

Two more terrorists killed
F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Security Forces conducted an intelligence based operation in South Waziristan District. During conduct of the operation, after an intense fire exchange, two terrorists were successfully neutralised and sent to hell. Weapons along with a large quantity of explosives were also recovered from killed terrorists, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area.



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PM announces to expand network of Danish School System

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday announced that the federal government would establish Daanish Schools in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan and remote areas of Balochistan and Sindh to fulfill the aspiration of Quaid-e-Azam's Pakistan by delivering quality education to children coming from economically disadvantaged families.

"This is not the fault of the poor children if their parents cannot afford quality education despite working hard or those who are orphans...If the iron gates of the Aitchison College or Grammar School are obstructing their way (to quality education), the door of Daanish Schools are open for them," the prime minister said addressing a ceremony of inspection of site for Daanish School being established in Kuri area of the federal capital.

To be established over 30 acres of land, the school will provide free education and accommodation to the children from the capital city and its suburbs with a vision to provide equal opportunity for quality education. Calling the alarming figure of 26 million out-of-school children a "criminal negligence", the prime minister said Quaid-e-Azam's dream about Pakistan would remain unfulfilled without making arrangements for their education.

"There can be no bigger national service or the fulfillment of the responsibility than enrolling these out-of-school children," he said and announced that the federal government would fully bear the expenses

of constructing Daanish Schools in AJK, GB, remote areas of Balochistan and Sindh. Prime Minister Shehbaz also announced that the federal government would declare an education emergency in the country and would dole out all possible resources to educate particularly the children from disadvantaged families.

He told the gathering of federal ministers, bureaucrats, heads of international institutions, educationists and students that the Daanish Schools project was initiated under PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif's vision and that the students were making an impact in debate, sports and other fields internationally.

Recounting the journey of the visionary project, the prime minister said they resisted the immense criticism of the initiative just to support the children from low-income groups with quality education at par with elite-class education institutions. He also recalled that under Nawaz Sharif's leadership, the PML-N government in the past gave away laptops to the students which became an earning tool for them. Besides, the then Punjab government also recruited around 200,000 teachers purely on merit.

He said the groundbreaking of Islamabad's Daanish School would be performed soon and asked the education ministry to ensure its completion within 6-8 months. He also announced to personally inaugurate the Daanish Schools to be established in AJK, GB and Balochistan. In his address, Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui lauded

the vision behind Daanish School and said the scope of the project was being expanded to other parts of the country.

He requested the prime minister to declare an education emergency to address the challenges and shortcomings in the education sector and that every vacant building should be used for teaching purposes. Comparing the aging nations of the US, Japan and Germany, he said Pakistan was rich with youth bulge and the government should utilise its resources to skill train them to make them employable in the international market.

Chairman of Benazir Income Support Program and Akhuwat Foundation Amjad Saqib recalled the journey of the establishment of Daanish Schools aimed at addressing the disparities in the society and lauded the Punjab Education Endowment Fund which benefited around 450,000 students in Punjab. Highlighting the issue of out-of-school children, he said the poor parents also yearned to see their children educate and excel and expressed the hope that the prime minister would play his role to change their fate.

In his remarks, Usman Akram, a Pre-Engineering student of Daanish School in Attock, said the Daanish School had played a remarkable role in improving the literacy rate in the province by providing a platform of quality education to students like him coming from a low-income group. He said the Daanish School students were ready to play their role in national development and requested the prime minister to expand the facility across Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif meeting a student of Danish School, Jand.

Malala asks PM to spend 4% of GDP on education

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Education activist and Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai on Tuesday asked Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to increase expenditure on education up to 4% of the national GDP.

In a letter written to the premier by Malala Fund, Malala said Pakistan was spending less than 2% of its GDP on education and she wanted it to reach and surpass 4% of the GDP. Acknowledging a significant progress in education of girls in the last decade, she said the government of Pakistan should pay special attention to the girls' education. The Malala Foundation had given Pakistan \$15 million for promotion of education in the country, she said.

"Our work with the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training has allowed us to reach more than 4,500 high schools, engaging directly with nearly 500,000 girls through our STEAM partnership. We also support civil society and education experts in their efforts to improve teaching practices, digital education, and girls' leadership development," she said.

The new government should focus more on girls' education in its first 100 days' priorities, she added. "As you develop your first 100-day plan, I look forward to working with your government to elevate girls' education as a priority. I assure you that my team in Pakistan and our grantees are working diligently with your federal and provincial governments, as well as other development partners, to advance our shared goals as rapidly and effectively as possible," she wrote. Malala also congratulated Shehbaz on his appointment as the PM and wished him all the best.

ASI shot dead in Peshawar

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Unidentified assailants shot an assistant sub-inspector (ASI) dead in Peshawar as he was returning home from a mosque after offering prayers late Monday night.

According to reports, the incident took place in Sheikh Muhammadi area in the limits of Badaber Police Station. A police official said that ASI Maroof Shah was seriously wounded in the attack. The cop was rushed to the Lady Reading Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries, he informed. On the other hand, SSP Operations Kashif Zulfiqar has confirmed the martyrdom of the police officer in the attack. Police were conducting a search operation in the area till last reports came in. In this connection, on the instructions of KP Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, the Chief Minister Secretariat issued a notification to all deputy commissioners and deputy police officers on Tuesday.

Shawwal moon sighted

Eid to be celebrated in Pakistan today

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Central Ruet-i-Hilal Committee on Tuesday announced that Eidul Fitr would fall on Wednesday (April 10) as the Shawwal moon was sighted.

The announcement came after a meeting of the Central Ruet-i-Hilal Committee at the Federal Secretariat's Kohsar Block in Islamabad, while meetings of zonal and district Ruet-i-Hilal committees were held at their respective headquarters concurrently.

The meeting was chaired by Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad, and attended by the members of the Ruet-i-Hilal Committee, as well as officials from the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), Suparco, and the Ministry of Science and Technology.

Addressing a press conference after the meeting, Maulana Azad said testimonies of moon sightings were received from majority of the country and hence Eid would be celebrated tomorrow. Azad said the moon was sighted in Karachi, Dir, Faisalabad, Skardu and other areas. He congratulated the nation on the occasion and said a "message of unity" was being sent to the Islamic world due to Eid falling on the same day.

Maulana Azad said all sections of society would need to move forward together for the sake of the country and paid tribute to the sacrifices of the armed forces for peace in the country. "The narrative of Pakistan is that stance which has broken the back of terrorism, extremism and suicide attacks." Multiple countries across the world will celebrate Eidul Fitr on Wednesday (today) after the crescent was not sighted on Monday. Pakistan will also celebrate Eid with the rest of the world. However, the moon was not sighted in India and Bangladesh, which will celebrate Eidul Fitr on Thursday.

Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait and Australia are some of the countries which will be celebrating Eid today. The Met department

has said that according to astronomical parameters, there is a "chance" of spotting the moon today. It said the weather was expected to be partly cloudy or fair in most of the country. A day earlier, the Central Ruet-i-Hilal Committee had also requested citizens to share any information regarding sightings of the moon with the committees in their respective areas.

Talking to media, Maulana Azad said that extensive meetings and discussions were held with clerics and religious groups across the country, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. All groups who had apprehensions with the Ruet-i-Hilal Committee in the past were taken on board and it is unlikely that any cleric would form their private moon sighting committee, he said.

India and Bangladesh — the neighbouring countries in South Asia region — announced to celebrate Eid ul Fitr on April 11 (Thursday) as Shawwal crescent was not sighted there. Shawwal moon marks the conclusion of the holy month of Ramadan in which Muslims observe fasts from sunrise to sunset, and the commencement of Shawwal in which first three days are celebrated as Eid ul Fitr as per Islamic lunar calendar.

Meanwhile in Pakistan, the central moon sighting body, Ruet-e-Hilal Committee, announced Shawwal moon sighting, meaning the first day of Eid ul Fitr will fall tomorrow (Wednesday), after collecting evidence from different parts of the country. In Indian capital New Delhi, imams of the renowned mosque including Jama Masjid Delhi and Fatehpuri announced that crescent was not sighted today, therefore, Eid would be celebrated on Thursday (April 11), according to Hindustan Times. The same outcomes were announced by the central moon sighting committee of India's Karnataka state which sat in the capital city of Bangalore today, and Markazi Chand Committee Eidgah, Lucknow — the capital of Uttar Pradesh state.

KP CM decides to launch air ambulance service

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur has decided in principle to launch Air Ambulance Service in the province with the aim to effectively deal with any health emergency situation, and has directed the concerned quarters for necessary steps to ensure practical launching of the service in four months time.

He was chairing an important meeting of the health department here the other day.

Provincial Minister for health, Syed Qasim Ali Shah, Advisor to Chief Minister on Information Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Amjad Ali Khan, Secretary Heather Mahmood Aslam and other high ups of health department attended the meeting. It was also decided in the meeting to launch Motor Bike Response Unit for congested areas to ensure timely provision of emergency treatment service to people during emergencies.

Moreover, the meeting also decided to declare Hayatabad Peshawar as Healthcare City with the aim to ensure the provision of all types of medical treatment facilities to both

the domestic and foreign patients at the same place. The meeting also nodded to the establishment of Health Information and Service Delivery Unit to ensure real time monitoring of service delivery in public sector hospitals of the province with the aim to improve the service delivery upto the desired level.

As an important welfare initiative, the meeting also decided to start Executive Health Checkup Program for senior citizens. Under the proposed program, citizens above the age of 65 will get free quarterly medical checkup facilities including lab tests, CT scan, MRI, Echo, ECG etc. Separate staff and desk will be dedicated in the hospitals to facilitate the senior citizens in this regard.

The Chief Minister has directed the concerned authorities to propose necessary measures to strengthen the primary healthcare system in the province future directing them to categorize the Basic Health Units and the Rural Health Centres, and ensure the availability of at least OT service, Gynae service and ultrasound services with the required technical staff in these primary healthcare units.

Ali Amin Gandapur has directed the health authori-

ties for steps to upgrade all the Tehsil Headquarter Hospitals with the aim to empanel them on Sehat Card program further directing them to make the District Headquarter Hospitals of the province state of the art healthcare facilities and to ensure the round the clock provision of quality healthcare services in these hospitals.

The Chief Minister has also directed the quarters concerned to open fair price pharmacy shops in all the tertiary care and DHQ hospitals of the province further directing the health department to work out all the requirements for strengthening the public sector hospitals across the province within one month time so that the required financial resources could be allocated in the upcoming financial budget.

Ali Amin has also directed to finalize a new health policy in one month to revamp the entire health sector on modern lines. Expressing dissatisfaction on the overall performance of District Health Offices, the Chief Minister has directed the relevant authorities to revisit the existing system of District Health Offices, and come up with proposals to realign the working of these offices with the needs of the hour.

Sindh minister slams MQM-P

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Home Minister Zia-ul-Hassan Lanjar Tuesday slammed the leadership of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) over their statement demanding that Karachi be handed over to the Pakistan Army owing to its worsening law and order situation.

The minister also termed statements made by MQM-P leaders as a stunt for cheap fame, adding that the army is only called in during a war-like situation. "According to the Constitution, there is a procedure for calling the army. The army is only called in during a situation of war," said Lanjar, responding to the statements amid the city's deteriorating law and order situation.

A day earlier, MQM-P leader Syed Mustafa Kamal demanded that Karachi be handed over to Pakistan Army for three months to control the rising rate of crimes in the city. "Karachi should be handed over to the army for three months as the Sindh government is not serious in providing protection to the life and property of citizens," the politician said in a statement, questioning Lanjar why the police were not taking action to apprehend street criminals.

While citizens remain vulnerable to street crimes in Karachi, the home minister said he is satisfied with the city's law and order situation, adding that it will take some time for it to come under control. The minister also claimed that action was taken by the police against criminals with several accused arrested in the last few days. "No criminal will be spared," the minister maintained. Lanjar added that action will also be taken against the police officer in the area where the crime is committed.

Holidays notice

ON the occasion of Eidul Fitr, the offices of The Frontier Post will remain closed on 10th and 11th April. Therefore, there will be no publication of paper on 11th and 12th (Thursday and Friday).

Gilani, Nasir elected Senate chairman, deputy

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) candidate and former prime minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani was elected Chairman of Senate unopposed on Tuesday.

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) Syed Syedat Khan Nasir was also elected as deputy chairman of the Senate unopposed. The oath-taking of chairman and deputy chairman will take place later.

Earlier in the day, 37 newly-elected senators took oath at the Parliament House in Islamabad. The newly-elected senators were administered oath by Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar who presided over the session. Eighteen of the sworn-in senators belonged to PPP, 14 to PML-N, three to JUI, two to PTI, three independents and one each belonged to MQM, ANP and National Party.

The Senate session began amid noisy slogans raised by the PTI members. As the session was set into motion, Senate Secretary Qasim Samad Khan announced that the newly-elected senators would take their oath of office. He then said that the session would resume "in the afternoon" to elect the chairman and the deputy chairman.

The prominent among those who took oath were Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani, Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, Syed Mohsin Naqvi, Abdul Qadoos Bizenjo, Finance



Minister Aurangzeb and Aimal Wali. The newly-elected senators then exchanges pleasantries and signed the roll of members.

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) meanwhile nominated Sedal Khan Nasir as its candidate for the post of deputy Senate Chairman. He is a PML-N leader from Balochistan. Nawaz Sharif announced the name of Syedal Khan in consultation with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Despite holding the Senate elections on April 2, the senate meeting could not be convened even after three days passed as per the constitutional binding. Anyhow, the first meeting of the Senate was called by the President today (on April 9).

Unlike the prevailing tradition, the swearing of members and election of chairman and deputy chairman will be done on the same day. Pakistan People's Party has nominated Yousuf Raza Gilani as Chairman Senate.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Senator Ali Zafar said that the election of the Senate chairman is in violation of Articles 59 and 60 of the Constitution. Ali Zafar said they will demand the presiding officer to postpone the election. If the presiding officer does not accept the demand, their party members will not be a part of the election, he warned.

It is worth mentioning that the numbers of the senators are incomplete till today as the senate elections were postponed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa until resolving the issue of the swearing-in of members on reserved seats in KP Assembly. And, new election schedule for 11 Senate seats in KP has not been released by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

So, without 11 senators of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the election process of chairman and deputy chairman has been questioned. Under the Constitution, the President's address is required at the beginning of the parliamentary year of the Senate and the National Assembly and the President cannot address the joint session of the Parliament until the swearing-in of the senators. Pertinent to mention that President Asif Ali Zardari also called a joint session of the Parliament on April 16 to address it following the constitution.



PESHAWAR: Mufti Shahab Ud Din Popalzai announcing Eidul Fitr after receiving evidences of moon sighting at Qasim Ali Khan Masjid.

Uniformed service of people govt top agenda: Muqam

PESHAWAR (APP): Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions and Kashmir& Gilgit Baltistan Affairs, Engr Amir Muqam here Tuesday said that provision of uniformed and an indiscriminate services to people was the top priority of the federal government.

Addressing media persons after holding party workers meeting here, the federal minister said that an immature political party in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa continued using accusations and blame games against other political parties to divert people attention from its poor performance in the province.

He said the leader of the immature political party had wasted time in accusations and blame games, adding had the so called leader

concentrated on people welfare, economic and industrial development then today the country would have achieved height of economic success and development.

Federal Minister said leaders did not make through social media rather lead the nation after remained successful in people Court. People of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa could not be deceived through hallow slogans any more and will make the immature political party accountable, he added.

Despite winning 92 seats in KP, he said that PTI continued politics of accusations and blame games rather providing relief to it's people.

He said other provinces were making rapid progress

while development race in KP was like that of a turtle race.

Engr Amir Muqam said that handful of elements were using social media tools to keep people away from genuine political leadership but masses would frustrate the negative designs of such elements and make these so called leaders accountable.

Engr Amir Muqam said that he has raised voice at every forum for people of Malakand Division and provided relief to its people after fighting the case of tax and customs duties exemption in federal cabinet in last Govt.

He said his office door was open for all and genuine problems of party workers would be addressed on priority basis.



PESHAWAR: Advisor Mashal Azam meeting with Advisor Barrister Dr. Saif at his office.

Youngsters benefit thousands of needy faithful by arranging Iftari

PESHAWAR (APP): TIFL Foundation, a charity organization, formed by a group of youngsters from Peshawar in their novice attempt of gaining maximum spiritual benefits during the prevailing holy month of Ramadan, showed encouraging results of reaching out to thousands of needy faithful by arranging Iftar dinners and providing food packages to them.

"The objective behind forming TIFL foundation was to do some practical work that reflect true spirit of Ramadan by extending helping hand to needy people in our society," comments Malik Mohsin, a founding member of TIFL Foundation.

The foundation has very few members and all are in their teens, but their sentiments of helping the poor got practical shape with the support of family elders and relatives, Moshin told APP.

We started from scratch by accumulating few thousands rupees from our own pockets during initial days of Ramadan and within a few days, hundreds of thousands of rupees starting pouring in from within the country and abroad.

"The response to our calls through whatsapp messages and a video documentary uploaded on social media was very encouraging, instilling renewed spirit of doing maximum for the support of poor people," observed Adan Salim, another member of TIFL Foundation.

"It was a first ever attempt and the result was

very inspiring, providing us satisfaction and boosting our resolve of doing more with improved planning in the next Ramadan," opined Muhammad Ahmad, a university student from Peshawar city.

Other members in the group are Abdul Muqet, Moiz Ahmad, Momin, Ali Ahmad Siddique, Abdul Rahim, Shaheer Ahmad, Abdul Mohaiman, Hamad, Musa, Abdullah, Shaheer, Sufiyan, Sanan.

The youngsters collected donations and arranged iftar dinners in different locations of Peshawar including at Hayatabad and Warsak Road. TIFL passed One million milestone on 26th Ramadan.

Large dastarkhawans were spread on roads in busy areas and passerby were provided eatable items including dates, samosas, pikoars, rice, kababs and sweet drink.

The beneficiaries were mostly poor passerby, laborers, drivers of taxies, rickshaws, donkey cart owners, child beggars etc.

Apart from TIFL, a large number of youngsters in Peshawar carried out such activities during Ramadan in different parts of Peshawar.

Besides arranging iftar dinners, sehri meals were also arranged in different parts of the city providing facility to deserving people of having free food for holding fast.

"This is the real spirit of Islam and real jihad -- to serve the people especially when they need it," remarked Prof. Dr. Abdul Ghafoor, a noted religious

scholar and former Director of Sheikh Zahid Islamic Center.

Dr. Ghafoor also appreciated those who extended financial support to these enthusiastic youngsters for doing this noble effort.

Parents and elders should support their youngsters to engage themselves in such activities aimed at extending help and support to needy people.

This is true message of Ramadan that everyone should become sensitive for those who cannot afford two time meals and provide them support.

Dr. Ghafoor commended the sentiments and efforts of volunteer members of TIFL who amateur attempt helped in provision of food to thousands of needy people and will have a very positive impact in character building of these youngsters.

Transporters involved in overcharging apprehended

PESHAWAR (INP): Peshawar district administration, in collaboration with officials from the Transport Department, apprehended two managers for overcharging passengers and subsequently sent them to jail.

As per the statement issued by the office of the Deputy Commissioner Peshawar, notices were served to 21 transporters for their involvement in the practice. Additionally, excess fares collected were promptly refunded to affected passengers.

The swift action was prompted by an abrupt surge in fares coinciding with the onset of Eid holidays.

In adherence to government directives, strict enforcement of official fare rates will be ensured, with no leniency granted to any party involved.

Governor congrats Qari Abu Bakar

PESHAWAR (APP): The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali on Wednesday invited Hafiz Qari Muhammad Abu Bakar to Governor House and congratulated him on achieving first position in International Qirat Competition that was held in Iraq.

Governor also congratulated father of Qari Abu Bakar and said that achievement is an honor that projected the name of Pakistan in the whole world. He encouraged Qari Abu Bakar and gave him prize and commendation certificate.

It is worth mentioning that Qari Abu Bakar who belongs to Manshera had also got second position in international Qirat Competition that was held in Iran.

Pak Army holds Health Day events

PESHAWAR (INP): Pakistan Army took the initiative to celebrate World Health Day across various districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, organizing special events aimed at raising awareness about healthy living.

In districts such as Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Swat, Dir, and Chitral, the army hosted events with the goal of educating the public about the importance of maintaining good health. The army set up free medical camps where locals received complimentary check-ups and essential medications, along with valuable insights into healthcare practices.

Additionally, engaging lectures emphasized the community's role in leading a healthy lifestyle. Schools also participated in the commemoration, with students delivering speeches and displaying banners promoting healthy living principles. The community expressed gratitude towards the Pakistan Army for its efforts in organizing these beneficial events.

CS felicitates countrymen on eve of Eid

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Secretary (CS) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry has congratulated countrymen on Eid-ul-Fitr urging them to join hands for progress of motherland.

In a message issued here in connection with Eidul Fitr, CS felicitated Muslim Ummah on Eid and said that day remind us about mutual feeling of happiness, coexistence and patience towards each other.

He also urged countrymen to renew their pledge to tirelessly work for progress, prosperity and development of the country.



PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur chairing important meeting of Health Department.

SCCI chief unveils holistic research reports on KP's natural resources

F.P Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fuad Ishaq unveiled comprehensive research reports, compiled by the chamber's research and development cell regarding natural resources of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and potentials in agriculture and fishery sector.

Ishaq said the business community can make contact with the chamber to take advantage of these research study reports.

According to details, the SCCI president Fuad Ishaq presented these research study reports prepared by the chamber's R&D Cell regarding natural resources of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and potential in agriculture and fishery sector during a iftar dinner hosted in honour of executive members of the SCCI here in local hotel, said in a statement here on Tuesday.

The 'iftar' dinner was attended by the chamber's senior vice president Sanaullah Khan, vice president Ejaz Khan Afridi, former FPCCI president Ghazanfar Bilour, former presidents Hasnain Khurshid Ahmad, Riaz Arshad, Zahidullah Shinwari, Adeel Rauf, Faiz Muhammad Faizi, Sherbaz Bilour, former vice presidents Haji Abdul Jalil Jan, Haris Mufti, former president IAP Malik Imran Ishaq, SCCI's executive members Imran Khan Mohmand, Pervez Khan Khattak, Muhammad Arshad Siddique, S Minhajuddin, Farhad Asfandyar, Affaf Ali Khan, Faisal Afzal, Muhammad Ismail Safi, along with Muhammad Nadeem Rauf, Sohail Javed, Fazl e Wahid, Saddar Gul, Ishtiaq Muhammad and Shafiq Afridi.

Fuad Ishaq informed on the occasion that SCCI has planned to organise a business conference with the motto: "Watan Kay Maimar - Tajir Aur Sanatkar [traders and industrialists - builders of the nation]" in the second week of May.

The SCCI chief said political leaders, government officials from relevant institutions and representatives of stakeholders and others would be invited to the conference.

He said a joint economic roadmap would be designed during this important moot.

