

KP CM calls on Governor
F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister, Ali Amin Gandapur on Monday directed to reserve a separate room for the transgender community in District HQ Hospitals. The decision in this connection was taken during a meeting between Governor Haji Ghulam Ali and Chief Minister, Ali Amin Gandapur on Sunday night. Mayor Peshawar, Haji Zubair Ali also attended the meeting.



@thefrontierpost

First national English daily published from Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, Karachi and Washington D.C

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIXI

No. 71

Regd. No. 241

RAMAZAN 22 1445 – TUESDAY, APRIL 02 2024

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

PRICE. 30

PM says culprits to get exemplary punishment

— assures foolproof security arrangements for Chinese nationals

F.P. Report

DASU: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday assured foolproof security measures for the Chinese nationals working on Dasu Hydropower Project as well as across the country and resolved to ensure exemplary punishment for the perpetrators of March 26 incident.

Addressing a gathering of the Chinese engineers and workers, he said the government would ensure that the perpetrators and culprits of March 26 incident should get the exemplary punishment, so that it would be a lesson and that no one could commit such dastardly act in future.

The prime minister said that the sole purpose of his visit was to offer deep and sincere condolences and express feelings to the Chinese brothers and sisters in Dasu over a sad incident that took place on March 26 in which five Chinese and one local lost their lives. He said it was a cowardly act on part of the terrorists to kill innocent Chinese and a Pakistani for no other reason except to disturb and damage the exceptional friendship between Pakistan and China.

Federal Ministers Amir Muqam, Attaulah Tarar, Chairman WAPDA

Lt Gen. (retd) Sajjad Ghani, Chinese Ambassador in Pakistan Jiang Zaidong, members of the Chinese company and senior officials were also present on the occasion. Terming it a job of the enemies of Pakistan, the prime minister said that it was a dastardly act on part of the perpetrators who found every opportunity to harm this friendship which was strengthening by each passing day and expanding and moving forward with speed.

“That is the reason enemies do not spare any opportunity to damage and create a wedge between the two Iron Brothers,” he added. Prime Minister Sharif said that they shared the moment of sadness and sorrow and assured that the government would not leave any stone unturned and would not spare any opportunity to ensure the best possible security measures for the Chinese families and nationals.

He also assured the Chinese leadership, the people and the Chinese ambassador that all foolproof security arrangements would be made for the Chinese people working and supporting a prosperous and developing Pakistan. The prime minister said that after the incident, he had visited embassy immediately to offer condolences on behalf of his government

and the people of Pakistan to the Chinese leadership and the Chinese people.

He informed that a joint investigation team was also constituted on the same day and its report was due any time. He further assured that they would not waste time to act upon the recommendations of the inquiry committee in letter and spirit.

Besides, a high level security meeting held on March 27 in which they discussed better coordination with the provincial governments over the additional security measures, he added. The prime minister said that Pak-China friendship would march forward in unison and the enemies of CPEC and this exceptional relationship would be defeated completely.

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Jiang Zaidong said that the prime minister visited the embassy and reassured security for the Chinese nationals. He also expressed gratitude to the government and people of Pakistan for expressing solidarity, adding that they were ready to work together to further build their strategic partnership with Pakistan. The gathering also observed 30-second silence for those who lost lives in the tragic incident.



DASU: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif addressing Chinese engineers and government officials at Kass camp of China Gezhouba Group Company.

Israeli strike on Iranian embassy kills 8 in Damascus

F.P. Report

DAMASCUS: As many as eight people were killed after an Israeli airstrike hit the Iranian embassy in the Syrian capital Damascus Monday, according to IRNA news agency as fears of conflict escalation in the Middle East ramp up, with thousands martyred in Gaza.

Iranian news agency claimed that the Syrian Air Force also intercepted some of the Israeli missiles fired toward the embassy, whereas Sana reported that the “Zionist forces” targeted the Mezzeh neighborhood in Damascus.

Iranian diplomatic mission in Damascus including the ambassador and his family remained unharmed in the attack. According to the Mehr news agency, a senior commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) was also killed in the strike. Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad contacted his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amirabdollahian and condemned the Israeli attack during his visit to the Embassy. The strike caused massive damage to the nearby buildings along the targeted site.

The Israeli forces after the missile attack said: “We do not comment on reports in the foreign media.” The attack comes as the occupied Israeli forces are continuing their brutality against the innocent Palestinians by bombing hospitals and opening gunfire on the food-starved residents of Gaza. Last week, the UNSC adopted a resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire amid the Israeli ground operation that was triggered by Hamas’s response on October 7, 2023, to the decades-old Israeli oppression. — IRNA

10 MNAs take oath

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Session of the National Assembly started at the Parliament House in Islamabad this afternoon with Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq in the chair on Monday.

Ten newly elected members of the National Assembly took oath of their office. Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq administered the oath. The House also observed one-minute silence over the killing of five Chinese nationals in Dasu terrorist attack to express solidarity with the people of China.

SC takes suo motu notice of IHC judges’ letter

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Monday took suo motu notice of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) judges’ letter alleging interference by intelligence agencies in judicial matters despite the government forming a commission to probe the matter.

A seven-member bench led by Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa will hold the maiden hearing on the issue on Wednesday. Apart from the CJP the bench also comprises Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Athar Minallah, Justice Mussarat Hilali, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail and Justice Naehm Akhtar Afghan.

The explosive letter which surfaced last week triggered a crisis and the Supreme Court led by CJP Isa has been under pressure to hear the matter under Article 184(3) of the Constitution. Just a day earlier, over 300 lawyers belonging to different bar associations across the country lauded the judges’ and called upon the apex court to hear the matter under its suo motu jurisdictions.

The IHC judges — Justice Mohsin Akhtar

Kiyani, Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri, Justice Babar Sattar, Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan, Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir, and Justice Saman Rafat Imtiaz — wrote the letter to the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC), urging the body to convene a judicial convention over the alleged interference of intelligence agencies in judicial affairs. The development came days after the Supreme Court declared the removal of former IHC Justice Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui illegal, directing that he may now be considered as a retired judge.

The verdict noted that the SJC proceeded against Justice Siddiqui on the “assumption that the truth or falseness of the allegations levelled” by the former judge was “irrelevant”. It also noted that the SJC opined that Justice Siddiqui had failed to substantiate, independently corroborate, substantiate or prove the allegations levelled by him. Following the emergence of the letter, on March 27, CJP Isa chaired a full court meeting of the Supreme Court to deliberate on the matter that sought guidance from the SJC “with regard to the duty of a judge to report and respond to actions on the part of mem-

bers of the executive, including operatives of intelligence agencies, that seek to interfere with the discharge of his/her official functions and qualify as intimidation”.

The two-hour huddle, convened by CJP Isa, took place after bar associations of Sindh, Lahore, Islamabad and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as well as senior lawyers demanded a probe into the allegations. The next day CJP Isa met Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on the advice of the full court in the presence of the law minister, attorney general, senior puisne judge and the registrar of the apex court.

As a result of the meeting, the government decided to constitute a commission to probe into allegations levelled by the IHC judges. Following the huddle, the federal cabinet on March 30 approved the constitution of an inquiry commission over allegations of the IHC judges and appointed former chief justice of Pakistan Justice (retired) Tassaduq Hussain Jilani as its head. However, after the Supreme Court took suo motu notice it emerged that Justice (retd) Jilani has recused himself from heading the commission.

Ex-CJP Jilani refuses to head commission

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minutes after the Supreme Court took suo motu notice on Islamabad High Court’s (IHC) judges’ letter, former chief justice of Pakistan Tassaduq Hussain Jilani recused himself from heading the one-man commission formed by the government to probe the allegations regarding the intelligence interference in judicial matters.

The former CJ, while excusing himself, noted that since the letter was written by the judges to the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) and chief justice, it would have been “violative of judicial propriety” for him to probe the matter, which he argued, may fall “within the jurisdiction of a constitutional body which is the Supreme Judicial Council or the Supreme Court of Pakistan itself”.

Justice (retd) Jilani also noted that the “terms of the

reference for inquiry” were not relevant to the subject asked to probe by the six IHC judges in their letter. He also noted that at the end of the letter the judges had requested for an “institutional consultation” on the issue.

“Though, the letter in question may not strictly fall within the parameters of Article 209 of the Constitution, but the Honorable Chief Justice of Pakistan being a paterfamilias may address and resolve the issues raised in the letter at the institutional level. For the afore-referred reasons, I recuse myself to head the commission and proceed with the inquiry,” said Justice (retd) Jilani in the letter.

The commission to probe the judges’ letter was formed after PM Shehbaz Sharif and incumbent CJP, Qazi Faez Isa, met on the judges’ letter that had emerged last week. The meeting between the CJP and PM Shehbaz was held after a full court had

met the very next day, March 27, the letter had emerged.

As a result of the meeting, the government decided to constitute a commission to probe into allegations levelled by the IHC judges. Following the huddle, the federal cabinet on March 30 approved the constitution of an inquiry commission over allegations of the IHC judges and appointed former chief justice of Pakistan Justice (retired) Tassaduq Hussain Jilani as its head.

The commission was tasked to hold inquiry into the allegations levelled by the judges in a letter. Subsequently, the cabinet members also gave go-ahead to the terms of reference (ToRs) of the commission. However, now with the recusal of the former chief justice and the Supreme Court taking suo motu notice on the issue, it remains to be seen what the fate would be of the commission.

CTD ‘arrests’ over 10 terrorists, facilitators

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) has “arrested” more than 10 terrorists, facilitators involved in the attack on Chinese engineers in Shangla’s Bisham city last week, sources told media on Monday.

As per the sources, a Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)-affiliated outfits are believed to be involved in the March 26 deadly attack. During the attack, five Chinese citizens, including a woman, and a Pakistani driver were killed when their vehicle was attacked in Shangla’s Besham city as a suicide bomber crashed his explosives-laden vehicle into the car carrying the victims. Following the incident, the country’s civil and military leadership notably Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, President Asif Ali Zardari and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir condemned the attack vowing that the perpetrators responsible for the heinous attack would be brought to justice.

Meanwhile, a wreath-laying ceremony was held at Rawalpindi’s Nur Khan Airbase and a 30-second silence was observed as bodies of the deceased Chinese nationals were airlifted back to China. Floral wreaths were laid on behalf of the president, prime minister, army chief, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmad Babar Sidhu and Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC) General Sahir Shamshad Mirza.

In the aftermath of the attack, Chinese companies overseeing operations at the sites of the Dasu and Diamer-Bhasha Dams, temporarily suspended the civil work at both sites owing to security concerns. Around 991 Chinese engineers were working on both projects, while the local staff has been told to stay at home till further instructions, an official working on the project confirmed to the publication.

Last week, a Chinese investigation team has also arrived in Pakistan to investigate the incident after China’s military expressed its willingness to work with Pakistan to enhance the capability of the two countries to tackle various security risks and challenges including terrorist attacks.

PHC stops adverse action against KP CM

CJ grants transit bail to Hammad Azhar

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Waqar Ahmad stopped Election Commission from taking any adverse actions against Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur for alleged rigging as well forced voting, on Monday.

The complaints were filed Kafeel Ahmad, Junaid and Aziz Ullah as political opponents while the lawyer argued that it was filed after issuance of success notification of Ali Amin Gandapur by election commission.

The counsel argued that Election Commission lacks jurisdiction after issuance of success notification but provincial election commission entertained complaint against Chief Minister Pakhtunkhwa and requested to stop legal action against Ali Amin Gandapur.

PHC’s divisional bench comprising of Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Waqar Ahmad stopped Election Commission from any adverse actions against Ali Amin Gandapur and ordered for submission of reply in this regard.

Meanwhile, the Chief Justice Peshawar High Court Muhammad Ibrahim Khan approved the transit bail of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Hammad Azhar in cases related to the May

Arrest warrants of Gandapur cancelled

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The arrest warrants of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur in case pertaining to protest and vandalizing the public property were cancelled by a local court on Monday.

Issuing the order, Judicial Magistrate Naveed Khan adjourned hearing of the case against Gandapur till May 20. Earlier, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur had approached the District and Sessions Court of Islamabad to cancel the non-bailable arrest warrant in the long march and vandalism case.

The petition has stated that Ali Amin Gandapur never deliberately avoided appearance in the court. It has been stated in the application that Ali Amin Gandapur could not appear in the court due to his election engagements, and he apologizes unconditionally for disobeying the court orders. The petition has requested that the ongoing non-bailable arrest warrant of Ali Amin Gandapur be cancelled.

09 riots.

The Chief Justice of Peshawar High Court, Mohammad Ibrahim Khan, heard the petition and approved the transit bail of Hammad Azhar in 51 cases and directed him to appear in the concerned courts within a month.

The lawyer representing the defendant disclosed that there are a total of 51 cases filed against Hammad Azhar, with the possibility of more cases yet to be uncovered. These cases span across various cities including Lahore, Rawalpindi, and Faisalabad, raising questions about the extent of the legal entanglement faced by the PTI leader. Additional Attorney General, Inam Yousafzai, deferred to the

court’s discretion, emphasizing the importance of allowing due process to determine the appropriate course of action.

Earlier this month, the Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) declared the Pakistan PTI leader Hammad Azhar and six others as fugitives in May 09 cases. According to the details, the police officials filed a plea to the ATC to declare the PTI leader Hammad Azhar, Adnan Ashraf, and others as fugitives as they went into hiding to fear arrests in the May 09 riots. The investigator in the court reported that the defendant did not attend court proceedings despite multiple court orders requiring their presence.

President for early completion of TAPI pipeline

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has stressed the need of early completion of the TAPI Gas Pipeline to help meet Pakistan’s energy demands.

He was talking to Ambassador of Turkmenistan to Pakistan Atadjan Movlamov who called on him here on Monday and discussed with him matters of bilateral interests. Speaking on the occasion, President Asif Zardari called for the early finalisation of the Transit Trade Agreement with Turkmenistan to fur-

ther boost bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

The president was of the view that the agreement, once signed, would help expand trade, promote regional connectivity as well as enhance economic activities in the region. Ambassador Movlamov congratulated President Zardari on assuming the office of the President for the second time as both sides expressed a desire for the early completion of the Turkmenistan-Pakistan-Afghanistan-Gas Pipeline (TAPIGAP) Gas Pipeline, which would not only support Pakistan’s economy

but would also help meet its energy needs.

Earlier, the president said that Pakistan attached special value to the bilateral relations with Turkmenistan due to the centuries-old historical, religious and cultural links and wished to increase high-level exchanges to give a fresh boost to bilateral ties. He expressed Pakistan’s desire to work with Turkmenistan to further enhance mutually beneficial cooperation. The president highlighted that the existing volume of trade between the two countries needed to be improved for the mutual benefit of the two countries.

The Frontier Post

Pak-China border opened
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pak-China border Khunjerab has opened today (Monday) for trade and tourism after remained closed for four months. According to the details, under the border agreement every year Pak-China border remain closed from December 1 till March 31. Border officials stated that under the agreement border transportation is closed due to snow and cold weather.

PU Confucius Institute
organises certificate
distribution ceremony

LAHORE (APP): Punjab University Confucius Institute has organized MINISO scholarship award, CIPU certificates distribution ceremony to the students who successfully passed HSK Chinese language levels, and orientation of new students.

On this occasion, PU Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Khalid Mahmood, Host Director of PU Confucius Institute Prof Dr Shafique-Ur-Rehman, Vice President of MINISO Company in Pakistan Mr Li Dong, Vice President of Lahore Overseas Chinese Association Miss He-yubing and students were present. In his address, PU VC Prof Dr Khalid Mahmood expressed his pleasure at the strong friendship between Pakistan and China. He emphasized that language promotion was crucial for strengthening bilateral relations and also said that we should make equal efforts to promote Urdu and Chinese languages. Prof Dr Shafiqur Rehman extended his warmest congratulations to the students and encouraged them to continue studying Chinese Language.

KU announces
result of ADS
Part-II Annual
Exam 2022

KARACHI (APP): The University of Karachi Monday announced the result of the Associate Degree in Science (ADS), Part II and both parts, Annual Examination 2022.

According to the gazette issued, 551 candidates were registered of which 547 students appeared in the papers, 102 candidates were declared passed with the first division, and 21 students with the second division. The overall pass percentage was 22.49 percent.

The gazette shows that Mehak Mahmood daughter of Sheikh Mahmood Alam, a student of D.J. Sindh Government Science College, having seat number 524094, secured 1326 marks out of a total of 1600 marks and clinched first position.

COURT NOTICE

In The Court of Sana Afzal C.J-V Kohat
Suit no.60/1 Date of hearing 15-04-2024
Titled:- Sayed Shah Alam Gillani Vs Najla Gillani(etc)
Notice against:-(1)Mrs Najla Gillani Wife of Khuram Waheed presently R/o(Now in Abroad 13 Zasest Road Australia v.i.c-3046 Australia) (Defendant)
Whereas the above plaintiff has instituted a civil suit against you Defendant in which date of hearing 15-04-2024 is fixed for your appearance Since your intimation/service is not possible through ordinary means/mode therefore you Defendant is intimated through this publication to appear before this court by person or by pleader on date fixed 15-04-2024 otherwise court shall be proceeded in accordance with law.order Issued on 26-03-2024 (Court of CJ-V Kohat)



LAHORE: A beautifully decorated view of Canal Road at night.

CM gives approval to set up research endowment fund

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz on Monday gave approval to establish a research endowment fund worth Rs 500 million for Ayub Research Center. Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif and PML Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif co-chaired a meeting to review challenges of agriculture in Punjab, said a handout issued here. She said, "When a farmer applies for a loan, it should be ensured that the loan is issued as soon as possible. The department should devise a fool-proof system of monitoring and feedback of the loan scheme."

Maryam Nawaz also gave in-principle approval of a pilot project for the recruitment of agriculture officers and field assistants against vacant posts. She directed to ensure adherence to merit in the recruitment process. In the meeting, it was decided to ensure coordination of the sub-institutions of the Agriculture Department for research, better performance and good governance. PML-N Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif said, "Lack of quality seeds even after the lapse of four decades is a matter of grave concern." He said, "Effective steps should be taken to plug the wastage of 37 MAF water from wastage in Punjab." He emphasised the need to use modern methods of irrigation.

The Secretary Agriculture in his briefing on various projects for the development of agriculture in Punjab apprised that 1.7 MAF

of water could be saved by paving 7300 water courses (Khalaas) in Punjab. A proposal to return rainwater to the ground by reverse pumping to improve groundwater levels was also reviewed in the meeting. Moreover, necessary measures to increase the rate of farm mechanization from 35 to 60 percent in Punjab were also discussed.

It was decided in the meeting that Rs150 billion loan will be given to farmers for Rabi and Kharif crops. PML-N Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif directed formulating simple eligibility criteria for the farmers to avail loans.

