Ramzan.

Additional Chief Secretary Abid Majeed assured PHC that a comprehensive report and actions taken in this regard will be submitted before the court.

PHC's divisional bench comprising of Justice Ijaz Anwar and Waqar Ahmad ordered Additional Chief Secretary Chief Secretary Abid Majeed for monitoring edible items market prices personally to submit detail report till 28th March.

SIFC Apex committee vows to take tough decisions

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Special Apex Committee on Thursday briefed the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) initiative and major contributions made by it towards the investments, privatization and overall micro-economic stabilisation of the country.

Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) convened the Special Apex Committee meeting here. The meeting was chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and attended by former caretaker prime minister Anwaar Ul Haq Kakar, Chief of the Army Staff, members of outgoing and incoming Federal Cabinet and Provincial Chief Ministers besides high level government officials. The committee admired the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for envisioning and launching the SIFC in June 2023, which has now moved to its formative phase and evolved progressively under the caretaker government. The committee underscored the need of continuing a consensual approach under SIFC to navigate the myriad of challenges being faced by the country.

The committee also vowed to ensure continuation of policies and take tough decisions in the larger interest of the country by setting correct economic priorities. The former caretaker prime minister congratulated Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Cabinet and Chief Ministers on assuming their responsibilities and wished good luck for dealing with economic challenges and transforming Pakistan as one of the top economies of the world. The Chief of Army Staff reassured the fullest support of Pakistan Armed Forces to speed up the economic initiatives of the present government besides ensuring the provision of safe, secure and conducive environment to nurture country's true economic potential. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that SIFC is the way forward under the challenging times and an iron resolve is needed to serve the country like never before. He urged the Federal Cabinet to join hands, keep political differences aside, and work as a cohesive team to keep the momentum of economic stability. He also thanked the caretaker government for continuation of larger national economic agenda in a befitting manner.

that when the PDM government took over the charge of the government in 2022, Pakistan was at the brink of bankruptcy but all the coalition partners decided to save the country from plunging into default by putting their politics at stake. He said unfortunately a major chunk of the country's resources drained down in shape of corruption. "This year's target of tax collection is Rs 9 trillion but its potential was over Rs 1.3 trillion.

Similarly, he said the cases of the taxes worth of Rs 2.7 trillion were pending either in the tribunals or courts that should have been resolved as soon as possible. The annual power theft is around Rs 400 billion in the country while the combined circular debt of electricity and gas was over Rs 5 trillion, the prime minister added. As regards the achieve-

ments of the interim government under SIFC, the prime minister informed that the caretaker setup, due to its measures against power theft, saved Rs 87 billion. Similarly, strict measures were also taken to curb smuggling besides introducing reforms in the land information system. Besides, it also successfully concluded the privatization process of Heavy Mechanical Complex (HMC).

The prime minister highlighted that annually hundreds of billions of rupees were lost in the State Owned Enterprises as PIA alone owed debt worth of Rs 825 billion. Likewise, he said that the interim government also signed many important agreements with different countries to bring investment in the country including that with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) valuing \$10 billion.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in a group photo with Chief Ministers of all provinces.

Mubashir appointed PIO



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Senior Information Officer of Grade 20 Mubashir Hassan was appointed as Executive Director General/Principal Information Officer (BS 21) of the Press Information Department (PID).

The appointment was made in accordance with sub-section 10 of the Civil Servants Act, 1973, said a notification issued by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting on Thursday. Mubashir Hassan is a senior officer of Information Group who has held various important positions and also successfully completed National Security and War Course 2024 from National Defense University Islamabad recently.

SC directs to submit details of restaurants

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Thursday directed the authorities concerned to submit a detailed report of all restaurants working in Margalla Hills National Park within a month.

The Apex Court also sought complete details and original record pertaining to land lease agreement between Monal Restaurant and Directorate of Remount Veterinary and Farms (RVM) within a week. Presided over by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa, a three-member bench of the Supreme Court heard the case pertaining to the lease of Monal Restaurant.

The court stated that the Attorney General of Pakistan has admitted that the agreement of RVM directorate with Capital Development Authority (CDA) was not legal as it was signed without the authorization by the federal government. The SC further said that the lawyer of Monal Restaurant stated that there were also more restaurants in the area of Margalla Hills National Park.

The court directed the authorities to tell the number of restaurants in the National Park area and details pertaining to the date of lease, period and rent. It said that the top court has been told that a delimitation of national park was underway. It directed the CDA to submit the required details after completion of this process. The Apex court said that the National Park Ordinance should be available to the public for education and research purpose. It said that the respondents if want would submit suggestions for the protection of the national park.

We have no designs against Kabul

Pakistan not invaded Afghanistan but acted against terrorists' hideouts: FO

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday said that the intelligence-based operation it had carried out on March 18 was not an invasion of Afghanistan but an action against the sanctuaries of terrorists hiding inside Afghanistan and posing threats to Pakistan's security.

"Pakistan has not invaded Afghanistan. We have no designs against Afghanistan... The operation was not against the people, institutions, or military of Afghanistan. The target was the terrorists belonging to Hafiz Gul Bahadur Group, which along with Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, is responsible for multiple terrorist attacks inside Pakistan," Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said in her weekly press briefing.

She said Pakistan respected the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan and wanted friendly relations with the neighboring country. Both countries should work towards removing the issues hindering the strengthening of the bilateral ties, she remarked. She told the media that Pakistan had repeatedly conveyed its serious concerns to the Interim Afghan Government over the presence of terror outfits including TIP inside Afghanistan which have consistently used Afghan territory to launch terror attacks inside Pakistani territory.

She said the Afghan side was repeatedly urged to take concrete action to ensure that the Afghan soil was not used as a staging ground for terrorism against Pakistan. She said following the March 16 terrorist attack in North Waziristan, Pakistan had communicated with the Afghan side and also issued a demarche, conveying serious concerns about the involvement of Gul Bahadur Group in the attack.

The spokesperson informed the media that Pakistan had shared concrete pieces of evidence with Afghan side on the presence of terrorist hideouts which was also confirmed by international observers as well as the United Nations. Besides, Pakistan also conveyed the involvement of India in sponsoring and funding terrorist groups in Afghanistan to carry out terrorism in Pakistan, she added.

Responding to the media queries regarding the statement of US Assistant Secretary of State Donald Lu at the US Congressional hearing, the spokesperson said it was an internal matter of the US where the Congressmen and the Administration were involved. She said Pakistan valued its rela-

tions with the US and believed in constructive engagement and expressed the hope that the US Congress would also continue playing a role in strengthening the ties. She observed that some statements made at the hearing regarding Pakistan showed a misunderstanding of the issues.

Coming to the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline, Spokesperson Baloch said Pakistan was starting work on the project within its territory, considering its significance for meeting its energy needs. She said Pakistan was also engaged with the US on the matter and had conveyed the cruciality of the project for Pakistan.

About the terrorist attack in Gwadar on Wednesday, she reiterated that Pakistan remained committed to protecting the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor projects including Gwadar Port. Apprising the media about Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar's ongoing visit to Brussels, she said the minister would participate in the First Nuclear Energy Summit March 21 wherein he would emphasise energy security, cost-effectiveness of clean energy and highlight Pakistan's experience in operating the nuclear plant besides reiterating its commitment to the nuclear safety.

The foreign minister would also hold bilateral meetings with the participating leaders and his counterparts. The spokesperson told the media that the Indian government had outlawed 14 political parties in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir including the Jammu and Kashmir Peoples Freedom League and four factions of Jammu and Kashmir Peoples League.

Pakistan urged the government of India to lift the curbs on the banned Kashmiri parties, reiterating its commitment to extending political, moral and diplomatic support to the Kashmiri people until they were given their self-determination right under the UN Security Council resolutions.

Sharing Pakistan's concerns about the humanitarian situation in Gaza, the spokesperson condemned the attack by Israeli forces on Shifa Hospital which had been the only partially operating medical facility. The attack constituted war crime as well as the crime against humanity, she remarked and called for making Israel accountable and UNSC's role to declare an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. To a question, she said Pakistan had applied for membership of BRICS and was waiting for the forum's decision in light of its proclaimed objectives of multilateralism and inclusivity.

Tarar for devising mechanism to counter fake news regarding CPEC

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Thursday emphasized the need to devise a mechanism at the government-to-government and media-to-media level to counter fake news regarding the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Attaullah Tarar said this during a meeting with the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, Jiang Zaidong who called on the minister here. The Chinese Ambassador congratulated Attaullah Tarar on assuming the portfolio of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting The CPEC, Pakistan-China strategic relations, ongoing cooperation in the media and film sector, and China-Pakistan Information Corridor were discussed in the meeting.

Discussions were held regarding the expansion of cooperation between the two countries in the fields of media and the establishment of the Pakistan-China Information Corridor to

prevent fake news about CPEC. Pakistan highly valued its relations with China, the minister added that both countries were bound by the eternal bond of friendship. Attaullah Tarar said in 1998, his grandfather Muhammad Rafiq Tarar received the then Prime Minister of China on his visit to Pakistan as President. "We have seen Pakistan-China friendship from generation to generation. We have to inform our new generation about our historical and strong friendship," he maintained. "We have to tell the new generation how China and Pakistan supported each other in difficult times," the minister said.

Tarar said that China had supported Pakistan at every international forum including Shanghai Cooperation Organization and United Nations. He opined that a close and sustainable partnership between the two countries in the form of CPEC was in the wider interest of the entire region. The CPEC was an important milestone in promoting

the economic development of Pakistan, Tarar remarked.

"The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is a framework for regional connectivity that will not only benefit China and Pakistan but will also have positive effects on Iran, Afghanistan, India, Central Asian Republics and the region," the minister said. He said that the China-Pakistan Information Corridor would be an important strategic step towards preventing fake news about CPEC as it aimed to harness the power of digital connectivity and information exchange. The Ministry of Information, he added will continue its work in this regard.

He said it was the vision of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to make Pakistan an investor-friendly country. In the meeting, the two countries agreed to expand cooperation in the field of film and culture. "Like China, Pakistan is an ancient civilization with a history of seven thousand years," Tarar told the Chinese envoy.

Aseefa's papers accepted

NAWABSHAH (PP): PPP leader Aseefa Bhutto Zardari's nomination papers for by-election in National Assembly constituency NA-207 approved, it emerged on Thursday. The NA-207 seat fall vacant after her father Asif Ali Zardari was elected as President of Pakistan. PPP's legal team, comprised of Farooq H. Naek and Sindh's ministers of law, home department and jails reached to the office of the RO for scrutiny of nomination papers.

Rs 22m educational scholarships

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar has approved Rs 22 million educational scholarships to 48 police officers for Masters, MPhil and other higher degrees from a well-known private university.

Constables, Head Constables, Junior clerks, Sub-Inspectors, Police Technical Officers and other rank officers are among the recipients of educational scholarships, who will pursue higher studies in the best disciplines and modern subjects at the University of Management and Technology.

DIG Welfare Ghazi Salah-ud-Din said that Punjab Police and University of Management Technology had signed an MOU two months ago for higher education of police employees. Under which police employees have been given scholarships for higher education in Artificial Intelligence, Data Sciences, Public Policy, Security and Strategic Studies, Mathematics, Supply Chain Management, Economics and Information Systems etc. IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar said that maximum support from the department will continue to increase the efficiency and educational qualification of police employees. He directed the DIG welfare to process all applications related to educational scholarships on priority basis.

ETPB terms news of temple demolition in Swabi baseless

LAHORE (APP): The Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) has declared the news of demolition of a temple (mandir) in Swabi as baseless. In a press release, issued here on Thursday, the spokesperson said that in fact there was no temple or any worship place for minorities in that area. There was an ancient building of 'Dharamshala' [Temporary shelter for Hinduism followers] measuring three-and-a-half marla in a dilapidated condition, located in Dargai village, 21 kilometres away from Peshawar. It could have caused loss of lives in case of its collapse.

On the directions of ETPB chairman, secretary and other officers visited the site in district Swabi and compiled a report. The report revealed that there was no temple or worship place on the spot. Instead, there is an ancient building of Dharamshala in a very dilapidated condition, which can collapse any time, endangering lives and property in the surrounding area. Moreover, principal of a girls school, situated adjacent to the building, had filed an application that the building could collapse any time and cause an untoward situation. The report said that the news regarding demolishing a mandir was totally baseless.

Donald Lu, Asad Majeed rejected Imran's narrative regarding cipher: Sharjeel Memon

F.P. Report

KARACHI: People's Party Leader and Senior Minister of Sindh Sharjeel Inam Memon has said that the cipher was a drama, Imran Khan concocted a false narrative regarding the census to protect his political interests, not only Donald Lu but also Asad Majeed rejected the claims of Imran Khan. Imran Khan hired lobbyists to save his politics and attempted to distort Pakistan's image.

In one of his statements, Sharjeel Inam Memon said that The PTI's sloganeering during Donald Lu's speech made Pakistan a mockery in the eyes of the whole world.

The congressman who supports the genocide of innocent Palestinians is also a supporter of Imran Khan.

He stated that the rigging to install Imran Khan on the throne had commenced prior to 2018. The unannounced

censorship serves as evidence of the rigging in 2018.

There were irregularities in the constituencies during 2018, and European observers acknowledged that the results lacked transparency.

Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that the introduction of RTS in 2018 was aimed at bringing PTI into power. To ensure PTI's victory in 2018, a "go-slow" policy was implemented with the voters during the election.

The process of counting, custody, or delivery of the ballot boxes was kept secret during the 2018 elections.

People's Party Leader and Senior Minister of Sindh Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that the true rigging in the 2018 election was determining how much of PPP should be dismantled and handed over to PTI.

The rate of rigging against the People's Party was 50 percent.

PEC and IEP observed the World Water Day 2024



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: UN Water organizes the "World Water Day" every year on 22 March under a specific theme. This year's theme is "Water for Peace," focusing significance of water towards stability and prosperity of the mankind. In this regard, PEC observed the World Water Day wherein IEP also joined the discussion focusing water for peace to realize the significance of water challenges and promote awareness in Pakistan towards sustainable and equitable sharing of water and conservation among the communities within and trans-border peace and harmony.

PEC Think Tank on Water deliberated for enhancing climate-resilient water & food security and resolution of provincial and trans-boundary water governance related issues.

Engr. Dr. Syed Raghib Abbas Shah, Convener WRDC, highlighted the policy level contribution of PEC in developing and sharing technical reports, policy recommendations for the government on groundwater and flood management, water conservation strategies, rain-water harvesting code for resilient future against the climate change addressing the rural and urban flood disasters to minimize climate change impacts.

While observing this important UN theme, the Convener WRDC highly appreciated the PEC leadership Engr. Muhammad Najeeb Haroon, Chairman PEC, Engr. Syed Abdull Qadir Shah, Convener PEC Think Tank, Engr. Abdur Rab, Chairman IEP (Islamabad Centre), members WRDC, and Engr. Dr. Nasir M. Khan, Secretary/Registrar PEC for their vibrant and active role to accomplish the entire work done by the Council.

The PEC and IEP reaffirms a national commitment to Water for Peace as a precious resource essential for life ensuring efforts towards building a sustainable and climate resilient water future for Pakistan, considering efficient and effective utilization, equitable access, conserving and valuing precious water resources, reviewing/ improving existing water treaties/ accords, creating awareness to promote water culture in the society at all levels, and finally bringing peace and harmony for sustainable & resilient future in the region.

Minister promises swift progress on Mayo Hospital revamp

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique has reaffirmed the government's commitment to ensuring timely completion of the revamping project at Mayo Hospital. During a thorough review session on Thursday, he underscored a zero-tolerance policy for any delays, urging contractors to fulfill their obligations promptly.

He emphasised the paramount importance of ensuring minimal inconvenience to patients throughout the renovation process. He assured that once completed, the revamped Mayo Hospital would significantly enhance patient care and amenities. Continuing vigilance over the project's progress, the minister reiterated the government's unwavering

dedication to delivering improved healthcare infrastructure to the people of Punjab.

Earlier, contractors and officers from the C&W Department gave a briefing on the project. The minister also visited the ICU, Child Emergency Block, TB & Chest Department, and Child Surgical Block at Mayo Hospital. Additional Secretary Development Department of Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education Agha Nabeel, Professor Dr. Asghar Naqi, Professor Dr. Muin, Professor Dr. Ahsan Nauman, MS Dr. Faisal Masood, Professor Dr. Ali Ayaz, Professor Dr. Asad Islam Khan, Dr. Salman Kazmi, and officers from C&W were present during the visit.

Court issues decree in favour of senior journalist

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In compliance with the order of a local court, the Bank Alfalah has blocked the official bank account of the Saar Digital Private Limited in a damages lawsuit decreed in favour of a senior journalist of Peshawar.

The court, presided over by Additional District and Sessions Judge Ejazur Rehman Qazi, issued the order to attach the bank accounts of the Saar Digital Private Limited, which runs loksujag.com, and its chief executive officer, Syed Tahir Mehdi Zaidi. However, the Standard Chartered Bank's F-7 Markaz Islamabad, where the CEO has his personal account, has yet to comply with the orders of the court. The court issued a decree of Rs. 100 million in favour of the journalist, Ghulam Dastageer, on December 12 last year after the defendant did not appear in the court despite repeated court notices and an advertisement published in a national daily.

During the execution of the court judgment to recover the decretal amount, the court sent several notices to the defendant which finally led to the issuance of his non-bailable arrest warrants twice. In his lawsuit, the plaintiff said he is a qualified journalist having done master's in Journalism from the University of Peshawar. During his over 25-year career, he has worked for renowned national and international media organizations as well as served the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan as its provincial coordinator.

The suit states that the plaintiff

worked with the Saar Digital Private Limited initially as a freelancer for about one-and-a-half-year and "keeping in mind the hard-work and professionalism of the plaintiff, he was hired as a staff member by Saar Digital Pvt Ltd in October 2021." As per the contract, the work station of the plaintiff was Peshawar. Subsequently, he was elevated to the position of the Editor-North in November 2022.

The counsel of the plaintiff Inayatullah Rehman argued that since the hiring of the plaintiff in October 2021, the defendant never raised any question over the performance of his client. However, in February 2023, the Defendant sent the Plaintiff an email in which he showed some reservations about the pace of work. His reservations were properly addressed by the plaintiff the same day.

Nevertheless, on April 3, 2023, only hours before the plaintiff was scheduled to travel to London to participate in the prestigious South Asia Journalism Fellowship, he received an email from the defendant wherein he ended the terminated the plaintiff, raising grave allegations over his performance.

The plaintiff said he reached London on April 4 to participate in the fellowship. "Right after landing in London, the Plaintiff started feeling extremely stressed, causing him acute sleeplessness." This resulted in his frequent visits to government-run clinics and hospitals in London. He was put on tranquilizers to overcome the depression and ensuing insomnia. The plaintiff said that till start to the end of the eight-week course in London, he remained in

the continuous stress due to the treatment he was meted out by his employer. He has annexed with the plaint all his medical documents duly attested by a London-based Solicitor and Commissioner for Oath.

He added that even after coming back home, he had to undergo monthly Cognitive Behavioral Therapy under a renowned psychiatrist of Peshawar, Prof. Dr. Zahid Nazir.

The counsel of the plaintiff contended that the job termination message was devoid of any legal reason. He argued that the defendant terminated the contract without affording the opportunity to the Employee to show cause.

The Plaintiff has been terminated over "poor performance", meaning that this allegation has been used as a 'Cause' for the termination. And, under the federal and provincial laws, for workers, the term 'Cause' has been considered synonymous with the term 'misconduct'. "Under the federal and provincial laws, employers are bound to give prior notice to workers in cases of termination for cause. The procedure includes: informing the relevant worker in writing about the alleged misconduct; giving him/her an opportunity to explain the circumstances alleged against him/her; conducting an independent inquiry into the alleged misconduct; and if the worker is found guilty, recording the reasons in writing for such termination for cause.

But in the case in hand, the employer did not bother to follow any of the legal requirements, the counsel concluded.



ISLAMABAD: The esteemed Grand Mufti of the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dr. Husein ef Kavazovic, calls on the Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis Chaudhry Salik Hussain.

55000 sq ft roads, streets to be paved in Orangi Town: Murtaza

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab has said that 55000 square feet of roads and streets would be paved at a cost of Rs 80 million in Orangi Town.

He said this while talking to media representatives after laying the foundation stone of paving works of various roads and streets in Orangi Town on Thursday.


Barrister Murtaza Wahab said that Pakistan People's Party was making every possible effort to solve the

problems of the people. Water, sewerage, infrastructure improvement and development are among our priorities. Development works are also going on in the suburban areas of Karachi frequently, he said.

The Mayor Karachi said that the roads and streets in Orangi Town had been paved under the ADP scheme. In order to solve the long-standing problem of the people of this area, this project has been started on priority basis to provide

better facility to people especially, women and children in Orangi area and will be completed as soon as possible for which the credit goes to the leadership of the People's Party, he added.

He said that the parks in Orangi Town are also being improved, Afaq Shaheed Park was restored by us so that the people of the area can get better recreational facilities and other parks will also be made green and equipped with modern facilities.



پاکستان سول ایوی ایشن اتھارٹی

PAKISTAN CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY (PCAA)

OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME A PART OF PCAA'S PROFESSIONAL TEAM

SITUATION VACANT NOTICE NO. 02/2024

Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority requires services of qualified individual to fill the following vacant post on three (03) years contract basis (extendable as per rules). Selection will be made purely on suitability and merit :-

Post	No. of Positions	Prescribed Qualification / Experience / Desired Skills	Quota & Pay Scale	Age Limit
Additional Director Aero Medical (EG-07)	One (01)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">MBBS from registered Medical College and a qualified Flight Surgeon.Must be registered with Pakistan Medical & Dental Council (PMDC).Candidates with Diploma in Aviation Medicine shall be given preference.Minimum 20 years experience as Medical Practitioner / Managerial position related to medical management with at least 05 years of experience as Flight Surgeon.Experience of conducting inspections and monitoring & evaluation mechanisms in the field of Aviation Medicine.Awareness of matters related to communicable diseases with regard to international practices.Understanding of Health, Safety & Environment (HSE) practices in the field of Aviation Medicine.Knowledge of Civil Aviation Rules, International and National Regulations, ICAO Regulations related to Aviation Medicine.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">MeritLump Sum Package of Rs.479,370/-Per Month (Negotiable as per policy)With 5% Annual increment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Maximum 57 years (including all age relaxations)

Application Procedure:

(a) Interested candidates are required to fill & submit Online Job Application Form available at www.caapakistan.com.pk within **fifteen (15) days** from the date of this advertisement.

(b) Candidates will be required to upload scanned copies of certificate / degree of the required qualification only of the concerned post as mentioned above and CNIC while applying for the job.

(c) In case a candidate does not upload the above documents with the online application form, his/her application will be rejected.