KP was blessed with abundant natural resources, despite availability of oil, gas and electricity and other reserves why our province is lagging behind as compared to the other federating units in the journey of progress, Mr Ishaq remarked.

The chamber president said traders and industrialists are in great trouble in the prevailing circumstances whereas jobs were unavailable to our talented and highly-qualified youth.

Fuad Ishaq said economic growth and prosperity would only come with flourishing business, industries and trade.

Therefore, he urged government and authorities concerned to take pragmatic steps to mitigate business community sufferings and facilitate them, because when traders and industrialists would be prosperous then business and trade could be enhanced, consequently further employment opportunities would be generated in the province and provincial economy would also be stabilized and strengthened.

Artificial jewelry, readymade garments, footwear outlets attract shoppers

PESHAWAR (APP): The readymade garments with matching shoes and artificial jewelry here Tuesday attracted influx of people including youth and girls in the city markets selecting appropriate items for themselves and loved ones ahead of Chand Raat's celebrations.

Like other cities and towns of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Eid shopping craze on Tuesday reached to its climax in Peshawar where people, youth and girls thronged to shopping arcades and markets to buy appropriate stitched garments, shoes and bangles besides decorated hands with henna tattoos on the eve of Chand Raat.

Stitched Salwar Kameez, Kurata shirts especially of lawn and cotton prints, varieties of bangles and Peshawari and Carsaadda Chappals are dominating the city's fashion markets and shopping arcades.

Fayaz Khan, a resident of Nowshera told APP that he bought a stitched Salwar Kameez suit for Eid as it proves economical than tailors made suits.

The shalwar Kameez and Kurta, an amalgamation of modernity and traditions, with matching Peshwari Chappal, enhanced one's look on Eid, he added.

Following prices discounts on most of locally made footwear and stitched clothes as special Eid offer, most of residents of nearby districts including Charsadda, Nowshera, Khyber, Kohat, Swabi, Mohmand and Bajaur districts are visiting Qissa Khwani, Jahangira Mohalla and adjoining cloth markets, garments and shoes shops to buy their favorite lawns and cotton prints, which was hardly seen in the past.

Most poor families are taking keen interest in buying stitched Salwar Kameez and Kurta, cotton and lawn readymade garments besides henna and artificial ornaments after tailors closed new bookings.

Zubair Khan, a tailor in Fagirabad and fashion designers in Jahingirabad, Shafi Market, Cantonment and Hayatabad told APP the girls and ladies aged 18 to 35 are taking keen interest in Salwar kameez and Kurta, artificial jewellery and henna on this Eid.

"I hired extra labour working till Sehri to fulfill my customers' placed Eid orders," he said, adding new booking has been closed. He said increase of shop's rents, labour, load shedding and fabrics materials are major reasons behind hike in tailors' charges.

Salwar Kameez with leather-made Peshawari Chappal had widely been recognized as the symbol of traditions and culture in Pakistan especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where majority of people

prefer it on Eid and others festivals.

Peshawari Chappal has made deep inroads in Pakhtoon society and is also being used in Eid, wedding and engagement ceremonies. "I have purchased six sets of Peshawari Chappals for myself, friends and relatives to look different on Eid," he added.

Great rush of girls are being witnessed on henna stalls ahead of Chand Raat. "I came from Wapda Town to decorate my hands with a henna expert to look different on Eidul Fitre," Samina Bibi, a lady at Qissa Khwani bazaar told APP.

The vendors' shopkeepers also came out in large numbers by earning two times higher this year due to significant improvement in law and order situation.

Shoppers and customers complained about high prices of fabrics and shoes materials, traffic jams and lack of car parking in shopping malls and urged PTI led Govt for its immediate solutions to make Eid shopping convenient for people.

"On Tuesday evening, I broke my fast on the road due to a massive traffic jam at Qissa Khwani," Riaz Khan, a resident of Pabbi said while talking to APP.

He said people have to park vehicles in one kilometer distance of shopping areas mostly on the roadside and have to pay fine in case cars were lifted by traffic police.

Riaz suggested proper car parking facilities at shopping malls by making it mandatory before issuing of no objection certificates, and quick removal of all stuff from footpaths to facilitate shoppers on eve of Eid.



PESHAWAR: A vendor preparing food items to attract customers.

E-cards outshine traditional cards business in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The ancient tradition to send Eid cards to relatives and dear ones on joyous occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr had been significantly declined in Peshawar where majority of people were sending SMS and E Cards for greetings.

Due to a boom in IT sector in Pakistan, most of people were now sending greeting electronic cards to their loved ones to convey their best wishes and greetings on Eid.

With the introduction of an inexpensive communication means and excessive use of social media such as SMS, E Cards, WhatsApp and Fcebook messages, the business of traditional Eid cards has affected in

the lucrative market of Peshawar where people were preferring to greet their loved one by sending a simple SMS or WhatsApp message on Eid day and Chand Raat.

Eid card sellers in the past had arranged many stalls at different areas of Peshawar including Hastnagri, Karimpura, Goara Bazar, Liaquat Bazaar and Qissa Khawani Bazaar to attract customers.

However, with the introduction of IT technology, people prefer shortcut method of sending their wishes and greetings through E-cards, SMS and Whatsapp messages instead of sending traditional Eid cards through post offices

and courier services as they consider it expensive, outdated and time consuming exercise.

Umar Khan, a government employee who was busy in shopping in Liaquat Bazaar told APP that he do not have much time to go to shop and buy old fashioned eid cards and then send it to friends and relatives through couriers services.

"For the last five years, I select a nice SMS from internet and send it to my friends and relatives to congratulate them on Eid day," he maintained.

"The prayers for someone was most important than sending Eid cards," he said, adding that money spend on Eid cards can be

donated to poor people and orphan people.

The book sellers and gift showers owners at Liaquat Bazaar said the trend of buy eid cards has significantly declined due to boom in IT sector, SMS, 3 and 4 G, WhatsApp services in Peshawar. They said majority of shopkeepers associated with decades old Eid Cards business have said good bye to it.

The placing orders for special Eid greeting cards has almost come to an end and mostly the corporate sector gets the cards printed these days.

Printers had to hire extra staff for printing and designing of eid cards' as its selling had used to gain

pace ahead of Eid.

In these days, mostly senior citizens and traditional people come and purchase eid cards while attendance of students and young lots were almost comes to an end.

Khushal Khan, a student of engineering in a private University in Peshawar said he would send eid greeting SMS to friends and relatives on Eid day as he could not afford to buy expensive Eid cards from pocket money.

He said, "SMS is a cost efficient and a fast way of communication to convey eid greetings to friends, cousins and relatives."

"The electronic cards give us an option to edit text and modify background besides an addition of animation of choice. Such cards are liked especially by youngsters who are quick to adopt new technologies," he remarked.

Khushal said people do not have enough time to buy a card and go to a post office or couriers service to post it in busy life. The charges of postal and courier services also increased which was behind purchasing power of poor people and white collars.

Most of people, who had been in the business for decades, are now thinking to quit it. A handful of shopkeepers were used to set up makeshift stalls in front of their books shops

to sell Eid cards but this is no longer a common practice. The shops of Eid cards also cut down at Liaquat and Qisakhwani bazaars for which it was once famous for. Very few shops with limited variety and numbers are now available in these areas to quench the thirst of Eid Cards lovers.

Eid card sellers in Qissa Khawani Bazaar said price-hike has pushed the card prices up and have no other option but to design quality cards at range of Rs50-150 in the market to attract customers.

Local printers informed that people used to place orders for Eid cards on occasion of Eidul Fitr but now only the corporate sec-

tor placed orders and that too with their regular printers who print stationery for them.

The printers have urged the government to provide special incentives to printing industry for promotion of Eid Cards business in the province.

The printers said over 20,000 people were associated with printing industry in Peshawar whose business were badly affected by digital technology and were looking to Government for support.

They urged KP Govt to announce a comprehensive financial package for revival of printing press business in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



In brief

14 released from Mardan jail
F.P. Report

MARDAN: District and Sessions Judge Mardan Muhammad Zeib visited Central Jail Mardan along with Senior Civil Judge Mardan Qaiser Shahzad. He organized a camp court in the jail regarding the arrival of Eid-ul-Fitr. On this occasion, he issued orders to release 14 extraditees involved in minor cases. In the light of court orders, the Superintendent of Central Jail Mardan, Muhammad Arif, released the detainees immediately after completing the process of the code on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr. Meanwhile, under the direction of DPO Zahoor Babar Afridi, to further improve the professional skills and weapons training of police jawans, 40 jawans of the ongoing heavy weapon refresher course in the police line under the supervision of SP headquarters Rizwan Habib underwent elite force training. A practical demonstration of firing with different types of heavy weapons was presented in the center. This training course also includes training in night equipment. On this occasion, SP Rizwan Habib appreciated the efforts of the training staff to further improve the professional training and skills of the police jawans and the dedication and performance of the jawans participating in the course. Later, he also broke the fast with the youth. On this occasion, special prayers were offered for the security of the country and the high rank of police martyrs.

Eid shopping craze reach to climax
F.P. Report

MALAKAND: Like other cities of Pakistan, the Eid shopping craze on Tuesday reached to climax in Swat and Malakand districts. Great rush is being witnessed in garments, shoes and sweets outlets at Mingora, Saidu Sharif and Batkhela. People of all walks life including youth visited shopping centers in droves and selected appropriate items for themselves and loved ones. Swati Chappal demands also increased manifold as Eid special offer.

DPO for action against aerial firing
F.P. Report

MANSEHRA: Manshehra District Police Officer (DPO) Shaifullah Gandapur has ordered a crackdown on celebratory gunfire during Chand Raat, the night before Eid. In a high-level meeting held on Tuesday, DPO Gandapur directed police officers to take decisive action against those who violate the ban on aerial firing. His plan involves deploying personnel on the rooftops of high-rise buildings to monitor for celebratory gunfire. Upon witnessing such incidents, the officers will report to the nearest police station for immediate intervention. Raids will be conducted at the identified locations to apprehend the shooters and seize any weapons used. DPO Gandapur emphasized that legal action will be pursued against those caught violating the ban. This initiative by the Mansehra police aims to ensure a safe and peaceful Eid celebration for all residents of the district.

Three killed in road mishap

FATEH JANG (PPI): An overspeeding van crushed three motorcyclists to death on Pindi-Kohat Road near Fateh Jang Tehsil on Tuesday. One motorcyclist died on the spot while two others succumbed to their injuries in the hospital.

Dog-bite victims in Dir to be provided with free treatment

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Increase in dog bite cases in the Adenzai area of Lower Dir prompted the district administration to take the matter seriously.

A total of eight persons including minors were bitten by stray dogs in the Adam Dherai area Adenzai here the other day. In this regard the additional assistant commissioner Adenzai Sardar Badshah on the directives of deputy commissioner Wasil Khan held a meeting with the Chakdara Bar Association and medical superintendent of the THQ hospital Chakdara Dr Hamad Khan, to cope with the dog bite incidents in the area.

The participants also agreed to take appropriate steps to ensure availability of the anti-rabies vaccine and proper treatment at the hospital. Dr Hamad informed the participants that due to freezing of funds by the finance department, the hospital was facing acute shortage of anti-rabies vaccines and requested for its release to procure the vaccines for treatment of dog bite affected people.

The AAC asked the hospital management to seek release of funds through director general health and highlight the gravity of the situation at Adenzai as dog bite incidents had become a routine. The official said the tehsil municipal administration had also been taken on board. Meanwhile Dr Irshad Rughani, the district health officer told local journalists that anti-rabies vaccines had been dispatched to the THQ hospital Chakdara and the victims would be provided with free of cost medical care.

Also the DC Wasil Khan chaired a meeting regarding security arrangements for the Eid day in the district. Traffic police in charge Shad Muhammad Khan and Khan Nazar Khan, district emergency officer of Rescue 1122 Ibrar Ali, DHQ hospital Timergara medical superintendent and all assistant commissioners were in attendance. The meeting was informed that a total of 1431 police and 200 Dir Levis officials would guard Eid day prayers across the district.

A total of 158 mosques and 40 Eidgah would be provided with security staff.

The district police officer has cancelled all kinds of leaves of police officials in the district. Similarly 12 mobile police teams and 25 police check posts would perform patrolling duties on Eid day in order to maintain law and order situation.

The DC imposed section 144 on one wheeling on motorcycles, use of noise silencer, over speeding, aerial firing, display of weapons and sale and purchase of fireworks for a period of 10 days in the limits of district Lower Dir. The ACs were directed to take legal actions against the violators during Eid days. The DC also directed the traffic police to ensure the fare list issued by the regional transport authority on Eid. The meeting was informed that tourists would be provided with adequate facilities at scenic spots during Eid holidays.

Over 40 youths imparted with mobile repairing short course: More than 40 deserving students from different parts of the Lower Dir district completed various training courses, the graduation ceremony of which was held at a local private college in Timergara.

Renowned scholar Dr. Hussain gets peace award

F.P. Report

LARKANA After receiving the Ambassador of Peace Award from the United Nations, Professor Dr. Hussain Muhyiddin Qadri, the country's leading economist, intellectual, distinguished educationalist and Islamic scholar and President of Minhaj Al-Quran International, has been awarded the Ambassador of Peace Award at the international level.

In recognition of his great services for the promotion of social stability and inter-faith tolerance, Tehreek Minhaj-ul-Qur'an Shaykh-ul-Islam Dr. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri was given the biggest Global Achievement Award of the movement by personalities belonging to different schools of thought.

In this regard, Tehreek Minhaj-ul-Qur'an Sindh provincial information secretary

Didar Ali Soomro told the media that Prof. Dr. Hussain Muhyiddin Qadri was invited to the United Nations headquarters in Vienna, Austria this year by the Universal Peace Federation for peace at the global level. The Ambassador of Peace Award was given for his valuable services, while before that, the Global Islamic Finance Award was given in Cambridge for conducting international research on Islamic Economics and Finance, and with his efforts, Minhaj University Lahore became the best in the world.

Through his lectures and writings, he has proved his iron in the field of economics on the one hand and on the other hand has played an important role in showing the true and peaceful face of Islam in the whole world. He said that on behalf of Shaykh-ul-Islam Dr.

Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri, Chairman Supreme Council Minhaj-ul-Qur'an International Dr. Hussain Mohiuddin Qadri. Gandapur. Deputy Governor of Sindh Mazhar Mahmood Alvi and others presented Global Achievement Award to Dr. Hussain Mohiuddin Qadri.

Provincial Secretary Information added that Dr. Hussain Mohiuddin Qadri has written sixty books and more than one hundred articles on various topics including economics. He has written while giving hundreds of lectures. For receiving an award from the movement and the United Nations, Mazhar Mahmood Alvi, deputy coordinator of Minhaj-ul-Quran Sindh movement, provincial secretary of information Didar Ali Soomro, provincial coordinator of Minhaj Welfare Foundation, advocate Saifullah Bhangar.



NOWSHERA: Civil Judge, Asif Kamal interacting with officials during his visit to Jail.

Revamping police department: A call for comprehensive reforms

Sajid Mumtaz Khan

RESIDENTIAL problems often pose significant challenges for police personnel, particularly in terms of housing affordability and availability. Implementing housing schemes or rental assistance programs can help alleviate these concerns, ensuring that officers have access to safe and affordable housing options near their duty stations.

Feeding arrangements during duty hours are crucial for ensuring officers' nutritional needs are met while on duty. Providing subsidized or free meals at police stations or designated locations can ensure that officers have access to nutritious food throughout their shifts, thereby enhancing their overall well-being and performance.

Transportation to the spot of duty is another welfare measure that can significantly improve officers' quality of life and job satisfaction. Providing reliable and safe transportation options, such as shuttle services or transport allowances, can help officers commute to their duty stations more efficiently, reducing stress and fatigue associated with long commutes.

Psychological sessions and support services are vital for addressing the mental health challenges faced by police personnel. Regular counselling sessions, stress management workshops, and access to mental health professionals can help officers cope with the demands of their profession and mitigate the risk of burnout, PTSD, and other mental health issues.

Regular medical check-ups, conducted every six months, can help identify and address health issues early, ensuring that officers receive timely medical care and support. Additionally, implementing support schemes such as insurance coverage, pension plans, and disability benefits can provide financial security and peace of mind to police personnel and their families.

Regulating duty hours and responsibilities: Regulating duty hours and responsibilities is essential for ensuring the well-being, efficiency, and effectiveness of police personnel. This includes implementing policies and practices that address issues such as long working hours, monotony in job roles, and the allocation of responsibilities. One crucial aspect of regulating duty hours and responsibilities is establishing a strict policy of

transfer postings.

Transfers and postings play a significant role in maintaining organizational efficiency and preventing the development of entrenched power dynamics or vested interests within the police department. By instituting a transparent and merit-based transfer policy, the department can ensure that officers are deployed to different postings periodically, allowing for the redistribution of skills and experiences across various units and locations.

Overall, regulating duty hours and responsibilities requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses transfer policies, job rotation, allocation of clerical staff, and clarity in role assignments. By implementing these measures, the police department can enhance organizational efficiency, promote job satisfaction, and ultimately, improve its ability to serve and protect the community.

Inclusive reform approach: An inclusive reform approach is vital for ensuring that the transformation of the police department in Pakistan is comprehensive, transparent, and responsive to the needs and concerns of all stakeholders. This approach entails actively engaging with

the public, legislative assemblies, and internal stakeholders to solicit feedback, identify areas for improvement, and foster a sense of ownership and accountability.

One essential aspect of an inclusive reform approach is to facilitate debates and discussions on public forums and legislative assemblies. These platforms provide opportunities for citizens, civil society organizations, law-makers, and other stakeholders to voice their opinions, share their experiences, and contribute to the reform process. By promoting open dialogue and constructive debate, the police department can gain valuable insights into public perceptions, priorities, and expectations, thereby fostering greater trust and confidence in the reform efforts.

Furthermore, an inclusive reform approach involves rectifying weak aspects or areas identified through institutional surveys and assessments. These surveys can be conducted periodically to evaluate the effectiveness of reform initiatives, identify areas of improvement, and address any gaps or shortcomings in the implementation process. By taking a data-driven approach to reform, the police

department can ensure that resources are allocated effectively, priorities are aligned with the needs of the community, and progress is monitored and evaluated rigorously.

The need for comprehensive reforms within Pakistan's police department is undeniable. The challenges facing law enforcement are multifaceted and deeply entrenched, requiring a concerted and multifaceted approach to address effectively. As the custodians of law and order, the police department plays a pivotal role in safeguarding citizens' rights, maintaining public safety, and upholding the rule of law. However, to fulfil this mandate effectively, substantive reforms are urgently needed across various dimensions.

Conclusion: First and foremost, reforms in the service structure are imperative to promote professionalism, meritocracy, and accountability within the police department. This includes revising recruitment processes to ensure transparency and merit-based selection, instituting standardized promotion policies, and establishing clear performance evaluation mechanisms. By fostering a culture of excellence and integrity, the police department can attract and retain the best tal-

ent, thereby enhancing its overall effectiveness and credibility.

Mitigating the trust deficit between the police and the public is essential for building confidence, enhancing cooperation, and fostering positive relations within communities. This requires proactive efforts to engage with the public, promote transparency, and address concerns related to accountability and integrity. By actively soliciting feedback, addressing grievances, and fostering dialogue and collaboration, the police department can bridge the divide between law enforcement and the communities they serve, thereby fostering a safer and more inclusive society.

The journey towards reforming Pakistan's police department is both challenging and essential. By prioritizing reforms in service structure, duty hours, welfare measures, and trust-building initiatives, Pakistan can build a police force that is truly responsive, accountable, and dedicated to serving and protecting all citizens. It is only through sustained commitment, collaboration, and innovation that Pakistan can realize its aspirations of a fair, just, and secure society for all.

(Concluded)



SWABI: KP Minister for Irrigation, Aqib Ullah Khan inspecting Goati to Panjpir Bypass Road.

Poultry prices hit all-time high

FAISALABAD (INP): As Eid-ul-Fitr approaches, the affordability of chicken meat has plummeted, with prices skyrocketing per kilogram across the country.

In the bustling streets of Lahore, the provincial capital, chicken prices have surged in tandem with the nationwide trend. Joining the upward spiral of beef and mutton costs, chicken has now slipped out of reach for the lower and middle classes. With Eid festivities looming, a noticeable surge in chicken prices has emerged in the market. Profiteers are seizing the opportunity ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr, intensifying the struggle for the average consumer to put meat on the table.

Similarly, in Karachi, the price of chicken meat typically hovers between Rs. 760 to Rs. 800 per kilogram. Despite the official rates set by the Commissioner Karachi—Rs. 428 for live chicken and Rs. 666 for chicken meat—official prices remain elusive in the city's markets. Meanwhile, in the federal capital of Islamabad, chicken meat fetches Rs. 740 per kilogram, while in Peshawar, it surpasses Rs. 600 per kilogram.

During the holy month of Ramadan, chicken meat prices surged from Rs. 410 to Rs. 475 per kilogram. Similarly, at the outset of Ramadan, prices leaped from Rs. 595 to Rs. 690 per kilogram.

In the last four weeks of Ramadan, chicken meat prices escalated by 10 to 12 percent on Saturdays and Sundays compared to regular days, exacerbating inflationary strains on the populace.

Citizens bemoan the lack of effective measures to curb prices, which have left many struggling to afford basic sustenance. With rising inflation casting a pall over livelihoods nationwide, access to even the most essential food items remains a daunting challenge for many.

PDMA issues rain alert during Eidul Fitr days

F.P. Report

MULTAN: Provincial Disaster Management Authority Punjab (PDMA) has issued alert after rain forecast for Eid ul Fitr days from 10th to 15th April.

The PDMA stated that the rain will lash various districts of the province with occasional gaps from 10th to 15th April a westerly wave likely to enter upper parts of the country on 10th April. Under the influence of this weather system rainfall is expected in Murree, Galla, Islamabad, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Attock, Chakwal districts on 10th and then 12th to 15th April, with occasional gaps.

PDMA stated that Gujranwala, Lahore, Faisalabad, Sargodha and Multan will also receive rainfall on April 12. Isolated windstorm/hailstorm is also expected from 13th to 15th April, DG PDMA said.

Rainfall is also expected in various districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during the predicted period. Rain with wind or thunderstorm with isolated heavy falls expected in several districts of Balochistan from 12th to 14th April including Quetta, Kalat, Zhob, Sherani, Barkhan and other districts.

Rain with wind or thunderstorm expected in Sukkur, Jacobabad, Kashmore, Larkana, Dadu,

Qambar Shahdad Kot, Jamshoro and Sanghar districts on 13th & 14th April. Isolated rain is also expected in Karachi and Hyderabad during the period.

DISCOs directed to ensure smooth electricity supply on Eid: The Federal Government to ensure smooth Eid-ul-Fitr celebrations for citizens, has directed all electricity distribution companies (DISCOs) to minimize load shedding during the holiday period.

