

Four terrorists killed F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Four terrorists were killed and a former government official martyred in operation of the security forces against extremists. The armed forces, CTD and police conducted joint operation against militants in Kot Kundian area of Kulachi located at Dera-Tank border. During intense exchange of fire, four terrorists were killed while arms, explosives and other material were also recovered.



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UNSC demands 'immediate' Gaza truce, US abstains

NEW YORK CITY (AP): The UN Security Council for the first time on Monday demanded an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan after the US, Israel's ally which vetoed previous drafts, abstained.

Drawing unusual applause in the often staid Security Council chamber, all 14 other members voted in favor of the resolution which "demands an immediate ceasefire" for the rest of the ongoing Islamic holy month. The resolution called for the cessation of hostilities to lead to a "lasting sustainable ceasefire" and demanded that Hamas and other militants free hostages seized on October 7.

Russia, at the last minute, objected to the removal of the word "permanent" ceasefire and called a vote, which failed to gain passage. The text acknowledged the ongoing diplomatic efforts by Egypt, Qatar and the US to bring about an end to hostilities, the release of all hostages and an increase in the distribution of humanitarian aid.

The successful resolution was drafted in part by Algeria, the Arab bloc's current member on the Security Council, with a diverse array of countries including Slovenia and Switzerland. Also on Monday, the White House said the US abstention did not signal a change in

Washington's policy toward the conflict. It does not represent a "shift in our policy," National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told journalists. He said the US backed a ceasefire but abstained because the resolution text did not condemn Hamas and its October 7 attack.

Meanwhile, the Israel's army said it was battling Hamas militants Monday around two Gaza hospitals, reporting some 20 fighters killed in the past day in close-quarters combat and air strikes. Israel has launched raids on and near several Gaza hospitals since the war erupted in October, claiming that fighters have used them as bases — charges denied by the Palestinian militants.

Palestinians living near Gaza's largest hospital, Al-Shifa, have reported hellish conditions, including corpses in the streets, constant bombardment and the rounding up of men, who are stripped to their underwear and questioned. Israel labelled the raids underway Monday around Gaza City's Al-Shifa hospital, and in the Khan Yunis neighborhood surrounding Al-Amal hospital, "precise operational activities."

But the raids have sparked major fears for the patients and displaced people who are inside the facilities,

which in some cases Israel has raided or cordoned off on more than one occasion. The Palestinian Red Crescent said Al-Amal had all of its entrances surrounded by military vehicles and that hospital staff were prohibited from leaving.

The military said its operation in the Al-Amal neighborhood included "raids on several terrorist infrastructure sites in the area and located explosive devices, RPGs (rocket-propelled grenades) and military equipment." "Over 20 terrorists were eliminated in the Al-Amal area over the past day in close-quarters combat and aerial strikes," the army added.

The raid at Al-Shifa is now in its eighth day and the military reported detaining some "500 terrorists affiliated with the Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorist organizations" and locating weapons in the area. Israel has said that the operation will continue until the last militant is "in their hands," signalling an extended presence at Al-Shifa, which troops also raided in November. The Red Crescent on Sunday said military vehicles had also surrounded Nasser hospital, about a one-kilometer (half mile) drive from the Al-Amal medical center, but the situation at Nasser on Monday was unclear.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing a meeting regarding implementation of Track and Trace System.

Aitchison College principal quits



F.P. Report

LAHORE: Aitchison College Principal Michael A. Thomson Monday tendered his resignation after Punjab Governor Balighur Rehman ordered to waive the fees of Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Establishment Ahad Cheema's sons.

According to media reports, the resignation came after Cheema's wife had requested the Punjab governor to waive off the fees of her sons. Following her request, the governor issued an order after which their fees was waived off for three years. In a letter issued to the college staff, Thomson said that he will be stepping down from the principal's post on April 1 and will not be playing any role in the management and admissions process.

"I did not intend to leave Aitchison College but now I have no other choice. Throughout my time as principal, I have done my very best to protect the school's reputation while extending compassion to those in need," said Thomson in the letter. "However, there is a crucial difference between this pursuit and blatant policy manufacturing to accommodate certain individuals because such people simply insist on preferential treatment," the letter said.

The letter mentioned that the college's policy was undermined to "favour some people", adding that there is no room for "politics and nepotism" in the college. The principal added that over the past year, "prejudiced actions by the Governor House have contributed to a breakdown of governance and management".

"It seems incredulous to me, and quite possibly to most other people, that a school so successful can be subjected to such unwarranted interference and brazen directives. A well-intentioned foreigner does not venture to another country with less than pure intent, and nor should that person act in any way to encourage or facilitate what he considers to be wrong," he wrote.

PM directs swift action against tax defaulters

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday directed initiation of action against tax defaulters and evaders on emergency basis.

The prime minister directed for constitution of a committee to identify the hurdles and responsibilities in the track and trace system. The committee would identify the hurdles and people involved in tax theft within seven days. The prime minister chaired a meeting regarding implementation of Track and Trace System in Islamabad, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The committee would be tasked to submit future proposals over enforcement of automatic tax system in factories and industries. The meeting was attended by federal ministers including Muhammad Aurangzeb, Ahad Khan Cheema, Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Jehanzaib Khan, Chairman FBR Malik Amjad Zubair Tiwana and other senior officials.

The prime minister questioned as to why the system was still inactive? He observe that this system should have been made functional in tobacco, sugar, cement and fertilizer industries in the last two years, adding that the system should be placed in other important sectors of the economy. He said that all the legal impediments in the enforcement of track and trace system should be removed.

The prime minister directed that the system should be enforced at all the production lines of cement factories, besides he summoned a comprehensive plan over digital strategy and automated track and trace system. He further directed that all those factories that resisted the implementation of track and trace system should be immediately sealed.

He opined that besides revenues, the said system could also be utilized for counterfeit and substandard products. The prime minister asked for end to fake and unregistered cigarettes and their destruction. The country was facing economic issues and mafia with their connivance had been inflicting damages to the national kitty, he added.

The prime minister also asked for seek-

ing help of the international institutions in the track and trace system. The meeting was apprised in detail about the hurdles in the automated enactment of the track and trace system in the cement, sugar, fertilizer and tobacco sectors. The meeting was told that in 14 tobacco factories, the system was fully functional whereas 12 others had been sealed for non-compliance. The system was fully functional in fertilizer industry while it was facing problems in sugar and cement factories due to some technical issues which were being addressed. The meeting was further apprised that raids were being conducted on godowns throughout the country to control the smuggling. The prime minister directed that the law enforcement agencies should assist FBR.

Meanwhile, the Ambassador of Germany Alfred Grannas called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and discussed matters of mutual interest.

The prime minister thanked German Chancellor Olaf Scholz for sending a congratulatory message to him on his re-election. The prime minister emphasized that Pakistan deeply valued its longstanding ties with Germany and considered it an important partner in Europe.

While noting the positive trajectory of bilateral ties, the prime minister expressed the desire to expand existing level of bilateral trade and investment, stating that there was great potential for enhanced German investments in Pakistan. The prime minister welcomed the German side's initiative to send a business delegation to visit Pakistan soon and assured the German Ambassador that the delegation would be facilitated in every way to ensure a successful visit. He also extended an invitation to the German Chancellor to undertake an official visit to Pakistan at his earliest convenience. The ambassador assured the prime minister that Germany was keen to work closely with Pakistan to strengthen bilateral ties, especially in trade and investment.

Punjab Assembly Speaker Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan also called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and discussed matters of mutual concern. In the meeting, the overall political situation and other matters also came under discussion.

Police officers in KP reshuffled

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a bid to bolster operational efficiency and enhance law enforcement capabilities, the Police Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has announced a series of transfer postings. These strategic reassignments aim to optimize manpower distribution across various districts. Among the notable transfers

Zahoor Babar Afridi, PSP previously serving as District Police Officer in Mansehra, has been reassigned to Mardan. Dr Zahid Ullah, PSP formerly holding the Position of AIG Traffic Highway Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, will now serve as the District Police Officer in Swat.

Qamar Hayat, who was serving as District Police Officer in Chitral Lower, will now take charge as the District Police Officer in Battagram. Shafiuallah Gandapur, who held the position of District Police Officer in Swat, has been transferred to Mansehra.

Saud Khan, arriving from ICT Police Islamabad, will assume the role of Chief Traffic Officer in Peshawar. Suleman Zaffar, PSP, formerly Principal Staff Officer to IGP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, has been appointed as the District Police Officer in Haripur.

These transfers, meticulously planned to consider experience, expertise, and local knowledge, aim to strengthen the department's response capabilities and address specific security needs in different regions. The officers involved are expected to undergo specialized training programs to ensure a smooth transition into their new roles.

May 9 riots: SC seeks details of trials in military courts

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government Monday requested the Supreme Court to withdraw the former provincial caretaker government's appeal against the top court's October 23 judgment, declaring the military trial of civilians null and void.

Presenting a resolution passed by the provincial cabinet led by KP Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, the government's lawyer said the government wants to withdraw the intra-court appeal. However, the apex court maintained that the appeal on cabinet resolutions cannot be returned, directing the KP government's counsel to file a formal application to withdraw the appeal.

In November last year, KP caretaker government, along with that of the federal and other provinces, filed intra-court appeals against the apex court's October 23 verdict which was issued by a five-member bench. In its decision, the top court declared civilians' trials in military courts null and void in the May 9 riots, triggered by the arrest of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan in a corruption case.

It also held that 103 persons and others who may be placed in relation to the events arising from May 9 and 10 could be tried by criminal courts established under the ordinary or special law of the land. PTI and others approached the top court against the military trials on the grounds that they lacked transparency.

The KP government showed its intention to take back the appeal when a six-member bench headed by Justice Aminuddin Khan took up the pleas on Monday. At the outset of the hearing, the lawyer of former chief justice (ret'd) Jawad S Khawaja — one of the petitioners — objected to the bench overseeing the matter.

The counsel said his client objected to the size of the bench, stating that it should have been bigger. The lawyer, therefore, requested the formation of a nine-member bench. He said that this case's decision should not be marred by a question over the composition of the bench and how the verdict could have been different if a nine-member bench was to hear its proceedings. "It is a matter of public trust in this institution. The court should ask the committee to constitute a nine-member bench," the counsel said.

Sharing his views on the formation of the bench, the lawyer of one of the petitioners Khawaja Ahmed Hussain — who also previously requested the formation of a

nine-member bench — argued it would be appropriate to send the matter again to the judges committee. "If a 9-member bench had been formed earlier, it would not have been possible to hear the appeals today," Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar remarked upon his request.

"The five-member bench of the Supreme Court declared the trial null and void by giving a unanimous decision," the lawyer said, adding. He added that the verdict of the ongoing hearing will become controversial if the two to four member bench declares it null and void.

"For public trust in the judiciary, it is important that the decision is not controversial," he said. Meanwhile, former chief justice Khawaja's lawyer also told the court that the families of the least 103 accused — who remain in custody — want to join the court's proceedings.

"The court should allow the family to watch the hearing," Justice Khan questioned where these families will be seated, as the courtroom is full during hearings. "There is no objection [for them] coming to the court. Let's see their case," the SC judge remarked.

Meanwhile, the petitioners in the case also objected to the hiring of private lawyers. Lawyer Faisal Siddiqui said the Attorney General for Pakistan, Mansoor Usman Awan, has filed five appeals on behalf of government institutions, while some ministries have hired private lawyers. Questioning the government's decision in this regard, Siddiqui said that the AGP has filed these appeals himself, so why should public money be spent on private lawyers.

The court, on the other hand, ordered the AGP to share details regarding the cases of civilians in custody. "Out of 103 people, how many people are acquitted, how many people are innocent?" the court asked the AGP. Justice Khan asked Awan if any of the accused had been released or could be released. Responding to the SC judge, the AGP said: "The trial has been completed but the verdicts have not yet been announced."

"You had said that some cases are acquittals and some have completed their sentences," Justice Khan remarked addressing Awan. The AGP responded saying that there are some accused whose period of arrest will be considered in the sentence and acquittals could not be made due to the Supreme Court's injunction. Lawyer Salman Akram Raja, who was also present at the hearing, contested that there was no injunction on acquittal.

Power struggle causes disarray in PTI's ranks, says Tarar

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Monday said that there was a sheer power struggle within the ranks of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) that may lead to its disintegration or creation of a forward block.

Addressing a press conference here, he said that top PTI leaders like Gohar Khan and Sher Afzal Khan were taking contradictory stances on different issues. He regretted the "childish attitude" put up by the PTI which was a national party. Tarar advised the PTI leaders to shun its internal politics and play its due role in strengthening the economy.

Lambasting the PTI, he said sometimes they wrote a letter to the IMF, but sometimes asked the European Union to investigate the election process in Pakistan. If they had any complaint,

they should knock the door of the Election Commission of Pakistan or Election Tribunals, he said. He said once they were accusing the US of toppling the PTI government, now they had hired lobbying firms in the United States.

The minister said that American diplomat Donald Lu had called the PTI founder as a "certified liar". He urged the PTI leaders to join mainstream politics and contribute to the nation building process. "We need to create unity and consensus at the national political scenario", he opined. The minister said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the government was fully committed to the agenda of economic reforms.

He said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was holding meetings on the economy on a daily basis as the government's focus was on solving the

people's problems. "We are focusing on measures like privatization, reduction of government expenditure, tax reforms, digitization of FBR, expansion of tax net and reduction of tax burden on the poor segments of the society." He said that for the first time in the history, taxpayers would be honored with awards in the coming days. "The government of Pakistan will, for the first time, give awards to businessmen who increase the tax volume," he remarked. He said that in this regard, there would be a formal ceremony at the Prime Minister's House soon. The process of economic reforms is continued at a rapid pace, he added.

Tarar said that to provide relief to the people during Ramadan, the Prime Minister had assigned the duties of ministers across the country. He said yesterday and today also federal ministers visited the utility stores and

reviewed the arrangements to ensure relief to the masses. He said that a road map was being made and all measures were being taken to improve the country's economy as the focus of the PM was on economic reforms.

Besides economic revival, he told that eradication of terrorism from the country was also the top priority of the incumbent regime. He said that in the past, the PML-N government under the leadership of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif established peace and now peace would be established under the leadership of Shehbaz Sharif.

Paying homage to the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the sake of the country, he said, "in the war against terrorism, we have full confidence in the security forces, armed forces and police and law enforcement agencies", he maintained. He said Gwadar Port Authority was attacked and responsi-

bility for this attack was accepted by the Balochistan Liberation Army. The terrorist Karim Jan killed during the attack on the Gwadar Port Authority was included in the missing persons list, the minister added and said, when Karim Jan's body was handed over to the heirs, it transpired that he was declared a missing person from August 2022, he noted.

The minister said that it was very alarming that the BLA terrorist was involved in the Gwadar Port Authority attack, but the campaign was being conducted for two years by dubbing him as a missing person. He said that these were very sensitive matters, adding that Gwadar was a commercial hub, part of CPEC, and attack on it was an attack on the national economy.

The minister assured that the government would play its full role for

establishing peace in the country. To a query, the minister said the Governor Punjab had decided on the matter related to the fee of Ahad Cheema's children in accordance with the law. On the occasion, he underlined the need for promoting inter-faith harmony in the country by discouraging sectarianism.

The minister said that he had directed the officers concerned to ensure that more funds should be allocated in the next financial budget for the health insurance programme of journalists and media workers. "It is our responsibility to take initiative for journalists' welfare and let me assure you that the programme will continue in the coming years," he added. He said that Xinhua News Agency had the privilege to conduct the first interview of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif with any foreign news agency.

Govt to hold awards ceremony F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The government has decided to hold an exclusive civil awards ceremony for the doctors and paramedics who had lost lives their lives during COVID-19, an official statement said Monday. Last year on August 14, the President of Pakistan had awarded Tamgha-i-Imtiyaz posthumously to 299 doctors and paramedical staff who died while rendering services during the pandemic.



Ghulam Nabi Memon assumes charge as IGP Sindh

KARACHI (APP): Following a notification from the federal government, Ghulam Nabi Memon, a Grade 21 officer of the Police Service of Pakistan (PSP), has officially assumed the charge of Provincial Police Officer/Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sindh on Monday. This marks the beginning of his second tenure as Sindh Police chief.

Arriving at the Central Police Office (CPO) in Karachi, Memon received a warm welcome from the police brass band. He then paid tribute to fallen officers, honoring their sacrifice, and offered prayers for the departed souls of the Sindh Police martyrs.

Senior officers present at the CPO were greeted by the newly appointed IGP Sindh, demonstrating a smooth transition of command. During the Change of Command ceremony, Ghulam Nabi Memon formally took charge as IGP Sindh, while Riffat Mukhtar Raja completed the paperwork to relinquish his duties as the former IGP Sindh.

Health minister reviews projects of hospitals

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Minister for Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education (SH&ME) Khawaja Salman Rafique on Monday chaired a meeting to thoroughly assess the progress of ongoing revamping projects in government hospitals across Punjab. During the meeting, SH&ME Special Secretary Syed Wajid Ali Shah provided a comprehensive briefing to the minister regarding the status of the revamping initiatives.

Emphasising the government's commitment to swiftly completing these projects, the provincial health minister underscored that any delay in providing treatment to patients visiting government hospitals was unacceptable. He urged hospital heads to actively contribute to the expedited completion of the revamping endeavors.

Khawaja Salman Rafique reiterated the government's zero-tolerance policy towards negligence in patient care, inadequate sanitation facilities, medication shortages, and doctor absenteeism. He pledged to personally oversee the implementation of the revamping plans across all government hospitals and directed the special secretary to ensure daily monitoring of the projects.

KU declares results

KARACHI (APP): The University of Karachi on Monday announced the results of the Associate Degree in Arts (ADA), Part-I, Regular and External, Annual Examination 2022. According to the gazette issued here, as many as 5,205 candidates were registered in the ADA Regular papers of which 5,027 students appeared in the examination and 1,297 candidates were declared successful. The overall pass percentage was counted 25.80 percent. It is mentioned here that 3,427 candidates were registered in the ADA External papers while 3,127 students appeared in the exams, out of which, 747 candidates cleared their papers.

Relations between Pakistan and Turkiye on rise: CM

LAHORE (APP): Turkish Ambassador to Pakistan H.E. Dr Mehmet Pacaci, called on Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif and PML-N Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif to discuss issues of mutual interest and increase cooperation in various fields.

PML-N Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif said, "The people of Pakistan and Turkiye are bound to each other in the relationship of Islamic brotherhood." Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif said Pakistan and Turkiye want to increase cooperation in commercial, economic and other fields. She added that increasing trade volume between Pakistan and Turkiye is the need of the hour.

The Chief Minister highlighted that there are vast investment opportunities in Punjab in housing, tourism, solar energy, health, education, vocational training and other sectors. She added a very favorable investment ecosystem and incentives are being provided for investment in Punjab.

Turkish investors should take advantage of these investment opportunities. "We will provide them all kinds of facilities in this regard, because we want to benefit from the experience and expertise of Turkiye's rapid development," she added.

Turkish ambassador said Pakistan and Turkiye have historical brotherly relations. Cooperation between the two

countries is exemplary. He assured to increase cooperation with the Punjab government in various fields. He added that steps will be taken at a fast pace to further promote relations with Punjab. Potential agreements in this regard were also discussed in the meeting.

Turkish Commercial Counsellor Nurettin Demir, Ghazanfar Mahmood, Director of the Embassy Office, Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb and other relevant officers attended the meeting.

CM greets Hindu community on Holi: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has conveyed warm greetings to the Hindu community on the auspicious occasion of the Holi.

In her message, the CM wished happy Holi to Hindu community around the world, especially Pakistan.

Expressing her best wishes for the Hindu community on the occasion, the CM remarked that the Hindu community is playing a valuable role in the economic development of Pakistan. She said all those living in Pakistan are united, peace will illuminate through the colors of Holi.

CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif said that Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) government believes in equality, justice and fairness.

May the festival of Holi be a source of tolerance, happiness, peace and prosperity, she prayed.

4.8 mln ration bags distributed, 6132 profiteers arrested

LAHORE (APP): On the instructions of the Chief Minister Punjab, the provincial government is successfully continuing the Nighaban Ramzan package for providing relief to deserving families during the holy month of fasting and so far 4.8 million ration bags have been delivered to the needy people at their doorsteps.

Chief Secretary Punjab Zahid Akhtar Zaman chaired an important meeting held at the Civil Secretariat to review the Ramzan package and price control measures.

The administrative secretaries of departments of industries, agriculture, additional IG Special Branch, Chairman PITB and officers concerned attended the meeting, while the additional chief secretary, all divisional commissioners and deputy commissioners participated through video link.

Officials briefed the meeting that 6,132 person were arrested and 2109 cases were registered in the crackdown over profiteers in Ramzan, and the price magistrates checked nine hundred thousand places and imposed fines of Rs. 75 million over violations.

The Chief Secretary said that the delivery of ration bags at doorsteps under the Ramzan package was a big challenge, adding that the role of administrative officers in the successful implementation of the program was commendable.

He also praised the Punjab Information Technology Board for ensuring transparency in the Ramzan package through digital monitoring. The meeting decided that certificates of appreciation would be issued to the 10 best performing districts in connection with delivery of ration bags.

The secretaries of industries and agriculture gave a detailed briefing at the meeting. They said that on the directives of the Chief Minister Punjab, the crackdown on profiteers was underway across the province.

They said that due to effective monitoring and administrative measures, the prices of potatoes, tomatoes and other vegetables are decreasing. They mentioned that more than 1.5 million consumers had benefited from the agriculture fair price shops established in Ramzan bazaars.

Inflation, improvement of trade major challenges: Jam

KARACHI (APP): Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan on Monday said that the control over increasing inflation and improvement of trade in the country were big challenges for the incumbent government. He said that the federal government was seriously contemplating the current situation and would address it in the leadership of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

While talking to media during his visit to pay homage to father of the nation Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah at the mausoleum, he said that the federal and provincial governments would have to jointly address the challenge of rampant inflation. He said that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) had set conditions under that the government could not provide subsidy.

The Federal Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan said that the governments would have to make efforts for balancing supply and demand chain to provide relief to the people.

He said improvement of trade is a big

challenge for us.' He further said that the Special Investment Facilitation Centre (SIFC) had been established to facilitate the investors and improve the investment process in the country.

Kamal said that Pakistan had to engage with the world. He said that Africa was a big opportunity, which had not been tapped so far.

Replying to a question, he said that they would try to persuade Pakistan People's Party (PPP) to join the Cabinet. He said that PPP, MQM-Pakistan, National Party and other parties had played their part to form the government.

Answering a question, Jam Kamal said that there were many crises including energy and mismanagement of power in Gas sector.

Earlier, the Minister laid a wreath at the mausoleum of father of the nation Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah and offered fateha.

He also prayed for the development of the country and inked his impressions in the visitors' book.



KARACHI: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan offering Fateha at the Mausoleum of Father of the Nation Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah.

‘PM ‘Ramadan Package’ to provide relief to the people’

KARACHI (APP): Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan has said that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has increased the amount of Ramadan Relief Package from Rs7.5 billions to Rs12.5 billions to provide relief to the common men.

He stated this while talking to media persons on the occasion of his visit to a Utility Store here on Monday. The Minister said that the federal government was taking initiatives for the provision of relief to the public. He said that around all the items were available at the Utility

Store in reasonable prices. The Utility Stores were not meant for solution to beat the inflation, he said adding that these were merely a step for relief.

Kamal said that there was a need to balance the Price Control Mechanism. He said that the onus was on the government to put the house in order.

He said that the government had to boost the industry and manage the matter of energy crisis in the country.

He further said that there were six to seven projects in the pipeline.

Replying to a question about law

and order situation, he said that there was a need to review the issue of unemployment and address the law and order situation.

He further said that the federal and provincial governments were on the same page regarding the law and order situation and other challenges.

Replying to another question, he said when we borrow from IMF then we had to return it in a good manner.

Earlier, the Minister Jam Kamal visited the Utility Store and took details of the relief being provided to the people.

Consul General of China calls on Chief Secretary

KARACHI (APP): The Consul General (CG) of China Yang Yundong called on the Sindh Chief Secretary (CS) Syed Asif Hyder Shah at the Sindh Secretariat here on Monday. They discussed issues of mutual interest including the promotion of bilateral relations. On the occasion, the Sindh Chief Secretary assured the Chinese Consul General of the Sindh government's support and said that the provincial government and the people of Sindh valued their brotherly relations with China.