It was also decided in the meeting to amend the Fertilizer and Pesticide Act. Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari, Agriculture Minister Ashiq Hussain Kirmani and others attended the meeting.

CM grieved over Constable's death: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has expressed a deep sense of sorrow and grief over the death of a head constable Ghazanfar in Shahdara Town.

In her message, the CM extended condolences and expressed heartfelt sympathy and solidarity with the bereaved family members over their irreparable loss.

The chief minister directed for the early arrest of the accused involved in the murder of Head Constable, and sought a report from IG Police in this regard.

Five lakh houses in backward, hilly and desert areas are still deprived of all kinds of electricity: Nasir Shah

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Provincial Minister for Energy, Planning and Development Syed Nasir Hussain Shah has said that the most backward families of the rural, hilly and desert areas are still deprived of all types of electricity, all such areas will be supplied with electricity by providing solar panels soon, in this regard Energy Department has started practical and all these measures are being taken under the manifesto and vision of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

PPP government believes not only in claims rather it believes in practical measures. He talk to media and answering their questions in the Sindh Assembly today.

Nasir Shah said that there is also a plan to build solar parks at different places in Sindh, of which 50 MG of electricity generated from the solar park to be installed near Karachi will be given to Electric so that less Convenience can be provided to users using the unit.

Similarly, electricity facilities will also be provided to the people of the respective areas through HESCO and SEPCO. A lot of work has been done on generating electricity from waste and it will be implemented soon. He added that the upcoming budget is being prepared under the 10-point agenda of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's manifesto and under the same manifesto, 300 units of free electricity will be provided to the public through

the solarization process. We were sure that the mandate would be given in the federation, but it did not happen, otherwise we would have taken these steps for the convenience of the people of the entire country. In the area of Kacha, the police saved the lives of hundreds of people and martyred them by taking vigorous measures against the dacoits.

He emphasized on the media and said that the media should report positively on the initiatives of Sindh government and police and highlight such initiatives. For the safety of the people, pickets were placed before the caretaker government and those coming from outside were questioned as to where and why they had come. The PPP government has started this process again and various measures are being taken to protect the people.

In this regard, Chief Minister Sindh has taken practical steps on the special instructions of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari so that people's lives can be secured. Nasir Shah said that we are very hopeful of Justice Qazi Faiz Isa, as he has given revolutionary decisions, especially regarding the judicial murder of Bhutto Shaheed. He added that the success of Aseefa Bhutto is being deliberately made controversial even though Asif Ali Zardari won from this seat with 140 thousand votes. It is good that Faisal Vawda was elected. Hafiz Naeem should also come to the assembly, we have government in Balochistan and Sindh. The Chairman will implement the ten-point program in both provinces. PTI's are U-Turn Specialists.

Minister inspects women degree college construction

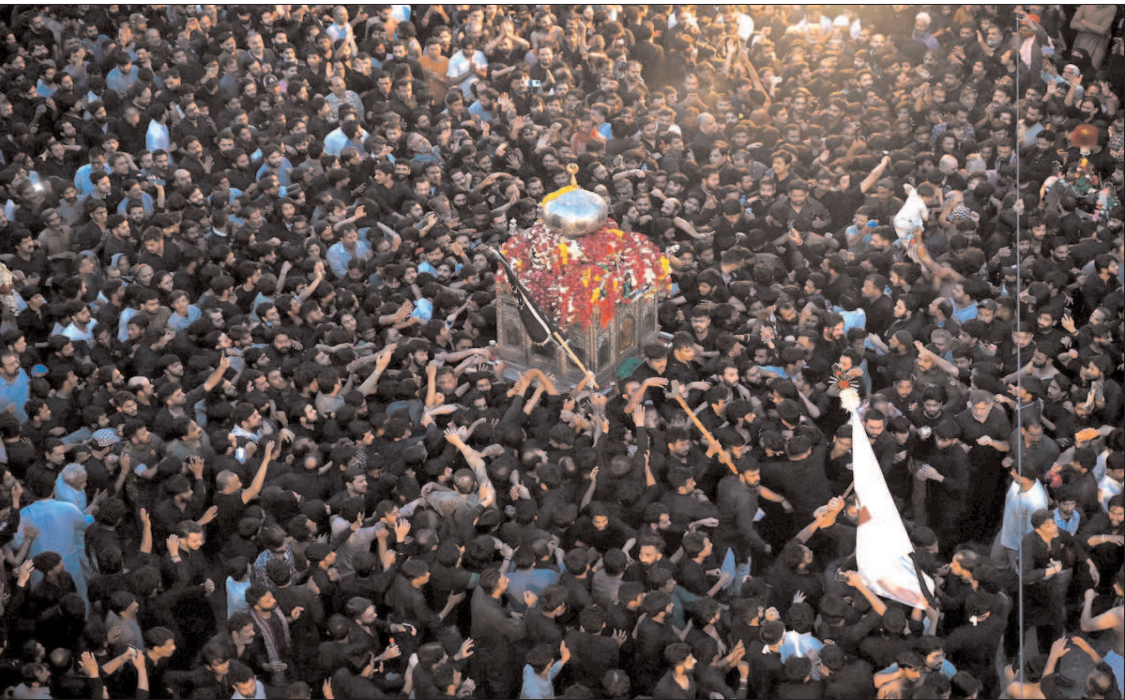
LAHORE (APP): Minister for Communication and Works Punjab, Sohaib Ahmed Bherth emphasized the need for timely completion and adherence to quality standards during his surprise visit to the construction site of the Government Degree College for Women in Tehsil Bhera. Accompanied by officials from both the College Administration and the Communication and Works department, Bherth diligently assessed the progress of the construction work, a hand-out said.

During the inspection, Bherth received comprehensive briefings on various aspects of the ongoing construction, ranging from the ground floor flooring to the structural integrity of the first floor and the development of essential facilities such as the canteen and living quarters. Despite acknowledging significant advancements,

Mr. Bherth stressed the importance of expediting the remaining finishing work to ensure timely completion.

Providing financial insights, Mr. Bherth disclosed that a substantial allocation of Rs 66 million had been earmarked for the project, with Rs 52 million already utilized. He reiterated the significance of this investment, particularly in enhancing educational infrastructure for female students in Tehsil Bhera and adjacent areas.

Highlighting upcoming additions such as new classrooms and laboratories on the first floor, Mr. Bherth underscored the transformative impact these expansions would have on educational access and quality. Mr. Bherth issued a stern warning against any compromises on material quality, emphasizing the zero-tolerance policy towards substandard materials.



LAHORE: Shiite Muslim mourners take part in a procession to commemorate the death anniversary of Prophet Mohammad's (PBUH) companion and son-in-law Imam Ali (AS) during the Ramadan.

‘PPP to achieve significant success in Senate polls’

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon addresses the media. Senior Minister of Sindh, Sharjeel Inam Memon, has stated that the People's Party will achieve significant success in the Senate elections. With 9 members, how will they secure the senate seats? Their decision not to withdraw from the election indicates their active participation.



Speaking to the media at the Sindh Assembly Media Corner, Senior Provincial Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that the Sindh Government and the Department of Excise, Taxation, and Narcotics Control are conducting a crackdown throughout Sindh, resulting in significant success in seven or eight cases. There has been a positive response to this crackdown, and the aim is to halt all types of drug supply under all circumstances. Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that immediately after Eid, the Sindh government will provide relief to people not only in Karachi but all over Sindh. The construction work on Jam Sadiq Bridge and Yellow Line BRT will commence swiftly.

He emphasized that the People's Party has consistently advocated for the freedom of the judiciary. The party remains committed to ensuring the judiciary's autonomy, a cause for which only the People's Party workers have made sacrifices, even shedding blood. It is disheartening that such efforts are often overlooked or misunderstood.

Sharjeel Inam Memon pointed out that Imran Khan, who spent only four to five months in jail, suddenly recalls the importance of freedom of judiciary. However, when Shaheed Bibi approached the judiciary, it supported unconstitutional and illegal actions. Additionally, President Asif Ali Zardari was unjustly incarcerated for 11 years without evidence. Surprisingly, there was no mention of judicial

freedom during that period. Furthermore, when Saqib Nisar implemented judicial activism and judicial martial law, there was also a lack of concern for the freedom of the judiciary. He mentioned that there was a nationwide campaign against illegal encroachments, during which the illegally constructed Bani Gala was regularized under court orders. Despite being known as dishonest and untrustworthy by the people of Pakistan, a false person like Imran Khan was unjustly granted the certificate of Sadiq and Amin.

Sharjeel Inam Memon questioned why nobody remembered the freedom of the judiciary when Saqib Nisar actively campaigned to secure Imran Khan's victory in the elections. At that time, Saqib Nisar was affiliated with the People's Party and PMLN. His statements created an impression that everyone except one person was considered dishonest.

He remarked that Pakistan faced the risk of losing billions due to the actions of Iftikhar Chaudhry in the Recodek case, yet there was no mention of the freedom of the judiciary during that time. Both Iftikhar Chaudhry and Saqib Nisar made a spectacle of the country in the name of suo moto notices, thereby undermining all constitutional institutions. This resulted in the disqualification of the elected Prime Minister.

He highlighted that in cases like May 9, the accused Imran Khan enters through a gate reserved for judges, being granted special privileges. He empha-

try's economy.

Sharjeel Inam Memon said that those who advocate for the freedom of the judiciary should explain which clause of Pakistan's constitution or law permits the receipt of illegal foreign funding from countries like India and Israel by political parties. He highlighted that Imran Khan received VVIP treatment despite being involved in serious crimes. The decision of the Election Commission of Pakistan was detailed and logical, making it indefensible. Imran Khan was allowed to continue for three or four years on a stay order, preventing the investigation into foreign funding by the Election Commission.

He mentioned that if Justice Umar Atta had not issued a stay order on Justice Waqar Seth's decision regarding the Peshawar BRT, the leadership of PTI would have been in jail, facing NAB cases. The Chief Justice of the High Court is currently drafting a decision indicating corruption in Peshawar BRT. The inspection team of the Chief Minister of KPK reported that kickbacks of 7 billion rupees were involved in the Peshawar BRT project. However, Justice Umar Atta Bandyal continued to issue stay orders one after another, allowing Imran Khan to obtain relief and maintain the facade of honesty. He emphasized that the government is committed to tackling drugs and street crimes. Protecting the life and property of every citizen is the government's duty. He further stated that they have successfully intercepted arms and drugs from entering Sindh, indicating their seriousness in maintaining law and order.

He mentioned that there is no issue if Faisal Vawda decides to become a senator. Previously, he was affiliated with a political party, but now he is contesting the elections as an independent candidate and not representing any specific party. There is nothing inappropriate about his decision.

He mentioned that there is no issue if Faisal Vawda decides to become a senator. Previously, he was affiliated with a political party, but now he is contesting the elections as an independent candidate and not representing any specific party. There is nothing inappropriate about his decision.

Advisor Tourism approves extension of contract of Tourism Police and supply of motorbikes

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Zahid Chanzeb, Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism, Culture and Archeology, has given in-principle approval of the extension of the contract of Tourism Police and provision of more motorbikes required by them.

Zahid Chanzeb directed that in wake of the beginning of the tourism season with Eid-ul-Fitr, tourism police must immediately reach their places of duty and ensure proper performance of their responsibilities so that with the increase in the number of tourists, they will be provided with full security?

He was presiding over a meeting at the Culture and Tourism Authority office in Peshawar on Monday, which was attended by Director General BarkatUllah Marwat and other officers besides Lady Commandant of Tourism Police.

Zahid Chanzeb asserted



that a record number of tourists are expected to arrive at all the tourist spots of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during this season, for which ensuring high security and health and sanitation arrangements is one of the primary duties of the Tourism Police?

Similarly, he said that the uniform of the tourism police

should be attractive and their attitude should be very polite and responsible? The Adviser Tourism directed the Commandant Tourism Police to visit the tourist places all over the province instead of staying at office.

They had to review the arrangements and also distribute pamphlets and brochures of the tourism authority among tourists, local hotels,

schools and markets?

Zahid Chanzeb clarified that the extension of the tenure of the officials of the tourism department will be extended on the basis of their quarterly performance, results and increase in revenue generation, while the officers who perform poorly will be relieved from duty and sent home immediately.

Provision of clean water to people top priority: Minister

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa minister for higher education, archives and libraries Meena Khan Afridi has said that provision of clean water to the people is our top priority while tangible steps will be taken for keeping Peshawar clean and green.

The minister told this while chairing a meeting of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cities Improvement Project (KPCIP) Peshawar. On the occasion KP health Syed Qasim Ali Shah was also present while project director Zafar Ali Shah, Mian M.

Shakeel director technical and chief engineer Dr. Mahboob Alam also attended the meeting.

The provincial ministers were briefed about the project. The ministers were informed about the project and told that KPCIP Peshawar interventions in water supply, green urban spaces and integrated solid waste management. Besides Peshawar, the project is also going on in four cities of the KP including Mingora, Kohat, Mardan and Abbotabad.

"Water Sanitations Services Peshawar (WSSP) is working in 5 operational zones of Peshawar. In these

zones, there are 34 water tanks (water reservoirs) in which 23 will be reconstructed while 10 will be rehabilitated" said in the briefing.

However, for collection of garbage, small and large size of loaders will be used aimed at cleaning the city, no waste touch the ground and for climate friendly disposal of solid waste. The ministers were further informed that those water reservoirs will be solarized where there is no issue of space. Meena Khan urged concerned authorities for ensuring of clean water and environment to people.

Pak-America Alumni for provision of scholarships

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pak-America Alumni Network Khyber Pakhtunkhwa held get together at Peshawar University Teacher Association (PUTA) hall to throw light on social and welfare activities of the community.

During the event Pak-America Alumni Network central president Sahibzada Amir Khalil, vice president Nauman Mohib Kakakhel advocate and executive member Seema Fayyaz addressed the participants. They argued for establishment of a mechanism to pave way for provision of scholarships for the marginalized segments in Pakistan.

The speakers throw lights on Pak-America Alumni Network activities related to Ramzan especially provision of edible package to poor people for socio-welfare of marginalized segments of society. They claimed that the Alumni is committed for provision of equal educational opportunities as well as provision of scholarship to students belonging to marginalized segments of society.

During the ceremony United States (US) Consulate Peshawar representative along with politicians, journalists, educationists and people from every walk of life were present. Pak-America Alumni Network members including Momin Khan and Saeda Khursheed said that PUNA in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is like a family and committed for socio-economic uplift and welfare of the people.

Hamza foundation requests for assistance

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Hamza Foundation Peshawar has demanded of the government and philanthropists to provide them financial assistance, so as they could continue providing their services to the needy and poor patients of Thalassemia and others, who are registered with the foundation.

This request was made by Ijaz Ali Khan, the founder of Hamza Foundation while addressing media personnel and claimed that the registered number of patients with Hamza Foundation is 1487 and they are being provided with blood donations and free medicines on daily basis.

However due to lack of funds, zakat and donations, it has become difficult for the institution to bear the increasing expenses of the patients, for which businessmen, philanthropists and individuals from all walks of life should extend their financial assistance, so that the lives of these patients could be saved, he said. He added that after proper screening in the hospital, safe and healthy blood is being provided to the patients suffering from thalassemia, hemophilia and cancer through modern equipment and machinery.

Hamza Foundation founder further added that due to inflation, the expenses incurred by the patients have also increased too much, so government as well as philanthropists should contribute their support in this noble cause, so that the sufferings of the poor and needy children suffering from thalassemia can be alleviated.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali inspecting 250 years old well at Chah Kala area of City.

Stakeholders commit for safeguarding public health

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a major stride towards advancing public health initiatives, Blue Veins organised a multi-stakeholder consultation to strengthen policy reforms concerning smoke-free public places and the sale of newer tobacco and nicotine products in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). The session brought together health experts, government officials, and civil society representatives to address the urgent need for updated regulations on Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS), E-Cigarettes, and tobacco use in public spaces.

The consultation explored paths forward for enhancing tobacco control policies and legislation in KP, emphasising the necessity for synergistic efforts to ensure the effective adoption and execution of these critical health regulations.

During the stakeholder consultation, participants admired the Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government's proactive measures in tobacco control. They acknowledged the significant strides made and emphasised the urgent need for more comprehensive legislative action. The call was for robust, provincewide policies and laws to curb the growing use of harmful nicotine delivery devices, highlighting the necessity of stringent controls to combat the health risks associated with vaping and e-cigarette consumption. Dr. Shukat Ali, Director General Health of KP, asserted, "Our commitment to public health is unwavering. It's imperative to reinforce our enforcement of existing tobacco control laws to protect our community's well-being."

Abdul Kabeer Khan, Member Provincial Assembly (MPA), reiterated the provincial government's dedication, stating, "The health and safety of our people is the key priority of the new government. We are committed to advancing legislation that prioritises public interest with a focus on

health and education." Dr. Irshad Ali Roghani, Director of Public Health KP, said, "To effectively counter the dangers of newer nicotine products, fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships is essential. This approach is vital for a healthier future for our citizens."

Dr. Irshad Ali Roghani, Director of Public Health KP, said, "To effectively counter the dangers of newer nicotine products, fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships is essential. This approach is vital for a healthier future for our citizens." Qamar Naseem, Program Manager of Blue Veins, commented, "This consultation marks a significant step towards comprehensive policy reform in tobacco control. Together, we can achieve a smoke-free environment that benefits all." The consultation underscored the collective resolve to usher in robust policy reforms, safeguarding public health against the backdrop of evolving tobacco and nicotine product challenges.

Extension in contract of Tourism Police approved

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Zahid Chanzeb, Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism, Culture and Archeology, has given in-principle approval for the extension of the contract of Tourism Police and provision of more motorbikes required by them.

Zahid Chanzeb directed that in the wake of the beginning of the tourism season with Eid-ul-Fitr, tourism police must immediately reach their places of duty and ensure proper performance of their responsibilities so that with the increase in the number of tourists, they will be provided with full security?

He was presiding over a meeting at the Culture and Tourism Authority office here on Monday, which was attended by Director General BarkatUllah Marwat and other officers besides Lady Commandant of Tourism Police.

Zahid Chanzeb asserted that a record number of tourists are expected to arrive at all the tourist spots of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during this season, for which ensuring high security and health and sanitation arrangements is one of the primary duties of the Tourism Police? Similarly, he said that the uniform of the tourism police should be attractive and their attitude should be very polite and responsible?

The Adviser Tourism directed the Commandant Tourism Police to visit the tourist places all over the province instead of staying at office. They had to review the arrangements and also distribute pamphlets and brochures of the tourism authority among tourists, local hotels, schools and markets?