(d) All the interested candidates must read the Terms of Reference (TOR) mentioned in the detailed notice available at www.caapakistan.com.pk before applying for the post.

ADDITIONAL DIRECTOR HUMAN RESOURCE (TM)
HEADQUARTERS PAKISTAN CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY,
TERMINAL-I, JINNAH INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, KARACHI
TEL: 021-99072067 - 68
www.caapakistan.com.pk

PID(KH)2643/23

GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

COMMUNICATION AND WORKS DIVISION DIR UPPER

NOTICE INVITING E-BIDDING

(Single Stage Single Envelope E-Bidding System)

The C&W Division Dir Upper, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa invites Electronics Bids from Eligible firms/ Contractors in accordance with KPPRA Rules 2014 amended up to 10.05.2022 & 22.08.2022 on 'Single Stage Single Envelope procedure for the following works.

S.No	Name of Work	Required Category of PEC	Bid security	Tender Fee @ 0.03%.	Period of completion	Last Date of Submission and Time	Date of opening and Time of Finance Bid Opening
A.	CONSTRUCTION OF ADDITIONAL CLASS ROOM, FACILITIES, DRINKING WATER TACTILITY IN 08 LAGGING DISTRICT, DISTRICT DIR UPPER UNDER ACTION TO STRENGTHEN PERFORMANCE FOR INCLUSIVE & RESPONSIVE EDUCATION (ASPIRE) SUB HEAD- CONSTRUCTION OF ADDITIONAL CLASS ROOMS IN HIGHER SECONDARY, HIGH & MIDDLE (BOYS) SCHOOLS IN DISTRICT DIR UPPER UNDER (ASPIRE). PACKAGE-1						
01.	GHSS S KHEEL DIR	C-5	Rs.1256020/-	Rs.18241/-	As Per Work order.	04/04/2024 At 12:00 PM	On Same date At 12:30 PM
02.	GMS NASIR ABAD						
03.	GMS SHIDYAL						
04.	GMS CHAPAR WARI						
05.	GMS BANDAN WARI						
06.	GHS DIR KHAN						
07.	GHSS JATGRAM WARI						
08.	GMS NASRAT						
09.	GMS KASS DELAKAL						
10.	GMS CHUPATRARA						
11.	GMS SHENGARA						
12.	GMS BANDAGAI						
13.	GHS BADAR KANI						
B.	CONSTRUCTION OF ADDITIONAL CLASS ROOMS, FACILITIES, DRINKING WATER TACTILITY IN 08 LAGGING DISTRICT, DISTRICT DIR UPPER UNDER ACTION TO STRENGTHEN PERFORMANCE FOR INCLUSIVE & RESPONSIVE EDUCATION (ASPIRE) SUB HEAD- CONSTRUCTION OF ADDITIONAL CLASS ROOMS IN HIGHER SECONDARY, HIGH & MIDDLE (BOYS) SCHOOLS IN DISTRICT DIR UPPER UNDER (ASPIRE). PACKAGE-2						
1	GGHSS BARAWAL BANDAI	C-4	Rs.1837460/-	Rs.26962/-	As Per work order	04-04-2024 At 12:00 PM	On same date at 12:30 PM
2	GGHS SHAHIKOT						
3	GGHS JUGHABANJ						
4	GGHSS WARI						
5	GGHSS KOTKAY						
6	GGHS WARI PAYEEN						
7	GGHS SHALGA						
8	GGHS PASHTA						
9	GGMS JATGRAM						
10	GGHS DOAG						
11	GGMS BIN						
12	GGHS TARPATAR						
13	GGMS KHAN SHAHEED						
14	GGMS MASHANGO						
15	GGMS TIKERKOT						
16	GGHS JANBHATTI						
17	GGMS DARMIDALA PAYEEN						

1. Bid Documents including instruction to Bidders can be downloaded from C&W website (www.cwd.gkp.pk) before the submission date/ time.

2. The bidders should submit their e-bids as per KPPRA Notification No. S.R.O(14)/Vol:1-20/2021-22 dated 10.05.2022 and Notification No.S.R.O(15)/Vol:1-25/2022-23 Dated 22.08.2022.

3. Complete Details of Bid Security in shape of CDR i.e Bank Name, CDR Number(s) and Date(s) must be submitted electronically along with E-bid on the E-bidding System.

4. All bidders are required to be registered with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority under Finance Act No.XXI of 2013.

5. Venue of Bids opening is Office of the Executive Engineer C&W Division Dir Upper

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER

C&W DIVISION DIR UPPER

INF(P)546/24



Nine cases of Corona reported in province

PESHAWAR (APP): As many as nine cases of Corona virus reported as Coronavirus once again started ringing the alarm bell, a report issued by the Health Department said here Thursday.

According to the report issued here Thursday nine cases were reported in the province during one week. The health department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa conducted 79 Tests in the week time and among them six coronavirus cases reported in Peshawar and there were zero reports in Swabi, Mardan, Charsadda, Nowshera, Chitral Lower.

However, three cases of coronavirus were reported in Swat where they conducted 66 tests.

The Health Department also issued prevention and control measures to all districts and people are advised to protect themselves from JN-1 by frequent and thorough hand washing with soap and water and use of hand sanitizer if soap and water are unavailable.

To opt for respiratory etiquettes through covering mouth and nose while sneezing or coughing with elbow, sick patients stay at home, take rest and avoid

crowds besides taking social distancing measures until recovery.

In the last one week, nine cases of Corona JN-1 variant have been reported, the report of the health department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa said.

Advisory issued to control spread of JN 1 corona variant: Director PH

Director Public Health (PH), Dr. Irshad Roghani has said that to identify corona variant hospitals have been directed to send samples to public health reference laboratory for genome testing.

He said that advisory has

been issued to control spread of JN 1 corona variant and hospitals have been directed to conduct more corona tests of patients having symptoms of diseases like Influenza.

He said that nine new cases of have been reported and new variants of corona JN 1 and JN 1.8 have been identified after genome testing sequencing.

He said that according to World Health Organization the spread ratio of JN 1 variant is 83 percent and advisory has been issued in existing situation for adopting necessary precautionary measures.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali addressing City Council monthly meeting.



PESHAWAR: DG KPRA Fozia Iqbal briefing Secretary Energy and Power Hassan Ahmed during a meeting.

Pak armed forces celebrates International Forest Day

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pak Army and Frontier Corps (PC) North marked World Forest Day with a series of special events across Khyber, Orakzai, Bajaur, Mohmand, Swat, Dir and Chitral districts. Led by Corps Commander Peshawar Lieutenant General Hassan Azhar Hayat and Inspector General Frontier Corps North Major General Noor Wali Khan, the plantation campaign commenced with a ceremonial tree planting in Bara, Khyber district.

Local elders, students, community members, representatives of district administration and Security Forces joined in the initia-

tive, underscoring the collective effort to preserve nature's bounty.

The day's activities included an awareness walk where students prominently displayed banners advocating for environmental stewardship.

In Orakzai, Mohmand, Bajaur, Swat, Dir and Chitral, similar functions were organized, fostering widespread participation from district administrations, locals, and school communities. Hundreds of saplings were planted, symbolizing a shared commitment to combatting environmental degradation.

With spring's arrival, the campaign aims to enhance the region's natural beauty

and combat environmental pollution.

Pak Army and Frontier Corps North are steadfast in their mission to promote tourism and elevate the aesthetic appeal of these districts through sustained conservation efforts. The campaign will run until March 31, 2024, with thousands of saplings set to be planted, embodying a collective vision for a greener, more sustainable future.

Participants and stakeholders alike extend their gratitude to Pak Army and Frontier Corps North for spearheading this crucial initiative, emphasizing the integral role of community engagement in safeguarding our environment.

Govt to launch technical training project: SACM

PESHAWAR (APP): The government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is mulling over bringing technical and vocational training in the province at international standard and launching a scheme of work place-based training to the under-training students in industrial and technical sectors to utilize the skilled manpower in domestic and foreign markets.

The model of this training project instead of teaching theory will consist of practical in technical and vocational institutions while the graduated students and skilled workers under the project will also be given a reasonable stipend during their practical training.

In this regard, a meeting regarding Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority was held under the chairmanship of Special Assistant to Chief Minister Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa for Technical Education and Industries and Commerce, Abdul Karim Tordhirs here on Thursday.

Besides, the Managing Director (MD) TEVTA Aamir Afaq and Director Finance Munir Gul, other officials also attended the meeting.

The Special Assistant was briefed regarding the basic outline of the plan of the said proposed project and given details regarding its usefulness and importance.

Speaking in the occasion, the Special Assistant instructed that in order to equip the youth in the province with employment and to take advantage of the abundant opportunities available for manpower in technical and professional fields in the country and abroad, he said equipping youth with market-oriented skills is essential.

He said that for this pur-

pose, acquiring a paper degree is not enough, but the students under the training of technical institutions in the industry and all other technical fields must be exposed to practical training, for which the new proposed project is very important.

He directed implementation of the project to make it fruitful and useful in all aspects and it should be placed in the board of TEVTA for its approval and courses with demand and industries and technical fields should be included while a reasonable and transparent procedure should be devised for the selection and classification of students to benefit all the districts of the province.

He also directed the TEVTA authorities to generate income from their institutions and machinery to utilize them usefully and also introduce various models in this regard.



PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Health Syed Qasim Ali Shah listening people's issues.

FIA's crackdown continued

PESHAWAR (APP): On the directive of the Federal Interior Minister, major operations of FIA Kohat Zone, elements involved in electricity theft and sale of fake drugs were arrested here on Thursday.

During the crackdown Illegal electricity connections were disconnected from Hangu Road Kohat and electricity was being stolen by connecting a wire to the direct line at the service station, FIA spokesman said.

Illegal connections have been canceled by PESCO officials, FIA spokesman said. Cable and other equipment used for illegal electricity supply have been seized and further legal action will be taken against the accused in the light of PESCO's technical report, FIA official said.

The spokesman said that FIA is also tightening the grips against the elements involved in the sale of fake medicines and raids operations on several medical stores located in Sarai Naurang, Lakki Marwat, involved in the sale of fake medicines.

During the raids, a large quantity of suspected fake medicines were sealed on the spot, FIA official said, adding, the suspected drugs were handed over to the drug inspector for laboratory testing.

Inquiries have been registered against the accused and further legal action will be taken in the light of the report of DRAP officials, FIA spokesman said.

SCCI to hold conference

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Preparations for holding a business conference theme: "Watan Kay Maimar - Tajir Aur Sanatkar (traders and industrialists - builders of the nation) under auspicious of Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry gets underway, which is being scheduled in second week of May.

A promotional campaign for the proposed conference has been formally launched as billboards and banners were installed at various squares and main routes and bazaars in the city, which conveyed a message that why treasure-filled Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is behind in the journey of progress? And Why traders and industrialists in trouble and highly-qualified youth jobless?

In this respect, on Thursday, a meeting was held at the chamber house under chairmanship of Fuad Ishaq, president of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry to review the arrangement of the forthcoming business moot, said in a statement here.

KP is blessed with abundant natural resources, despite the fact that businessmen of this province have faced enormous difficulties, Fuad Ishaq told the meeting.

The SCCI chief said no attention was paid toward treasures-filled KP province, owing to which it is behind in the race of progress as compared to other federating units.

According to a statement, a giant billboard has been installed at a busy square of the city, noting that one hand unemployment is increasing KP while traders and investors are highly disappointed in the prevailing scenario.

C&W, Energy Dept announces compliance with KPRA

PESHAWAR (APP): Secretaries of Communication and Works Department and Energy and Power Department have announced to ensure strict compliance with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sales Tax on Services.

The announcement was made here on Thursday during separate meetings of Director General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority with officials of both the departments.

During meeting, DG KPRA informed the Secretary C&W Idrees Khan Marwat that exemption to FATA and PATA in

the government-funded ADP and PSDP Schemes seized to exist after July 2021, however, it is still given which is wrong and shall be stopped immediately.

She informed the participants that due to misclassification of sales tax on goods and sales tax on services, the tax of KPRA is going to FBR that needs to be stopped. She added that there is no data sharing between KPRA and field formations of the C&W due to which there are compliance issues that need attention.

Secretary C&W Idrees Khan said that tax is a collective responsibility and everyone has to play role to ensure strict tax compliance for development of the province. He directed field formations and officers present at the meeting to ensure tax compliance.

It was agreed that KPRA would arrange a training workshop for Executive Engineers and Account Officers on KPRA on Sales Tax on Services, and Withholding regulations after Eid.

DG KPRA in another meeting with Secretary

Energy and Power Hassan Ahmed asked for registration of Inspectorate of Electricity with KPRA and complete tax compliance from Pakhtunkhwa Energy Development Organization (PEDO) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Oil and Gas Company Limited (KPOGCL).

The secretary agreed to the request and directed his team to register Inspectorate of Electricity and start tax compliance. He also directed officials of PEDO and KPOGCL to ensure complete tax compliance for betterment of the province.

International Forest Day observes with enthusiasm at PFI

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) a joint initiative of UNDP and the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination celebrated International Day of Forests at the Pakistan Forest Institute (PFI), Peshawar in collaboration with Climate Change, Forestry, Environment & Wildlife Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to raise awareness about the significance of forests in mitigating the impacts of climate change among the young generation.

Forests play a crucial role in absorbing the carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere, thereby mitigating climate change. This makes them especially crucial in reducing the impact of climate-induced disasters like Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs). For a country like Pakistan, which is amongst the top ten most vulnerable countries to climate change, the restoration and conservation of forests is highly imperative.

The event attended by Zuhra Nigar, Additional Secretary Forest, Haleema, Deputy Secretary Forest, Safdar Shah, Additional Director General Educa-

tion, Kifayat, Additional Director General Forestry Research, Afsar Khan, Deputy Director EPA and Rashid Khan, GLOF-II Project Representative along with the students from Pakistan Forest Institute, City School Hayatabad participated through painting competition, debate competition and tablos by kids

The event has been addressed by Zuhra Nigar, Safdar, Haleema and Rashid. The tree plantation was done at the end by Zuhra Nigar and Haleema and Students of PFI.

The event, attended by students, teachers, govern-

ment stakeholders and civil society organizations featured a tablo by young school kids, debate competition and an art competition on the theme of "forests and innovation" among students. While addressing the event, the Chief Guest appreciated GLOF-II project and Forest Department for arranging the event and emphasized on the importance of the conservation of the forests. Chief Guest distributed the certificates and shields among the event participants. To encourage tree plantation activities in society, the event concluded with a tree plantation drive

by the Chief Guest and students.

"World Forest Day in Peshawar taught me that our actions today determine the world we inherit tomorrow. From planting trees to advocate for conservation, every effort counts towards a greener, more sustainable future," said by the student.

"Engaging in arts and debate competitions during World Forest Day was not just about showcasing talent, but also spreading awareness about the critical importance of preserving our forests. Every action counts towards a greener, healthier planets," said by the student.



Progress made in water supply during flood response

PESHAWAR (APP): International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC) in collaboration with Red Crescent Societies (PRCS) Pakistan has made significant progress in implementation of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) services in the flood-affected districts of Pakistan during the last 19-month flood response and recovery operations.

"Our WASH interventions have benefitted 314,167 people with improved access to safe drinking water, promoting better sanitation practices, and encouraging good hygiene habits among the flood-affected communities," said Piwi Ophoff, Head of Country Delegation, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Pakistan. In a message issued on Thursday in connection with World Water Day 2024 to be observed internationally on March 22, Piwi Ophoff shared that during the floods, PRCS with support from the IFRC had deployed 13 water treatment plants across seven locations in Sindh, four in Baluchistan, and two in KP provinces. These

water treatment plants benefitted approx. 42,000 individuals daily. PRCS in collaboration with IFRC has constructed and rehabilitated 98 hand pumps, benefiting 34,000 people.

Moreover, five solar water filtration plants in Sindh and Balochistan provinces have been constructed, with a daily average production of 10,000 liters per solar water filtration plant.

A further 4,000 household water filters have been distributed in Larkana, Qambar Shahdadkot, Shikarpur, Jacobabad, and Dadu districts of Sindh, to ensure the availability of safe drinking water at the household level.

The construction of 300 permanent household latrines for 3,000 beneficiaries has been completed, contributing to minimizing the risk of sanitation-related diseases.

As part of our capacity building efforts, four hygiene promotion trainings have been conducted, through which 145 PRCS staff and volunteers have been trained in Larkana, Shikarpur, Qambar Shahdadkot, Dadu and Khairpur

districts in Sindh.

These trained PRCS staff and volunteers have conducted 1,200 hygiene promotion sessions reaching over 27,000 people in the flood-affected areas.

Piwi further informed that under the Flood Recovery Programme, 250 hand pumps, 1,200 permanent household latrines, and 18 solar water filtration plants are constructed across Sindh, KPK, Punjab, and Balochistan provinces.

Meanwhile, Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, Chairman, Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) in his message on the occasion said that as let us remember that cooperation on water issues creates a ripple effect of harmony, prosperity, and resilience.

Water is not merely a resource to be contested; it is a fundamental human right, essential to all aspects of life.

In our efforts to support those affected by disasters such as monsoon floods, we are constructing latrines, installing water pumps, and implementing solarized water treatment plants.

Together, we have produced 28.5 million liters of

safe drinking water, benefiting approximately 42,000 individuals, Shahid Laghari added.

Weather to remain dry

PESHAWAR (APP): The weather is likely to remain dry in most districts of the province, an official of the Meteorological Department said here Thursday.

The districts of Chitral, Dir, Swat, Kohistan, Kurram, Khyber, Batagram, Mansehra and Abbottabad are expected to experience light rain with partly cloudy skies, official of Meteorological Department said.

During the last 24 hours, the lowest temperature in Kalam was minus 3 degrees centigrade recorded, the official of the Meteorological Department said. Saidu Sharif recorded 3 degrees Celsius, Malam Jabba and Dir 5 degrees Celsius while Chitral recorded 6 degrees Celsius, the official said. Peshawar recorded a minimum of 12 and a maximum of 30 degrees Celsius, the official added.



In brief

DC chairs meeting
F.P. Report

BARA: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Khyber Sanauallah chaired high level meeting in connection of Khyber Pass Economic Corridor and Southern Link Road was held here in the DC office last day. Additional DC (relief) Nauman Ali Shah, Additional DC (finance) Haseeb-ur-Rehman, Assistant Commissioner, Jamrud Dr Amir Zeb, representatives of Forces, Khyber Police, Tesco, National Highways Authority, Planning & Development, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zone, Nespak Consultant and other were among the participants. Matters like land acquainted for District Secretariat, Police, and Forces besides route in Jamrud for Southern Link Road and Khyber Pass Economic Corridor and site selection for 220 KV and 132 KV grid stations were thoroughly discussed. It was decided that the officials of National Highways, Security Forces, and Planning & Development Nespak Consultant keeping in view the suggestion, presented in the meeting will formulate a strategy to remove hurdles in Southern Link Road and Khyber Pass Economic Corridor. The officials were directed that joint efforts will be needed to complete people welfare schemes on time.

Notorious
robber killed

GUJRANWALA (INP): An under custody notorious robber was killed in firing of accomplices during attempt to free him from police custody. According to details, the police was taking the under custody accused for recovery of the looted valuables when his accomplices ambushed police party at Aziz Cross Fly Over, in Dhaley police station jurisdiction, Gujranwala. As a result of firing, the under custody accused identified as Abu Baqar was killed and attackers sped the scene after retaliatory action of police. The killed accused had killed a man in presence of his wife. The body was shifted to hospital and police started search for his fled accomplices.

Secy population
visits Charsadda
F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: Secretary Population Welfare, Hafiz Motasimbillah on Thursday visited District Population Welfare Office Charsadda and inspected its various sections. He inspected various departments of the office and checked store house and records. He listened to the problems of people and assured cooperation to resolve their issues. He checked attendance register and expressed displeasure over absenteeism. He directed action against workers found guilty of ignoring their responsibilities.

DC inspects
check post
F.P. Report

KOHAT: Deputy Commissioner Kohat Azmatullah Wazir along with Assistant Commissioner Kohat visited the Joint Check Post in Khushalgarh here on Thursday. The check post has been established for prevention of smuggling. On this occasion, Deputy Commissioner Kohat Azmatullah met the Police, Excise, Customs, Agriculture, Food Departments and other government staff present there and issued necessary instructions regarding the prevention of smuggling.

BISP closes four distribution centers over alleged graft

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) Ehsaas Kafalat program, four centers that distribute funds due to corruption were sealed and the devices were confiscated, the cuts in the distribution of aid funds are unbearable Assistant Director Mardan.

According to the details, Jawad Khan Khattak, Assistant Director of Benazir income Support Mardan, visited different distribution centers of Mardan. Meanwhile, Ishal Mobile Zone Swarian, Falcon Mobile Ahmedabad Toru, Azan Towez Center Toru and Umair Mobile were acting on the complaints of illegal deductions from the aid funds in the centers of Dargai Bazar and blocked the IDs of the four agents and seized the biometric devices.

On this occasion, the Assistant Director made it clear that illegal deductions from the poor citizens in the relief funds are intolerable. He said that the crack-down will continue to root out corrupt elements.

Food Authority inspected bazaars: The presence of the Halal Food Authority's checking team in Mardan's crowded commercial center, Cantonment Board officials and local milk vendors reprimanded the checking team, and KP Food's employees retreated amid slogans of Shame Shame, why did Cantonment Board area action, Cantonment officials will talk to CO of Cantonment, DD Halal Food Mardan.

According to the details, the checking team of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa Halal Food Authority was

engaged in checking the samples of the milk shop in the jurisdictional area of Cantonment Board on Bank Road in the mobile laboratory on the spot.

Meanwhile, the milk vendor called the officials of the Cantonment Board, who shouted at the Halal Food Authority team in front of dozens of citizens and employees of the milk shop, prohibiting them from operating in the area of the Cantonment Board. After resistance, the checking team slipped away from the spot while the milk vendors raised slogans of Shame Shame while inciting the employees and citizens against the departing team.

It is clear that the officials of the Cantonment Board were called by phone from home, in this context Deputy Director KP Food Mardan Qaiser Khan while talking to the media representative said that our team was checking as usual and the samples were taken. They will take actions after getting their laboratory results. They said that they will talk to the CO of Cantonment Board in this regard.

CPDI along with USAID launches 5 years program: The United States government, in partnership with the Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives, launched a five-year project titled HumAhang in Harmony. HumAhang aims to foster peacebuilding and enhance dialogue between citizens and government institutions in South Punjab and North Sindh.

This project will be implemented by Centre for Peace & Development Initiatives (CPDI), Pakistan

Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT), and Blumont Pakistan, and seeks to strengthen the effectiveness of citizen-led initiatives. Responsiveness to citizens' concerns.