He further said that there were very good investment opportunities for Chinese companies and businessmen in energy and wastewater treatment plants as well as agriculture sectors in the Sindh province. Syed Asif Hyder Shah said that he appreciated the cooperation of the Chinese government during the flood and COP conference.

They agreed to work in the agriculture and technology sectors in Sindh. Later on, the Chinese Consul General Yang Yundong thanked the provincial government for its support and cooperation. The Chief Secretary Sindh presented a traditional Sindhi cap and Ajrak to the Chinese Consul General.

Crackdown against beggars in ICT

ISLAMABAD (APP): Assistant Commissioners and Magistrates led teams have executed a targeted operation against professional beggars on the directives of the Deputy Commissioner and arrested 18 professional beggars from F-6, PS Sahala, Lohi Bhair and surrounding areas of the Federal Capital. The Assistant Commissioner City Farhan Ahmad took swift action, nabbing 08 professional beggars from the F-6 and nearby areas. These individuals were promptly handed over to the police, while minor children found begging were safely relocated to the Edhi Center, said the ICT spokesman, Dr Abdullah Tabassum.

Meanwhile, the Assistant Commissioner Rural, Kamran Saeed raided at PS Sahala, Lohi Bhair and surrounding areas and arrested 12 professional beggars and handed over to police stations for further action. Under the supervision of Assistant Commissioners, the operation against beggars persists on a daily basis. The crackdown aims to curb the menace of organized begging in the capital, ensuring public spaces remain free from such activities.

Azam Nazir Tarar assesses prices, facilities at utility store

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Law and Justice, Azam Nazir Tarar, conducted a thorough inspection of a utility store in the provincial capital on Monday, focusing on product quality, facilities, and sales mechanisms.

During his visit, Minister Tarar diligently observed the sales activity, assessed the availability of facilities, and scrutinized the stock of discounted products.

Engaging with store staff, Minister Tarar inquired about any existing challenges and checked the rate list to ensure transparency.

Speaking to the media, he emphasized the government's commitment to prioritizing economic improvement, citing Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif's leadership as pivotal to the nation's economic progress.

Minister Tarar underscored the government's dedication to providing essential

facilities, highlighting the announcement of the largest Ramadan package in the country's history. He elaborated on the inclusivity of the package, emphasizing special discounted rates for both Benazir Income Support Program beneficiaries and the general public.

During the visit, utility store staff presented a comparative analysis of prices, reassuring the Minister that essential items such as ghee and sugar are being offered at affordable rates – Rs. 335 per kilogram for ghee and Rs. 109 per kilogram for sugar. Additionally, they assured special arrangements for BISP beneficiaries. Furthermore, Minister Tarar personally examined the quality of pulses and other food items available at utility stores, gathering feedback on their pricing to ensure accessibility and affordability for all citizens.

Minister for Maritime Affairs visits PNSC headquarters

KARACHI (APP): Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, conducted an official visit to the main office of the Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC) on Monday.

The minister received a warm welcome from PNSC officials upon his arrival.

During the visit, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh was briefed by PNSC's Director Project and Planning, Khurram Mirza, alongside other key officials including Director Finance, Syed Jarrar Ahmed Kazmi, Director Ship Management, S.M. Babar, and Director

Commercial, Captain Mustafa Qazibash.

Addressing the gathering, the Minister underscored the necessity for collaborative efforts to steer the nation's economy in a positive direction, emphasizing the importance of building a better Pakistan for future generations.

He also pointed out the significant progress in the Asian region while noting the country's lag in development. In discussions with the media, the minister outlined plans to finalize the PNSC board and appoint a CEO from the private sector, aiming to

enhance the corporation's efficiency further.

While expressing satisfaction with PNSC's current performance, the minister stressed the potential for further improvements. Regarding the government's economic endeavors, Sheikh assured that efforts were underway, promising visible results albeit requiring some time. Following the PNSC visit, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh proceeded to tour the DLB Building, where DG Port and Shipping, Aaliya Shahid, provided further insights during a briefing session.

Attempted Robbery Foiled by Woman in Peshawar's Hayatabad Controversy Surrounds Police Response

Syed Adnan

In a daring act of bravery, a woman in Hayatabad, Peshawar, thwarted an attempted robbery at her residence, signaling a stark defiance against criminal activity in the area. The incident unfolded when the woman managed to confine the intruders to a room and promptly alerted the authorities. Upon receiving the distress call, law enforcement swiftly responded, only to be met with resistance from the perpetrators who attempted to open fire on the police. Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Nayab Maaz, who led the operation, recounted the intensity of the situation, high-

lighting the brazenness of the suspects. This is not the first brush with the law for the accused, as ASP Nayab Maaz revealed ongoing investigations into prior incidents of robbery and criminal activity involving the suspects. During the confrontation, authorities recovered firearms from the suspects, further underscoring the seriousness of the situation. However, the saga took a controversial turn when allegations surfaced against one of the suspects for the alleged murder of a security guard. In a turn of events, when the Station House Officer (SHO) arrived at the scene, he found himself under attack from one of the suspects. In an act of self-defense, the SHO

retaliated, leading to the suspension of the officer by higher authorities. The suspension has sparked debate and raised questions regarding the integrity of law enforcement and the decision-making process within the police hierarchy. Concerns have been voiced over whether the SHO's actions were justified in the face of imminent danger posed by the armed suspect. As investigations continue into the attempted robbery and subsequent altercation, the incident serves as a testament to the bravery of citizens against criminal elements, while also highlighting the complexities and challenges faced by law enforcement in maintaining public safety.



LAHORE: Exhibition of colorful flowers on display in Jilani Bagh.



Minister inaugurates SSC at UET

PESHAWAR (APP): The Minister for Higher Education Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Meena Khan inaugurated the Student Service Center at University of Engineering Technology (UET) on Monday that is a newly established one stop solution center, equipped with modern technology to facilitate the students in their academic matters such as transcripts, course registration and degree clearance etc.

The Minister Higher Education was received by Prof. Dr. Qaisar Ali, Vice Chancellor UET Peshawar

and apprised him of his vision to facilitate the students on top priority with his student centric approach.

He told that the SSC will be equipped with modern technology to reduce the wait time and well trained staff. The Deans, senior faculty and administration were present on the occasion.

Meena Khan said that promoting engineering education and facilitating the students to the remote areas of KP is a sacred mission of UET Peshawar

which is appreciable.

He congratulated Prof Dr. Qaisar Ali and his team for opening up a center aimed to solve the issues of the students through modern technology will be a useful addition.

“This initiative aligns with the university’s vision of creating a vibrant educational environment that prepares the youth to become leaders, commending the efforts of Prof Dr. Qaisar Ali for his student centric approach,” he added.

While talking to the media, the Minister assured

that the Government of KP will soon share the sustainable financial model for the universities so that they get out of financial crisis.

He also asked to promote high standard of engineering education based on the demand of market.

He appreciated the UET Peshawar for an extensive research portfolio and international linkages.

Later, the Vice Chancellor gave a presentation of UET Peshawar’s activities, research portfolio and financial problems the university is facing.



PESHAWAR: Minister for Higher Education Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Meena Khan offering dua after inaugurating Student Service Center at University of Engineering Technology.

Providing relief to govt employees in budget being seriously considered

PESHAWAR (APP): Zahid Chanzeb, Adviser to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Tourism, Culture and Archives has said that the KP government is seriously considering to provide relief to the govt employees in the new budget and improving their working conditions side by side with its efforts for the welfare of other segments of society.

He was talking to the delegation of the clerks’

community that called on him under the headship of Mubashir Aftab Dalazak, district president of APCA from Mansehra at his office, Civil Secretariat here on Monday.

The delegation congratulated the provincial adviser on taking over the portfolio of tourism and culture as well as apprised him of certain issues faced by the clerk community of Mansehra.

Zahid Chanzeb listened

to their grievances very patiently and assured them that it would be resolved at an appropriate level, while contacting the relevant authorities on the spot to resolve some of the issues.

The CM’s Adviser clarified that he has a heart and soul connection with Mansehra, where he was born and raised, and his heartfelt desire is that this backward district must be included in the national mainstream of development and prosperity in all respects.

He will endeavor to repay their debt in the next five days for the way in which the people came out and made him successful during the one day of the general elections.

The delegation appreciated the developmental and people-friendly policies of the tourism advisor as well as the provincial government and assured their full cooperation in its implementation.

DG felicitate Advisor Social Welfare

PESHAWAR (APP): The Director General Agriculture Research Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Dr Abdul Bari on Monday called on Advisor to the CM on Social Welfare, Malik Liaquat Ali here at his office.

On the occasion, DR Abdul Bari felicitated Malik Liaquat Ali on assuming the charge as Advisor to the CM on Social Welfare.

A press release said both discussed developmental schemes and exchanged views on addressing public issues on a swift basis.

The both also expressed the resolve to expedite work on ongoing development projects in Dir Lower and complete them on urgent basis for public welfare.

Agricultural uplift takes priority

PESHAWAR (APP): Minister of Agriculture for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Sajjad, has stated that the government is placing significant emphasis on advancing the agricultural sector.

He has directed relevant officials to expedite ongoing agricultural projects while maintaining transparency and accountability.

During a recent briefing at the district office in Karak, the Minister highlighted the government’s unwavering commitment to enhancing the agricultural sector.

Acknowledging the pivotal role of agriculture in the region’s economy, he underscored the need for the timely completion of development schemes across the district.

He emphasized that agricultural progress is essential for economic growth and urged officials to devise strategies that not only boost production but also address farmers’ challenges through modern techniques.

During his visit to various areas, including Sar Kali, Loagar Faqirabad, Abazai, and Kadokhel Dam, Minister Sajjad conducted a comprehensive assessment of water resources allocated for agriculture.

He instructed officials to ensure the efficient utilization of rainwater to optimize agricultural productivity, thereby preventing wastage and fostering increased output.

PDMA releases Rs.348m for TDPs of North Waziristan

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Monday released an amount of Rs 348 million as monthly financial assistance (sustenance allowance) to the affected families of Operation Zarb Azab in North Waziristan who have not yet returned to their homes.

Each and every verified family will receive it through SIM messaging

within a day or two.

In a statement issued by the office of The Director General PDMA Qaiser Khan, it has been said that the said financial assistance is being given to more than 17 thousand families of North Waziristan who are duly certified by NADRA and registered as temporarily displaced persons (TDPs).

On this occasion, Director Complex Emergencies Wing PDMA for merged Tribal Districts

Subia Hussam Toru said the recent release is the 114th installment of the series in which each verified family will receive a total of Rs 20,000 as cash assistance and ration allowance.

Subia Hussam Toru further said that more funds of the same amount will be released before Eid to reduce the financial burden of the TDPs so that the homeless people of North Waziristan can also participate in the joys of Ramadan and Eid.

CM’s aide takes notice of violence

PESHAWAR (APP): Adviser to Chief Minister on Women’s Development Mashal Azam Yousafzai on Monday took notice of violence against woman in a village near Timargara, district Lower Dir and directed immediate action against the accused.

On the instructions of the CM’s aide the district police arrested the accused and registered a case under the relevant provisions.

Mashal Azam Yousafzai warned that violence against women would not be tolerated and those involved would be dealt strictly.

FIA arrest seven power pilferers

PESHAWAR (INP): In major crackdowns against power pilferers, FIA Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Monday arrested seven accused of power theft from Bannu and DI Khan circles.

The raids were carried out by Composite Circle Bannu and DI Khan, wherein the accused Muhammad Aslam, Muhammad Bilal, Hamza, Khalid Parvez, Samiullah, Maymood Khan and Imdadullah were held while illegally consuming electricity.

According to an FIA spokesman, the accused were stealing electricity by hooking the main power line at their shops, adding that PESCO officials disconnected the illegal connections on the spot and confiscated the wires and other equipment being used for illegal electricity connections.



PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister Arshad Ayub presiding over a meeting regarding pension issues of retired employees of Local Council Board.

Commissioner for renovation work

PESHAWAR (APP): Commissioner Peshawar Division Muhammad Zubair on Monday issued instructions to relevant quarters to immediately start the second phase of Peshawar Uplift Program in Qissa Khawani Bazaar to restore its past glory.

Presiding over an important meeting, he recommended installing uniform sized signboards on the pattern of Saddar bazaar and banning display of goods outside the shops on footpaths, adding that the renovation and repairing should be done in the way that the historic design of the buildings might not be affected.

He also emphasized to restrict traffic from entering the bazaar and making it pedestrian specific.

The meeting was attended by SP Traffic Peshawar, Project Engineer Peshawar Uplift Program, Director East Capital Metropolitan Government Peshawar, business leaders of Qissa Khawani Bazaar and other relevant officials.

In the light of the

instructions of the provincial government, the meeting discussed various proposals regarding the renovation of the historic Qissa Khawani bazaar and decided a major operation against encroachments on emergency basis within 24 hours.

The meeting decided to rebuild dilapidated sidewalks in a modern style and appoint a permanent municipal official to keep a check on loading and unloading in the bazaar during the day.

KP launches online driving license renewal for expats

PESHAWAR (INP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has fulfilled the long-standing demand of overseas Pakistanis by announcing an online driving license renewal facility for them.

According to a notification issued by the office of the Inspector General of Police, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, all overseas Pakistanis will be required to submit a scanned copy of their passport, national identity card, expired driving license, recent medical fitness certificate, and fee challan to the concerned Embassy or High Commission through email.

The embassy will then forward the application to the office of the Inspector General of Police, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, via official email. Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur stated that overseas Pakistanis are valuable assets to the country, and the provincial government will take all possible steps to facilitate them.

Girl diagnose with Thalassemia Major F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A minor girl named Aiman four years of age has been diagnosed with Thalassemia Major and Hamza Foundation and Thalassemia Welfare Hospital registered her and initiated treatment, on Monday.

According to details, the minor girl is resident of Kohat road Peshawar, while the number of patients had increased with Hamza foundation unprecedentedly.

The administration argued public for both financial and blood donation to serve humanity.

As many as 1487 patients are registered with Hamza Foundation and Thalassemia Welfare Hospital while well to families and individuals are requested to grant their Zakat, donation and other financial assistance.

Hamza Foundation Contact No. 091-5845553.

Civil society demands extension of ban on E-cigarettes and vapes

PESHAWAR (APP): Blue Veins, local NGO, Civil Society Organizations, Provincial Doctor Association, Tobacco Control Advocates, and Alliance for Sustainable Tobacco Control on Monday demanded Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government to extend the interim ban on e-cigarettes and vapes for an additional 60 days.

The CSO, on Monday urged the authorities for extending the stringent measures, prohibiting the sale of e-cigarettes to individuals under the age of 21 and implementing a minimum distance requirement of 50 meters from educational institutions to safeguard public health.

Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on 16th January 2024, through Administrative notification imposed an interim ban, under Section 144, on the

storage, sale, and use of e-cigarettes in the province.

This temporary measure, which expired on March 16, 2024, was a significant stride towards safeguarding our communities from the harms of electronic nicotine delivery systems.

In response to the World Health Organization’s call for action and in the interest of public health, civil society organizations commend the proactive approach of the Governor and Chief Secretary of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In a press statement Qamar Naseem, Program Manager at Blue Veins and leading advocate for a complete ban on vape and e-cigarette sales in KP, stated, “Extending the ban on sale of e-cigarettes and vapes is imperative to prevent youth and adolescent of these harmful products and to pave the way for evidence-

based regulations.”

“Civil society organizations pro-actively stands with Government to strengthen and expedite the enactment of comprehensive provincial legislation to ensure a permanent solution to these growing health concerns.” He added.

Dr. Ihtisham Ullah Khan, a renowned Physician and Chest Specialist at Lady Reading Hospital (LRH), highlighted the health risks associated with e-cigarette use, stating, “As healthcare professionals, we have evident detrimental effects of e-cigarettes on respiratory health. Extending the ban is a crucial step in protecting individuals, particularly youth, from the long-term health consequences of vaping.”

Dr. Qazi Shahbaz Mohyuddin Senior Vice President Provincial

Doctors Association, emphasized the need for comprehensive regulations, stating, “The regulation of e-cigarettes must go beyond a temporary ban. We urge the government to implement permanent stringent measures, through strong regulations, to effectively mitigate the harms associated with vaping.”

Zahoor Ahmad, member for the Provincial Alliance for Sustainable Tobacco Control, underscored the importance of stakeholder engagement in the policy-making process, stating, “Extending the ban will provide an opportunity for meaningful consultation with stakeholders from various sectors. This inclusive approach is essential for the development of comprehensive and effective regulations to address the growing threat of e-cigarettes.”

In light of emerging con-

Minister directs for provision of education

PESHAWAR, (APP): Provincial Minister Elementary and Secondary Education Faisal Khan Tarakai visited the Private Schools Regulatory Authority (PSRA) on Monday and directed for provision of quality education.

Managing Director Syeda Tanzeela Sabahat and her team gave a detailed briefing to the provincial minister about the performance of the institution and the goals achieved.

The minister was briefed that the work of our institution is registration, regulation and supervision of private schools.

Fees are determined by classifying the schools on the basis of various facilities in the schools.

They briefed that a total of 10,907 schools are registered with us in which more than 3,100,000 male and female students were get-



ting education.

Provincial Education Minister Faisal Khan Tarakai issued instructions to the authorities to form region-wise competitive registration campaigns for the registration of more schools and the unregistered schools have unnecessarily increased the fees.

If there is a lack of facilities in the schools and there is a writ challenge of

the government, immediate action should be taken against them.

He said that private schools are also our institutions and we are providing all kinds of support to them.

The Minister Education further said that we will try our best to make this institution more active and take steps to solve all the problems in time.



In brief

Student caught with hashish Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: A drug smuggler disguised as a school student was arrested by the police near Railways Station here on Monday. Police said, during snap check-in-charge Chowki Bannu Gate, Aftab Khan stopped a suspected youth in school uniform and recovered over 11 kg hashish from his school bag. The arrested smuggler was identified as Amir Zia, a resident of Latumber, district Karak. A case was registered against the arrested smuggler at Cantt police station. The Chowki In-charge said action against drug dealers will continue in the district as directed by DPO Kohat Mohammad Umar Khan.

Robber killed in police encounter

NANKANA (INP): One robber was killed and two managed to escape after exchange of fire here on Monday. According to details, the police intercepted a three-member gang of robbers engaged in looting citizens in Bara Ghar police station jurisdiction in Nankana Sahib. Upon sight of police, the robbers started firing and attempted to flee from scene which led to an encounter. In cross firing one robber was killed while two others managed to escape from scene. Arms were recovered from possession of killed robber and his body was shifted to hospital.

Cleanliness drive inspected

SARGODHA (INP): Commissioner Sargodha Muhammad Ajmal Bhatti on Monday visited various villages including Chak No. 39-SB, 88-SB and 100-SB and reviewed the implementation of Clean Punjab Campaign. The officials of departments concerned briefed the Commissioner about the activities being carried out under the Clean Punjab Campaign. He also met the members of committees established to monitor cleanliness matters in villages and stressed the need for redressal of complaints, complete removing garbage heaps, elimination of encroachments, and ensuring the proper disposal of waste including grass and weeds from graveyards. Expressing dissatisfaction over the performance of Union Council Secretary of Chak 88-SB, the Commissioner snubbed him and directed his to improve his performance. He further said that attention was now being paying to rural areas along with urban areas for sanitation and cleanliness. The commissioner said: "Various villages of Sargodha are being designated as model villages and instructions have been issued to the departments."

DPO for gaining public trust F.P. Report

TANK: Newly appointed District Police Officer (DPO) Tank Abdul Salam Khalid on Monday said all out efforts would be made to gain public trust in the police department. He stated this while talking to a delegation of Daman Tehsil Press Club (R) led by its president Adam Khan Kundi and comprising General Secretary Saleem Danish, Finance Secretary Shahid and Joint Secretary Muhammad Usman. The DPO said the media have a vital role in effective policing, urging journalists to play their role in eradication of all crimes from across the district. He said the doors of police stations were opened for the citizens so that they could get their issues resolved amicably.

AWKUM employees demand release of arrears

F.P. Report

MARDAN: All Employees Association Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan held cabinet meeting at Garden Campus library. Chairman Muzamil Khan, President Adnan Saeed, General Secretary Inam Afridi, Senior Vice President Jawad Sangar, Vice President Abid Ali Media Person Ali Khan, Person Umair Ali Shah Pappu Khan and Ajmal Shah were also present. On this occasion he said that the tenure of former Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Zahoor-ul-Haq has ended on November 11, 2023, but it is still a question mark for the university not to appoint a Vice Chancellor and Pro Vice Chancellor.

The university is facing serious financial problems, there is no stationery for the current exams and the teachers are managing their own support, but on the other hand the bills are cleared by the contractors and immediate steps are taken for this, but the degrees of students who are waiting for the signature of the Vice-Chancellor are not happy and the students are stumbling. Abdul Wali Khan University is the only university in Pakistan whose employees have not yet received the additional salary of June 2023.

The employees strongly demanded from the government institutions to issue additional salary orders to the employees as soon as possible, otherwise they will be forced to march toward the provincial assembly and the higher education department, apart from this, the inquiry made by the provincial government on the former vice-chancellor Prof. Dr. Zahoor-ul-Haq was carried out in a clear and transparent manner.

Meanwhile, Provincial Food Minister Zahir Shah Toru made it clear to government officials that according to the vision of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan, establishment of a just system based on justice and elimination of corruption is our first priority.

Solving people's problems is the most important for us, so the officers leave the offices and go to the field to solve people's problems. He was addressing a meeting of officers of all provincial and federal departments in the conference room of Deputy Commissioner Mardan along with the elected members of the provincial assembly from Mardan district.

Besides Deputy Commissioner Mardan Muhammad Fayaz Khan Sherpao, provincial assembly members Abdul Salam Afridi, Iftikhar Ali Mashwani, Tufail Anjum, Amir Farzand Khan, Tariq Mehmood Ariani, Zarshad Khan and ADC Samiur Rehman participated in the meeting. The members of the assembly discussed issues related to education, health, public health, Tehsil Municipal Administration, C&W, Police, Sui Gas, Pesco WAPDA and other departments individually.

Provincial Minister for Food Zahir Shah Toru directed the officers of all the departments to complete the ongoing development projects in their respective departments on priority basis and where necessary funds will be provided. In the meeting, some members of the assembly

directed to investigate recruitment and ghost development schemes in many departments including Health Department, TMAs, C&W and Public Health Engineering.

In the same way the meeting also directed to stop illegal mining, insure war-bandi in Baizai irrigation, provide necessary facilities and staff in Type D Hospital Katling, crack down on drug dealers especially ice in Mardan city and other areas of the district and decreasing load shedding of electricity and gas.

It was further directed to end the low pressure of gas including ending the unscheduled load shedding. He directed the government departments to pinpoint the state land and take action against the land mafia so that the government land can be used for public benefit. He also directed the government departments to ensure supremacy of merit and eliminate tautism in their respective departments.

He directed the PESCO authorities to immediately replace damaged transformers and stop illegal and unscheduled load shedding. He urged the Sui Gas authorities to remove the complaints of low pressure. Zahir Shah Toru said that the provincial assembly members are elected representatives of the people. Officers should fully cooperate with MPs in solving public problems. "We believe in work and there is no room in Mardan for officers who are not interested in work", he remarked.

Several administrative positions lay vacant: Due to lack of interest from the government, the second largest city of the province, Mardan, could not be appointed to the administrative positions of several departments under the provincial government.

According to the details, HD and MD positions have been lying vacant for two years in the largest Mardan Medical Complex in Mardan city. Acting doctors were appointed to the administrative positions of the hospital, while the posts were advertised for recruitment on a permanent basis in these seats but have not been appointed so far.

In this way, the post of District Health Officer has also been vacant for one and a half years. The Medical Superintendent of DHQ Hospital has been given the additional charge of DHO. In this way, the important posts are also vacant after the tenure of the vice chancellors of Abdul Wali Khan University and Engineering University has ended, due to which the students are facing serious problems, while the vice chancellor of Women's University has also resigned after the completion of her tenure last week.