Zahid Chanzeb clarified that the extension of the tenure of the officials of the tourism department will be extended on the basis of their quarterly performance, results and increase in revenue generation, while the officers who perform poorly will be relieved from duty and sent home immediately.

Labour room inaugurated at HMC

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Chairman of the Hayatabad Medical Complex (HMC) Board of Governors on Monday inaugurated the labor room attached to the Gynecology Ward.

Board of Governor member Dr. Muhammad Ali Chaudh, Medical Director Prof. Shahzad Akbar, Hos-

pital Director Dr. Shahzad Faisal, Ward Incharge Prof. Shamshad Begum and other faculty of Gynecology Department were also present in this event.

Prof. Shamshad Begum while giving a briefing said that during 10 months there were many problems due to over capacity patients in the gynecology ward and the old labor room had a capacity of

only 10 beds while this labor room was expanded to 30 beds.

The newly designed labor room includes three operation theaters and a minor operation theater which will be able to perform 9 deliveries on time. Apart from this, separate safe arrangements have been made in the labor room for HIV, HCV and HBS patients.

Muslims sit in Itikaf seeks Allah's blessings, forgiveness

PESHAWAR (APP): The Muslims on the first day of Itikaf here Monday sought the Allah Almighty's blessings and forgiveness besides prayed for the progress and prosperity of Pakistan.

Like other parts of Pakistan, hundreds of thousands of Muslims sit in Itikaf in mosques and women at homes before Magrib prayer in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Sunday evening seeking forgiveness, mercy and Allah's unlimited blessings in the last Ashra of Ramazanul Mubarak.

The worshipers gather for Itikaf in all small and large mosques in all districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including merged areas (ex-Fata) and confined themselves at small places at mosques and women at homes seeking Allah's blessings and forgiveness.

In Peshawar, all the small and large mosques including the historic Mohabat Khan mosque, Zarghoni Hayatabad mosque, Spine Jumati, Gunj mosque and Sunheri mosque etc were flooded with Mutakifs (a person sitting in Itikaf).

The worshipers also gathered in

large numbers at mosques at adjoining districts of Peshawar including Khyber, Charsadda, Nowshera, Kohat and Swabi. The worshipers observing Itikaf would spend their time in reading the Holy Quran, Nawafil and praying to Allah Almighty for showering His countless blessings on human beings especially of the fasting Muslims.

"Itikaf is an intensive worship observed during the last 10 days of Ramazanul Mubarak by remaining confined to a small place in a mosque or in a house (for women). It has been a regular Sunnah (practice of Holy Prophet PBUH), which carried great blessings of the Allah Almighty for His believers during Ramazan," said Chief Khateeb KP, Maulana Tayab Qureshi while talking to APP.

"Itikaf means to 'isolate or devote oneself for worship of the Allah in the last Ashra (10-day) of Ramazan and Allah would grant reward to Mutakifs in this world and hereafter," he said, adding there was also a blessed night of 'Layatul Qadar' (the Night of Power) most probably in the last Ashra of Ramazan and



who prays in this holy night with faith and sincerity, all his/her past sins would be pardon.

He said the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had also laid great stress on 'Itikaf' and declared that "whosoever for Allah's sake did even one day's Itikhaf, Allah

Almighty would keep him/her away from the hellfire (Jahnnam).

Professor Dr Abdul Ghafar, former Director Sheikh Zaid Islamic Centre and member of Central Roet Hilal Committee said that Ramazan's last Ashura Itikaf was very significant for fasting people as

evidenced by its performance by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

"As devoted servants of Allah Almighty, we have an obligation to be grateful when we earn Allah's help and bounties," he said, adding Mutakif passes through patience and abstain himself/herself from all kinds of sinful actions, behaviors, smoking and worshiped day and night for happiness of Allah.

"Ramazan teaches us compassion and tolerance besides helping the needy, orphans and the oppressed segment of the society. Ramazan trains people to tolerate any trial, realizing that whatever we are going through is according to Allah's divine well and He is the one to take us out of all difficult situations," he said.

He said there are three types of Itikaf including sunnah itikaf, which is only performed in the last ten-days of Ramazan. The other type is Nafal itikaf that could be performed for any number of days—even one day itikaf while wajib itikaf is done when someone promises to do it after his intention, wish or condition is fulfilled.

"Itikaf strengthens believers' faith in Allah and brings him/her closer to Him and takes him/her out of the worldly desires," he said. He said if Mustakif has no one in the family to get them food or water in the mosque, he is permitted to go out and buy food but return as soon as possible to his/her worship place in the mosque and home.

"If itikaf of a person was broken on purpose such as leaving the place of itikaf without any pressing need, he would give kafara (penalty). "The penalty for breaking an itikaf is to either free a slave or fast for 60 consecutive days and if not possible then fee sixty poor persons."

He urged people to concentrate on worship during the last Ashra of Ramazan and give maximum charity to orphans, widows and people with disabilities and the poor. Preference should be given in charity to those organizations with clean service records so that their money could be used for people welfare. The people have been further requested to give fitra before Eid to the poor so that they could be included in the joyous occasion.

3600 litres adulterated milk discarded

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A five-day special campaign against adulteration launched by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority concluded wherein 3600 liters of adulterated milk was discarded.

The five-day special campaign was carried out across the province, said a spokesperson. Food Authority adding that teams checked milk vendors and milk tankers on main highways. A modern mobile food testing lab collected and tested 1061 milk samples and found 906 samples satisfactory while 155 were unsatisfactory.

Similarly, in 155 unsatisfactory milk samples, the adulteration of powder was found in 10 percent of samples and water in 90 percent. The teams discarded about 3,600 liters of adulterated milk, sealed eight milk shops, and imposed a fine of a million. Director General Food Authority Wasif Saeed said that adulteration of milk was tantamount to playing with human lives, especially children. He said the special campaign was launched to take strict action against the adulteration mafia and warned of more crackdowns in the future.



Often when you think you're at the end of something, you're at the beginning of something else." — Fred Rogers

Retirement is wonderful if you have two essentials—much to live on and much to live for. It's time to embrace your future and reflect on your past. I know you are happy with what you did with your life. I'm happy for you as well. May this new chapter of your life be full of wonderful surprises!

What a day to remind you that you are not getting any younger. Just kidding, fella, God knows you will always have a soul of a 5-year-old. And that's what makes you so very special. Happy retirement, mate. You are so energy man. I guess that retirement will not change anything in your life. Wishing you not to lose your charm! Congratulations on becoming the new grocery in charge at home and getting a new boss - your wife!"



In brief

Illegal gas pipeline removed Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: Sui Northern Gas Pipeline (SNGPL) teams has cut off four and half kilometers long illegal gas pipe line in lower Dir. More than 450 gas connection users were involved in pilferage and other irregularities. The operation was carried out in the villages of Damamu, Oleya Banda, Bandgai, Tange, Nakhro koto and Shagi. Operation was headed by Area In charge Malakand Division Engineer Mairowis Khan, Executive Engineer Bathkila and In charge Complaint Center Dir also participated. The teams carried out the operation early in the morning and 4.5 km 4 inches pipe was disconnected all illegal connections were cut off. According to in-charge sub-area Swat engineer Mirwais Khan, more than 450 illegal connections were obtained from this pipeline in these six villages and gas worth 11 crores was being stolen, on which action was taken. He said that the details of people using gas illegally are being collected and regular letters are being sent to the concern authorities and police stations for legal action against these pilferage and irregularities.

Trader killed in Takht Bhai F.P. Report

TAKHTBHAI: An elderly businessman named Haji Bahramand was shot dead by unidentified motorcyclists on Main Malakand Road in the premises of Takhtbhahi police station, on Monday. The accused managed to escape. First Information Report was lodged on the complaint of victim's son. According to reports unknown suspects riding a Honda 125 motorcycle on Main Malakand Road in Takhtbhahi shot dead Haji Bahramand resident of Mohalla Muhammad Ali Khan while the murderers escaped from the crime scene. On receiving the information, Rescue 1122 and the local police arrived and shifted the body to the hospital. Shah Khalid son of the deceased while filing a report told the police that we have no enmity with anyone, from which the police came to know about the deceased. That he was a pious man who was bound by five prayers and had good morals.

Foolproof security on Easter F.P. Report

MARDAN: District Police Officer along Superintendent of Police (SP) Investigation visited various worship places of the Christian community and checked the security being provided over there. Police Officers and Jawan are performing their duties in religious places on the eve of Easter. Similarly, additional personnel have also been posted at the churches. SP Investigation also visited the sports complex and other entertainment venues to check the police security arrangements. Meanwhile, DPO visited the Buddhist remains of Takht-Bhai. Police stations Takht Bai and Saro Shah, besides Church in Mardan. He reviewed the security and administrative matters including the record of police stations and lock ups in detail and issued necessary orders. He also instructed the staff to perform their duties vigilantly and to treat the citizens with good manners and to provide them with legal assistance.

No immediate relief to masses: Kh Asif

F.P. Report

SIALKOT: In a candid revelation, Defense Minister Khawaja Asif acknowledged that Pakistan stands on the brink of financial collapse, resembling a default scenario.

Speaking to the press in Sialkot, Asif highlighted the gravity of the situation, attributing it primarily to the country's near-bankruptcy and rampant tax evasion plaguing various sectors. "As it stands, the government is unable to provide immediate relief to the populace," remarked Asif, addressing the dire economic predicament. He pointed out that a staggering number of citizens, particularly in key sectors such as retail and wholesale, evade their tax obligations, exacerbating the nation's economic woes. Shockingly, only a fraction of the population, amounting to a mere few hundred thousand individuals, dili-

gently fulfill their tax duties.

Compounding the issue, Asif revealed that tax disputes worth a colossal 2.6 trillion rupees linger unresolved in the courts, with the judiciary's sluggishness further impeding any semblance of fiscal stability. The burden of taxation disproportionately burdens the salaried class, exacerbating the socio-economic disparities within the country.

However, Asif expressed cautious optimism for a turnaround within the next 18 to 24 months, citing the government's strategic policies as the beacon of hope. He assured that the fruition of these measures would gradually alleviate the financial strain on the populace.

In a bid to alleviate the tax burden and encourage compliance, the government unveiled the Tajir Dost Scheme, commencing its registration today. Targeting traders and shop-

keepers across major cities, including Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, Rawalpindi, Quetta, and Islamabad, the scheme aims to foster a business-friendly environment while bolstering tax revenues. Under the scheme, participants stand to benefit from a 25 percent discount for prompt tax payments and return submissions, with an estimated additional tax influx of approximately Rs 500 billion annually anticipated.

Small traders, shopkeepers, wholesalers, retailers, manufacturers, and importers will all be eligible to partake in the initiative, underscoring the government's commitment to inclusive economic reform. As Pakistan navigates through its financial turbulence, the Tajir Dost Scheme emerges as a beacon of hope, signaling a concerted effort towards economic revival and stability in the foreseeable future.

About 440 illegal gas connection disconnected

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Sui Northern Gas Pipeline Limited (SNGPL) intensified its crackdown on gas theft in the Lower Dir district as a 4500 meter long illegal pipeline was dismantled and 440 illegal gas connections were disconnected during an anti-theft drive here on Monday.

Sources in the SNGPL told this reporter that a special team comprised of the SNGPL regional manager Akif Ahmad Noor along with regional head Swat Mir Awais Saeed, chief executive engineer Bathkela Wiqas Jamil and Timergara in-charge Mehmoodur Rehman raided the villages of Damamo, Awlia Banda, Bandagai, Tangi, Nakhro, Koto and Shagai early in the morning and dismantled 4500 meter long illegal gas pipeline.

The team also disconnected a total of 440 connections taken from the illegal pipeline in those villages. The team also got registered cases against the consumers using illegal gas in various police stations in the district. According to the officials a total of 36 million cubic feet of illegal gas was being stolen, causing a huge loss to the national kitty. They said the crackdown would be continued in the district against the gas thieves who would be strictly dealt with.

Meanwhile the exorbitant gas bills have disturbed the consumers who were voluntarily disconnecting their lines. Talking to local journalists at Timergara, a number of gas consumers complained the SNGPL had sent them exorbitant bills for the last month. The consumers

said that they had started using the LPG cylinders instead of Sui gas as they were unable to pay its bills. An LPG distributor Rafiullah told this reporter that gas consumers preferred to buy gas cylinders. He said that LPG was being sold at Rs 320 per kilogram and its sale had risen during the last week.

Eid packages: The Shakil Shaheed Development Organization (SSDO), a welfare and non-profit organization on Monday distributed Eid food packages among 100 deserving orphans and helpless families in the Talash area.

The SSDO founder Peer Imtiaz Ahmad distributed the packages each containing wheat flour, rice, ghee and sugar costing Rs 8000 each. Speaking on the occasion he said the SSDO had been distributing such packages with the financial support of overseas for the last ten years. Dozens of children were also given cash amounts on the occasion.

PhD completed: A scholar Dr Ijazul Haq from the Shalkana, a small village of Khall completed his PhD degree from the Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU) in China. Talking to local journalists at Timergara the scholar Dr Ijazul Haq said the title of his research was 'artificial intelligence especially Pashto natural language processing' on which he published several theses in reputable journals.

District, Tehsil bar associations elected new cabinets: The annual elections of the district and tehsil bars' associations for the year 2024-25 in the Lower Dir

district were completed here the other day. Advocate Malik Abid Hayat backed by the Jamaat-i-Islami and Pakistan People Party affiliated lawyers, was elected as president of the district bar Timergara.

A total of 189 votes out of 212 registered votes were polled. Advocate Muhammad Yar supervised the elections. Malik Abid Hayat bagged 95 votes while his rival advocate Shah Faisal backed by the ANP, PTI, PML-N and JUI-F got 93 votes.

Similarly, Majidullah of the two parties alliance got 103 votes and was elected as general secretary of the district bar Timergara. Khurshid Ali was elected as vice president, Jawad Rauf as joint secretary, Ashraf Ali as finance secretary, Qazi Ruhail Amin as librarian and Ziaullah as executive member.

Moreover, Murtaza Khan of the Malgari Wakilan was elected as president, Nasir Khan as general secretary, Amjad Ali as vice president, Tariq Aziz as joint secretary, Abdul Basit as finance secretary, Ali Muhammad as librarian and Navid Zaman as executive member for the tehsil bar association Samarbagh for the next term. Muhibullah advocate supervised the election. In Chakdara, Asadullah advocate was elected as president, Arshad Khan as vice president, Amjad Nawaz as general secretary, Shafqatullah as joint secretary, Muqadar Shah as finance secretary and Zeeshan Khan as librarian for the Adenzai tehsil bar association for the year 2024-25.



HYDERABAD: Women busy in Eid shopping at Resham Bazaar during upcoming Eidul Fitr celebrations.

Provision of best health facilities top priority: Saira F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Chairperson Chief Minister's Special Initiative Committee and Ex-Federal Minister Saira Afzal Tara said that provision of better health facilities besides other amenities of life to the people is top priority of the Chief Minister of the Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif. She expressed these views while visiting District Headquarter Hospital Hafizabad to review availability of medicines and other necessary treatment facilities to the patients.

Local leader of PMLN Sheik Gulzar Ahmad, Ali Husnain Tarar, ADCG Hamad Ullah, Medical Superintendent DHQ Dr. Shakeel Ahmad Shahid, DHO Dr. Faiq Ali Tarar, senior child specialists Dr. Abid Hussain Bhatti, District Information Secretary PMLN Hafizabad Muhammad Zaman Bhoon and other members of committee were also accompanied by her. Saira Afzal Tarar inspected general emergency, children emergency, laboratory, X-Ray room, necessary and other wards and took feedback from patients regarding availability treatment facilities including medicines in the hospital.

Chief Minister advisor said that rush of patients was reflected that better healthcare were being provided to patients under supervision of senior doctors. She said that the Punjab government was focusing on improving treatment facilities in the hospitals throughout the Punjab including Hafizabad so that the best healthcare could be available to people at local level.

Chairperson Special Initiatives also said discussed proposal to establish separate emergency unit for heart and Paralysis patients at DHQ hospital and assured that this suggestion would be take up with higher authorities at provincial level. She urged the doctors and other staff to ensure their attendance timely and serving the ailing humanity a big worship and means of getting blessing almighty Allah as well as success in this world and hereafter.

2 killed in fireworks factory blast

FAISALABAD (INP): Two people including a teenager boy were killed due to blast in a fireworks factory in the area of Khurarianwala police station.

Rescue 1122 spokesman said here on Sunday night that fireworks were being prepared in a factory, situated at Ghazi Town on Makkoana-Khurarianwala bypass road when the material caught fire and exploded.

As a result, iron shed of the factory caved in and caused instant death of two people including 34-year-old Shehbaz and 15-year-old Zia-ul-Haq, residents of Ghazi Abad old Makkoana Road.

Receiving information, fire-fighters of Rescue 1122 rushed to the spot and brought the fire under control after hectic efforts.

Mediterranean cold winds cause Gwadar flooding

F.P. Report

GWADAR: Mediterranean cold winds cause Gwadar flooding, said Ahmed Kamal, Chief Engineering Advisor & Chairman Federal Flood Commission.

Responding to the misinformation from some media on Gwadar's flood situation and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), he pointed out that main reason for recent torrential rains in Gwadar is the stream of cold winds coming from the Mediterranean.

He told Gwadar Pro here on Monday that between mid-February to mid-April the temperature has been a bit higher, and this time this condition and the temperature were higher. Due to the higher temperature and the

penetration of the system, there had an impact of the seaside also in Gwadar. That's why there was increased rainfall due to higher temperatures at that time and sea surface vapor being sucked into it,"

Ahmed Kamal explained. "Such incidents have happened in the past in Gwadar and nearby areas such as Kage or Lasbela, but not with the intensity that has happened this time. This is very much indicating the impact of climate change, and this is an indication of western wave or cold winds coming to Pakistan and increasing its impact in Pakistan," he further said.

According to Ahmed Kamal, China and Pakistan have been closely working together on disaster man-

agement. "We have also signed an MoU with the relevant Ministry of the Chinese Government, and Hohai University of China, under which there will be a Joint Water Management Center.

Besides this, a large number of personnel every year i.e. junior, middle and senior students who will be water resources and management professionals from colleges and universities will be trained in Pakistan as well as in China," he said. If we want to develop a place and we want to improve our country, then no one should have any kind of objection. People of my country especially people of Balochistan have as much right to develop as anyone else," Ahmed Kamal remarked.

Police arrests injured dacoit after encounter

F.P. Report

THATTA: Police shown arrest of a dacoit in injured condition near Babra bus stop after alleged encounter. The local police said that three dacoits armed with deadly weapons stormed a petrol pump located some eight kilometers from Garho city district Thatta district.