USAID Mission Director Kate Somvongsiri noted the long history of collaboration between the United States and Pakistan. "The United States government is committed to supporting initiatives that promote peace-building and inclusive communities, where the voices of individuals including women, members of minority communities, and persons with disabilities are fully heard in decision-making processes."

The event also celebrated Women's History Month and highlighted the vital role women play in all spheres of life. "It is essential that women's voices are heard and included in decision-making processes that affect their lives. By promoting gender equality and by empowering women, Pakistan can create a more prosperous and equitable society for all its citizens," noted the USAID Mission Director, U.S. Consul General in Lahore Kristin Hawkins was also present at the launch.

Present at the event were representatives from various government departments, civil society organizations, media, and youth. Mukhtar Ahmad Ali and Mohammad Azim Arshad presented the project's objectives and Ahmed Bilal Mehboob offered words of appreciation for USAID's continued support to promote peace-building and social cohesion.

Plantation drive kicks off at Lower Chitral

F.P. Report

CHITRAL: Plantation drive for the year 2024 kicked at police line launched in Chitral. In this connection, a simple function was also held in Police Line Chitral.

Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Abdul Majid, Sub Divisional Forest Officer (SDFO) Yusuf Farhad, Assistant Commissioner Chitral Dr. Atif Jalib, Director Agriculture, District Officer of Sail and Water Conservation, Mujeeb-ur-Rehman, Commandant Chitral Scouts, Major Admin, DPOs and officers of other departments participated in plantation campaign. DFO Chitral Abdul Majeed highlighted the importance of plants and trees.

DFO said that the forest department has been distributing free sapling to Chitral police which they will be planted in different police stations.

He said that because of these plants and trees not only it increases the beauty of Chitral but it also gives us oxygen in terms of tons, colourful birds sit on its branches in the spring season, which of causing the human being. Nature is a lot of goodness and in the

autumn season, the leaves of the trees turn into different charming colors, which further enhances their beauty.

He said that these plants also have colorful flowers, which makes us happy and eradicate all the boredom and fatigue of the human being and they became fresh and happy. These trees are giving us fruit along with fuel as we also burn its branches for cooking and heating purposes.

In response to a question, he said that since Chitral is a cold area, where in some areas severe cold weather unbearable and the people here cut fire wood for burning to protect themselves from the cold as well as using it for cooking, which causes a lot of burden on the forests and if this situation remained continue in the next thirty years, there would be no tree or plants in this region, except forest protected trees.

He suggested that if the people of Chitral were provided cheap electricity or LPG gas on subsidize rate, they would use gas or electric heaters for cooking and heating purposes instead of burning wood as a result it would reduce the burden on the forests.

Sub Divisional Forest Officer Yusuf Farhad said that these trees also work as a natural check dam because Chitral is dry zone. When it is raining, flood water flow very fast and the nullahs from the mountains occur in the form of destructive floods. It also causing often human life and financial loss, but in the mountains or fields where plants and trees are on large scale, it slows down the flood water and reduce its speed if the flood water flows at a low speed, it is not so damaged.

As high comparative to high speed flood water. He added that because of these trees and plants, we can also save from the negative impact of climate change. Because now we see that there is no rain or snow for a long time, but without season, it is raining and snow. If we do more and more plantation and planting trees, it will be cause of positive impact on our environment and reduce the negative effects of climate change. During the ceremony, the participated in plantation campaign by planting saplings. Later on, free plants were also distributed among the people. The ceremony ended with praying words.

Polio eradication campaign from 25th

F.P. Report

LARKANA: Additional Deputy Commissioner One Larkana Asif Raza Chandio has given strict instructions to the officials of the health department to make the polio eradication campaign in Larkana district from March 25 to March 31, 2024 a success. He expressed these views while presiding over the meeting of the District Polio Eradication Committee in the Durbar Hall of the Deputy Commissioner's office.

The previous polio campaign was reviewed in the meeting. Officials of the health department gave a briefing to the additional deputy commissioner of Larkana about the preparations made in connection with the polio campaign. He directed the officials to ensure that children under 05 years of age are vaccinat-

ed against polio. He said that polio teams should be appointed at the UC level and committees should be formed to monitor them and ensure the security of the polio teams.

ADC said that the target set for polio vaccination should be completed in any case. He said that polio is a dangerous disease, for which a campaign has been going on for many years. The Sindh government is paying special attention to the polio campaign. The meeting was attended by Assistant Commissioner Larkana, DHO Larkana Syed Athar Shah, WHO Representative Dr. Asif Pechuho, Health Department, Education Department officials and officials of related institutions.

Meanwhile, in district Qamber Shahdaddit, Utility stores established by

the government for public welfare have not benefited the public, a day ago when a shop was exposed, media representatives ran the news, after which district officers reached at shop and imposed the fine on the shopkeeper.

It is very sad that the utility store employees with poor people who did not have access to the goods. If sold, the citizens might have received cheaper goods from the utility for some time. The biggest thing is that the claimants of the ownership of the city in various cities have become accomplices of the corrupt mafia.

Instead of giving relief to a few businessmen, it makes a lot of sense to stick to a city with a population of three lakhs, which Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Faryal Talpur need to focus on.



JAMRUD: KP Minister for Higher Education, Meena Khan Afridi inspecting Lab during his visit to Government College of Management Sciences in Khyber.

Four killed in Swabi mishaps F.P. Report

SWABI: Four persons lost their lives in separate incidents of violence and road mishaps occurred in different areas of the district, said police on Thursday.

In first incident, a man, Aamir Nawaz was shot dead by unknown assailants in limits of Topi Police Station. The reason behind the killing has not been ascertained.

In second incident, accused Hamza and Asif injured, Waqas who was resident of Kalu Khan. The injured succumbed of wounds in the hospital. Reason behind the incident was an altercation between two parties.

Meanwhile, Masooq Ali who was FC worker was electrocuted in his house in Village Sherghand while a man, Qasim Shah was killed in an accident of tractor trolley in Banda Salim Khan.

Assistance to victims announced F.P. Report

WANA: Wana Welfare Association (WWA) President Rehmat Ullah Wazir announced financial aid to the victims of roof collapse in Raghazai village near Pak-Afghan border, South Waziristan.

According to details, as many as 6 members of a poor family lost their lives while 10 people were injured when the roof of their house collapsed last night. Children and women were included among the dead. In response to this grief, WWA President, Rahmatullah Wazir said that in this difficult time, he is going to the home of the victims to express his condolences.

The Association has announced cash assistance of Rs 10 lakh for the bereaved family, aimed at mitigating the immediate financial crisis. WWA reiterated their commitment to stand shoulder to shoulder with the family, cooperate with them and provide all possible help.

It has promised to continue to help people in this difficult time. As investigations continue into the tragic accident, the focus is on providing compassionate support to the victims and their families. Important collective efforts by local organisations, police, and other stakeholders to ensure their support to get the affected family stood on its feet, are going on. Local people claimed.

Man kills wife, minor daughter

LODHRAN (INP): A pitiless man strangled to death his pregnant wife and minor daughter after clash with wife over domestic issues, police said on Thursday.

According to details, the incident took place in Massa Kotha locality of tehsil Karor Pakka in district Lodhran where accused Irfan exchanged hot words with pregnant wife Ruqia after which the wife slapped husband.

Release of two youths demanded

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The relatives of two youths from Lower Dir and Bajaur abducted by the Kache gang of robbers demanded the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief minister Ali Amin Gandapur and Inspector General of Police (IGP) to take notice of the matter and ensure a safe release of the kidnapped youths.

Talking to local journalists here at Timergara the victims' relatives said the youths fell prey to the Kacha robbers when they tried to buy a car they came across through social media on a low price. They said that Haji Hameed from Koto Hajiabad area saw the pictures of vehicles on social media and then went to Punjab to buy a vehicle along with his partner.

When the two youths reached there, they were taken hostage at gunpoint and shifted to an unknown location. The relatives said that the gang was now

demanding a ransom of Rs 50 million from the families. They said the children and families of the hostages were grief-stricken and they were waiting for the release of the youths.

Meanwhile, the Lower Dir district police officer Ziaud Din Ahmad confirmed the abduction of the two youths and told local journalists on contact that they had gone to Multan Punjab from Lower Dir where they were taken hostage by robbers. The DPO said that they were in contact with police high ups to resolve the matter but they could do nothing on their own as the incident had occurred in Punjab province.

The relatives demanded the KP chief minister Ali Amin Gandapur and IGP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to take notice of the matter and take it up with the Punjab government as soon as possible so that safe release could be ensured.

JUI-F argues Speaker

Elimination of encroachment directed

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Commissioner Mardan Division Shaukat Ali Yousafzai has instructed the related departments including Tehsil Municipal Administration Mardan to take immediate and effective measures to eliminate illegal encroachments in Mardan city. He ordered to clear the main market bank road of the city from Kachari Chowk to Pakistan Chowk of all kinds of temporary and permanent encroachments and a committee headed by Additional Deputy Commissioner was entrusted with the task.

In this regard, a meeting was held under the chairmanship of Commissioner Mardan Division in the Commissioner's Office, in which Additional Commissioner Naem Akhtar, Regional Police Officer Najib-ur-Rehman

ur Rahman, City Mayor Mardan Himayat Ullah Mayar, Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Saeedullah Jan, Cantonment Board CEO, NHA, PKHA, C&W officers and other concerned officials were present.

City Mayor Himayat Ullah Mayar drew the attention of the meeting to the illegal encroachments on the main highways including markets and intersections in Mardan, the second largest city of the province, saying that due to these encroachments, the lives of the citizens have become miserable, while it also detracts from the beauty of the city. He said that due to lack of parking in the markets and shopping plazas established in the city, traffic problems are also increasing.

Commissioner Mardan Division Shaukat Ali Yousafzai directed the offi-

cers present in the meeting to regularize the traffic system in the city to make Mardan city clean from encroachments, reconstruct the U-turns in the light of traffic engineering and where the slip road directed to take steps for construction of slip road where necessary. It was decided in the meeting that in the first phase, Bank Road will be cleared of all types of temporary and permanent encroachments.

A committee consisting of police officers was formed to eliminate encroachments from Bank Road, after which other markets and intersections will also be cleared of encroachments. Commissioner Mardan Division directed the committee to ensure the achievement of the set goals in every way to make Mardan, the second largest city of the province an ideal city.

Parents, teachers urged for success of enrollment drive

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: District Education Officer (DEO) male Lower Dir Mehboob Elahi asked schools' heads, teachers and the parents teachers' councils to make the ongoing enrollment drive in the district a success.

DEO in this regard visited several primary, middle and high schools and met the teachers. Speaking to teachers during his visit to the government high school Dherai Talash the DEO said the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government had launched the enrollment campaign from March 1st. DEO checked the teachers and students' attendance and answer sheets of students during the ongoing annual examination.

He appreciated the school management and staff for its best performance. He said that 100 per-

cent out-of-school children would be enrolled in public sector schools in the Lower Dir district. The DEO said that most of the uneducated youth fell prey to terrorism and other anti-state elements due to their ignorance. He said that extensive planning was required to make the country prosperous and developed.

Elahi said the department had planned a door-to-door campaign in all parts of the district to bring all the out-of-school children to government schools. He asked schools' heads, teachers and PTC members to play their active role in enrolling more and more out-of-school children. He asked the schools' heads to display attractive banners and enrollment panaflexes on prominent places outside the schools' gate so that the public could be made aware

about the drive.

DEO directed the schools' heads and school leaders to also utilize the services of local mosques, prayers' leaders, ulema and area elders to make the drive a real success. He also issued directives to public sector schools to arrange functions for observing the March, 23rd in their areas. He said the schools should also assign speeches, songs and special tableaux to students to mark the day with utmost spirit and zeal.

PTI demands ending cases against Murad Saeed: Pakistan Tahreek Insaf (PTI) Lower Dir has demanded the federal government and law enforcement agencies to end cases against the former federal minister Murad Saeed and other activists who have been underground since May 9 last year.



Advocates gird for Texas migrant law that could upheave US immigration

TEXAS: Texas has upped its fight to make a controversial new law - which would allow local authorities to arrest and detain migrants - enforceable. The law has been the subject of an ongoing legal battle, with the United States Supreme Court briefly allowing it to go into effect.

But a lower court blocked its implementation hours afterwards, amid ongoing challenges over the law's constitutionality. That court heard further arguments weighing the pause. As Texas's Republican-led government doubles down, pledging to defend the law in any legal battle, civil rights advocates have likewise promised to do everything in their power to stop it from taking effect.

They warn, however, that the law and its uncertain fate only add to the confusion and fear surrounding immigration in the US. "Our community has endured a legal and emotional roller coaster, and this anti-immigrant law [is] very extremist, probably the harshest we've ever seen in the country," said Christine Bolanos, a representative from the Texas-based Workers Defense Project, which represents migrant labourers. "We do know that we're in limbo, and we're doing our best to continue keeping our community updated and fighting alongside our partners and allies." The law - known as Texas Senate Bill 4 or SB4 - was originally signed by Republican Texas Governor Greg Abbott in December. But it has since faced legal challenges from rights groups like the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the administration of President Joe Biden, who have maintained it violates the US Constitution. They argue that the federal government has the sole authority to set and enforce immigration policy. But for community groups like the Workers Defense Project - which is not part of the current lawsuit - SB4 raises the spectre of racial profiling and other abuses of power on the part of law enforcement. Bolanos told Al Jazeera there is still work to be done to aid migrants and asylum seekers with information so that they can navigate the uncertainty surrounding SB4. "The vast majority of our members are migrant workers fleeing violence and other injustice in Latin America, only to find themselves confronting measures like this," Bolanos said.

She explained that her organisation works to ensure migrants and asylum seekers "understand their rights, regardless of their legal status". The group also offers tips about "how to act if and when an officer approaches" someone about their immigration status. "We've also started working on what's called a 'dignity plan'. That includes an emergency checklist for

them to make sure that our members have everything in order to prepare for the worst," Bolanos said. "If they're facing the threat of deportation, do they have their child's passport? Who can pick up their kids from school other than them? Who has the authority to enter their house?" "These are things that anyone who is undocumented in Texas needs to be thinking about," she added. The Texas law would empower state and local authorities to detain people suspected of having crossed into the US from Mexico outside of legal ports of entry. Those without legal documentation could face up to 20 years in prison, but the law allows them to avoid prosecution if they agree to be deported to Mexico, regardless of their country of origin. Mexico's government has condemned the law as "inhumane" and has said the country will not accept migrants and asylum seekers deported by Texas. Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador also called SB4 a violation of international law. Rights advocates say the law is the state's most draconian yet. It comes as part of a slate of state legislation aimed at curbing an influx of migrants and asylum seekers at the border. Some of that legislation comes under the auspices of Operation Lone Star, a \$12bn initiative that has seen state authorities plant razor wire along the border, build a floating fence in the Rio Grande, and surge members of the Texas National Guard to the area. However, critics have highlighted a particular danger of heightened racial profiling under SB4. Texas is already a "minority-majority" state, where ethnic and racial minorities outnumber the white population. An estimated 42 percent of Texans identify as Latino, 10 percent are African American and another 5 percent are Asian American.

Those communities are expected to face the brunt of the law, according to Domingo Garcia, the national president of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC). Such a law could wreak particular havoc in communities with "mixed" families composed of US citizens and undocumented members, he explained. "There is a huge fear that a father can go to work one day, get stopped by police, then be detained and deported," Garcia said. "His children might come home to an empty home." Like the Workers Defense Project, LULAC is leveraging its resources to reach those most at risk in Texas. The organisation is launching a "very massive communications program" with ads on Spanish-language TV channels like Univision and Telemundo, as well as through social media and WhatsApp. — Aljazeera

Thailand's national police chief suspended

BANGKOK (AP): Thailand's national police chief and one of his deputies were temporarily suspended under the order of Prime Minister Srettha Thavasin, as accusations that the deputy was involved in an illegal online gambling ring sparked concerns about a possible power struggle in the police department.

Torsak Sukvimol, who was appointed to the top police post in October last year, and Surachate Hakpam, one of his deputy chiefs, were temporarily moved to inactive posts in the Office of the Prime Minister, which directly supervises the police department. Surachate has been accused of involvement with illegal online gambling websites, a charge he denies. Surachate's home in Bangkok was raided in September last year in an

operation police said was related to the bust of a major illegal online gambling network. Eight of Surachate's subordinates were arrested on the day of the raid over the case.

The raid occurred as a new national police chief was set to be named, and Surachate was considered one of the frontrunners. Torsak was appointed to the post days after the raid. Thailand's national police agency has a tradition of fierce internal politicking, as well as a longstanding reputation for corruption at all levels. The prime minister said the transfer order is effective immediately and that he is forming a special committee to investigate the situation, adding he would consider lifting the suspension orders after 60 days. Srettha said the orders were not meant as punishment but to ensure that an investigation could

occur without interference. Torsak and Surachate were called into the Prime Minister's Office hours before reports of the transfers came out and later held a news conference together, denying any personal rift between them. Jaroonkiat Pankaew, the deputy chief of the Central Investigation Bureau, said last month that Surachate was accused of abuse of power and bribery, after money trails linked him to bank accounts used by the online gambling websites. He also said investigators would pursue a money laundering charge against Surachate, who has yet to be arrested or formally charged. Through his lawyers, Surachate has denied any wrongdoing, claiming the accusations were made to discredit him and accusing other top-ranking police officers of taking money from the gambling operators.

US releases 'strongest ever' car pollution rules

WASHINGTON: The United States has released what it calls the "strongest ever" regulations for car tailpipe pollution, as the country looks to accelerate its sales of electric vehicles (EVs) in an effort to curb greenhouse gas emissions. Still, the rules - released - fall short of more ambitious goals previously set by the administration of President Joe Biden.

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) said it projects that the regulations would lead to 30 to 56 percent of new cars being electric between 2030 and 2032. Last year, the EPA projected that EVs would amount to 60 percent of new car sales by 2030 and 67 percent by 2032. "With transportation as the largest source of US climate emissions, these strongest-ever pollution standards for cars solidify America's leadership in building a clean transportation future and creating good-paying American jobs, all while advancing President Biden's historic climate agenda," EPA Administrator Michael

Regan said in a statement. "The standards will slash over 7 billion tons of climate pollution, improve air quality in overburdened communities, and give drivers more clean vehicle choices while saving them money." In 2021, Biden signed an executive order setting an objective that half of US car sales in 2030 would be "zero-emissions vehicles". Close to eight percent of new car sales in the US in 2023 were electric vehicles, according to the EPA.

The car industry, however, has pushed back against the Biden administration's efforts to tighten emissions regulations and speed up the transition to electric vehicles. Biden's agenda has also faced opposition from Republicans, as well as questions about whether the US has adequate infrastructure, including charging stations, to accommodate a significant increase in the number of electric cars on the roads. But Democrats argue that curbing greenhouse emissions is necessary to address the climate crisis, as the planet

sees some of its hottest temperatures on record. The EPA also said that the rules will save money in the long run. "These standards will ... provide nearly \$100 billion of annual net benefits to society, including \$13 billion of annual public health benefits due to improved air quality, and \$62 billion in reduced annual fuel costs, and maintenance and repair costs for drivers," it said. Former President Donald Trump, who is set to face off with Biden in the general elections in November, has repeatedly criticised the Democratic incumbent over EVs. Trump stirred controversy last week when he said there would be a "bloodbath" if Biden is reelected, arguing that the Democratic president would allow Chinese EVs, built in Mexican factories, to flood the US market.

He later clarified that his "bloodbath" comment was meant to indicate that the US car industry would suffer under his Democratic opponent. In January, Trump also took aim at EVs. — Aljazeera

Papua New Guinea floods leave 23 dead

PAPUA NEW GUINEA: At least 23 people have been killed as torrential rain and king tides wash away roads, homes and food gardens in Papua New Guinea's (PNG) highland and coastal regions. The dead, including a mother and her child, died in landslides in the highlands province of Chimbu, Lusete Man, the acting director for the National Disaster Centre, told the AFP news agency.

"The 23 were buried under tons of mud in three separate landslides," Man said. "We are still experiencing heavy rains, landslides, flooded rivers, that have caused extensive damages in the highlands." Coastal communities in the Gulf province south of Chimbu were also inundated. King tides flooded the coastal village of Lese Kavora, causing "extensive damage to food gardens and contaminating fresh water sources", PNG's public broadcaster, the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), reported. Community members have since discussed potential options for relocating the village, NBC added, "as this is not the first time the village has been pooled under king tides due to climate change, causing the rise in sea level". Heavy flooding also spread to the highlands province of Enga, with the community leader of Wapenamanda, Aquila Kunzie, telling RNZ Pacific the community was rationing its food supply. "Constant continuous rainfall in Wapenamanda district has caused rivers to flood," Kunzie said.

He added that more than 100 women and children had taken refuge in his village following nearby tribal warfare. "[We are eating] only one meal per day, we can't afford breakfast and lunch with all of them," he said. "We have no way to call out for help." Papua New Guinea is ranked as the world's 16th most at-risk country to climate change and natural hazards, according to the 2022 World Risk Index. Its mountainous highlands are home to the third largest rainforest on earth, after The Amazon and the Congo Basin rainforest. But logging from palm oil plantations and foreign timber companies has seen large areas of the rainforest cleared. PNG is the world's fifth-largest exporter of palm oil with most of its exports going to India, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Malaysia in 2022. Clearing rainforests contributes to climate change but also causes local environmental degradation that can make floods and landslides worse. — Aljazeera

Russia warns US

MOSCOW: Russia has said it is aware of US intelligence efforts to use commercial satellite operators such as SpaceX and has cautioned that such moves made their satellites legitimate targets. The Reuters news agency reported this month that SpaceX is building a network of hundreds of spy satellites under a classified contract with a US intelligence agency, demonstrating deepening ties between Elon Musk's space company and national security agencies.

"We are aware of Washington's efforts to attract the private sector to serve its military space ambitions," Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told reporters. Such systems "become a legitimate target for retaliatory measures, including military ones", Zakharova said. The network is being built by SpaceX's Starshield business unit under a \$1.8bn contract signed in 2021 with the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), an intelligence agency that manages spy satellites, five sources familiar with the programme said, according to Reuters. The vast, low-Earth orbiting satellite systems are aimed at supporting ground forces. If successful, the sources said the programme would significantly advance the ability of the US government and military to quickly spot potential targets almost anywhere on the globe. — Aljazeera

Sudan is on course to become world's worst hunger crisis: UN

UNITED NATIONS (AP): The nearly year-long conflict between Sudan's military and paramilitary forces has put the African nation on course to become the world's worst hunger crisis with malnutrition soaring and already claiming children's lives, the UN humanitarian office warned.