The post of Chief Executive Water and Sanitation Services Company has also been lying vacant for a year, while the important and sensitive post of District Police Officer is also vacant for the past few days, the post of DPO is important in the sense that an unfortunate incident of terrorism took place in Mardan a few days ago in which SP Rural was martyred, there are about seventeen police stations in Mardan and dealing with the law and order situation on a daily basis is one of the duties of the DPO. According to the sources, the Chairman of the District Zakat Committee is also laying vacant.

Residents protest against Dir admn

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Hundreds of locals staged a protest sit-in against the Lower Dir administration and forest department for raiding timber godowns and saw machines at Rabat here on Monday. The protesters set a weeklong deadline and demanded immediate replacement of the assistant commissioner for sealing timber warehouses.

The residents of Rabat, Dandha, Babakray and Laram Top took part in the protest. A jirga of local elders for holding talks with the district administration, was formed on the occasion. The administration and forest department had sealed a timber warehouse and booked three persons for illegally running the business of timber at Khall, Rabat and Babakray here the other day.

The protest rally was addressed by the JI former tehsil nazim advocate Imranud Din, Shad Nawaz Khan, PPP's advocate Alam Zeb, JUI-F's Maulana Muhammad Nabi Shah, Maulana Rehmanullah, ANP's Malik Muhammad Zeb Khan, former MPA advocate

Muhammad Zamin Khan, Bakht Malik Rughani and others.

They alleged that the administration had been teasing locals declaring them as timber smugglers. The speakers said the administration had broken local norms and tradition by raiding the houses, saw machines and godowns in their areas. They said that locals were being treated as professional timber smugglers. They demanded the immediate replacement of the assistant commissioner and threatened to block the Timergara Chitral main road for all kinds of vehicular traffic if their demand was not accepted.

Cleft lip and palate children from Dir to be provided with free surgeries: The Al-Khidmat Foundation (AKF) arranged a special screening camp for cleft lip and cleft palate children at its Zwall Baba hospital here the other day. Affected children, their parents, medics and area elders were present. The hospital managing director Majidullah and jamaat-i-Islami district general secretary engineer Yaqub ur Rehman informed local journalists on the

occasion that a total of 20 children were screened who would be sent for surgery to Peshawar.

They said the children with cleft lip and cleft palate would be provided with free of cost treatment. The AKF activists said the screening camp was aimed to identify patients and provide them with proper medical care free of cost by the Foundation. They said that so far hundreds of such patients had been operated upon and the service would continue for future as well. Mr Majid said the patients and their parents were also provided with transport fare and other facilities during the treatment.

A specialist doctor told reporters that cleft lip and cleft palate were caused by a combination of genes a child inherited from the parents and it was usually treated with surgery, speech therapy and dental care. He said that obesity during pregnancy and lack of folic acid in mothers also caused cleft lip and palate. The expert suggested green leafy vegetables, beans, fresh fruits and aquatic food for mothers during pregnancy to overcome folic acid deficiency.

PPP (SB) protests for recovery of girl Priya F.P. Report

LARKANA: A protest demonstration was held in front of the press club for the recovery of the innocent girl Priya Kumari who was allegedly abducted from Sukkur 22 months ago by the Pakistan People's Party (Shaheed Bhutto). They also raised slogans with organizational flags and pictures of the innocent girl. On this occasion, PPP leaders Liaquat Ali Imrani, Zulfiqar Ali Jokio, Abdul Sattar Jagirani, Muhammad Saleem Chana, Riaz Hussain Khoso, Shahnawaz Thahim, Fida Hussain Jagirani, Waryam Chana and others said that it is a matter of great regret that an innocent.

The daughter was abducted from outside the house 22 months ago. Protests are being held at different times for her recovery, but the rulers do not pay attention. The landlords and nobles in Sindh are part of the ruling party, are involved in the process. We appeal to the people to listen to the cries of a mother and bring back the innocent Priya Kumari.

Newly SSP commits for public facilitation: Newly posted SSP Rohail Khan Khoso in Larkana district is facing many challenges in the district. Helpless and helpless People's expectations are high from the newly appointed SSP Larkana district, which is the duty of SSP Larkana to ensure the safety of people's life and property.

Currently, Larkana district is completely under the control of criminals and the police of the district has become completely helpless in front of criminals. There are black sheep in the police who are mixed with criminals. So SSP should eliminate these black sheep first. Strict legal action should be taken against them and there is an urgent need to bring reforms in the police station culture.

From NC to registration of FIR and arrest of the accused, huge bribes are taken from the affected citizens. There is also an urgent need to bring reforms in various branches including the MT established in the police headquarters. The visa facility should also be abolished as there is a severe shortage of personnel in the district. The major cause of crime is the various bloody tribal feuds in the district, without the elimination of which the establishment of law and order in the district is a dream.

Due to the tribal disputes, the undercover accused wanted in various cases are moving to the cities. Criminals are busy robbing city dignitaries to do business and avoid arrest. Gambling, drug and prostitution dens are running rampant across the district, complete eradication of such illegal activities is necessary. Due to which many families have been completely destroyed and the life of the young generation has been ruined. It is necessary that the new SSP appointed in Larkana district should seriously consider all these matters and take legal steps for law and situation orders.

School enrollment awareness walk conduct in Khyber



F.P. Report

BARA: To sensitize parents to enroll their children in schools, an awareness walk was held at Speen Dhand, Sipah Tehsil Bara, district Khyber on Monday.

As part of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government children enrollment campaign, the activity was organized by the Khidmat-e-Khalq Welfare Society that was attended by people from different walks of life including elders of Speen Dhand, Sandana, Drey wandy, Shiekh Maly, Nagrosa and Kandow besides students of five government and community schools in the area.

Addressing on the occa-

sion President Khedmat-e-Khalq Welfare Society Shiekh Gul Afridi said that uneducated people could not contribute well to the society therefore in that modern era, education was compulsory for every boy and girl. He urged the parents to enroll their children in schools in the best interest of his, her as well as for the country.

The elders applauded efforts of the society, Dosti Welfare Organization and the Forces for setting up five educational institutions in remote areas where more than 300 hundreds children were getting education.

They demanded the educational department, Deputy Commissioner Khyber,

Forces, Parliamentarians and other Non-government organizations to facilitate their children as they attend their studies under trees and other temporary shades due to lack of buildings.

They also asked for deployment of permanent teaching staff in the schools and provision of other needed facilities so that their children could get their education in a friendly environment. It is to be stated here that as per census survey carried out under the Benazir Income Support Programme for the years 2021-2022, almost 4.7 million children aged five to 16 are out of school in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Public safety constitutional obligation of LEAs: DPO

Saqib Mushtaq

BAHAWALPUR: Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Asad Sarfaraz Khan has taken over the charge of DPO Bahawalpur. Earlier Asad Sarfaraz Khan has served as District Police Officer Dera Ghazi Khan, Rahim Yar Khan, Khanawal, Lodhran, Sialkot & SSP Telecommunication Punjab Lahore. SSP Asad Sarfaraz Khan is considered as one of the capable and honest officers of Police Service of Pakistan, he is a crime fighter and considers his duty as worship.

Capable of controlling serious crimes and solving problems of people at their doorsteps in a professional manner as a team. SSP Asad Sarfaraz Khan has a lot of experience of working in South Punjab because in South Punjab due to the politics of court & police station there is a lot of registration of false first investigation report FIR by police then SSP Asad Sarfaraz would have raised the knowledge of truth against false cases and corruption. They ensure the rule of law so that no one is oppressed or abused.

At present, the dacoits of Kacha area are performing a triple dance with the law enforcement agencies and during this time Bahawalpur district is very important because the main pass and the route of the dacoits of Kacha area is this route from Bahawalpur to GT Road and Rahim Yar Khan Motorway. At this time, SSP Asad Sarfaraz Khan has the professional skills that he will use to attack the bandits of Kacha while living in Bahawalpur district and with the help of modern information tech-

nology for kidnapping for ransom. They will also play their key role in thwarting the incidents.

On the appointment of SSP Asad Sarfaraz Khan as District Police Officer DPO Bahawalpur, Member Provincial Assembly of Bahawalpur city Rana Muhammad Tariq Khan and civil society of Bahawalpur thanked Inspector general of police (IGP) Punjab Captain R. Usman Anwar and said that by appointing such a competent and honest officer where the problems it will help to control and along with the Punjab Police Bahawalpur will also tighten the perimeter against evils like corruption so that people can get timely and free justice. SP Investigation Ghulam Mohtida Hafiz welcomed him in Police Lines and saluted by police patrol squad.

The DPO placed floral wreaths on the martyrs and held a meeting with the police officers after recitation of Fatiha to raise their ranks, issued several instructions. He also held an introductory meeting with all SDPOs, SHOs and DPO office staff of the district in the conference hall. In the meeting, SP Investigation Ghulam Mohtida Hafiz briefed the DPO on the location and crime situation of the district. All the SDPOs briefed the DPOs on their respective circles and SHOs on the behavior and crime situation of their respective police stations.

Speaking in this regard, DPO said that my policy is only merit, providing maximum relief to the citizens is my first priority. The doors of my office are always



open to everyone. Strict accountability will be implemented on any complaint of abuse or corruption by the police. He said that torture on the accused will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Daily progress will be checked, speed up the arrest of advertised criminals and old accused will be declared as advertised. He further said that cases of violence and sexual abuse of women and children should be solved within hours and the accused should be brought to justice.

Murder, attempted murder, robbery, robbery and other serious cases should be investigated on merit and within stipulated time. Security of banks and financial institutions should be tight and as per SOP. The cases under investigation should be consolidated as soon as possible, and submitted to the court within the given deadline.

Special surveillance of hot spot areas and effective patrolling system should be implemented against kite sellers in spring to save the precious lives of people. At the end of the meeting DPO told all the SHOs. To ensure an effective strategy to prevent motorcycle and vehicle theft, trace registered cases, recover stolen property and arrest the accused officers.

Advisor to CM annoys poor sanitation at shelter houses

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) on Zakat, Ushar, Social Welfare, and Women's Development, Mashal Azam Yousafzai, visited Mardan to assess the situation at a local shelter. Expressing dissatisfaction with the

sanitation conditions, Yousafzai directed the administration to take immediate steps to improve hygiene and explore alternative shelter locations. During her visit, she also ensured that separate facilities were arranged for women at the shelter.

Yousafzai's inspection of the shelter came during her participation in

an iftar meal arranged for travelers as part of the Ramadan Dasterhawan program at the DHQ Hospital Mardan. Speaking to media representatives, she highlighted the government's efforts to reactivate shelters and langar khana following directives from Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur.

Climate change and its consequences

Kashmala Khan

Climate change is a variation in the climate patterns since decades. Being a rising issue, climate change has affected many countries of the world. Human rights like right to life, right to health, right to housing, and right to water and sanitation are being influenced in one way or another.

In the meantime, climate change has resulted from our activities. These activities

include the excessive burning of fossil fuels, over-population and much more. The greatest threat to human rights in the twenty-first century is "Climate change". Moreover, it is affecting our life to a greater extent. As far as, the consequences of climate change are concerned, they are enormous. They include floods, high temperatures, global warming, greenhouse effect, and variations in the timings of seasons. As the emission of carbon dioxide

(CO2) and methane gas (CH4) is increasing, climate change is reaching its peak resulting in many effects and consequences. Furthermore, in 2023 the 28th session of the "Conference of the Parties" (COP-28) was held to identify global solutions for limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius. latest science from the UN's "Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change" indicates that greenhouse gas emissions need

to be cut 43% by 2030, compared to 2019 levels. This is done in order to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, including droughts and rainfall's severity.

From a broader aspect, floods from 15 June to October 2022 killed 1839 people and caused rupees 3.2 trillion of damage in our Homeland and Pakistan. In this regard, the Government of Pakistan announced 170 million dollars allocation to flood victims, as

part of "Pakistan Flood Response Plan" (2022). The Pakistani embassies in China and Turkey had also set-up fund raisers requesting flood relief donations from locals.

In conclusion, climate change has significantly affected our life. We all should realize at the very moment to decrease and eliminate it. We can take steps such as to reduce the burning of fossil fuels, using less meat products, initiating less transportation, and

decreasing the use of pollutants. In order to ensure a better lifestyle, we all should make our lives a little conservative and limited so that we become safe from the consequences of climate change. According to United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres, "Now it is time to stop burning our planet and start investing in abundant renewable energy all around us".

The writer is student of BS-English at Swat.



Ukraine war: Two Russian landing ships hit off Crimea

MOSCOW (BBC): Ukraine says it has hit two landing ships, a communications centre and other infrastructure used by Russia's Black Sea fleet off annexed Crimea. An announcement by the Ukrainian general staff said the Yamal and Azov ships had been destroyed. The Russian-installed governor of the port of Sevastopol said 10 Ukrainian missiles had been shot down.

Russia also launched a missile and drone attack on the capital, Kyiv, and the region of Lviv. In an announcement, Mikhail Razvozhayev, the Russian-appointed mayor of Sevastopol, said damage had been caused to residential buildings and transport infrastructure as a result of the "massive" attack. He asked residents not to publish information or any images. UK Defence Secretary Grant Shapps praised the attack on the Russian ships, calling it a "historic moment for Ukraine". "In plain English, it means that Putin can no longer exercise safely in the Black Sea, even though the Russian Fleet has operated there since 1783," Mr Shapps said. He added that the world "cannot afford" for Ukraine to lose this war, and that the UK's support for Kyiv in the face of Russian assaults "will remain undimmed". The BBC has not been able to verify the Ukrainian claim to have damaged the Russian landing ships, which are used to land troops and equipment straight to shore without the need for a pier or dock. Kyiv residents took shelter in metro stations as the attack began at 05:00 (03:00 GMT). Officials said their defences had shot

down 18 Russian missiles and 25 drones there. There was only minor damage. About 20 Russian missiles and seven drones targeted "critical infrastructure" in the western region of Lviv. No damage has been reported. One of the cruise missiles entered the airspace of neighbouring Poland, a Nato member, the armed forces announced.

"The object entered Polish space near the town of Oserdow and stayed there for 39 seconds. During the entire flight, it was observed by military radar systems," the armed forces said in a statement. "If there was any premise indicating that this object was going in the direction of any targets located in Poland, of course, it would have been shot down and more adequate measures would have been taken," Defence Minister Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz said. Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 and launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. There has been an increase in aerial attacks by both sides in the past few days, even as Russia makes slow progress in taking some territory in the east of the country.

Russia fired dozens of missiles at Ukraine, hitting a dam and leaving a million Ukrainians without power. And Ukraine has been hitting targets in Crimea more regularly. In particular, Ukraine has repeatedly hit the Black Sea fleet - seen as the best of Russia's navy. Satellite images last year showed many of the Crimea-based warships had left the peninsula for the Russian Black Sea port of Novorossiysk. Last month, the Russian landing ship Caesar Kunikov was sunk

off the coast of Crimea, according to Ukraine's armed forces. Its sister ship Novocherkassk was hit while in port in Feodosiya in December last year. In one of the biggest strikes on the Black Sea fleet, last September Ukraine attacked naval targets and port infrastructure, using as many as 10 missiles and three unmanned boats. It caused a large fire at a Sevastopol shipyard. Ukraine's biggest scalp in naval warfare has so far been the sinking of Russia's flagship Black Sea missile cruiser, the Moskva, in April 2022. Ukraine has also targeted the Kerch bridge several times, as it is an important resupply route for Russian forces occupying parts of the country's south. Kyiv has repeatedly said it plans to retake Crimea and all territories seized by Russia. Ukraine is critically dependent on weapons supplies from the US and other Western allies to keep fighting Russia - a much bigger military force with an abundance of arms and artillery.

As well as being a platform from which to attack Ukraine, the Black Sea fleet is a major symbol of Russia's centuries-old military presence in the region. It was based in Crimea under a leasing deal, even before Russia illegally annexed the peninsula. President Vladimir Putin has said that Russia had to take control of Crimea to stop it from falling into Western hands. Meanwhile, a million people are without power across Ukraine after Russian missiles targeted energy infrastructure. There is no electricity in the second-largest city of Kharkiv, the regional head says, and more than 53,000 households in Odesa are without power.

France raises its security readiness to highest level

PARIS (AP): France's government increased its security alert posture to the highest level after the deadly attack at a Russian concert hall and the Islamic State's claim of responsibility. French Prime Minister Gabriel Attal announced the decision in a post on X, saying authorities were "taking into account the Islamic State's claim of responsibility for the (Moscow) attack and the threats weighing on our country."

The announcement came after President Emmanuel Macron held an emergency security meeting prompted by attack in a Moscow suburb that killed more than 130 people. The attack was claimed by an affiliate of the Islamic State group. France has repeatedly been hit by deadly Islamic State attacks, including the Bataclan theater massacre in 2015 in which extremists opened fire on concertgoers and held hostages for hours. French troops have also fought against Islamic extremists in the Middle East and Africa. France was already on high security alert ahead of the Paris Olympics and Paralympics this year, which are expected to draw millions of visitors to the country. Security concerns are notably high for the the exceptional opening ceremony July 26, which will involve boats riding along the Seine River and huge crowds watching from the embankments.

Bodies of 3 Rohingya found

JAKARTA: The bodies of three Rohingya refugees have been found in open waters off Indonesia's Aceh province, says the provincial search-and-rescue agency as authorities end a search for survivors from a capsized boat.

The wooden boat with an estimated 151 people on board capsized some 19km (12 miles) from the beach of Kuala Bubon on the west coast of Aceh. Fishers and a search-and-rescue team rescued 75 people from the boat - 44 men, 22 women and nine children - after they huddled on its overturned hull throughout the night.

However, more than 70 Rohingya were "presumed dead or missing", which if confirmed would be the biggest loss of life in such an incident so far this year, the United Nations' refugee agency (UNHCR) said. "After we searched the area, the team found three bodies, two adult women and one boy. They are allegedly Rohingya refugees who were the passengers of the capsized and sunken boat," Al Hussain, chief of Banda Aceh Search and Rescue Agency, said in a statement.

Fishers first spotted the three bodies and reported them to local authorities. The bodies were taken to the hospital in Calang city in Aceh Jaya district before local authorities buried them. Officials of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said survivors had confirmed the deceased refugees were on the capsized boat. "We have verified ... we [took] one of the refugees to identify and verify that they were together on the boat," Faisal Rahman of UNHCR in Aceh said. Local authorities in Aceh have received several reports about dead bodies floating in nearby waters. Most of those presumed to have died - mainly women and children - were likely unable to swim, and were carried out to sea by the currents. The predominantly Muslim Rohingya minority in Myanmar faces widespread discrimination, and most are denied citizenship. About one million of them fled to Bangladesh - including about 740,000 in 2017 - as refugees to escape a brutal campaign by Myanmar's security forces, who were accused of committing mass rapes and killings and burning thousands of homes. In recent years, many Rohingya have been fleeing overcrowded camps in Bangladesh to embark on dangerous sea journeys on rickety boats to reach Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia in search of a better future. — Aljazeera

South Korea's medical professors join protests

SEOUL (Reuters): Medical professors in South Korea said they will cut back on the hours they spend in practice starting on Monday to support trainee doctors on strike for more than a month over a government plan to boost medical school admissions.

"It is clear that increasing medical school admissions will not only ruin medical school education but cause our country's healthcare system to collapse," Kim Chang-soo, the president of the Medical Professors Association of Korea, told reporters. He said the professors will start scaling back outpatient treatment to focus on emergency and severely ill patients, while some will submit their resignations.

The strike by the trainee doctors over a plan to increase the number of students admitted each year to medical school from 2025 has forced several hospitals to turn back patients and delay procedures. The government says the plan is vital to remedy a shortage of doctors in one of the world's fastest-ageing societies, but critics have said the authorities should focus on improving the working conditions of trainee doctors first. The trainee doctors have been on



strike since Feb 20, and President Yoon Suk Yeol, who has made healthcare reforms one of his signature policy initiatives, has vowed not to back down on implementing the admissions plan.

The government has also threatened to suspend the licences of the doctors who have walked off their jobs but, Yoon appeared to seek a more conciliatory approach and urged Prime Minister Han Duck-soo

to seek "flexible measures" in dealing with the suspension. Yoon's office said he also ordered the prime minister to form a "constructive consultative body" to speak with all medical professionals. According to a Gallup poll released on March 15, 38% said the government was doing a good job dealing with backlash from doctors and the medical void amid the doctors' strike while 49% said "not a good job".

Philippines summons Beijing envoy over South China Sea attack

MANILA: The Philippines has summoned Beijing's envoy after accusing the Chinese Coast Guard of wounding three of its soldiers during a water cannon attack in the disputed South China Sea. The Philippines' Department of Foreign Affairs, in a statement on Monday, said Manila conveyed its "strong protest against the aggressive actions" undertaken by China's Coast Guard and Chinese maritime militias against the Philippine mission near the Second Thomas Shoal in the South China Sea.

The department said it has also instructed its mission in Beijing to lodge a formal complaint over the incident. The move comes a day after Philippines' National Security Adviser Eduardo Ano said the confrontation wounded three Filipino soldiers caused severe damage to the Unaizah May 4 vessel. Ano did not reveal the extent and nature of their injuries,

though the military said the personnel were treated on board a coastguard escort ship. The Second Thomas Shoal, known as Ayungin in the Philippines, has been the scene of repeated confrontations between Chinese and Philippine vessels over the past year. The confrontation marked the second time that Unaizah May 4 has been damaged by the Chinese coastguard's water cannon assault at the far-flung shoal in March. The shoal has been occupied by a small contingent of the Philippine Navy and marines on a marooned warship since 1999. The sailors, who require regular resupply missions to survive their remote assignment, have been surrounded by Chinese coastguard and suspected militia vessels in an increasingly tense territorial standoff. China claims almost the entire South China Sea, brushing off rival claims from other countries, including the Philippines, despite an international ruling that its assertion has no legal basis. China's Ministry of National Defense warned the Philippines against "provocative" actions in the South China Sea and pledged to safeguard Beijing's territorial sovereignty. "We warn the Philippines to stop making any remarks that may lead to the intensification of conflicts and escalation of the situation, and stop all infringing and provocative actions," the ministry said in a statement. "If the Philippines repeatedly challenges China's bottom line, China will continue to take firm and decisive measures to firmly safeguard its territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests," the statement added. The repeated high-seas confrontations have raised fears they could degenerate into a larger conflict that could bring China and the Philippines' treaty ally United States into a collision. Washington lays no claims to the busy seaway, a

key global trade route, but has deployed Navy ships and fighter jets in what it calls "freedom of navigation" operations, which China has criticised. The US has also warned repeatedly that it is obligated to defend the Philippines - its oldest treaty ally in Asia - if Philippine forces, ships or aircraft come under an armed attack, including in the South China Sea. US State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said in a statement that the US "stands with its ally the Philippines and condemns the dangerous actions by the People's Republic of China (PRC) against lawful Philippine maritime operations in the South China Sea on March 23". He said the Chinese ships' "repeated employment of water cannons and reckless blocking maneuvers resulted in injuries to Filipino service members and significant damage to their resupply vessel, rendering it immobile". — Aljazeera

Senegal's Faye takes lead in presidential election

DAKAR: Supporters of Senegal's presidential candidate Bassirou Diomaye Faye have taken to the streets of the capital, Dakar, in celebration as early results from vote showed the opposition contender in the lead. The celebrations came as at least five of the 19 candidates in the race issued statements congratulating Faye on what they called his victory.

But his main rival from the ruling coalition, former Prime Minister Amadou Ba, said the celebrations were premature. "For our part, and considering the feedback of the results from our team of experts, we are certain that, in the worst case scenario, we will go to a run-off," Ba's campaign said in a statement. There was no immediate comment from Faye. Millions in Senegal took place in vote to elect the country's fifth president. It followed three years of unprecedented political turbulence that sparked violent antigovernment protests and buoyed support for the opposition.

At stake is the potential end of an administration led by outgoing President Macky Sall, who is stepping down after a second term marred by unrest over the prosecution of opposi-

tion leader Ousmane Sonko and concerns that the president wanted to extend his mandate past the constitutional limit. The incumbent was not on the ballot for the first time in Senegal's history. His ruling coalition picked 62-year-old Ba as its candidate. Sonko, in jail until recently, was disqualified from the race because of a defamation conviction. He is backing Faye, the co-creator of his now-dissolved PASTEF party, who was also detained almost a year ago on charges including defamation and contempt of court. An amnesty law passed this month allowed their release days before the vote. He and his colleague Diomaye have campaigned together under the banner "Diomaye is Sonko". About 7.3 million people were registered to vote in the country of approximately 18 million. Turnout was at about 71 percent, according to state television RTS. Election day ran smoothly with no major incidents reported.