The area police got timely information of the incident, claimed Station House Officer Garho and they reached the site. As soon as bandits saw police mobiles heading towards them they opened fire on police, which was retaliated and an encounter ensued. The brief encounter of around half an hour left a dacoit injured critically while his two accomplices made their escape good.

The injured dacoit was brought to rural health center Garho where he was

identified as Noor Ahmed Sommo. Police said that they were busy evaluating the criminal record of the arrested dacoit, however he had not disclosed the name of the fleeing suspects.

On the other hand, the relatives of the arrested suspect claimed that police had picked him up from outside his house on Tuesday and then projected him as a dacoit on the behest of a local influential businessman. SSP Thatta Dr Imran Khan said that he would take all possible measures to reduce crime rate in the district.

Crackdown against street crimes kicks off: Amid surge in street crime, Thatta police have launched a crackdown against criminals involved in heinous offences including the supply of drugs and other substances. According to information gathered by this correspondent as many as 19 notorious

delinquents have been arrested while four of them were nabbed after brief encounters.

SSP Thatta Dr Imran Khan on Monday told local reporters that they were committed to wipe out crime from Thatta. "Ashiq Totani, Noor Soomro and Zahid Chandio were wanted in more than 16 cases," he said and added that the operation against the criminals would continue.

Police have formed a strategy to trace the hide-outs of vagabonds involved in supply of narcotic substances mainly ice and hashish. SSP Thatta has urged citizens and other institutions to cooperate for eradication of crime. The incidents of robbery have surged in Thatta and Sujawal district during the past few months and the decision of crackdown has been taken to revive the peace of the district.

Buner Bar Association elects new cabinet

F.P. Report

BUNER: The legal fraternity elected Mian Naeemuddin Advocate as President by securing 75 votes out of 144 while Ilyas Advocate was elected as General Secretary by getting 74 votes. Ashraf Ali Advocate of the same alliance was elected Vice President by getting 800 votes.

Muhammad Hamza, the nominee of the Islamic Lawyers Forum and an ally of the Five Lawyers Forum, was elected as the joint secretary by getting 88 votes, and Gul Nacha, an advocate of the same alliance, was elected as the finance secretary by getting 94 votes, while Shakeel Ahmed, an advocate of the same alliance, was already elected librarian.

The election results were announced by Election Board Chairman Rafiq Ahad Khan Advocate after the Aftari along with members Qaiser Khan Advocate and Hazrat Hussain Advocate.

Meena Bazaar established for women: One day long special subsidized market for women titled with "Meena Bazaar" organized

by district administration in wake of Eid shopping at Girls College in Khali Kalay area of Khadukhel tehsil. The Meena Bazaar was set up on the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Buner.

It was an activity for the first time under one roof for the women of Khadukhel, for the easy availability of Eid shopping and other daily necessities started after 7:00 iftar to 11:00 PM. In this one-day "Women's Bazaar".

Women's clothes, bangles and other decorative items were available. Around 2000 women attended and shopped for Eid. Men entry was completely banned in the bazaar. Only children up to seven years of age could accompany women.

The women who participated in Meena Bazaar. The regional delegation of Khadukhel, political and social leader Iqbal Khan of Panj Tar and Board Member Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment and President Malakand Division Welfare Wing Muhammad Shahid thanked the district administration and Assistant Commissioner Khadukhel

13 houses burnt to ashes

KANDIARO (INP): In two separate incidents of fire in the Kandiaro and Tharo Shah areas of Sindh, 13 wooden houses were burnt to ashes on Monday. In the fire incidents many cattle, goats, grains, and all other household goods were burnt to ashes.

The cause of the fire is being said to be a spark from the stove of the house. As per the details, 12 houses were gutted due to a fire in the nearby village of Ali Muhammad Gadhni of Moro in Kandiaro while a house was also burnt to ash in the Tharo Shah area of Kandiaro due to the same reason.

The local police told the media that the crude hut-like houses of workers, laborers, and farmers caught fire.



MULTAN: A view of dry bed of Chenab River at Head Muhammad Wala.

Policeman among two killed for resisting robbery in Jacobabad

JACOBABAD (INP): In a tragic incident, a policeman and youth were killed in Jacobabad for resisting robbery.

As per details, the incident occurred in the jurisdiction of Bahu Khosu Police Station, where dacoits attempted to snatch motorcycle and other valuables from the deceased. However, the robber opened fire on both of them when they resisted and killed the policeman and the youth.

Earlier, a young man was shot dead by robbers while

he was returning home after attending an Iftar party at his maternal uncle's house in Surjani Town. Thirty-two-year-old Zohaib, son of Irfan, was killed by motorbike-borne robbers near Sector 4D in the Abdullah Morr area and fled from the spot.

Javed said when Zohaib tried to overpower robbers, they fired shots at him, with a bullet piercing through his mobile phone kept in the pocket of his shirt and hitting him in the chest. The wound proved fatal.

It is pertinent to mention

here that at least 49 Karachi citizens have been killed so far in 2024 over resisting robberies with February recording the highest number of 20 killings. In response to the recent surge in street crime incidents in Karachi, the Inspector General of Police (IGP) initiated a strategic crackdown, and formed a specialized force to tackle the criminals in the metropolis. Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sindh, Ghulam Nabi Memon, convened a high-level meeting with the city's top police officers.



Barrage of Russian attacks aims to cut Ukraine's lights

MOSCOW (BBC): In central Kharkiv you hear the rattle of generators on every street. Ten days ago, Ukraine's second city was plunged into darkness by a massive, targeted Russian missile attack on the energy system - it was the biggest since the start of the full-scale war.

As Kharkiv works to restore power, there has been a wave of additional strikes across the country targeting the energy supply. Volodymyr Zelensky has condemned what he calls Russia's "missile terror". The Ukrainian president has also renewed his calls to his country's allies for more air defence systems as protection. The authorities in Odesa on the Black Sea in the south of the country say the energy system there was the latest to be hit overnight, with missiles and drones, causing partial blackouts. In Kharkiv to the north, the damage is more serious. Kharkiv's mayor, Igor Terekhov, has said it will take weeks to restore full supply and that is if Russia's armed forces don't strike the same targets again. The initial attack on the city's energy supply even knocked out the air raid siren. There is now a screeching noise that comes straight to people's mobile phones instead.

There can be hours of those missile warnings in the city each day - during one, the blast wave from a strike blew out dozens of windows in a block of flats. But the Russians have increasingly been aiming at the power grid. "The damage is very serious," Mr Terekhov told the BBC. "We need time to repair it," he added, suggesting that meant a couple more months at least. Russia's defence ministry confirms that its latest strikes have been focused on Ukraine's power supply. It says the

aim is to disrupt the work of the country's defence industry and claims that "all aims of the strike were achieved". The ministry has a long history of disinformation.

But the Kharkiv mayor did tell the BBC that the city's manufacturing sector, which requires significant power, has been affected by the blackouts. There are no further details. The impact on civilian life is more obvious. Blackout periods have been introduced in order to conserve energy, and there is a schedule for the city. Those power cuts lasted six hours, but they had been reduced to four hours. The timings can slip. "They were supposed to cut the power to my area at 09:00, so I got up especially early to charge everything," a friend messaged. "Then I got in the lift and got stuck. They'd cut the power early!" A hair salon in a Kharkiv back street is one of many small businesses with a generator whirring noisily outside the door. It was on for seven hours, allowing the salon to keep operating.

The same goes for cafés and companies throughout the city centre, although many have sheets of wood over their windows to cover a gap where the glass has already been shattered or to protect it from future blasts. Some of the boards are painted with birds and flowers. "We've been working on generator power since Monday," salon owner Natalia told the BBC. "Of course it's really hard, especially because we're all women and when we finish work late at night it's so dark!" Russia has attacked Ukraine's power grid before, in the first winter of the full-scale war. As engineers scrambled to perform emergency repairs then, residents shivered in the dark in their homes or headed for

central "invincibility points" for warmth and power. It is much warmer now but the impact is still significant; when night falls, whole areas of Kharkiv remain pitch dark.

That affects people's mood as much as it makes life awkward. "The Russians have got new weapons," a student called Liza worries, in one of Kharkiv's central squares. There's a lot of chatter here about whether new, gliding bombs used by Moscow might bring even more devastation to Ukraine. "People are depressed and thinking about leaving Kharkiv for a while. We notice that our army is struggling." The city authorities are determined to keep spirits up, as much as possible. Within hours of the latest missile strike this weekend, dozens of workmen were clearing up the mess around the apartment block and sawing wood to seal windows. The city metro is already running and electric trolleybuses and trams have been replaced by regular buses. In Odesa, two districts were in partial blackout. By early afternoon, power had been restored.

"A few days ago we had a total blackout, that was major," Odesa resident Masha told the BBC. "Yesterday there were no traffic lights in the city centre and limited streetlights, to save power." She said, there were people out and about in town as usual. Officials say consumption restrictions have now been lifted all over the country. When I asked Kharkiv salon owner Natalia whether she was worried by the latest attacks, she quoted her city's reputation. "We are invincible," she joked. She then wished us a "quiet night," meaning one with without explosions. In Kharkiv, nowadays, that is increasingly rare.

8 Chinese migrants found dead in Mexico

MEXICO CITY (BBC): The bodies of eight Chinese nationals have been found on a beach in the Mexican state of Oaxaca after their boat capsized, officials say. The bodies were found along a route used by illegal migrants trying to reach the United States. The seven women and a man were on board a boat operated by a Mexican that set off from Chiapas state, on the border with Guatemala.

One other person survived. It was not clear what happened the boat's driver. The prosecutor's office in Oaxaca said the bodies were found near a beach in the town of Playa Vicente. It said it was investigating the cause of the accident and working with the Chinese embassy in Mexico to identify the victims. The number of migrants attempting to enter the US from Mexico has been increasing in recent years. More than 6.3 million migrants have entered the US illegally since 2021. The number began to rise in 2018, largely driven by Central Americans fleeing a series of complex crises including gang violence, poverty, political repression and natural disasters. Of migrants from outside the Americas, the greatest increase comes from China, with a growing number looking to escape a faltering economy and political repression at home. More than 37,000 Chinese nationals were detained at the US-Mexico border last year, about 50 times the figure from two years ago. Mexico's immigration facilities and shelters have been overwhelmed by the rising number of migrants. The country's government has come under increased pressure from the US to fight the flow as illegal immigration takes centre stage in the upcoming US presidential election campaign.

Japan raids factory

TOKYO: Health officials in Japan have raided a factory belonging to Kobayashi Pharmaceutical after the drugmaker reported a fifth death possibly linked to its dietary supplements advertised as helping to lower cholesterol. Officials from the ministries of health, labour and welfare as well as local authorities inspected the facility in the city of Osaka that had made the supplements containing an ingredient called red yeast rice, or "beni koji".

Kobayashi said that five people had died and 114 people were being treated in hospitals after taking the products. Japan's Ministry of Health says the supplements are responsible for the deaths and illnesses, and warned that the number of those affected could increase. The company has said that little is known about the exact cause of the illness, which include kidney failure. An investigation into the products is under way in cooperation with government health authorities. Reports of health problems surfaced in 2023, although "beni koji" has been used in various products for years. "Beni koji" contains Monascus purpureus, a red mould that is also used as a red colouring in some foods. The products were recalled on March 22, two months after the company received official medical reports about the problem. The company's president, Akihiro Kobayashi, has apologised for not acting sooner. The supplements could be bought at pharmacies without a prescription. Kobayashi said about a million packages were sold over the past three fiscal years. It also sold "beni koji" to other manufacturers, and some products were exported to countries like China and Taiwan.

The government has ordered a review of the approval system for health products in response to the supplement-related illnesses. A report is due in May. A Chinese consumers association urged consumers to stop usage, saying it was concerned about the risk of Kobayashi products, state media reported. — Aljazeera



GAZA STRIP: Palestinians and local members of the media checking the damage at a makeshift camp for displaced people in front of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir el-Balah, after it was hit by Israel bombardment.

US to impose visa restrictions on Hong Kong officials

WASHINGTON: The United States has said it will impose new visa restrictions on a number of Hong Kong officials responsible for cracking down on "rights and freedoms", days after a draconian national security law went into force in the Chinese-ruled territory. The law - referred to as Article 23 - gives the government new powers to crack down on all forms of dissent on the grounds of alleged treason, espionage, sedition and external interference in Hong Kong's internal affairs.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the legislation could be used to suppress dissent inside Hong Kong and further China's campaign to intimidate activists abroad. "In response, the Department of State is announcing that

it is taking steps to impose new visa restrictions on multiple Hong Kong officials responsible for the intensifying crackdown on rights and freedoms," Blinken said. His statement did not identify the officials who would be targeted. It came after Washington's annual review of Hong Kong's autonomy, a status promised by China when Britain handed over the city in 1997. "This year, I have again certified that Hong Kong does not warrant treatment under US laws in the same manner as the laws were applied to Hong Kong before July 1, 1997," Blinken said. The Hong Kong government said sanctions and visa restrictions "smack of despicable political manipulation to intimidate the officials safeguarding national security". China's embassy in

Washington said it firmly opposed US threats to "impose unwarranted unilateral sanctions" on Hong Kong. "The US side disregards facts, makes irresponsible remarks about Hong Kong affairs, and levels groundless accusations" at the Chinese and Hong Kong governments, the embassy posted on its website. Washington has imposed visa restrictions and other sanctions in the past on Hong Kong officials blamed for undermining freedoms and announced an end to the special economic treatment the territory long enjoyed under US law. The United Nations-funded Radio Free Asia (RFA) said its Hong Kong bureau was closing because of safety concerns under Article 23.

Bay Fang, the RFA president, said in a statement that

the outlet will no longer have full-time staff in Hong Kong but would retain official registration. "Actions by Hong Kong authorities, including referring to RFA as a 'foreign force,' raise serious questions about our ability to operate in safety with the enactment of Article 23," Bay said. Cedric Alviani, the Asia Pacific bureau director for Reporters Without Borders, called the broadcaster's withdrawal "a consequence of the chilling effect applied on media outlets" by the new security law. "We urge democracies to build up pressure on Chinese authorities so that press freedom is fully restored in the territory," Alviani said. Hong Kong ranked 140 out of 180 countries and territories in Reporters Without Borders's latest World Press Freedom Index. — Aljazeera

Peru President's home raided in luxury watch investigation

LIMA: The home of Peru's President Dina Boluarte has been raided as part of a continuing corruption investigation linked to undisclosed luxury watches, police said. The AFP news agency reported, citing a police document, that about 40 officials were involved in the raid to search for Rolex watches that Boluarte had not declared.

The joint operation between the police and the prosecutor's office was broadcast on the local television channel Latina. Televised images showed government agents from an investigative team breaking into the president's residence with a sledgehammer. The Associated Press news agency reported. As government agents surrounded the house in the Surquillo district of the capital, Lima, officers blocked oncoming traffic. The president did not appear to be home at the time. The raid "is for the seizure of search and seizure," police said of the operation authorised by the judiciary at the request of the attorney general's office. "Personnel from the

palace provided all the facilities for the diligence requested," the presidency said on social media platform X, adding that it was carried out "normally and without any incident". However, Peruvian Prime Minister Gustavo Adrianzen criticised the raids. "The political noise that is being made is serious, affecting investments and the entire country," he wrote on X. "What has happened in the last few hours is disproportionate and unconstitutional actions." Adrianzen said the president was in her residence inside the government palace and that she would make statements to the prosecutor's office when summoned. He also told radio station RPP there was "no way" ministers or Boluarte planned to resign.

In an address to the nation later, Boluarte, 61, slammed the police raid of her home and the presidential palace, calling the measures taken "arbitrary, disproportionate and abusive". "I took office with clean hands and thus I will retire from the presidency in 2026," the president said.

Authorities launched an investigation into Boluarte this month after local news outlet La Encerrona reported that she had worn various Rolex watches at official events. Responding at the time to questions about how she could afford such expensive timepieces on a public salary, she said they were a product of working hard since she was 18 years old, and reportedly urged the media not to delve into personal matters. Al Jazeera's Mariana Sanchez, reporting from Lima, said experts estimate that the watches' value is around half a million dollars.

"If one goes back in time before she was president or vice president, Boluarte was the head of a government institution where she made a salary of about \$1,000 a month, and now about \$4,300 every month, so many people are saying she didn't have the means to buy these watches," she said. Attorney General Juan Villena this week criticised Boluarte's request to delay her appearance before the court for two weeks, emphasising her obligation to cooperate with the inves-

tigation and provide proof of purchase for her watches. He also said Boluarte was obligated to produce the three Rolex watches for investigation and warned against their disposal or destruction. The government comptroller later announced it would review Boluarte's asset declarations from the past two years to search for any irregularities. Through it all, the president has staunchly defended herself. Boluarte came to power in July 2021 as vice president and social inclusion minister, and then took office as president in December 2022 after former President Pedro Castillo tried to dissolve Congress and rule by decree, leading to his quick removal and arrest. At least 49 people were killed in the protests that followed.

Critics accuse Boluarte's government of taking an increasingly authoritarian bent as it staves off demands for early elections and works with members of Congress on laws that threaten to undermine the independence of Peru's judicial system. — Aljazeera

Senegal's top court confirms Faye's election victory

DAKAR: Senegal's Constitutional Council has confirmed the presidential election victory of opposition candidate Bassirou Diomaye Faye. The confirmation paves the way for his inauguration as the country's fifth president, which is expected to take place on April 2. The top court validated provisional results announced based on vote tallies from 100 percent of polling stations.

Faye - an anti-establishment candidate and ally of popular opposition figure Ousmane Sonko - won more than 54 percent of votes cast delayed presidential poll. His closest competitor in the polls, ruling coalition candidate Amadou Ba who was handpicked by outgoing President Macky Sall, took about 35 percent of the vote. The Council said no objections had been raised by the other contenders.

At age 44, Faye becomes Africa's youngest president. The African Union hailed the

"unanimous acceptance of the results". African Union Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat said he "warmly congratulates" Faye on his victory and wished him "full success in his weighty and noble charge".

French President Emmanuel Macron also offered Faye "warm congratulations" and said France wanted to "continue and intensify the partnership" between their countries, his office said. Faye's victory came just 10 days after he was freed from prison. He has said he wants a "break" with the current political system. Analysts said his win reflected a protest against the outgoing leadership and divisions within a powerful, but weakened, governing coalition. Millions in Senegal took part in the vote. The polls followed three years of political turbulence that led to violent antigovernment protests, which garnered greater sup-

port for the opposition. Going into the election, Faye was seen as a strong contender to replace Sall, after his ally Sonko was disqualified from the ballot because of a suspended jail sentence following a conviction for defamation. Sonko endorsed Faye to run in his place.