Edem Wosornu, the director of humanitarian operations, told the UN Security Council that already one-third of Sudan's population - 18 million people - face acute food insecurity, and catastrophic hunger levels could be reached in some areas of the western Darfur region by the time "the lean season" arrives in May. "A recent assessment revealed that one child is dying every two hours in Zamzam camp in El Fasher, North Darfur," she said. "Our humanitarian partners estimate that in the coming weeks and months, somewhere in the region of around 222,000 children could die from malnutrition."

Wosornu called the harrowing violent situation that has seen appalling accounts of ethnic-based attacks, sexual violence including gang rapes, and indiscriminate attacks in densely populated areas, "the stuff of nightmares." With the global spotlight now on the Israeli-Hamas war in Gaza and to a lesser extent on the war in Ukraine, she lamented that "A humanitarian travesty is playing out in Sudan under a veil of international inattention and inaction."

Sudan plunged into chaos last April, when long-simmering tensions between its military led by Gen. Abdel Fattah Burhan and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces commanded by Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo broke out into street battles in the capital, Khartoum. Fighting quickly spread to other parts of the country, especially urban areas, but in Darfur it took on a different form, with brutal attacks by the Arab-dominated Rapid Support Forces on ethnic African civilians. Thousands of people have been killed.

Two decades ago, Darfur became synonymous with genocide and war crimes, particularly by the notorious Janjaweed Arab militias against populations that identify as Central or East African. In late January, the International Criminal Court's prosecutor, Karim Khan, said there are grounds to believe both sides in the current conflict are committing possible war crimes, crimes against



humanity or genocide in Darfur. The UN's Wosornu said there has been no respite from fierce fighting in Khartoum, Darfur and Kordofan which are home to 90% of the people facing emergency levels of food insecurity. Farmers have been forced to abandon their fields and cereal production has dropped since hostilities moved into Sudan's breadbasket, Jazeera state, in December, she said. In these circumstances, the delivery of humanitarian aid should be a lifeline, Wosornu said, but the UN appeal for \$2.7 billion for Sudan in less than 5% funded - receiving just \$131 million. She expressed hope that a high-level donors conference for Sudan and its neighbors in Paris on April 15 will lead to "tangible commitments" to support aid operations "in the face of looming famine." In addition, Wosornu said, the UN must have access to reach the most vulnerable people in Khartoum, Darfur, Kordofan and Jazeera states which "continues to be severely obstructed" by the fighting. It also needs more cross-border openings and approvals to deliver aid across conflict lines, she said.

Carl Skau, the UN World Food Program's deputy executive director, told the council the rapidly worsening food security situation in Sudan also has "profound regional implications." In addition to the 18 million people facing acute food insecurity in Sudan, he said 7 million people in neighboring South Sudan and nearly 3 million in Chad which borders Darfur also

face dire hunger. Currently, Skau said, 90% of people who are a step away from the catastrophic level of food security and urgently need life-saving food "are trapped in areas that are largely inaccessible to humanitarian agencies," including Khartoum, Jazeera, Kordofan and Darfur.

"If we are going to prevent Sudan from becoming the world's largest hunger crisis, coordinated efforts and joined up diplomacy are urgent and critical," he said. "We need all parties to provide unrestricted access: across borders and across conflict lines." Echoing Wosornu's call for funding, he said WFP had to cut assistance to 3 million acutely hungry people in South Sudan and reduce rations to others in need because of a lack of money. And in Chad, he said, WFP will have to end assistance to 1.2 million refugees and nearly 3 million Chadians. Skau expressed concern that hunger will spike even higher when Sudan's lean season arrives, and could reach catastrophic food insecurity unless there is sustained access and resources.

Rein Paulsen, Director of the FAO Office of Emergencies and Resilience, told a news conference that an agency report on Sudan issued demonstrates the conflict's damage to agricultural production: cereal production in 2023 dropped 46% below 2022, and up to 80% below in areas where the conflict was most intense. "The outlook for food production in 2024 is bleak," he said.

Prabowo Subianto's election as Indonesia's next president is official

JAKARTA (AP): Indonesia's electoral commission announced that Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto, a former general linked to past human rights abuses, was elected president. The results immediately drew allegations of fraud from Subianto's political rivals.

Former Jakarta Gov. Anies Baswedan and former Central Java Gov. Ganjar Pranowo have said they plan to challenge the official results at the country's highest court. The Feb. 14 election was Indonesia's fifth since shaking off a dictatorship in 1998. The archipelago of more than 270 million people is Southeast Asia's most populous country and its biggest economy.

Here's what you need to know about the results and why they are being challenged. Subianto, a 72-year-old former special forces general with ties to former dictators and popular current President Joko Widodo, emerged as the apparent winner on election day, as unofficial tallies by polling agencies showed he had an overwhelming lead. That victory was confirmed by the General Election Commission's official tally,

a laborious process that took more than 30 days. Subianto won 58.6% of votes while Baswedan received 24.9% and Pranowo received 16.5%. Both of the losing candidates said irregularities occurred before, during and after the vote. Widodo faces criticism for throwing his support behind Subianto. The outgoing president distanced himself from his own party and made a series of actions seen as efforts to boost Subianto's campaign. Indonesian presidents are expected to remain neutral in elections to replace them. Hefty social aid from the government was disbursed in the middle of the campaign - far more than the amounts spent during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Widodo distributed funds in person in a number of provinces, which has drawn scrutiny. The challengers also allege that the Constitutional Court acted improperly in allowing Subianto to choose Widodo's son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, as his running mate, even though he does not meet the constitutional age requirement. Anwar Usman, the court's then-chief justice, is

Widodo's brother in law. An ethics panel forced Usman to resign as chief for failing to recuse himself and for making last-minute changes to the election candidacy requirements, but allowed him to remain on the court as long as he does not participate in election-related cases. Any election challenges face long odds, said Todung Mulya Lubis, a lawyer who represents Pranowo. Subianto's commanding lead reflects pre-election polls that showed him as the front runner.

"We will argue that when we talk about election disputes, we are not only talking about the outcome of the election, but we are also talking about the process of the election, prior to the election," Lubis told journalists on March 14. In Indonesia, election disputes can be registered with the Constitutional Court during the three days that follow the announcement of official results. The court is expected to rule by May 7. Any cases would be decided by eight justices instead of the full nine-member court because Usman is required to recuse himself. The new president will be inaugurated on Oct. 20 and will have to appoint

a Cabinet within two weeks. Subianto was a longtime rival of Widodo who ran against him for the presidency twice and refused to accept his defeat on both occasions, in 2014 and 2019. But Widodo appointed Subianto defense chief after his reelection, paving the way for an alliance despite their rival political parties. During the campaign, Subianto ran as the popular outgoing president's heir, vowing to continue signature policies like the construction of a multi-billion-dollar new capital city and limits on exporting raw materials intended to boost domestic industry. Subianto, who comes from one of the country's wealthiest families, is a sharp contrast to Widodo, who came from a humble background and as president often mingled with working-class crowds.

Subianto was a special forces commander until he was expelled by the army in 1998 over accusations that he played a role in the kidnappings and torture of activists and other abuses. He never faced trial and vehemently denies any involvement, although several of his men were tried and convicted.

Record number of people executed for drug offences in 2023

LONDON: At least 467 people were executed for drug offences in 2023, a new record, according to Harm Reduction International (HRI), an NGO that has been tracking the use of the death penalty for drugs since 2007. "Despite not accounting for the dozens, if not hundreds, of executions believed to have taken place in China, Vietnam, and North Korea, the 467 executions that took place in 2023 represent a 44% increase from 2022," HRI said in its report, which was released.

Drug executions made up about 42 percent of all known death sentences carried out around the world last year, it added. HRI said it had confirmed drug-related executions in countries including Iran, Kuwait and Singapore. China treats death penalty data as a state secret and secrecy surrounds the punishment in countries

including Vietnam and North Korea. "Information gaps on death sentences persist, meaning many (if not most) death sentences imposed in 2023 remain unknown," the report said. "Most notably, no accurate figure can be provided for China, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia and Thailand. These countries are all believed to regularly impose a significant number of death sentences for drug offences." International law prohibits the use of the death penalty for crimes that are not intentional and of "the most serious" nature. The United Nations has stressed that drug offences do not meet that threshold.

Singapore has drawn international criticism after resuming the use of the death penalty in March 2022, following a two-year hiatus during the pandemic. Some 11 executions, carried out by hanging, took

place that year, and at least 16 people had been hanged as of November 2023, according to Human Rights Watch. Among those executed was Saridewi Djamani, a Singaporean woman who was convicted of drug trafficking in 2018. She was the first woman to be executed in the city-state for almost 20 years.

"Singapore reversed the COVID-19 hiatus on executions, kicking its death row machinery into overdrive," Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director at Human Rights Watch said in the organisation's annual report. "The government's reinvigorated use of the death penalty merely highlighted its disregard for human rights protections and the inherent cruelty of capital punishment." Some countries have moved to reform their death penalty regimes in recent years with Malaysia ending the

mandatory death sentence, including for drugs, and Pakistan removing the death penalty from the list of punishments that can be imposed for certain violations of its Control of Narcotics Substances Act.

Still, in other countries, defendants continued to be sentenced to death for drug offences. HRI said such confirmed sentences last year increased by more than 20 percent from 2022. About half of those were passed by courts in Vietnam and a quarter in Indonesia.

At the end of 2023, some 34 countries continued to retain the death penalty for drug crimes. In Singapore, there are just over 50 people on death row with all but two convicted of drug offences, according to the Transformative Justice Collective, a Singapore-based NGO that campaigns against the death penalty. — Aljazeera

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Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

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Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

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

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

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

Where Pakistan's core problem lies?

THE newly elected cabinet held its first-ever meeting, presided over Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, and took a holistic review of the national affairs, discussing future courses and modalities to steer the country out of prevailing chaotic situations. As said, trillions of rupees were being evaded by the mafias due to undocumented transactions, lax legislation, and an informal economy. The cabinet decided that the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) would be completely digitized as soon as possible to avoid tax evasion. Meanwhile, Rs 2.4 trillion worth of tax cases were currently pending either in the tribunals or in the courts which need to be concluded as early as possible. The Premier told the cabinet that the country faces annual power theft of around Rs 500 billion which was alarming and needs to be stopped immediately. The Prime Minister directed the authorities to draw a list of honest and efficient officers to encourage them and acknowledge their services. On the other hand, the prime minister vowed to take strict action against the officers involved in corrupt practices.

The current portrait of the country depicts a gruesome picture of national affairs in which each sector is down-trodden and each institution is fragile, demanding reform and support from the government to carry out its normal functioning. Institutional losses, mismanagement, and non-productiveness are common problems of all government entities, that further add to the government woes and public issues instead of solving those impediments. In fact, institutional corruption and dishonesty are the two major issues of the country that eroded its foundations and caused unimaginable damage to our nation.

Historically, Corruption has long been a pervasive issue in Pakistan, permeating various sectors of society and hindering progress and development. From government institutions to private enterprises, its detrimental effects have undermined public trust, impeded economic growth, and perpetuated inequality in our society. The menace of corruption has been fueled by multiple factors, including political instability, weak institutions, inadequate transparency, a lack of accountability mechanisms, and socio-economic disparities. The nexus of power and privilege often leads to the abuse of authority for personal gain. Moreover, feudal culture and political legacies have contributed to a tolerance for corruption, making it entrenched within the fabric of society. Currently, Corruption and misgovernance have been identified as big challenges that gave birth to cartelization and spoiled each nook and corner of our national life. The 2023 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) ranked Pakistan 29 out of 100 countries with no improvement in the past decade.

Pakistan continues to face significant challenges and several mechanisms including the creation of the Anti-Corruption Establishment, National Ombudsman Office, National Accountability Bureau (NAB), anti-corruption Courts, etc. largely failed in satisfying the national needs rather those institutions themselves fell victim to similar evils, grinding down public trust in the country. The government structure is badly marred by rampant bribery, nepotism, embezzlement, and favoritism and the writ of the law is absent across various sectors of national life.

Historically, multiple strategies have been implemented to reset national institutions wherein the Army was deployed to overcome electricity theft, Air Force generals were deployed in the PIA to enhance its operational efficiency and overcome its fiscal losses, etc. but all those measures could not prove their worth. Instead of drawing lists of loyal and dishonest bureaucrats, the government must endeavor to establish the writ of the law, stem accountability, and ensure merit and transparency all across the board which is essential for any civilized, developed, and trustworthy nation. Otherwise, a selective approach and ad-hoc measures neither resolve our long-held issues nor transition our society into a successful nation.

Literacy rate and education emergency

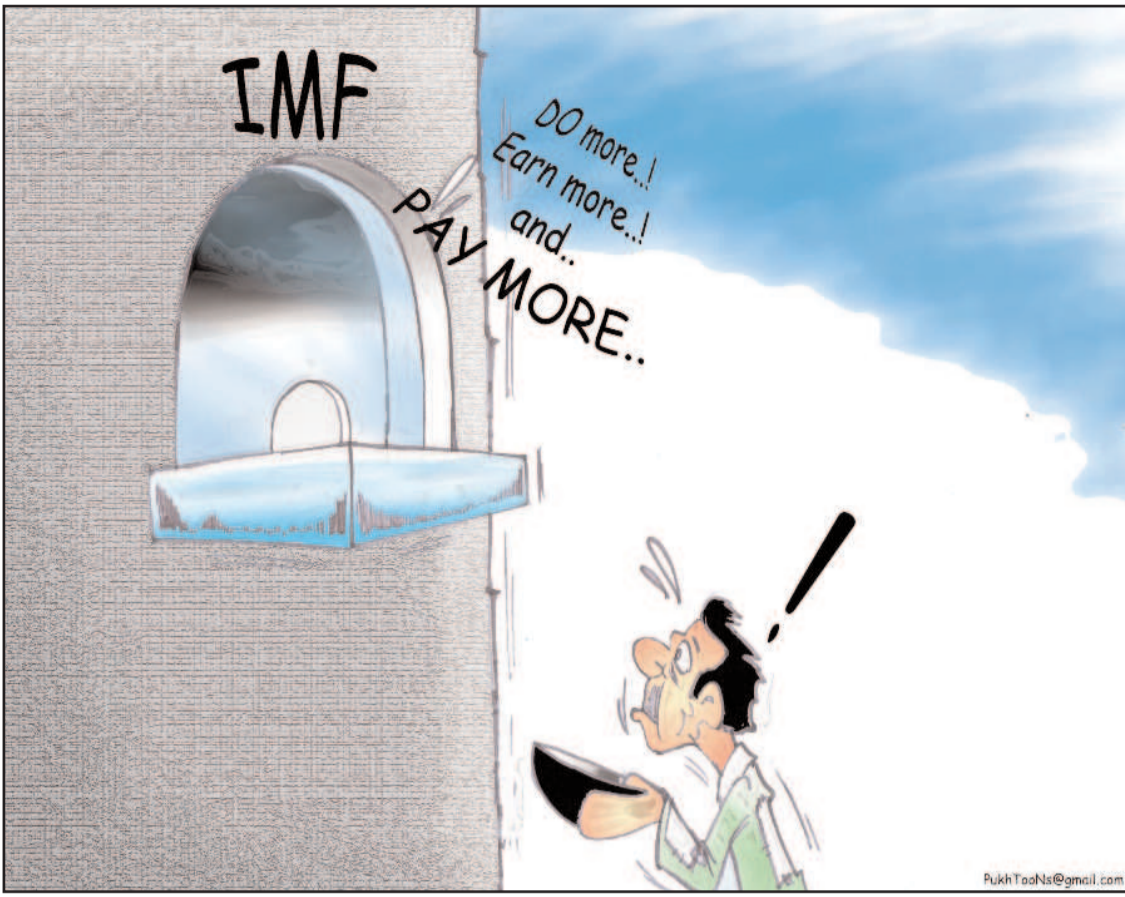
FEDERAL Minister for Education and Professional Training Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui has underlined the need to declare a nationwide education emergency to bring back out-of-school children. The minister expressed deep concern over the alarming number of out-of-school children and discussed suggestions with the high-ups of the Ministry of Education and Professional Training to achieve literacy goals of the country. The Education Minister aims to float the proposal to declare an education emergency in the upcoming cabinet meeting so extraordinary measures can be put in place to enroll out-of-school children without delay.

Education is the most important element in the overall national life of any nation. A modern and competitive education system is of utmost importance to impart state-of-the-art education to school and university students so they can compete with the current day challenges effectively. The private education industry has been groomed over the past years while the numbers of public schools and students in government education institutions decreased sharply because of a lack of resources and substandard teaching practices in state-run educational institutions. Pakistan faces an alarming situation in the education sector, wherein the literacy rate stands at 58% and nearly 28 million children are currently out of school, which forms almost 40 per cent under 18 children in the country. Pakistan's education sector faces serious issues such as a lack of funds, policy lethargy, shortage of education facilities/ schools, social disparities, class-based education systems, low literacy rates, pedagogical conservatism, commercialization of the education sector, unskilled teaching staff, multiple mediums and diverse curriculum being taught in various schools systems and religious seminaries in the country.

Historically, the education sector has always been the least funded, poorly managed and largely ignored sector in the country, due to which Pakistan not only lags behind in literacy but is surpassed by the regional states in the field of Research and Development (R&D) and modern innovations. The newly appointed federal Minister floated the idea of educational emergency which is something of an exaggeration of the situation and distraction from the real issues. Pakistan education sector needs mass funding, and provision of essential infrastructure, availability of highly qualified teacher, conducive and politics free educational environment, provision of free of cost books, school uniform and removal of fees etc. along with a ban on child labour, a halt of gender discrimination and prosecution of parents if they fail to enrol their children in schools. So, each child boy and girl join the school and essentially obtain grade 12 education at all cost. This objective can easily be achieved through budgetary allocation and adoption of necessary legislation at an urgent basis.

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Could Poland's promotion to Europe's top table be a turning point for Ukraine?

Paul Taylor

POLAND'S long-standing struggle for a bigger say in European leadership may finally be gaining ground with the revival of the long dormant Weimar Triangle - a diplomatic compact bringing Warsaw together with Germany and France in a regular dialogue on EU affairs.

When the Polish prime minister, Donald Tusk, joined the German chancellor, Olaf Scholz, and the French president, Emmanuel Macron, for a show of unity in Berlin last Friday, they breathed new political life into a format that has the unfulfilled potential to unite northern, southern and central Europe around a common agenda - especially in support of Ukraine.

The three leaders are coming from very different starting points. Poland is rushing to rearm itself and pouring assistance into Ukraine. Scholz is digging his heels in and refusing to give Kyiv Germany's most potent long-range cruise missiles, while Macron has suddenly morphed into Volodymyr Zelenskyy's most outspoken ally, even though Paris lags far behind Berlin in terms of the volume of its military aid. Relations between France and Germany, long the EU's leading couple, are as tense as they have been for ages, with domestic politics pulling them in opposite directions. The uber-cautious Scholz has to manage a fractious coalition including pacifists in his own Social Democratic party (SPD), while Macron's new hawkishness is partly an attempt to wrong foot the rising hard-right opposition to his minority centrist government.

For the past decade, the Weimar Triangle has been more like the notorious Bermuda triangle of aviation fame - a void into which political initiatives episodically disappear without trace. That was mainly because the previous Polish government, led by Jarosław Kaczyński's conservative nationalist Law and Justice (PiS) party, spent its time feuding with Berlin and Paris on everything from the rule of law to arms contracts, the

fight against the climate crisis, relations with Russia, and demands for second world war reparations.

There were earlier air pockets too, notably when the then French president Jacques Chirac reprimanded central European countries in 2003 by saying they had "missed a good opportunity to shut up" after they had signed a joint letter supporting the US-led invasion of Iraq. The Poles were long seen in Berlin and Paris as alarmist about Russia and too close to the US. With the benefit of hindsight, Macron acknowledged last year that France should have listened more to central Europe.

He has the confidence of most of his central and eastern European peers, and is moving fast to mend Warsaw's relations with Brussels and dismantle his predecessor's capture of the judiciary and public media.

With a dynamic economy and a population of nearly 40 million, Poland is the largest and most influential central European state. Moreover, it is on its way to becoming a regional military power and a fortress against Russian aggression by spending more than 4% of its gross domestic product on defence. How Warsaw will pay for this arms bonanza remains to be seen.

Yet the country has punched below its weight in recent years because of Kaczyński's obsession with picking fights with Berlin and Brussels for domestic political gain, and with playing off Washington against the EU. Tusk, a former president of the European Council, is well positioned to play a greater role in EU leadership. He has the confidence of most of his central and eastern European peers, and is moving fast to mend Warsaw's relations with Brussels and dismantle his predecessor's capture of the judiciary and public media. He is also a trusted senior figure in the centre-right European People's party,

the EU's dominant political family.

Whether Tusk is willing to join Berlin and Paris in their reform agenda for the EU, including taking more foreign policy decisions by majority vote instead of unanimity, is unclear. First he needs to consolidate his authority at home, defuse farmers' protests over imports from Ukraine, and avert a comeback by PiS in local polls in April and European parliament elections in June. PiS would seize on any hint that Tusk's centrist coalition was willing to yield Polish sovereignty by giving up a national veto on foreign policy and sanctions. The Weimar Triangle was the

regular Weimar format meetings with their Polish counterparts, the westerners were not receptive to Poland's warnings of the looming threat from a revisionist Russia. Germany's headlong pursuit of closer energy ties with Moscow, bypassing both Poland and Ukraine, was typical of that failure to listen.

Ironically, Tusk now finds himself having to soothe strained relations between Paris and Berlin, which have been squabbling publicly over their degree of commitment to Ukraine, as well as European defence procurement, nuclear energy and common EU borrowing, making it harder for the EU to take decisions at a time of acute geopolitical stress. With US military aid to Ukraine blocked by partisan feuding in Congress, Europe's leading powers urgently need to overcome differences over arming Kyiv. Scholz and Macron each gave some ground at Friday's meeting, backing a Czech initiative to procure hundreds of thousands of rounds of ammunition from outside the EU, while European production is insufficient to meet Ukrainian needs.

Gently chiding both Paris and Berlin, Tusk said, "Ukraine needs less talk and more ammo." The leaders did not take questions. The triple handshake was the political message. Friday's meeting did not resolve differences over Scholz's refusal to give Kyiv potentially gamechanging Taurus long-range cruise missiles, nor over Macron's assertion that sending western troops to Ukraine should not be ruled out.

However, they agreed to meet again in the Weimar format after the June European elections, when each of the three may have a freer hand to make progress both on arming Ukraine and on EU reform.

The risk is that by then Ukraine's strategic position will have deteriorated further, and hard-right Eurosceptic nationalists will have gained a louder voice in the European parliament to oppose both further aid to Kyiv and closer European integration.

The Guardian

Trump's dangerous \$600m problem

Frida Ghitis

WHEN former President Donald Trump's lawyers informed the court on Monday that their famously wealthy client faces "insurmountable difficulties" in raising cash for a bond to cover the massive judgment against him in the New York attorney general's civil fraud case, Trump critics may have felt some satisfaction. Facing close to \$600 million in legal judgments, Trump, who has spent decades bragging about his wealth, is facing a financial crisis.