The first set of tallies announced on television showed Faye had won the majority of votes. Jubilant crowds gathered in Sonko's neighbourhood in Dakar, with supporters setting off fireworks, waving Senegalese flags and blow-

ing vuvuzelas.

"This is really an unusual election," said Al Jazeera's Nicolas Haque, reporting from outside Sonko's home. "People are celebrating outside the home of a politician who is not even in the running - Ousmane Sonko. For the people here, the fact that this election even took place is a reason to celebrate. There has been so much pent-up emotion being released. On these streets just weeks ago, there were riots, demonstrators protesting for this election to take place." He added: "No one has claimed victory. The counting is still under way, but there are some notable candidates who have all congratulated Faye." They included one of the main contenders, Anta Babacar Ngom, who wished Faye success as leader of Senegal in a statement. "Congratulations to Bassirou Diomaye Faye on his unquestionable victory," she said on X.

It was not clear how many of the 15,633 polling stations have been counted so far. Final provisional results are expected. A second round of voting will only take place if no candidate secures the more than 50 percent majority required to prevent a run-off. — Aljazeera

65 migrant bodies found in Libya mass grave, says UN

NEW YORK (BBC): A mass grave containing the bodies of at least 65 migrants has been found in Libya, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has said. The IOM said the circumstances of their deaths and their nationalities are still unknown but they believe they died being smuggled through the desert towards the Mediterranean.

The organisation, part of the United Nations, said it was "profoundly shocked" by the discovery. Libya is investigating, the IOM said. The grave was found in south-west Libya, it said. An IOM spokesperson said: "Each report of a missing

migrant or a loss of life represents a grieving family searching for answers about their loved ones or acknowledging the tragedy of the loss. "The cost of inadequate action is evident in the increasing human deaths and the disturbing conditions migrants find themselves in." The organisation said the tragedy highlighted the need for a co-ordinated response to smuggling of migrants and legal migration pathways. Libya is among the main departure points for migrants trying to cross the Mediterranean to enter Europe.

The Geneva-based IOM also called on Libyan authorities and

other UN agencies to ensure a dignified recovery, identification and transfer of the remains. The discovery of the mass grave comes after at least 60 migrants, who set off from Libyan coast, died when a rubber dinghy ran into trouble in the Mediterranean Sea. The IOM said earlier this month that 2023 was the deadliest year for migrants since records began a decade ago, with at least 8,565 people dying on migration routes worldwide. The UN agency, which provides humanitarian assistance to vulnerable people in Libya, said the figure was 20% up on the year before.

Simon Harris to be Ireland's youngest PM

IRELAND: Simon Harris is set to become Ireland's youngest prime minister after he was appointed as the new leader of the governing Fine Gael party. The 37-year-old said it was the "absolute honour of my life" to be appointed party leader, replacing Leo Varadkar, who resigned unexpectedly, saying the party would be better governed under another leader.

Harris will be voted in as the Republic of Ireland's youngest-ever prime minister - known as the taoiseach - when the country's parliament or Oireachtas next sits on April 9 due to support from Fine Gael's coalition partners. "I think he's done a really good job in securing the leadership in as comprehensive a way as he has," Fine Gael deputy leader Simon Coveney said. Harris told the centre-right party's members that he would repay their faith with "hard work, with blood, sweat and tears, day

in and day out with responsibility, with humility and with civility". Setting out his priorities, Harris insisted that Fine Gael "stands for law and order" and told members he wanted to "take our flag back" from nationalists, to loud cheers. He also said that he would pursue a "more planned and sustainable" immigration policy, following increased tension over the issue, and that he would "fight against the dangers of populism". On the international front, he called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and condemned Russia's "horrific illegal invasion of Ukraine".

He will have no more than a year to save the coalition from defeat at parliamentary elections. In the last three years, polls have put Sinn Fein, a left-wing party that backs unification with Northern Ireland, a British province, as the preferred choice to lead the next government. However,

two more polls confirmed a recent trend of support for Sinn Fein dropping off highs of 12-18 months ago. A Business Post/Red C poll conducted before Varadkar's departure as taoiseach put Sinn Fein's lead over Fine Gael at six percentage points, while an Irish Independent/Ireland Thinks survey showed a five-point edge. Harris, formerly a minister for education, research and science, is best known for taking responsibility for Ireland's COVID-19 response. He said recently that he became involved in politics as an "opinionated, moody teenager" bothered by his lack of educational supports for his autistic brother. Although he has spent most of his adult life in parliament, Harris has cast himself as an "accidental politician". His online presence led one opponent in the Oireachtas to dub Harris the "TikTok taoiseach". While the econ-

omy grew strongly under Varadkar, successive governments, of which Harris has been part, have struggled to tackle a decade-long housing crisis and, more recently, the pressure from record numbers of asylum seekers and refugees.

Inheriting a three-party coalition government working off an agreed policy programme will not give the incoming leader much room for major new policy initiatives. Before Harris, Varadkar was the country's youngest-ever leader when first elected at age 38, as well as Ireland's first openly gay prime minister. His mother is Irish and his father is Indian, which also made Varadkar Ireland's first biracial taoiseach. Varadkar, 45, has had two spells as taoiseach - between 2017 and 2020, and again since December 2022 as part of a job-share with Micheal Martin, head of coalition partner Fianna Fail. — Aljazeera

Powerful Spanish regional leader under pressure

MADRID (AP): A Spanish judge has opened an investigation into alleged fraud and false documentation against the partner of Madrid's powerful rightwing regional president, Isabel Diaz Ayuso, who has recently faced a wave of calls to resign over several controversies. The move is certain to put more pressure on her party, Spain's main conservative opposition Popular Party, to take action against her.

Ayuso, who is seen as a possible future party leader and prime ministerial candidate, has come under fire in recent months on several fronts. Last week, news reports said the Spanish tax office was investigating accusations of tax fraud against her partner, Alberto González Amador. His alleged enrichment thanks

to his connections with Ayuso has led opposition parties to call for her immediate resignation. Ayuso, who is visiting Chile, has hit back, denying the allegations and saying they were part of an orchestrated opposition campaign to try to halt her political rise and take the focus off a major scandal affecting the ruling Socialist party. Ayuso also claims that while she lives in her partner's luxury Madrid apartment, his financial dealings have nothing to do with her. The court move against González Amador and four other partners was sparked by a prosecutor's probe into tax fraud of some 350,000 euros (\$380,000) following treasury inspections. Lawyers for González Amador. His admitted to the fraud this week in a statement to the

prosecutors' office, Spanish media reported. Several hundred people gathered outside the Popular Party's headquarters in Madrid to demand Ayuso's dismissal, the first demonstration against her. The party has so far defended her. The Socialists and the Popular Party are constantly engaged in accusing each other of corruption and not acting against culprits. The Socialists are currently grappling with the fallout of a probe into money made during the COVID-19 crisis that is affecting an adviser of a former minister in the cabinet of Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez and strongman in the Socialist party. Ayuso, 45, has been regional president since 2019 and won an overwhelming majority in regional elec-

tions last year. Dubbed by some as Spain's future Margaret Thatcher, she has rarely been far from controversy, both within her party and outside. She has come under intense criticism for the deaths of more than 7,000 people in nursing homes during the 2020 coronavirus pandemic as orders were issued that they should not be transferred for treatment to overloaded hospitals in the region. During the crisis, she also attracted much attention at home and abroad by challenging the national government's lockdown policies. This week, she defended her chief adviser against accusations that he had bullied journalists deemed to be from opposition media that have been covering the story about her life partner.

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Prospects for Pak-India trade

FOREIGN Minister Ishaq Dar said that trade with India via Dubai and Singapore has been much more expensive, and Pakistani businesses are eager for the restoration of direct trade with India. According to him, the government was considering the resumption of direct trade with New Delhi and the decision would be taken after consultations with all stakeholders. Dar claimed that the government would implement a five-year road map to put the country on the road to economic progress and bring down inflation to lessen the economic difficulties of the people.

Islamabad downgraded its diplomatic ties and suspended bilateral trade with India following India's most controversial move of revoking Article 370 and annulling the special autonomous status of Occupied Jammu and Kashmir on August 5, 2019. Meanwhile, the imposition of a 200% tariff on imports from Pakistan by the Indian government was another reason for Pakistan's severing trade ties with India. Since then, diplomacy has been on pause, and mutual trade between both countries has been suspended despite the fact Pakistan offered a trade corridor to Afghanistan-India trade from its soil. There had been indirect trade between the two neighbours via Dubai and Singapore but that became much more expensive due to extra freight and transportation charges, port tariffs, and duties at a third country, making it unaffordable and counterproductive for the importers and the consumers. Previously, the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) approved the import of cotton from India but the Khan-led PTI government immediately backtracked from the decision due to political pressure from the masses and the opponents.

Presently, the bilateral trade between India and Pakistan is a topic of interest for the media, political, and scholarly circles due to the unbearable inflation, particularly the prices of vegetables and daily use commodities are very high in Pakistan as compared to neighboring India. Historically, bilateral trade, sports, tourism, and inter-state civic engagements between Pakistan and India have always been driven by political disputes, security concerns, and domestic politics in both countries throughout the past. Wherein, the political leadership across the border sought to further ignite animosity and confrontation to boost their domestic politics.

Amid a dwindling economy, skyrocketing inflation, and high cost of living, the resumption of trade ties with India is genuinely a good idea. However, the scope of trade with India remains elusive due to a lack of consensus among the stakeholders particularly the need for backing from the military establishment regarding the restoration of trade relations between the two neighbours would be essential. During the process, some political figures in the cabinet or coalition might differ with the idea while others take a realistic view considering Pakistan's current economic outlook and debt profile. Believably, resuming trade ties with India could help Pakistan mitigate some of its biting economic woes and facilitate some relief to the public.

Despite tension, the two countries agreed to renew the 2003 ceasefire agreement along the Line of Control (LoC) in February 2021 and resolutely upheld that commitment so far. While considering the history of Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) good neighborliness with India and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's facilitation message for Shehbaz Sharif after he was sworn in as Prime Minister of the country, increased the possibilities for any breakthrough between the two major nations in South Asia. Although trade relations between the two countries have shaped into political issues rather than business or trade disputes. The resumption of bilateral trade would have implications for both countries, regional peace and stability. The conditions are currently conducive from both sides, based on the BJP's history of exploiting anti-Pakistan sentiments for political gains. New Delhi might not respond appropriately to Islamabad's offer in pre-election season, yet there are bright scopes for normalization of Pak-India relations in the aftermath of the upcoming election in India. Peace full coexistence, and bilateral cooperation are the only way forward for both countries if this reality is admitted by the leaders from both sides of the border.

Pak Army's pro-public legacy

PAKISTAN Army organized a free medical camp for the people of Allahabad and its neighboring villages in Chunian tehsil of district Kasur. Specialist doctors and paramedical staff examined and treated hundreds of people. ECG and ultrasound test services were also provided with free medicines and nutritional supplements. More than 1300 patients benefited from the free camp. Doctors and paramedical staff also gave awareness lectures on hygiene, a balanced diet, and the prevention and treatment of various diseases including dengue.

Pakistan's health sector is a matter of concern, especially for the middle-class and low-income segments of society, which cannot afford inflated rates of essential medicines, high doctor's fees, and the cost of lab work. The recent rise in the prices of 146 essential life-saving medicines has further burdened the populace. Meanwhile, inflation and devaluation of the local currency have strained local drug production making essential medications unaffordable for the poor. Although, the newly elected governments in Punjab and KP have restored the Sehat Card Plus to provide free-of-cost indoor healthcare to each household up to one million rupees, yet outdoor treatment affordability remains a key challenge for many Pakistanis seeking healthcare. High out-of-pocket expenses, coupled with limited or no health insurance coverage, make quality medical services a luxury for a common Pakistani during this era of economic frailty.

Amid such conditions, the free medical camps by the Armed Forces medical teams and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in remote areas are no less than blessings for the poor masses. The Armed Forces particularly Pakistan Army often organized free medical camps in rural areas in Balochistan, Sindh, KP, and Erstwhile FATA to share the burden of the government and provide some healthcare relief to the masses. It is a highly adorable practice that not only strengthens the bond between the armed forces and the public but also removes doubts and nullifies anti-state and anti-military propaganda by the enemy. Hence, such endeavors not only continue but must be expanded to other parts of the country for the common good and in the larger interest of the country.

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Saudi-Paks ties are deepen...



How Moscow terror attack exposes the farce of Russia's 'security theater'

Jeremy Morris

CARRYING out the worst terror attack in Moscow in 20 years appeared shockingly easy, despite the Russian capital being one of the most surveilled and guarded cities in the world. The metal-detector attendants at the Crocus City Hall stood no chance against men with automatic weapons willing to immediately open fire as they approached the building. The idea police who happened to be present could have confronted the terrorists like in an action movie is the stuff of fantasy.

However, the attack does underline how farcical Moscow's visible security presence is. The most securitized of any large city in Europe, Moscow is probably more vulnerable to terrorism than ever, as events yesterday clearly showed. If we peel back the curtain of Russia's security theater, where a superficial appearance of strength does not keep people safe, we can see why.

Since the numerous deadly terrorist attacks during the Chechen wars, Russians have become used to seeing uniformed guards with metal detectors at the entrances to transport hubs, large venues like Crocus City Hall, and even small metro stations. Typically, you have to go through a detector archway and staff will scan your large bag. But putting police and guards everywhere completely desensitizes the public and leads to utter indifference and boredom on the part of security personnel.

If you have guards for everything, that means they are deprofessionalized. Indeed, some of the least capable (including the old and disabled) and least educated people in society become low-paid security personnel. The way they wave a detector wand in a person's general direction without paying attention reflects a culture in which they will perform their single task without doing anything else they have not been specifically ordered to do.

But that's not all. A lack of training and motivation, along with low pay and boredom, means that much

of the time scanning and searching does not even uncover genuine transgressions.

Anecdotal, behavior that demonstrates this appears with depressing frequency. I've witnessed people take firearms on aircraft, and others walk straight past guards into supposedly secure airport zones. I've seen people pass sleeping concierges to enter the gated communities of the rich and powerful, and talk their way around security officers guarding sensitive sites merely because they were dressed well or, in the case of women, revealingly. People even cross international borders simply by tossing a few dollars to the right people and waiting until there is an opportunity.

On the flip side, one can be denied entry to your own organized event because you do not have the right piece of paper. Recently, I could not leave a secure building in Moscow because my magnetic token did not register in the turnstile. The guard manning the machine saw me drop the token into the gate, but could not use his initiative to let me through. Time and time again, emergency exits end up blocked or locked on the rationale that people would use them to avoid queues.

Once at an airport, I was asked what I had in my case.

"Nothing but a computer," I replied, and was waved through. Need I go on? With dozens of guards around just at the entrance to an international airport, everyone assumes that someone else will notice a potential threat. Not to mention the notoriously counterproductive effect of forcing people to line up to pass security gates, which often creates huge concentrations of people vulnerable to attack as they wait to go through security in airports and train stations.

Russia suffers from a lack of public awareness of security, and a culture that it isn't even the business of ordinary people. I was living in Moscow in 1999 when the apartment bombings happened, and during the 2000s when many

attacks occurred on public places in Moscow and St. Petersburg. As someone who grew up in Britain in a period when the Irish Republican Army carried out repeated terrorist attacks, I have always been struck by how the general public in Russia retreats into oblivion when obvious risks are present. It was as if people were trying to ignore everything they could, minding their own business.

I have asked a busful of carriage of passengers who left a bag unattended many times. Most people had no idea why someone would be concerned about what could be inside. There is also still a culture of entrusting luggage to others on long-distance journeys. I still see people accept luggage from strangers at international airports - the height of naivety. Then there's the police. In small towns and other places, local officers may have a good idea about what's going on and even be effective in detecting crime. But in large cities, the public order threat means patrolling public spaces. This leads to the same problems - boredom, desensitization and focusing on easy targets - the homeless, people illegally hawking goods - and racially profiling taxi drivers to extort them.

The bobby-on-the-beat is not much more than a glorified security guard, except that he's worse because he can assault people with impunity, and may well have a patron-client relationship with the precinct commander meaning he has to pay up extorted money as tribute. The misnamed security ministries exemplify more than anywhere else the Russian concept "I'm the boss and that means you're an idiot."

This saying expresses how a subordinate must never take initiative and always remain vigilantly passive within their hierarchy. They must never question orders they were given, nor even ask for clarification. Just as corruption pays upwards, the consequences roll downhill so nobody wants to make matters worse by being a smart-ass.

Leadership is about maintaining distance and impunity. The culture of authority means the person with the most responsibility seeks to avoid any of that duty through delegation in the most unprofessional and unhelpful way. He gets to cover his backside and return to what his job is really about - avoiding boredom and finding ways to make money.

Taking initiative - talking back, bringing a problem to attention, and suggesting a course of action - is socialized out of subordinates at early stages in their career. This works at the level of organizational units too. Just as during the sluggish response to the mutiny led by the now-deceased Wagner leader Yevgeny Prigozhin, one can easily imagine the one security agency local to Crocus City Hall standing idle, assuming that responding was the police's job, and not deeming it worthy for themselves to coordinate or even communicate effectively.

One should never underestimate the sense of entitlement and superiority among elements of the security services. After all, the state's largess made them into an untouchable caste. Even in the mainstream media, we find hints of how they are just an illicit business corporation in competition with other agencies.

Russia's security theatre should be put into its sociological perspective. Agencies and police follow the same logic as that dictated by the broader system - look after yourself and watch your back (especially materially), no one is responsible for others (unless we want to scapegoat them), keep quiet and don't cooperate with the "others" (don't cooperate even with sister agencies). Internal collective responsibility is everything.

Thank goodness for the real heroes, ordinary bystanders going to aid those in need, and civic-minded citizens giving blood - an example of the capacity, outside the dysfunctional and incoherent state, that people have to take responsibility and think of themselves as members of society.

The Moscow Times

Putin will be ruthless after the Moscow attack

Andrei Soldatov

WHEN Vladimir Putin came to power in 2000, he made one thing clear immediately: he would be different from his predecessors - Boris Yeltsin and Mikhail Gorbachev, the last leader of the Soviet Union - in his response to terrorism.

That difference would be manifested in his declared determination never to wilt under pressure. Like many officers trained in the KGB and traumatised by the collapse of the Soviet Union, Putin was convinced the Russian state was so fragile that it could collapse at any moment if its enemies were given an inch. To Putin and his KGB friends, the famous phone call made in 1995 by Yeltsin's prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, to a terrorist leader to save the lives of hostages in a hospital in Budyonnovsk, was the worst possible way of dealing with terrorists.

Broadcast live on Russian television, Chernomyrdin's call resulted in the release of women and children and the end of the first Chechen war, which was seen as a humiliation for the Russian army. It also led to a traumatic soul-searching in the Russian security services and special forces.

Putin will have none of that. In the years that have followed, he has responded to every new terrorist attack with more restrictions that have made it impossible to bring any public pressure to bear on him and his agencies during or after a terror attack. Strict information censorship around terrorist attacks was introduced. I was investigated by the FSB (the federal security services) for the first time for publishing a critical account of an FSB operation in October 2002, when more than a thousand people were taken hostage in a Moscow theatre. The special operation ended with a horrible loss of more than 130 hostages, most killed by a gas used by the FSB. Any criticism of the Russian security services' response was ruled out and the idea of relying on the Duma to find the truth was completely compromised after its attempt to investigate the Beslan school hostage-taking and siege in 2004.

By 2006, Putin's obsession about not giving an inch to his enemies had been formalised into a major piece of Russian anti-terror legislation "on countering terrorism", which replaced Yeltsin's 1998 law. It had a striking definition of terrorism: "Terrorism is an ideology of violence and practice of influence on decision-making by bodies of the government, institutions of local government, or international organisations, by means of intimidation of the population and (or) other forms of illegal violent actions." That new legislation placed a strong emphasis on terrorism as something aimed at the Russian state, while Yeltsin's 1998 law had defined it as something directed at civilians. The Russian security services got the point, and so did terrorist groups. In the 1990s and early 2000s, terrorists took hostages and made political demands,

hoping to force the Kremlin into negotiation. Thereafter they switched to brutal, senseless acts of terror, knowing that Putin's Kremlin would not respond to any demands.

Terrorist groups in the North Caucasus first killed security services personnel, but then progressed to massacre by blowing up a Moscow airport and attacking public transport. Putin is a very systematic person. He has stuck to his policy of protecting his agencies throughout his reign. He has kept the successor to the KGB, the FSB - his longest and most beloved investment - well supplied with resources, and made sure it is completely immune to any criticism. That has deeply affected its culture as the main Russian security agency responsible for counter-terrorism. The FSB became very efficient and innovative at repression. Nowadays, the Russian security and intelligence services are world experts in killing and torture. Russian society has seen plenty of recent examples of that: Alexei Navalny's horrible death in February, the plight of political prisoners, the assassination last month of a Russian defector in Spain, and the hammer attack on a political exile in Vilnius, Lithuania.

The FSB is also rather competent at investigating attacks after the event, thanks in large part to video surveillance, combined with up-to-the-minute facial recognition technology. We saw this in the FSB's response to the Crocus city hall attack in Moscow. Four suspected perpetrators were identified, pursued and arrested within 24 hours. And, sure enough, they were immediately tortured - one of the suspects had his ear cut off and was forced to eat it by special forces, all recorded and at once leaked to pro-Kremlin media. But these are not the qualities that help to prevent attacks happening, and time and again, the FSB has failed as an intelligence collection agency because other things are needed: information-sharing capabilities between agencies, both domestic and foreign, and trust between those agencies and within those agencies. They also need to be trusted by the population, and they need to be ready to say very uncomfortable things to the generals - even to the country's leader. In this country where no freedoms are allowed and political discussion is strongly censored, trust in national security services is in short supply. Of course, the harassed population will go along with the government narrative, but fear and mistrust has already led to the blossoming of all sorts of conspiracy theories, questioning and undermining everything the Kremlin has said about Friday's attack.

At some point, the Russian people came to realise that Putin will stop at nothing to achieve his objective, and that he would be fully capable of committing any crime against his own people, however horrible. That's a problem he faces in the aftermath of attacks: big brother technology, brutal force and repression can only get you so far.

The Guardian

Cooperation the way forward for Japan, China

Kimihiro Fukuyama

It is a miracle that two of the biggest economies in the world are close neighbors. The economic relationship between China and Japan, which can be described as a "dance of dragons", is a fascinating but somewhat complicated matter.

On the one hand, they are intertwined giants, with China being Japan's largest trading partner and a major investment destination, and vice versa. On the other hand, the differences in their perspectives and their geopolitical rivalry have cast a shadow on bilateral relations. Understanding this "complex dance" is crucial for the two sides to seize the opportunities and overcome the challenges it presents.

The economic melody between the two countries is undeniable. Bilateral trade has soared in recent decades, fueled by China's vast market and efficient large-scale production capability, as well as Japan's technological and

sub-cultural capability. This interdependence created a win-win situation, with China accessing advanced and environmentally-friendly technologies and Japan finding a lucrative consumer base and excellent production hub.

This win-win situation, however, faces somewhat discordant notes. Concerns over intellectual property rights protection, market access barriers, regulatory uncertainties and limited flow of people between the two sides could dampen the rhythm of this economic symphony.

In particular, the flow of people between the two countries is much below the pre-pandemic level. Which is of concern, for the best way to know each other is to meet in person. The more people visit each other, the deeper their mutual understanding is likely to be. China and Japan have maintained official/unofficial trade and communication

channels since the Sui Dynasty (581-618). And the most important aspect of maintaining trade or other relations is trust, which is always fostered by people's warm hearts. I love the Chinese people's heartwarming, kind and friendly attitude toward foreigners. I always feel Chinese people's ren qing wei - human touch or human warmth. The Chinese people have always been innovative and forward-looking.

One of my best Chinese friends always tells me that he loves to visit Japan, because Japan has preserved Tang Dynasty (618-907) architectures not only in Kyoto and Nara but in other parts of the country. He has visited a lot of old temples and shrines in Japan, some of which have preserved ancient calligraphy works written in classical Chinese characters. We both have the same hanzi - Chinese characters.