Although Faye was imprisoned last April and charged with contempt of court, defamation and acts likely to compromise public peace, after posting a message critical of the justice system, he was not convicted of any crime and was able to stand in the election. "A man that was imprisoned for more than 11 months, over a Facebook post that authorities had deemed dangerous to the sovereignty and the security of the state, is now at the helm of one of the fastest growing economies in West Africa," said Al Jazeera's Nicolas Haque, reporting from Dakar. — Aljazeera

The Frontier Post

Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town, Peshawar.

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

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

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

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

Pak-US ties and contemporary challenges

PRIME Minister Shehbaz Sharif, has recently replied to the letter by US President Joseph R. Biden underscoring the key importance attached by Pakistan to its relations with the United States. While reciprocating Biden's goodwill and sincere thoughts, Prime Minister Shehbaz underscored that Islamabad desires to work with Washington to achieve the common goal of global peace and security, regional development, and prosperity. Shehbaz maintained that the two countries have been working on important initiatives in the fields of energy, climate change, agriculture, health, and education, whilst Islamabad not only intends to strengthen these bonds but seeks expansion in bilateral cooperation in multiple avenues such as energy sector, the Green Alliance Initiative, climate change and other pressing issues to the mankind.

Historically, President Biden did not engage personally with the Pakistani leaders over the past three years after assuming US Presidency in early 2021. Neither did he reach out to former prime minister Imran Khan after his election victory, nor did he communicate with Shehbaz upon his succession in April 2022. Despite crucial US military draw down from Afghanistan, superfloods in Pakistan in the following year, and other challenging issues including the War in Ukraine and the Gaza Conflict. Biden didn't feel a need to consult with the former US ally and the sole Muslim nuclear state in the world. As now, the President has broken his silence after a long period, might it be his political need in the face of the next year's Presidential contest or a strategic compulsion sensitized by the top US military Commander General Michael Kurilla, who stressed the importance of Pakistan and urged the US government to engage with Islamabad on merit.

Pakistan and the United States have a long history of bilateral relations, teamwork, and cooperation. Both countries have enjoyed a multifaceted and broad-based relationship, driven by mutual interests in all walks of life ranging from education, trade, and investment to Intelligence collaboration, defense, and security. Historically, the resource-deficient and security-centric Pakistan remained heavily dependent on American military and economic assistance while the US strategists successfully invented a trustworthy ally in South Asia to carry forward their anti-communism agenda in the region. Pakistan played a pivotal role in checking communism during the Cold War and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, while Islamabad's bridging role in the US-China rapprochement during the 70s was the landmark achievement of Pak-US friendship. Later, Pakistan became an important Non-NATO ally of the United States in the War on Terror (WoT), brokered the Doha agreement, and also facilitated US withdrawal from neighbouring Afghanistan in mid-2021.

The regional geo-strategic landscape has significantly sensitized the former allies to reset their ties against common threats despite their nonalignment in certain areas including Washington's romance with New Delhi and Pakistan's economic and security relations with China, Russia, and neighboring Iran. Although, Pak-US military ties and counter-terrorism cooperation had always remained in place despite political and economic estrangement between the two countries throughout the past. The current upsurge in terrorism in the AfPak region and the congregation of terror outfits in neighbouring Afghanistan has specifically converged Pak-US interests on a single-point agenda at this moment. Based on previous partnerships, there is no other trustworthy ally for the United States except Pakistan which plays an effective role against the widely anticipated security challenges in the broader South Asia region. The American civilian leaders have had an indifferent attitude towards Pakistan in recent years, but the US military establishment is well aware of Pakistan's geostrategic importance and wants a working relationship with Islamabad. That's why, the US CENTCOM Chief stressed the importance of a good relationship with Pakistan during multiple hearings before the US Senate Standing committees in recent days.

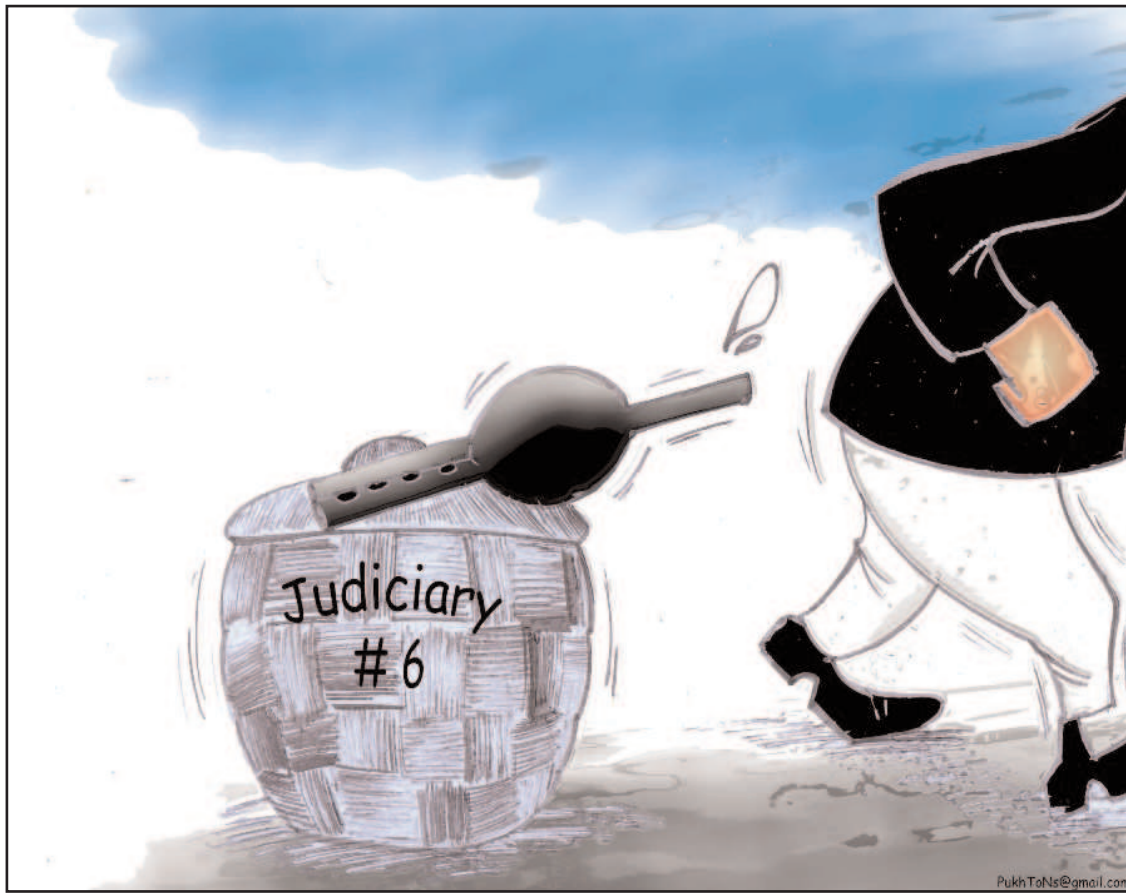
Realistically, Pakistan is a sovereign state and the US government should neither view its relationship with Islamabad in the context of Washington's policy with Kabul, New Delhi, or Beijing nor it should attempt to curb Pakistan's ties with China, Russia, Iran, or Afghanistan. Although, Biden's rapprochement is a little delayed endeavour yet it is important the US President finally perceives the urgency of Pak-US ties in the maintenance of regional stability, global peace, and security. There are tremendous opportunities for mutual cooperation in diverse fields, particularly trade and investment, renewable energy, education, science and technology, defense and security, counter-terrorism, and organized transnational crimes including human trafficking, drug enforcement, and smuggling. There is a dire need for concerted efforts and apolitical approaches to achieve shared objectives that will benefit both nations and surely have a positive impact on regional and global affairs at large.

A need for charter of democracy

PAKISTAN has passed through a smooth transition of the government and this nationwide activity will culminate with the successful conduct of the Senate election today on April 2, 2024. There have been voices from various political groups, civil society, intelligentsia, and scholarly circles regarding long-pending electoral reforms which are imperative, as after every election, whether it be in 2013, 2018, or the recent 2024 polls, the sage of election rigging and allegations of electoral irregularities gave birth to chaos and spoiled the political environment in the country.

The state and the people of Pakistan have witnessed the utmost political uncertainty and chaos over the past more than two years. The unceasing political animosity and irrational conduct of the political stakeholders largely exacerbated the political environment and stimulated unimaginable political instability. The absence of political dialogue, persistent clashes, and intolerance remained major hurdles in conceiving an agreement regarding the electoral reforms and a consensus on a charter of democracy in the broader sense, that further paves the way for political cohesion and economic stability in the country. On these pages, the Frontier Post has urged the political pandits time and again to put aside their differences and sit together for the sake of the people of this country, put forth your views and achieved consensus on a political framework which governs the future politics, electoral code and transforms the politics into peaceful civic work without hurting public life, national economy and governance. If all stakeholders were to implement this strategy before election-2024 there would be no disarray over the conduct and results of the recent Election.

Our nation can't afford further antagonism and political instability in the country and expect a constructive attitude from the warring political groups at this point. All Political stakeholders must abandon the politics of ego, hate, and lies by taking a principled course of mutual respect, to preserve democratic gains, national well-being, and the rule of law that encourage a healthy political process and promote democracy in the country. Realistically, dialogue and negotiation are the fundamentals of politics which enable the statesmen to translate disputes and failure into opportunity and victory. Therefore, this endeavour should be kicked start today to avoid disunity, hassle and collision in the aftermath of the next election in the country.



Lost in Orientalism: Arab Christians and war in Gaza

Robert Clines

ON February 21, it was announced that the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby refused to meet with Munther Isaac, a Palestinian Lutheran pastor, after Isaac had appeared at a pro-Palestine rally with former UK Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn. Isaac, whose Christmas Eve sermon went viral for its condemnation of the Israeli assault on Gaza and concomitant Western Christian silence, has repeatedly called for ecumenical peace amid Palestinian suffering.

A week later, Welby apologised and agreed to meet with Isaac. But in his apology X post, the archbishop stated it was wrong to shun Isaac "at this time of profound suffering for our Palestinian Christian brothers and sisters", making no mention of the equal suffering of Palestinian Muslims, with whom Isaac has repeatedly stood in solidarity.

Today, as Catholics and Protestants celebrate Easter, Palestinians of these denominations are barred from visiting their holy places in Jerusalem. Neither the Church of England nor other Western churches have denounced these restrictions on free worship by the Israeli government.

Welby's refusal to meet Isaac and the continuing silence of Western churches on Israeli crimes perpetrated against Palestinian Christians and Muslims are just further reminders that, for Arab Christians, their place in the West remains tenuous because of Orientalist and Islamophobic views of the Arab world.

Rarely allowed to speak for themselves, Arab Christians are either depicted in the West as hapless victims whose numbers continue to dwindle because of "Islamic fundamentalism" or as heretical Christians whose faith is marked by its cultural proximity to Islam. Driving this is an Orientalist gaze that sees the Arab world as barbaric and uncivilised, with only Western civilising missions and the state of Israel serving as a bulwark against its "terror". Ignored in turn are the experiences and perspectives of Arab Christians who lived alongside their Arab Jewish and

Arab Muslim neighbours in relative peace and security from the seventh century to the latter period of the Ottoman Empire and the onset of Western imperialism.

From the Crusades onward, Western Christians have seen Arab Christians as the victims of "Islamic terror" in need of rescue. One of Pope Urban II's just-

that Arab Christians had purportedly been Islamised and were thus in need of cultural reform. They also saw Arab Christian religious practices and theological beliefs as evidence of both ignorance and poverty as well as centuries of influence of Islam.

Catholic missionaries frequently grew frustrated when local Christian com-

Lebanon and Damascus. While most Arab Christians rejected such Western interventions, and many Muslims protected their Christian neighbours during riots, Arab Christians nevertheless became, as historian Ussama Makdisi argues, "the most obvious symbol of the new Europe-oriented Ottoman order of things".

Yet, even when Arab Christians are Catholics, Anglicans (like the late Palestinian scholar Edward Said) or Lutherans (like Munther Isaac), they continue to be seen as Arabs first, Christians second. They are racialised, Orientalised, and erased in the European view of what a Christian should look like. What is often absent in this Orientalist view of Arab Christians are their rich histories, cultures and traditions. Ignored are the great contributions of Arab Christians, such as Hunayn ibn Ishaq al-Ibadi (808-873), whose translations and commentaries were integral to preserving Ancient Greek philosophy across the Middle Ages and beyond, and Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq (1805/1806-1887), a central writer of the Nahda, or the Arab Awakening, a period of immense cultural reform and modernisation within the Arab world.

Quick to comment on the purported anti-Christian and anti-Semitic violence of Islam, Western Christians have remained mostly silent on the plight of Palestinian Christians at the hands of Israel. At the root of this stance is the longstanding Orientalist belief that all Arabs are "Muslim fundamentalists" bent on murdering Christians and Jews. But this ignores the plurality of Arab life and how religious ecumenism between the three Abrahamic faiths has long transcended differences and united people across the Arab world. Western Christian leaders like Archbishop Welby must see beyond their Orientalist views that dismiss the concerns of Arabs and Palestinians like Munther Isaac, regardless of their faith. Otherwise, the plurality of the Arab world and a truly ecumenical future for all will remain lost in Western Orientalist, moral and political apprehensions.

Aljazeera

This attitude was apparent in letters by Catholic missionaries who had been dispatched by Rome to the Middle East in an effort to bolster Catholic numbers following the loss of large swaths of Europe to Protestantism in the wake of the Reformation. Many of them were aghast that Arab Christians had purportedly been Islamised and were thus in need of cultural reform.

tifications for the First Crusade (1095-1099), which resulted in the Western conquest of Jerusalem, was that Muslims destroyed churches, raped Christian women, and forced Christian men to be circumcised. Similarly, Western observers across the Middle Ages and into the 16th and 17th centuries claimed that the perceived theological ignorance and poverty of Christian communities, such as the Copts in Egypt and the Maronites in Lebanon, were due to the oppressive Muslim rulers who overtaxed them, refused them permission to build or repair churches, and through various means, convinced more and more Christians to convert to Islam.

When Arab Christians were not perceived as victims of "Islamic terror", they were seen as a product of it. This attitude was apparent in letters by Catholic missionaries who had been dispatched by Rome to the Middle East in an effort to bolster Catholic numbers following the loss of large swaths of Europe to Protestantism in the wake of the Reformation. Many of them were aghast

munities, like the Coptic Orthodox and the Syriac Orthodox, refused to change their beliefs to the benefit of distant Rome, referring to them as obstinate and ignorant fools who were more like their Muslim and Jewish neighbours than their European co-religionists. In the period of European imperialism, European powers established missionary schools as part of their colonisation efforts in Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. Europeans strove to reform and civilise these newly subjugated populations, and they saw Arab Christians as potential allies to undermine Muslim powers.

In the wake of widespread Westernisation and modernisation throughout the Ottoman Empire known as the Tanzimat reforms (1839-1876), Christian communities in the Middle East were often politicised as Western fifth columns who potentially undermined the sectarian equilibrium of Ottoman society. This resulted in 5,000 people killed in the Massacre of Aleppo (1850) and more than 20,000 killed in the 1860 conflicts in Mount

Biden continues to offer Arab Americans mere breadcrumbs

Ray Hanania

THURSDAY'S announcement by the US Census Bureau that it will, for the first time, include a limited category for Americans from the Middle East or North Africa is clearly a political and desperate ploy by President Joe Biden to counter the growing opposition to his reelection bid among Arab and Muslim voters.

Under the banner #AbandonBiden, Arab and Muslim Americans are refusing to vote for Biden during the Democratic primary elections, instead selecting "uncommitted" or writing in "Gaza Strip" as a way to protest the Biden administration's funding and arming of Israel's post-Oct. 7 military assault on the Gaza Strip, which has taken more than 32,000 lives. The US Census Bureau announcement follows the pattern of Biden responding in partial and fractured ways in an attempt to satisfy Arab and Muslim voters and get them to return to the fold. I do not think it will work.

Census forms will, from the next survey in 2030, mention four of the 22 Arab countries by name: Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Egypt. But the new MENA banner will also cover Israel and Iran. All other Arab Americans, including the two largest Arab populations in America (Palestinians and Jordanians) and the fastest-growing population (Yemenis), will be required to continue to write their nationalities on a separate blank line. Arabs have been allowed to write in their nationalities for years, but only a small segment of the community has done so, due to them feeling politically excluded.

Instead of pushing for an "Arab" category, many Arab American groups opted to compromise, hoping that the "MENA" section would list all 22 Arab nationalities. But that is not the case and many leaders have told Arab News they are disappointed. Inclusion in the census is critical to countering the stereotypes in America that have fueled racism and held the community back on almost every level. Once identified in the census, ethnic and national groups can qualify for federal funding to promote their identities and culture. Such a move would also allow the funding of advertising to strengthen the weak Arab American news media.

More importantly, once identified in the census, national groups like Palestinians would receive political continuity protections, meaning that the political powers would be prohibited from redrawing congressional districts to divide large, cohesive Arab populations. Several years ago, Democrats in Illinois did just that, dividing the 3rd Congressional District, which had one of the country's largest concentrations of Palestinian American voters. This district elected pro-Palestinian champion Marie Newman to Congress in November 2020. A year later, Democrats seeking to silence Newman's pro-Palestine voice redrew the district, diluting the Palestinian American voter strength.

Newman attempted to win the 6th Congressional District in 2022 but was

defeated in the Democratic primary by Sean Casten, who Arab American leaders have described as "unresponsive" to the community's needs and concerns. Casten opposed calls for a Gaza ceasefire resolution and has accepted pro-Israel political action committee contributions to his campaign fund. By limiting the MENA listing to only four Arab nationalities while also including Israel and Iran, the US Census Bureau is attempting to make everyone happy. It will not work. Similarly, instead of supporting the adoption of a humanitarian ceasefire resolution in the UN Security Council, Biden's ambassador to the organization Linda Thomas-Greenfield abstained on last week's vote, allowing it to pass with a weak mandate. On three previous occasions, Thomas-Greenfield vetoed similar resolutions to satisfy the pro-Israel community in the US, which has a much stronger voice than Arab Americans. Biden's half measures will only further aggravate the Arab American community's opposition to his reelection. Activists have repeatedly told me that "four years of negative rhetoric" under Donald Trump, who will face off with Biden in November, is far more appealing than four months of Biden's funding and arming of Israel's carnage in the Gaza Strip.

Trump insulted Arabs and Muslims with his words and restrictive policies. But Biden's policies have failed to prevent thousands of deaths and helped to create even greater uncertainty for Palestinian statehood. Biden should find the courage to do what is right. Arab Americans have been calling for inclusion in the census since the early 1980s. They have been actively engaged in every aspect of American society, not just in politics, and have defended America by serving in all the country's conflicts since the Civil War. Arab Americans are fully American and, one day, they will be treated as such and be given the same rights and benefits as all other Americans, as well as a more engaged place in US politics. But that will not happen by accepting half measures or Biden's breadcrumbs.