To his critics, the thinking is that any obstacle in Trump's path puts him further from the presidency and so, makes the country safer. In this case, however, the opposite may be true.

The former, and perhaps future, president looks like he is on the financial ropes, and that makes him potentially even more dangerous. He urgently needs cash - lest he be forced to give up some of his trophy properties to satisfy the courts. That pressing need could make him vulnerable to anyone offering to help him out of his troubles, including America's enemies and rivals.

It was Trump himself who highlighted the governing conflicts that could emanate from depending on other people's money. Boasting, as he always has, of being fabulously rich, he told the 2016 voters that his campaign, unlike that of his rival, was completely self-funded. That wasn't true, of course, but his argument was actually correct. Nobody would control him, he claimed, because those who give you money expect something in return. "I don't need anybody's money," Trump said in his June 2015 presidential campaign announcement.

Now Trump needs money, a lot of it. What would his creditors or benefactors want in return?

It was already noteworthy that Trump made a 180-degree reversal regarding the TikTok platform not long after meeting with one of the platform's wealthy stakeholders at his Mar-a-Lago estate. He had vowed to ban the app in the US for national security reasons when he was president. Now, with Congress moving to force TikTok out of China's control, he has suddenly switched camps.

Alarm bells started going off as soon as Trump's bond predicament became public. Illinois Democratic Rep. Sean Casten posted on X, "The presumptive @GOP nominee for President is desperate for \$464M (and counting)," saying that makes him a "massive national security risk; any foreign adversary seeking to buy a President knows the price."

As a reminder, a New York judge last month found Trump liable for fraudulently manipulating the value of his properties, ruling that his "complete lack of contrition and remorse borders on the pathological," and slapped him with a \$450 million penalty, plus interest. Separately, Trump was ordered to pay more than \$80 million to E. Jean Carroll in January after a jury concluded he defamed her when he denied he had sexually assaulted her. (Trump denies all wrongdoing).

In addition to nearly half a billion dollars in judgements, Trump faces massive legal fees over multiple civil and criminal cases, and his presidential campaign funds, drained after funding his per-

sonal legal costs, are badly lagging behind President Joe Biden's massive war chest.

Anyone who thinks America's foes are not paying attention to what could become an entry gate for a Trojan Horse is suffering from wishful thinking.

Incredibly, the former president wants to bring back to his campaign none other than the disgraced, Russian-linked, formerly imprisoned operative Paul Manafort, his 2016 campaign chairman. Even without Trump's financial troubles this would raise all manner of red flags, especially concerning Russia.

Manafort had a track record of working for dictators around the world before he met Trump. After his stint with the 2016 Trump campaign, he was sentenced for financial crimes and served time in prison before Trump pardoned him. He had already received tens of millions from Russian oligarchs and pro-Kremlin Ukrainians when he approached the Trump campaign and, oddly, offered to work for free. Representing Trump at the 2016 Republican convention, he reportedly had the GOP platform scrap a plan supporting Ukraine, then already besieged by Russia. It was a startling reversal for the party.

Now Trump wants him back in, of all things, a fundraising capacity. But there are many ways to help Trump without going through the campaign or through the president. Consider son-in-law Jared Kushner, whose professional activities since leaving his senior adviser role in the Trump administration have raised eyebrows. In addition to securing a \$2 billion cash infusion from the Saudis for his investment firm, Kushner is now busy with developments in the Balkans.

Last week, he confirmed he's closing in on major real estate businesses in Albania and Serbia. Regardless of the legality and (in)appropriateness of the deals, the fact that Trump's son-in-law, a former White House official, is making hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of business deals abroad, including in places like Serbia, which has close connections to Russia, potentially creates more openings for cash infusions and interference by people seeking to pay for influence in US politics with an eye toward obtaining their favored government policy as a payoff. If, indeed, foreign money comes to Trump's rescue, it wouldn't be the first time.

Now, there's a lot of wealth sloshing around the globe and much of it, perhaps all of it, would like to buy influence. Foreign or domestic funders might ask for favors in exchange for their support. We have no evidence that any Russian has approached Trump or Kushner or Manafort so far. And, to be fair, Trump already aligns with the wishes of Russian President Vladimir Putin, particularly concerning Ukraine, a war Trump sounds as if he wants Putin to win.

Already Saudi Arabia has boosted Jared and his wife Ivanka Trump's fortunes. We don't know what, if anything, the Saudis wanted in return. Trump's "insurmountable" money problems could easily become America's problems, because there's a fairly good chance he could become president again and, at this very moment, he is looking for a way to surmount these problems at a cost that only he may fully know.

CNN

Climate change increasing saltwater's threat to crops

Ranvir S. Nayar

ONE of the most damaging impacts of climate change is hardly visible to the naked eye, even though it is occurring more frequently and at a greater intensity each year. This damage is occurring in the ground below us, as rising seawater levels are leading to the erosion of land in various coastal regions, as well as to much higher soil salinity, rendering it infertile.

In addition to these two threats, coastal regions are being battered by extreme weather incidents like cyclones, which are becoming more frequent and more intense. Millions of farmers across the world whose lands are near the coast have been facing increasing damage to their farmland due to the triple threat posed by climate change and its aftermath.

A 2021 report by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization stated that more than 833 million hectares of land worldwide has been

damaged by high levels of salinity; this is more than a 10th of the planet's total farmland. This number is rising by as much as 10 percent each year, indicating the severity and rapidity of the spread of this problem around the world.

While rising sea levels were initially seen as a threat only to extremely low-lying areas, notably islands in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, over the last few years the damage has spread to vast tracts of land stretching from North America right across the globe to South and Southeast Asia.

In North America, the damage is mainly occurring in the northeast coastal area, where hundreds of acres of farmland are being lost every year because they are becoming too wet and salty to grow crops. This occurs as saltwater moves inland, mainly during storms, as high tides invade the coastal land. Another factor in driving the salinity of farmland is rising

groundwater consumption; to fill in the empty spaces in the aquifers, subterranean saltwater starts to flow from the sea. Obviously, droughts, which are also increasing due to climate change, only act to enhance the seawater incursion into farmlands.

Their vulnerability stems from two main factors. One is the sheer number of people who rely on farming as their principal livelihood and means to provide for their families. Unlike the Western or developed economies, where farming employs less than 1 percent or 2 percent of the total population, in developing countries, especially large nations like India, Bangladesh, Indonesia or Nigeria, farmers and their families often account for as much as 60 percent of the population, taking the total number globally to well over 2 billion people.

The second factor relates to their financial situation.

Unlike the average farmer in the developed world, who is relatively better off, most farmers in developing countries find themselves at or very near the absolute bottom of the economic heap, living well below the poverty line.

In such a situation, the developing world's farmers are in no situation to be able to handle setbacks like crop failure due to drought or floods, let alone undertake the relatively expensive measures to prevent salination or treat it if it is already present on their lands.

As almost all of them are poor, seeking crop insurance cover is out of the question, assuming that insurance companies even offer proper coverage and reimburse farmers in the case of damage to their harvests. Similarly, while rich countries' governments manage to find the funds to compensate farmers for crop losses, seeking government help remains out of

reach for most farmers in the developing world.

The future does not look promising for farmers around the world, as carbon emissions have risen sharply since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic and do not show any signs of slower growth in the near term. This means they must brace for an even more severe impact on their farmlands and harvests. While some solutions do exist - or rather stop-gap arrangements that can at least slow down the incursion of saltwater - most of these are actions to be implemented at a regional level, rather than for each farm on its own. For instance, mangroves are a very effective barrier that curb soil erosion and prevent the incursion of saltwater, hence curbing the salinity of soil. But planting and protecting mangroves is beyond an individual farmer and can only be implemented by either groups of villages or

ideally by national or regional governments that can muster the required resources. Similarly, governments can educate farmers about shifting their crop patterns by adding salt-resistant or hardy crops or through crop rotation. But these need large-scale education programs, as well as the availability of seeds and other raw materials.

So far, there have been few signs of governments taking the threat as seriously as the situation merits, leaving farmers to fend for themselves. However, sooner rather than later, governments are bound to wake up to the fact that the loss of harvests is not just a challenge for an individual farmer or even all farmers collectively, but for entire societies and countries, as it severely erodes food security. The sooner governments acknowledge this fact, the better it will be for all. The question is whether they will wake up in time.

How the Putin phenomenon happened by accident

Konstantin Sonin

VLADIMIR Putin has just won his fifth term as president of Russia (or his first according to the 2020 referendum). He has been at the helm of the country uninterrupted for 25 years, even while Dmitry Medvedev was nominally head of state, making him one of the longest-serving leaders in Russian history. Like all those leaders, his lengthy tenure includes periods of reform, rapid development, stagnation and war.

What makes Putin's political longevity increasingly puzzling is the absence of any distinguishing characteristics, personal or political, that defeated his challengers for the Russian throne. The answer lies in how although Russia's leader was determined by chance, the system rebuilt itself around him.

Putin does not possess any qualities that would distinguish him from other Russian politicians, other than the office he holds. He is an uninspiring speaker, his expressions are formulaic, if not outright primitive. He is slow to absorb new information and struggles to remember names and numbers. He struggles to grasp the mood of his audience, and has a mediocre, sluggish sense of humor at best.

Not surprisingly, he never made an impression on anyone until he gained power. Once he did, his apparent charm was the product of the respect commanded by his office, not his personality. By contrast, Alexei Navalny, the Russian opposition leader murdered on Putin's orders, made an impression wherever he went whether among seasoned diplomats at an embassy reception or inmates in a prison colony. If Putin were to enter a room unannounced, no one would notice him.

Putin is not the only uninspiring

person to have led Russia - look at Nicholas II. But while his supreme power was inherited, Putin's rise was very different. In 1999, the power obtained through appointment as prime minister had to be earned and defended, not merely inherited.

It is clear what made Putin president. In the absence of a political program that was distinct from his predecessor, he was perceived as a man of the people. Because that is what he was, an average man. After 10 crisis-ridden years, when the elite invariably occupied the top positions, someone who resembled the views, approaches, and mannerisms of the majority appeared attractive. After a quarter of a century in power, Putin no longer resembles the average Russian. In 2024, his views on most issues align with those of a small minority. The combination of his advanced age (in a country with a relatively low life expectancy) and mental inflexibility which prevents him from adapting to a changing world, led to Putin's views becoming distant from those of the majority of Russians.

The sharp increase in censorship and repression of people who stray from the official lines about war and peace, authority, gender relations, etc. is a direct result of this divergence. Putin can no longer pretend to be an average man, because he is no longer average. Russia's citizens changed, but he did not - because he has not had to. The snap forensic analysis after the March 2024 elections showed that the government had to add tens of millions of votes to Putin's final tally to make his so-called victory look more decisive. Putin had no chance of winning a competitive election. He had to arrest, force into exile, and - ulti-

mately - kill his political opponents, along with closing newspapers and prohibiting civil organizations, and making sure his only opponents were puppet candidates to make it happen.

As unimpressive as Putin is as a person, he is equally devoid of individuality as a politician. Across his quarter of a century in power, he appointed people to key positions based on personal relationships. Their professional qualities clearly played a secondary role. Of course, the state is made up of many institutions and many people. A significant share of those in power have made their way through a competitive, albeit undemocratic, selection process. Stalin or Khrushchev appointed the overwhelming majority of their closest associates - quick-minded, resilient, morally flexible people capable of working 20 hours a day - this way. With Putin, for every competent technocrat like Igor Shuvalov or Elvira Nabiullina, there is an Igor Sechin or Vladimir Yakunin, otherwise useless personal friends.

Putin's inability to work with strong and independent-minded individuals was evident from the very beginning of his rule. By 2022, such people were practically nonexistent among Russia's leaders.

In theory, the inability to select and promote technocrats, even in his own political interests, should have caused Putin to lose power at an early stage. But it did not. The system operated on the premise that the most competent individuals had the opportunity to become incredibly wealthy if their activities also ensured the prosperity of Putin's inner circle. For instance, Igor Shuvalov was a competent hand

who guided the government's response to the 2008-2009 financial crisis. He made a staggering billions of dollars in the process. One can also look at the Russian Railways under Vladimir Yakunin or Rosneft under Igor Sechin. The companies functioned the exact same way as they would have done without them, while their executives raked in incredible salaries without doing anything.

The war against the LGBTQ+ community comes, of course, from backwardness and ignorance. But it is also a war against a younger, growing majority in defense of one's own power. Likewise, the war against abortion rights and women's autonomy is classic ideological conservatism. But it is also politically conservative - a pregnant woman is less likely to join a protest, and a man tied to a single job to support his large family is more likely to remain loyal. Though Putinism seems unique, turns out to be just the most primitive ideology that ensures the continuation of his power. The origin of the "Putin phenomenon" lies in the fact that the Russian state was built and solidified around this average individual. The result could never be effective, and turned out to be tragic.

A decade and a half of stagnation, during which the country fell further behind the world each year, culminated in a war that has already claimed tens of thousands of lives, a wave of repression that led to hundreds of thousands of refugees, the destruction of science and education, and the creation of a new economic model that sets the stage for a crisis after the war ends. But whether this story will convince the country that it needs a different model to live and thrive is yet unclear.

The Moscow Times

How maritime search and rescue cooperation can be strengthened in S China Sea

Ding Duo

waters of Wan'an Tan in the Nansha Qundao. In July 2023, in the waters near Jinqing Dao in the Xisha Qundao, China's maritime search and rescue forces rescued a semi-submersible ship (25 people on board), which was in danger due to main engine failure, and helped its repair main engine. In September 2023, in the waters near Yongshu Jiao in the Nansha Qundao, China's maritime search

tions, conducted joint sand table exercises and joint search and rescue exercises, held high-level training courses, and achieved many results in substantive cooperation.

Although the search and rescue cooperation of the countries surrounding the South China Sea has made positive progress and achieved phased results under the promotion of China, the current cooperation is still limited to a few coastal countries in the

In March 2023, China's maritime search and rescue forces successfully towed the breakdown Panamanian-flagged bulk carrier "FuPing", which was carrying 21 people on board, to safety in the southwest waters of Wan'an Tan in the Nansha Qundao.

and rescue forces rescued a Liberian-flagged freighter carrying 19 Filipino crew members, which was in danger due to main engine failure, and helped its repair of the main engine. In November 2023, when the Marshall Islands-flagged ship "Es Jasmine" was sailing through the waters of Beibu Bay, a Vietnamese sailor accidentally fell and fractured his arm. With the coordination of the Hainan Maritime Search and Rescue Center, the injured sailor received timely treatment in Haikou.

Over the years, maritime search and rescue cooperation has been an important part of practical cooperation in the South China Sea, and it is also the consensus reached between China and ASEAN countries. In November 2002, China and the 10 ASEAN countries signed the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea. According to Article 6 of the DOC, the parties concerned may explore or carry out cooperation in the field of search and rescue before the dispute over territorial sovereignty and maritime jurisdiction in the South China Sea is fully and permanently resolved.

In the following four editions of the Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity (2005-2010, 2011-2015, 2016-2020, and 2021-2025), strengthening maritime search and rescue cooperation has been included in the relevant items. In 2017, China and ASEAN countries also established a technical cooperation commission on navigation safety and search and rescue. Under the guidance of the spirit of these documents and approach, China and ASEAN countries have carried out maritime consulta-

South China Sea, and there is a lack of unified, coordinated and normalized emergency plans and facility deployment among countries, so the ability of international rescue coordination and information sharing still needs to be improved.

Due to the complexity of the disputes in the South China Sea, there is still a long way to go to form a comprehensive and stable regional maritime search and rescue cooperation mechanism in the sea. China and ASEAN countries can continue to promote maritime search and rescue cooperation in the following aspects, and make functional cooperation in the South China Sea more substantive:

The first is to strengthen the sharing of maritime search and rescue information and technical experience, and regularly carry out bilateral or multilateral maritime search and rescue sand table exercises, communication drills or live ship drills, to continuously improve the efficiency of maritime emergency rescue.

Second, China and ASEAN countries are encouraged to carry out various forms of cooperation projects on maritime search and rescue through bilateral or multilateral channels, including joint research and development of technology and equipment. Third, in accordance with relevant international treaties, with reference to relevant international standards, and with full consideration of the national conditions of each country, China and ASEAN countries can explore the formulation of operational procedures, technical guidelines and contingency plans for maritime search and rescue operations.

The China Daily

Canada's Gaza policy shift reasserts its moral leadership

Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg

CANADA appears to be recalibrating its policy toward the war in Gaza. Initially, it sided uncritically with Israel, but it has now reconsidered in light of the catastrophic conditions in Gaza, which has become a virtual concentration camp and a free-for-all death zone. Palestinians who are not killed by airstrikes, sniper bullets or tank and artillery shells die in large numbers as a result of Israel blocking humanitarian assistance or systematically destroying medical facilities. Israel's current leaders appear to have totally abdicated their responsibilities under international humanitarian law in a nonstop killing and destruction spree not seen in Palestine since the Crusades.

To distance Canada from these actions, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has become increasingly critical of Israel's war on Gaza. And now his government has made two concrete decisions indicating its displeasure. The changes are more than symbolic, although Canadian humanitarian organizations have demanded that the government do more.

On Tuesday, Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly announced that her government would halt future arms shipments to Israel. Another equally important reversal was the announcement on March 8 that Ottawa would resume its funding for the UN Relief and Works Agency, the main humanitarian organization operating in Gaza, after a disruption of several weeks due to accusations by Israel that some of UNRWA's staff had Hamas connections.

The decision to halt future arms sales to Israel follows a nonbinding vote in Canada's House of Commons on Monday. The motion was introduced by the New Democratic Party, which supports Trudeau's minority government. The New Democrats have repeatedly criticized the government for failing to do enough to protect civilians in Gaza. The motion passed 204-117 with the support of the ruling Liberal Party, Bloc Quebecois and the Green Party.

The vote on Monday also called on Canada to work "toward the establishment of the state of Palestine." The New Democrats had originally called on the government to directly "recognize the state of Palestine," but that was watered down at the behest of the government, which believes that Palestinian statehood should come as the result of a negotiated settlement with Israel, a position it shares with the US.

Canada previously said that, while it had paused issuing military export permits to Israel, it was still assessing applications on "on a case-by-case basis," but the vote on Monday appears aimed at stopping delivery of previously licensed shipments. "It is a real thing," Joly told the press.

Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East called the vote "watered-down," but said it represented a "small step forward for ending Canadian complicity in Israel's genocidal war in Gaza."

Many in Canada have opposed their country's continued arming of

Israel despite the atrocities its forces have committed in Gaza. On Feb. 4, more than 50 peace and humanitarian organizations sent a letter to Joly expressing their "profound concerns about the legal and humanitarian implications of Canada's transfer of weapon systems to the government of Israel."

They added: "Over the last decade, Canada has exported more than 140 million Canadian dollars (\$102 million) in military goods to Israel, including military aerospace components as well as bombs, missiles, explosives and associated parts." And that "some of these weapons could be enabling Israel's operation in Gaza."

In addition to direct exports, the letter stated that Canadian-produced technology has also been supplied to Israel after first being integrated into US-produced systems, including components incorporated into the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, which Israel has used in its bombing campaign across Gaza. The letter quoted experts describing this campaign as the "deadliest and most destructive in recent history."

Given Israel's conduct in Gaza, there is "clear and substantial risk" that Canadian arms may be used to commit serious violations of international humanitarian law or international human rights law, according to the signatories. The letter cited Canada's obligations under the Export and Import Permits Act and the Arms Trade Treaty to stress that it is "required to halt arms transfers and deny further arms export and brokering authorizations to Israel."

Netanyahu on course to become the man who broke Israel

Dr. Dania Koleilat Khatib

WILL Bibi break Israel? This question is in no way original. It was asked in March last year by The Economist magazine. However, this year we have a confirmed answer. It is a resounding "yes." Benjamin Netanyahu fractured Israeli society with his proposed overhaul of the judiciary. Now, his Gaza campaign is on the way to making Israel a pariah.

There is no one more concerned about their own survival than Netanyahu. He knows that, if he leaves power, he will not go home but to jail. Hence, he is adamant about keeping his coalition going, no matter the cost. In this respect, he needs to cater to the most far-right, Jewish supremacist and ultranationalist factions of Israeli politics: Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich.

With his proposed overhaul of the judiciary, he could subjugate the Israeli Supreme Court. On the other hand, this would make him more dependent on his coalition and its extreme-right objectives, which pose an existential threat to Israel itself. The proposed overhaul sparked widespread protests in Israel. But beyond those protests, it created an identity crisis in the country. It created a clash between those who think of their state as "democratic" and those who see their state as being, first and foremost, "Jewish." President Isaac Herzog last year warned that Israeli society risked imploding. Oct. 7 had the effect of rallying Israelis around the flag. However, after the war is over, the divisions are likely to reemerge

and become deeper. In addition to corruption charges, Netanyahu will likely face accusations of negligence. Hence, he needs to continue the aggression.

The war on Gaza - a heavily populated, small piece of land - has resulted in a humanitarian catastrophe. Netanyahu needs to score a victory at any cost. He cannot compromise. Therefore, he is resorting to the most atrocious means to achieve his goal, such as preventing aid from reaching hungry Gazans. The world is appalled that Gazan children are dying from starvation. Nevertheless, Netanyahu remains unmoved. Israel has become an embarrassment to the US, its prime ally. America is now in a position of defending the indefensible. It needs to defend a "plausible genocide." It needs to defend an ally that is starving 2.3 million people. It needs to defend an ally that has been accused of using white phosphorus bombs on a civilian population. It needs to defend an army that shoots at civilians while they carry a white flag. It needs to defend an ally that is bluntly saying it does not want a Palestinian state.

As much as a commitment to Israel is ingrained in US politics, this task is becoming increasingly difficult. As a result, the American government is facing scrutiny from the international community and its own people. Public opinion is turning against Israel. It is no longer seen as the David fighting against Goliath. It is now perceived as the Goliath, the monster. This is a major issue for the Democrats and

President Joe Biden in particular. Arab Americans, Muslim Americans, Black people, Hispanics and progressive Jews are all turning against Biden due to his handling of the Gaza war. These groups make up the bulk of the Democratic vote. The Democrats are worried about the "uncommitted" vote, which could cost Biden the presidency. As much as Biden loves Israel, he would not risk losing the November election just to please Netanyahu.

Everyone knows that Israel cannot survive without American support, whether political or military. And it is starting to lose American political support. Sen. Chuck Schumer, a corporate Democrat and staunch supporter of Israel, has called for new elections. He said that Netanyahu is no longer fit for the job as he is making Israel lose international support. As much as pro-Israel groups fund politicians, those politicians cannot win elections if their constituency does not vote for them. What is even more serious for Israel is that people are now not only questioning the campaign on Gaza, they are also beginning to question Israel's approach on other fronts. The discussion is going beyond the death toll in Gaza and how many children have been killed.