According to the spokesperson of WAPDA, this directive encompasses Fesco, LESCO, Mepco, Hesco, Gepco, and Iesco, covering a vast majority of electricity consumers across Pakistan. According to a spokesperson for the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA), the Chief Executives of these DISCOs have been instructed to prioritize minimal power outages on both Eid-ul-Fitr and the preceding Chand Raat (eve of Eid).

The focus on Chand Raat specifically acknowledges the importance of this night for families who traditionally engage in last-minute Eid shopping. By minimizing disruptions, the government aims to ensure a more enjoyable and hassle-free shopping experience, particularly for women, he added. He said that this initiative

reflects the government's understanding of the significance of Eid for Pakistani families and its commitment to facilitating a festive and stress-free celebration.

Pakistan Railways slashes train fares: Pakistan Railways on Tuesday slashed train fares by 25 per cent for Eidul Fitr 2024 to facilitate passengers returning home. As per details, Pakistan Railways has announced a reduction in fares for three days of Eidul Fitr 2024, which will be applicable on all passenger trains except for Eid special trains.

Earlier, Pakistan Railways achieved a historic increase in its revenue as the earnings surged to Rs66 billion in the first nine months of FY2023-24. Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee will meet in Islamabad with Chairman Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad in the chair for the Shawwal moon sighting. The PMD predicted that the Shawwal moon is likely to be seen in Pakistan on April 9 across the country. According to PMD, the birth of the Shawwal moon is expected to emerge on the night of April 8 at 11:21 pm local time. Pakistanis will have a 29-day Ramadan in 2024 and will celebrate Eidul Fitr on April 10 if the crescent moon is sighted on April 9.

Camp court judges release three from district prison

F.P. Report

BUNER: On the directives of District & Session Judge Sumera Wali the ADC Qaiser Khan Afridi and Senior Civil Judge Adm Shiraz Firdos on the instructions held Camp Court in District prison Daggar Buner.

The honourable Judges released three lucky ones, Irfanullah, Usman Ghani and Kamil Sher, who were imprisoned in judicial referrals in minor cases. They

were released on personal surety bonds for Eid-ul-Fitr so that they could celebrate the joys of Eid with their loved ones at home.

The Honourable Judges also visited the barracks including the Juvenile and the Women Cells and heard the issues of prisoners and referrals and gave directions for immediate action.

The judges also inspected the jail kitchen and medical center and also reviewed the quality and quantity of food and medicines and expressed

their satisfaction. The Judges inquired about health of an admitted inmates too. The Senior Civil Judge Adm Sheraz Firdos told this scribe the judges team on the instructions of the D&S Judge was held Camp Court and visited various barracks and kitchen dispensaries of the Jail and met the prisoners undergoing treatment in the Jail and reviewed the facilities available in the Jail and assured that the prisoners should be treated as per the Jail Manual.



Anti-coup forces claim control of key Myanmar border town

YANGON: Myanmar's military appears to have abandoned the strategically important border town of Myawaddy on the eastern border with Thailand, after a sustained assault by an alliance of anti-coup fighters. Thai PBS reported that more than 600 Myanmar nationals, including 67 military officers and 410 non-commissioned officers as well as their family members, were waiting for entry to Thailand after the regime in Naypyidaw requested permission for an aircraft to land on the Thai side to collect the group.

The Karen National Union (KNU) earlier said that soldiers from its armed wing, the Karen National Liberation Army, in alliance with anti-coup fighters from the People's Defence Force (PDF), had taken control of the military base in the town, sharing photos of weapons and ammunition they said they had seized.

Myawaddy lies just across the border from Mae Sot in Thailand and is a

major trading route. Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director for Human Rights Watch, said that even with the renewed fighting since the February 2021 coup, bilateral trade across the checkpoint between April 2023 and March 2024 amounted to more than \$1bn and Myawaddy's loss was significant.

"This is a major blow to the Myanmar military junta," he told Al Jazeera. "This is the largest and most important of the six official Thai-Burma border crossings." Myanmar was previously known as Burma. The generals led by army chief Min Aung Hlaing seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021, triggering a crisis that has displaced thousands and left millions in need of humanitarian assistance.

The military has come under increasing pressure across the country since the Three Brotherhood Alliance, another coalition of ethnic armed groups,

launched a major offensive in northern Shan and western Rakhine states at the end of last October, seizing hundreds of military outposts. Forced to fight on multiple fronts, the generals have intensified air strikes and announced a policy of forced conscription.

"The military has really backed itself into a corner, waging a very unpopular war against the people of Myanmar who refuse to go back to a military dictatorship and all that that entails," Robertson said. Last week, the National Unity Government (NUG), a parallel government of elected politicians overthrown in the coup, said their forces carried out a drone attack on Naypyidaw, the military's remote, purpose-built capital. The KNU is Myanmar's oldest ethnic armed group and was one of the first to condemn the coup. It has provided training and expertise to members of PDFs, which were established by the NUG. — Aljazeera

China holds 'combat patrol' in S China Sea

BEIJING: China has conducted military "combat patrols" in the disputed South China Sea, as the United States holds the first joint military exercises with the Philippines, Japan and Australia. Beijing's surprise announcement of a naval drill came a day after defence chiefs from the four countries said the Philippines would host joint drills in the same area on the same day.

People's Liberation Army (PLA) Southern Theater Command said it was organising "joint naval and air combat patrols in the South China Sea". "All military activities that mess up the situation in the South China Sea and create hotspots are under control," it said in a statement in an apparent swipe at the US-led drills. The Chinese army gave no further details about its activities in the waterway.

The exercises took place days before US President Joe Biden was due to hold the first trilateral summit with the leaders of Japan and the Philippines. Top US officials have repeatedly declared the US's "iron-clad" commitment to defending the Philippines against an armed attack in the South China Sea – to the consternation of Beijing. China claims sovereignty over nearly all of the South China Sea and has been increasingly assertive in the region in recent years. A 2016 ruling by a court in The Hague declared Beijing's claim as without basis. But Beijing has ignored that ruling as well as competing claims by the Philippines and other Southeast Asian nations.

China's coastguard also traded accusations with the Philippines. It said it had "handled" a situation on Thursday at Iroquois Reef, claiming several ships from the Philippines were engaged in "illegal" operations. "Under the guise of 'protecting fishing', Philippine government ships have illegally violated and provoked, organised media to deliberately incite and mislead, continuing to undermine stability in the South China Sea," spokesman Gan Yu said.

"We are telling the Philippines that any infringement tactics are in vain," Gan said, adding that China would "regularly enforce the law in waters under [its] jurisdiction". Iroquois Reef lies about 128 nautical miles (237 kilometres) from the Philippines' island of Palawan, and within its 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ) as defined under international law. — Aljazeera



GAZA: A view of destruction after Israeli forces' withdrawal from Khan Younis.

In India's richest state, exam scams kill escape from farm crisis

MUMBAI: Had it not been for his grandfather, Ganesh Kale might have been dead today. In January this year, the 40-year-old woke at 6am in his remote village in India's western state of Maharashtra and quietly walked to his 2-hectare (5-acre) farm – on which the millet crop was about to be harvested – to end his life.

Just as he was about to swallow a bottle of pesticide, his grandfather shouted at him, making Kale pause. The old man then rushed towards Kale and snatched the bottle from his hands. "I had hit rock bottom," he told Al Jazeera. "I couldn't think of a reason to live."

Kale comes from a part of India that is well familiar with suicide deaths. Maharashtra state has India's largest economy by far. But that wealth does not reach Kale's rural district of Beed in the western agrarian region of Marathwada, now famous for its farmer suicides. According to official estimates, the region recorded more than 26,000 farmer suicides between 2013 and 2022 – an average of seven a day. The suicides in Marathwada have been triggered by falling crop prices, rising inflation and climate change, with the average farm household income being as low as 11,492 rupees a month (\$138), according to government figures, forcing farmers to think of alternative income sources for survival.

But unlike thousands from Marathwada, the farm crisis was not the immediate trigger for Kale to try to take his life. An exam scam was what drove him to that extreme step. Amid the deepening agricultural crisis, tens of thousands of children of farmers have been taking online exams for various government jobs, seeking a better future than their parents. While the exams for the government's top jobs – the so-called Class 1 and Class 2 positions – are conducted by a state body, the lower-grade tests for positions like clerks, village accountants and teachers are contracted out to private companies.

According to complaints filed with police, the lower-grade exams are plagued with rampant corruption and

paper leaks, allowing those with influence or money to "buy" government jobs, cutting the chances of poorer aspirants and denying them a fair shot. Kale is a victim of this. For the past 10 years, he has been trying to get out of farming and land a government job – without success.

"I come from a drought-prone region where we hardly break even as farmers," he told Al Jazeera. "It is frustrating to see people scam their way to the top while I work hard and get nothing in return." In August and September last year, the Maharashtra government conducted the examinations with the help of a private software company to recruit village accountants across the state. More than a million people applied and just more than 850,000 took the test for a mere 4,600 vacancies.

"Such is the level of desperation," local political activist Dhananjay Shinde told Al Jazeera. "The state charges a non-refundable 1,000 rupees [\$12] from each applicant. That means they collected 1bn rupees [\$12m] from people who primarily come from very poor families." In the past eight years, Kale filled out the forms for more than three dozen such exams, spending nearly 40,000 rupees (\$490) in search of a government job. "Who will give me my money back?" he asked. "You are charging us an amount. The least you could do is ensure a fair examination."

However, instances of paper leaks and fraud in the 2023 exams were reported from at least seven districts of Maharashtra – Nashik, Ahmednagar, Wardha, Amravati, Sangli, Latur and Aurangabad. Al Jazeera has copies of the First Information Reports (FIRs) filed by the police in each district. Registration of an FIR means the police have recognised that an offence has been committed.

On August 29 last year, two candidates in Latur passed the online exam for village accountants. According to the FIR filed by police last month, one of them confessed that he had paid 2.7 million rupees (\$32,500) to a man to cheat in the exam. Once he logged in on his computer to take the test, he

found two cursors on his screen – one his own and the other of the man outside who had remote access to his desktop. The candidate had to simply select the answers the other cursor pointed at, helping him pass the test.

That same month, police in Nashik arrested an accused man and checked the electronic tablet he was carrying. It had 186 photographs of the question paper of the village accountant exam under way at the time. Police said he was supplying answers to some candidates sitting inside the examination centre via Bluetooth and spy cameras. The man was also accused in identical FIRs filed by the Maharashtra police in 2021 and 2022 when he was charged with leaking the questions for the tests conducted to recruit people in the state's police and housing departments. But he absconded at the time. Now, he is out on bail, according to Police Inspector Subhash Dhavale at the Mhasrul police station in the city of Nashik.

In February, another man was found in Amravati with a document containing the 100 questions to be asked for clerical posts in the state's soil and water conservation department, according to the police FIR. Local media reports said three employees of the private firm contracted to conduct the examination were also arrested for being complicit in the paper leak. On September 6 last year, police in Aurangabad said they noticed four men talking suspiciously outside an exam room. One of them was caught while the others ran away. The police checked the caught man's mobile phone and found 34 questions being circulated via the Telegram app, according to the FIR.

"These are just instances where people have been caught," said activist Shinde. "This is a proper racket to ensure people close to political leaders get in. The state here is complicit in keeping the deserving candidates sidelined. It has a terrible impact on their mental health." Kale took the September test in Aurangabad, a city about 125km (78 miles) from his hometown, where he attended most of his exams. — Aljazeera

In Ecuador, gov't sees mining as future

LAS PAMPAS: The alarm rang at 7am, summoning everyone in the main square. Protesters boarded three trucks, normally used to transport livestock. The convoy carried them close to the nearby town of Palo Quemado, home to the mining project of La Plata in northwestern Ecuador, 130km (81 miles) from the capital Quito. Since last July, this quiet community has turned into an epicentre of anti-mining protests.

Under the sight of military men stationed on the crest of the hill, roughly 100 demonstrators approached the road into town. But a whole riot squad blocked their way. "We don't want mining, and we will exert our right to resist every day," 33-year-old farmer Rolando, who asked to use a pseudonym, told Al Jazeera. A resident of Las Pampas, there were stitches under his right eye. He says the police shot him right in the face with a canister of tear gas.

Since 1996, mining companies have been exploring the area around Palo Quemado, discovering deposits of gold, silver, copper and zinc. In 2020, Atico Mining, a Canadian firm, stepped in and started drilling for exploration after having obtained a concession from the Ecuadorian government until 2049. It

now wants to ramp up and start building facilities and expects to start exploitation of the deposit in 2026. According to the Central Bank of Ecuador, Atico Mining plans to invest \$75.9m until 2025.

However, some local farmers fear that mining operations could affect the availability and quality of water. "Our earth remains green every day of the year. It gives us fruits daily. Mining would endanger the source of income that sustained us for decades and decades," 47-year-old farmer Luis Martinez from Las Pampas told Al Jazeera. The area is renowned for producing high-quality meat and raw cane sugar, which is also exported to Europe.

"The explosions will pollute the air, and the water inside the slopes will decrease due to the boring of tunnels," Martinez said. Atico Mining stressed that it cares for the sustainable development of the local community, and it adheres to strict standards of responsible mining. The La Plata project will be provided with state-of-the-art infrastructure, such as a tailing facility that will allow for efficient use of water by recirculating "a large portion of the water needs for the processing plant".

Additionally, the compa-

ny says it has funded the refurbishment of the local potable water system and is backing innovative agricultural projects. But people in Las Pampas remain sceptical. Berta Chiribogan, 63, has been raising cattle and farming cane sugar since she was young. She is convinced that mining will end their way of life.

"We don't believe them. We already had mining here, and the water was left polluted. Before micay [carpet grass] and sugarcane grew there. Nowadays, nothing springs up there," she told Al Jazeera. At the beginning of March, President Daniel Noboa travelled to Canada to join the annual conference of the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada (PDAC), the world's largest mining convention. With more than half of global mining companies based in Canada and 15 of them currently developing projects in Ecuador, PDAC represented a juicy opportunity for drawing more foreign financing. "Mining attracted over \$4bn investment, so I define its role as a crucial driver for the economy, benefiting the country through job creation, income for communities, local governments and the state," said Noboa in front of representatives of the major companies. — Aljazeera

Where Rwanda's genocide perpetrators and survivors live side by side

MBYO/KIGALI: Mukaremera Laurence gazed at the ground as Nkundiye Thacien spoke about how he used a machete to kill her husband 30 years ago. The three of them had been neighbours and lifelong friends, living together in the Rwandan village of Mbyo. But then, in 1994, Thacien received orders to kill.

"It was an order and if you didn't obey they threatened to kill your family," Thacien told Al Jazeera, "so I felt like I had to do it." He speaks about one of the 20th century's most macabre events, when the majority Hutu group he belonged to, which ruled Rwanda at the time, began a campaign of mass killing against the Tutsi – the minority ethnic group to which Laurence's husband belonged.

More than 800,000 people – by some estimates, a million – died during 100 days at the hands of machete-wielding Hutus. More than 250,000 women were targeted with sexual violence, according to the United Nations. Now, Laurence and Thacien live as neighbours in Mbyo, a village that has turned from a killing site to a place practicing resilience and unity. It is one of six reconciliation villages in Rwanda where perpetrators and survivors of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsis live together and attempt to reconcile their past.

"We can't forget; it's impossible to forget," said Laurence. "We live in peace now, but we remember it and always will." While their reconciliation story is seemingly one of success, despite criticism of it being artificial, Rwandans continue to struggle with the legacy of the genocide. Many survivors have found solace in learning the truth about how their loved ones were murdered and from apologies from their killers. Others have not found such closure, as new mass graves continue to be discovered and killers' identities continue to be exposed.

Ethnic violence had been bubbling in Rwanda for decades before April 6, 1994, but it was on that day that a

plane carrying then-President Juvenal Habyarimana and Burundian President Cyprien Ntaryamira, bot was shot down over Kigali. The death of the two presidents, who were both Hutu, led Hutu extremists to blame the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a rebel group helmed by current president Paul Kagame, who had been fighting against the ruling Hutus since they took power in 1979. The RPF's position was that the plane had been shot down by Hutus to provide an excuse to begin killing Tutsis. The Hutus used the flight to revive a long-held belief that all Tutsis needed to be exterminated, convincing the Hutu population in Rwanda to immediately start a campaign of slaughter.

Thacien says that soon after the plane crashed, he heard orders on the newly created Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines station for Hutus to kill all Tutsis – and anyone who protects them – or be killed themselves. The radio messages spewing hate and identifying names of high-profile Tutsis to be targeted were responsible for inciting more than 45,000 killings. The Hutu-run military also spread word on the ground, encouraging violence and organising killing sprees. Thacien joined his fellow Hutus in the killings.

Government forces and Hutu militia groups – together known as Interahamwe, a name that means "those who attack together" – began killing Tutsis in Kigali while also distributing weapons to ordinary Hutus. Hutus had been preparing to eradicate the Tutsi people for years, explained Thacien, who participated in several Hutu meetings some years before, but "1994 was the official genocide", he said.

He was 47 when it began. He recalls how people discussed killing tactics and ways to spread genocidal ideologies, while dehumanising the Tutsis by calling them "cockroaches" and "snakes" that needed to be exterminated. On April 7, Thacien was stationed at main junctions checking

identification, which at the time mentioned an individual's ethnicity, to single out Tutsis to be killed. He also participated in killing parties; one of his targets was Laurence's husband.

More than a million Hutus joined the movement and used machetes, grenades, guns and other blunt weapons to kill their neighbours, regardless of gender or age, if they belonged to the Tutsi group. Hutus who tried to protect their fellow Tutsis were also targeted. Places of worship, where people usually found safety, became massacre sites. In the second week of the genocide, thousands – mostly women and children – sought out safety at the Nyamata Church, about 30 minutes from Mbyo.

Hutu militias killed the armed men protecting the church and threw grenades inside and outside its doors. Then the Interahamwe slaughtered the survivors inside with machetes. Today, evidence of the carnage is still evident throughout the church. There are bullet holes in the roof and the walls. Clothing, coffins and skeletal remains litter the floor. A blood-stained cloth covers the pulpit. In the basement, one floor holds multiple skulls marked by machetes or bullet holes. More than 10,000 people from the church massacre and surrounding areas were buried in mass graves next to the church.

Similar events happened across the country. The massacre ended in July when the RPF, the Tutsi rebel group from Uganda, captured Kigali and overthrew the Hutu government. Its leader, Paul Kagame, became president and continues to rule in Rwanda. Many still don't know who killed their loved ones. Laurence found out in 2003, when Thacien wrote to her from prison and apologised for killing her husband.

The government had adopted a law that reduced prison sentences in exchange for confessions to the killings. To speed up the sentencing of more than one million participants

in the genocide, local "gacaca" courts (gacaca means "grass" in the local Kinyarwanda language) were installed as community-led justice systems.

"I felt so bad about it even when I did it, but in prison I knew I had to face my actions," said Thacien. When Laurence received the letter and learned that the person who killed her husband was her friend and neighbour, she was shocked. "It was so hard for me to read the letter," Laurence told Al Jazeera. "I couldn't imagine or understand what happened and why." She worried that the release of prisoners back into the community would put her in danger of again being targeted by Hutu militias.

After Thacien was released from prison, a local priest organised a meeting so the perpetrators could apologise to the survivors in person. During the first event, people were shy and scared – they didn't know what to say to each other. At the second meeting, Thacien says he built up the courage and approached Laurence, telling himself, "If she doesn't forgive me I can't control that, but what I can do is own up to what I did and ask for forgiveness." It took three years, but Laurence did forgive Thacien.

In 2005, they both moved to the Mbyo village, one of six reconciliation villages around the country that were built by a partnership formed between the government and Prison Fellowship Rwanda, an NGO dedicated to helping perpetrators of the genocide reintegrate into society. The purpose of the villages was to have killers and survivors live alongside each other, while rebuilding their lives and reconciling the past. They also looked to create equality between the two ethnic groups and prevent people from taking revenge for the 1994 genocide.

Government policies also helped to encourage reconciliations, explained Felix Mukwiza Ndahinda,

an assistant professor of transitional justice at the Netherlands-based Tilburg Law School and an expert on the Rwandan genocide. Some of these policies included creating institutions focused on unity and reconciliation and removing ethnicity from personal identification.

Also, it was essentially made illegal to challenge the state's narrative of the genocide. The government has faced criticism for exploiting history for political gain and has been accused of censorship. Opposition leaders or critics of the government have been imprisoned under the genocide ideology laws, which have been criticised as vague and seen by critics as political tools.

Ndahinda explained that political freedoms in Rwanda need to be examined against the country's difficult history, genocide legacy and the resulting fracture that made it difficult to imagine how Rwanda could emerge from it. Reconciliation processes are more complex than this narrow frame, he added. "How individuals engage with one another on the hills, live together in villages, negotiate their daily relations and sometimes choose to marry within families across the survivor-perpetrator divide is beyond governmental doing," Ndahinda said.

Thacien and Laurence have been living in the reconciliation village for 19 years and remain close. When Thacien's son got married recently, Laurence attended the wedding. But not everyone has found peace. Naphtal Ahishakiye, executive secretary of Ibuka, a genocide survivors' group, spoke to Al Jazeera from the Nyanza Genocide Memorial site in Kigali's suburb of Kicukiro, where workers were repairing and trimming grass in preparation for the following week's commemoration events. He told Al Jazeera that "people are still suffering and many don't have closure" because many remains haven't been found and not all perpetrators have been sentenced.

More mass graves are still being discovered. Last October in the region of Hueye, bones were found during a home renovation. This prompted search-and-excavation efforts in the area, which led to the discovery of the remains of more than 1,000 people. "For 30 years, villagers asked their neighbours to tell them the truth about what happened in the past and no one admitted to anything. Then they found the remains," said Ahishakiye. "This undermines trust and the reconciliation process."

A quarter of the genocide's survivors still struggle with mental health, according to Ahishakiye, who stressed the need for continued support as new generations born after the genocide reach adulthood. The state can't control how parents of both perpetrators and survivors communicate with their children in private about the past, Ndahinda pointed out. The Rwandan diaspora, made up mostly of people critical of President Kagame's approach to governance, also has starkly contrasting views to Rwandans at home – differences that might not be as easy to handle, he added.

"The uncertainty about the future in an environment with pockets of instability remains on many people's minds," said Ndahinda. But while issues still persist for many, often hidden behind closed doors, people like Laurence and Thacien have found a way to accept the past and move on together. Back in the Mbyo village, the two neighbours attend church together, share food and take care of each other's children.

With tears in his eyes and while holding Laurence's hand, Thacien said how grateful he is for Laurence's forgiveness. "I did something extremely bad and hurt her and her family," he said, "Now, during the week of commemoration events my only wish is to be by her side. I want to show that I care for her and that I will protect her. I want her to feel safe with me." — Aljazeera

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Pak-Saudi ties

PRIME Minister Shehbaz Sharif along with a high-level delegation has recently paid a three-day visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Besides performing Umrah, Prime Minister Shehbaz met with the Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud on Sunday and held wide-ranging discussions on matters of mutual interest. The discussions centered on fortifying the fraternal relations between the two brotherly nations and exploring avenues for enhanced collaboration across various sectors including bilateral trade, investment, defense and security, science and technology, education, expatriates, tour and tourism. Both leaders exchanged views on regional and global developments of mutual interest, including the worrying situation in Gaza. Both countries reaffirmed their commitment to expedite an investment package worth \$5 billion discussed previously, to shape bilateral cooperation into a long-term and sustainable economic partnership.