Fukuzawa Yukichi, a famous scholar whose portrait you can find on Japan's highest denomination bank note, of 10,000 yen, was already a master of ancient Chinese literature when he started studying science and technology in English almost 170 years ago. As a result, he coined so many Japanese terms using Chinese words, for example, jingji - economy, yinhang - bank, baoxian - insurance and renmin - people. Their roots are all in ancient Chinese literature which Fukuzawa had mastered. China faces new economic challenges, the challenges a country faces in transitioning from a developing to a developed country, especially because its economic growth rate has slowed down. Japan, too, faces the challenges of caring for its rapidly rising aging population, and dealing with the declining population. It also lags behind in

adapting to the digital economy in a big way.

From the late 1970s to the 2000s, Japan provided huge development assistance for China, which catalyzed the rapid growth of the Chinese economy. The Japanese funds and technologies were used not only to build huge infrastructure facilities like ports, airports, expressways, power plants and industrial zones but also for technological transfers and human resource development projects such as reforestation, low-carbon and eco-friendly technologies, and State-owned enterprises' capacity building.

After the devastating Wenchuan earthquake in May 2008, Japan dispatched teams of experts to help with the rescue and relief operation in Sichuan province. And after the quake-triggered tsunami struck northeast Japan in March 2011, China dispatched rescue teams and some Chinese companies offered to send

construction equipment to Japan. This shows the two sides have always helped each other. Also, the Chinese and Japanese economies still complement each other. China's bright university graduates need to find decent jobs, whereas Japan is plagued by serious workforce shortage. China's digital technology may soon face challenges in maintaining the current pace of innovation, whereas the digitalization of Japan's logistics/transportation sectors still has enough room for growth. If the two sides just move one step forward, that is, relax the rules for issuing visas to each other's nationals, many Japanese and Chinese people can visit each other's country, boosting not only their respective country's economy but also the two countries' mutual trust and friendship. Now is the time for the two Asian dragons to join hands and step forward to dance together in the Year of the Dragon.

The Canadian arms embargo on Israel that was not

Andrew Mitrovica

ALEX Cosh is an editor with the status-quo-allergic independent Canadian news upstart, The Maple. Cosh is a young reporter with an old-style muckraker's temperament. His bunkum antennae are tuned to detect and expose the state-sanctioned flimflam that much of Canada's establishment media hand-deliver like obedient couriers.

So, while the big, corporate mastheads fell promptly and predictably in line behind Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's fulsome support for Israel's plans to erase Gaza, Cosh has put his experience and dexterous skills to work, revealing Canada's complicity in that ugly enterprise. This has translated into a stream of stories detailing how military "aid" flows from Canada to Israel through private companies; what type of military "goods" are exported to Israel, often via the United States; and how Canada's arms trade with Israel has grown exponentially over the past decade and is now worth tens of millions of dollars per year.

Cosh has also dissected the rhetorical shenanigans of senior government officials meant not only to deflect questions concerning the nature and extent of Canada's military exports to Israel, but to deny and sow confusion about whether any permits had been approved since early October that may have helped render Gaza a barren, apocalyptic landscape. Pressed by a coalition of arms-monitoring and peace groups, scores of enlightened Canadians, Cosh and other reporters, Trudeau and company belatedly and grudgingly admitted in late January that Canada had indeed authorised military exports to Israel after October 7.

Official Ottawa tried to blunt the stunning volte-face by suggesting

that the permits were limited to "non-lethal equipment" - a meaningless bureaucratic concoction that has no legal and hence binding definition. In February, Cosh challenged that exculpatory construct. He obtained export data showing that the Trudeau government had approved at least 28.5 million Canadian dollars (\$21m) in new permits for military exports to Israel during the opening months of its killing rage in Gaza. That figure beat the previous record of 26 million Canadian dollars (\$19m) worth of weapons and equipment sold in 2021.

Some of the permits allowed for the sale of products from a category that includes "bombs, torpedoes, rockets, other explosive devices and charges and related equipment and accessories". By what cockeyed measure do any of those "goods" constitute "non-lethal equipment"?

Cosh's sleuthing discovered that the permits had been issued quickly, with one processed within four days. The dates on which some of the permits were certified indicate, as well, that Trudeau's apparatchiks gave the green light to new military exports as late as December 6 after warnings had been issued by genocide scholars and United Nations special rapporteurs that genocide in Gaza was imminent.

But the documents Cosh obtained failed to answer a critical question: How long were the permits valid for? This left open the possibility that some of the "goods" were still being shipped to Israel or will be in the future. Cosh's scoop reverberated in the House of Commons, with New Democrats and Green Party members pressing Foreign Minister Melanie Joly for answers about the scope, scale, and

timing of Canada's military exports to Israel. Then, the leaks began - designed, I suspect, to stanch the disagreeable political fallout and burnish a damaged minister's doddering image. The first backroom plant was published on March 14. It quoted anonymous sources who claimed that Joly had stopped approving new permits for exports of "non-lethal" military goods on January 8 because of the "extremely fluid" situation in Gaza. Describing genocide as an "extremely fluid" situation is an obscene first, even for career bureaucrats expert in non-sensical doublespeak.

On the same day, CBC/Radio-Canada reported that the federal government was "slow-walking" an application to permit a Canadian manufacturer to sell armoured patrol vehicles to Israel. The implicit message: Joly was on the job. Members of the pretend socialist party of Canada, the New Democrats, were not convinced. On March 18, they put forward a non-binding motion in Parliament calling on Canada to "suspend all trade in military goods with Israel". Although nonbinding, had the motion been adopted, it would have amounted to a wholesale, two-way arms embargo. Not surprisingly, that motion was gutted, with Trudeau's Liberals only agreeing to "cease the further authorisation and transfer of arms exports to Israel". The emasculated, nonbinding motion passed with the government's backing. Cue the confusion, backlash and hysteria.

Foreign Minister Joly reached back to a 1970s tagline for a Coca-Cola ad and told the Toronto Star that the motion is the "real thing" whatever that means. Lackadaisical editors unfamiliar with the motion's

fine print, penned headlines announcing that Canada had imposed an arms embargo on Israel. A few easily impressed "progressive" US Democrats shouted: Hurray! Meanwhile, a legion of easily upset Israeli politicians and editorial writers dismissed the motion as a performative stunt by a B-movie country with little, if any, influence to deter Israel from pursuing "total victory" in Gaza and beyond - whatever that means. Oh, wait.

The arms embargo might not be an embargo at all. On March 20, Cosh wrote a long story pointing out that the military export permits authorised before January 8 will be allowed to proceed. The Trudeau government's existing policy of pausing approvals of new applications for export permits - but not necessarily rejecting them - remains intact. This was the government's policy before the New Democrat's disembowelled motion won the day in Parliament.

The rub: Canadian military goods will carry on flowing to Israel. New Democrats MP Heather McPherson confirmed the thrust of Cosh's discerning analysis, telling The Maple that existing permits will not be subject to any changes; that could mean military exports worth tens of millions could be delivered to Israel. To add lunacy to a failed arms "freeze", Trudeau et al have not ruled out buying Israeli military hardware, including those flagged by human rights groups as being "tested on" Palestinian civilians. In December, the Canadian military made public its eagerness to spend 43 million Canadian dollars (\$31.6m) on an Israeli-made missile the occupation forces have strafed Gaza with yesterday and today, Canada, the true north strong and free - and still complicit.

The Max Planck Society must end its unconditional support for Israel

WE, a diverse group of employees at the Max Planck Society (MPS), Germany's top research institution, are writing this letter to express our disapproval of the position our employer has taken on Israel-Palestine and call for a serious change in discourse, both within the MPS and in Germany as a whole, about Israel-Palestine.

On October 11, MPS published a "statement on the terror attacks against Israel", which began with a condemnation of "the horrific attacks by Hamas against Israel in the strongest possible terms". It went on to express solidarity with Israel, grief for Israeli and other lives lost, and sympathy for affected families, friends, and loved ones. It lamented that students, young academics, and other employees of universities and research institutions would be "called up as reservists" and reaffirmed a commitment to maintaining "close scientific and personal ties" with research institutions in Israel, and using those connections to "extend support wherever possible".

The only sentence that mentioned Palestinians was one that ascribed responsibility for their "unspeakable suffering" not to Israel or the Israeli army, but to Hamas. The statement did not sit well with numerous employees of the MPS, nor have subsequent statements and actions of the MPS in the past six months.

In November, MPS President Patrick Cramer went on a visit to Israel and the Weizmann Institute of Science and expressed his support for Israeli researchers, but voiced no criticism of the actions of the Israeli army in Gaza. In December, the MPS announced it was allocating one million euros (\$1.1m) for German-Israeli research collaboration. The programme seeks "to help stabilise Israel's world-leading scientific community during the current crisis". The way the programme was framed to the public reflects the MPS leadership's perception that there is only one victim that needs to be supported - the Israeli research community, which allegedly suffers severely as a consequence "of the Hamas attack on Israel" - meaning only the Israeli research community suffers from the relentless war carried out by Israel against Gaza.

Why German taxpayers' money should be spent to stabilise a research community impacted by the actions of its own government remains inexplicable to us. On the other hand, not a single euro, or indeed word, has been spent on offering any kind of help to the scientific communities in Gaza and the West Bank, which are

the primary victims of Israel's war and policies of violent occupation. According to a statement issued by the Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, "the Israeli army has killed 94 university professors, along with hundreds of teachers and thousands of students, as part of its genocidal war against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip".

In February, an article appeared in the German newspaper Die Welt, attacking eminent Lebanese-Australian scholar Ghassan Hage, employed at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, which is part of the MPS. Within a few days, the MPS announced it was firing him for "expressing views that are incompatible with the core values of the Max Planck Society". Hage had been critical of Israel in his online posts. An open letter from Max Planck researchers was circulated in protest of Hage's dismissal, appealing for the reversal of this decision. We support the letter and also stand behind an earlier statement by colleagues published on December 17, criticising the MPS's stance on Israel-Palestine and asking it to reconsider its position of unconditional support of Israel and its academic institutions in their entirety.

The events of the last months have fully confirmed that such a reconsideration is absolutely necessary. In particular, as members of the MPS, we should not support indiscriminate killings of civilians, massive destruction of civilian infrastructure, and a nearly comprehensive denial of humanitarian conditions for Palestinians in Gaza.

In its declaration of January 26, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) placed Israel under the obligation to undertake all possible measures to protect civilian life in Gaza, to guarantee the provision of basic services and adequate humanitarian aid, and to take all measures to prevent incitement to and acts of genocide. None of this has happened until now. On the contrary, Israel continues its inhumane campaign of annihilation in Gaza without shame. The participation in the Holocaust of scientists from the MPS's predecessor, the Kaiser Wilhelm Society, obliges us to stand together against all crimes against humanity and the possibility of genocide: "Never again" must be "Never again now". As inheritors of this legacy, we have four clear demands for a rapid change in the MPS's position on Israel-Palestine:

To uphold the ICJ's stipulation to do everything to protect civilians in Gaza, we demand that the MPS call for a complete, unconditional, and imme-

diate ceasefire. We demand that the MPS take a clear public stance against the long-standing Israeli occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem and its violence against the Palestinian people.

We demand that the MPS allocate the same amount dedicated to the Israel Programme, to the reconstruction of scientific institutions in Gaza. This is even more important since all universities in Gaza have now been completely destroyed. Finally, we demand a public declaration by the MPS as to whether - and if so, in what manner - it has been and continues to be involved in dual-use research, meaning research that can be used for peaceful as well as military purposes, with its academic partners in Israel. Any continuation of the one-sided and unconditional support of Israeli academic institutions by the MPS threatens to make the MPS and all its members complicit in the crimes committed by Israel in Gaza. We categorically reject this.

In addition to these immediate issues of morality, law, and justice, we, as scholars of the MPS, want to raise some pertinent and long-overdue questions of political and academic relevance: What are the effects of excluding Palestinians from the MPS's articulation of its historical relationship with the State of Israel? How has collaborating with scientists in Israel but not in Palestine shaped the content and contours of the scientific knowledge produced?

How is this collaboration entangled in the formation of structural violence toward Palestinians, whether within Israel, in Gaza, or in the West Bank and East Jerusalem? In an environment of public censorship and vilification of dissenting voices on this issue in Germany - which motivated us not to sign this letter with our individual names - does the MPS not feel an obligation to foster and actively call for an open and critical dialogue on Palestine-Israel, within the organisation and, more importantly, in the wider German public sphere? How can we, a large group of internationally diverse researchers living in Germany, help to build bridges, not only between Germany and the State of Israel, but with Palestine too, and in so doing nurture a more peaceful and just future?

These and other questions urgently need to be discussed objectively and critically both within the MPS and the entire academic community in Germany and across the world if further horrific outbreaks of violence, and our complicity in them, are to be prevented in the future.

Aljazeera

Is Al-Qaeda now in Moscow?

THE sudden resurgence of Al-Qaeda has thrust its name back into the global spotlight, this time as a prime suspect. Turkey has pointed fingers, linking the terrorist organization to two attacks resulting in 12 fatalities, while a statement has emerged claiming the group's involvement in a recent terrorist strike in Moscow, which left more than 100 dead. Other reports indicate the group's alleged involvement in attacks across Somalia, Yemen and Iraq.

Al-Qaeda was once a well-established organization with a recognized presence, headquartered in Kabul and led by Osama bin Laden. Bin Laden engaged with journalists and activists, releasing video statements. But today, Al-Qaeda has been reduced to nothing more than a name. Why would Al-Qaeda target Moscow? Especially with the decline in hostilities in Syria, leaving no convincing explanation for its actions.

The primary enemies for Russians are the Ukrainians and their allies, who have conducted operations targeting Moscow. It is crucial to recognize that the war in Ukraine is significantly larger in scale than the Gaza conflict, both in terms of military operations and the involved armies. Moreover, the Ukraine situation has dangerous strategic implications, while the Gaza conflict is primarily regional in nature. Despite the reluctance of most

regional nations to engage in the Ukrainian conflict, Iran stood out by actively supplying Russia with drones, marking the first instance of its status as a dangerous source of weaponry. Therefore, it seems implausible that any organization under Tehran's control or influence would launch an attack against Russia.

Most countries in the region have chosen to remain nonaligned in the Ukrainian conflict. Despite mounting pressure from the US, their relations with Russia remain positive. However, navigating these ties proves challenging, given Moscow's support for Tehran and Tehran's military involvement in the region's numerous proxy conflicts. The indictment against Al-Qaeda, though not entirely unfounded, has lost much of its persuasive force, prompting a deeper dive into the reality of the group and its affiliated armed factions. Whether breakaway factions from the original Al-Qaeda or independently inspired groups, the spotlight is back on.

Since the US-led crackdown on Al-Qaeda's leaders, the Iraq war marked a significant turning point, offering a broader marketplace for terrorism. Iraqi Baathists, embittered by the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, have played a notable role in this new chapter.

Additionally, Arab jihadists with ties to Syria

have joined the fray, expanding the theater of conflict beyond Iraqi borders. As the conflict in Iraq waned, these elements spilled over into neighboring Syria, fueling anti-Russian insurgencies. This phenomenon drew in counter-establishment organizations from Central Asia. Since the demise or capture of its key leaders, Al-Qaeda has lost its prominence, overshadowed by groups such as Jabhat Al-Nusra, Daesh, Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, Al-Shabab in Somalia and others. These organizations have spread across the region like wildfire.

Saif Al-Adel stands as one of the last surviving leaders of Al-Qaeda from the Afghan jihad era. He currently lives in Iran, where he sought sanctuary alongside other key figures of the organization in the aftermath of the American invasion of Afghanistan. With only a solitary photograph dating back four decades, Al-Adel remains an enigmatic figure. According to revelations from US interrogations, he vehemently opposed Bin Laden's proposal to execute the Sept. 11 attacks, foreseeing the catastrophic consequences they would bring upon the organization. Leading the Iranian branch of Al-Qaeda, Al-Adel's activities remain shrouded in mystery. Given mutual interests, it is improbable that this faction would engage in conflict against the Russians.

Arab News

Why a foreign-based app's influence on political messaging raises concern

IN a resounding display of bipartisan unity, the US House of Representatives recently passed legislation to safeguard American data from potential foreign adversaries. The bill, dubbed the Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act, has ignited significant debate, especially concerning its implications for the popular social media platform TikTok.

With 352 votes in favor and 65 opposed, the overwhelming support for the bill underscores its bipartisan consensus. If implemented, this legislation would require ByteDance, TikTok's Beijing-based parent company, to divest its stake in the platform within six months. Failure to comply would result in the platform's ban from US app stores and web-hosting services.

The urgency with which this bill was fast-tracked indicates the gravity of the situation. American lawmakers are deeply concerned about the potential exploitation of user data by foreign entities, particularly in light of China's national security laws, which mandate cooperation with intelligence-gathering efforts. The fear that the Chinese government could leverage TikTok to access the data of its 170 million American users has alarmed legislators across the political spectrum. FBI Director Christopher Wray's testimony before the House Intelligence Committee highlighted these concerns. Wray emphasized the risks of allowing a foreign entity access to vast amounts of personal data, highlighting the potential for compromising Americans' devices and manipulating information dissemination through TikTok's recommendation algorithm.

At its core, this legislation is not

about stifling innovation or impeding free expression; it is a proactive measure to protect national security and individual privacy. The proliferation of digital platforms has opened new avenues for connectivity and communication but has also exposed users to unprecedented vulnerabilities. The question is not whether to embrace technological advancement but how best to limit its associated risks. By holding ByteDance accountable and imposing necessary safeguards, the US is committed to preserving its digital infrastructure's integrity while upholding the privacy and security values fundamental to democracy.

Critics may argue that the ban on TikTok infringes upon personal liberties or stifles competition in the social media landscape. However, such concerns must be weighed against the paramount importance of national security. The potential ramifications of allowing a foreign government unfettered access to American user data far outweigh any short-term inconvenience. Furthermore, this legislation sends a powerful message to other tech giants operating in the US: Compliance with regulatory standards and respect for user privacy are non-negotiable. Governments must remain vigilant in safeguarding digital sovereignty in an era of increasing cyber threats and geopolitical tensions. Recent claims suggesting that America's move to ban TikTok is an attempt to overshadow the Gaza conflict following the terrorist attack against Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, are not only misleading but also misinformed. These assertions fail to acknowledge the timeline of events and the broader context surrounding the ban.

Contrary to the narrative being

propagated, the ban on TikTok pre-dates the recent events in Gaza. In fact, Congress took decisive action in December 2022 by passing the No TikTok on Government Devices Act, which prohibits downloading or using the app on any federally issued device or network. This legislation was not a knee-jerk reaction to geopolitical developments but rather a proactive measure to address legitimate concerns regarding national security and data privacy. The No TikTok on Government Devices Act underscores a broader global trend, with more than a dozen countries also implementing similar bans on TikTok from government devices. This collective action reflects widespread recognition of the risks associated with the app's ownership by a foreign-based company and the potential implications for sensitive government information.

It is essential to recognize that the decision to ban TikTok from government devices is rooted in concerns about data security and potential foreign influence rather than being driven by geopolitical agendas. With the increasing digitization of government operations and the growing reliance on technology for critical functions, safeguarding sensitive information from unauthorized access or manipulation is paramount. The danger posed by the app became evident when TikTok sent notifications urging users to contact their representatives to oppose that measure. The app provided a direct link to call their district representatives. Lawmakers have been overwhelmed with threatening messages. Reports indicate that numerous offices have received approximately a dozen violent threats. One House aide disclosed receiving multiple calls from individuals

implying self-harm if legislation targets the app.

Recently, Sen. Thom Tillis from North Carolina shared a disturbing voicemail his office received, where the caller threatened to "shoot" the lawmaker if he supported the app's ban. The caller's menacing words, filled with laughter and delivered by someone who sounded youthful, are deeply troubling. Tillis rightly pointed out on social media that such threats against elected officials could constitute a federal offense, primarily when fueled by misinformation campaigns orchestrated by foreign companies like TikTok. These incidents underscore the concerning influence that social media platforms can wield over their users, especially when used to disseminate political messaging. The ease with which individuals can be mobilized to take extreme actions highlights the need for greater scrutiny of online platforms and their potential to incite violence or intimidation, especially among young users.

TikTok's involvement in this scenario is a stark reminder of the broader challenges posed by foreign-controlled platforms and the imperative to safeguard against manipulation or coercion. As lawmakers navigate these turbulent waters, it is essential to prioritize the security and well-being of all individuals involved in the political process. As the bill advances to the Senate, lawmakers must prioritize the interests and safety of the American people above all else. Supporting measures to mitigate the risks posed by foreign-controlled applications like TikTok shows a real commitment to protecting the integrity of American democracy. Now is the time for decisive action to secure the digital future of the US.

Turkiye streamlines its relations with Iraq

Yasar Yakis

RELATIONS between Türkiye and Iraq have certainly improved in recent times. After the Second Gulf War, there was a shadow of American influence on Turkish-Iraqi relations. When the Turkish parliament refused to allow US troops to transit Türkiye to open a new front in the north of Iraq, Ankara's relations with Washington hit a low point. Its effects are still visible in many areas, and the Pentagon accused the Turkish military establishment of not having played the leadership role it should have.

What Türkiye did at that time was nothing but obey the will of its parliament. There have been other unpleasant episodes in the meantime, but Turkish-US relations have never returned to their pre-Gulf War stage. The relations between Türkiye and Iraq remained less than cordial for a long period. A thaw, however, started around a year ago. Türkiye came up with tangible cooperation projects, not only in security but also in economic areas. Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, Defense Minister Yasar Guler, and Ankara's intelligence chief, Ibrahim Kalin, were busy giving substance to the cooperation.

In a meeting held last week between the two neighbors, several important decisions were adopted, but one of them is most important:

The Iraqi delegation agreed in that meeting to consider the PKK a terrorist organization. Up to now, it had consistently avoided referring to the PKK as a terrorist organization. We do not know yet whether the Iraqi government - and eventually the Iraqi parliament - will also adopt the same position. We may not, of course, consider the PKK as dissolved with such a loose commitment. However, it is an important step in shaking its foundations in Iraq. There is a long way to go for the eradication of the PKK in Türkiye, in Syria, and in many Western countries.

Another meeting was held, this time at the strictly military level, in Iraq. Recent pictures made available by the Turkish Defense Ministry indicate that it was again held in northern Iraq with the participation of senior Turkish commander Lt. Gen. Metin Tokel. On the Iraqi side, there were the representatives of the central Iraqi authorities as well as the members of the Kurdistan Democratic Party. In other words, almost everyone who should have been there was there.

Both these meetings were a preparation for another more important meeting to be held in Baghdad with the participation of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. That meeting is scheduled for the last week of April.

Turkiye wants to elevate the bilateral meetings with Iraq to the High Level Strategic Cooperation Councils. However, the title of such meetings does not always solve the problems. What is needed is a strong will to support cooperation.

The relations with Iraq have been ambivalent for a long time. Several attempts have been made to streamline them, but progress has remained modest. There are now signs of its reactivation. The Turkish Defense Ministry has underlined that military operations are carried out in close cooperation with the Iraqi security authorities. While the security of the Turkish-Iraqi border has been the main purpose of the operations, the security of Iraqi citizens was also meticulously taken care of.

Iraq recently complained to the UN Security Council that Türkiye was violating its border because of the military operations it had carried out. Now, the same Iraq is cooperating with Türkiye to repel PKK assaults against Türkiye. This is an important change of policy on the Iraqi side.

The question of opening a transport corridor appeared on the agenda in an earlier meeting. In a sense, it was some kind of revival of another transport corridor first proposed in 1903 by Germany to link three capitals: Berlin, Belgrade,

and Baghdad. An extension from Baghdad to Basra was later added to the project. After Turkey withdrew in 1923 from the former Ottoman territories in the Middle East, the idea of this major transport corridor fell into disuse. Only parts of it were revived in a scattered manner. The line between Aleppo and Baghdad was completed in 1930 and the first train from Istanbul to Baghdad did not run until 1940.