People are also now discussing the settlements, the home demolitions and the dispossession of the Palestinian people. The West used to look at Israel as a home for the Jews that had been persecuted for centuries. Today, Israel is looked at as a

settler-colonial project and the last bastion of white colonialism.

The terms "apartheid state" and "settler-colonial project" are now being used in the mainstream Western media. That cannot be good for Israel. Since its inception in 1948, Israel has been diligently working on gaining legitimacy. It has used all the tools possible to portray itself as a democracy and a beacon of Western civilization in the Middle East. Today, with the Gaza war, all its previous efforts are being shattered. Of course, Israel is trying to play the antisemitism card to silence its critics, but this old tune does not play out anymore. Nevertheless, the Israeli public is living in a bubble. They do not see how the world around them has changed. Their line of thinking is as follows: the entire world is against us, it does not matter what we do. We are alone. Therefore, we need to do what we need to do to survive and be strong. Netanyahu is blowing this bubble instead of making Israel's face reality. The harsh truth for Israelis is that the world does not look at Israel the same way it did before. It is losing its legitimacy.

Currently, the international opposition to the Israeli government's actions is mainly on the grassroots level. However, political change follows social change. If Israel continues with its behavior, sooner or later it will become a pariah. Israel cannot survive as a pariah, isolated from international trade. When this happens, Israelis will start leaving Israel. And Netanyahu will go down in history as the man who broke his own country.

Arab News

Biden is trying to buy his way into a second term

Fred Bauer

FEW things illustrate the broader realignment of American politics better than the latest fundraising numbers from Joe Biden and Donald Trump. Biden has charged into the general-election campaign with a massive fundraising total. His campaign has reported raising \$53 million in the month of February and claims to have access to around \$155 million in cash on hand.

While the Trump campaign has not yet released fundraising numbers for February, his total cash on hand combined with funds available through the Republican National Committee was around \$40 million at the end of February.

As the affluent and politically engaged have increasingly migrated into the Democratic coalition, Biden now has a substantial fundraising advantage over his populist Republican challenger.

Trump faces a three-front financial war: in addition to the big-ticket cost of a presidential campaign, he also risks tremendous legal fees and the potential for major financial penalties as fallout from these court cases. These combined legal costs can be vertiginous. Many reports estimate that his campaign and allied organizations spent around \$50 million on legal fees in 2023.

Trump was ordered to

pay over \$83 million in the E. Jean Carroll defamation case, which he is currently appealing. The New York fraud case's civil penalty is over \$450 million, and Trump's legal team recently declared that he has been unable to secure a bond for this amount while he attempts to appeal this judgment. Meanwhile, he faces continued legal battles in DC, Florida, Georgia, and New York.

These legal controversies helped rally Republican voters to Trump during the primary, but now they risk being a continued drain on his campaign finances. The Republican National Committee is facing its own financial challenges. It had an anemic year of fundraising in 2023 and ended that year with around \$8 million in the bank. After installing his daughter-in-law Lara Trump as co-chair, Trump has taken increasing control of the RNC. Yet that very show of dominance may compound the wariness of potential donors, who fear that their donations could be used to pay Trump's legal bills.

In light of all those financial pressures, it's not surprising that the former president has expanded his brand to NFTs and shoes. The self-described "king of debt" has built a business empire out of creative financing and may now be

staking his political career on similar financial ingenuity.

Of course, money isn't everything in American politics. If fundraising equaled poll numbers, Jeb Bush would have won the 2016 Republican nomination. In the general election of that year, Hillary Clinton and her allied committees raised almost twice as much as Trump, but that financial landslide did not translate into an electoral one. Perhaps one of the most important assets for any political campaign is media oxygen. Trump is a former president and a master of provoking the press, so he is likely to rake in media coverage.

But money still matters. Echoing the way that Barack Obama's team struck hard to define Mitt Romney early in the 2012 cycle, Biden has unveiled a \$30 million anti-Trump ad barrage. In contemporary presidential elections, turnout in many states is now a weeks-long campaign, combining usual get-to-the-polls efforts with massive drives to organize mail-in ballots and early votes. A campaign that can invest in that infrastructure over the long term can reap considerable political dividends. While Biden faces grim polling on multiple levels, his campaign hopes that it can transform this financial edge into a political advantage in November.

The Telegraph



PSX witnesses bearish trend, loses 314 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to a bearish trend on Thursday, losing 314.39 points, a negative change of 0.48 percent, closing at 65,417.40 points against 65,731.79 points the previous trading day.

A total of 389,654,899 shares valuing Rs.11.307 billion were traded during the day as compared to 341,843,546 shares valuing Rs.11.844 billion the last day. Some 357 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 115 of them recorded gains and 221 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 21 remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were PTCL with 52,898,951 shares at Rs.15.84 per share, Pak Int. Bulk with 41,979,500 shares with 6.05 per share

and Bank of Punjab with 29,102,209 shares at Rs.5.44 per share.

Pakistan Engineering Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.38.16 per share price, closing at Rs.546.99, whereas the runner-up was JDW Sugar Mills Limited with a Rs.31.45 rise in its per share price to Rs.450.75.

Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs. 350.01 per share closing at Rs. 8,225.00, followed by Khyber Textile Mills Limited with a Rs. 49.66 decline to close at Rs.612.53.

Rupee gains 01 paisa against dollar

Pakistani Rupee on Thursday gained 01 paisa against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs278.39 against the previous day's closing

of Rs278.40.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs278.3 and Rs281.05, respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by Rs1.83 to close at Rs304.18 as against the last day closing of Rs302.35, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen surged by 01 paisa and closed at Rs1.84, whereas an increase of Rs2.08 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs355.88 compared to the last closing of Rs353.80.

The Emirates Dirham decreased by 01 paisa to close at Rs 75.80 and the Saudi Riyal remained stagnant at Rs74.23.

Gold rates up by Rs.4,600 to Rs.232,400 per tola

The per tola price of 24 karat gold witnessed an increase of Rs.4,600 and was sold at Rs.232,400 on Thursday compared to its sale at Rs. 227,800 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs.3,943 to Rs.199,245 from Rs. 195,302 whereas the price of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs.182,642 from Rs. 179,027, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola silver increased by Rs.20 to Rs.2,600 whereas that of and ten gram silver went up by Rs.17.15 to 2,229.08. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$47to \$2,225 from \$2,178, the Association reported.

Karandaaz Pakistan unveils GreenFin Innovations

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Karandaaz Pakistan, a development finance platform at the forefront of promoting financial inclusion and driving digital transformation across the country, announced the launch of GreenFin Innovations (GFI), a groundbreaking initiative dedicated to scaling innovative and sustainable solutions aimed at promoting a green economy and addressing the critical challenges of climate change in Pakistan.

GreenFin Innovations offers a unique blend of support, including concessional financing of up to PKR 50 million and tailored business development support, all while fostering connections within the climate change network. The initiative is committed to

driving transformative change and local capacity building, to address urgent environmental and climate change challenges through innovative solutions.

Businesses registered and operating in Pakistan with a valid National Tax Number (NTN) are eligible for GreenFin Innovations support. The proposed solutions must actively address the climate change issues in adaptation, mitigation, or cross-cutting thematic areas.

Karandaaz Chairperson Salim Raza, while elaborating on the initiative, said, "GreenFin Innovations is aimed at catalysing sustainable solutions to combat climate change in Pakistan. It provides blended finance in the form of concessional loans, with funding sizes varying based on the nature and scale of each project.

GFI will empower businesses to play a pivotal role in promoting a green economy and mitigating the impacts of climate change."

In the past, Karandaaz has successfully provided growth capital to innovative solutions on plastic waste management, efficient water management, and air quality under their Green Challenge Fund (GCF). With the launch of GreenFin Innovations, Karandaaz aims to amplify the impact, recognising the urgency of building local capacity for innovation and scaling existing technologies to effectively tackle climate change challenges.

Shumaila Rifaqat, Head of Innovation and MEL at Karandaaz said, "Pakistan is facing the dire effects of climate change. It is imperative that local capacity to address environmental and

climate change challenges is developed and, in that endeavour, private sector has a huge role to play. To this end, GFI will provide the essential support and risk capital to catalyse innovation in addressing the climate challenge."

Karandaaz invites eligible businesses and entrepreneurs to join hands with GreenFin Innovations in creating a sustainable future and making a significant contribution to the fight against climate change.

Karandaaz Pakistan is a not-for-profit company that aims to promote financial inclusion and catalyse economic growth in Pakistan. Through a combination of financial services, digital solutions, and investments, Karandaaz works to create an inclusive financial ecosystem that empowers individuals and communities.

Transparency International Pakistan releases report

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Transparency International Pakistan has released its report titled "Financing Climate Action: Enhancing Effectiveness and Transparency in Pakistan's Climate Governance Frameworks". The report is an assessment of existing frameworks driving climate governance in Pakistan with an aim to identify areas of improvement and implementation gaps, specifically focusing on transparency, inclusiveness, and effectiveness of the country's response to climate change at the federal and provincial levels.

The report notes that Pakistan experiences an average annual loss of US\$4 billion due to a high vulnerability to climate change-induced events. Pakistan has made its NDC commitments contingent upon receiving adequate finance. Given climate finance inflows are very low, these commitments cannot be implemented without effective access to international climate

finance. Pakistan ranks among the top ten countries most impacted by climate change, it does not feature among the top ten recipients of climate finance.

The report further notes that while clear climate change mitigation and adaptation targets are set, limited progress has been made in establishing a suitable and well-integrated climate finance regime in Pakistan that can allow effective access to financial resources. The report notes that the Climate Change institutions as set under the Climate Change Act 2017 need to be operationalized and empowered and be the primary drivers of integrating climate in governance, both horizontally and vertically, across the federal and provincial governments.

Mr. Kashif Ali, Executive Director TI Pakistan highlighted that "Due to the cross-cutting nature of climate governance, it is important that a whole-of-society approach is taken in policy design, and a whole-of-government approach taken into consid-

eration for administration, with the legally mandated Climate Change institutions leading in both fronts. To improve climate governance in a long-lasting manner, the report recommends it should be integrated into national development plans (such as the long-term plans prepared by the Planning Commission). This integration will gradually allow uptake of climate governance priorities within the whole public sector and align it with adaptation and mitigation goals set by the federal government.

There is also a need to align our climate governance frameworks with international best practices, as well as ensure better coordination, inclusive policy-making, and appropriate capacity enhancement at sub-national levels. This will allow the Government of Pakistan to both create an enabling environment for achieving its NDCs, as well as develop long-term resilience and reduce its vulnerability to the climate crisis through increased access to climate finance, which at the moment remain meagre compared to the needs of the country".

Transparency International Pakistan has provided 10 recommendations to strengthen climate governance in the country, including a) Climate Change institutions as set under the Climate Change

Act need to be operationalized and empowered b) A 'whole of society' approach which invites public and expert participation in climate planning and decision making must be adopted c) Integrate Transparency & Climate perspective in project designs including at planning and budgeting level d) Capacity Building of key auditing and reporting institutions, including corruption watchdogs e) Policy lag between national and provincial Climate policies and lack of institutional capacity f) Enhance climate budgetary allocations in proportionate to the scale of climate change crisis g) Ensuring compliance with Public Procuring Regulatory Authority (PPRA) Rules to enhance transparency of climate projects h) Establish open database on Climate Finance i) Enhance climate governance integrity using global best practices j) Ensuring appropriate mechanisms and capacity to capture complaints and enforce anti-corruption measures is of vital importance.

Justice (R) Zia Perwez, Chairman, TI Pakistan said it is hoped that Federal and Provincial Governments, International Development Partners and Civil Society Stakeholders will take key lessons and recommendations provided in the report to help guide Pakistan be better prepared in the decades to come.



KARACHI: Rizwan Umer Jafarani appointed as Convener of Anti Corruption Committee by FPCCI Federation.



KARACHI: Member Incharge Federal Ombudsman Secretariat Navaid Ahmed Sheikh and Associate Advisor Dr. Riaz Ahmed Memon inspecting One Window Facilitation Desk for Overseas Pakistanis at Jinnah International Airport.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Four ships namely, Maersk Kinloss, Maersk Cabo Verde, Trans Spring and Gaschem Leda, carrying Container, Steel coil and Chemicals, berthed at Container Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal and Engro Terminal respectively on Wednesday.

Meanwhile four more ships, Solar Roma, Sky Runner, PGC Patreas and Southern Anoa carrying Palm oil, LPG and Chemicals also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim during last 24 hours.

A total of eleven ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them three ships, Maersk Cabo Verde, Kano and Uog Sparta left the Port on today morning while three more ships, Gaschem Leda, Maersk Kinloss and Beteleur are expected to sail.

A cargo volume of 165,823 tonnes, comprising 119,716 tonnes imports cargo and 46,107 tonnes export cargo carried in 3,567 Containers (1,866 TEUs Imports and 1,701 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 10 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them two ships, Bolan and Patreas & another ship, APL Southampton carrying Gas oil, LPG and Container are expected to take berths at FOTCO, EVTL and QICT on today, 21 st March, while another containers ship, Al-Safat is due to arrive at Port Qasim on Friday.

Machinery import goes up by 21.43%

ISLAMABAD (APP): The imports of the overall machinery group witnessed an increase of 21.43 per cent during the first eight months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) compared to the corresponding period of the last year, PBS reported.

The total imports of the machinery group during July-February (2023-24) stood at \$5,044.898 million against the imports of \$4,154.465 million during the same period of the last year.

The import of agriculture sector machinery and equipment surged by 96.58 per cent from \$26.953 million to \$52.983 million; office machinery including data processing equipment 44.23 per cent from \$220.796 million to \$318.448 million; electricity machinery and apparatus 48.45 per cent from \$1,135.552 million to 1,685.707 million; telecom related equipment 102.44 per cent from \$ 708.796 million to \$ 1,434.853 million; mobile phone 156.43 per cent from \$ 447.854 million to \$ 1,148.438 million and other apparatus 9.76 per cent from \$ 260.942 million to \$ 286.415 million.

However, during the period under review, the import of power-generating machinery declined by 28.42 per cent from \$374.340 million to \$267.951 million; textile machinery by 64 per cent from \$ 267.767 million to \$ 94.543 million; other equipment by 16.59 per cent from \$ 1,358.221 million to \$ 1,132.958 million; construction and mining machinery by 7.39 per cent from \$ 62.041 million to \$ 57.455 million.

Navaid visits One Window Facilitation Desk at airport

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Member-in-Charge Federal Ombudsman Naveed Ahmed Sheikh and Associate Advisor Dr Riaz Ahmed Memon visited the One Window Facilitation Desk for Overseas Pakistanis at Jinnah International Airport. They held a detailed discussion with the representatives of different departments regarding the complaints registered by the passengers.

The officials present at the desk told Naveed

Ahmed Sheikh that most of the passengers' complaints are related to 'Protectorate'. Member-in-charge Federal Ombudsman said that we have to ensure the efficient functioning of One Window Center. He said that the facilitation desk was established for overseas Pakistanis but ordinary travelers are also benefiting from it.

Member-in-charge Federal Ombudsman checked the attendance of the staff present at the desk and instructed to ensure 100% attendance. Naveed Ahmed

Sheikh said that all the departments have a great responsibility to resolve problems faced by the passengers. He said that a monthly report should be prepared comprising of the complaints registered at the facilitation desk to ascertain in which cases the passengers are having troubles.

Naveed Ahmed Memon also visited the immigration counter and instructed the FIA duty in-charge to provide maximum convenience to the passengers.

Sariev keen to enhance Pak-Kyrgyz trade

LAHORE (APP): Kyrgyzstan Chamber of Commerce and Industry's President Temir Sariev has shown keen interest to further enhance trade volume between Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan particularly in key sectors of pharmaceuticals, textiles, sports goods, food and surgical products.

He was talking to the visiting trade delegation of Pakistan led by Meher Kashif Younis, an honorary Consul of Kyrgyzstan, during their visit to the chamber, according to Meher's spokesman here Thursday. President of Kyrgyzstan Trade House in Pakistan Dr Shahid Hassan was also present

Temir Sariev underscored the potential for mutually beneficial partnerships and economic growth. He said, "Our proactive stance signals a promising opportunity for enhanced collaboration, fostering economic development. With a clear focus

on these strategic sectors, there is ample room for expanding trade ties, capitalizing on each country's comparative advantages, and meeting the evolving demands of global markets." Our dedication to promote closer economic ties holds well for future trade relations, as both the countries seek to harness their respective strengths and drive sustainable growth."

Temir Sariev said: "By leveraging synergies and exploring new avenues for cooperation, we can unlock untapped opportunities, create value, and contribute to shared prosperity". He said Kyrgyz government's initiative was a testament to the importance of dialogue, partnership, and collaboration in today's interconnected world. He said as they work together to overcome challenges and seize opportunities, the potential for mutually beneficial outcomes was vast. Through proactive engagement and

concerted efforts, he added, both sides could build a stronger foundation for trade and investment, paving the way for increased prosperity and welfare for their people.

Leader of Pak delegation Meher Kashif Younis briefly, speaking on the occasion, said Sariev's vision for deepening economic ties reflected a forward-looking approach that prioritized innovation, inclusivity, and sustainability. "By aligning our interests and objectives, we can chart a course towards a more prosperous and interconnected future."

Change of Name

It is to inform the public at large that I have changed my name from Toti Marjan to Ali Marjan. Please correct the name in all my documents rewardingly please.

Name correction

My father correct name is Rafiq Ahmad Khalil while mistakenly written in my documents as Rafiq Ahmad please make the required correction in it. Zarghona khan D/o of Rafiq Ahmad Khalil.

My correct name is Sania Sana while mistakenly written in my documents as Sania please make the required correction in it as Sania Sana D/o Sanaullah

Court Notice

IN the Court of Jauhar Ali Saffi Civil Judge I /Alaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar.

Suit No 530/1. Institution 2023. Date of hearing. 26/4/2024. Bakht Rasool VS Jabir Rasool. Notice to No 6. Mst Rasheda widow. 7. Zahid Rasool son. 8. Msts Jasmea. 9. Shabana. 10. Asima dependent ds/o Sabir Rasool alias Sabir Khan. 11. Wazir Rasool s/o Gul Rasool resident of Agaray Chamla tehsel Mandar District Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through duly authorized agent or pleader in the court at 9 am dated 26/4/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Motorbikes, 3-wheelers sale decreases 11.92%

ISLAMABAD (APP): The sale of motorbikes and three-wheelers in the country witnessed a decrease of 11.92 per cent during the first eight months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) as compared to sales of the corresponding months of the last year.

During July-February 2023-24, as many as 740,204 motorbikes and three-wheelers were sold against the sale of 840,396 units in July-February (2022-23), according to the Pakistan Automobile Manufacturing Association (PAMA).

The sale of Honda motorcycles dipped by 7.64 per cent from 697,864 units to 644,544 units whereas the sale of Suzuki motorcycles witnessed a decrease of 58.70 per cent from 24,981 units to 10,316 units during the months under review.

Similarly, the sale of Yamaha motorbikes also went down from 8,623 units to 5,218 units while the sale of Road Prince motorbikes witnessed a sharp decline of 52.06 per cent from 22,109 units to 10,597 units. The sales of United Auto motorcycles witnessed a decrease of 23.74 per cent from 71,213 units to 54,305 units.

Meanwhile, the sale of United Auto three-wheelers however surged from 1,100 units to 1,805 units showing growth of 64.09 percent, while the sale of Sazgar three-wheelers also witnessed an increase of 18.35 per cent from 7,335 units to 8,681 units.

The data revealed that Qingqi three-wheeler sales had decreased by 28.72 per cent from 5,229 units to 3,727 units whereas sale of Road Prince three-wheeler also witnessed a decrease of 38.08 per cent from 1,326 units to 821 units.



In brief

Dhoni hands over CSK captaincy

CHENNAI (Cricinfo): Rituraj Gaikwad has been unveiled as the new captain of Chennai Super Kings a day before the opening game of IPL 2024, where defending champions CSK take on the visiting Royal Challengers Bengaluru at Chepauk. This brings to an end MS Dhoni's long stint as captain of CSK - which began in the tournament's first season back in 2008 - though he had stepped away from the position in 2022 too, when Ravindra Jadeja was made captain. But Jadeja stepped down after eight matches and Dhoni took back the reins, continuing in 2023 when CSK won the trophy for the fifth time and drew level with Mumbai Indians at the top of the title leaderboard. That triumph was widely expected to be Dhoni's IPL farewell - he had retired from international cricket following the 2019 World Cup - but he vowed to return for at least one more season if his body allowed it. Troubled by a knee issue right through the 2023 season, Dhoni underwent surgery days after the final. The 42-year-old joined CSK's pre-season camp in Chennai earlier this month. In all, Dhoni captained CSK in 235 of their 249 games in all competitions, leading them to two titles in the defunct Champions League T20 to go with the five IPL titles, in 2010, 2011, 2018, 2021 and 2023. Such was CSK's consistency under Dhoni's leadership, that the team finished outside the top four in just two seasons - 2020 and 2022 - while also reaching the final 10 times, including four consecutive years, from 2010 to 2013.

Sutherland, King put Australia 1-0 up

DHAKA (Cricinfo): Australia's new golden girl Annabel Sutherland stepped in to rescue Australia in Dhaka, leading them to a 118-run win over Bangladesh in the first ODI. After Australia had slumped to 48 for 4 early on a slow and turning pitch, Sutherland hit a measured unbeaten 58 to lift her side to 213 for 7. Her runs came as part of a 67-run eighth-wicket stand with Alana King, who belted 46 not out from 31 balls - including 28 in a 29-run final over - in an innings that included five sixes. Australia were then able to bowl out Bangladesh for 95, with Ashleigh Gardner taking 3 for 22 and Phoebe Litchfield producing a superb run-out. But it is 22-year-old Sutherland who is continuing to produce for Australia. The all-rounder hit her maiden Test century batting at No. 8 for Australia in last year's Ashes, and backed it up with a double against South Africa in Perth last month. She was more measured on Thursday, after Beth Mooney and Gardner began to steady the game for Australia. Sutherland hit 19 from her first 35 balls, before upping the ante late alongside King, who pulled and swept legspinner Fahima Khatun over the rope four times in the final over. "Annabel batted really well, along with Beth Mooney and Ash Gardner," King said afterwards. "They set the foundation... It was just a bit of fun in the last over. We were looking at getting over 200 and Annabel gave me free rein. We could go for as many runs as possible and I am glad I connected with a few." And after Megan Schutt struck with the second ball of Bangladesh's innings, King kept control with the ball with 1 for 12 from her ten overs.