The #AbandonBiden movement is ensuring that our voices will be heard in the upcoming presidential election, telling Democrats - the political party that has long claimed to be more supportive of Arabs than the Republicans - that Arab Americans cannot be taken for granted. The #AbandonBiden group is not advocating for Trump's reelection.

They plan to gather in the fall to consider alternative candidates to endorse. But Democrats like Biden cannot claim to support Arab American interests while offering diluted rights to the community. They need to be shown the power of the Arab American vote.

One day, Arabs in America will be formally identified as what they are: Arab. This will not be achieved through incomplete gestures or diluted references that seek to satisfy other powerful political lobbying groups. We have earned and we deserve respect.

Arab News

The US 'contingency plan': Send Haitians to Guantanamo, again

Belén Fernández

IN March, amid a flare-up in gang violence that prompted the declaration of a state of emergency in Haiti, the United States made it known that - as usual - Haitians fleeing for their lives would not be welcome on US shores. To that end, preparations were being made to deal with a potential mass maritime migration of US-bound Haitian refugees by diverting them to the naval base at Guantanamo Bay, which is located on occupied Cuban territory and is of course better known for its illegal US prison-cum-torture centre.

A March 13 CNN article quoted General Laura Richardson, head of the US Southern Command, on the military's preparedness for such an eventuality: "We did a full walkthrough of our contingency plan on Gitmo last summer with all of the interagency and all of my components." The Stars and Stripes military maga-

zine offered additional reassurance from Richardson: "Everything is refreshed - the equipment, everything is ready to go." And while media reports have been careful to specify that intercepted Haitians would be sent to a migrant processing facility in Guantanamo that is separate from the complex that houses "terrorist suspects", it is hard to see the US's "contingency plan on Gitmo" as anything but yet another racialised carceral undertaking.

As it so happens, this would not be the first time the US blocked Haitian refugees from entering the country by shipping them to Guantanamo Bay. In fact, Haitians were the naval base's first guests in the 1990s, with thousands indefinitely detained as they attempted to flee Haiti in the aftermath of the 1991 US-backed military coup against President Jean-Bertrand Aristide - not to be confused with the 2004 US-backed coup against the

same man. This was nearly a decade prior to the launch of the "war on terror" in 2001 and the ensuing inauguration in Guantanamo Bay of everyone's favourite offshore penal colony and legal black hole. In 2010, Guantanamo was once again designated as a potential holding pen for Haitian refugees from that year's apocalyptic earthquake, which killed more than 200,000 people.

The predicted maritime exodus did not take place but, just in case, a US Air Force cargo plane was immediately dispatched to fly for five hours a day over the devastated land, broadcasting a message in Creole from Raymond Joseph, the Haitian ambassador to the US: "Listen, don't rush on boats to leave the country ... Because, I'll be honest with you: If you think you will reach the US and all the doors will be wide open to you, that's not at all the

case." Then, as now, the US's "closed-door" attitude vis-a-vis Haitian refugees would be a notch less mind-blowingly repulsive had the US not helped itself through Haiti's own doors for well over a century - and not just via the aforementioned coups.

The resulting turmoil in Haiti, in turn, served as an excuse for an "all-out invasion" by the US, which went on to occupy the country for nearly two decades and "reimposed" forced, unpaid labor, performed at gunpoint, to build a road system to ensure military and commercial control".

Sounds sort of like slavery. Nor did Haiti get a break from the imperial chokehold in later decades, when in the name of fighting communism the US lent its support to Haitian despots François "Papa Doc" Duvalier and Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier, who killed tens of

thousands of people and imprisoned and tortured many more. They say old habits die hard - and, true to form, the US has continued to fuel both physical and economic violence in Haiti to this day. Most of the firearms and ammunition in Haiti come from the US, which is a crucial context when contemplating the current gang brutality that has displaced more than 360,000 people. Thousands have been left homeless, and the threat of famine looms.

As for the ravages of US-backed capitalism in Haiti, recall the WikiLeaks revelation in 2011 that the Barack Obama administration had agitated to block an

increase in the minimum wage for Haitian assembly-zone labourers earning 31 cents per hour. In other words, it is not difficult to see why a whole lot of Haitians over the past century-plus have found their country unlivable. And the US's role in rendering it so just makes the present Guantanamo "contingency plan" all the more criminal. It remains to be seen, for the moment, whether history is repeated in this case and Haitian refugees are once again packed off to a US military base on occupied Cuban land. But whatever happens, there is unfortunately no contingency plan for an end to imperial hypocrisy.

Important Notice

The Frontier Post will not be responsible for the comments in the articles and letters. The Frontier Post requests the writers of articles and letters to please make sure that they write their email addresses and mention the names of the cities, towns, districts or teshil of their residences at the bottom of their articles and letters.

Erdogan’s retirement announcement may not be final

TURKISH President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in March announced that this would be his final term in office and he would not seek reelection in 2028. However, there will be people around him persuading him to run. To avoid confusion, we have to underline that Erdogan's decision is not connected with the local elections held on Sunday. He was referring to the presidential and parliamentary elections that will be held in 2028. If he keeps his word, this will be an important step forward in Turkey's democracy.

According to the Turkish constitution, presidents are allowed only two terms of office. Despite this rule, Erdogan managed to be elected for a third time last year. This was made possible by stretching the provisions of the constitution. The argument used to justify his reelection was that Turkey had in 2017 moved from a parliamentary system to an executive presidency. Therefore, Erdogan did not count the term when he served as the president of the republic under the parliamentary system. He considered that the beginning of the executive presidency was a new era; therefore, everything had to be started from scratch. Many scholars and high court judges opposed such an interpretation of the constitution, but it did not change the outcome.

Erdogan and Devlet Bahçeli, the leader of the right-wing Nationalist Movement Party, are two leaders who need each other very much. Without Bahçeli's support, Erdogan would not have been

Yasar Yakis

elected in 2018 or in 2023. On the other hand, without Erdogan's support, Bahçeli would not have served as chairman of his party for such a long period. Erdogan also wants to use his performance in the local elections to pave the way for a new constitution.

Political life in Turkey is dominated by Erdogan's Justice and Development Party, known as the AKP. I was one of the founding members. After we established this party, the first elections in which we participated took place in 2002. We won 34.5 percent of the votes and, thanks to the fractured nature of the opposition, we got two-thirds of the seats in parliament. As time went by, the party needed the support of one of the opposition parties.

Erdogan chose to cooperate with the Nationalist Movement Party, known as the MHP. This party was established in 1969 and is well organized, especially in central Anatolian provinces. With the creation of Meral Akşener's Good Party in 2017, the MHP lost a considerable segment of its support, but those that remain on the side of MHP still suffice to make up for the ruling party's shortfall in parliament. At one stage, Erdogan took the lead in solving Turkey's perennial Kurdish problem.

A series of meetings were scheduled to be held in the historic Dolmabahçe Palace in Istanbul. High-level members of the AKP made all the arrangements for the first meeting, including which participant would be seated in which

chair. However, all of a sudden, Erdogan disowned the idea, asking: "Who told you that I agreed to holding such a meeting?" Therefore, a golden opportunity to seriously negotiate on Turkey's Kurdish problem was shattered. If this question was handled as it was initially intended, the Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party could have become Erdogan's coalition partner and Turkey's Kurdish problem would have been eased to a considerable extent. One of the most moderate leaders of this Kurdish party, Selahattin Demirtaş, has been kept in jail for more than seven years despite the European Court of Justice in 2020 ruling that Turkey should release him immediately.

Ahead of the general elections of 2018, six opposition parties decided to form a coalition, but they could not achieve their goal. In the 2023 campaign, Meral Akşener's Good Party attempted to change horses midrace. Though she stepped back within days, her hesitation caused a meltdown in her party. Following this bitter experience, we are yet to see how the opposition parties will again put their forces together. When Erdogan needed help during last year's election campaign, Bahçeli's MHP again became a savior for him. Addressing Erdogan publicly following his recent announcement, Bahçeli enthusiastically said: "You cannot leave the leadership of the party. You cannot leave the Turkish nation without a leader. We want to see you as our savior."

It was only a few years ago that Bahçeli did not spare any unkind words about Erdogan. Some of the aggressive language he used included the following: "Erdogan, you are a prisoner of US policy," "You are a dirty copy of Bashar Assad," and "You are the enemy of Turkishness." All these insults are still circulating in the Turkish media with Bahçeli's original voice. As the ruling AKP cannot form a government without the MHP's support, this makes for a marriage of convenience. Erdogan may still come up with new ideas when we approach the date of the next elections. Erdogan is on the record as saying, in the 1990s, that democracy was only a tram that you use to arrive at your destination, meaning that once you have arrived at your destination you do not need democracy any longer.

This Machiavellianism is now regarded as mockery. Democracy is not a concept that you use when you need it and ignore when you need it no longer. Sunday's local elections may pave the way for the constitutional amendment that Erdogan is very much eager to carry out.

There are two ways Erdogan might again extend his rule. One is if the parliament, toward the end of its current mandate, decides - according to Article 116 of the constitution - to call for new elections. This could allow Erdogan to be elected again because his current term would not have been completed. The second is to draft a new constitution that would provide a lifetime presidency for Erdogan.

Heroism of Ukraine

LATE morning Monday, from Occupied Crimea, the Russians launched two hypersonic ballistic missiles at Kyiv. Our friends heard the explosion and the air raid sirens simultaneously - which is unusual. Hypersonic missiles are faster than the speed of sound. Fragments hit the Academy of Decorative and Applied Arts and Design, where the students, with no time to get to the shelter, lay down on the ground.

Kyiv is dependent on air defense. In turn, air defense is dependent on American aid, and that aid is currently hostage to House Speaker Mike Johnson, who is at the moment among Russian President Vladimir Putin's most powerful allies. We are American Slavacists and have just returned from Kyiv. It's not easy to get there these days. The trip takes at least 36 hours from New York. We took an overnight flight from JFK to Warsaw - where the war does not feel far away. From Warsaw we rode four hours by train to the Polish border city of Chelm. And from Chelm we rode another 13 hours to the Ukrainian capital, in a Ukrainian train that arrived precisely on time. Neither of us had been to Kyiv since shortly before Covid shut down the world.

"Did you hear how Covid ended?" - goes the Ukrainian joke. "Boom! Boom! Boom!" Our colleagues at the Kyiv School of Economics wanted us to feel safe, so they hired Andrii, a tall, retired police officer, to be our security consultant. He advised us to install two air-raid apps, and to keep track of missiles' location on Telegram. On Sunday evening we were on our way back to Kyiv from Bucha, the Kyivan suburb where Russian forces carried out a massacre in March 2022, when the first alert showed up on our phones. "It's OK," Andrii texted, "the missile is on the other side of the city. Text me when you're home safely."

In Ukraine the air raid alerts are incessant. The missiles keep coming. Everyone has lost someone. But Kyiv is thriving in its own way. In the center of the city a new bookstore called Sens has a large Ukrainian literature section and a well-lit cafe serving quinoa salad with avocado. There are chic coffee houses, and a Crimean Tatar restaurant with fabulous beet meze and babaganoush. There are two retrospective exhibits featuring the late Ukrainian New Wave painter Oleksandr Roytburd. One of them has a constant line winding out of the Pinchuk gallery and across the street towards the Bessarabka market. Roytburd succumbed to cancer, complicated by Covid, in 2021. The monumentalist painter Alla Horska was killed in 1970, most likely by the KGB. Her first retrospective is now open at the Ukrainian House, a cavernous Soviet-era exhibition hall near the city center. When an air raid siren went off, the exhibit guide encouraged the visitors to relocate to the bomb shelter: "There is a concession stand and bookstore on the basement floor. Please go down and have a cup of coffee." At the Kyiv School of Economics, Tymofiy Mylovanov, the school's president and Ukraine's former trade minister, showed us the underground lecture rooms to which we would relocate in case of an air raid alarm.

Ukraine, as a unifier in Russia, as a traitor in Poland. Jews remember him as an instigator of pogroms. In a discussion at the Kyiv Fulbright offices about Khmelnytsky's disparate legacies, the historian Oleksandr Halenko thought Amelia, a Jewish studies scholar, had glossed too quickly over the pogroms. "Were you just being polite?" he wanted to know. Ukraine, fighting for its survival, is also rethinking its historical icons. In Kyiv, everyone is used to the war. They do not-can-not-ignore it, but they are habituated to a rhythm of life shaped by curfews and air raids that can interrupt everything at any moment. They know that debates about whether the West could have pacified Putin by reassuring him that NATO would never expand or whether Ukraine should now raise a white flag and negotiate make little sense. Putin and his allies have embraced a practice of destruction seemingly for the sake of destruction. And Ukrainians know that neither negotiation nor surrender is possible. They are determined to keep living. At 12:49 a.m. on Thursday March 21, Andrii texted us a message prefaced with a red exclamation point: "Reconnaissance groups report the taking off of 10 Tu-95s from the Olenya air base. Do not ignore the air raid alarm!"

Two minutes later he texted again: "Most likely between 5 and 6 am there

the barrage. "I waited in the bathroom," she said. "The metro's too far and I don't have a basement." That morning Ukrainian air defense shot down all 31 Russian cruise and ballistic missiles. Andrii showed us photos, taken from his apartment window, of the defense rockets reaching their targets. Over a dozen people were injured on the outskirts of Kyiv, when shards of the intercepted missiles fell; some buildings were damaged and there are large craters in the ground. Kyiv has the best air defense in Ukraine; the country lacks the resources to defend other cities this way. These other cities have not fared as well. Before dawn on Thursday alone, Russia - a country where millions of citizens are too impoverished to have indoor plumbing - spent some \$390 million firing missiles at Ukraine, according to Agiya Zagrebelska, head of sanctions policy at the National Agency on Corruption Prevention. The nihilism of it is staggering. "How many schools could you build with the equivalent of the money...?" Arad Benkö, the Austrian ambassador to Ukraine, texted us. "Pessimists don't win wars," Admiral Rob Bauer, chair of the NATO military committee, said to the audience at the Kyiv Security Forum a few hours later. He noted that Ukrainian air defense had done a spectacular job that morning intercepting every single missile launched at Kyiv. "There is

One of them has a constant line winding out of the Pinchuk gallery and across the street towards the Bessarabka market. Roytburd succumbed to cancer, complicated by Covid, in 2021. The monumentalist painter Alla Horska was killed in 1970, most likely by the KGB. Her first retrospective is now open at the Ukrainian House, a cavernous Soviet-era exhibition hall near the city center. When an air raid siren went off, the exhibit guide encouraged the visitors to relocate to the bomb shelter: "There is a concession stand and bookstore on the basement floor. Please go down and have a cup of coffee." At the Kyiv School of Economics, Tymofiy Mylovanov, the school's president and Ukraine's former trade minister, showed us the underground lecture rooms to which we would relocate in case of an air raid alarm.

will be a massive rocket attack. In the event of an alarm, go to the shelter." The two of us are humanities professors, not security specialists. We googled Tupolev, or Tu-95: it was a large turboprop-powered bomber, designed in the 1950s to carry multiple missiles at once across great distances. Russia used them in Syria in 2016. Now they were being launched from the Olenya airbase, south of the Russian city of Murmansk. The air raid siren came at 3:21. We put on our shoes, grabbed our jackets and phones and went down to the underground parking garage repurposed as the hotel's bomb shelter. Phones lit up the garage. Everyone was following the Telegram channels with crowd-sourced news. Marci's former student, Sergii, texted on a group chat: "sitting in the corridor, between the walls." His friend responded: "please go to the bomb shelter." There are levels of choice: stay in bed; go into the bathtub, or the corridor, or the basement bomb shelter, or the metro stations - which are deeper. Built in the 1950s with the intention of doubling as shelters in the event of a NATO attack, they are the safest option. Sergii sent screen shots from the Telegram channels he followed: "don't relax. a second wave is coming in fifteen minutes." Sergii's sister heard the explosions at 5:00 a.m. and then went back to sleep. She had decided to take her chances. "healthy sleep=healthy psyche," she texted. We stayed in the bomb shelter while 31 missiles reached Kyiv oblast. The alert ended at 6:10 a.m., after 2 hours and 49 minutes. Everyone's apps then announced in unison: "ATTENTION! THE AIR ALERT IS OVER. MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU!" All air raid alerts end with "May the force be with you!" Mark Hamill-alias Luke Skywalker has been doing outreach for Ukraine.

A woman at a kiosk asked what we thought of

nothing you cannot do," Bauer told Ukrainians, "the only thing you need is our help." But renewed help has not been forthcoming. The United States has essentially cut off Ukraine, and Ukrainian air defense is quickly running out of ammunition. It is a matter of weeks - or days - before it will be gone. "I'm glad you came when you did," the literary translator Iaroslava Strikha told us. "In a couple of weeks we may not have the defense missiles to keep Kyiv safe." Mike Johnson, beholden to Donald Trump, who has praised Putin, is holding 42 million people in Ukraine hostage. Across Ukraine children are continually buried under rubble, killed by the Kremlin's barrage of missiles.

Ukrainians know their lives depend on whether or not Johnson brings the National Security Supplemental to the House floor. Poles, Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians know that their lives, too, depend on this: they know that the war could cross their borders at any moment, and that the Ukrainians are fighting for them as well. And the French and Germans, too, are slowly coming to understand that we are a hair's breadth from the third world war. At the opening of the Security Forum former Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk addressed Johnson: "The world is watching you. And you're a devout Christian, Mr. Speaker, so God is watching you, too." Putin, with his oil money, has many more military resources than Ukraine does. He has, moreover, no qualms about running through the entirety of Russia's national wealth - or bleeding through the entirety of its population. When other people's lives mean nothing to you, you have a free hand. After we landed back in JFK, we turned off the air raid sound on our phones. But we haven't deleted the app.

CNN

Sudan war’s humanitarian cost demands a collective response

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

THE humanitarian crisis gripping Sudan has surged to unprecedented levels, drawing urgent appeals for help from aid organizations and top UN officials alike. This crisis, labeled as one of the gravest humanitarian catastrophes in recent memory, has catapulted Sudan into a nightmare scenario - and it has the potential to reverberate across the region, triggering a hunger and famine crisis of unparalleled proportions.

Unfortunately, the power struggle between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces militia continues to take a devastating toll, leaving a trail of destruction and despair in its wake. Reports of appalling violence and atrocities perpetrated against civilians, including brutal killings and acts of rape, serve as grim reminders of the human cost of war. The harrowing testimonies of survivors paint a chilling portrait of the horrors endured by those caught in the crossfire. Families torn apart, communities shattered and futures extinguished; the toll of this conflict is immeasurable, leaving behind scars that may never fully heal.