Now, with Turkish-Iraqi relations improving, a new version of this transport corridor from Basra to Türkiye has come on the agenda. As both sides reap the advantages of this corridor, they will regret that the corridor was not created earlier. A thorny issue between Türkiye and Iraq is the question of the allocation of the waters of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers among Syria, Türkiye, and Iraq. Syria is too busy at present with other priorities, but neither Iraq nor Syria are likely to put aside this important subject indefinitely. The question will come on the agenda sooner or later and neither Iraq nor Syria will give up their claims on water until an amicable solution is found for the problem. The Syrian leg of the question is dormant because of uncertainties in the country. Turkish-Iraqi relations have the potential to develop. What is needed is a strong will to improve them to the level that they deserve.

PSX continues with bullish trend, gains 373 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Monday, gaining 373.82 points, a positive change of 0.57 percent, closing at 65,525.65 points against 65,151.83 points the previous trading day.

A total of 261,194,334 shares valuing Rs.8,945 billion were traded during the day as compared to 208,408,686 shares valuing Rs. 7,149 billion the last day.

Some 332 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 144 of them recorded gains and 168 sustained losses,

CDNS accomplish targets

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has attained a target of Rs 1200 billion in fresh bonds in the current fiscal year, from July 1 to March, 21.

The CDNS surpassed the annual target and achieved the target of Rs 1.6 trillion in fresh bonds in the current fiscal year, the senior official of CDNS told APP here on Monday.

He said this was an Rs 200 billion additional annual target than the target of Rs 1300 billion for the previous financial year 2021-22. "The CDNS has set a reviewed saving target of Rs 1.4 trillion for the current financial year (2021-22) which will promote savings culture in the country," he said.

Given the current market trend in the country, the ambitious target had been set to improve the savings culture further, he added.

The official said that work was being done on institutional reforms in CDNS and new reforms and innovations were being introduced.

"At this time Automated Teller Machine (ATM) has also been introduced in CDNS which will provide enough facilities to the users," he added.

Replying to a question, he said the CDNS had collected an investment of Rs 60 billion by March 15th, 2023-24, through Islamic investment bonds.

The official added that the directorate had set a target of Rs 75 billion for the new financial year 2023-24 for Islamic finance bonds.

Replying to a question; he said the CDNS aimed to introduce new dimensions in the Islamic finance sector. "Islamic finance has a very important role in the global financial sector at this time, and a large part of the economy of many major countries currently includes Islamic finance," he added.

Court Notice

In the Court of Qaisar Khan Afridi Additional District Judge-II/Azafi Zila Qazi Buner at Dagar, Appeal No. 289/13, Institution 18/12/2021, date of hearing 24/4/2024, Maraj c/o heirs Vs. Deraj Khan etc. Notice to 9/2 Mohamadullah s/o late Mohamadullah 14/1/1 Nisar Ahmed 14/1/2 Faiz Ahmed 14/1/3 Shafiq Ahmed 14/1/4 Irfan Ahmed 14/1/5 Sadiq Ahmed sons 14/1/6 Mst. Rehaba 14/1/7 Mst. Sadia ds/o Yusuf Ahmed 14/2/1 Mykhtiar Ahmed 14/2/2 Muneb 14/2/3 Husain Ahmed 14/2/4 Mihamad Salih 14/2/5 Ehsan sons 14/2/6 Mst. Fareda 14/2/7 Mst. Meena 14/2/8 Husna 14/2/9 Mst. Shabana ds/o Nazer Ahmed resident of Gulunw Bawrhay 14/4/1 Maraj Ahmed 14/4/2 Israr Ahmed 14/4/3 Abrar Ahmed 14/4/4 Imran Ahmed 14/4/5 Ajaz Ahmed sons 14/4/6 Mst. Nasrat Bibi 14/4/7 Mst. Asmat Bibi 14/4/8 Zenat Bibi ds/o Sheren Ahmed 21 Bakht Sultan 22 Ghafar sons of Abdul Haq resident of Batara Tehsil Chaghorzai District Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants cannot be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 9 a.m. dated 17/4/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

whereas the share prices of 20 remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were P.T.C.L with 27,177,895 shares at Rs.15.70 per share, Hascol Petrol with 21,377,000 shares with 8.08 per share and K-Electric Limited with 20,911,495 shares at Rs.4.57 per share.

Nestle Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.200.00 per share price, closing at Rs.7,400.00, whereas the runner-up was Sapphire Fiber Limited with a Rs.24.39 rise in its per share price to Rs.1,495.00.

Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.199.89 per share closing at Rs. 8,200.11, followed by Sapphire Textile Mills Limited with Rs.45.17 decline to close at Rs.1,479.83.

Pakistani exports during Jul-Feb: US, China, UK remain top destinations

ISLAMABAD (APP): The United States (US) remained the top export destination of Pakistani products during the first eight months of the current financial year 2023-24, followed by China and the United Kingdom (UK).

Total exports to the US during July-February 2023-24 were recorded at US \$ 3,626.141 million against the exports of US \$ 4,046.337 million during July-February 2022-23, showing a decline of 10.38 percent, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

This was followed by China, wherein Pakistan exported goods worth US \$1,895.720 million against the exports of US \$1,334.804 million last year, showing an increase of 42.02 percent.

UK was the third top

Rupee gains one against dollar

Pakistani Rupee on Monday gained 01 paisa against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs278.12 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.13. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs278.25 and Rs281, respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by 19 paisa to close at Rs300.84 against the last-day closing of Rs301.03, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese Yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs1.83, whereas a decrease of 06 paisa was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs350.59 compared to the

last closing of Rs350.65.

The Emirates Dirham remained constant to close at Rs75.73 and the Saudi Riyal declined by 01 paisa each to close at Rs74.15.

Gold rates remain constant at Rs228,200 per tola

The per tola price of 24 karat gold witnessed no change and was traded at Rs.228,200 on Monday in the local market.

The price of 10 grams 24 karat gold and 10 gram 22 karat remained stagnant at Rs195,645 and Rs.179,341, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver witnessed no change and was traded at Rs2,580 and Rs2211.93 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$2 to \$2,187 from \$2,185, the Association further reported.



KARACHI: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan Chairing a meeting at Trade Development Authority of Pakistan.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Five ships namely, MSC Bremen, MSC Lome-V, Bekforest, Paloma and Mackenzie, carrying Container, Canola Seed, Gas oil and Coal, berthed at Container Terminal, Grain Terminal, Oil Terminal and Bulk Terminal respectively on Sunday.

Meanwhile three more ships, MSC Spring-III, Taxisdiara and Shiva scheduled to load/offload Container, Cement and LPG also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim on today.

Ten ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them three ships, MSC Lome-V, MSC Bremen and Al-Wajbah left the Port on today morning while two more ships, Forshun and Bharadwajare expected to sail on today afternoon.

A cargo volume of 126,368 tonnes, comprising 86,443 tonnes imports cargo and 39,925 tonnes export cargo carried in 3,820 Containers (1,892 TEUs Imports and 1,929 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 7 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them three ships, Nimble Nicky, Solar Roma and Shiva & another ship MSC Munda-VIII scheduled to load/offload Iron Ore, Palm oil, LPG and Container are expected to take berths at MW-1, LCT, EVTL and QICT on Monday, while four more ships, Maersk Sentosa, X-Press Bardsey, MSC Maeva and Milaha Ras Lafan with container and LNG are due to arrive at Port Qasim on Tuesday.

Withdrawal of gas tariff hike demanded

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) President Kashif Anwar and Vice President Adnan Khalid Butt Monday urged the government to withdraw hike in gas tariff immediately in the larger interest of the economy.

They made this demand in a meeting with a delegation of paper, board and packaging, food and confectionary here at Lahore Chamber.

The delegation apprised LCCI office-bearers that repeated increase in gas prices are causing losses to the industry. Because of high gas bills, they added, the industrialists have started disconnecting the commercial gas meters. The government should consider the worries of the industry and bring down the gas prices.

The delegation members feared that the challenges of industrial sector would swell and doing business would become difficult.

On this occasion, the LCCI office-bearers said that 400 percent increase has been registered in gas prices during the current financial year.

They said that increases in the electricity and gas tariff would hit the exports as it would jack-up cost of doing business manifold and expel the Pakistani products from the international market.

They said that such measures would hamper the growth of manufacturing sector, asserting that the hike in the gas tariff would create multiple problems for the industrialists as they have to bear heavy loss while fulfilling their export commitments.

Game Developers Conference: 6 Pak companies participated

ISLAMABAD (APP): As many as 6 dynamic Pakistani companies and a delegation of 30 delegates have participated in the Game Developers Conference (GDC) 2024 held in San Francisco, USA.

The Pakistani delegation engaged in networking, knowledge-sharing, and exploring collaboration opportunities with industry leaders worldwide, said a news release received here on Monday.

This interaction showcased Pakistan's talent and creativity in game development, opening doors for potential partnerships and investment opportunities.

The presence of officials from the Consulate General of Pakistan in Los Angeles Asim Ali Khan and Trade

& Investment Counselor Quratulain Fatima, underscored Pakistan's booming gaming sector's importance on the international stage.

The Consulate's support highlights the government's commitment to fostering innovation and promoting Pakistan's digital economy.

The potential of Pakistan's gaming sector is apparent, with its current valuation at almost \$200 million, constituting 1% of the global market.

Pakistan's gaming industry hosts more than 200 studios, primarily generating revenue from North America and Europe, experiencing a growth rate of around 125%.

The Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB) dili-

gently explores new avenues to showcase and boost the growth of Pakistan's IT sector.

USA is an important market for worldwide technology exports including Pakistan.

Recognizing that approximately 50% of Pakistan's total IT/ITeS exports are channeled towards the United States of America, PSEB emphasizes the significance of creating a robust market presence to broaden business horizons globally.

As Pakistan continues to invest in its digital economy and foster innovation in the gaming sector, its presence at GDC showcased its commitment to becoming a global hub for game development.

PTCL-Telenor: CCP begins review of pre-merger application

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: PTCL intends to acquire 100% shareholding of M/s. Telenor Pakistan (Private) Limited (Telenor) and M/s. Orion Towers Private Limited (OT).

CCP received a pre-merger application on 29th February, 2024 from PTCL Lawyers. Initially, the application was submitted with incorrect fee. The remaining outstanding fee was sent to the Commission on 6th March, 2024. CCP requested further information on 20th March, 2024 in order to complete its due diligence. The requisite information is still awaited from the PTCL lawyers.

The Commission has 30 working days to complete

its due diligence after all the required information is submitted. The 30 working days timeframe for the first phase review will commence after PTCL lawyers submit the outstanding information requested by the Commission.

It is pertinent to mention that the CCP's merger department is processing 21 applications at the moment. Acquisition of Telenor by PTCL is one of those applications.

There were altogether five undertakings operative in Pakistan's mobile telecom industry. This included Jazz, Zong, Telenor Pakistan, Warid and Ufone. Jazz acquired Warid in 2016. PTCL has a wholly-owned subsidiary called Ufone. The acquisition of

Telenor by PTCL will reduce the number of competitors offering telephony service in the market.

The Commission has also received concerns from a competitor regarding the intended acquisition by PTCL. The CCP will complete its due diligence in due course.

A number of newspapers have publicized a misleading information on behalf of Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) regarding the progress of pre-merger application of PTCL. The media is urged to avoid speculation and dissemination of premature information about the merger. For accurate information, they are encouraged to contact the Commission directly.

Circular for intimation of share transfer issued

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) on Monday issued a circular clarifying provision of section 465(4) read with 510 of the Companies Act 2017 regarding filing of return with the registrar for change in shareholding of the companies.

Under the provisions of Section 465 of the Companies Act, 2017, it is mandatory for a company, other than a listed company, to report any change of more than 25 percent in its shareholding or membership or voting rights.

The circular has been issued to address practical difficulties being faced in reporting transfer of shareholding and in order to keep the record of shareholding of companies updated.

Form-3, said a news release issued here.

The circular clarified that a company other than listed company, may also file Form-3 with the registrar about any change of twenty five percent or less in its shareholding or membership or voting rights.

The circular has been issued to address practical difficulties being faced in reporting transfer of shareholding and in order to keep the record of shareholding of companies updated.

The clarification would encourage companies to report any change of 25 percent or less in shareholding, membership or voting rights to the Registrar. It added.

Additionally, since, the company's information/returns maintained by the Registrar are public documents which may be inspected and certified copies may be obtained by any person, hence, updated shareholding information will be available to the stakeholders and the interested parties.

Tokyo stocks end lower on profit-taking

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks snapped a four-day winning streak to close lower on Monday, as investors took profits after the key Nikkei index hit record highs last week.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index lost 1.16 percent, or 474.31 points, to end at 40,414.12, while the broader Topix index dropped 1.26 percent, or 35.58 points, to 2,777.64.

"Profit-taking was dominant in Tokyo after falls of the Dow index, amid widespread caution over the rapid rise (of the Nikkei index)," IwaiCosmo

Securities said. The dollar fetched 151.24 yen in Asian trade, against 151.40 yen in New York on Friday.

A Japanese finance ministry currency diplomat on Monday hinted at potential intervention in the currency market, referring to the yen's depreciation after the Bank of Japan raised interest rates but indicated monetary easing conditions would continue.

"Clearly there are speculative actions behind the current cheapness of the yen," Masato Kanda told reporters.

"We can't tolerate exces-

sive movement based on speculation, which has a huge negative effect on the national economy," he said.

"We will take appropriate measures against excessive movement without ruling out any means."

Automakers were lower, with Toyota falling 1.08 percent to 3,830 yen and Honda plunging 2.21 percent to 1,879 yen. Nissan dropped 2.12 percent to 629 yen. After the closing bell, the auto giant announced a new global target of selling one million more vehicles annually in three years' time.



In brief

Lakers hit highest score

NEW YORK (Agencies): Anthony Davis and LeBron James starred as the Los Angeles Lakers put in their highest-scoring performance in 37 years to hold off the Indiana Pacers. The Lakers won 150-145 with 36 points and 16 rebounds from Davis, while James added 26 points and 10 assists. Indiana scored 46 points in the final quarter but the Lakers hit 10 in the last minute for a third successive win. "We allowed them to score 145 so it was terrible defensively but we can do what we want offensively," said Davis. "But we've got to defend, especially when we've got a team [in trouble] like that. We don't need to give them life, but at this point in the season, a win is a win." The Lakers, who start a run of six away games on Tuesday, are ninth in the Western Conference and have 11 matches remaining in the 82-game regular season. The top eight qualify for the end-of-season play-offs. The Pacers are sixth in the Eastern Conference and have 10 games to go. Elsewhere, Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 30 points and grabbed a season-high 19 rebounds as the Milwaukee Bucks beat the Oklahoma City Thunder 118-93 to consolidate second position in the Eastern Conference. The defeat leaves the Thunder fractionally behind reigning NBA champions the Denver Nuggets in the battle to win the Western Conference. The Minnesota Timberwolves are also in the running, with just one win separating the top three after they edged past the Golden State Warriors 114-110. Steph Curry contributed 31 points for the Warriors. The Los Angeles Clippers remain fourth despite a 121-107 defeat by the Philadelphia 76ers.

Alves pays bail and can leave jail: court

BARCELONA (AFP): Former Brazil international footballer Dani Alves, convicted of rape in Spain, has paid his bail of one million euros and can leave jail pending his appeal, a court said Monday. One of the world's most decorated footballers, Alves, 40, was last month sentenced to four-and-a-half years in jail for raping a young woman in the VIP bathroom of a Barcelona nightclub in the early hours of December 31, 2022. In a surprise move, a Barcelona court agreed last Wednesday to his request for provisional release while his appeal is heard on condition that he posted bail of a million euros (\$1.08 million), hand over his Spanish and Brazilian passports, remain in the country and present himself to court "on a weekly basis". It took him until Monday to present the funds, meaning he remained in jail while his entourage tried to raise the money. "We hereby inform you that the deposit of Daniel Alves' bail has been registered in the accounts of the 21st section of the Barcelona Court," the court said in a statement. TV crews gathered outside the Brians 2 prison, northwest of Barcelona, where Alves is being held to capture the moment of his release which is expected in the coming hours. Alves had been in jail since he was arrested in January 2023 on the grounds that he was a flight risk. Brazil does not extradite citizens sentenced in other countries. Public prosecutors and the victim's lawyer, Ester Garcia, have appealed the decision to grant Alves bail.



MUNICH: Harry Kane of FC Bayern Muenchen at Saebener Strasse training ground on March 25, 2024 in Munich, Germany.

ICC delegation review Champions Trophy preparations

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): The International Cricket Council (ICC) delegation on Monday reached Pakistan to review the arrangements for the Champions Trophy, which is scheduled to be held in February 2025.

According to the details, the ICC Event Operations team, including Senior Manager Sarah Edgar, and Manager Aoun Zaidi, landed in Karachi to review the arrangements for the Champions Trophy 2025 scheduled to be held in Pakistan.

The ICC delegation will inspect various parts of the National Stadium in Karachi while the management of the stadium will brief the delegation regard-

ing the arrangements for the upcoming tournament.

The ICC delegation is also likely to meet representatives of law enforcement agencies. The delegation will also visit Lahore and Rawalpindi stadiums in stages meanwhile, ICC Head of Events, Chris Tetley will join the delegation during their visit in Rawalpindi.

Last year in December, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) signed the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 hosting rights agreement with the International Cricket Council (ICC) in Dubai. According to a statement, the former PCB Management Committee Chairman Zaka Ashraf was joined by ICC General Counsel Jonathan Hall in

the signing of the hosting rights to Pakistan at the ICC headquarters.

The PCB in its capacity has already intimidated the government to provide foolproof security to visiting international teams for the Champions Trophy.

For the unversed, ICC, in November 2021, announced a series of international cricket competitions for both men and men in the 2024-2031 cycle, which also features the 2025 and 2029 Champions Trophy editions.

The ICC Champions Trophy 2025 will be an eight-tournament and the structure will follow previous editions with two groups of four, semi-finals and final.

South Korean footballer released

BEIJING (AFP): South Korean international footballer Son Jun-ho, who was detained by Chinese authorities in connection with a bribery case, has been released and returned home, Seoul's foreign ministry said Monday.

The World Cup midfielder was detained in northeast China last May "on suspicion of accepting bribes by non-state employees", the Chinese government said at the time, without providing further details.

Son "recently arrived in South Korea as his detention ended" after 10 months, the South Korean foreign ministry said in a statement Monday.

The government has provided "active legal assistance through close communication with Son's family", it added.

The Korea Football Association confirmed Son's release, saying the 31-year-old footballer had returned on Monday. Son played for Shandong Taishan football club in the Chinese Super League since 2021 and appeared in three of South Korea's four matches during last year's World Cup in Qatar.

Amir and Wasim among 29 Pakistan cricketers set for army training camp

ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan's international cricketers will undergo a two-week fitness training camp with the army to prepare for upcoming limited-overs tours and the Twenty20 World Cup.

Fast bowler Mohammad Amir and allrounder Imad Wasim were among the 29 cricketers selected Monday by the Pakistan Cricket Board to attend the March 26-April 8 camp at Kakul, Abbottabad. Amir and Wasim have come out of international retirement and made themselves available for selection until the T20 World Cup in the US and Caribbean in June.

Pakistan is scheduled to host New Zealand for five T20s next month and will also play T20 series in Ireland and England before

the T20 World Cup starts on June 2. The Pakistan Super League T20 tournament finished last week.

The PCB said the camp, organized in collaboration with Pakistan army, will focus on team building and is aimed to enhance the physical and mental strength of the players, "ensuring they are in the best condition to face the challenges ahead."

"The players will undergo a comprehensive training regime tailored to elevate their fitness levels, agility, leadership, strategic thinking and overall performance on the field," the PCB said in a statement.

It's not the first time Pakistan's leading cricketers will have to go through a training camp in Kakul. In 2016, the

national team captained by Misbah-ul-Haq conducted a camp there before flying to England for a test series.

Pakistan squad: Amir Jamal, Abrar Ahmed, Azam Khan, Babar Azam, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Hasan Ali, Haseebullah, Iftikhar Ahmed, Imad Wasim, Irfan Khan, Mehran Mumtaz, Abbas Afridi, Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Amir, Mohammad Haris, Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Rizwan, Mohammad Wasim, Naseem Shah, Sahibzada Farhan, Saim Ayub, Salman Ali Agha, Saud Shakeel, Shadab Khan, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Usama Mir, Usman Khan and Zaman Khan.

Rajitha takes five wickets as Sri Lanka crush Bangladesh

SYLHET (AFP): Kasun Rajitha claimed his second five-wicket haul in Test cricket as Sri Lanka crushed Bangladesh by 328 runs on Monday in Sylhet to go 1-0 up in the two-match series.

The visitors bowled out Bangladesh for 182 in their second innings after lunch on the fourth day, with Rajitha returning with 5-56.

Overnight batsman Mominul Haque scored 87 not out for Bangladesh to delay the inevitable, before Lahiru Kumara (2-39) took the final wicket.

Fast bowler Rajitha claimed the wicket of Tajjul Islam in the third over of the morning, trapping the left-hander in front for six.

Mominul, who hit 12 fours and a six, put on a dogged 66-run partnership with Mehidy Hasan Miraz for the seventh wicket before Rajitha struck again.

Mehidy, on 33, edged Rajitha to Dhananjaya de Silva at second slip. Rajitha took the wickets of Shoriful Islam (12) and Khaled Ahmed (zero) off consecutive deliveries after the break to complete his five-wicket haul. Vishwa Fernando was the other pivotal bowler for Sri Lanka with 3-36 as pacer-men took all 20 wickets for the visitors in the game.

"The wicket had something for the fast bowlers," said Sri Lanka captain and player of the match de Silva. "We were talking about playing late, and what shots to play on this wicket. It paid off at the end of the day." Tajjul and Mominul resumed Bangladesh's innings at 47-5 after the top order collapsed in little over an hour before the close of play on Sunday.

"The wicket was good, there was movement early on," said Bangladesh cap-

tain Najmul Hossain Shanto. "We have to improve our new-ball batting. A lot of work has to be done before the next Test, and we are going to have a plan to come back strongly."

Sri Lanka, who have never lost a Test series in Bangladesh, made 280 in their first innings and Bangladesh replied with 188. The visitors then made 418 with first-innings century-makers de Silva and Kamindu Mendis both reaching three figures for the second time in the match.

They were only the third pair from the same country to score centuries in each innings of a Test after Australia's Chappell brothers, Greg and Ian, and Pakistan's Misbah-ul-Haq and Azhar Ali. The second and final match of the series will be played in Chittagong from March 30.

Japan to advance in World Cup qualifying after N. Korea game cancelled



TOKYO (AFP): Japan look poised to reach the final stage of qualifying for the 2026 World Cup without kicking a ball after FIFA said their match at North Korea will not be rescheduled.

North Korea were supposed to stage the qualifier on Tuesday in the capital Pyongyang but five days before the game officials abruptly said the isolated country could not play host without giving a reason.

On Friday the Asian Football Confederation said the match was off and at the weekend FIFA said it "shall neither be played nor rescheduled", citing lack of space in the international football calendar.

"The matter and match outcome will be referred to the FIFA disciplinary committee," football's world governing body added.

North Korea could suffer a 3-0 forfeit as a result, which would send Japan

into the third stage of qualifying for the World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico. Japan beat North Korea 1-0 in Tokyo on Thursday to make it three wins from three in Asian qualifying Group B.

Coach Hajime Moriyasu, who took Japan to the last 16 of the Qatar World Cup after wins over Spain and Germany, had been eyeing the North Korea game as an opportunity to make improvements following an unconvincing display in the home leg.

"It's unfortunate that we lost the opportunity to correct areas of concern and potential areas for improvement that came to light," he said on Friday.

"We will aim to improve as a team based on what we have built so far."

Japan were dumped out of the Asian Cup quarter-finals 2-1 by Iran last month after entering the tournament as favourites.

20 probables for West Indies Women series announced

LAHORE (APP): The women's national selection committee led by Saleem Jaffar has named 20 probables for the forthcoming white-ball series against West Indies women scheduled to take place at the National Bank Stadium in Karachi from 18 April to 3 May.

Three ODIs – part of the ICC Women's Championship 2022-25 and five T20Is will be played during the series. The first ball in the ODIs (18, 21 and 23 April) will be bowled at 3:30 pm, while the T20Is (26, 28, 30 April, 2 and 3 May) will begin at 7:30 pm.