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia share a deep and historical relationship. Pak-Saudi ties are characterized by shared faith, cultural values, and political and economic bonds, whereas the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic solidarity make this mutual relationship vital in the realm of international affairs and global politics. Following the partition of British India in 1947, Pak-Saudi relations have been consistently close and friendly. Being a major military power in the Muslim world, Pakistan remained Saudi Arabia's closest ally and assumed a watchman role for Saudi Arabia's two holy sites Makkah and Medina, against all internal and external threats. Saudi Arabia was a strong supporter of Pakistan during its wars with India, in 1965, and 1971, and played an important role in the Afghan jihad throughout the 1980s. Islamabad firmly stood beside Riyadh during the Gulf War and sent troops to protect Islamic holy sites in Saudi Arabia. Both countries enjoy strong military-to-military ties, and strategic cooperation, through intelligence sharing, joint training, Counterterrorism, and teamwork against common threats. Meanwhile, over 2.7 million Pakistani expatriate workforce plays an important role in the development and prosperity of the Kingdom along with fostering people-to-people ties between the two countries.

Over the years, this bilateral relationship has matured into a strategic partnership, a shared foreign policy outlook vis-à-vis both regional and international events, and collaboration in the security domain. Pak-Saudi ties are further strengthened by the need for regional allies due to longstanding tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran and between Pakistan and India, while domestic political changes within the two countries have also shaped the relationship's development which is mostly driven by personal terms between the rulers in brotherly nations. Historically, economic cooperation has always remained a cornerstone of the tally of bilateral relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, which strengthened mutual bonds and emboldened bilateral ties throughout the past. Saudi economic cooperation has always remained crucial for the economic stability of the South Asian country, wherein Riyadh mostly provided crude oil on deferred payments, economic loans, grants, and investments to meet the urgent needs of the brotherly Muslim country. In 2019, both countries signed an agreement to establish a \$10 billion refinery and petrochemicals complex in Gwadar, while Saudi Arabia announced \$3 billion as balance of payment support along with a one-year deferred payment facility of up to \$3 billion for oil imports to support Pakistan's dying economy.

In fact, the strengthening of economic ties between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia holds immense significance for both nations to foster collaboration and capitalize on investment opportunities. The Kingdom's supportive role in Pakistan's economy and the mutual desire to strengthen trade and investment ties is of utmost importance in the regional geopolitical environment. This collaboration has the potential to drive economic growth and protect shared economic, security, and political interests at the regional as well as global levels. The current geo-political dynamics underscore the need for a shared and renewed commitment from both nations to enhance their bilateral cooperation and teamwork to meet current-day challenges in an effective and befitting manner. There are tremendous scopes and potential for growth and expansion in Pak-Saudi ties, hopefully, this bilateral relationship and spirit will cement and grow to the optimum level in the future.

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Palestinians and world must not lose hope

Mariam Barghouti

WHEN in early October we, Palestinians, laid out to the world what was going to happen, our testimonies and foresight were seen as an exaggeration. Our warnings of Israel's terrifying enthusiasm for using excessive violence were not taken seriously. Worse, our warnings that Israel was going to commit killings of Palestinians on a massive scale were dubbed "anti-Semitic".

Today, the official statistics say 33,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli air strikes with US-made bombs, shelling and field executions in Gaza and the West Bank. This number does not account for all those "missing" under the rubble, shot dead in the streets or in their homes by the occupation soldiers, or buried under the sand by their bulldozers. And while Gaza is bearing the brunt of Israel's tormenting violence, Palestinians in the West Bank are being arrested by the thousands, including children, most of whom are denied trial. They are held under torturous and abusive conditions that have resulted in the killing of at least 13 Palestinian captives in the last six months.

Meanwhile, Palestinians with Israeli citizenship as well as Palestinians in Jerusalem suffer under Israel's draconian apartheid laws while being policed, detained, tortured and attacked by Israeli mobs for simply sharing social media posts or consuming what Israel calls "terrorist media". If I were to describe the past 26 weeks, it would be one hour after another of just barely pulling through. I have asked myself, what is the point of writing another piece about Israel's remorseless sadism?

Between pitching this article and finding the strength to actually write it, more than 3,000 Palestinian children, women and men were killed. Al-Shifa Medical Complex was completely destroyed and the extrajudicial killings in the West Bank have only intensified. The feeling of numbness, of paralysis among Palestinians is one

of the aims of the Israeli "attrition" strategy. A war of attrition is meant to create the conditions to drain, exhaust and weaken an opponent. It is meant to diminish the capacity to fight back.

Israel's goal is the emotional, moral and mental depletion of those resisting its occupation and colonisation so they lose motivation and commitment to engage and mobilise in the face of brute repression. It has applied this strategy in "peacetime" as well. Following in the footsteps of European colonialists and their logic of pacification, Israel has sought to wear down the Palestinian population into full submission by making life impossible at all levels. While feeding the world the false narrative of "self-defence", it has tried to create the moribund Palestinian: not necessarily dead, but always on the edge, constantly facing the choice between death and torment.

I do not think I will ever be able to fully explain what it is like to be a Palestinian - in all the shades of bruises we come in. It is not for the lack of words as much it is for the recognition that if I were to speak of the horrors, I am not confident that those who listen would bear to hear all the pain embedded in the Palestinian experience. For the past 182 days, Palestinians have been plunged into waves of deep grief, penetrating pain, and a crippling fear of anticipated loss. Quivers of terror remain stuck in our spine unable to escape, just like us.

One of the most testing parts of this aggression is having to manage this grief. So many people we know are either killed, arrested or displaced. Palestinians have suffered not only physical displacement but psychological displacement as well; our mental and emotional anchors have been dislodged. It is an excruciating type of pain to keep witnessing the different ways in which Palestinian bodies can be turned lifeless. There is no capacity to bury the slain bodies, no ability to collec-

tively mourn our losses, not just the material but also the emotional: the destroyed homes, the destroyed memories, and the destroyed hope we mustered to have.

With continued exposure to Israel's unyielding psychopathy, comes a collective feeling of burnout not only among the population still trying to survive Israel's slaughter, but also among those mobilising to stop a genocide still being committed as I write these words. The burnout is real. Too many of us are too exhausted to say anything, to resist succumbing to the delusion that our voices do not matter and will achieve nothing. As we sit with those uncomfortable and hopeless feelings, the war persists and the scale of the horrors increases.

And it is not just us, Palestinians in Palestine. This extends to those in the world who rose up against the genocide. Israel has responded to global resistance with more slaughter - like the killing of international humanitarian workers - and more lobbying for its critics to be punished. As governments refuse to take action to end the slaughter, those mobilising against the genocide are slowly and strategically pushed towards incapacitation, despair, and the conviction that the Israeli onslaught cannot be stopped.

In May of 2021, when Palestinians were in the midst of the largest uprisings of the past decades, when they showed true unity across Gaza, the West Bank, the 1948 territories and the diaspora, I wrote a piece for the Guardian titled, Why are Palestinians protesting? Because we want to live. I wrote the piece on my phone in between running from tear gas fired by Israeli soldiers and barely escaping the brutal beatings at the hands of the Palestinian Authority's security forces.

Those were brutal times, terrifying times, and defining times. In that piece, I tried to capture the strategy of colonialism: "This is what colonialism does: it suffocates every part of

your life, and then it finishes by burying you." I was not trying to draw a silhouette of a killer. I was trying to capture the moment of defiance and renewed unity among Palestinians from the river to the sea and in the diaspora.

"It is a strategic, deliberate process, and it is only obstructed or delayed because oppressors are almost always confronted and challenged by those under their rule," I wrote. Indeed, over the past many decades, Israel was not left without challenge.

Palestinians continued to rise up against its policies of repression: One uprising after the next, from nonviolence to diplomacy, to armed resistance. As the Israeli conquest of Palestinian lands, resources and lives intensified, so did Palestinian struggle.

For the past six months, Israel and its backers have sought to erase history and context and portray October 7 as an "unwarranted" brutal attack on Israel. The reality is, on October 7, a people suffocated by decades of colonialism and oppression used their last breath to reject the impossible choice of death or torment and to call out to the world. Perhaps that is what really shook Israel and its allies on October 7. What triggered Israel's wrath was the fact that Palestinians were still breathing after decades of colonial pacification.

Understand this: What stands between our eradication and our survival is you, the global community. As Israel unleashed its genocidal force onto us, it implicated the rest of the world. Israel's genocide is enabled by international engagement. It uses weapons provided by foreign governments and enjoys impunity guaranteed by them to avoid accountability for its crimes.

Recognise this: Palestinians are not buried yet, and while the destruction is massive, so is the number of survivors with dreams to pursue, miracles to witness, and a faith in humanity to be re-instilled. Amid all the destruction there is life, and Palestinians are putting up one hell of a fight for it.

Economic stagnation is coming for Italy

Roger Bootle

THE last few years have been remarkable for smashing established preconceptions about economic performance. Two weeks ago, I analysed Germany's economy and made it clear that not only is it currently weak but its economic prospects look pretty poor as well. As I know from the subsequent reaction, this came as a shock to many people.

Readers are likely to be equally shocked by the revelation that Italy, supposedly a perennially weak economic performer, has recently done relatively well. But is this likely to continue? My colleague, Jeremy Warner, last week gave an upbeat assessment of Italy. He was certainly right to emphasise that since the pandemic, of the eurozone's four major economies, Italy has grown the fastest.

Admittedly, this is not saying a great deal. Since 2019, Italy's economy has grown by only 4pc. Even so, for Italy to come out ahead of Spain, France and Germany is pretty surprising. In fact, the four southern European countries - Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece - have all done relatively well and, in particular, have outgrown Germany and some other normally successful Northern economies.

This is partly explained by a major revival in tourism as people embarked on foreign holidays again post-Covid. Also, compared to Germany, this group of countries has a lower share of manufacturing in GDP and was not as hard hit by the surge in energy prices following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

But in Italy's case, recent relatively strong growth has been mainly driven by a huge surge in construction output owing to a substantial tax incentive scheme led by Giorgia Meloni's government. This surge is likely to continue for a while longer but by the end of the year, it should be fading, not least because the tax incentive scheme is being wound down.

Moreover, it seems likely that capacity constraints will prevent construction activity from continuing much longer at this level. The upshot is that next year Italian growth will probably come in at something like 0.5pc, compared with a eurozone average of nearer 1pc. When it comes to medium-term prospects, Jeremy Warner may be right that Italy has turned a corner.

There is certainly more political stability than Italy has been used to. But on economic prospects there is plenty of room for reasonable people to differ - and I do. Italy's recent comparative success has done little to alter the picture of a country held back by major structural problems. The country faces two key supply difficulties. First, the working population is set to fall considerably.

Admittedly, in Italy the female participation rate is pretty low by normal European standards and therefore there is some scope for the fall in working-age population to be compensated by an increase in the female participation rate. Also, the retirement age is automatically geared to increasing longevity. Even so, these factors will not be enough to stop the

labour force from declining over the coming years and decades.

The second problem is more serious. Productivity growth in Italy is pitifully low. This is, of course, a problem across most of the world but in Italy, the difficulties are deep-seated. From 2000 to 2022, the average Italian growth rate was 0.2pc per annum, in other words, next to nothing. Over this period, productivity growth was flat.

There are several causes. The education system is not well geared to producing people with the requisite skills to succeed in the modern world, with a relatively low proportion of students studying STEM subjects. Italy also suffers from a lack of digital advancement, while corruption poses an ongoing problem. Most aspects of public administration, including the justice system, are also riddled with bureaucracy and endemic delays. If the outlook for economic growth across the West is brighter in the coming years - and I think it is - then the main reason will be the productivity growth unleashed by the AI revolution. Yet Italy is poorly placed to take advantage of AI. It ranks 25th out of 30 economies in the Capital Economics AI Economic Impact Index.

A major symptom of Italy's economic difficulties, and a possible cause of further challenges, is its fiscal position. Italy is a test case of how a country can end up in a debt trap. The ratio of government debt to GDP is running at about 140pc, compared with 65pc in Germany and about 100pc in the UK.

Before the pandemic, it was normal for Italian governments to run a primary surplus on their budgets, that is to say, an excess of revenues over expenditure, excluding interest payments. More recently, however, Italy has been running a large primary deficit. It was about 3.4pc of GDP last year. What's more, interest payments are huge, currently running at over 4pc of GDP. The result is that despite raking in tax revenues successfully, last year the Italian government ran an overall deficit of 7.2pc of GDP.

This year the deficit is likely to be more than 5pc of GDP. This wouldn't matter so much if the economy were growing strongly. But, as noted above, this doesn't seem likely. Recently, the spread of Italian bond yields over their German equivalents has been comparatively low at 1.4pc. If this spread were to widen, however, then Italy's budget deficit would increase again and require further fiscal tightening to stop the debt ratio from rising. As it is, it looks as though this ratio is set on a path that will take it to about 150pc of GDP by 2050. None of this is to say that Italy is bound to face an imminent crisis. Just as in the UK, it might be better if it were. Rather, again just like in the UK, without fundamental and radical reform, the outlook is probably something that looks and feels like stagnation, with living standards managing to increase only by negligible amounts. We both deserve much better.

The Telegraph

Gaza is one big 'kill zone'

Belén Fernández

FOUR Palestinian men are walking in the city of Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip through an area largely pulverised by Israeli bombardments. There is no indication that they are carrying weapons or doing anything aside from putting one foot in front of the other, as humans do to get from one place to the next.

Suddenly, a direct air strike on the pedestrians takes out two of the men. The third continues walking and is quickly blasted to bits as well. The fourth is eliminated by yet another strike after falling to his knees. This episode, which reportedly took place in February, is depicted in Israeli drone footage released in March by Al Jazeera. Watching the defenceless men systematically picked off from the sky in a fanatical display of firepower, one is reminded

of the Collateral Murder video published by WikiLeaks in 2010, in which a dozen Iraqi civilians were exuberantly massacred by helicopter-borne United States military personnel.

In the Khan Younis incident, it appears that the "crime" of the four men - meriting an instant death sentence - was their presence in one of the Israeli military's so-called "kill zones" in Gaza, the subject of a recent expose in the Israeli newspaper Haaretz. The article specifies that "there is no written order" stipulating kill zones in the Israeli army's "rule book", but it's abundantly clear that they are a very real phenomenon with very little institutional oversight. "Ultimately, the boundaries of these zones and the exact procedures of operation are subject to interpretation by commanders in that specific area," the newspaper found.

Speaking to Haaretz, one Israeli reserve officer described the business as follows: "In every combat zone, commanders define such kill zones. ... As soon as people enter [a zone], mainly adult males, orders are to shoot and kill, even if that person is unarmed." So much for the world's "most moral army". In sum, then, Palestinians can be slaughtered simply for finding themselves in an area that happens to have been arbitrarily designated a "kill zone" by some Israeli commander or another.

And if you're killed in a "kill zone", chances are you'll be marked down by Israel as a "terrorist", which certainly helps in terms of inflating the casualty count of "bad guys" in a war that as of mid-March had already killed more than 13,000 Palestinian children. According to

Haaretz, of the more than 32,000 Palestinians estimated to have been killed in Gaza over the past six months, the Israeli army says 9,000 or so were "terrorists" - a claim that has failed to convince even many army commanders. As one officer who previously served in Gaza commented to the newspaper: "In practice, a terrorist is anyone the [military] has killed in the areas in which its forces operate." Not that the Zionist politico-military establishment hasn't been known to deploy the terms "Palestinian" and "terrorist" more or less interchangeably. Indeed, 75 years of perverse propaganda has sought to persuade the world that the victims of continuous terrorisation by Israel are in fact the ones doing the terrorising.

Now the victims of "kill zones" get to be terrorists

too. Never mind that, regarding the case of the four pedestrians in Khan Younis, a senior Israeli military officer remarked to Haaretz: "They were unarmed. They didn't endanger our forces in the area in which they were walking." The article goes on to quote the same officer's speculation that many civilians in Gaza had met their demise after entering areas they thought the army had already abandoned, possibly in the hopes of finding food that had been left behind: "When they went to such places, they were shot, perceived as people who could harm our forces."

An Israeli military spokesperson has huffily denied the "kill zone" reports. And yet at the end of the day, the Gaza Strip is one big kill zone - with literally no space off limits to killing. How else do you explain massacres at Palestinian hospitals and

United Nations shelters or the slaughter of people waiting in line for food aid as children starve to death? To be sure, Israel has long boasted of its alleged prowess in conducting surgically precise air strikes and targeted killings. But even if the figure of 9,000 dead "terrorists" tallied by the Israeli army had any basis in reality, it's difficult to account for more than 23,000 "collateral murders", to borrow the WikiLeaks phrasing.

Unless, of course, collateral has nothing to do with it and Israel is simply straight up targeting civilians - which, after all, is how genocide works, isn't it? After six months of apocalyptic war, Gaza today is a bunch of "kill zones" within a larger kill zone. And as Israel continues its quest to normalise depravity across the board, the current Israeli monopoly on terrorism will certainly be tough to break.

China, Sri Lanka forging stronger bonds

Lu Yang

IN ancient times, Sri Lanka was the center of trade in the Indian Ocean and is now an important partner for China in South Asia. More recently, Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena, paid a six-day visit to China, from March 25-30.

In October 2023, Sri Lanka's President, Ranil Wickremesinghe, attended the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in China. President Xi Jinping had an in-depth exchange of views with him and arrived at an important consensus on developing China-Sri Lanka relations. Gunawardena's visit continues the trajectory of this consensus of friendly and supportive bilateral relations. He met President Xi and Premier Li Qiang and other top Chinese officials, besides attending the Boao Forum. The visit confirmed a new chapter in the relationship between Sri Lanka and China, amid the changing strategic landscape in the Indo-Pacific region.

Sri Lanka is still struggling to recover from the economic crisis it faced in 2022. China is one of Sri Lanka's largest creditors. Central to the discussions during Prime Minister Gunawardena's visit was the exploration of avenues for bolstering economic collaboration between the two countries. China has supported Sri Lanka in debt relief, humanitarian emergency assistance and in extending financial assurances to help Sri Lanka obtain the IMF Extended Fund Facility Arrangement. Gunawardena highlighted the opportunities available for investment in Sri Lanka, including in the Colombo Port City and Hambantota Industrial Zone, which are flagship infrastructure projects of the Belt and Road Initiative in Sri Lanka. China's assistance in infrastructure development contributes to the economic growth and connectiv-

ity of Sri Lanka in the long run. Beginning in 2014, the Colombo Port City project has been under construction for 10 years. It is the largest foreign direct investment project in Sri Lanka to date and the Sri Lankan government regards it as a "lifeline" for economic recovery. After its completion it will become a high-end urban complex integrating finance, tourism, logistics and information technology in South Asia. The Colombo International Container Terminal, also invested in by China, currently brings more than 40 percent of traffic to the Colombo Port, making it one of the busiest ports in the world.

The state visit President Xi paid to Sri Lanka in September 2014 was a historic landmark in China-Sri Lanka relations. Since then, Sri Lanka has actively been participating in the Belt and Road Initiative, which offers many opportunities to further advance infrastructure development and economic prosperity in Sri Lanka. In addition to infrastructure development, BRI has extended to new areas such as "Green Silk Road", "Health Silk Road" and "Digital Silk Road", which provide multiple channels of cooperation in agriculture, health care, clean energy, environment and the digital economy between the two countries. E-commerce in Sri Lanka has grown rapidly over the past years. In 2023, Sri Lanka developed a digital economy strategy that plans to expand Sri Lanka's digital economy from 3.5 to 15 percent by 2030. This will be a promising area that welcomes Chinese expertise and investment. China assured continuous support to Sri Lanka's efforts for political and socioeconomic development. The spirit of the Rubber-Rice Pact, signed in 1952, five years before the

establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, got special mention when Xi met Gunawardena.

The Rice-Rubber Pact was the first trade agreement signed by China with a non-communist country. Under the agreement, Sri Lanka supplied natural rubber and China reciprocated with rice at a time when both countries suffered difficulties buying the two items respectively from the international market. The Pact was initially only for a period of five years but was renewed on six occasions and in effect for 30 years until 1982. It was the most beneficial and successful trade agreement negotiated by Sri Lanka and China appreciates this action of Sri Lanka offering natural rubber during an era when other rubber-producing countries declined its supply to China because of pressure from western countries.

President Xi has said that China is willing to work with Sri Lanka to carry forward the spirit of the Rubber-Rice Pact, which is characterized by "independence, self-reliance, solidarity and mutual assistance", to consolidate political mutual trust, expand practical cooperation, and advance the high-quality Belt and Road cooperation. Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena's visit to China underscores the enduring commitment of Sri Lanka and China to strengthening their strategic cooperative partnership across multiple fronts. A number of bilateral cooperation documents were signed in industrial investment, standardization, livelihood assistance, agriculture, media and other areas this time. China will encourage more competent Chinese enterprises to invest and do business in Sri Lanka, and is willing to increase

imports of quality agricultural products from Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka will provide a favorable investment and business environment for Chinese enterprises and accelerate preferential policies for integrated development projects in Colombo Port City and the Hambantota Port.

In addition to enhancing economic ties, Prime Minister Gunawardena's visit provided an opportunity for both nations to address common challenges and concerns. As members of the international community, Sri Lanka and China face common concerns such as sovereignty and territorial integrity, climate change, maritime security, and regional stability.

The scale of the brain drain leaves a worrying gap in Sri Lanka's economic recovery. The South Asian country faces a lack of professionals in areas such as IT, medical staff and engineering. Both sides expressed a readiness to further enhance exchanges in the education sector, as well as to strengthen personnel training and scientific exchanges. The China-Sri Lanka Joint Center of Science and Education under the Chinese Academy of Sciences will begin operation, making it an important step in this direction. Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena's diplomatic visit to China signifies a reaffirmation of the enduring bonds Sri Lanka and China share, grounded in peace, mutual respect and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. As Prime Minister Gunawardena returns from his diplomatic sojourn, the seeds of friendship and collaboration sown during his visit are poised to bear fruit in the people of China and Sri Lanka, shaping the trajectory of mutually supportive bilateral relations and contributing to a more prosperous and interconnected world.

How to ensure proposed global treaty on pandemics is just

RECENT drafts of a proposed global treaty on pandemics have been widely criticized as "shameful and unjust." When the latest round of negotiations began on March 18, it was clear that a key lesson of the COVID-19 pandemic was being ignored: that public health and the health of the economy are interdependent.