As famine looms ominously over Sudan, urgent international action is required to mitigate the suffering and prevent any further escalation of the crisis. The specter of mass starvation looms large, casting a dark shadow over Sudan's already precarious humanitarian landscape. Amid the chaos and despair, humanitarian aid access remains severely restricted, exacerbating the plight of vulnerable populations.

bating the plight of vulnerable populations.

The conflict has ravaged Sudan's fragile public infrastructure, including its healthcare system, exacerbating the strain on essential services such as basic healthcare, water, sanitation and hygiene. Hospitals and medical facilities, which once offered hope for the sick and injured, now stand as mere shells, unable to cope with the overwhelming influx of patients. The displacement of civilians has placed an additional strain on stretched resources, further exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. In turn, the ripple effects of Sudan's crisis have been felt far beyond its borders, casting a long shadow over the stability and prosperity of the entire region. The influx of refugees fleeing violence and persecution has placed immense strain on neighboring countries, overwhelming their capacity to provide humanitarian assistance and support. Countries such as Ethiopia, Chad and South Sudan, already grappling with their own internal challenges, have been forced to contend with the additional burden of hosting displaced Sudanese populations. This sudden influx of refugees has stretched limited resources to breaking point, escalating social tensions and economic disparities within host communities.

Looking ahead, the situation is expected to deteriorate further, with the increasing violence driving additional displacement and

heightening risks across the region. The protracted nature of the conflict, compounded by political stalemates and competing interests, threatens to plunge Sudan into a state of perpetual instability, with far-reaching implications for regional security and stability. In the face of such daunting challenges, a comprehensive and sustainable solution is urgently required to address the crisis and alleviate the suffering of millions of Sudanese civilians. Sponsored mediation efforts, backed by the UN and the African Union, offer a glimmer of hope in an otherwise bleak landscape. The recent talks led by Saudi Arabia and the US in Jeddah aimed at brokering a truce between Sudan's army and the paramilitary RSF also represented a step in the right direction.

However, sustained diplomatic engagement and multilateral cooperation are essential to build trust between the warring parties and pave the way for a durable peace agreement. The involvement of regional and international actors is also crucial in supporting efforts to promote dialogue, reconciliation and national unity in Sudan. In addition to diplomatic initiatives, it is critical to prioritize the protection of civilians and ensure unhindered humanitarian access to affected populations. International actors must exert pressure on all the parties to adhere to international humanitarian law and respect the rights of civilians. Furthermore, sustained funding and investment in humanitarian assistance and

development programs is essential to address the immediate needs of vulnerable communities.

As Abdullah Al-Rabeeah, the supervisor general of the Saudi aid agency KSRelief, correctly pointed out: "Finding solutions for the humanitarian crisis in Sudan includes securing full and safe access for aid and workers, increasing international funding, and supporting sustainable peace initiatives. Millions of refugees and (internally displaced persons) are in need of urgent emergency assistance in Sudan and in neighboring countries, and host countries also need our support to care for the influx of those fleeing from the violence. With every day that passes, more and more people are at risk but, working together, we can make a positive difference in the lives of Sudan's most vulnerable. It is our shared responsibility to do everything we can to alleviate suffering and work towards peace and stability in Sudan." In a nutshell, the crisis in Sudan demands a sustained and coordinated effort by the international community and regional and local actors. By galvanizing political will, mobilizing resources and prioritizing the needs of affected populations, the international community can work toward a future where the people of Sudan can live in peace, security and dignity. The stakes are too high to ignore - the lives and futures of millions of Sudanese civilians hang in the balance. Now is the time for decisive action, before more lives are lost and irreparable damage is done.

Delusions at United Nations

Andrew Mitrovica

WE have now entered the comforting world of delusions. Earlier this week, 14 members of the United Nations Security Council agreed on a resolution that called for an "immediate ceasefire" between Israel and Hamas and the "unconditional release of all hostages". The US delegation abstained, allowing the resolution to pass.

Applause broke out in the chamber. It was a surreal, farcical scene, punctuated by an expression of self-congratulatory delusion that something tangible had finally been achieved to end Israel's killing rage in the shattered, dystopian remnants of the Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank. These delighted diplomats - many of them inconsequential underlings who devote careers to doing what they are told to do by presidents and prime ministers - seemed to have forgotten that up until this latest vote they were instructed to oppose a host of other ceasefire resolutions. They also appear to have forgotten that the presidents and prime ministers who appointed them UN ambassadors rushed to Tel Aviv not too long ago and embraced Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and advised him, in effect, to do whatever he wanted to Palestinians in Gaza and beyond, by whatever means he wanted to, for as long as he wanted to.

Now, some of these same presidents and prime ministers apparently want Netanyahu to stop doing what he has been doing with their unequivocal blessing, and they want you and me to believe them. It is a farce and a delusion. Even if there was a sliver of sincerity in their craven vol-face, it is far too late. They championed Netanyahu. He could erase Gaza

and its people - with their approval or not. Netanyahu and his fanatical cabinet - who have long claimed that the UN is a cesspool of anti-Semitism - are not going to be dissuaded from achieving their aim of turning Gaza into dust and memory by a resolution that they consider as disposable as toilet paper.

Anyone, in any quarter, who believes otherwise is delusional, too. Remember, in January, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which arguably enjoys a touch more gravitas than the UN Security Council - a spent, feckless anachronism - ordered Israel, almost unanimously, to stop doing what it is doing to Palestinians in Gaza given that it amounts "plausibly" to genocide. Israel's response has been to keep doing what it has been doing in Gaza every ruthless day since the ICJ issued its interim ruling. If anything, Israel's killing rage has surged in its cruelty and ferocity. So, on Thursday, the judges issued "new provisional measures" amid "the worsening conditions of life faced by Palestinians in Gaza".

The ICJ acknowledged the obvious: Israel has, by deliberate design, engineered a famine in Gaza meant to starve Palestinians into submission and capitulation. The ICJ has demanded that Israel, as a signatory to the Geneva Conventions, allow food, water, fuel and the other stuff of life to enter Gaza "unhindered" at "land crossings" more often. It is another delusion. Israel will reject the "new provisional measures" just as it rejected wholesale the ICJ's "interim ruling". The ICJ's answer for Israel's preening arrogance and obstinance is as pathetic as the court itself. "... the State of Israel shall submit a report to the Court

on all measures ... within one month." Yes, that ought to get Netanyahu and company to abandon their "plausibly" genocidal destruction of Gaza tout de suite.

Meanwhile, back at the UN Security Council, the US delegation gave quite the vacuous performance that was hailed by a batch of hyperbolic Western commentators as evidence that President Joe Biden has lost patience with the recalcitrant Israeli government. Leading the delusional pack was an article in the online British publication, The Independent, which described the US ambassador's abstention as a "landmark" moment that may have signalled the end of Biden's, and by extension America's, "love affair with Israel". "Faced with Netanyahu's unsparing belligerence in Gaza and the contempt he has shown to global concern, the US special relationship with Israel has been pushed to breaking point. But what happens next could help reshape Middle East politics for the better," a columnist wrote. What an instructive paragraph, filled as it is, with palatable euphemisms, falsehoods and clichés that confirm the column's delusions.

First, from October 7 on, Biden has repeatedly declared that America's abiding "love affair" with Israel is sacrosanct even in the face of Netanyahu's "unsparing belligerence" in Gaza, which is a polite euphemism for genocide. All along, Biden - the self-proclaimed Zionist - has had one, overarching message for Netanyahu and friends: Please proceed. Whatever differences exist between the US and Israel vis-à-vis the genocide in Gaza, they have been on the rhetorical margins and, hence, meaningless.

In this context, the US decision to abstain is more a fleeting lovers' quarrel than any concrete sign of a "special relationship ... pushed beyond a breaking point".

Instead of a bouquet, Biden sent Bibi more bombs to make amends this week. Netanyahu's "contempt" for "global concern" is a product of this blunt calculation: just like the ICJ and the UN Security Council, Biden is irrelevant. Donald Trump looks poised, come November, to return to the White House. Then, the empty rhetorical spats will vanish, and Israel will be granted carte blanche to "reshape" Gaza and the occupied West Bank as it pleases. That could well translate, I fear, into the forcible expulsion of Palestinians from Gaza and the occupied West Bank as the definitive solution to the "Palestinian question". There will be one state: a greater Israel. That is Netanyahu's end game. Trump will say, "Aye, aye, sir!", as will most Israelis, who have cheered on every malignant aspect of the still unfolding genocide. The notion that there exists some grand plan in the offing - ready to be enacted whenever Israel's killing rage ends - that respects the right of Palestinians to self-determination and recognises the territorial integrity of a Palestinian state is perhaps the grandest delusion of all.

Human rights organisations inside and outside Israel warned that an avowed apartheid state would not be satisfied with "occupying" Gaza and the West Bank. They wrote voluminous reports steeped in international law and conventions that doubled as flares of what inevitably was to come. A few heeded the alarm. Most dithered. Palestinians have paid and will pay the price for that negligence and willful blindness.



PSX stays bearish, loses 208 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Monday, losing 208.79 points, a negative change of 0.31 percent, closing at 66,796.32 points against 67,005.11 points the previous trading day.

A total of 238,829,562 shares valuing Rs.8,365 billion were traded during the day as compared to 313,035,305 shares valuing Rs.9,899 billion the last day.

Some 335 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 139 of them recorded gains and 176 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 20 remained unchanged.

In future market, as many as 309 companies traded shares in the market, out of which 95 recorded gains, 202 witnessed losses whereas share prices of 12 companies remained unchanged.

unchanged.

In PSX, the three top trading companies were PIAC (A) with 39,967,500 shares at Rs.29.28 per share, Agritech Limited with 31,101,500 shares with Rs.28.33 per share and PTCL with 21,231,631 shares at Rs.16.94 per share.

Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.75.00 per share price, closing at Rs.8,250.00, whereas the runner-up was Hallmark Company Limited with a Rs.34.42 rise in its per share price to Rs.536.47.

Sapphire Fibres Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.95.00 per share closing at Rs.1,405.00, followed by Mari Petroleum Company Limited with Rs.19.48 decline to close at Rs.2,517.51.

Gold rates increased by Rs2,800 and reached to Rs237,600 per tola

The per tola price of 24 karat gold witnessed an increase of Rs2,800 and was sold at Rs237,600 on Monday as compared to its last day rate of Rs234,800.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold increased by Rs2,401 and was sold at Rs203,704 against the sale price of Rs201,303 and 10 gram 22 karat gold also increased to Rs186,728 as against Rs184,528 respectively, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver also witnessed no change and was traded at Rs.2,600 and Rs.2,211.93 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$24 to 2,278 from \$2,254, the Association reported.

Rupee gains 01 paisa against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani Rupee on Monday gained one 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 Rs278.1 and Rs281 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by 20 paisa to close at Rs299.75 against the last-day closing of Rs299.55, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs1.83, whereas a decrease of 12 paisa was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs350.74 compared to the last closing of Rs350.86.

The Emirates Dirham remained unchanged to close at Rs75.68 and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 01 paisa to close at Rs74.10.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Eight ships namely, Olympia, Wide Alpha, MSC Prelude-V, Yun Ding-19, Sc Taipei, Al-Diab-II and Goofy carrying Container, Palm oil, Chemicals, LPG and Coal, berthed at Container Terminal, Liquid Terminal, Engro Terminal, Sui Southern Gas Terminal and Bulk Terminal respectively on report period.

A total of ten ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, Olympia and Wide Alpha left the Port on today morning while two more ships, Kerala and Taxisdiara are expected to sail on today afternoon.

Cargo volume of 103,018 tonnes, comprising 58,482 tonnes imports cargo and 44,536 tonnes export cargo carried in 2,279 Containers (703 TEUs Imports and 1,576 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 7 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them three ships, Supra Duke, Mala Kado and Uog Sparta and another ship, Al-Areesh scheduled to load/offload Rice, Cement, Mogas and LNG are expected to take berths at MW-1, MW-2, FOTCO and PGPCL on Monday.

Tokyo shares close lower

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks shed early gains to close lower on profit-taking on Monday, as investors sought fresh direction after the Easter break in the United States.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index fell 1.40 percent, or 566.35 points, to end at 39,803.09, while the broader Topix index dropped 1.71 percent, or 47.40 points, to 2,721.22.

Before the opening bell, the Bank of Japan's Tankan poll showed that business confidence among large manufacturers slipped in March -- the first decline in the past four quarters, although it was slightly higher than market expectations.

The Tankan survey "showed that confidence among Japan's largest manufacturers slipped, but it wasn't seen as bad news as it had already been factored in", IwaiCosmo Securities said.

"However, there was not much buying as many overseas investors were on Easter holidays," the brokerage added.

Wall Street was closed for Easter holidays on Friday, and European markets on Friday and Monday.

The dollar traded at 151.30 yen against 151.40 yen on Friday.

Semiconductor shares closed lower on Monday, with Tokyo Electron dropping 3.21 percent to 38,300 yen and Advantest plunging 4.96 percent to 6,481 yen.

Toyota tumbled 4.03 percent to 3,639 yen and Honda lost 2.14 percent to 1,850 yen.

MCB Islamic awarded PCI DSS Compliance Certification

F.P. Report

LAHORE: MCB Islamic Bank, one of the six full-fledged Islamic banks in Pakistan, proudly announces its achievement of the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS v3.2.1) Certificate of Compliance, awarded by Risk Associates, Pakistan's leading PCI Qualified Security Assessor (QSA) Company.

The certification ceremony, held at MCB Islamic Bank's Head Office in Lahore, underscores MCB Islamic Bank's unwavering commitment to ensuring top-tier data security, safeguarding customer interests, and maintaining financial integrity. This achievement highlights the bank's dedication to adhering to the strictest standards for handling sensitive cardholder data, contributing to a more secure digital banking landscape in Pakistan.

Kashif Hassan, QSA - Managing Director of Risk Associates, presented the PCI DSS Certificate of Compliance to Zargham Khan Durrani, President & CEO of MCB Islamic Bank.

PCI DSS v3.2.1 is internationally recognized as the benchmark for securely handling payment card information. It establishes stringent security requirements for organizations entrusted with cardholder



data, ensuring that sensitive information is protected against unauthorized access and breaches.

During the ceremony, Zargham Khan Durrani, President & CEO of MCB Islamic Bank, underscored the importance of achieving PCI-DSS certification for the bank. He highlighted its crucial role in bolstering customer confidence and upholding the highest security standards. Additionally, he reiterated the bank's dedication to continually enhancing cybersecurity measures.

Kashif Hassan, Managing Director of Risk Associates, applauds the diligence and commitment demonstrated by the team at MCB Islamic Bank in attaining the PCI DSS certification. He further added, "This notable accomplishment not only underscores the bank's resolute dedication to maintaining robust data security but also signifies a pivotal advancement towards cultivating a more secure digital banking environment in Pakistan."

The ceremony was attended by MCB Islamic

Bank representatives, including Mr. Abrar Aleem (Chief Information Officer), Mr. Asif Iqbal (Chief Information Security Officer), Mr. Salman Naseer (Acting Chief Risk Officer), Mr. Umer Sheikh (Business Head - Digital Banking), Mr. Azhar Nazir (Group Head Centralized Operations) and Mr. Sheraz Sharif (Chief Digital Officer). From Risk Associates, Mr. Hashim Mufti, Head of Business Development & Strategy Services, alongside other officials from both organizations.

SEPA urges banks to combat air and noise pollution

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) has directed all banks operating in Sindh province to take immediate action to address air and noise pollution caused by generators on their premises.

"Air pollution is a major health threat, especially in urban areas like Karachi," said Naeem Ahmed Mughal, Director General of SEPA. "Generators deployed by banks are significant contributors to this problem, emitting harmful

pollutants and excessive noise."

The letter issued to all banks highlights the dangers of air pollution, ranking it as the fourth-leading cause of death globally. It emphasizes the impact on public health, particularly for children and the elderly, and the economic consequences of poor air quality.

The letter specifically points to generator emissions, including nitrogen oxides, particulate matter, carbon monoxide, and sulfur dioxide.

These pollutants, primarily from diesel fuel com-

bustion, contribute to smog formation and pose significant health risks.

SEPA urges banks to implement mitigation measures, including:

Upgrading generators: Adopting cleaner technologies with improved emission controls and noise reduction features.

Shifting to renewable energy: Installing solar panels for a sustainable and cleaner energy source.

The letter emphasizes the importance of complying with SEPA's air and noise pollution standards. Banks are advised to:

Test generator emissions and noise levels: Utilize laboratories certified by SEPA to ensure compliance.

Prepare for inspections: SEPA monitoring teams will be conducting citywide inspections.

Warning: Non-compliance with environmental regulations may result in legal action under the Sindh Environmental Protection Act 2014.

SEPA concludes by requesting bank officials to take responsibility for improving Karachi's air quality.

Graana.com and Agency21 sign monumental MoU with MoveIt

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In order to provide the best services and convenience to their clients and team members. The country's top real estate brands, Graana.com and Agency21, have teamed up with MoveIt, the nation's foremost moving and packing service provider. The collaboration was formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed on Monday in Islamabad.

The MoU represents a seamless integration of MoveIt's expansive moving services with the superior real estate solutions offered by Graana.com and Agency21. The ceremony saw the coming together of Farhan Javed, Group Director of Graana.com, and Sharjeel A. Ehmer, Group Director of Agency21, who signed the MoU for their respective companies, alongside MoveIt's founders, Uzair Khan and Mirza Hassan Baig.

Farhan Javed, Group Director of Graana, expressed his enthusiasm about the partnership, stating, "This MoU with MoveIt is not just a strate-



gic decision; it's a leap towards redefining the standards of convenience and service in the real estate sector. Through this partnership, we are not only facilitating our clients but also setting new benchmarks for service excellence in the industry."

Echoing the sentiment, Sharjeel A. Ehmer, Group Director of Agency21, said, "This partnership is a natural step forward for us. It aligns with our mission to provide seamless solutions to all our clients' needs. Working with MoveIt will certainly streamline this process."

Mirza Hassan Baig from MoveIt highlighted the

importance of the partnership, saying, "Signing this MoU is a significant achievement for MoveIt, marking an important phase in our journey. We're thrilled to join hands with Graana and Agency21, enhancing our reach and service offerings."

Uzair Khan added, "Partnering with Graana.com and Agency21 is a fantastic opportunity for MoveIt. It enables us to serve a wider clientele and provide our comprehensive moving services at competitive prices, benefiting all parties involved."

This partnership allows clients of Graana.com and Agency21 exclusive access to MoveIt's services at pre-

ferred rates, underlining the commitment of all three organizations to leverage their expertise for the betterment of the real estate and moving experience in Pakistan. By offering a holistic solution that addresses the entire spectrum of home finding and moving needs, Graana.com, Agency21, and MoveIt are set to significantly elevate the client experience, making it more efficient, stress-free, and enjoyable.