Ayesha Zafar (29 ODIs, 20 T20Is), Gul Feroza (2 ODIs), Rameen Shamim (3 ODIs, 4T20Is), Sidra Nawaz (67 ODIs, 56 T20Is) and Tuba Hassan (1 ODI, 21 T20Is) are the players making a comeback. Omaima Sohail and Shawaal Zulfiqar (recovering from shoulder injury), who were part of the 17-member squad that was named for the last bilateral series against New Zealand women's team, have been omitted from the camp probables.

The selection committee in consultation with the captain and interim head-coach will announce the 15-member squad for the ODI series during the camp in Karachi. The remaining five players of the probables camp will be released to take part in the domestic Women's

One-Day Tournament (to be announced in due course).

Probables: Aliya Riaz, Ayesha Zafar, Bismah Maroof, Diana Baig, Fatima Sana, Ghulam Fatima, Gul Feroza, Muneeba Ali, Najhi Alvi (wk), Nashra Sundhu, Natalia Parvaiz, Nida Dar, Rameen Shamim, Sadaf Shamas, Sadia Iqbal, Sidra Amin, Sidra Nawaz (wk), Tuba Hassan, Umm-e-Hani and Waheeda Akhtar

Player support personnel: Saira Iftikhar (manager), Mauhtashim Rashid (interim head coach), Saleem Jaffar (bowling coach), Taufeeq Umar (batting coach), Hanif Malik (fielding coach), Muhammad Javed (strength and conditioning coach), Syed Nazir Ahmed (media manager), Rabia Siddiq (physiotherapist), Zubair Ahmed (analyst) and Nadia Arif (masseuse)

Chief Selector Saleem Jaffar: "The selection committee has chosen 20 probable players based on their performances in both domestic and international circuits. Ayesha Zafar, Gul Feroza, Rameen Shamim, Sidra Nawaz, and Tuba Hassan have been added to the probables camp following their performances in the last domestic event, as we aim to broaden our pool of players.

"The upcoming series against West Indies, which includes ICC Women's Championship matches, is of utmost

importance as we strive to earn maximum points to strengthen our claim for direct qualification in the ICC Women's 50-over World Cup."

The 20-member squad will assemble in Karachi on Monday, 1 April and will undergo a seven-day camp in Karachi from 2 April at the Hanif Mohammad High Performance Centre. The squad members and the team management will return to their hometown on 9 April for Eid and the squad will assemble again in Karachi on 13 April.

Series schedule:
14 Apr – West Indies women's team arrival in Karachi

18 Apr – First ODI at National Bank Stadium (NBS), Karachi (330pm local time) (ICC Women's Championship)

21 Apr – Second ODI at NBS (330pm local time) (ICC Women's Championship)

23 Apr – Third ODI at NBS (330pm local time) (ICC Women's Championship)

26 Apr – First T20I at NBS (730pm local time)

28 Apr – Second T20I at NBS (730pm local time)

30 Apr – Third T20I at NBS (730pm local time)

2 May – Fourth T20I at NBS (730pm local time)

3 May – Fifth T20I at NBS (730pm local time).

Murray in dramatic defeat by Machac in Miami

MIAMI (Agencies): Andy Murray was knocked out of the Miami Open in a dramatic 5-7 7-5 7-6 (7-5) last-32 defeat by Tomas Machac.

The Briton, 36, converted his ninth break point to take a 6-5 lead in the opening set before serving out to love.

But Machac hit back to win the second set and then clinched the match in a third-set tie-break, having previously been broken when serving to progress.

Murray received treatment on an ankle injury late in the third set and was also agitated by movement in the crowd. Elsewhere, British number one Cameron Norrie lost 7-5 6-1 to third seed Daniil Medvedev in just 81 minutes.

Murray's match against 23-year-old Czech Republic player Machac lasted three hours and 27 minutes and saw him save match point to force a tie-break.

After the Briton secured the opening set, Machac broke Murray for the first

time at 6-5 in the second set - which was interrupted by a brief rain delay - to draw level. But Murray's frustration grew with people in the crowd moving and umpire Carlos Bernardes at the end of that set.

In response to an unheard reply from Bernardes to Murray's "useless, useless" comment, the Scot responded: "What are you talking about? It's quite obvious when people are standing up between every single point."

Machac raced into a 3-0 lead in the decider, but Murray retrieved a break and saved match point when serving to stay in the match before succumbing to defeat when he lost the tie-break. He had worryingly gone down with an ankle injury at the net after hitting the winner to level at 5-5 in the third set.

He received treatment from the physio and managed to continue but could not overcome a resolute Machac, who was ranked two places lower than the then 58th-placed Murray.

Medvedev has too much for Norrie

Norrie, 28, conceded two early breaks in the opening set against Medvedev and left himself with too much to do.

He was blown away by Medvedev's serve in the second set, with the Russian winning eight of nine first-serve points.

The world number three was happy to progress, but expressed concerns about the balls being used after the win. "It's a bit strange," said Medvedev. "The court is pretty fast but the balls get old very fast."

"So at one moment in the rally, you feel like there isn't much you can do, so you can't go for the winner because the risk-reward isn't there. It's the same for the opponent, so we just hit, hit."

Meanwhile, Australian Open winner Jannik Sinner lost the first set to the Netherlands' Tallon Griekspoor before the Italian recovered after a rain break to win 5-7 7-5 6-1.



PESHAWAR: Azadi Snooker Cup for Minority Youth in Peshawar, Mr Augustin Jacob opened the Torument Group photo with players.



In brief

Ustad Beebo Khan remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): The death anniversary of renowned musician Ustad Beebo Khan of Sindh was observed on Monday. His original name was Muhammad Ibrahim Qureshi. He was born in Shikarpur in 1904. Ustad Beebo Khan received his musical training from his father Ustad Gaman Khan, Ustad Mubarak Ali Khan and Ustad Murad Ali. He was well versed in his family heritage. With the passage of time, the fame of his singing began to spread far and wide. He started being invited to sing every month at All India Radio Bombay. Ustad Beebo Khan's students include Ustad Qudratullah Khan, Ustad Niaz Hussain, Ustad Fida Hussain Khan, Muhammad Hashim Kicchi, Hadi Bakhsh Khan, Mai Allah Wasai, Muhammad Saleh Sand and Allah Dena Noonari. Ustad Bebo Khan was died on this day in 1954 in Hyderabad and was buried in Tando Yusuf graveyard.

Naqvi greets Hindu community

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Interior and Narcotic Control Mohsin Naqvi on Monday sent greetings to the Hindu community on the festival of Holi. "Happy Holi to the Hindu community living in Pakistan" he wrote in his message and said that Holi is the festival of colors and colors always last only with love. He said that the festival of Holi is a wonderful occasion to unite hearts and spread love and harmony because today's society is suffering from hatred and ugliness. He said that one should put aside mutual bitterness and join in the joy of this colorful festival. He further said that the festival of Holi promotes feelings of brotherhood and goodwill and celebrating joyous festivals together promotes love and relationships. All minorities including the Hindu community are equal citizens of Pakistan, Mohsen Naqvi added.

Long weekend ahead of Eid ul Fitr

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistanis are gearing up to potentially enjoy an extended holiday period, with six days earmarked for festivities and celebrations as the upcoming auspicious occasion of Eid ul Fitr. According to a private news channel amid preparations for the festival, expected to fall around April 10. In a significant move aimed at addressing concerns related to moon sightings and ensuring uniformity in Eid celebrations, the IT ministry introduced the Lunar calendar in 2019. This calendar, endorsed by the Meteorological Department, has become the cornerstone for determining the dates of various Islamic events, including Eid ul Fitr. Traditionally, Eid holidays commence a day earlier than the anticipated date to allow individuals ample time for preparations and to partake in the joyous festivities. With the government contemplating a four-day holiday starting from April 9 (Tuesday) to April 12 (Friday), coupled with the usual weekend holidays on Saturday and Sunday observed by both government and select private offices, the total holiday period is expected to span six days. However, the final decision regarding the holiday schedule remains contingent upon consultations with the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) and other pertinent authorities. The aim is to ensure alignment with the Lunar calendar and to facilitate nationwide celebrations in accordance with Islamic traditions.



ISLAMABAD: Women queuing up outside Benazir income support centre to receive cash money at Sitara Market.

Police accelerate operation against kite sellers, flyers

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi district police have accelerated their ongoing operation against kite sellers and flyers and managed to net 20 accused with 1000 kites and 27 kite flying string rolls, said a police spokesman here on Monday. He informed that Waris Khan police seized 500 kites each from the possession of two accused Nabeel and Aamir while Bani police recovered 350 kites each from three accused Usman, Najeebullah and Muhammad Ali.

Sadiqabad Police recovered 58 kites from five accused Khurram, Salim,

Khayyam, Ramzan and Ahmed, and Gunjamundi police seized 44 kites from three accused Saghar, Kamran and Bilal.

Similarly, Ratta Amaral police recovered 30 kites from the possession of Abbas Khan and Taxila police recovered 35 kites from an accused Yousaf.

Gujar Khan police recovered 17 kites and five string rolls from accused Naveed and Dhmyal police recovered 25 kites and string rolls from an accused Wasim.

Race Course police conducted a raid and arrested

an accused Salman with 10 kites and two string rolls while City police recovered 7 kites and 2 string rolls from 2 accused Faiz Ahmed and Arif. During this year's crackdown against kite flyers and sellers, more than 970 accused were arrested and more than 78,000 kites, over 1300 string rolls, 4 rifles, 23 pistols and 6 loud-speakers were recovered. Kite flying and aerial firing are deadly activities and the accused involved in kite flying and kite selling could not escape from the grip of law, Senior Superintendent of Police, Operations said.

'Text to CPO' service launched to facilitate citizens

RAWALPINDI (APP): City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi, Syed Khalid Hamdani on Monday launched 'Text to CPO' service to facilitate the citizens and improve service delivery. Through this service, the citizens can send a direct message to CPO on cell number 0300-4911720.

According to a police spokesman, during last six months, a total of 1560 complaints were received from the citizens. More than 99 per cent of the complaints of the citizens were resolved, he said adding, in this regard, 103 cases were registered while 14 complaints were being processed.

A complainant can send text messages through whatsapp/sms regarding abuse of civic authority, corruption or bribery, police violence, misbehavior, poor investigation, delay in FIR or any other complaint related to police.

Action on merit would be ensured on the complaint, as per the vision of Chief Minister Punjab and Inspector General of Police Punjab and best service delivery was being ensured for the citizens, he added.

Saudi ambassador calls on minister for Power

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan, Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki Monday called on Federal Minister for Power, Sardar Awaish Ahmad Khan Leghari.

During the meeting, the minister acknowledged the steadfast support of the brotherly country in all challenging situations, said a news release.

Federal Minister for Power, Sardar Awaish Ahmad Khan Leghari highlighted various investment opportunities, particularly in the transmission sector, and assured the ambassador of investor-friendly policies under the current government. The ambassador pledged support for Saudi businesses to explore Pakistan's investment potential.

KSrelief completes distribution of 5,000 Ramazan packages in Punjab

ISLAMABAD (APP): The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSrelief) completed the distribution of 5000 food packages across four districts of Punjab in Ramzan. In an unwavering commitment to address the pressing nutritional needs of the residents of Punjab, KSrelief has initiated the distribution of 5000 essential food packages across

four districts including Muzaffargarh, Kot Addu, Rajanpur and Rahimyar Khan in Punjab.

Each package, weighing 97 kg, contains essential food items to support a family for an entire month of Ramazan.

The contents include 80 kg of flour, five liters of cooking oil, five kg of sugar, two kg dates and five kg of Daal Chana.

Around 35,000 individuals across these four districts will be benefiting with this humanitarian effort, said a news release. The project is being executed with collaboration with the National Disaster Management, local governments, and implemented through the coordinated efforts of KSrelief and its partner organization Hayat Foundation.

Commissioner directs price magistrates to improve performance to provide relief to citizens

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Engineer Aamir Khattak here on Monday directed the price magistrates to further improve performance to provide relief to the citizens.

The officers concerned while briefing the Divisional Coordination Committee regarding Nigabhan Ramadan package and price control informed that during last 24 hours, 9,917 raids were conducted regarding price control. The Commissioner chairing the meeting said that low performing magistrates should be immediately suspended after warning and show cause notices.

Apart from the government subsidy, the number of price magistrates had also been increased by the Punjab government to bring essential items within the reach of the common man,

he added. First priority of the administration was to bring the full benefit of the government subsidy to the people, Engineer Aamir Khattak said adding, actions against hoarding and illegal profiteering would continue without discrimination.

Actions should be taken keeping in view the public complaints as well as the report of the Special Branch, the Commissioner added. Fines amounting to Rs 497,000 were imposed on the rules violators while 39 profiteers and hoarders were sent behind the bars after 199 violations were reported, the Commissioner was informed. During last 24 hours, show cause notices were issued to 118 price magistrates who had done less checking across the division. The number of Price Magistrates in Rawalpindi Division had

increased to 178, Engr. Aamir Khattak said.

The Committee was briefed that in Rawalpindi Division, 280,822 beneficiaries had been provided ration bags under Nigabhan Ramadan Package.

In last 24 hours, three officials were suspended for low distribution across the division while 13 others were suspended on cluster distribution and warnings and show-cause notices were also issued to many. Ration bags were given to 95,090 households in Rawalpindi district, 78,318 households in Attock, 47,542 beneficiaries in Jhelum district, 54,160 beneficiaries in Chakwal and 5,713 beneficiaries in Murree were provided the ration package at their doorsteps, Engineer Aamir Khattak said adding, the Government of Punjab had a zero-tolerance policy regarding cluster distribution.

Drum beating tradition in Sehri still alive in capital city

ISLAMABAD (APP): The centuries old tradition of a Drum beater waking up people for Sehri remains alive even in the federal capital of Islamabad.

For centuries, the majority people would wake up to the loud drumbeats in the wee hours heralding the beginning of Sehri time during Ramazan. However, with modern technology, this tradition has declined but still kept alive by drum beaters like Faqeer Hussain.

Faqeer Hussain still beats the drum at Sehri and wakes up the people in sector G-7, Islamabad. Talking to APP he said "I feel very happy to wake the people up. I never enjoyed any other event like this and feel that I am doing a religious activity. "I don't perform this duty for the

sake of cash but I do it only for the hereafter," he added.

"It's not that the people of my area do not have modern equipment, they do have, but they want to keep this custom alive," he added.

The drum beaters visit various streets, usually around 3 to 4 AM. Most of the time, he calls out loudly, "Utho rozay daro" and makes sure that the thunderous beat of his drum along with his slogans is loud enough to wake up the residents of a particular locality.

Those who perform this duty during the Ramazan, go from house to house to receive their reward at the end of the holy month. The locals give cash, clothes and rations of their free will, which helps them celebrate Eidul Fitr better.

Prof. Chaudhry Rasheed Sal told APP that due to the use of advanced technology, the tradition of waking people up at sehri has changed as the majority of people now use alarms and digital clocks to wake up for Sehri.

However, he said that keeping alive, centuries-old traditions are a very positive activity and should be encouraged, adding that all these traditions make our country more beautiful. He said that even though people had modern devices to help them wake up, they wanted to keep the tradition alive and encouraged the 'dhol wala'. In some areas, Qawwali performers are also seen in action visits from one street to another soon after Iftar or before Iftar.

OPF to establish new female academic block in Rawalpindi

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Overseas Pakistanis Foundation (OPF) an attached department of the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development would establish OPF Higher Secondary Girls School Academic Block the government's unwavering commitment to providing quality education to the children of overseas Pakistanis.

An official source told APP that the construction of a new Academic Block at OPF Girls Higher Secondary School, Rawalpindi reflects the government's dedication to meet the educational needs of both the overseas community and the general public.

At present, 710 students including 279 children of Overseas Pakistanis are enrolled in the said school. New Academic Block will be constructed on an area of 21057 Sq. Ft to accommodate around 300 more students. The proposed construction work of the new academic block will be completed with an estimated cost of Rs.99.93 million. The new academic block includes class-

rooms, daycare, a conference room, an art studio, a medical room, and a cafeteria.

Highlighting the alignment with the Prime Minister's vision, he underscored the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development's relentless efforts to extend maximum facilities and assistance to Pakistani expatriates, not only domestically but globally. Recognizing the invaluable contributions of overseas Pakistanis to the national economy, he affirmed the government's commitment to exploring all avenues to facilitate them comprehensively.

He expressed optimism regarding the pivotal role overseas Pakistanis can play in national development, leveraging their knowledge, expertise, and global exposure for the betterment of the country.

He commended the management of OPF for the successful launch of the new academic block at OPF Girls Higher Secondary School, Rawalpindi, underscoring the importance of such initiatives in fostering educational growth.

Punjab extends scholarship application deadline

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Punjab government has extended the deadline for deserving non-Muslim students studying in government institutes to submit their applications for merit-based scholarships from March 20 to April 1.

Minority students with excellent educational records, whose monthly family income does not exceed 48,300 rupees, will be eligible for the scholarship program for the fiscal year 2023-24.

Applicants from matric to PhD levels, who are interested and hold a Punjab domicile, are eligible to apply for the scholarship. Students belonging to Sikh, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, and other minority communities, who are regular attendees and have scored a minimum of 40% marks in their latest annual examination, meet the eligibility criteria for the program. Minority students pursuing professional degrees like MBBS, BDS,

BSc (English), BSc (Nursing), DVM, Pharm-D, PhD, or equivalent qualifications qualify for an annual scholarship of 50,000 rupees. Students enrolled in postgraduate programs such as MSc, M. Com, MA, MCS/MBA, M Phil, LLM, or equivalent qualifications will be awarded 35,000 rupees annually. Meanwhile, undergraduate students pursuing BSc, BBA, BA, B.Com, or equivalent qualifications will receive 30,000 rupees per year.

Drive on Railway safety, prohibited items in full swing

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways awareness campaign was in full swing in order to raise public knowledge of the dangers of trespassing, crossing railroad tracks, and carrying forbidden objects like gas cylinders, guns without a license, cartridges, drugs, and daggers.

"The campaign was launched on the directives of Minister for Railways Shahid Ashraf Tarar and Secretary Syed Mazhar Ali Shah which will not help the department to control accidents but also win the confidence of the passengers of the rail" an official told APP. The official said, "Pakistan Railways will use all the social media platforms including print, electronic media, twitter, Facebook, poster and pamphlets to create an awareness among the citizens about a safe train journey." He said the department has also asked all the divisional superintendents to ensure checking of luggage of passengers at entry points with scanners, metal detectors and walk-through gates.

He said Pakistan Railways had always given importance to the safety of citizens and its passengers.

"It has been directed to discourage and stop those passengers who are carrying prohibited products. It is suggested to install emergency doors and auto-lock doors in coaches in case of any emergency," he added.

The official urged the citizens to stop at the level crossing before crossing the track, look on both sides of the track and wait for the train to pass if any train was coming.

He said that double whistle boards had been provided at most of level crossings where train drivers were bound to play horn to warn the road users about train arrival.

To a question, he said, "Pakistan Railways has converted approximately 181 un-manned level crossings to manned level crossings across the country, out of 550 identified by the department over the entire railway network in over one year."

"The relevant provincial government provided the finances to Pakistan Railways for the up-gradation of un-manned level crossings in the country," he said.

He said the department was taking several steps including the up-gradation of unmanned and vulnerable railway level crossings across the country in collaboration with respective provincial governments.

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The official said there were two types of level crossings over the Pakistan Railways network, un-manned and manned level crossings, adding that the un-manned level crossings were without gate leaves.

"There is a total of 1,565 unmanned level crossings over the entire railway network and as per railway policy in vogue, the up-gradation of any unmanned or manned level crossing is the responsibility of road owning authority," he added.

The said that un-manned level crossings without gates leaves and gate men, were previously provided where 'Kacha path' with low traffic volume crosses the railway track to facilitate movement of locals, farmers and carts at their own risks.

However, he said, "Due to high risk of accidents on existing un-manned level crossings, construction and provision of new un-manned level crossing is completely banned on entire Railway system as per Railway policy for level crossings from 2019." He said that it also mentioned Section 12 of the Railway Act of 1890 that the district administration or road authority should bear the expenses for the upgrade of these unmanned level crossings.



ISLAMABAD: Heavy mahinery being used for construction under the bridge at IJP Road.

UN announces programs

KABUL (Khaama Press): The World Food Program has launched sewing education programs across Afghanistan for women's self-sufficiency. The organization stated the purpose of these programs as "women's self-sufficiency in Afghanistan" in a message on its social media platform X on Monday. The World Food Program emphasized that this decision comes simultaneously with the reduction in "economic opportunities" for women in Afghanistan.

Sayed diagnosed with cancer

KABUL (TOLOnews): Mohammad Sayedi, the former coach of the Afghan national under-19 futsal team, has been suffering from colon cancer for some time and is currently undergoing treatment in Iran. Officials in the Futsal Committee of the Football Federation confirm that Sayedi has been battling this disease for more than six months. Mohammad Sayedi is now a refugee in Iran and due to poor economic conditions, cannot afford his treatment costs.

Economic, electricity projects signed: Official



KABUL (TOLOnews): Agreements for four projects worth 4 billion Afghanis were signed between the officials of the Islamic Emirate and the private sector. The head of Facilitation and Investment of the Administrative Office of the Islamic Emirate, Ahmad Zia Khalid, said that these projects include the production of 23 megawatts of solar power in the Sarobi district of Kabul, the construction of two substations in Herat,

the extension of a 220-kilovolt power line in this province, the construction of a commercial market in the Kot-e Sangi area of Kabul city, and the establishment of a commercial center and residential apartments in Helmand province. "The second project in Helmand province, in the city of Lashkar Gah, in first district, is the Luqman Hakim commercial market, a public-private partnership," said Ahmadzia Khalid. The head of the Islamic

Emirate's General Directorate of Administrative Affairs said that the implementation of these projects will create job opportunities for hundreds of people, and the Islamic Emirate is currently providing more facilities for investment in the country. "In this situation, the investor is ready, and the taxes that are collected are the right of the nation and the people," said Noor-ul-haq Anwar, the head of the Islamic Emirate's General Directorate of

Administrative Affairs. Similarly, the acting Minister of Energy and Water, Abdul Latif Mansoor said that with the transparency provided by the officials of the Islamic Emirate in the investment sector, the interest of domestic and foreign investors in the country has increased. "The Economic Commission of the Prime Minister's Office has transparently invested billions of afghani in projects, which is a revolution in our country, and we also want other investors to come to Afghanistan and invest," he said. "As I previously mentioned, we produce 15 megawatts of electricity from solar energy in Kandahar, and the Zorlaristan company also produces 15 megawatts of electricity. Now, both companies have decided to produce 32 megawatts of electricity from solar energy in Naghlu dam," said Suliman, a Turkish investor. The Ministry of Economy has previously stated that in the year 1402, 114 projects worth 13 billion Afghanis were implemented by the Islamic Emirate.

6m Afghans received aid from WFP in past month

KABUL (Khaama Press): The World Food Programme (WFP) of the United Nations has recently announced that six million people in Afghanistan received aid over the past month. In a press release on Saturday, March 23, the agency stated that the World Food Programme has provided cash and food assistance to over six million people in Afghanistan. According to the press release, the aid has been provided to meet the needs of beneficiaries in delivering meals to their children. The program added that it has been able to provide this assistance with the help of financial support from some private donors and cooperating countries. This comes as the World Food Programme had previously stated that economic challenges and humanitarian crises in Afghanistan have increased the demand for food aid.

Amid a dire humanitarian crisis, Afghan refugees are returning from Pakistan in significant numbers. The deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, including ongoing conflict and economic instability, has prompted many refugees to seek repatriation despite the uncertain conditions awaiting them. As these refugees return, they face immense challenges, including limited access to basic necessities such as food, shelter, and healthcare. The international community is urged to provide urgent assistance to support the resettlement and reintegration efforts for returning Afghan refugees, ensuring their safety and well-being amidst the ongoing crisis in their homeland.