Achieving both requires rewriting the rules of how health and well-being are valued, achieved and distributed, and how economies are governed. The success of a treaty will depend on the willingness of member states to hard-wire equity into its terms. That, in turn, will require a new economic paradigm. If the treaty is whittled down to become as inoffensive as possible, it will fail.

The World Health Organization's Council on the Economics of Health for All, which I chaired, has already issued its recommendations for how to proceed. For starters, negotiators from all countries must remain focused on the overarching goal of preventing future health threats from becoming catastrophic. This means designing the terms of the treaty - including those related to innovation, intellectual property, public-private collaborations and funding - to be mission-oriented. Equity must be the top priority because everyone, and every economy, ultimately suffers during a pandemic if tests, vaccines and lifesaving therapeutics are not accessible to all. Moreover, the ways in which innovation and knowledge are governed are as critical as the innovations themselves. Governments have powerful levers for determining who benefits from innovation. They are major funders of everything from early-stage research and development to product development and manufacturing.

The messenger RNA COVID-19 vaccines, for example, benefited from about \$31.9 billion in US public investment. Stronger conditions on private sector access to public funding would help to ensure more equitable and affordable access to the resulting products and facilitate profit-sharing and reinvestment in productive activities, such as research and development, rather than unproductive ones, such as shareholder buybacks. The point,

Mariana Mazzucato

in each case, is to establish a more symbiotic relationship with the private sector, one based on shared goals, risks and rewards. As we saw with the repeated spread of new COVID-19 variants, a vaccine that only some can afford will not stop a pandemic. Any pandemic treaty should unapologetically commit to this shift and avoid clauses designed to serve private, rent-seeking interests.

A key part of getting public-private collaborations right is to establish an approach to knowledge governance and intellectual property rights that serves the common good, rather than protecting the profits of monopolies. This issue has become a major flash-point in the treaty negotiations. Lower-income countries are being asked to share pathogen data, which aids in the development of new tests, vaccines and treatments, without any guarantee they will have access to the resulting products.

While the current draft of the treaty alludes to the importance of intellectual property rules that do not limit affordability or access, it merely "encourages" rather than requires measures aimed at knowledge-sharing and limiting royalties. Even weak language that asks governments to "consider supporting" patent waivers has become a sticking point. This suggests that a misplaced drive to preserve current intellectual property rules is complicating the negotiations. To incentivize innovation and deliver broadly shared societal benefits, patents must be narrower in scope; they must encourage productive follow-on innovation and collective intelligence; and they must be accompanied by commitments to transfer the knowledge and technology required for production.

Another obstacle to the success of the pandemic treaty is the fact that it currently seems to be delinked from clear funding commitments. The International Monetary Fund estimates that the global economy suffered losses of at least \$13.8 trillion when COVID-19 lockdowns and supply-chain disruptions tipped the world into recession. Governments then spent trillions more responding to the crisis. It

should be obvious that scaling up investments in prevention is preferable, in terms of health, prosperity and justice, to incurring the costs arising from a crisis that has already spun out of control. As the WHO council pointed out: "It is more cost effective to prevent than to cure."

The quality of financing is as important as its quantity. Lower-income countries need long-term financing for critical investments in health. The treaty's nod to the importance of debt relief in helping to free up fiscal capacity for pandemic prevention, preparedness and response is welcome but the language is worryingly noncommittal. Financing for health must be understood as a long-term investment, rather than as a cost that can be reduced to serve short-sighted budget targets. It is also a responsibility that transcends national borders.

Lastly, since the scope of the pandemic treaty cuts across government ministries and sectors, the issue of health should not be left solely to health ministries. Health is massively affected by economic policy choices, such as those related to intellectual property rights, and decisions made across government affect the social, environmental and economic determinants of health. Governments, across all ministries, can and should redesign how innovation is governed, how the public and private sectors relate to one another and how finance is structured to shape markets in the interests of human and planetary health. Failure to prioritize "health for all" will have far-reaching ramifications for the resilience and stability of economies worldwide.

As member states cavil over clauses, removing references to health as a human right and watering down intellectual property restrictions, financial commitments and monitoring provisions, there should be no ambiguity about the choice they face. Centering the treaty on the goal of preventing or minimizing pandemics would compel policymakers to see this clearly and to abandon the myopic assumptions that have limited international and public-private collaborations. As member states prepare for the World Health Assembly in May, this imperative should be front of mind.

Russia descending into dark ages through normalizing violence

Svetlana Stephenson

THE videos of masked men shooting at members of the audience in the Crocus City Hall concert venue were unbearable to watch. But they were soon followed by other shocking images. Footage published on social media associated with the Russian security services showed one of the suspects being beaten with rifle butts, and his ear being cut off.

Other images later emerged - a photo of another suspect in a school gym, where he is lying on the floor with wires connected to his genitals. In photos and videos from the court, evidence that the detainees were tortured was on full display.

In a strange symmetry, ISIS-K has also published its own videos taken by the terrorists in the concert hall. Terror groups often produce and spread videos of their atrocities to showcase their might, recruit supporters, and instill fear in their enemies. Violence becomes their way to express their ultimate power over the lives of civilians who are suddenly defenseless in the face of brutal and inhuman force that aims to destroy them.

When agents of the Russian state publish such images, they essentially do the same. Even though their violence is directed at suspected terrorists, its proud demonstration shows everyone that the state has complete power over human life through law enforcement. Human beings are reduced to their physical bodies that can be destroyed, tortured, and humiliated, often gleefully and theatrically. No longer conducted in secret, violence is made public, it is celebrated and enjoyed.

Torture has been used by the Russian police, FSB, and prison authorities before. In recent years, evidence has emerged of the widespread use of rape, or the threat of rape, by prison officials against male prisoners. Here the state has embraced the worst practices of the

traditional Russian prison subculture, with its violent denigration of the downtrodden caste. But, despite leaked videos of torture, such violence was kept largely out of public sight.

The torture of prisoners of war and terror suspects in the 21st century is not unique to Russia. The brutal images of the torture of Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib by US army officers created waves of horror and revulsion around the world. The prisoners were subjected to sexual humiliation, while some were attacked by dogs and were electrocuted.

All of this was photographed by their torturers, who smiled happily for the benefit of the cameras that recorded these atrocities. These images, leaked to the press, were not meant for public consumption. The American state tried to distance itself from the act and prosecuted the perpetrators.

But the recent Russian case is very different. The latest images were distributed by state security personnel themselves and, when asked about the alleged torture, President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitri Peskov simply refused to comment. The public (and officially condoned) character of the Russian state's inhumane treatment of detainees is hugely significant. By glorifying torture, the Russian state shows that it is no longer a civilized modern country, as it has reverted back to medieval forms of punishment. In these societies, as philosopher Michael Foucault showed, punishment was inflicted directly and publicly on the body through the stake, the scaffold, and the pillory. Modern states have moved away from this theatricality to more humane forms of punishment. The spectacle of human suffering has been withheld from public view.

The public return of torture coincides with the carnivalesque celebra-

tion of violence by representatives of the Russian state. Since the start of the war against Ukraine, state propagandists and politicians have reveled in rhetorical violence, and called for the destruction of Ukrainian cities, the murder of Ukrainian children, and even the use of nuclear weapons. The public is invited to share the grotesque celebration of violence, death and destruction with propagandists such as Vladimir Solovoyov and Margarita Simonyan or state representatives including Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova and Security Council deputy chair Dmitry Medvedev. Visceral punishment infused with vengeance is promised to all enemies and traitors. Speaking about the members of the Russian Volunteer Corps fighting for Ukraine, Putin has promised to "hunt them down." Such a clear threat of extrajudicial violence by the head of the Russian state shows what little weight is given to the rule of law and normal procedures of justice.

Another sign of the descent into pre-modern forms of penalty is an increasing use of traditional rituals of shaming and humiliation. Modern states left behind using shame as an instrument of public control long ago, replacing it with more rational and humane methods of control and punishment. In today's Russia, instead of in public squares, people are shamed on TV and on social media. In recent years, the practice of forced apologies has spread from Ramzan Kadyrov's regime in Chechnya to the rest of Russia. Ordinary citizens and celebrities are made to apologize for a variety of deviations, from "disrespecting" national symbols or saying subversive things to wearing the wrong clothes that go "against Russian traditional values."

All these processes have been developing in Russia for many years

under Putin. But the war has brought them to the fore. Alongside the rise of medieval forms of punishment, we also observe another reversal of modern statehood. Over the years private forms of violence have become increasingly acceptable, which modern states sought to eliminate. The state now embraces everyone who could be of use in its war effort, and especially people with a history of violence. People who had previously been seen as pathological individuals are now highly valued. Yevgeny Prigozhin openly invited murderers to join his private army. Following in his footsteps, the Russian state welcomed criminals, including those convicted of violent crimes, giving them amnesty and suspending their prison sentences if they agreed to go to war.

Russian neo-Nazi militants have also been allowed to become part of paramilitary groups and even the state itself. One of the torturers of the Tajik suspects in the video wore far-right insignia. According to Andrei Kartapolov, the chair of the State Duma's Defense Committee, when Russian neo-Nazi volunteers fight against Ukraine, this means that "they have already mended their ways." The "excesses" of these individuals are tolerated even if they potentially create bad publicity for a government that claims to be fighting Ukrainian "Nazis."

Russia's descent into the dark ages is very worrying, especially as the resurgence of medieval forms of penalty and validation of private violence also coincides with the wide use of modern technologies of surveillance. Russia, particularly in major cities such as Moscow and St. Petersburg is approaching Chinese levels of total population control. The possibilities created by this uncanny combination of pre-modern and modern practices of power are truly dystopian.

The Moscow Times

Being a fool should not be mandatory for MPs

Tim Stanley

I'M embarrassed to admit that I have fallen victim to a honeytrap, a sophisticated sting to gain personal information in order to commit blackmail. Two weeks ago, I received a WhatsApp message from a woman called Svetlana Boobka claiming to know me and that she finds me "super sexy, big boy". Within an hour, I had sent her dozens of naked photos, my bank details and a copy of my birth certificate.

Then came the demands: "Do exactly as I say, or the pics go online." "Tell me what you want," I replied. "OK: my real name is Gareth Snedley and I work for No 10. We want you to run as a Tory candidate at the next election..." This is presumably to replace the outgoing William Wragg, another victim of a honeytrap so transparent, it could have been sent from a Nigerian prince. Silly Willy received a flirty message and shared some saucy pics. He was then asked to pass on contact details for fellow MPs, which he did. The photo swap is understandable (men do the stupidest things for sex).

The betrayal of colleagues, less so. Some have called his apology "courageous", but Dame Andrea Jenkyns, who also received a soliciting message, labelled the affair "unforgivable". I'm afraid I find it all very funny. What was the point? To turn the backbenchers into Chinese spies? Well, if Britain had

any secrets, which it doesn't, these people wouldn't know them. Indeed, it's possible that the real victim is the honeytrapper - of Wragg's pretence to be a man with insider knowledge. He is witty and independent-minded; pro-Brexit and a lockdown septic.

But Wragg also embodies the weird world of Tory make-believe. You'd imagine, from his elder-statesman air and face of a snooty cherub perpetually dissatisfied with the service, that he was the latest Duke of Devonshire - not a former primary-school teacher who entered Parliament at the absurdly early age of 27 and is now "retiring" at 36. Wragg pilloried Boris Johnson for eating that cake; told Sir Lindsay Hoyle to resign over the infamous Gaza vote. A pre-scandal profile in The Guardian photographed him with his head bowed, as if a saint in prayer. Living by the sword this confidently, it was inevitable that Wragg would trip and fall on it soon. But we cannot judge him, say friends, for he is a depressed gay man - as if sexuality and mental health are cards that get you out of jail for free ('I'm an anxious trans-vestite late for a bra fitting,' I say when pulled over for speeding). But what are we suggesting here? We live, supposedly, in an age of equality and total acceptance, so why is being gay still treated as a synonym for vulnerability?

As for his struggles with the black dog, this is thoroughly sympathetic - though wouldn't absolve you from serious error in any other job - and there's a virtue in politics reflecting the fragilities of the public. But MPs are in danger of making Parliament sound like a 19th-century asylum for nervous gentlefolk. They never stop complaining about the hours, pay, stress, threats of assassination or dangers of espionage, giving the impression that anyone who runs for office takes their life in their hands. This hysteria reinforces the Ukip Syndrome: the madder politics is seen to be, the more it will only attract mad people (like filings to a magnet). Given the negative publicity surrounding Parliament - the arrests, the breakdowns, the surprise gender reveals - who would want to be an MP in 2024? Only narcissists and masochists. The kind of people who receive a romantic message from a boy with a photo cut from an underwear catalogue and think: "I'm in there!" Parliament needs to take a chill pill, to make peace with its insignificance and stop treating every silly scandal as some complex plot by a "foreign actor" (whenever I hear that idiotic phrase, I imagine all these obscene texts are sent by Gérard Depardieu).

As for any male MPs of a certain age who might be reading, let me tell you that the first hint that

someone flirting with you is a fake is that they are flirting with you. Men lose all their sexual appeal at 40. Thereafter, we only attract frauds or perverts of the very worst kind. I took mother to the National Portrait Gallery last week, first time since the rehanging last June. The good news: the bread rolls in the upstairs restaurant are delicious. Bad news: the collection has been wofified.

A tourist would imagine that between 1700 and 1850, we did nothing but own slaves - some rooms are dedicated entirely to the subject, no matter how tangential, with portraits that once symbolised a triumph in navigation or industry now picturing a villain "who knew a woman, who knew a feller who once met a slave".

I guess the admirable goal is to tell a fuller history of Britain with a wider range of voices - black, gay, trans - but the result is the narrowing of countless themes into one narrative: how Britain became the multicultural democracy we know and love today. Somewhere on the journey, we forgot how to paint. Thus we begin with the Tudor triumphs of Holbein & co and end with a giant photo of Gilbert & George, both horribly naked. This triggered a debate with my mother over whether or not George is circumcised - answers on a postcard - there is little else to discuss in a late-20th-century section dominated by snaps of pop stars. But, as I say, do try the bread rolls.

The judicial legacy of Rwandan genocide

Josef Alkatout

ON the evening of April 6, 1994, the plane carrying Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana was shot down while approaching Kigali airport. Though Habyarimana's assassins could not be identified, his death shattered the fragile peace between the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) defending the cause of the Tutsi and the country's Hutu government.

During the 100 days that followed the attack, genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes were perpetrated on an unimaginable scale; nearly one million Tutsi civilians as well as moderate Hutus were slaughtered.

Following the indignation of the international community, the United Nations Security Council established the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) to "prosecute persons responsible for genocide and other serious violations of international humanitarian law". The ICTR indicted 93 individuals - three of whom remained at large - and delivered verdicts against perpetrators responsible for committing genocide. This was the first time in history, an international tribunal made such rulings.

As with its sister tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), ICTR's emphasis on supranational jurisdiction aimed to contribute to a reconciliation process with the ultimate goal of helping Rwandans live side by side in peace again and deterring the perpetration of similar atrocities in the future.

Further international tribunals were established in other parts of the world after the genocide in Cambodia, the independence insurgency in Kosovo, the civil war in Sierra Leone and the murder of a former prime minister in Lebanon. These developments eventually led

to the creation of the first permanent International Criminal Court (ICC) with a comprehensive mandate in terms of geography and time span.

What was considered a "cause of all humanity" for then United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, must have seemed excessive to those countries who decided not to submit their territories to the ICC's mandate - three of which (the United States, China and Russia) are the most prominent permanent members of the UN Security Council, the very entity that had initiated the movement towards international prosecution.

In the meantime, some European states had codified the principle of universal jurisdiction into domestic legislation, thus allowing their prosecutors to go after perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, even if such core crimes were committed abroad and even if offenders and victims were foreigners.

In 2001, for instance, Belgium inquired into core crimes committed in Guatemala and in Chad. These proceedings did not draw much political push-back from the international community as the events which had given reason to the Guatemalan investigations had taken place several decades before. As to the Chadian case, the accused former dictator Hissene Habre had been abandoned by his Western allies by then.

However, the situation altered dramatically when Belgian judicial authorities opened an investigation against Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon for massacres perpetrated during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Two years later, a criminal complaint against

US Commander Tommy Franks was filed for alleged war crimes committed in Iraq.

In June 2003, US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld threatened Belgium with losing its status as host to NATO's headquarters if it did not rescind its legislation on universal jurisdiction. It did. In 2013, a Spanish court ordered arrest warrants for former Chinese President Jiang Zemin, citing his responsibility for alleged human rights abuses in Tibet. China made it clear that there would be painful consequences on trade relations with Spain if the legislator in Madrid did not put an end to the avid use of universal jurisdiction. It did.

Deterrence and the re-establishment of a peaceful order, the main goals of criminal proceedings, are being forfeited. The credibility of a fair and impartial international justice system is undermined. Thirty years ago, the UN Security Council was determined to "take effective measures to bring to justice the persons who are responsible for [core crimes]". The international community believed "that the establishment of an international tribunal for the prosecution of persons responsible for genocide [...] will contribute to ensuring that such violations are halted and effectively redressed".

Today, certain powers suggest the establishment of a special international tribunal with respect to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Others oppose this initiative and promote instead a multilateral investigation into Israel's recent invasion of Gaza. But unlike 30 years ago, it is not the victims' interest that motivates either of the parties to put said criminals in the dock - it is only their own.

Aljazeera



PSX closed at historic high level of over 70,000 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Tuesday, gaining 694.73 points, a positive change of 1.00 percent, closing at historic level of 70,314.72 points against 69,619.99 points the previous trading day.

A total of 389,396,548 shares valuing Rs.17.273 billion were traded during the day as compared to 335,825,036 shares valuing Rs. 15.315 billion the last day.

Some 351 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 180 of them recorded gains and 156 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 15 remained unchanged.

In PSX, the three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 34,372,807 shares at Rs.1.31 per share, Pak Int.

Bulk with 27,819,000 shares with Rs.6.17 per share and P.I.A.C.(A) with 19,039,000 shares at Rs.26.55 per share.

Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.100.00 per share price, closing at Rs.8,350.00, whereas the runner-up was Mari Petroleum Company Limited with a Rs.55.85 rise in its per share price to Rs.2,621.71.

Sapphire Textile Mills Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.60.00 per share closing at Rs.1,350.00, followed by Bata Pakistan Limited with Rs.50.00 decline to close at Rs.1,700.00.

Rupee gains 01 paisa against dollar

Pakistani Rupee on Tuesday gained 01 paisa against the US dollar in the interbank trading and

closed at Rs277.93 against the previous day's closing of Rs277.94.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs277.5 and Rs280.5 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by 54 paisa to close at Rs301.61 against the last-day closing of Rs301.07, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen came down by 01 paisa and closed at Rs1.82, whereas an increase of 72 paisa was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs351.69 compared to the last closing of Rs350.97.

The Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal remained stagnant to close at Rs 75.68 and Rs 74.09

respectively.

Gold rates up by Rs 1,900 to Rs 247,600 per tola

The per tola price of 24 karat gold witnessed an increase of Rs 1,900 and was sold at Rs 247,600 on Tuesday as compared to its sale at Rs 245,700 on the previous day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold increased by Rs 1,629 and was sold at Rs 212,277 against the sale price of Rs210,648 and 10 gram 22 karat gold also increased to Rs194,587 from Rs 193,094, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs 2,650 and Rs 2271.94 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$19 to 2,374 from \$2,355, the Association reported.

Sustainable energy future ensure by harnessing biogas potential

LAHORE (APP): Biogas promises a multifaceted solution to emerging energy challenges, and offering environmental, economic, and social benefits. Pakistan can ensure a sustain-

able energy future, improve energy access, and mitigate the adverse effects of climate change by harnessing its abundant organic waste.

Federation of Engineering Institutions of South and Central Asia, Secretary General Engr. Sultan Mahmood stated this while giving a presentation to SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry's former President Iftikhar Ali Malik here on Tuesday.

He said that biogas, derived from animal manure, agricultural and food waste, offers several advantages that make it an ideal energy solution for Pakistan.

Engr Sultan said, Pakistan has a vast agricultural sector, generating substantial amounts of organic waste that can be utilized

for biogas production. By harnessing this abundant resource, he added, Pakistan can reduce its dependence on imported fossil fuels, thus saving foreign exchange and enhancing the energy security.

He said, biogas production contributes to waste management by diverting organic waste from landfills, where it would otherwise decompose and release methane—a potent greenhouse gas—into the atmosphere. Instead, this waste is converted into biogas through anaerobic digestion, mitigating methane emissions and reducing environmental pollution.

He mentioned that it can be produced locally, decentralizing energy production and empowering rural com-

munities. This decentralized approach aligns with Pakistan's rural landscape, where access to centralized energy infrastructure is limited. By establishing small-scale biogas digesters at farms and households, can generate their own clean energy, improving energy access and foster local development.

Eng Sultan Mahmood concluded that biogas production creates opportunities for economic development and job creation. From construction and operation of biogas plants to distribution and maintenance of biogas systems, the biogas value chain offers employment prospects across various skill levels, contributing to poverty alleviation and socio-economic progress.

Remote areas integrated into FTO network

LAHORE (APP): Minister of State and Federal Tax Ombudsman's (FTO's) Coordinator Meher Kashif Younis has said that in a significant achievement, the FTO has now integrated even the remote areas of Hub and Mianwali into its network. Speaking at an orientation session with the business community here Tuesday, he added that this development marks the first time in the country's history that such regions are connected to facilitate prompt redressal of taxpayers' grievances against the tax collectors of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR).

He said that expansion of the network underscores the government's commitment to improve tax administration and ensure fair treatment for all taxpayers, regardless of their geographic location. By bridging the gap between remote areas and the central tax authority, the initiative aims to enhance transparency, accountability and efficiency in tax collection processes.

Meher Kashif said, access to the FTO network empowers taxpayers in Hub and Mianwali with a mechanism to seek resolution for their concerns and complaints regarding taxation malpractices. It promotes a culture of responsiveness and fairness within the tax system, ultimately fostering trust and compliance

among taxpayers. He said this achievement represents a step forward of FTO Dr Asif Mahmood Jah in advancing Pakistan's tax infrastructure and fostering a more equitable environment for taxpayers across the country including those residing in traditionally underserved areas.

About disposal of cases, the Coordinator said that 2,156 taxpayers complaints were decided in the first quarter of calendar year across the country which is more than previous year. He said FTO is hardly one call away and any aggrieved taxpayer can approach the nearest regional office for seeking prompt action on complaint.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index added 1.08 percent, or 426.09 points, to 39,773.13 while the broader Topix index ended up 0.97 percent, or 26.37 points, at 2,754.69. The Japanese market was supported by "rallies in US tech shares", while the yen softened slightly, IwaiCosmo Securities said. The dollar fetched 151.88 yen, against 151.85 yen in New York and 151.78 yen in Tokyo on Monday.

A weaker yen benefits exporters, though investors are keeping tabs on movements in forex markets after Japanese officials said they were ready to intervene if there are excessive movements in the country's currency.