Javeria Khan announces retirement from international cricket



PESHAWAR (APP): Javeria Khan has announced her retirement from international cricket 15 years after making her ODI debut in Kurunegala, Sri Lanka in a Women's Asia Cup fixture against Sri Lanka on 6 May 2008. The right-handed batter made her T20I debut against Ireland in Dublin in 2009. Javeria went on to represent the Pakistan women's team in 228 international matches and scored 4,903 runs, which included two centuries and 25 half-centuries. She also bagged 28 international wickets. Javeria is currently listed as the second leading run scorer in ODIs and T20Is for the Pakistan women's team and is the only women's cricketer from Pakistan to have scored over 2,000 runs in each format besides Bismah Maroof.

She represented Pakistan in four 50-over World Cups (2009, 2013, 2017 and 2022) and in all eight T20 World Cups (2009, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020 and 2023) held since its inception. Javeria was also part of the Pakistan women's team squad that won the Gold medal in the 2010 and 2014 Asian Games held in China and South Korea, respectively. Javeria also captained Pakistan women's team in 17 ODIs and 16 T20Is. Among the 16 T20Is, she captained the side in two editions (2018 and 2020) of ICC Women's T20 World Cups.

The 35-year-old Karachi-born player also participated in the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Level 2 Cricket Coach course held in August last year in Lahore. Javeria Khan said: "I want to call it a day and

announce my retirement, however, I will be available for league cricket. I am grateful for the unwavering support I received throughout my career. I want to thank my family, teammates, for the Pakistan Cricket Board, my department Zarai Taraqati Bank Ltd (ZTBL) for their support and guidance at each step, and my fans whose appreciation was instrumental in bringing out the best in me. "I have been blessed to hold Pakistan's flag globally," she added.

Head of Women's Cricket, Tania Mallick said: "On behalf of the PCB and all cricket fans, I extend heartfelt gratitude to Javeria Khan for her invaluable contributions to women's cricket in Pakistan. Her glittering records with the bat speak for themselves and I am confident that her illustrious career will inspire many girls in the country to not just take up this sport but also excel at it across many years, she added.

"As Javeria announces her retirement, we reflect on her remarkable career and the services she has rendered for Pakistan cricket. We thank her for her untiring commitment and wish her all the success in her future endeavors", Tania maintained.



ISLAMABAD: FIFA World Cup 2026 qualifier football match is being played between Pakistan and Jordan teams at the Jinnah Sports Stadium. A

Former Pakistan captain Saeed Ahmed died



LAHORE (PPI): Saeed Ahmed, the former Pakistan captain and all-rounder, has died here at the age of 86 after a brief illness. Saeed, who played 41 Tests between 1958 and 1973, captained the side briefly, for three drawn Test matches against England in 1969, replacing Hanif Mohammad. He scored 2,991 Test runs, including five centuries, three of which came against India. A capable offspinner, he also took 22 wickets.

Saeed was born in Jalandhar in 1937 in what was then British India - now a part of Indian Punjab. He made his debut at the age of 20 against the West Indies in the famous drawn Test in Bridgetown, where Hanif Mohammad batted for 970 minutes to score 337 runs. Saeed shared a 154-run partnership with Hanif for the third wicket, scoring 65 as West Indies bowled 319 overs before the game was ultimately called off.

He quickly made a name for his grace and ease, particularly when driving the ball, and demonstrated instantly that he belonged at the highest level. He finished his career with a batting average of 40.01, almost identical to his first-class average of 40.02. He scored his first of five Test hundreds in Georgetown against an attack that included Roy Gilchrist, Lance Gibbs and Garry Sobers, though West Indies won that Test by eight wickets. Pakistan never won a Test he scored a hundred in, though playing in the least prolific period of Pakistan's Test history may have been a factor. He made 508 runs in his first Test series, in the Caribbean in 1957-58, and had a taste for big hundreds: three of his five at Test level were of 150 or more.

World Open: Ronnie O'Sullivan beaten by Hossein Vafaei in last 16

YUSHAN (BBC): Ronnie O'Sullivan is out of the World Open after a surprise defeat by Hossein Vafaei in the last 16 in China.

The world number one took the match to a deciding frame with a brilliant break of 125 in the eighth, which levelled it at 4-4 in Yushan.

But O'Sullivan missed a crucial black in a thrilling final frame, which allowed Vafaei back to the table to complete a 5-4 victory.

The Iranian will play Ding Jinhui in the last eight. "He's my hero," said Vafaei. "Just playing against O'Sullivan is a dream come true, never mind winning."

Elsewhere, 2019 World Open champion Judd Trump will take on Kyren



Wilson in the quarter-finals after his 5-3 win against David Lilley.

Trump, the world number two, is aiming for his fifth title of the season before next month's World Championships in Sheffield.

Stephen Maguire was unable to repeat his performance against reigning world champion Luca

Brecel in the previous round as he lost 5-1 to Barry Hawkins.

Hawkins will take on Neil Robertson in the quarter-finals after the Australian's 5-1 win against Chris Wakelin.

Jackson Page's reward for a 5-2 win against Mark Selby is a tie against Elliot Slessor, who beat Daniel Wells in the last 16.

Irishman tested twice more than any other UFC fighter this year

NEW YORK (BBC): Conor McGregor is the most drug-tested fighter under the UFC's new anti-doping regime as the Irishman continues to tease his return to fighting.

McGregor has been drug tested five times, external since January 1. No other fighter has been tested more than twice.

The former UFC champion has spoken at length this week about his desire to return this summer having not fought since 2021.

But the UFC are yet to officially announce his return, McGregor has been promoting his acting debut in the film Road House this week and has used the tour as an opportunity to appeal to the UFC to officially confirm a fight date.

The 35-year-old is expected to face American Michael Chandler on his



return. McGregor caused a stir when it emerged he had removed himself from the United States Anti-Doping Agency's (Usada) testing pool following his defeat by Dustin Poirier in 2021.

The Dubliner suffered a broken leg in that fight but he returned to the anti-doping programme last year.

The UFC has since ended their anti-doping partnership with Usada and have now teamed up with

Drug Free Sport International.

Combat Sports Anti-Doping (CSAD) oversee the anti-doping programme and on Thursday heavyweight Walt Harris, of the USA, became the first UFC athlete to be given a ban in the new era.

Harris has been given a 48-month suspension for two separate anti-doping violations, occurring in July and August last year.

Lewis Hamilton says F1 hard to trust with no accountability in the sport

LAS VEGAS (BBC): Lewis Hamilton says there is "no transparency and no accountability" in Formula 1 as the sport continues to be rocked by off-track wrangles. The seven-time champion appeared to conflate controversies involving governing body the FIA and the behaviour of Red Bull team principal Christian Horner.

Speaking before this weekend's Australian Grand Prix, Hamilton said: "With the FIA, things happening behind closed doors, there is no accountability and the fans need that." He added: "How can you trust the sport and what is happening here if you don't have that?"

Hamilton praised F1 Academy director Susie Wolff for taking legal action against the FIA following its controversial conflict of interest inquiry into her last year.

Wolff announced her legal case, which is believed to be one of defamation against a number of senior figures within the FIA, on the same day as the organisation's ethics committee cleared its president of claims he interfered with races in Saudi Arabia and Las Vegas last year.

Asked whether Mohammed Ben Sulayem still had Hamilton's confidence as FIA president, Hamilton said: "(He) never

has." The Mercedes driver added: "I am incredibly proud of Susie. She is so brave and she stands for such great values and she is such a leader.

"In a world where often people are silenced, for her to be standing up sends such a great message, and I love that she has taken it out of this world and is fighting it from the outside. "So hopefully, this stand she is taking now will create change and have a positive impact. And especially for women."

In continuing his remarks, he appeared to reference the controversy surrounding Horner, who was accused of inappropriate behaviour by a female colleague. Horner, 50, has always denied the claims. Red Bull dismissed the complaint after an internal investigation and have since suspended the employee who made them. She has appealed against

Red Bull's decision to dismiss her complaint.

BBC Sport has previously reported that the reason given by Red Bull to the employee for her suspension was that she had been dishonest. Hamilton added: "It is still a male-dominated sport. And we are living in a time where the message is: 'If you file a complaint, you will be fired.' And that is a terrible narrative to be projecting to the world, especially when we're talking about inclusivity.

"We need to make sure we are staying true to the core values." Ben Sulayem was accused by a whistleblower of demanding the overturning of a penalty to Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso in Saudi Arabia last year, and of asking his officials not to pass the Las Vegas track fit for racing. A report by the FIA's compliance officer contained claims by an eyewitness who was a senior FIA official that both things had happened.



Women's Six Nations 2024: Marlie Packer to win 100th cap in England's opener against Italy

LONDON (BBC): Captain Marlie Packer will win her 100th cap in England's opening game of the Women's Six Nations against Italy on Sunday.

The 34-year-old flanker debuted for the Red Roses in 2008 and becomes the seventh woman to reach the milestone. Fly-half Zoe Harrison, centre Emily Scarratt and lock Abbie Ward all return to the starting XV.

The trio have not played for England since the World Cup final defeat by New Zealand in 2022.

Loughborough Lightning's Scarratt starts in the unfamiliar role of inside centre despite spending the majority of her 108-cap international career at 13.

Scarratt played at inside centre for Lightning last month following her return from a 13-month injury lay-off

with a neck injury which required surgery.

Bristol Bears' Ward returns to international rugby for the first time after the birth of her daughter last year, with Saracens' Harrison recovering from her lengthy ACL injury in time for the Six Nations.

The Red Roses won a Six Nations Grand Slam last year and are aiming to win their sixth Six Nations title in a row.

"Talking to Marlie about her journey, she has had to overcome adversity since her Test debut in 2008," Red Roses head coach John Mitchell said.

"What has been evident since I first met her is her determination to succeed has been ingrained in her over the past 16 years, helping her achieve she has in the game.

"She epitomises what it is to be a Red Rose," Flanker Sadia Kabeya

and scrum-half Lucy Packer are also named in the starting XV after missing the inaugural WXVI tournament in New Zealand, which England won in November to partially avenge their World Cup final defeat.

Exeter Chiefs back rower Maddie Feaunati, 21, could make her Red Roses debut after being named on the bench.

"We are excited to get going in what is an awesome tournament," Mitchell added "Italy is our first opportunity to put into practice what we are aiming to achieve."

Line-up England: Kildunne; Dow, Rowland, Scarratt, Breach; Harrison, Packer; Botterman, Atkin-Davies, Clifford, Aldcroft, Ward, Kabeya, Packer, Beckett.

Replacements: Powell, Carson, Muir, Feaunati, Matthews, Hunt, Aitchison, Jones.

Victoria Ohuruogu has been cleared of an anti-doping rule violation

LONDON (BBC): It had been alleged the 31-year-old was being coached by her boyfriend Antonio Infantino, who is serving a three-year doping ban.

But this was dismissed by a UK Anti-Doping (UKAD) panel.

British 400m champion Ohuruogu said the allegation had cost her "a great deal" and disrupted her Olympic preparations.

"I can confirm that an independent panel has emphatically dismissed the charge of prohibited association against me, finding that it was 'not satisfied, let alone comfortably satisfied that I have broken any rules,'" said Ohuruogu, who has had her UK Sport funding reinstated and will aim to qualify for Paris 2024.

"I take my anti-doping obligations extremely seriously and am pleased that the truth of the matter - which is exactly as I have always maintained - has now been confirmed."

UKAD said in a statement the outcome of the



hearing, held before the independent National Anti-Doping Panel (NADP), would not ordinarily be disclosed, but it had done so at Ohuruogu's request.

Her long-term boyfriend Infantino, who formerly represented GB but competed for Italy at the Tokyo Olympics, is banned until December 2024 following his failed doping test.

Ohuruogu was investigated after being photographed training alongside Infantino by reporter for The Times, external. Anti-doping rules state athletes must not work in a professional or sport-related capacity with coaches or

other athlete support personnel currently serving an anti-doping ban.

The Commonwealth Games silver medalist also helped the British team to 4x400m relay bronze at both the World and European Championships in 2022, but she was left out of GB's quartet at the 2023 Worlds in Budapest last summer with the investigation ongoing. Nicole Yeargin, Laviai Nielsen, Amber Anning and Ama Pipi made the relay podium, clinching bronze, while Ohuruogu missed out on the individual 400m final.

When British sprinter CJ Ujah was banned for 22

months following a positive test for two prohibited substances at the Tokyo Olympics, the entire British team was stripped of its men's 4x100m silver medals. Ohuruogu added: "I'm incredibly thankful for the support of those around me. The allegation, its publication, and the media intrusion has cost me a great deal over the past 16 months. "It has affected my personal relationships, cost me the chance to run in what would have been career-defining events, and caused huge disruption to my preparation and training in an Olympic year.

"It has caused me to doubt whether I can sustain a private life or even be seen with those closest to me without being accused of breaking the rules. None of that can be undone by the fact that I have now been fully exonerated. "I'm now eager to put this firmly behind me, get my head down, and train hard for the outdoor season and - hopefully - the Olympics.



In brief

Train crushed a man to death

RAWALPINDI (APP): A 45-year-old man died after being hit by a train here on Thursday. The incident took place at Dhok Chiragh Din railway track. According to details, an unidentified man attempted to cross the railway track when a speedy train hit him. Spokesman 1122 I formed that rescue teams were immediately rushed to the spot and shifted the body to the hospital.

ICP releases patriotic song

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) has released a patriotic song "Jannat Se Bulawa Aaya Hai" in commemoration of Pakistan Day and paying tribute to the valiant sons of the nation for rendering their lives and services for the country. A public relations officer on Thursday said that this song was written by Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the song highlights the commendable efforts and serves as a heartfelt tribute to the unwavering dedication and sacrifices of the brave officers and officials serving in all law enforcement agencies. The ICP's patriotic song reflects their relentless efforts, serving as a tribute to their dedication to the service and protection of the motherland. The song beautifully expressed the sacrifices of the sons and daughters of the nation and their selfless love for the country.

PTA conducts successful raid

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Zonal Office Faisalabad, in collaboration with the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Cyber Crime Circle, conducted a successful raid against the franchisee of a mobile phone company in Sahiwal against Illegal SIM Issuance. The franchisee was found to be involved in the illegal issuance of SIMs that were also found to be used in grey trafficking and fraudulent activities, said a news release on Thursday. During the raid, 146 suspicious SIM cards, five BVS devices, and one laptop being used to activate the SIMs illegally were seized. Additionally, two individuals were apprehended on-site by the FIA team, against whom FIR has been registered. The FIA is actively pursuing further investigation into the matter. PTA had filed a complaint with FIA based on information related to the illegal issuance of SIMs by the sales channel. This raid signifies the Authority's dedication to eradicating the illegal issuance of SIMs.

Police arrest three bike lifters

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested three bike lifters and recovered 10 stolen motorcycles from their possession, said a police spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that a team under the supervision of SHO, Taxila Police Station managed to net three bike lifters namely Adnan, Alian and Suleman, members of Adnan gang and recovered 10 stolen motorcycles and other items from their possession. A case has been registered against the accused while further investigation is underway. Superintendent of Police, Potohar, Nasir Nawaz said the accomplices and facilitators of the accused would also be sent behind bars.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi chairing a meeting on matters related to Federal Investigation Agency.

Railways planning to run Special Trains on Eid

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways is planning to run 'Eid Special Trains' on the eve of Eid-ul-Fitr to cater to the rush and provide opportunities to celebrate the Islamic festival with their loved ones across the country.

"The department has completed all the arrangements regarding Eid Special Trains to facilitate the passengers and the announcement would be made shortly," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP. The official said that Pakistan Railways would not only advertise the schedule of the Eid Special Train in daily Urdu, and English newspapers but also disseminate it into social and electronic media.

To celebrate Eid with their loved ones, he said the foreign nationals, students, government employees, and labours return home via trains, due to

which, the department has run special trains every Eid. To a question, he said Pakistan Railways has earned Rs 55 billion in the first eight months of the current financial year 2023-24, despite facing a financial crisis due to floods in the monsoon season. During the first eight months of the last financial year (2022-23), the department earned Rs 37 billion, a historic increase in revenue during the same period of the current financial year (2023-24), he added.

According to the data, he said that out of the revenue of Rs 55 billion, revenue was derived from passenger and freight trains while other sectors of the department also contributed to the total revenue. The department is expecting to generate revenues up to Rs 80 billion by the end of this financial year through the consistent efforts and hard work of

the Railway workers, the official added.

At present, he said that Pakistan Railways is operating 96 passenger trains, up from the previous year when 86 trains were running. Similarly, during the previous year, on average it operated 3.75 freight trains while the number reached seven freight trains this year. He said the department emphasized that the issue of delay in payment of salaries to employees has now been resolved and things will be more streamlined, once work on the Mainline-I (ML-I) project kicks off.

The official said that owing to inflationary pressures, led by high fuel costs, Pakistan Railways has increased its fares, both for passenger and freight segments that would help the cash-strapped corporation to fetch better revenues in the next few months.

ANF recovers 107 kg drugs in six operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting six operations across the country managed to recover 107 kg drugs and arrested 10 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday.

He said, 74 hashish-filled capsules were recovered from a passenger going to Doha at Multan Airport and two facilitators were also arrested during the operation.

16.8 kg opium and 33.6 kg hashish were recovered from two suspects arrested near Motorway Toll Plaza Sheikhupura.

In third operation, 8.4 kg opium and 18 kg hashish were recovered from the possession of an accused netted near Tandlianwala in Faisalabad. 16.8 kg hashish was recovered from two accused rounded up in Gluian Mor Daska.

11 kg hashish was recovered from Zakhakhel Khyber area and 2 kg hashish was recovered from two suspects arrested near Sher Shah Toll Plaza Multan. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.

Police carry out search operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi District Police here on Thursday carried out search operations in the jurisdiction of Airport and Civil Lines police stations.

According to a police spokesman, the search operations were conducted in order to maintain law and order and flush out suspects following the directions of City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Hamdani. He informed, senior police officers and police personnel including women police took part in the search operation.

Police checked as many as 63 houses, 62 shops, 35 tenants and 270 individuals during the search operations. The spokesman said that police were fully prepared to shield the lives and property of the public and combing and search operations were being done to flush out the suspects and hardcore criminals. He said that police were more vigilant to keep an eye on suspects and maintain law and order in Rawalpindi.

Mohsin Naqvi orders countrywide crackdown against gas, electricity thefts

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control Mohsin Naqvi on Thursday making a major decision, tasked Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to initiate a crackdown across the country against power and gas thieves.

Chairing an important meeting at his office, the minister gave instructions to the Agency to take strict legal action against those involved in electricity and gas thefts.

The FIA officials informed the minister that special teams were already constituted to crack down on electricity and gas thieves on the past instructions given in the last meeting.

Upon receiving a detailed report on Greece boat accident submitted by the FIA officials, the minister directed that all the elements involved in this tragedy must be brought to justice.

He also directed strict action against all the elements involved in human traffick-

ing to curb this evil from the society. The minister also directed to further tighten the cordon against those involved in the Hundi/Hawala business.

The action against those involved in the Hundi/Hawala business has improved the value of the Pakistani rupee, the FIA Officials informed the minister. The minister also reviewed the progress on pending promotions of FIA officials and directed to deal with pending promotion cases on urgent basis. All pending promotion cases should be disposed off within the prescribed period of one month, he directed the Agency's top leadership. In the meeting, the progress on the orders issued on the occasion of the visit of the Interior Minister to the FIA headquarters last week was also reviewed. Interior Secretary Aftab Durrani, Additional DGs and Directors of all regions of FIA participated in the meeting.

Sherdil's T-37s, PAF fighter jets spell bound spectators along expressway amid aerial acrobats

ISLAMABAD (APP): The full dress rehearsal of the Armed Forces for Pakistan Day Parade left numerous spectators spellbound along the Expressway while observing the aerial acrobats of the fighter aircraft of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) and the Sherdil's T-37 aircraft that painted the sky with multicolours.

The Shakarparian Parade Ground has become the center of attraction of every commuter entering the federal capital for their daily chores and employment purposes that pause and rest at the road sides to observe the thundering fighter jets hovering over scenic Parade Ground surrounded by thick green cover.

Absa Alam, a female entrepreneur told APP that she was heading towards her office when she heard the roaring sounds of the JF-17 Thunder. "I can assume that it's the pride of the nation JF-17 thunder because it had the loudest engine sound that deafened everyone's ears. But, I must say that there is an unexplainable motivation and pleasure to witnesses the

armed forces troops and PAF fighter jets doing aerial acrobats," she said.

Alam said it took a great deal of motivation to join this sacred duty of defending your motherland in khaki as it was a noble yet thrilling and daring task. "I captured many spectacular views of the F-16, J-17 and the team Sherdil of PAF that left the sky painted with different colours during the acrobats," she added.

Nasir Ali, a tourist said he was going to Blue Area for his office work but the roars of fighter jets glued him to the roadside to stay and witness the aerial acrobats. "I really found it motivating and energizing as I got goosebumps on my skin. My daughter admires Shaheed PAF fighter pilot Marium Mukhtiar and wants to become a fighter pilot too. I captured a few visuals to show that she would really love to watch on my mobile phone," he added. Tayyab and Muttayab, twin brothers said that they had bunked their college to see the aerial acrobats. "It is one of the

rare occasions as it will again take place after a year near next Pakistan Day. We really loved the Team Sherdil acrobats and other fighter jets. We find every fighter jet one of the best but its hard to differentiate or identify between any because for us every jet is F-16 or JF-17 Thunder," he added.

The twins also captured visuals and pictures of the aircraft performing aerial acrobats and drills over the Parade Ground and claimed that it would be great memory for them. Akram Abbas, an elderly who was standing on the overhead bridge told that he was going to cross the road to catch Metro Bus but waited to witness the fighter jets.

"Every passing aircraft sound warms your blood because it reminds us of our brave sons of the soil who had sacrificed for the defence of our motherland. Our prayers, regards, emotions and love always remain with every soldier, sailor and pilot who takes up his or her task in the field to protect the country," he added.

Commissioner kicks off spring plantation drive 2024

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Engineer Aamir Khattak along with Deputy Commissioner, Rawalpindi Hassan Waqar Cheema here on Thursday kicked off spring plantation drive 2024 by planting saplings in different city areas.

According to details, Aamir Khattak and Hassan Waqar Cheema inaugurated a special plantation campaign by planting saplings in different areas of Rawalpindi on International Forest Day.

A large-scale plantation drive was launched at Swan bridge, Gorakhpur, Chakri Road, Misa Kaswal, Gujar Khan and Kallar Syedan.

On this occasion, Station Commander Rawalpindi, Director General, Parks and Horticulture Authority, Ahmad Hasan Ranjha, CEO Education, Yasin

Baloch, Chairman Solid Waste Management Company, Saqib Rafiq, the officers of the Forests and Environment departments, students from different schools, colleges, universities and a large number of citizens were present.