Daikundi residents thirsting for potable water

NEILI (Pajhwok): Some residents of central Daikundi province complain about lack of potable water, while officials say 40 percent of locals have access to the precious resource. Locals say much of the water they consume is unhealthy and causes various diseases. They want the government to resolve the problem on priority. Quadrat, an inhabitant of Sangi Takht district, told Pajhwok Afghan News they had been using contaminated water for drinking due to lack of wells and fountains in the area. He said: "Our house is very far from a fountain and we could not fetch water from it except in spring and summer." He asked the government to dig up water wells for them because they could not afford to do so on their own due to economic hardships. Anwar, an inhabitant of Neili, also grumbled about the shortage of clean drinking water and called for the authorities to address the problem. He said a large number of people did not have access to potable water. The use of unfit water had caused various diseases, he added. "Most of the wells in the city have dried up, forcing people to purchase water. Tankers do not supply healthy water and thus contribute to public health hazards." On other hand, local officials acknowledge about 60 percent of residents do not have access to potable water. Syed Noor, an official of Rural Rehabilitation and Development Department, told Pajhwok according to a survey, only 40 percent of people were using clean drinking water. He said most of the people had access to potable water previously, but the resource became scarce in the recent years due to drought. He claimed his department had implemented different projects with financial support from partner institutions during the past one year to resolve the problem.

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Iron smelting factory inaugurated in Kabul

KABUL (TOLOnews): An iron smelting factory with a \$50M investment was inaugurated in the presence of a number of officials from the Islamic Emirate. The factory's officials said that the factory has provided direct employment opportunities for two thousand people. Naqibullah Nazari, the factory manager, asked the Islamic Emirate to also increase the import tariff on steel rods. "In the second phase of our factory, about \$50 million has been invested. This month, we are producing steel rods ranging from 8 to 32 millimeters with diameters of 60 to 75," he added. Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, deputy prime minister for economic affairs,

pledged at the opening ceremony that they support investors in the country and have increased the import tariffs on similar goods. Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar said the opening of the iron smelting factory is important for the economic growth and development of the country. "We have settled for less, and all industrialists need electricity, but they have settled for less electricity," he added. "There is no doubt that Afghanistan has been oppressed and destroyed over the past few decades, but fortunately a system has emerged in Afghanistan that possesses the spirit of revival," said Noor-ul-haq Anwar, the head of the Islamic Emirate's General Directorate of

Administrative Affairs. Khalil Rahman Haqqani, the acting Minister of Refugees and Repatriation, emphasized at this ceremony that for self-sufficiency in iron production, the iron smelting factory was also established during the first era of the Islamic Emirate. "With the resumption of the Islamic Emirate, Alhamdulillah, we have rebuilt and inaugurated factories that lead Afghanistan towards self-sufficiency, including the iron smelting factory as part of this process," he said. Previously, the acting Minister of Industry and Commerce said that the country had achieved self-sufficiency in 134 domestic products and semi-self-sufficiency in another 100 items.

Taliban orders HI leader to vacate home, office

KABUL (Khaama Press): According to media reports, Taliban forces have reportedly surrounded the house of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the leader of Hizb-e-Islami, in Kabul. It has been said that the controversy revolves around the land of Hekmatyar's house; according to the Taliban, it belongs to the Ministry of Defense of Afghanistan. Habib al-Rahman, Hekmatyar's son, wrote in a post on his social media platform X that their house is not surrounded, but they are changing their residence in Kabul.

According to him, the leader of Hizb-e-Islami lived in a house provided by the previous government after the peace agreement, while the Taliban have not accepted this agreement. He stated that based on the previous government's agreement, this house was



given to Hekmatyar, but after several months of discussions with Taliban officials, the previous peace agreement is not acceptable to the current government. But Karim Amin, a member of the leadership of Hizb-e-Islami, speaking to the media, said that the Taliban officials forced Hekmatyar to leave his home and workplace and go to another place. This incident occurred

while Hekmatyar had previously criticized the Taliban leader and policies. The leader of Hizb-e-Islami Afghanistan, in a recent speech, strongly criticized the Taliban's system and policies, such as banning girls' education. Regarding the ban on girls' education, he said that anyone who differentiates between the education of boys and girls is "definitely wrong."

Kabul rejects US media claim of Daesh threat to diplomatic areas

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Islamic Emirate, in response to a New York Times report on the threat of Daesh's Khorasan branch attacking the embassies of China, India, and Iran in Afghanistan, said that Daesh is being strongly pursued by the forces of the Islamic Emirate. Spokesman of Islamic Emirate, Zabihullah Mujahid, said that the group does not have the capability to attack diplomatic missions in the country. Zabihullah Mujahid also said attempts by foreign countries to increase anxiety with the aim of reducing diplomatic activities of other countries in Kabul will be "unsuccessful."

"Daesh in Afghanistan is under intense surveillance by security forces. This means they are being actively pursued, and we are very aware of their activities. Insh Allah, they do not have the capability to carry out any attacks in diplomatic areas because diplomatic areas are under special security, and special forces are assigned there," he said. Following the bloody attack by Daesh on a concert hall in Krasnogorsk near Moscow, the New York Times reported that the group has now threatened to attack the embassies of China, India, and Iran in Afghanistan. "The ISIS affiliate that

American officials say was behind the deadly attack in Moscow is one of the last significant antagonists that the Taliban government faces in Afghanistan, and it has carried out repeated attacks there, including on the Russian Embassy, in recent years," the report reads. "Daesh in Afghanistan is not as much as it is made out to be, except by the hands of some major intelligence groups that Daesh is followed by in the region, you understand that regional intelligence efforts strive to make this issue prominent. Therefore, it can be seen as a bigger issue," said Mohammad Matin Mohammad Khil, a

military analyst. "One of the objectives that the United States pursues in this matter is threatening Russia. This recent attack is indicative of the same trend that the United States wants to use Daesh in this region to threaten Russia and create some troubles for Russia, especially through its borders in Central Asia," said Rashid Qutbzadeh, a political analyst. Daesh has also claimed responsibility for the attack near the Kabul Bank office in Kandahar, which, according to official reports, resulted in three deaths and twelve injuries. However, some sources have reported higher casualty figures for this event.

Over 3m national electronic ID cards distributed, says NSIA



KABUL (Ariana News): A total of 3.12 million national electronic identification cards were distributed in the past 12 months in Afghanistan, the National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA) announced Monday. The number includes 2.68 million IDs for men and 1.56 million IDs for women. In Kabul, 700,000 national electronic ID cards

were distributed in 1402, followed by Herat (280,000), Balkh (188,000) and Nangarhar (162,000). Kandahar distributed 155,000 e-ID cards in the past 12 months. Since the start of the process of distributing national electronic ID cards in the country, 12.9 million citizens have received the card, including 7.5 million men and 5.4 million women.

Female journalists dealing with economic challenges in Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): Local media outlets in Laghman province, located in Eastern Afghanistan, are struggling with significant economic challenges like those in other parts of the country. These difficulties have greatly hampered media activities in the province, making it difficult for journalists to work effectively. Local journalists in Laghman province told Khaama Press that media outlets provide them with fewer opportunities. Due to economic issues, they cannot properly carry out their journalistic work. Zamzama Sapi, an employee at a private radio station in Laghman province, has been affected not only in her work but also in her physical and mental health due to economic problems. Zamzama, driven by her passion for journalism, has been on duty for several months. Still, she feels that her enthusiasm for the job is fading daily due to the minimal recognition she receives for her work. On the other hand, some journalists in Laghman's radio stations state that

despite the complex and exhausting work, they do not receive sufficient monthly income, making their lives challenging. Journalists in the broadcasting and administrative departments of five active radios in Laghman told Khaama Press that existing limitations often force them to leave their jobs. Suma Kainat, a reporter at "Kawun Ghag" radio, says that working in the media is challenging, but they still love their job. She says, "Our first problem is that we don't have enough privileges. If we are given these privileges, we will perform our duties better. Another problem is access to information, as we cannot confidently request information from institutions, or relevant entities do not provide information on time." They are concerned that if this trend continues, journalists will face many difficulties in the future. Haya, who works at another private radio sta-

tion in Laghman, says that male and female journalists can go to remote areas for work, but female journalists must have a companion, posing a severe challenge to their work. In addition to national radio and television, five private radios are operating in Laghman, where about eight female employees work alongside dozens of men. With the advent of the Taliban administration, many media outlets ceased operations. In addition to dozens of men, female journalists also lost their jobs and are currently suffering from psychological and mental illnesses due to journalists' unemployment. It is worth mentioning that before the advent of the Taliban regime, there were 530 active media outlets, including about 70 television networks, about 300 radios, and other print media and news agencies, which provided employment opportunities for hundreds of female journalists.

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Traders' union criticizes freezing of funds in Iran

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Nimroz Money Exchangers Union said that the Iranian government has frozen about \$4 million dollars of the province's money exchangers in the country's banks for the past month. This union is asking the Islamic Emirate to discuss this issue with Iran and address it. "Our money exchangers' billions of toman have been frozen by Iran, which amounts to about \$3 to 4 million dollars. If this trend continues, it will seriously harm the money exchangers. We ask the Islamic Emirate to resolve this issue with Iran as soon as possible," said Noor Ahmad Nawrozi, the head of the Nimroz Money Exchangers Union. The freezing of funds and the blocking of Afghan money exchangers' bank

accounts by the Iranian government have raised serious concerns among the money exchangers and the private sector of this province. Several Afghan money exchangers and businessmen who have accounts in Iranian banks for the purpose of transferring money for the purchase of commercial goods are asking officials to address this challenge. "For a month now, my account and the people's capital collected by the money exchangers have been blocked by the Iranian government, which is about \$3 to 4 million dollars, and we face problems with the people every day because of this," said Mir Aqa, a money exchanger. "If this problem is not solved, we will face problems with the people, and

now money exchangers and businessmen, including myself, are struggling with this problem," said Abdullah. Another money exchanger. Meanwhile, local officials in Nimroz said that they have discussed this issue with Iranian officials. "This problem has been shared with us by the Money Exchangers Union, that about 2,000 bank accounts have been blocked for a month now, and we have discussed this matter with Iran," said Yar Mohammad Haqqar, the head of Nimroz's foreign relations. According to the statistics of the Nimroz Money Exchangers Union, more than two thousand Afghan money exchangers' accounts have been blocked in Iranian banks over the past month.



Releasing of girls' objectionable photos

No leniency for accused: IHC

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday observed that the people accused of sharing objectionable pictures of women with others and similar offences do not deserve any leniency.

The remark came during the hearing of a plea seeking bail of a man, Muhammad Haseeb, who is accused of sharing objectionable pictures of a girl on social media site Facebook and her father and husband on WhatsApp. The court rejected the bail plea, stating that such offences have become very common in the society for the reason that girls send "their objectionable pictures" to boys or friends when in a relationship,

which are later shared on social platforms in case of a breakup.

The court termed the sharing of private pictures a very heinous crime. "[...] as these pictures become stigma throughout the life of girls and in many cases their family life has destroyed; the girls have also committed suicide, hence the accused committing such offences are not entitled for any leniency," the court stated in a written order.

The case against Haseeb was registered at the Federal Investigation Agency's (FIA) Cyber-crime Reporting Centre, Islamabad, under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016, alleging that the accused "disgraced and destroyed the modesty"

of the complainant by unauthorisedly capturing or recording her objectionable pictures and publicly projecting them and sharing with her family members. "The petitioner has committed a heinous crime by sending the sexually explicit pictures of the complainant to her father, husband, friends etc. as well as by posting the same on the [...] Facebook; FIA collected sufficient incriminating evidence against him. Technical analysis expert report is available on record which shows that the petitioner has committed aforementioned crime," the order stated. It further stated that the petitioner's request for bail has been rejected but it is a "tentative assessment" which will not affect the case's trial.

Court issues production order for Imran, Bushra

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A district and sessions court of Islamabad on Monday issued a production order for Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan and his spouse Bushra Bibi.

The court has issued their production order on the plea filed by the two seeking bail in the cases pertaining to the forgery of receipts for Toshakhana gifts, while Khan has also filed a plea to seek bail in a May 9 violent protests case as well. District and sessions judge Tahir Abbas Sipra issued the production order and directed the Adiala jail superintendent to produce the couple before the court on April 4.

The decision came after another district and sessions court, last week, had approved a request seeking to produce Khan and PTI leader Shah Mahmood Qureshi in court, directing authorities to ensure the politicians' production on April 20. The petition, requesting their production, was heard by Judicial Magistrate Mureed Abbas in relation to the Parliament attack case against Khan and others.

Khan's lawyer Naeem Panjotha, during the hearing, had argued that the Superintendent of Adiala jail did not obey the order of any court. He had insisted the court to ensure that the jail officials adhered to the orders and produced Khan. The former premier's counsel had asked the court to order to present Khan in the courtroom.

"The High Court ruled that a meeting with a political leader can be done on video link," Panjotha had added that the internet worked in Adiala jail, but only in the case of PTI founder, it stopped working. "Superintendent Adiala jail is afraid to bring PTI founder on video link," the counsel had said.

KP, Punjab Ministers discuss issues

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah and Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Imran Nazir on Monday discussed combating counterfeit medicines and cooperation in health sector.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Minister paid an unofficial visit to the Primary and Secondary Health Care Department in Punjab during which he was warmly welcomed by Punjab Health Minister and his team.

During the meeting, the health ministers exchanged views on matters of mutual interest, including combating counterfeit medicines and utilizing each other's best practices in primary health care management. Punjab Health Minister briefed Syed Qasim Ali Shah about various departmental affairs and conducted an introductory tour of various divisions of the department.

Both ministers agreed on the necessity of inter-provincial communication to establish a coordination mechanism to tackle natural disasters, epidemics, and other emergencies. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Minister highlighted the importance of learning from each other's best practices in handling epidemic situations such as vector-borne diseases like dengue, malaria, and leishmaniasis, as well as floods.

Discussions also ensued regarding the exchange of experts to develop specialization in various health sectors. Minister Shah was briefed on the ongoing reforms and digitization efforts in the Punjab Health Department. Syed Qasim Ali Shah emphasized the desire to adopt the health system prevalent in Western countries in progressive nations, for which ground realities are not entirely conducive.

He further explained the importance of leveraging the experiences and research of different provinces to enhance the existing system continuously, ensuring a journey of ongoing improvement. Minister Shah extended a formal invitation to the Punjab Health Minister and his team to visit Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Insaf (PTI) have spoken out regarding the ongoing legal battle involving their party's founder, Imran Khan, while also outlining strategies for addressing alleged electoral mandate theft.

Sher Afzal Marwat, a prominent figure within PTI, addressed the media in Abbottabad, asserting that positive developments are expected by Tuesday in the cipher case against Imran Khan. Marwat criticized the handling of political cases against Khan, labeling them as acts of revenge and alleging inadequate legal procedures, including insufficient cross-examinations. He hinted at forthcoming good news in the cipher case and announced plans to initiate a mandate recovery campaign starting March 30, targeting alleged electoral malpractices, particularly in the aftermath of the February 8 election.

Marwat emphasized the trust placed by the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in PTI, highlighting the party's historical significance in the region. He also expressed intentions to discuss the inclusion of Ahmed Ghani and Mushatq Ghani in the cabinet, aiming to uphold justice and representation for the populace.



ISLAMABAD: Wafaqi Mohtasib of Pakistan, Mr Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi, presenting Annual Report-2023 to President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

KP reserved seats

Opposition moves PHC over oath-taking

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Opposition parties in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Assembly Monday moved the Peshawar High Court (PHC) seeking the court's intervention on the issue of oath-taking of members on the reserved seats.

The petition, filed by members of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), urges the court to see that the members elected on the reserved seats are sworn in to be able to cast their votes in the upcoming Senate elections.

"Failure to administer the oath to members elected on the KP reserved reflects 'mal-intent'," the plea reads further praying the court to postpone the Senate polls if the elected members are not sworn in. The development comes as the issue of oath-

taking of members on the reserved seats is facing uncertainty owing to the deadlock between the KP government and opposition parties, wherein the former has objected to the KP governor's decision to summon the assembly session upon the opposition's request.

According to KP Food Minister Zahir Shah Toru, the governor took an illegal step by writing a letter summoning the assembly session. Last week, Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) Central Information Secretary Faisal Karim Kundi had announced approaching the courts as well as the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to convene the provincial assembly session.

His remarks came after KP Assembly Speaker Babar Saleem Swati's refused to follow the governor's recommendation to summon the legislature's session and administer the

oath to the members elected on seats reserved for women and minorities. It is pertinent to know that the oath-taking of KP Assembly members notified on reserved seats has become crucial for both the ruling and opposition parties as it will play an important role in the Senate polls slated for April 2 for filling 11 seats from the province.

The Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC), which has a clear majority in the house, is planning to delay the oath-taking, at least till the Senate polls. With the existing strength of the assembly, the ruling party can win most of the Senate seats in all categories from the province. On the other hand, the opposition parties want the 24 MPAs elected on reserved seats to be administered oath before the Senate polls to get the desired number of seats in the upper house of parliament.

PHC issues detailed verdict on allocation of reserved seats

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court issued 30-page detailed judgment in the writ plea filed by the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) regarding allotment of reserved seats which was rejected, on Monday.

PHC five-members larger bench gave a brief verdict on March 14 while the judgment authored by Justice SM Atiq Shah. The court maintained that it had the authority to hear cases of reserved seats up to the provincial level, adding that the Election Commission's decision to allocated reserved seats to other political parties was in accordance with Article 51 of the constitution.

It said that SIC was not entitled to reserved seat for women as the party submitted a list after the prescribed time. The judgment stated that "SIC" have

asked for issuance of an appropriate writ for declaring that order dated 01.03.2024 of the worthy Election Commission of Pakistan ("ECP"), rendered in the cases relating to the seats reserved for women and non-Muslims in the National and Provincial assemblies.

The verdict declined the allocation of reserved seats to the petitioners and instead were allocated to other political parties. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) candidates after the ECP declared PTI's intra-party election as illegal, contested the general election for National and Provincial Assemblies held on 8th February 2024 as independent candidates and as such they all were notified as independent returned candidates while issuing the Notification dated 16.02.2024 by the ECP. Assemblies, being

nullity in the eye of law, is of no legal whatsoever.

In terms of Article 51 read with Article 106 of the Constitution, an independent returned candidate has to join any political party within three days of the issuance of notification. PHC larger bench ordered that SIC is not entitled for any share in the reserved seats for women, therefore, the request for filing list of candidates for reserved seats at a belated stage does not arise.

Petitioner has essentially assailed the interpretation of the section as done by the ECP. Besides, the section is not a substantive provision rather it merely provides a mechanism for effective conduct of election. Other than what has been stated above, the learned counsel did not lay much stress on the vires of the section 104 of the Act of 2017.

Katcha operation: 55 dacoits surrender to police

F.P. Report

KASHMORE: Punjab police conducted a grand operation, claimed a big success, against the dacoits of the Katcha area in Rojhan city.

As per the District Police Officer (DPO), Dost Mohammad, a total of 55 dacoits, affiliated with Bannu and Fayyaz Dulani gang, surrendered before the police. The DPO claimed that the police destroyed several hideouts of Katcha area dacoits during the Rojhan city operation. Last week, Sindh Rangers and police arrested 21 suspects allegedly involved in numerous criminal activities in a joint operation in the Katcha area in the province. The arrested accused persons were wanted in many cases of murder, attempted murder, robbery, and kidnapping for ransom.

The arrested accused are also involved in the murder of a teacher named Allah Rakhyo, the spokesman said and added that they were handed over to the police for legal action. According to the Rangers, the gang is involved in criminal activities in

On US Embassy's request, FIA arrests man involved in visa fraud

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Federal Investigation Agency's (FIA) Anti-Human Smuggling Circle has arrested a man, who had allegedly issued a fake bank statement to a woman, from PIB Colony, Karachi, reported on Monday.

As per the FIA officials, Brian Salim was involved in cases of visa fraud, and that action was taken against him at the request of the US Embassy in Pakistan. Brian had issued the bank statement to a woman who had applied for a study visa in the embassy. The officials have said that the man is being interrogated and raids are being conducted for the arrest of other suspects.

Kashmore, Tangwani, and Kandhkot. Meanwhile tow day earlier.

Police claim to have killed an alleged dacoit and injured three others during an operation against criminals in the Katcha (riverine) area where wheat harvesting season is about to begin. Rajanpur DPO Dost Muhammad said the alleged dacoits belonging to Lound and Dulani gang escaped while the police set fire to their hideouts. He said as police chased them, the dacoits opened fire on them. In the crossfire, one of the dacoits, later identified as Haider Kajala was killed and

his three accomplices, including Wahab Lound, were injured. The DPO said an elite force personnel, Allah Divaya, was injured in the exchange of fire between the police and the dacoits.

The injured policeman was shifted to hospital for medical treatment, where his condition is said to be out of danger, a police spokesman said. The DPO said the operation against the dacoits had been relaunched in the Katcha area of Khairpur Bamibili in Rujhan Mazari, on the orders of Punjab IGP Dr Usman Anwar.

Bugti orders termination of 2,000 absent teachers

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bughti on Monday issued directives to the relevant officials to terminate the services of 2,000 absent teachers of School Education Department.

These directives were issued by him while chairing a high level meeting regarding the affairs of School Education Department, Balochistan. He said in the meeting that District Education Officers in all the districts of the province would be posted on merit and there would be no any interference regarding posting of District Education Officers.

CM Bugti said that an amount of Rs5625 was being incurred on the education of one child in Balochistan, adding that amount was suffice for a child to get education in private educational institutions of the province.

Issuing directives for terminating the services of 2,000 absent teachers of School Education Department, he directed Chief Secretary Balochistan, Shakeel Qadir Khan to submit a report about terminating the service of absence teachers within a period of one month.

On the occasion, Chief Secretary Balochistan, Shakeel Qadir Khan, Additional Chief Secretary (Development), Planning and Development Department, Abdul Saboor Kakar, Secretary, School Education Department, Saleh Muhammad Nasar, Secretary, Finance Department, Babar Khan, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Balochistan, Imran Zarkoon and others were also present.

Quake jolts Balochistan

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Different parts of Balochistan on Monday once again felt tremors of 4.8 magnitude on the Richter scale. In the recent days, Balochistan has been hit with earthquakes of varying intensities. A wave of panic gripped the people in cities where tremors were felt and they came out of their houses reciting Kalima Tayyaba.

According to the National Seismic Monitoring Centre depth of the earthquake was 30 kilometre with its centre 76 kilometre east of Zhob. In another quake in Balochistan last days tremors of 5.6 magnitude on the Richter scale had hit different cities of the province.

An earthquake measuring 4.2 on the Richter scale shook Khuzdar and its adjoining areas in Balochistan province on late Wednesday night. People came out of their homes in panic and started reciting verses from the Holy Quran. No loss of life and property was reported from any part of Khuzdar due to earthquake.

According to the National Seismic Monitoring Centre, Islamabad, the epicenter of the earthquake was located 72 kilometres northwest of Khuzdar at the depth of 43 kilometres. It is pertinent to mention here that this was the fourth earthquake that hit Balochistan in the past 72 hours.



FAISALABAD: Chief Minister of Punjab, Maryam Nawaz meeting with mother of WASA employee, who lost his life in sewerage line work.

PTI demands EU report on Feb 8 polls to be made public

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has demanded the European Union (EU) report on the February 8 general elections to be made public. "The EU report on the elections should be made public," PTI spokesperson Raouf Hasan said while addressing a press conference in Islamabad.

Recalling the EU delegation's visit to Pakistan before the polls, Hasan said that the intergovernmental body has confirmed handing over its report on the country's general elections to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). "The EU report is very sensitive and important," he added.

The PTI spokesperson's demand comes as the party has time again complained of wide-scale rigging and election result manipulation in last month's general elections claiming that its mandate was "stolen". The former ruling party's founder Imran Khan had also written to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) calling on the global lender to hold an audit of the election results before approving any new loan for Islamabad — a demand excused by the Washington-based lender citing its "narrow mandate on economic

issues" saying that it does not comment on domestic political developments.

It is pertinent to know that following the February 8 polls, the EU's Lead Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Peter Stano had deplored the "lack of a level playing field due to the inability of some political actors to contest the elections, restrictions to freedom of assembly, freedom of expression both online and offline, restrictions of access to the internet, as well as allegations of severe interference in the electoral process, including arrests of political activists." The EU official had also called upon the relevant authorities to ensure a timely and full investigation of all reported election irregularities and to implement the recommendations of the Election Expert Mission report. However, EU wasn't the only entity that had expressed concerns over the polls, as both the United States and the United Kingdom have expressed concerns about the "restricted" election environment followed up by allegations of irregularities and interference in the polling process.

Meanwhile, in a series of confident declarations, leaders of Pakistan Tehreek-e-