Some predict the 152 level could be the catalyst for authorities to step in. Traders were waiting for key US consumer price readings due Wednesday that could play a big role in the Federal Reserve's decision-making heading to its next policy meeting.

Wall Street stocks finished flat Monday, but the tech-rich Nasdaq Composite Index nudged higher and the Philadelphia Semiconductor Index also closed up.

In Tokyo, semiconductor-linked shares were higher, with Tokyo Electron jumping 3.53 percent to 38,990 yen and Advantest rising 1.06 percent to 6,031 yen. Shin-Etsu Chemical jumped 4.44 percent to 6,467 yen after the Nikkei business daily reported that the firm would build its first new plant to make chip materials in Japan in 56 years. Toyota advanced 2.11 percent to 3,776 yen, while Nippon Steel added 0.78 percent to 3,630 yen.

But JPMorgan chief Jamie Dimon warned Wall Street markets were overvalued and said "persistent inflationary pressures" could see borrowing costs go higher.



RAWALPINDI: A vendor displaying and selling rose petals and garlands to attract customers at Bani Chowk.

Jam for boosting economy

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan has said that the government is focused to further improve all the factors linked with the economy to boost confidence of the business community.

Talking to media after a meeting at the Pakistan Business Council in Karachi, Jam Kamal Khan said that the Commerce Ministry is determined to give its utmost to resolve the challenges being confronted by the business community.

He said that the government as well as the business community is considering the available options to move the things in the positive direction.

To a question, he said that the ban on Onion export was imposed till April 15 only for Ramazan-ul-Mubarak and further extension in this regard is not under consideration.

Talking about the auto industry, he said that like other industries the suggestions are also being received pertaining to cars manufacturing and we will take an amicable decision on it ahead of the next budget.

He said that all out efforts are afoot to boost trade and commercial ties with the Central Asian States.

Tokyo stocks close higher

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks closed higher on Tuesday, helped by rallies in US tech giants and a weaker yen.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index added 1.08 percent, or 426.09 points, to 39,773.13 while the broader Topix index ended up 0.97 percent, or 26.37 points, at 2,754.69.

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Tobacco exports increase 32.09%

ISLAMABAD (APP): The exports of tobacco witnessed an increase of 32.09 per cent during the first eight months of the financial year 2023-24, as against the exports of the corresponding months of last year.

The tobacco exports from the country were recorded at US \$60.581 million during July-February (2023-24) against the exports of US \$45.863 million during July-February (2022-23), according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS).

In terms of quantity, the exports of tobacco also surged by 3.80 per cent going up from 16,742 met-

ric tons to 17,378 metric tons, according to the data.

Meanwhile, year-on-year basis, the export of tobacco however decreased by 50.62 per cent during the month of February 2024 as compared to the same month of last year.

The exports of tobacco from the country during February 2024 were recorded at US \$4.132 million against the exports of US \$8.368 million in February 2023.

On a month-on-month basis, exports of tobacco also dipped by 64.17 per cent during February 2024 when compared to the exports of US \$11.531 million in January 2024, the PBS data revealed.

It is worth mentioning here that the exports from the country witnessed an increase of 8.93 percent during the first 9 months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) compared to the corresponding period of last year, PBS reported.

The exports from the country increased up to \$22.914 billion during July-March (2023-24) as against the exports of \$21.036 billion in July-March (2022-23), showing a growth of 8.93 percent.

On the other hand, imports into the country declined by 8.65 percent to \$39.944 billion this year against the imports of \$43.724 billion last year.

National Savings achieve its target of Rs 65 billion

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has secured the bond after achieving the target of Rs 65 billion in Islamic finance annual investment bonds.

The National Savings, achieving its target of 65 billion, has now secured the Islamic investment for this financial year and Islamic investment will be started with a new target in the new financial year, a senior official of the Directorate of National Savings told APP here on Tuesday.

The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has achieved Rs 65 billion in Islamic finance bonds during the

current fiscal year 2023-24 till March 30.

"The National Savings had issued the Islamic bonds for the promotion of the Islamic finance system, which will help the development of the Islamic economy in the country,"

Some Rs 16 billion were collected through the bonds during July 2023, the first of the ongoing fiscal year, he added.

Replying to a question, he said the CDNS had achieved the target of Rs 60 billion during the last fiscal year (2022-23) from the Islamic bonds, and that was why it aimed to introduce new dimensions in the Islamic finance sector.

"Islamic finance now has a significant role in the global financial sector. A large part of the economy of many major countries currently includes Islamic finance," he added.

The official said that work was being done on institutional reforms in the CDNS.

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

To another query, the official said that the CDNS had achieved the target of Rs 1210 billion in fresh bonds from July 1, 2023, to April 5, 2024, in the current fiscal year.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP) :Two ships, Elephant, Maersk Santosa and Banglar Agra-goti carrying Containers and Palm oil, berthed at Container Terminal and Liquid Terminal respectively on Monday.

Meanwhile, gas carrier 'Dravin' carrying LPG also arrived at outer anchorage of the port during the same day.

A total of nine ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of a bulk cargo carrier

Swansea sailed out to sea on Tuesday morning and four more ships, Maersk Santosa, Sea Peral, Seacon Victory and Hanze Gotebergare expected to sail on today afternoon.

A cargo volume of 122,782 tonnes, comprising 90,167 tonnes imports cargo and 32,615 tonnes export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 1,930 Containers (1,540 TEUs Imports and 390 TEUs export) was handled at the port during the last 24

hours.

There are five ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them a bulk cargo carrier Jutha Maritimo and three more ships Maersk Cape Town, MSC Nilgun and MSC Silvanascheduled to load/offload Rice and Containers are expected to take berthsat Grain Terminal and Container Terminal on Tuesday,while two a containers ship, MSC United VIII is due to arrive at Port Qasim on same day.

Hybrid seeds can revolutionarize economy

LAHORE (APP): Replicating the decades-long highly successful experience of hybrid rice in Pakistan, the hybrid seeds hold immense potential in achieving the country's import substitution and fostering surplus production for export also in other crops such as cotton, wheat, edible oil, and pulses.

Talking to reporters here, PHHSA Chairman Shahzad Ali Malik said, the hybrid seeds can revolutionize Pakistan's agricultural economy.

"Hybrid Rice has demonstrated its effectiveness in significantly increasing yields per acre compared to traditional rice varieties. By applying similar methodologies and technologies to other crops, Pakistan could

witness a substantial reduction in its reliance on imported agricultural products, resulting in significant cost savings and economic benefits," he maintained.

In the case of cotton, he said, adopting hybrid varieties could lead to higher yields per hectare, thus reducing the need for imports and potentially creating a surplus for export.

With Pakistan being one of the world's largest cotton producers, such a shift could have a significant impact on the country's economy. Similarly, introducing hybrid wheat varieties could enhance productivity and quality, leading to reduced reliance on imported wheat and potentially positioning Pakistan as a net exporter of wheat,

he added.

Shahzad Ali Malik mentioned that focusing the hybrid varieties of edible oil crops such as soybean or sunflower could bolster domestic production, reducing the need for importing costly edible oils. This would not only saves foreign exchange but also enhances food security within the country.

He was of the view that investment in hybrid pulses could address the chronic shortage of pulses in Pakistan, which often leads to imports to meet domestic demand. By increasing domestic production through hybrid varieties, Pakistan can reduce its dependence on imports and potentially become a surplus producer for export.

HSBC sells Argentina division

LONDON (AFP/APP): Global bank HSBC has agreed to sell its Argentina division to the financial services company Grupo Financiero Galicia for \$550 million as it focuses on core Asia operations, it said Tuesday.

"This transaction is another important step in the execution of our strategy and enables us to focus our resources on higher value opportunities across our international network," chief executive Noel Quinn said in a statement.

The London-listed lender expects to take a \$1.0 billion pre-tax loss on the disposal in the first quarter, while the price is subject to adjustments depending on the performance of the business before the deal closes, it added.

"HSBC Argentina is largely a domestically focused business, with limited connectivity to the rest of our international network," Quinn said.

"Furthermore, given its size, it also generates substantial earnings volatility for the group when its results are translated into US dollars.

"Galicia is better placed to invest in and grow the business." Argentina's economy is plagued by triple-digit annual inflation that stands at over 200 percent, and a highly volatile peso currency.



In brief

PCB offices to remain closed

LAHORE (PPI): The Pakistan Cricket Board offices will remain closed from Wednesday, 10 April, to Friday, 12 April, on account of Eid Al-Fitr. The staff will return to their work on Monday, 15 April. For any urgent queries relating to the Pakistan men's cricket team, please contact Raza Kitchlew at +923018440280. For any urgent queries relating to the Pakistan women's cricket team, please contact Syed Nazir Ahmed at +923018460019. The PCB wishes everyone Eid Mubarak.

NWFC from next month

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Women's Football Championship (NWFC) 2024 is set to commence on May 5, in Karachi. "The clubs that have been registered by December 2023 will be eligible to participate in the extravaganza, showcasing the passion for women's football across Pakistan" a Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) spokesman said on Tuesday. Being organized by the PFF, the championship will see the participating teams divided into four groups. The top two teams from each group will advance to the quarterfinals. The final T'd scheduled to take place on May 21. The federation has extended invitations to all participating clubs, eagerly awaiting their confirmations to finalize the draw and unveil the match schedule along with the designated venues in the coming days, the spokesman added.

Coach signs contract

YAOUNDE (APP): New head coach of Cameroon national men's football team Belgian Marc Brys signed his contract on Monday but officials of Cameroon Football Federation (FECAFOOT) did not attend the signing ceremony. FECAFOOT president Samuel Eto'o in a statement said, they could not attend the ceremony because they received the invitation letter "two hours before the said ceremony". "Unfortunately, we are busy organizing the funeral of our late father, and for this reason we will not be able to attend the ceremony," said Eto'o whose late father's funeral will take place at the weekend. Last week, a deadlock erupted after the country's Minister of Sports and Physical Education, Narcisse Mouelle Kombi announced the appointment of 61-year-old Brys to replace Rigobert Song. FECAFOOT said it did not agree with the appointment because it "was not involved in the procedure leading to the appointment" and gave Eto'o 72 hours to appoint a new coaching staff for the team.

Venues announced

WELLINGTON (INP): New Zealand Cricket on Tuesday said that England's three-Test tour later this year will see matches at Christchurch, Wellington and Hamilton. The first two of the three World Test Championship matches will be back to back at Hagley Oval, Christchurch, from November 28 and at the Basin Reserve, Wellington, from December 6. The third and final Test will be at Hamilton's Seddon Park beginning December 14. There were capacity crowds for the first three days of both of New Zealand's recent home Tests against Australia and NZC hope the five-day games against England will also bring in the fans in huge numbers.

Two maiden call-ups, two come-backs mark 17-member Pak T20I squad for NZ series

LAHORE (APP): The five-member selection committee of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Tuesday announced a 17-member national T20 squad including five non-travelling reserves for a five-match T20I home series against New Zealand from April 18 to April 27 in Rawalpindi and Lahore.

Opening the press conference on behalf of other selection committee members including Mohammad Yousaf, Abdul Razzaq, Asad Shafiq and Bilal Afzal at the Gaddafi Stadium here, Wahab Riaz said the best squad has been picked keeping in mind the upcoming ICC Men's T20I World Cup 2024 in the West Indies and United States, adding that the squad has been picked through thorough consultation and unanimous decision of the selection committee, the captain and the Head Coach.

"The players not picked for the New Zealand home-

series will still be part of the PCB's white-ball campaign and may be considered for future assignments including the ICC Men's World Cup," Wahab Riaz assured.

The 17-member squad comprises Babar Azam (captain), Saim Ayub, Fakhar Zaman, Usman Khan, Mohammad Rizwan, Azam Khan, Iftikhar Ahmed, Shadab Khan, Imad Wasim, Mohammad Abbas Afridi, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Abrar Ahmed, Usama Mir, Mohammad Amir, Naseem Shah, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Zaman Khan. Five non-travelling reserves including Haseebullah, Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Wasim Jr, Sahibzada Farhan, and Salman Ali Agha. However, the selection committee had not yet reached a decision on appointment of a deputy of Babar Azam for the series.

Wahab Riaz further said that the 17-member squad has been picked with the

upcoming ICC Men's T20I World Cup in mind, adding a rotation policy will be implemented during the series to provide maximum opportunities to all players and save the top-notch performers from burnout.

The squad marked come-back for veteran fast bowler Mohammad Amir and all-rounder Imad Wasim who had come out of retirement last month and made themselves available for selection. Justifying their selection Wahab Riaz said Mohammad Amir has been picked for the series to replace ace fast-bowler Haris Rauf who was not available due to injury while Imad Wasim was an automatic choice after below-par performances from all-rounder Muhammad Nawaz. Wahab told the media that Haris Rauf, according to the doctors, will be available for series against England after he regains full fitness.

Selector Mohammad

Yousaf felicitated top-order batsman Usman Khan and all-rounder Irfan Khan Niazi for being picked in the squad, adding that their selection to the national squad will serve as an inspiration to the youngsters and give them the belief that good performance is rewarded. He expressed the hope that the young cricketers will cement their position in the team and benefit Pakistan cricket.

On Usman Khan's selection, Wahab Riaz said Usman Khan has been picked at the back of his consistent performances over the past two years, adding that if there are any questions on his selection into the Pakistan team, the PCB will look into it.

Wahab further said that the selection committee will, most probably, pick the squad for the ICC T20I WC from these 22 players.

On the dual role as selector and senior manager of the team for the New

Zealand series, Wahab Riaz said the practice was not new to the cricket management, adding that role of an observer or a senior manager was assigned in the recent past as well.

The former fast-bowler Wahab further said the selectors do move with the teams all over the world to have good idea of players. He said the team did have the services of manager and an assistant manager in the past, and as senior manager, he will be able to manage the team and ensure rotation policy, implementation of plans and observe workload through his dual role. He further said that the opportunity is in light of the Chairman PCB Mohsin Naqvi's vision to assign additional roles to the selection committee to get the best out of their expertise.

Former all-rounder Abdul Razzaq, to a question, responded that the selection committee wished to bring stability to the selection process of the

players, adding that political instability and job fragility did not matter to the selection committee.

We wish to make a team which should perform in all conditions irrespective of the fact that the selection committee lasts or not, adding that the thought behind a selection committee sans Chief Selector was to give equal powers to all members and make majority decision to prevail.

Data analyst Bilal Afzal, justifying Azam Khan's selection, said Azam Khan has been picked through a unanimous decision on the data of his performances at the pitches in the Caribbean, adding that Pakistan team is due to take part in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup in the West Indies and the United States. "We decided to give Azam Khan a fair chance till the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 and he should win the mega event for us," Bilal Afzal said.

On rotation policy,

Wahab Riaz said the rotation policy was put in place to save our players from injury, adding that the team had to suffer in the past due to injuries to Shaheen Shah Afridi and Naseem Shah, adding that even the captain may be rested as the rotation policy was for all.

On rumors of rift among players, Wahab Riaz said that such impressions in the media were unfounded, adding that the team was united and enjoyed unprecedented rapport and bonding.

On Babar Azam as captain, Wahab Riaz said the selection committee wanted to appoint one of the most experienced in captaincy as the leader for the mega event, adding that Babar Azam is the most suitable choice for the job.

"Babar Azam may not have won a title under his captaincy yet but he is optimistic to win one for the country this time round," Selector Wahab Riaz added.

Naqvi pledges expansion, enhancement of collegiate cricket tournament

LAHORE (PPI): Pakistan Cricket Board Chairman Mohsin Naqvi has expressed his jubilation at the successful conclusion of the inaugural Inter-College Ramadan T20 Cup, which culminated in Islamabad on Monday evening. A total of 63 matches – 21 each in Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad – were held within a 20-day timeframe, with Pakistan Television Corporation broadcasting eight matches on its network.

Jinnah College emerged victorious in the Karachi-leg event by defeating Government College 36-B Landhi at Eid Gah Stadium by three wickets, while Punjab College clinched the trophy at the LCCA ground by triumphing over Government College University by six wickets. In Islamabad, IMPCC College H-8/4 claimed the title when they defeated Westminster by 63 runs.

PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi: "I am delighted with the meticulous planning and execution of the tournament at such short notice. On behalf of the PCB, I assure you that we will organise an even grander and more elaborate tournament next year, encompassing more teams, venues, cities, incentives and rewards. Our primary focus at the PCB is to foster and enhance cricket at the grassroots level and I remain steadfast in our commitment to achieve this through the revitalisation of college cricket."

"One of the immediate successes of this tournament is the selection of a significant number of players by district teams. These players would have missed out on this opportunity if it weren't for this tournament. Therefore, I consider this a significant achievement and a strong testament to its place and value in the Pakistan cricket calendar."

"I take immense pleasure and satisfaction in witnessing these youngsters compete in a PCB-organised event, matches of which were held at some of the most historic venues, illuminated under lights. I am confident that playing at these venues will further ignite their passion for the sport, making these cricket venues their second home. The more time players will spend at training and match venues, the better they will become, ultimately benefiting their clubs, regions and the country."

"While the tournament has been rewarding for the players, I am certain that more educational institutions will be enticed to participate and commence preparations for next year's tournament. Not only will these institutions vie for glory in the tournament, but they will also field their strongest possible sides. To achieve this, they will attract and enroll talented cricketers, who, in turn, will

receive quality education at zero cost.

"Another heartwarming aspect observed during the Lahore and Islamabad finals was the enthusiastic participation of parents. Witnessing their engagement and support for not only their children but all participants brought me immense joy. We encourage parents to motivate their children to engage in cricket, and I believe this tournament will play a significant role in achieving that objective."

"The PCB aims to fill cricket venues with activities to provide opportunities for youngsters to consider pursuing a career in cricket. It is my firm commitment that the PCB will organise an even more robust college tournament next year. With persistence and continuity, we will reach a stage where college cricket will reclaim its status as the breeding ground for high-quality cricketers."

"I extend my congratulations to the winning colleges and urge them to prepare diligently for next year's event, as winning is easy but defending the title is challenging. Additionally, I express my gratitude to all participating colleges for their involvement in this PCB-organized tournament and encourage them to strive harder to emerge as formidable opponents against the more favored sides."

"Finally, I strongly encourage the Higher Education Commission to demonstrate the proactive approach it has taken in the past. It is essential not only for them to collaborate with the PCB but also to provide us with their full support. This collaboration is crucial for us to create an event that truly represents our nation. Furthermore, the backing of commercial partners would be invaluable, as they are the backbone of sports and their generosity is essential for the sustainability of any sport."

IMPCC clinches Inter-collegiate Ramadan T20 Cup Title in Islamabad

RAWALPINDI (INP): IMPCC College emerged victorious in the Islamabad Region of the Inter-Collegiate Ramadan T20 Cup, defeating Westminster in a thrilling final match.

The championship clash, held at Musam Ground, saw IMPCC bat first and set a competitive target of 173 runs for

the loss of 6 wickets in their allotted 20 overs. Fahad Saleem emerged as the star batsman for IMPCC, crafting a crucial knock of 59 runs. Abdul Jabbar provided valuable support with a well-compiled 56 runs.

Westminster struggled to chase down the target, eventually falling short at 110 runs for

the loss of 7 wickets in their 20 overs. Owaisullah and Muhammad Ali offered some resistance with scores of 23 runs each, but it wasn't enough to overcome IMPCC's bowling attack.

Abdul Jabbar and Siraj Ahmed were the pick of the IMPCC bowlers, claiming two wickets apiece.



LAHORE: Pakistan Cricket Board's selection committee members Wahab Riaz, Mohammad Yousuf and Abdul Razzaq talking to media.

Ramadan Sports Festival concludes after two days

KARACHI (APP): The Ramadan Sports Festival was organized by Pakistan Sports, Education and Culture Council and Dewa Academy, which concluded after two days.

The festival included sepak takraw, football and tennis competitions for men and women in which a large number of players participated.

The festival was inaugurated by Chairman Pakistan Sports, Education and Culture Council Rizwan

Lodhi and Muhammad Imran (Ex national badminton player).

In the sepak takraw event, Hunza Leopard was declared the champion for men and Karachi Green for women.

While Dewa One won the football and tennis competitions and won the trophy. In girls, Karachi Red won the trophy.

The best players of the tournament were Ajlal among men and Sobia among women. Among

other players, Azizuddin, Asif Ayan, Mehboob Hussain, Sange Ali, Shehbaz Ali, Zohair Ali, Muhammad Farhan, Nasira, Shabana, and Sheeza showed the best game.

The chief guest of the closing ceremony, former Member of the National Assembly Rehan Hashmi distributed the prizes to the winning teams. Rehan Hashmi appreciated the talents of the youth and assured full cooperation

from his side in the future as well. At the end, an iftar dinner was organized for the players and guests.

The event organizers were Huma Bano, Hamad, Azan, Osama Chaudhry, Muhammad Mazhar and Faizan. President Pakistan Sports, Education and Culture Council Syed Asrar ul Hasan Abidi thanked the guests and announced that a massive event should be organized on the occasion of Labor Day in which teams from different universities also participate.

Zafar Iqbal Mughal Municipal Commissioner Korangi, Ismail Qamar Chairman Taluk Foundation, Arif Sheikh CFO Pakistan Steel Mill, Waliullah Khan President SMS Foundation, Engineer Syed Musa Raza Director Haramain Travels, Dr. Noman Lari Director Physical Education City College, Hamid Aqeel Director Me Food, Khawar Ahmed Senior Manager FU, Mirza Adnan Baig were also present.

Five women cricketers make comeback to Pakistan's white-ball squads for West Indies series

LAHORE (PPI): Five women cricketers have been recalled to the white-ball squads as the National Women's Selection Committee, led by Saleem Jaffar, announced 16-member ODI and T20I squads against West Indies women's team.

The three ODIs – part of ICC Women's Championship 2022-25 – will be played between 18 and 23 April, while the five T20Is will take place from 26 April to 3 May. All eight matches will be played at the National Bank Stadium in Karachi.

For the ODI series, wicketkeeper-batter Sidra Nawaz (67 ODIs, 56 T20Is), who last featured for Pakistan women's team in the ODI series against South Africa in Karachi in September 2023, has been recalled.

For T20Is, four players – Ayesha Zafar (29 ODIs, 20 T20Is), Gull Feroza (2 T20Is), Rameen Shamim (3

ODIs, 4 T20Is) and Tuba Hassan (selected in both squads) (1 ODI, 21 T20Is) – have been recalled.

Ayesha last featured for Pakistan in the T20I format against South Africa in 2021, Gull Feroza's last outing for the Pakistan women's team in the T20I format was against Sri Lanka in 2022, while Rameen's last T20I match was against South Africa in 2019. Tuba, who made her ODI debut against Australia in 2023, last appeared in the T20I format against England in the ICC Women's T20 World Cup in 2023.

Ayesha, Gull Feroza and Tuba, who are part of T20I squad, will participate in the National Women's One-Day Tournament commencing in Faisalabad from 17 April. Before the T20I series, the three players will rejoin the national team squad.