The Commissioner informed that a target of one million plants had been set for the spring plantation drive which would continue till June 30. The Forest Department, PHA, Education and Environment Departments would make efforts to achieve the target.

He said that the authorities concerned were directed to plant 10,000 saplings today on the occasion of International Forest Day.

Saplings would also be planted in Rawalpindi and Chaklala Cantt Board areas under Plant for Pakistan

campaign, Aamir Khattak said adding, all the organizations should work together to make the plantation drive a success.

The private sector should be included in the campaign and the banners should also be displayed to create awareness among the citizens about the plantation drive, the Commissioner added.

Awareness seminars should be organized at schools, colleges and university level, he directed and urged the citizens to grow plants in the open areas of their homes. He urged the citizens to take care the saplings after planting under spring plantation campaign 2024. All-out efforts would be made to achieve the target set for the ongoing plantation campaign in Rawalpindi district, said Hassan Waqar Cheema.

College principal, staff face disciplinary action on various complaints

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training took disciplinary action against the Principal and other officials of Islamabad Model College for Boys (IMCB) F-7/3, following substantiated allegations of harassment and misconduct.

According to a notification, the accused officers, including Aftab Tariq, Principal of the College, along with Ms Umme Rubab Headmistress, Mateen Ahmed Acting Principal and Ms Khalida Asif ex-Drawing & Disbursing Officer have been made dysfunctional from their positions of authority.

Furthermore, they have been barred from holding any future administrative roles within the educational department.

The move comes in response to a joint complaint lodged by four daily-wage female teachers of IMCB F-7/3 in October 2023.

Madad Ali Sindhi, the former minister, demonstrated swift attention to the matter, directing the education ministry to form an inquiry committee to investigate the allegations against the accused officers.

The inquiry committee facilitated a hearing for the victimized teachers on October 25, 2023, providing them with

an opportunity to voice their grievances and concerns.

The inquiry report, dated December 4, 2023, highlighted Aftab Tariq's disregard for established procedures and his unilateral decision-making, leading to chaos and embarrassment within the ministry. It was alarming when Aftab Tariq issued illegal verbal orders for the termination of all daily-wage teachers, that further worsening tensions among staff members.

The inquiry committee's findings substantiated the claims of harassment and the ministry has directed the Federal Directorate of Education to disfunction the accused officers from their administrative positions.

Warning letters have already been issued to them. The warning letter issued to Aftab Tariq cited evidence of autocratic behavior, harassment, and misuse of authority.

The investigation revealed troubling signs of a narcissistic personality of Aftab Tariq, characterized by bursts of anger and inappropriate conduct towards employees.

The Ministry has directed the Federal Directorate of Education to ensure compliance with the disciplinary measures and submit a report within 48 hours.



RAWALPINDI: People watching Aerobatic aircrafts taking part in a rehearsal for Pakistan Day celebration show at Shakarparian area in the Federal Capital.



Shah Mohammad Mehrabi said: "The Afghanistan Trust Fund has made significant progress in the area of economic growth of Afghanistan. Shirbaz Kaminzada, head of the Afghanistan

after the return of the Islamic Emirate, of which \$7 billion are held in banks in the United States, and Washington created the Afghanistan Trust Fund on September 15, 2023, to hold half of these assets in Switzerland.

This report interviewed close to 600 women from 22 provinces of Afghanistan through online, face-to-face, and group counselling sessions and individual surveys.

A group of men are seated in a room, engaged in a discussion. On the left, two men in Western-style suits are seated on a grey sofa. In the center, a man in a tan jacket and black headscarf sits in a wooden armchair. To his right, a man in a white thobe and black turban sits in a similar armchair, holding a white flag with black Arabic calligraphy. Further right, three more men in traditional Afghan attire (doppa, kumchi, and pakols) are seated on a blue sofa. The room features a large window with sheer curtains and a patterned rug. A framed picture hangs on the wall to the left.

Muttaqi said that the IEA seeks balanced relations with all the countries

A photograph of Ayatollah Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of Iran, speaking at a podium. He is wearing a white turban and a white robe. The podium is decorated with a floral arrangement. Behind him is a large banner with the text "ایران، مهد امام زمان (عج)" (Iran, the land of the Imam of the Time (Ej)) and the United Nations flag is visible on the right.

Hanafi said that more work should be done to provide modern education and technology training along with religious education for students.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, by publishing an informative video, said that in the last 15 years alone, Afghanistan has lost 34%

that two years ago, Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesman of the Islamic Emirate, said in a tweet that according to the decision of the Council of Ministers of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, it is strictly forbidden to cut forests, sell the wood and

According to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan there are 100 members of this unit in Kabul and 50 people in each of the other seven provinces – Kunar, Nuristan, Khost, Laghman, Paktia, Paktika and Nangarhar – that have forests and woodlands.

A woman wearing a black hijab and a black face mask, sitting in front of a chalkboard and a stack of books.

Zahra, who had purchased a white

"And so the fact that this is another year in which Afghan women and girls don't have access to these kinds of schools, it's heartbreaking and it's troubling," Patel noted. As academic years 1400 through 1402 (solar years) passed without girls in schools, Islamic Emirate and Education Ministry officials haven't discussed their return for the start of 1403.

Noor Ahmad Islamjar, school for over 900 days.

Hospital officials have confirmed that the wounded victims are in stable condition.



So far no group or person has claimed responsibility for the blast.

Kandahar is the center of activities for the leadership of the Taliban, and in the past two years, fewer security incidents have been reported from this province.

Rafiyee insisted fasting relaxed the stomach, whose

He underlined the importance of eating good food during the Sehri time: "Skipping the Sehri has a direct impact on the stomach. Keeping the stomach

The Prophet (PBUH) also invited Muslims to observe fasting and he called it important for health, the scholar added.

He quoted the Prophet of Allah as saying the obligation of fasting is make the rich realise the condition of the poor. When hungry or thirsty, the rich are encouraged to help the poor with money and food.

Deadly Russian attack rocks Odesa

Ukraine vows to defeat ‘lunatic’ Putin

KYIV: Russian forces’ creeping momentum has continued for a fifth week after the fall of Avdiivka in eastern Ukraine as the Russian command moved reservists from other parts of the front to press its advantage. The villages of Tonenke and Nevelske, west of Avdiivka, fell to the Russian advance by Saturday.

In the same area, Russia’s Ministry of Defence claimed Orlivka three days later, and Russian forces seemed to be swallowing the village of Berdychi street by street. “The enemy concentrated its main efforts in the Avdiivka direction and for several days in a row has been trying to break through the defence of our troops, defended by three brigades,” Ukraine’s commander-in-chief, Oleksandr Syrskyy, said on Friday.

“Three brigades are being attacked by an army consisting of several divisions,” said Dmytro Kukharchuk, a Ukrainian battalion commander in the Avdiivka area. “The Russian troops are trying to create a 10-to-1 advantage.” Dmytro Lykhovyi, spokesperson for the Tavria Group of forces facing Russia there, had claimed the front was “stabilised” in early March.

Ukrainian military observer Konstantyn Mashovets said that assessment was premature but the Russian advance was slowing because “the enemy has already activated most of its tactical reserves and already ‘unpacked’ operational reserves.” “The enemy failed to achieve breakthroughs tens of kilometres deep,” and advancing “even a couple of kilometres is not cheap”, Mashovets said, suggesting Ukrainian forces retained their power to exact a high toll. Kukharchuk, too, said Russian forces were paying for their tactical success with “colossal losses”.

Ukraine’s military said it killed or wounded 6,600 Russians in the week before President Vladimir Putin’s re-election on Sunday – almost 1,000 a day. Al Jazeera was unable to confirm this toll. While the Avdiivka region was the main thrust of the Russian assault, Russia also intensified operations elsewhere. Its forces marginally advanced near Verbove, a village in the southern region of Zaporizhia, and near Synkivka, a village in the northeastern region of Kharkiv – demonstrating the complexity of Ukraine’s defensive tasks.

Russia also kept up the pressure on Ukrainian civilians, firing drones and missiles into the country during the 108th week of the war. The worst attack came on Friday when two Iskander ballistic missiles landed on homes in the Black Sea port city of Odesa, killing 21 people – one of the city’s deadliest attacks of the war. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Russia has fired 130 missiles, 320 Shahed drones and 900 glide bombs in March alone.

Since March 13, Ukraine has shot down 80 out of 101 Iranian-designed Shahed drones launched by Russia, it said. As these desperate struggles played out on the ground, Ukraine continued to attack Russia at home, carrying out a stated policy of making Russians feel the pain of their own war by destroying oil infrastructure. On Friday, Ukrainian military intelligence sources said they had struck the Perviy Zavod oil refinery in Kaluga, 160km (100km) southwest of Moscow, which reportedly supplies the military. Russian outlet Baza confirmed there was a blaze, and a large explosion at the plant was caught on camera.

The following day Zelenskyy said

Ukraine struck three oil refineries in the Samara region of Russia, 500km (310 miles) southeast of Moscow. Samara’s governor confirmed there was an explosion at the Novokuibyshevsky refinery. News outlet RBC-Ukraine said the Kuibyshevsky and Syzran Rosneft refineries were also struck and the three refineries were responsible for a 10th of Russian oil-refining capacity, processing 25m tonnes of crude oil a year. On Sunday, Putin’s re-election day, the Security Service of Ukraine said it had struck the Slavyansk oil refinery, 500km (310 miles) south of Moscow. According to a Russian military news outlet, it was just one of eight attacks on infrastructure across the country that day.

Russia forbade exports of refined petrochemicals in September to bring prices down from a high of nearly 77,000 rubles (\$840) a tonne for AI-95 standard petrol. RBC-Russia reported that repeated attacks had helped drive AI-95 to its highest price since, of 60,500 rubles (\$661) a tonne on March 13. Ukraine has struck several Russian petrochemical processing or loading plants since the beginning of the year, from St Petersburg to the Black Sea coast.

Kyiv also allowed anti-Putin Russian paramilitaries to launch a cross-border incursion from its soil the week before Putin’s election. The Russian Volunteer Force, Freedom of Russia Legion (LSR) and Siberian Battalion attacked border garrisons in Belgorod and Kursk on March 12. On Sunday, the LSR and Siberian Battalion said they had seized an administrative building in Gorkovsky, a border settlement in Belgorod, suggesting the incursion was ongoing. That prompted Putin to talk of creating a “sanitary zone” on Ukrainian soil to protect Russian borders.

“I do not rule that out. ... We will be forced at some point, when we consider it appropriate, to create a certain ‘sanitary zone’ in today’s territories subordinate to the Kyiv regime,” Putin said at a news conference on Monday, calling the paramilitaries “traitors”. The incursions also went the other way. Ukraine said it had repelled three reconnaissance and sabotage groups that crossed into its Sumy region from Russia.

Russia has frequently spoken of its openness to a negotiated end to the war, and this has garnered support among Western countries, including among members of the Republican Party in the United States who have pressed Ukraine to open talks. Putin’s right-hand man and deputy head of the National Security Council, Dmitry Medvedev, outlined last week what that negotiated peace might look like.

In a March 14 post on Telegram, he demanded “unconditional surrender”, the delisting of Ukraine as a sovereign country at the United Nations, its complete demilitarisation and Western recognition of its government as Nazis. “This may be the soft Russian formula for peace,” Medvedev said. “This is a compromise position, right? I think it is precisely on this basis that we can seek a benevolent consensus with the international community.” Less than a week later, Zelenskyy said in an evening address that “Putin must lose.” “Our actions must be long range to defeat Putin rather than being in a situation where doubts about the strength of the West benefit this lunatic,” the Ukrainian leader said. — Aljazeera

Islamabad not seeking armed conflict with Kabul: Minister

ISLAMABAD: Days after Pakistan hit outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) targets inside Afghanistan, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has said that Islamabad does not want any ‘armed conflict’ with Kabul.

“Force is the last resort. We do not want to have an armed conflict with Afghanistan,” Asif said while speaking to the Voice of America. The defence minister’s remarks come as the neighbouring countries have experienced a spike in their already tense bilateral relations over increasing terrorist attacks by the TTP and other banned outfits, which are based in Afghanistan, inside Pakistani territory.

Terming Pakistan’s military action inside

Afghanistan as a necessary message against increasing cross-border terrorism, the minister called on the Afghan interim regime to “control” the TTP and “not let them start a war” with Pakistan while living in Afghanistan. “We cannot continue like this,” he said, adding that Islamabad will be forced to retaliate if the TTP continues its attacks.

Elaborating on the prospects of bilateral trade and prospects of providing an economic corridor to Kabul, owing to the country being landlocked, Asif questioned why Islamabad should entertain such a possibility if the neighbouring country treats it “like an enemy”.

As reported by the VOA, around 5,000 to 6,000 TTP fighters reside in

Afghanistan after being driven out of Pakistani territory owing to the military-wide-scale anti-terror operation in erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) along the border with Afghanistan. Furthermore, United Nations’ assessments also confirm TTP’s presence in Afghanistan, the publication added.

Expressing his views on TTP’s presence inside Afghanistan, the defence minister said that the militant group was “being allowed” to operate as part of the interim Afghan government’s bid to prevent its fighters from joining IS-Khorasan Province (ISKP) — a rival group which has been engaged in armed conflict with the Afghan regime. — VOA

New Delhi CM arrested in ‘liquor policy scam’

NEW DELHI (Reuters): Just weeks ahead of the Indian national polls, New Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was on Thursday arrested in the alleged liquor policy scam. Kejriwal has become the first sitting chief minister to be arrested in the history of India, according to NDTV.

A 12-member team of the country’s Enforcement Directorate (ED) arrested Delhi CM Kejriwal at his residence in North Delhi’s Civil Lines this evening. The ED team reached his residence and began questioning after Delhi High Court refused to grant the CM protection from coercive action in the excise policy case earlier today, according to Indian Express.

The arrest means the main leaders of the decade-old Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) are in jail, following the arrests last year of two of Kejriwal’s deputies in the same case – which the party has called “dirty politics”.

The financial crime agency, the Enforcement Directorate, is investigating allegations that a liquor policy implemented by the Delhi government in 2022, which ended its control over sale of liquor in the capital, gave undue advantages to private retailers. The policy was subsequently withdrawn. Atishi, an AAP lawmaker from Delhi, said on social media that the party was seeking to quash the latest arrest. “We have asked for an urgent hearing by the Supreme Court tonight itself,” she said.

LHC puts off hearing of plea against Nawaz

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Thursday adjourned the hearing of the petition, seeking the court order that from now on former prime minister and PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif would not chair any official meeting, for an indefinite period when lawyer for the petitioner sought time from the court so that he could present relevant documents in the court.

Justice Muzammil Akhtar Shabbir heard the petition filed by Mashkoor Hussain, a citizen, through his lawyer Nadeem Sarwar Advocate while Additional Advocate General Barrister Hassan Khalid Ranjha represented the Punjab government. Speaking during the hearing, counsel for the petitioner said that a few days ago, Nawaz co-chaired a meeting with Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz on the transport sector in Punjab despite the fact that Nawaz did not have any administrative post.

The lawyer, on the occasion, also read out the press release issued by the Punjab government in this regard. “The PML-N supremo cannot preside over any official meeting,” he argued.

Justice Shabbir asked the lawyer to present an official document since there were no signatures on the press release. “Don’t you have any official document that could show that Nawaz had chaired the meeting?” the judge said. The lawyer then requested the court to grant him time so that he could present such a document. The court accepted the request and adjourned the case’s hearing for an indefinite period of time.



KYIV: Rescuers help a resident evacuate the site of a residential building damaged by a Russian missile attack.

US unveils draft UN resolution seeking immediate Gaza truce

JEDDAH (AFP): The United States has circulated a draft UN Security Council resolution calling for an “immediate ceasefire linked to the release of hostages” in the Gaza Strip, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said. The diplomat made his announcement while on a tour of the Middle East that will include a stop in Israel.

Key Israel backer the United States has vetoed previous UN Security Council votes on the nearly six-month war, objecting as recently as in February to the use of the term “immediate” in a draft submitted by Algeria. In recent weeks, however, Washington has upped the pressure on its ally, while insisting that Hamas militants must immediately release the hostages seized by militants during its October 7 attacks on Israel.

“Well, in fact, we actually have a resolution that we put forward right now that’s before the United Nations Security Council that does call for an immediate ceasefire tied to the release of hostages, and we hope very much that countries will support that,” Blinken said in Saudi Arabia. “I think that would send a strong message, a strong signal,” he told Saudi media outlet Al Hadath on Wednesday.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to destroy Hamas in retaliation for the October 7 attacks. “Of course, we stand with Israel and its right to defend itself... but at the same time, it’s imperative that the civilians who are in harm’s way and who are suffering so terribly — that we focus on them, that we make them a priority, protecting the civilians, getting them humanitarian assistance,” Blinken said.

US officials had been negotiating an alternative text since blocking an Algerian draft resolution calling for an “immediate humanitarian cease-

Egypt hosts Arab talks with Blinken on steps to end Gaza war

CAIRO (AFP): Government ministers from five Arab countries met Thursday in Cairo with a Palestinian official to discuss the Gaza war, Egypt’s foreign ministry said, ahead of talks with the US top diplomat.

In a joint statement released by Egypt’s foreign ministry, the ministers called for “a comprehensive and immediate ceasefire” and the “opening of all crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip,” where aid has only trickled in and the United Nations has repeatedly warned of imminent famine. The meeting was attended by the foreign ministers of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Jordan, as well as the Emirati minister of international cooperation and the Palestinian Authority minister for civilian affairs, the ministry said.

The Arab officials also reiterated their “rejection of any attempt to displace the Palestinians from their lands,” as a looming Israeli ground invasion of Gaza’s southernmost city of Rafah has raised fears for the 1.5 million mostly displaced Palestinians sheltering in the city, penned in by the Egyptian border. Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan arrived in the Egyptian capital on Thursday afternoon to participate in a series of consultative ministerial meetings on the evolving situation in the Palestinian territories, Saudi Press Agency reported.

Later Thursday, the ministers were due to hold talks with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken who is visiting Egypt as part of his sixth tour of the region since the Israel-Hamas war started on October 7. Blinken also had separate meetings with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi and Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry to discuss “ongoing efforts to protect Palestinian civilians and humanitarian workers in Gaza” and “secure an immediate ceasefire that includes the release of hostages,” according to the state department.

fire” in Gaza at the end of February. That alternative, focusing on support for a six-week truce in exchange for the release of hostages, had little chance winning approval, according to diplomatic sources.

A new version, seen by AFP, stresses “the need for an immediate and durable ceasefire to protect civilians on all sides, enable the delivery of essential humanitarian aid, and alleviate suffering... in conjunction with the release of hostages still held.” No vote has yet been scheduled on this text. Blinken met Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan and then held talks with Crown Prince Mohammed bin

Salman soon after landing in the kingdom on Wednesday on the first leg of a regional tour that will include Egypt on Thursday and then Israel on Friday.

Blinken’s tour, his sixth to the region since the war began, runs parallel with talks in Qatar, where mediators met for a third day on Wednesday in a renewed effort to secure a ceasefire but with little indication of an imminent agreement. The plan being discussed in Qatar would temporarily halt the fighting as hostages are exchanged for Palestinian prisoners and the delivery of relief supplies to Gaza is stepped up.

India’s Congress party accuses govt of freezing accounts before polls

NEW DELHI: The Congress party, India’s main opposition political group, has accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government of stifling democracy and “crippling” the party by freezing its bank accounts in a tax dispute ahead of the general election. India will hold a six-week election starting next month, with the Congress-led alliance pitted against Modi’s heavily funded Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi on Thursday told reporters in New Delhi the party is unable to campaign properly with its accounts frozen by the income tax department. “Our entire financial identity has been erased,” said Gandhi, 53, the scion of the family that dominated Indian politics for decades after independence. “We have no money to campaign, we cannot support our candidates. Our ability to fight elections has been damaged.”

A portion of the Congress’s bank accounts were frozen last month pending a tax case that dates back to 2018-19. Earlier this month, a tax tribunal dismissed its appeal to pause the

recovery of 1.35bn rupees (\$16.32m) in income tax from its bank accounts. Congress treasurer Ajay Maken said in a statement that tax authorities imposed a 2.1bn rupee (\$25m) lien on February 13, “virtually sealed” its bank accounts, and then confiscated 1.1bn rupees (\$14m).

The Congress claims the tax department’s sanctions are politically motivated, to hobble it from mounting a challenge to Modi’s BJP. “Last week, we received another notice from the tax authorities that dates back to our filings from 1995-96,” Gandhi said. “This is a criminal action on the Congress party done by the prime minister and the home minister. The idea that India is a democracy is a lie. There is no democracy in India today.”

Earlier on Thursday, his mother and former Congress chief Sonia Gandhi also made a rare public appearance, saying the tax penalty was “part of the systemic efforts to cripple” the party. The BJP rejected the allegations, saying the Congress’s bank accounts were partially frozen because it had failed to file an income tax return for cash

donations it received in 2017-18 and had therefore lost the tax exemption available to political parties.

BJP president Jagat Prakash Nadda said the Congress was making the accusations against Indian democracy and institutions because it feared an “historic defeat” in the election. India’s Supreme Court is scheduled to take up the Congress party’s complaint early next month after it was rejected by tax appeal authorities, BJP spokesman Ravi Shankar Prasad told reporters.

According to the latest official financial disclosures to the Election Commission of India, the BJP’s funds are nearly 10 times that of Congress. The gulf dramatically widened after Modi’s government introduced contentious electoral bonds in 2017, allowing unlimited anonymous donations. Last month, the Supreme Court outlawed the scheme as unconstitutional and asked for donor and receiver details to be made public. Released details showed the BJP was by far the single largest beneficiary, with just under half of all donations, totalling about \$730m. — Aljazeera

IHC orders arrangements for Imran’s meeting with lawyers

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court on Thursday issued the written judgment on a plea seeking meetings between PTI founder Imran Khan and his legal team. The court in its verdict ordered the Adiala jail superintendent to arrange online meetings between the former prime minister and his lawyers till the resolution of the security issues.

IHC’s Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan issued the judgment in which the court sought a report from the Adiala jail superintendent today (Friday) regarding the arrangement following court orders. In the judgment, the court said that the PTI founder’s lawyer had said that they were restricted from meeting their client due to

security issues.

The IHC ordered the jail authorities to make arrangements to facilitate Imran Khan’s online meetings with his legal team. They were directed to ensure the required internet speed for smooth huddles of the former prime minister. On Adiala jail’s superintendent’s contention that the jail rules did not allow online meetings, the court said that the rules were drafted in 1978 and there was no such facility in that period.

The Punjab home department on March 12 banned meetings with the PTI founder in Adiala Jail, citing security threats. The ban was slapped for two weeks the sources within the Punjab home department said while media coverage is also prohibited in front of Adiala Jail’s gate no-5.



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