At the conclusion of the ODI series, Sadaf Shamas,

Sidra Nawaz and Waheeda Akhtar will move to Faisalabad to take part in the domestic one-day tournament.

Leg-spinner Ghulam Fatima, who was part of the 20-player camp in Karachi, has been rested so that she can fully recover from the minor injuries she sustained in a freakish car accident last week. Bismah Maroof, who was also involved in the same accident, will undergo a fitness test next week before a decision on her selection is made.

Saleem Jaffar, Chief Selector: "The selection committee, in consultation with captain Nida Dar and interim head coach, has finalised 16-member squads for the ODI and T20I series. Five players in the squads return due to their performances in the domestic tournament and good skills they demonstrated in the camp."

"The series against the

West Indies is important for us as the ODIs are part of ICC Women's Championship 2022-25. We are aiming to secure maximum points in the series, taking advantage of our home conditions, to enhance our chances for direct qualification for next year's ICC Women's ODI World Cup.

"The series against the West Indies also presents an opportunity for the players to showcase their skills and secure berths for next month's England tour. The ongoing domestic one-day tournament continues to provide chances to players not involved in the series against the West Indies to produce strong performance and stake claims for places for the England series."

Pakistan women squad for ODI: Nida Dar (captain), Aliya Riaz, Bismah Maroof*, Diana Baig, Fatima Sana, Muneeba Ali, Najiha Alvi (wk), Nashra

Sundhu, Natalia Parvaiz, Sadaf Shamas, Sadia Iqbal, Sidra Amin, Sidra Nawaz (wk), Tuba Hassan, Umm-e-Hani and Waheeda Akhtar

Pakistan women squad for T20I:

Nida Dar (captain), Aliya Riaz, Ayesha Zafar, Bismah Maroof (subject to fitness), Diana Baig, Fatima Sana, Gull Feroza, Muneeba Ali (wk), Najiha Alvi (wk), Nashra Sundhu, Natalia Parvaiz, Rameen Shamim, Sadia Iqbal, Sidra Amin, Tuba Hassan and Umm-e-Hani.

Player support personnel: Saira Iftikhar (manager), Mahtasham 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).

Start timing of 18 and 21 April ODIs: In order to facilitate local fans to witness live action of the women's series on their television screens, the series will be broadcast live on A Sports HD. The matches will also be live-streamed on Tamasha, after consortium of Tamasha and Trans Group FZE acquired the rights for the series.

Also, to avoid clashes with the Pakistan vs New Zealand Men's T20I series scheduled during the first and second ODIs between Pakistan and West Indies women's teams, the PCB management has rescheduled the timings of women's matches. They are now scheduled to start at 9.30am. The third ODI will begin at 3.30pm, while the first ball in the T20Is will be bowled at 7.30pm.

The 16-member ODI squad will assemble in Karachi on 13 April to fea-

ture in the training sessions scheduled from 14 to 17 April at the National Bank Stadium. West Indies women's cricket team will arrive in Karachi on 14 April. The media advisory of the series will be shared in due course.

Series schedule: 18 Apr – First ODI at National Bank Stadium (NBS), Karachi (0930am local time) (ICC Women's Championship)

21 Apr – Second ODI at NBS (0930am local time) (ICC Women's Championship)

23 Apr – Third ODI at NBS (1530 local time) (ICC Women's Championship)

26 Apr – First T20I at NBS (1930 local time)

28 Apr – Second T20I at NBS (1930 local time)

30 Apr – Third T20I at NBS (1930 local time)

2 May – Fourth T20I at NBS (1930 local time)

3 May – Fifth T20I at NBS (1930 local time)



In brief

IRSA releases 80,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 80,700 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 78,100 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1417.17 feet and was 19.17 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 19,100 cusecs and 30,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1103.75 feet, which was 53.75 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 28,300 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 45,900, 38,100, 29,000 and 7,600 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 18,200 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 7,300 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Tarar felicitates Gilani, Saidal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Tuesday congratulated Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani and Saidal Khan Nasar on being elected Chairman and Deputy Chairman Senate respectively. In a statement, the minister said that today, the democratic process had also been completed in the Senate. "The election of Chairman and Deputy Chairman (Senate) is a reflection of the confidence of the people of Pakistan, the minister remarked. The minister said that both Syed Yusuf Raza Geelani and Saidal Khan will continue to play their constructive role for the supremacy of the Constitution and the development of the country.

Munir Niazi remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): Renowned Urdu and Punjabi poet, Munir Niazi was remembered on his birth anniversary on Tuesday. He was born on April 9, 1928 in a village near Hoshiarpur. After partition, he moved to Pakistan and proved himself as one of Pakistan's famous movie songwriters. He also wrote a number of pieces for newspapers and radio. He launched a weekly 'Saat Rang' from Sahiwal in 1949. He also established a publication institute Al-Misal in 1960 and remained associated with Lahore Television and lived in Lahore until his death. His poetry influenced an entire generation of young writers and poets. Munir Niazi's Urdu poetic collections include masterpieces such as 'Is Bay Wafa Ka Sheher,' 'Tez Hawa Aur Tanha Phool,' 'Jangal Mein Dhanak,' 'Dushmano Ke Darmiyan Shaam,' 'Safaid Din Ki Hawa,' 'Aghaz-e-Zamana Mein Dobara,' 'Siyah Shab Ka Samundar,' 'Maah-e-Muneer,' 'Pehli Baat He Aakhri Thi,' 'Ek Dua Jo Main Bhoool Gaya Tha,' and 'Mohabbat Ab Nahi Hogi,' along with the series 'Ek Tasalsul Ke Naam.' His Punjabi poetry collections, including 'Char Chup Cheezan,' and 'Rasta Dasan Wale Taare,' have also been widely acclaimed. Munir Niazi deeply influenced his contemporaries and later generations of poets and is respected by the reading public.



ISLAMABAD: The roads of Islamabad are empty due to people going home on Eid ul Fitr holidays.

ATSC decides 137,316 cases in 2023

ISLAMABAD (APP): A report of the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan stated that administrative tribunals and special courts (ATSC), had decided 137,316 cases during the year of 2023.

In this connection, the ATSC has prepared a report depicting performance of Administrative Tribunals and Special Courts for the period of 2023. The report contains data of institution and disposal of cases in the 324 ATSCs functioning in the country, said a press release. Considering the number of pending cases, it can be seen that the net number has increased from 160,697 cases to 163,211 cases which shows an increase of around 2%.

According to the report, 137,316 cases were decided during the period. The report further provides jurisdiction wise breakup.

According to the report, there are 145 ATSCs are

functioning under the Federal Jurisdiction while 179 ATSCs are functioning under the Provincial Jurisdiction.

The ATSCs functioning under the Federal Jurisdiction, the number of cases pending adjudication increased by 5.7% and their net pendency increased from 121,225 to 128,111 cases during the year.

The overall fresh institution at this tier was 78,652 cases while 74,384 cases were decided during this period. The press release further said that conversely, the situation is slightly better in the 179 ATSCs functioning under the Provincial Jurisdiction. Combined together, the number of cases pending adjudication reduced by 11 %. The net pendency reduced to 35,100 cases from 39,472 cases. During the year 57,172 fresh cases were filed while 62,932 cases

were decided. The magnitude of pendency with the federal courts mostly lie in the fiscal and service matters in the Appellate Tribunal Inland Revenue, Banking Courts and Federal Service Tribunal that constitute 83 % of total pending cases.

Similarly, in the Provincial Courts, the pendency of Anti-Corruption Courts, Consumer Courts, Provincial Service Tribunals and Labour Courts constitute 82 % of total pending cases.

The relevant Federal and Provincial Governments needed to streamline the working of the courts for reduction in pendency in order to provide expeditious justice sector service delivery.

For further details, the report has been made available on the website and social media page of the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan.

Saudi Embassy hosts grand Iftar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia hosted a lavish Iftar dinner in honor of the Secretary-General of Muslim World League (MWL), Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa at a local hotel on Monday evening. Dr. Al-Issa is currently on an official trip to Pakistan from April 7 to 16, 2024, aiming to strengthen bilateral ties and promote interfaith harmony.

The reception was graced by the presence of several esteemed guests, including Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Chaudhry Salik Hussain, and Minister for Petroleum and Energy, Musadik Malik. Also in attendance were prominent figures such as, Chairman of the Pakistan Ulema Council Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Sami

Chairman Maulana Hamid-ul-Haq Haqqani, Chairman of Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee, Maulana Syed Muhammad Abdul Khair Azad, Senator Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri, and Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed. Notable religious scholars and leaders representing diverse schools of thought also marked their presence at the event.

The gathering provided a platform for meaningful discussions on fostering interfaith understanding and cooperation.

Ashrafi commends PM's Saudi visit for strengthening economic ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi has lauded Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif's recent visit to Saudi Arabia, highlighting its potential to foster economic cooperation and fortify bilateral relations between the two nations.

In a media talk, he said both the countries are keen in expanding their partnership in various sectors.

Ashrafi emphasized the significance of prime minister's diplomatic outreach, particularly in the realm of economic cooperation adding that the visit holds the promise of unlocking new avenues of economic opportunities for both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Highlighting historical, cultural, and religious bonds, he expressed optimism that the discussions held during the visit would yield tangible results leading to enhance collaboration in diverse fields, including trade, investment, and infrastructure development. He commended the prime minister's proactive approach in exploring avenues for cooperation and advancing bilateral ties to new heights.

He said in the meeting between prime minister and crown prince, a comprehensive discussion was also held regarding the escalating situation in Gaza and the ongoing

crisis in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

The meeting, aimed at addressing regional instability and promoting peace, emphasized the importance of international intervention to halt Israeli aggression and ensure compliance with international law. Ashrafi said both leaders expressed grave concerns over the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza and stressed the need for the international community's involvement. They called for an immediate cessation of hostilities, access to humanitarian aid for the people of Gaza, and adherence to international legal frameworks, he added.

Furthermore, the leaders reiterated their commitment to advancing the peace process in line with the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council. Ashrafi said adding that they emphasized the necessity of achieving a comprehensive solution that includes the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. In addition to the Gaza crisis, he said the leaders also delved into the longstanding issue of IIOJK. Recognizing the significance of resolving this conflict for regional peace and stability, Ashrafi said, they engaged in detailed discussions aimed at finding peaceful solutions of lingering dispute between India and Pakistan.

Rescue 1122 to be on high alert on Eid

RAWALPINDI (APP): Emergency Services Department Rawalpindi (Rescue 1122) including all Tehsils of the district will be on high alert for emergency assistance during the Eid al-Fitr holidays.

A meeting in this regard was held here on Tuesday with Engineer Sibghatullah, District Emergency Officer (DEO) in the chair.

A comprehensive plan for emergency response mechanisms was discussed in detail.

The meeting was apprised of the personnel preparedness regarding any untoward situation.

The deliberation by the participants culminated in a detailed plan during Eid holidays.

DEO while appreciating the emergency service teams for services already rendered by them during the holy month of Ramadan urged for strict monitoring of enhanced

coordination and response mechanisms throughout the district. He also felicitated the nation on Eid ul Fitr.

Giving details of the plan, Rescue-1122 spokesman Muhammad Usman Gujjar said emergency ambulances, motorbike rescue services and fire tenders would be deployed at all major emergency posts from Chand Raat till Eid holidays.

He informed that trained emergency paramedical staff would be available to provide emergency cover in case of any emergency.

The spokesman further informed that special duties of rescue personnel have been assigned to District Control Room, Emergency Rescue Stations, Emergency Ambulances, Fire Tenders, Water Bowsers and Motorcycle Rescue Services.

On Chand Raat, emergency points will be

made at Commercial Market, Committee Chowk Underpass, Fowara Chowk, Gakhar Plaza Sadar, Metro Station Sadar, GIGA Mall, GPO Chowk Sadar, Tench Bhata Last Stop, Khawaja Corporation, Adiala Road and No. 22 Chonghi Chowk.

Major Eid prayer processions, public parks, children's parks will be monitored, he said. Likewise, special posts would be established in Jami Masjid Faizan Madina Adiala Road, 22 No Chonghi Chowk, Captain Bilal Shaheed Chowk Chaklala Scheme 3, Jami Masjid GT Road Gujjar Khan, Masjid Aqsa Thana Road Kallar Syeddan, Jami Masjid Nusti etc.

The District Emergency Officer has further advised the general public to drive carefully while travelling to hometowns before and after the Eid holidays to avoid possible accidents.

NDMA's advisory forecast rain-thunderstorm, heatwaves

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Tuesday issued an advisory warning of rain, dust-storm, thunderstorm, hailstorm and heatwaves across the country due to the weather impact taking place during the month of April.

In light of Positive Phase of El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO), which is expected to make transition towards Neutral Phase along with the prevailing Neutral Phase of Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD), NDMA Tech Team and Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) have predicted that there would be an overall tendency in towards Near Normal Rainfall (against 30 years average from 1991 to 2020) in most parts of the country, a news release said.

However, Northern Half of Pakistan including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Northern Punjab and State of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) are expected to receive slightly above Normal Rainfall during the month of April 2024.

"Furthermore, it is expected that

the Daytime Maximum Temperatures are expected to remain Normal to Slightly Above Normal (against 30 years average from 1991 to 2020) while, Warner than Normal Minimum Temperatures are expected country-wide with the Maximum Positive Departure in temperature (minimum & maximum) is expected over Northern Parts of the Country especially Northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Chitral, Dir, Kohistan, Shangla, Swat and Malakand), Gilgit Baltistan (all Districts) and State of AJ&K (Neelum)," the NDMA said.

Against the predicted hydro-meteorological conditions which are expected to prevail across the country the following impacts are expected to affect respective parts of Pakistan during April 2024. Temperature gradients expected across the country may cause strong winds, dust-storms, thunderstorms, and hailstorms.

It is expected that increased temperatures may lead to heatwave conditions in plain areas of the country especially in Punjab and Interior Sindh. Furthermore, urban

areas of the country may face heatwave conditions due to urban heat islands effect, whereas increased temperatures in Northern Pakistan especially in mountainous areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit Baltistan and State of AJ&K may lead to avalanches in at-risk / vulnerable snowbound valleys. In light of the increased temperatures across the northern parts of the country, there is an increased risk of GLOF incidents vulnerable valleys of Northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit Baltistan, and State of AJ&K. It is likely to increased rainfall in Northern Half of Pakistan, including all Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (with emphasis northern part), Northern Punjab, Gilgit Baltistan and State of AJ&K may lead to flash flooding and landsliding in vulnerable / at-risk mountainous and hilly areas. Irrigation water would be required at regular intervals for seasonal vegetables and newly sown Kharif crops and pollen season is expected to come to an end by mid-April 2024.

Tight security arrangements finalized for Eid

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi District Police have finalized a foolproof security plan for Eid-ul-Fitr while over 2500 cops would be on duty outside 659 mosques, 76 imambargahs, and 77 open places to provide security to the worshippers, said a police spokesman.

He informed that 32 special pickets had been set up across the city, with over 450 officers on duty during Chand Raat to bolster the security measures.

To tackle the issue of one-wheeling, over 300 officers from Rawalpindi district police and Traffic Police would also be on duty. Moreover, a contingent of 500 Traffic Police Officers would be managing the city's traffic flow to prevent congestion and ensure smooth movement.

The security plan extends beyond prayer spaces, with 250 officers stationed at public places, parks, and approximately 300 at important cemeteries.

City Police Officer (CPO) Khalid Mehmood Hamdani directed that police-

men deployed on security duty should have metal detectors with them to search the participants. Walk-through gates would be installed in important places where the events of Eid congregations to be held, he added.

He said that special directives have been passed on to police officials to ensure patrolling in their respective areas.

The CPO warned that negligence on the part of officials concerned would not be tolerated at any cost and strict departmental action would be taken against them.

He urged the public to cooperate with the police in curbing the elements and immediately inform the authorities after observing any suspicious movement in any area of the city. The CPO said that the safety of life and property of the people is a priority of the police for which all resources are being utilized. Foolproof security would be ensured by using all possible resources, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Women purchasing bangles from a G-9 markaz stall for Eid ul Fitr Festival.

Online exchanges banned

KABUL (Khaama Press): DAB announced that online exchanges are banned and legal action will be taken against anyone who violates the order. DAB said in an announcement that it has not issued any license to any person or company to operate an online exchange, because such activities are illegal. “Da Afghanistan Bank requests our dear compatriots to refrain from online exchange transactions due to the risks, damages and subsequent consequences of these transactions,” it said.

CSTO supports peaceful

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) has affirmed its support for Afghanistan's independence and unity. Imangali Tasmagambetov, CSTO secretary-general, said members of the Eurasian military alliance wanted Afghanistan to be a peaceful state free from terrorism, war and drugs. Tasmagambetov made the remarks at a meeting with Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Afghanistan Roza Otunbayeva at the CSTO Secretariat.

Anti-locust campaign starts in farmlands

KABUL (TOLONews): The Afghan Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock reported the start of a campaign against locusts and natural pests in the agricultural lands of the northeast zone.

A mobile team from this ministry, which has gone to Takhar province, said that this year, 11 provinces of the country are at risk of locust invasion.

“Almost 11 provinces of the country are under locust invasion... Alhamdulillah we started yesterday in Baghlan, and the program has also started in Kunduz and Takhar,” said Marjan Hemat, an official in the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation.

The Department of Agriculture and Irrigation in Takhar said that they have started the process of distributing 3,000 liters of anti-locust treatment in 8 districts of the province.

“Alhamdulillah, today we distributed approximately 3,000 liters of treatment in 8 districts of Takhar, which are currently loaded on trucks and heading towards the districts to start work,” said Rahimullah Ahadi, the head of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock in Takhar.

Several farmers in Takhar say that last year's locust invasion damaged their agricultural lands, and they find the start of this year's campaign against

this insect effective in protecting their crops.

Bay Mohammad, a farmer, said: “Last year, locusts came from Tajikistan towards Kokcha and the districts of Khwaja Ghar and Dashti Qala, causing ninety percent damage to the farmers.”

Ehsan, another farmer, said: “It is very good that the treatment is applied in advance, currently no presence has been found in our areas, but in the Pul-e Begim area, there is a lot.”

Last year, Moroccan locusts from Tajikistan invaded parts of the agricultural lands in the north-eastern provinces of the country, causing damage to the farmers' produce.

US largest contributor to WHO in Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): Karen Decker, a US Chargé d'Affaires for Afghanistan, emphasized on the occasion of World Health Day that her country is the “largest” supporter of the World Health Organization in Afghanistan, especially for women and girls.

Ms. Decker announced through a post on the assistance provided by the United States to support health in Afghanistan.

In Ms. Decker's message, it is stated, “The United States is proud to be a major contributor to the international health organization in Afghanistan, providing the necessary resources to ensure the health of Afghans, especially women and children, to maintain their well-being.” This comes as the World Health Organization celebrated World Health Day on Sunday, April 7th, with the slogan “My Health, My Right.”

The organization, in a message posted on its social media platform X, emphasized the need for strong healthcare systems for all, especially women and children in the country, stating that 18 million people in Afghanistan need humanitarian assistance in the health sector.

Jamshid Tanwoli, Acting Head of the World Health Organization's office, also stated that the organization and its partners will continue to support Afghanistan's health system to ensure that everyone, especially women and children, has fair access to health services.

According to the World Health Organization's report, millions of people, including women and children worldwide, are increasingly at risk.

Previously, the World Health Organization and several international organizations have expressed concerns about the health crisis among mothers and children in Afghanistan.

Previously, the country's citizens have complained about shootings, the sale of fireworks, and weapons for children during the Eid days, and have always demanded that security officials prevent this.

Journalist protection body calls for lift of Facebook ban

KABUL (Khaama Press): Simultaneously with the reports of restricting access to Facebook in Afghanistan, which surfaced recently, the Committee to Protect Journalists based in the United States called on the Taliban government to reverse this decision.

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) on Tuesday, April 9th, responded with the dissemination of newsletters regarding the reports of the ban on Facebook in Afghanistan, expressing concerns and demanding the reversal of this decision by the de facto regime.

The agency states that the ban on Facebook in Afghanistan leads to obstacles in the flow of information freedom.

The reaction of the Committee to Protect Journalists comes as earlier, Najibullah Haqqani, the acting Minister of Telecommunications and Information Technology, announced to Tolo News the completion of the ministry's policy to restrict or block Facebook in Afghanistan.

Haqqani described the goal of this policy as preventing the waste of time and money by youth, along with curbing the dissemination of “immoral” issues. It is unclear how many Afghans currently use Facebook, yet Facebook remains popular among Afghan citizens and has more users than other social networks in Afghanistan.

identification and punishment of the perpetrators of this incident. They also urge the security institutions to make more efforts in ensuring the safety of citizens.

Meanwhile, Sharafat Zaman, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Public Health, said that the doctors at the hospital provided primary services to the injured person with the available facilities; however, the patient had active bleeding, and if there is a complaint, the victim's family can refer to the hospital's mortality review committee.

“If his family has any problem or wants clarification, our health personnel, Inshaallah, are ready to provide them with information,” Sharafat Zaman said.

“The cause of this incident has not yet been determined, but investigations are underway,” said Khalid Zadran, the spokesperson for the Kabul Security Command.

According to some residents of the capital, criminal activities have seen an upward trend in Kabul in recent weeks.

Afghan Minister, Chinese envoy discuss Wakhan Road



KABUL (Khaama Press): Acting Minister of Rural Rehabilitation and Development Mohammad Yunus Akhundzada has said during a meeting with the Chinese ambassador in Kabul that the construction of Wakhan road – connecting Afghanistan with China – is in full swing.

He said the construction of the road was important for strengthening the economy of both countries and said that the road will benefit Afghanistan, China and the Central Asian countries.

In the meeting, Chinese ambassador, Zhao Xing, emphasized that his country will continue to cooperate

with Afghanistan in the execution of developmental projects.

According to economic experts, the construction of the Wakhan-Xinjiang road will not only reduce transportation costs for traders, but it will also enable traders to transport goods by road without having to wait for

flights via the air corridor.

After the takeover of the Islamic Emirate, Afghanistan's commercial and political relations with China have expanded. Experts believe that China wants to have greater investment in Afghanistan, as it would ensure its economic interests.

Women's economic participation in Afghanistan ranks 178th in WB report

KABUL (Khaama Press): The World Bank, in its latest report on the status of women in the economy and business, has declared that women's economic participation in Afghanistan ranks higher than in countries such as Iran, Yemen, and Palestine, placing at 178th position. The 182-page report recently published by the World Bank assesses women's economic participation in 190 countries.

The World Bank has not provided clarity on the methodology used in their survey or how they arrived at their conclusion. This is particularly concerning given that women in Afghanistan face numerous oppressive policies, with over 90 restrictions that deprive them of opportunities for employment, education, and free movement.

Titled “Women, Business and the Law 2024,” the World Bank report's main focus is to evaluate women's status in three areas: legal frameworks, policymaking, and implementation of laws and policies.

Key indicators such as mobility, workplace situation, wage and ownership

rights, maternity rights, entrepreneurship, investment, childcare, security, marriage, and retirement rights are used to assess the status of women in this report.

In this ranking, Afghanistan has scored only 20 points out of 100 in the legal frameworks section and 13.3 points out of 100 in the policymaking section.

The country also ranks 187th, with a slight difference from Iranian women, in policymaking and legal frameworks.

According to the World Bank report, Iran with a score of 31.3 is in 188th position after Afghanistan, Yemen at 189th, and Pale-

stine due to deadly conflicts and famine in the last position, which is 190th.

Meanwhile, Belgium, Canada, and Denmark top the World Bank report's rankings.

Over the past two years, following the suspension of education and work for women in Afghanistan, there has been an increased interest among women in the private sector and business.

At the same time, female investors in Afghanistan have consistently advocated for greater support for female entrepreneurs in the country.

Sediqa Tufan, in charge of one of the handicraft

shops, explained in an interview with Khaama Press that the reason for the increase in demand for jobs in handicraft workshops is the lack of employment opportunities and deprivation of education among girls.

According to Ms. Tufan, her market has seen good growth lately, and about 300 women are working indirectly with her in various country provinces.

Previously, the United Nations and several international organizations have emphasized supporting the private sector for women to ensure meaningful participation of women in all aspects of public life.

Special representative for Afghanistan to be appointed

KABUL (Khaama Press): The spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General says that the process of appointing a special representative for Afghanistan is underway.

Stephane Dujarric, the spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General, said on Monday, April 8th, during a press briefing in response to journalists' questions about the timing of appointing a UN special representative for Afghanistan, that if progress is made in this regard, information will be provided.

The UN spokesperson stated that there is no specific timeline for the appointment of the UN special representative for Afghanistan. However, Dujarric did not provide further details on this matter.

The United Nations has been deliberating for



months on the appointment of a special representative for Afghanistan.

The Taliban regime opposes the appointment of a new special representative and believes that with the presence of UNAMA, this is an unnecessary move.

Several countries, including Russia and Iran, also align with the Taliban government in opposing the appointment of a new UN

special representative for Afghanistan.

In the second Doha meeting, attended by special envoys of countries and followed by a meeting of the UN Security Council where the appointment of a special representative for Afghanistan was a major part of their agenda, efforts did not yield results. It is unclear exactly when the parties reached consensus on this decision.

Tragic loss: Family decries security lapses and healthcare failure



KABUL (TOLONews): Relatives of Shabir Ahmad, a 20-year-old residing in the Dasht-e Barchi neighborhood of Kabul, said that their son was initially stabbed by unknown assailants on Sunday (April 8), subsequently leading to his death.

The family of the young man complained about the lack of attention from doctors at a government hospital and the failure to provide security in Kabul.

Shabir Ahmad, a twenty-

year-old student, was severely wounded by a knife by unknown individuals while returning home in the Resoul Akram Township in PD18th of Kabul city on Sunday.

Zaki Samadi, the brother of Shabir Ahmad, told TOLONews: “We put him in an ambulance and took him to Ali Jinnah Hospital, where we took him to the emergency section, which was very disorganized in terms of professionalism, the beds and stretchers

were not proper. I think the stretcher they put the patient on was a dental stretcher, meaning for patients who come for dental treatment.”

Abdullah, one of the victim's relatives, said: “They hadn't even bandaged him. The most basic thing in the health sector is to dress a wound first... and even the specialists at Ali Jinnah Hospital were against us...”

The relatives of the young man demand the

Russia, China to deepen security cooperation

BEIJING (AFP): China's top diplomat said on Tuesday that Beijing would strengthen strategic cooperation with Moscow and that the two must stand on the side of "fairness and justice" as he met his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov.

Lavrov arrived in China for a two-day official visit on Monday, with the two countries looking to deepen diplomatic ties as Russia's war in Ukraine grinds on. Russia and China have in recent years ramped up contacts, and their strategic partnership has only grown closer since the invasion of Ukraine.

Lavrov held discussions with President Xi Jinping on Tuesday afternoon, Chinese state media announced, in a previously undisclosed meeting. State broadcaster CCTV showed footage of chairs arranged around a glossy table in an opulent room in Beijing's Great Hall of the People ahead of the talks.

In earlier meetings on Tuesday, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi promised: "China will support Russia's stable development under the leadership of (Vladimir) Putin. "Beijing and Moscow will continue to strengthen strategic cooperation on the world stage and provide each other with strong support," Wang said, according to Russia's RIA Novosti news agency.

"Under the strong leadership of President Putin, the Russian people will have a bright future," he said. Lavrov, in turn, thanked China for its "support" after Putin's recent re-election, in which he was unchallenged by any meaningful opposition. "Xi Jinping [...] was among the first ones to send congratulations to the presi-

dent-elect Putin, and we are overall grateful to our Chinese friends for this support," Lavrov said, according to a video of the meeting shared by Izvestia on Telegram.

"The election results confirmed the deep trust of the Russian people in our leader and the ongoing domestic and foreign policies," he added, according to RIA Novosti. "This applies not least to the course to strengthen strategic interaction and partnership with the PRC," the top diplomat said, referring to China by its official acronym. Lavrov last visited Beijing in October for an international forum on Chinese President Xi's flagship Belt and Road infrastructure initiative.

Analysts say China holds the upper hand in the relationship with Russia, with its sway growing as Moscow's international isolation deepens following its invasion of Ukraine. That asymmetry is still "changing in China's favour" as it enables Moscow "to continue the war by providing very necessary materials for the Russian war machine", Alexander Gabuev, director of the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center, told AFP.

"Integrating Russia's economy, brainpower, and military technology into... a Chinese-led order with Eurasia at its geographic heart, is the only way Russia can sustain its confrontation with the West," he wrote in Foreign Policy magazine this week. "China has stronger bargaining power and many more options than does Russia, and its leverage over its northern neighbour is growing all the time," he added. "Russia is now locking itself into vassalage

to China."

US officials have recently warned Beijing against providing indirect aid to the Russian war effort and regularly urge China to wield its influence to help bring about peace in Ukraine. In Brussels last week, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told reporters that "China continues to provide materials to support Russia's defence industrial base".

And Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, who wrapped up a visit to China on Monday, said she had warned officials of the consequences of supporting Russia's military procurement. But Lavrov on Tuesday drew a parallel between the West's "unlawful sanctions" and efforts to curb China's access to sensitive US-made technologies.

At a press conference following bilateral talks, he accused the West of seeking to impede China's "economic, technological development opportunities, to put it simply in order to eliminate the competitors". Wang, in turn, declared that Russia and China "always stick to the correct path on great matters of principle". "China and Russia must take a clear-cut stand on the side of historical progress, on the side of fairness and justice," he said.

"(We must) oppose all acts of hegemony, tyranny and bullying; oppose Cold War thinking and separatist provocations; and actively push for the construction of a common future for all humankind," he said. "As a force for peace and stability, China will stick to playing a constructive role on the international stage [...] and will never add oil to the flames," he added.



BEIJING: Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi shaking hands prior to a meeting.

ECP asks parties to submit lists of major donors

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan has asked the political parties to furnish the list of contributors who have donated or contributed an amount equal to or more than one million rupees for their election campaign.

The Commission, in a press release issued in Islamabad today, said the political parties are also required to furnish details of election expenses incurred in form sixty eight by them during the general election 2024 within the sixty days from the date of publication of the name of returned candidates in official gazette. It further said that the last date for submission of above mentioned documents to the Election Commission of Pakistan is 22nd of this month.

3 hostages return from Katcha area

KANDHKOT (INP): Three Sukkur residents taken hostage in Karampur area of Kandhkot have returned their homes. Three labourers Sohrab Shaikh, Mir Khan and Ali Sher, who went to Karampur for labour work, were kidnapped by bandits from their workplace in night.

Sindh's katcha area bandits released a video of the three hostages earlier in which they were pleading their families to pay ransom to dacoits for their freedom. The hostages who worked at private construction company were abducted a month ago by the bandits. The viral video shows the dacoits beating up the hostages as they were pleading their families to pay ransom in exchange of their freedom. All three workers hailed from Sukkur city of Sindh and were abducted last month by the katcha area bandits within the jurisdiction of Karampur police station.

Turkiye imposes export restrictions on Israel

French FM suggests sanctions

ANKARA (Reuters): Türkiye will impose restrictions on the export of products from 54 different categories to Israel until a ceasefire is declared in Gaza, the Turkish Trade Ministry said on Tuesday, adding the measures would take effect immediately.

In a statement following Ankara's announcement that it would be taking measures after Israel rejected its request to take part in an aid air-drop, the ministry said the restrictions would include iron and steel products, construction equipment and products, machines and more. Israel vowed Tuesday to take steps against Türkiye, accusing it of violating trade deals between the two countries after Ankara announced trade restrictions over the war in Gaza.

"Türkiye is unilaterally violating the trade agreements with Israel, and

Israel will adopt the necessary steps against it," the foreign ministry said in a statement. Foreign Minister Israel Katz sharply criticized Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for the decision. "Erdogan has sacrificed the economic interest of Türkiye's people for the sake of his support of Hamas murders in Gaza," Katz said on X.

"Israel will not submit to violence and extortion... and will adopt against Türkiye similar steps that will harm the Turkish economy." Israel is now preparing an "expanded list of products" it intends to stop importing from Türkiye, the ministry said, including construction materials like steel and cement.

France's foreign minister said on Tuesday that pressures, and possibly sanctions, must be imposed on Israel to open crossings to get humanitarian aid to

Palestinians in Gaza. "There must be levers of influence and there are multiple levers, going up to sanctions to let humanitarian aid cross check points," Stephane Sejourne told RFI radio and France 24 television "France was one of the first countries to propose European Union sanctions on Israeli settlers who are committing acts of violence in the West Bank. We will continue if needed to obtain the opening of humanitarian aid," he said.

Some 33,207 Palestinians have been killed in six months of conflict, Gaza's health ministry said on Monday. Most of the enclave's 2.3 million people are homeless and many at risk of famine. Hamas killed 1,200 people in southern Israel in a cross-border attack on Oct. 7 that triggered the conflict, according to Israeli tallies.

Where will top politicians celebrate this Eid

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Top politicians including PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif and President Asif Ali Zardari are all set to celebrate this Eidul Fitr at their hometowns.

According to sources, PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will celebrate Eidul Fitr in Lahore while President Asif Ali Zardari will offer Eid prayers in Nawabshah. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi will celebrate Eid in Lahore and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto will offer Eid prayers in Larkana.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Gohar Ali Khan will offer Eid prayers in Buner and Leader of Opposition Umar Ayub Khan will celebrate at Haripur. Parvez Khatak

will offer Eid prayers in Nowshera. MQM convener Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui will offer Eid prayers in Karachi and JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman will celebrate Eid in DI Khan.

Senate chairman Candide Yousef Raza Gilani will celebrate Eid in Multan and National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq will offer the prayers in Lahore. NA Deputy Speaker Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah will celebrate the event at hometown, Nawabshah.

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif will offer Eid prayer at Jati Umrah, Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah at Sehwan Sharif and KP CM Ali Amin Gandapur in DI Khan. Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti will celebrate Eid in Quetta. Defence Minister Khawaja

Asif will offer Eid prayers in Sialkot, Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar will offer Eid prayers in Lahore and Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani will celebrate Eid in Chaghi.

Punjab Governor Balighur Rehman will celebrate Eid in Lahore, Balochistan Governor Abdul Wali Kakar in Quetta, Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori in Karachi and KP Governor Haji Ghulam Ali will offer Eid prayer at the Governor House Peshawar. Punjab Assembly Speaker Malik Ahmad Khan will celebrate Eid in Kasur, Sindh Assembly Speaker Owais Qadir Shah in Sukkur, KP Assembly Speaker Babar Saleem Swati in Mansehra. KP Assembly leader of opposition Dr Ibrara Rehman will celebrate Eid in Shangla.

May 9 riots: 20 convicts freed

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Gen Asim Munir has granted a special relaxation to 20 convicts involved in the May 9 riots after which they were released from the Pakistan Army's custody, media reported Tuesday.

Attorney General Usman Awan has submitted a report to the Supreme Court regarding the release of 20 people who were sentenced to one year of imprisonment by the military. The army chief allowed the release of these convicted persons prior to Eid-ul-Fitr. They were released on April 6 and 7.

Among those freed, include eight residents of Rawalpindi, three from Lahore, five from Gujranwala, three from Dir, and one from Mardan. On December 23, 2023, a Supreme Court bench headed by headed by Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan allowed the military court to resume trials and therefore handed down sentences in cases of lesser punishment.

The attorney general had earlier told the Supreme Court that individuals sentenced to one year imprisonment or less could benefit from relevant legal provisions, while those facing longer sentences would require relaxation from the competent authority. The released convicts had stayed in custody for various periods up to 10.5 months. Responding to the court's inquiry, the AGP had said that the army currently holds custody of 105 accused, two more than the previous count of 103 provided earlier.

Facilitating acts of genocide in Gaza

Germany rejects allegations at UN court

THE HAGUE (AP): Germany on Tuesday strongly rejected a case brought by Nicaragua at the United Nations' top court accusing Berlin of facilitating breaches of the Geneva Convention and international humanitarian law by providing arms and other support to Israel in its deadly assault on Gaza.

"The minute we look closely, Nicaragua's accusations fall apart," Christian Tams, a member of Germany's legal team, told the 16-judge panel at the International Court of Justice. On Monday, Nicaragua urged judges to order a halt to German military aid to Israel, arguing that Berlin's support enables acts of genocide and breaches of international humanitarian law in Gaza.

The head of Germany's legal team, Tania von Uslar-Gleichen, said Nicaragua's claims "have no basis in fact or law. They are dependent on an assessment of conduct by Israel, not a party to these proceedings." Preliminary hearings held Monday and Tuesday are focused solely on Nicaragua's request for so-called provisional measures, including a court order for Berlin to halt military and other aid to Israel and reinstate funding to the UN aid agency in Gaza.

Tams said that Germany had licensed only four exports of weapons of war to Israel since October, "three of which concern

test or practice equipment." Showing judges a photo of German aid being airdropped over Gaza, Tams added that Berlin continues to provide humanitarian support to Palestinians "every single day under extremely difficult conditions, constructively engaging with international partners."

Nicaragua's case is the latest legal attempt to rein in Israel's offensive by a country with historic ties to the Palestinian people, after South Africa accused Israel of genocide at the same court late last year. It also comes against a backdrop of growing calls for Israel's allies to stop supplying the country with weapons — and as some supporters, including Germany, have grown more critical of the war. At Monday's hearings, Nicaragua's Ambassador to the Netherlands, Carlos José Argüello Gómez, accused Germany of "failing to honor its own obligation to prevent genocide or to ensure respect of international humanitarian law."

However, another lawyer for Germany, Samuel Wordsworth, argued that the court could not rule Germany was violating the obligation to prevent genocide because its judges have not ruled that Israel is breaching the Genocide Convention. In a preliminary phase of the case brought late last year by South Africa, the UN court has said that it is

"plausible" that Israel's actions in Gaza could amount to breaches of the convention.

"How can it be said that there was a failure to ensure respect of a third state, if the failure on the part of that third state to respect is not established in the first place?" Wordsworth said. The court will likely take weeks to deliver its preliminary decision, and Nicaragua's case will probably drag on for years. Israel strongly denies that its assault amounts to genocidal acts, saying it is acting in self defense after Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on Oct. 7, killing some 1,200 people.

Since then, more than 33,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, according to the territory's Health Ministry. Its toll doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants, but it has said women and children make up the majority of the dead. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Germany is second only to the US in supplying arms to Israel — but it would be harder, if not impossible, for the US to be brought before the court because Washington does not recognize the ICJ's power to compel countries to appear before it. The US also has not signed a protocol to the Genocide Convention that allows countries to bring disputes to the court.

Israel says 'date set' for Rafah invasion amid ongoing Gaza truce talks

TEL AVIV: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says a date has been set to invade Rafah in southern Gaza as truce talks with Hamas in Cairo are ongoing but do not appear close to the finish line. In a video statement in Hebrew, Netanyahu reiterated his position that a ground military operation in Rafah, bordering Egypt, where more than 1.5 million Palestinians are sheltering, is essential for victory in the war. "It will happen. There is a date," he said without elaborating.

This comes as Hamas was presented with a new proposal in ceasefire talks at the end of the weekend, but one that does not appear to be able to secure a deal. The Palestinian group confirmed in a statement that it is reviewing the proposal, but said Israel "has not responded to any of the demands of our people and our resistance". Senior Hamas spokesperson Sami Abu Zahry told Al Jazeera that Netanyahu's remarks "raise questions about the purpose of resuming negotiations".

"The success of any negotiations depends on ending the aggression," said Zahry, adding that the group's "demands are clear: an end to aggression against our people". Israel has so far rejected Palestinian demands of an unrestricted return of hundreds of thousands of Gaza Palestinians to the enclave's north, and the retreat of Israeli military ground forces from the strip. The Israeli military said it has withdrawn some of its ground forces from Gaza, but has kept the troops in charge of maintaining an east-west corridor that effectively cuts the enclave in half and prevents

the return of Palestinians to the north.

The United States continues to be publicly opposed to the idea of Israel's invasion of Rafah as it has said there are no viable plans to evacuate the large number of civilians who are in the area. An unnamed Israeli official told The Associated Press news agency that Israel is buying 40,000 tents to prepare for the evacuation of Palestinians from Rafah. US Department of State spokesperson Matthew Miller told reporters following Netanyahu's announcement that the US has not been fully briefed on any new Rafah developments.

"We have made clear to Israel that we think a full-scale military invasion of Rafah would have an enormously harmful effect on those civilians and that it would ultimately hurt Israel's security," Miller said. This comes as the leaders of Egypt, Jordan and France wrote a joint op-ed published by several media outlets, including The Washington Post and Le Monde, that called for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, as demanded by a United Nations Security Council resolution passed in late March.

"We warn against the dangerous consequences of an Israeli offensive on Rafah, where more than 1.5 million Palestinian civilians have sought refuge. Such an offensive will only bring more deaths and suffering, heighten the risks and consequences of mass forcible displacement of the people of Gaza and threaten regional escalation," said the leaders. Mahjoub Zweiri, director of the Gulf Studies Center at Qatar University, told Al Jazeera it has become appar-

ent to Israel's Western allies and even within the country that Netanyahu has no interest in reaching a deal "any time soon".

"He wants more time, he wants to go to Rafah, he wants to have something he has failed to achieve so far," Zweiri said. "He and the right wing need individuals, they need names — they talk about [Hamas leaders Yahya] Sinwar and [Mohammed] Deif, and none of this has been achieved." Zweiri said as long as this continues, the Israeli prime minister's stance will remain the same out of "self-interest" to preserve his political future. "Everyone knows, but the issue is whether the international community accept this, will accept to see more killing and more destruction for someone who is irresponsible politically and immorally is waging war on civilians," he added.

Earlier, Israeli and Hamas officials say no significant progress has been made in the latest round of Gaza truce talks in Cairo attended by representatives from mediators Egypt, Qatar and the United States. "There is no change in the position of the occupation and, therefore, there is nothing new in the Cairo talks. ... There is no progress yet," a Hamas official, who asked not to be named, told the Reuters news agency, shortly after reports quoting Egyptian sources said headway had been made.

Israel's Ynet news outlet cited an unidentified Israeli official as saying there had been "nothing dramatic" in the talks. "We still don't see a deal on the horizon. The distance is still great, and there has been nothing dramatic in the meantime," the official said.

Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz described the Cairo talks as the closest the sides have come to a deal since a November truce under which Hamas freed dozens of hostages. "We have reached a critical point in the negotiations. If it works out, then a large number of hostages will come home," he told Israel's Army Radio.

The US said that negotiators had presented Hamas with a proposal for a Gaza ceasefire and hostage release deal, but that it was up to the Palestinian militant group to decide. "Where we are now is that a proposal has been presented to Hamas, and we are waiting on Hamas's response," National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told reporters.

"Now it's going to be up to Hamas to come through." Much of the international community has expressed outrage over the Palestinian death toll and humanitarian crisis arising from Israel's military operation in the Gaza Strip. More than 33,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's war on Gaza since October 7, according to Palestinian officials.

Israel launched its assault on Gaza in response to Hamas-led attacks on Israel on October 7, which killed 1,139 people, according to an Al Jazeera tally based on Israeli statistics. Hamas seized 253 people at that time and took them back to Gaza. Of those, 133 captives remain, and negotiators have spoken of about 40 going free in the first stage of a prospective deal with Hamas.

Israel's army says more than 600 of its soldiers have been killed in combat. Israel and Hamas sent teams to Egypt on Sunday after the arrival

on Saturday of CIA Director William Burns, whose presence underlined rising pressure from the White House for a deal that would reach a truce, free captives held in Gaza and get aid to isolated civilians. Al Jazeera's Imran Khan, reporting from occupied East Jerusalem, said the fact that talks have not broken down was a positive development.

"There is apparently a ceasefire framework that the Israelis are now taking back to the war cabinet and Hamas is discussing within the movement," he said. Khan said senior Israeli politicians are actually talking about the potential of the talks. "Finance Minister [Bezalel] Smotrich is calling for a meeting to get an update on what this framework is, and Yair Lapid, head of the opposition, says he's willing to give the government a safety net to be able to come to some sort of deal," Khan said.

Two Egyptian security sources and state-run Al-Qahera News said that some progress had been made in the Cairo talks. The security sources said both sides had made concessions that could help pave the way for a deal for a truce that — as proposed during previous talks — would be staggered over three stages with the release of the remaining Israeli captives and a long-term ceasefire addressed in the second stage.

The concessions relate to the release of Israeli captives and Hamas's demand for the return of displaced residents to northern Gaza, they said. Mediators suggested the return could be monitored by an Arab force in the presence of Israeli securi-

ty deployments that would later be pulled back, they added.

Delegations left Cairo, and consultations were expected to continue within 48 hours, the sources and Al-Qahera said. Luciano Zaccara, a professor of Gulf politics at Qatar University's Gulf Studies Center, told Al Jazeera that while mixed messages were emerging from Egypt, the Israeli government has made it clear the war will go on. The weekend pullout of Israeli forces from Gaza is aimed at reorganising troops for their future mission in Rafah, "meaning that Israel has not stopped pursuing the main objective, which is to destroy Hamas completely", Zaccara said. "But the government is aware of the mounting pressure from captives' families who joined forces with those seeking the prime minister's resignation," he added. "It seems like something is moving inside Israel to reach an agreement. They have to show they are working towards a solution, but we have to wait for the next 48 hours to see if a deal is reached," Zaccara said.

Six months into its offensive on Gaza, Israel has devastated the enclave and left most of its 2.3 million people homeless and many at risk of famine. The country is under global pressure to ease Gaza's humanitarian crisis and drop its plans to storm Rafah, a town on the southern border with Egypt packed with more than a million displaced Palestinians. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that a date has been set for the Israeli offensive on Rafah. He did not disclose when it would be. — Aljazeera