For more information about this partnership and the services offered, please visit Graana.com, Agency21.com.pk website, or MoveIt's platform at MoveIt's Website.

Karandaaz Pakistan and the Bank of Punjab join forces to Digitize Agriculture Lending



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Bank of Punjab (BOP) and Karandaaz Pakistan join forces in a strategic alliance aimed at revolutionizing Pakistan's Agriculture Sector under Karandaaz's inaugural Digital Financing for Agriculture (DFA) Challenge 2023. The landmark Agreement, inked on April 1, 2024, signals the commencement of pioneering initiative geared towards enhancing digital agriculture loans and fostering financial inclusion nationwide.

The agreement signing, held at the Marriott Hotel Islamabad, was performed by Mr. Zafar Masud, President & CEO of The Bank of Punjab, and Mr. Waqas ul Hassan, CEO of Karandaaz Pakistan. Other notable attendees included, Mr. Sharjeel Murtaza, Director DFS Karandaaz, Mr. Asif Riaz, Group Head Consumer Banking, Mr. Nadeem Khanzada, Senior Joint Director of SBP and Mr. Qasim Javed, representing Techlogix alongside other senior management of BOP, Karandaaz, Agri, and Fintech Sector.

Mr. Zafar Masud, President & CEO of The Bank of Punjab, opined that the collaboration aims to overcome farmers' finan-

cial hurdles. It not only aims to improve productivity but also addresses the challenge of loan securitization by offering collateral-free financing. By easing out the loan process and leveraging innovative solutions, such as real-time loan disbursement based on predictive AI assessments, the initiative is poised to empower farming community across the country, foster resilience and bring prosperity to the marginalised agriculturists. Mr. Masud extended gratitude to Karandaaz Pakistan, the State Bank of Pakistan, Techlogix and all other stakeholders for their unwavering support.

Mr. Waqas ul Hassan, CEO of Karandaaz Pakistan, expressed his enthusiasm about the collaboration, stating, "Banks are one of the most suited partners to address farmers' access-to-credit challenges. The collaboration between Karandaaz Pakistan and Bank of Punjab represents a significant opportunity for demonstrating increase in the productivity of the agricultural value chains through digital inclusion of small farmers."

Mr. Masud highlighted how Karandaaz's Digital Agriculture Finance Challenge 2023 spurred innovation. Utilizing tech-

nology, bank will provide digitally processed Crops/Livestock /Dairy loans aggregating Rs 5 billion approximately. The aim is to enhance financial inclusion, access to credit, help increase yield, reduce poverty and create employment. This initiative, supported by Rs 50 million grant, shall promote sustainability, innovation and productivity through advisory services and digitalization. Partnering with Techlogix for their Digital Platform and Country's top AgriTechs for Agronomy scores and advisory, BOP and Karandaaz are poised to revolutionize agricultural financing, benefiting farming communities across Pakistan.

The Director of Digital Financial Services (DFS) at Karandaaz apprised, "Through this partnership with Bank of Punjab, Karandaaz aims to establish a comprehensive digital lending platform, featuring a dynamic credit scorecard complemented by instant approval, and disbursement mechanisms for timely access to finance. This platform will act as the rails for delivering a range of financial products currently out of reach for smallholder farmers across the country."



In brief

Basketball Tournament

ISLAMABAD (APP): Timber Wolves, YMCA, Bulls A and Reapers Red advanced to the last-four stage in the club category of All Pakistan 3x3 Ramadan Cup Basketball Tournament here at outdoor basketball courts of Pakistan Sports Complex Islamabad on Sunday night. As many as 48 clubs are taking part in the club category of the tournament, being organised by Federal Basketball Association (FBBa). In the club category quarterfinal round, Timber Wolves outclassed Mustang Club by 21-12 points in a one-sided match. Ali Kazmi scored 12 and Muhammad Osama scored 6 points for the winning side. YMCA thrashed United Kings in the second quarterfinal. YMCA dominated the match all the time with 21-15 points, maintaining lead till the end. Muhammad Hamza scored 8, while Hammad Ali scored 6 points for YMCA. In the third quarterfinal Bulls A beat Bulls B by 17-14 points while Reapers Red thrashed Raptors White 20-8 points to enter into the last four stage in the club category.

Everton announce £89.1m losses

LONDON (AFP): Premier League strugglers Everton revealed an £89.1 million (\$112 million) loss for the 2022-23 season in their latest financial accounts on Sunday. Everton's losses were a significant increase from the 2021-22 season, when their accounts showed a £44.7 million deficit. The Goodison Park club have blamed the indefinite suspension of sponsorship deals with key commercial partners as mitigation for the increased loss. Everton's latest accounts, which also show heavy investment in the club's new stadium, comes at a time when their finances are under scrutiny. The Toffees are due to find out before April 8 the verdict of a second charge of breaching the Premier League's profitability and sustainability rules. They could be hit with a further points deduction in addition to the six they have already lost for breaches related to the 2021-22 season. Under PSR regulations, clubs can lose a maximum of £105 million over a three-season period, or £35 million per campaign, before facing sanctions. Beaten 2-1 at Bournemouth on Saturday, Everton are currently 16th in the Premier League table. Sean Dyche's side sit just three points above the relegation zone with nine games left. Under-fire majority shareholder Farhad Moshiri said earlier this week that he remains confident the protracted takeover of the club by 777 Partners will be completed soon.

Jones guides England

WELLINGTON (Agencies): Amy Jones hit a superb unbeaten 92 to lead England to a four-wicket win over New Zealand in the first one-day international. Needing 208 to win, the tourists slumped to 79-6 in Wellington before being rescued by a record unbroken seventh-wicket stand of 130 between Jones and Charlie Dean. Jones took the lead, playing a perfectly paced counter-attacking innings, with Dean keeping her cool in a valuable supporting knock of 42 as England got over the line with 8.4 overs to spare. Dean had earlier taken three wickets to become the fastest woman to 50 ODI scalps in only her 26th game.

Chairman PCB visits Kakul camp, interacts with players

ABBOTTABAD (APP): Chairman, Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Mohsin Naqvi, on Monday visited Kakul in Abbottabad to personally observe the ongoing fitness camp, being conducted by trainers from the Pakistan Army for Pakistan's T20 players.

The visit was aimed at gathering firsthand insights into the training camp and to extend gratitude to the Pakistan Army for their invaluable support in organising the camp, said a news release.

The fitness camp has been instrumental in enhancing the

physical capabilities of Pakistan's T20 players, ensuring they are in optimal condition for forthcoming cricketing assignments which also includes ICC T20 World Cup in June this year.

Chairman PCB also took the opportunity to interact with the players, personally commending them for their dedication and active participation in the camp. He expressed satisfaction over the players' enthusiasm and commitment towards enhancing their fitness levels.

In addition to meeting with the players, Chairman PCB also

held a meeting with the selection committee to talk about the team's selection ahead of the New Zealand T20I series. The meeting was also attended by captain Babar Azam.

Chairman PCB took the members into confidence on the developments made by the Board regarding the appointment of head coach.

"I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Pakistan Army for their support to our cricketers. Their collaboration will not only enhance the fitness levels of our players but will also make them more disciplined in



future. This camp will surely put the players in good stead before undertaking a challenging journey leading to a global tourna-

ment in the USA and West Indies. The PCB remains dedicated to providing comprehensive support to its players, Mohsin Naqvi said.

Kabul Premier League and ATN broadcast KPL2024 in Kabul



F.P. Report

KABUL: Kabul Premier League and Ariana Television Network (ATN) have joined hands for the second time in a row to broadcast KPL2024 in Kabul.

Ariana Television Network (ATN) has secured the rights to produce and broadcast the second season of the exciting T20 tournament Kabul Premier League (KPL).

The league will be played at the Ayobi Sports Complex in Kabul.

"ATN leadership is committed to development of sports, and it will cooperate with Ayoubi Sports Complex officials so that citizens will be offered a sound entertainment and players in different teams will bring pride to Afghanistan," said Lutfullah Stanikzai, Business Development Director of ATN.

Ayoubi Sports Complex officials said that the upcoming tournament will bring greater excitement for fans. "Kabul Premier

League will get underway. It will be its second season. ATN broadcasted the last season's matches live. It was a good tournament last year.

There will be new innovations and greater excitement this year," said Abdul Latif Ayoubi, head of Ayoubi Sports Complex.

The inaugural season of KPL last year consisted of five franchises namely Abasin Defenders, Kabul Zalmi, Pamir Stars, Shaheen Hunters and Shamshad Eagles.

Sri Lanka on top in Bangladesh Test despite 2nd innings batting blues

CHITTAGONG (Agencies): Asitha Fernando claimed 4-34 as Sri Lanka bowled out Bangladesh for 178 to take a massive 353-run lead in the first innings of the second Test in Chittagong on Monday.

The visitors decided against enforcing a follow-on but were left struggling with their batting in the second innings, reaching 102-6 at stumps on the third day to extend their lead to 455 runs.

Debutant pacer Hasan Mahmud gave Bangladesh something to smile about with 4-51, while fellow pacer Khaled Ahmed also troubled the Sri Lankan batsmen with 2-29.

But Angelo Mathews remained unbeaten on 39 alongside Prabath Jayasuriya, three not out, with the pair looking to extend Sri Lanka's lead with the help of the tail-enders.

Lahiru Kumara, Vishwa Fernando and Jayasuriya earlier chipped in with two each as Sri Lanka claimed nine wickets in two sessions to leave the hosts flattened.

Sri Lanka fast bowling coach Dharshana Gamage

praised both sides.

"Both teams' bowlers, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, bowled really well," Gamage said.

"We need to score another 50-60 runs, then we will be in a good position. I am pretty sure our bowlers will fight back."

Zakir Hasan made the highest score for Bangladesh with 54, while Mominul Haque offered some resistance with 33.

"We totally failed with the bat," Zakir said. "We couldn't perform our roles, we didn't play as we were supposed to play."

Resuming on 55-1 with nightwatchman Taijul Islam, Zakir survived for more than an hour before Bangladesh lost their first wicket of the day.

Sri Lanka ended Bangladesh's dogged early resistance when Vishwa Fernando, a left-arm quick, swung one in to uproot the leg stump of Zakir.

Skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto looked edgy from the start and faced 11 balls before being dismissed by

Jayasuriya for one.

Najmul departed after attempting an on-drive, which was caught at short midwicket by Dimuth Karunaratne.

Vishwa Fernando bowled Taijul for 22 with another in-swinging delivery to reduce Bangladesh to 105-4.

Asitha Fernando trapped Shakib Al Hasan leg-before for 15 and then induced an edge from Liton Das (four) in the same over.

Bangladesh kept losing wickets in clusters.

Shahadat Hossain (eight) was caught by Kamindu Mendis at slip off Kumara and Jayasuriya hit Mehdi Hasan (seven) in front.

Asitha Fernando ended Mominul's defiant innings before he bowled Khaled for one to wrap up the innings.

Sri Lanka dominated Bangladesh in the first two days to amass 531, the highest Test total without any batsman scoring a century.

Sri Lanka, who have never lost a Test series to Bangladesh, won the first Test in Sylhet by 328 runs.

Formula One owners Liberty Media buy MotoGP for \$4.5 bn

PARIS (AFP): Formula One owners Liberty Media have agreed to buy MotoGP on Monday in a deal valued at around \$4.5 billion, the American company said.

MotoGP said in a statement that Liberty Media would acquire "approximately 86 percent" stake from Spain-based owners Dorna in a deal valued at 4.2 billion euros (\$4.5 billion).

The acquisition is expected to be completed by the end of 2024 subject to clearances and approvals by competition and foreign investment law authorities in various jurisdictions.

Liberty will not be the first company to own both Formula One and MotoGP.

Private equity firm CVC Capital Partners had owned both F1 and MotoGP but was forced to sell the motorcycle series to buy F1 after EU competition regulators raised objections.

"Liberty Media Corporation has announced an agreement to acquire MotoGP. MotoGP is the pinnacle of two wheels," read a statement issued by MotoGP. "Liberty Media will acquire approximately 86 percent of Dorna, with Dorna management retaining approximately 14 percent of their equity in the business." The transaction reflects an enterprise value for Dorna/MotoGP of 4.2 billion and an equity value of 3.5 billion, with MotoGP's existing debt balance expected to remain in place after close.

Liberty were not the only company interested in acquiring Dorna. According to a report last week in the Financial Times, Qatar Sports Investments (QSI), owners of French champions Paris Saint-Germain, and TKO Group Holdings, which comprises mixed martial arts organisation UFC and World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE), had also held talks with Dorna.

However, it was Liberty who emerged the winners. "We are thrilled to expand our portfolio of leading live sports and entertainment assets with the acquisition of MotoGP," said Greg Maffei, Liberty Media President and CEO.

"MotoGP is a global league with a loyal, enthusiastic fan base, captivating racing and a highly cash flow generative financial profile."

Pakistan cricket holds crisis talks after Afridi statement furore

KARACHI (AFP): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) will hold crisis talks Monday after replaced captain Shaheen Shah Afridi reportedly denied he had made comments backing new skipper Babar Azam that were quoted in a PCB statement.

After dropping Azam as captain over last year's World Cup flop, the PCB on Sunday reinstated him as white-ball captain, replacing Afridi after less than five months in charge.

The PCB statement said Afridi had "nothing but respect" for the returning skipper. "I will try to help

him on and off the field. We are all one," Afridi was quoted as saying.

But a source close to Afridi denied he had signed off on the statement that implied a harmonious transfer of the top job.

The source added Afridi resented being replaced after being in charge for just one Twenty20 series.

"This is not Shaheen's statement and he has contacted PCB to clarify this," the source told AFP.

"Shaheen will meet PCB chairman Mohsin Naqvi on Monday to clarify this."

The PCB issued a statement confirming that Naqvi, who is also the

country's interior minister, would visit Pakistan team training in Kakul on Monday, without mentioning Afridi.

Fast bowler Afridi led Pakistan to a 4-1 loss in a Twenty20 Series in New Zealand in January.

Afridi also captained Lahore Qalandars as they finished last in the T20 Pakistan Super League that ended two weeks ago.

Pakistan next play New Zealand in a five-match home Twenty20 series, followed by matches in Ireland and England.

The T20 World Cup takes place in the United States and West Indies in June.

Jurgen Klopp keen to enjoy title chase in final Liverpool season

LONDON (AFP): Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp is determined to enjoy the closing stages of the Premier League title race, for all its twists and turns, in what will be his final season at Anfield.

The Reds came back from conceding an early goal against Brighton on Sunday to win 2-1, thanks to goals from Luis Diaz and Mohamed Salah.

With Manchester City and Arsenal playing out a goalless draw, Liverpool are now two points clear at the top of the table with nine matches left to play.

Liverpool's run-in includes games against Manchester United, Tottenham and Aston Villa -- sixth, fifth and fourth respectively.

Klopp's men and their title rivals could all well drop points between now

and the end of the season but the German boss is relishing a tense time in the campaign.

"We have to get through this (and) we decide if we enjoy it or not, pretty much," he said.

"It will be tough and yes, it is sometimes nerve-racking and the heart rate will be at 180 or 200 or whatever from time to time if you watch it or if you play in it."

"But if we all together enjoy this, then we have a chance. If we don't, we still have a chance, it's just really much more difficult and that's why we try to stay positive in all these moments."

Klopp added: "It is a great situation where the boys brought us in, we are there with two other teams fighting for the biggest prize in English football

and we will see how it will end up.

"But I decided I will really try hard to enjoy it."

Liverpool's victory over Brighton owed much to Alexis Mac Allister, who was outstanding against his former club with the Argentina international's pass setting up Salah for the winning goal.

"Macca was incredible -- absolutely incredible -- but when you have that kind of talent, when you have that kind of character, then you should show it," added Klopp.

"It's Macca, he can do that -- so do it. The boys are good, so show it."

"Yes, I am the biggest fan of these boys but I stopped being surprised if they really perform on the highest level because it is just what I want them to do and then when they do it it's fine."

James scores 40 points in dominant Lakers win

NEW YORK (Agencies): LeBron James secured a place alongside fellow great Michael Jordan in the NBA record books as his 40-point haul helped the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Brooklyn Nets 116-104.

James is only the second player, after Jordan, to score 40 points in more than one NBA game after the age of 39. Jordan, who played until he was 40, achieved that feat three times with James, 39, having now done it twice.

"Any time I'm linked with the greats, it's pretty cool," James said. D'Angelo Russell scored 18 to move beyond 10,000 career points, while James also matched a career high by registering nine three-pointers at Barclays Center, New York.

"I love this game. I try to put everything into the game and with it, it gives back to me," James said.

"I just try to continually put my game where I have no weaknesses out on the floor, especially offensively. Tonight I had it going from the three-point line."

The Lakers are ninth in the Western Conference and on track for a play-off



berth with the Nets sitting 11th in the Eastern.

Elsewhere, the Oklahoma City Thunder clinched a play-off spot for the first time since 2020 with a 113-112 win against the New York Knicks.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander tipped the game in Thunder's favour when he scored the winning point with just 2.6 seconds remaining. The Denver Nuggets also ensured they will be involved in the season-ending play-offs after beating the Cleveland Cavaliers 130-101.

Nikola Jokic, a two-time NBA Most Valuable Player, starred for the

Nuggets, registering his 23rd triple-double of the season with 26 points, 18 rebounds and 16 assists. "It speaks to why he's going to be a three-time MVP," Nuggets coach Michael Malone said.

"[It was] him showing up and saying, 'I'm going to do what MVPs do. I'm going to lead us to a win.'"

The Dallas Mavericks made it seven wins on the bounce as Luka Doncic scored 47 points and matched his career-high of nine three-pointers in a 125-107 victory at the Houston Rockets. Doncic also added 12 rebounds and seven assists to bring an end to the Rockets' 11-game winning streak.



In brief

IRSA releases 110,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 110,700 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 165,000 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1417.56 feet and was 19.56 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 38,500 cusecs and 18,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1085.40 feet, which was 35.40 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 58,800 cusecs and 25,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 71,400, 34,100, 31,400 and 6,300 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 42,500 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 19,500 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Police bust street criminal gang

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have busted a street criminal gang by arresting two of its active members allegedly involved in street and other crimes and recovered snatched Rs 114,000 cash, seven stolen motorcycles, mobile phones, weapons and other items from their possession. According to a police spokesman, Civil Lines police held two street criminals namely Kamran and Basharat and recovered snatched Rs 114,000, seven stolen motorcycles, mobile phones and weapons from their possession. A case has been registered against the accused while further investigation is under process. The accused had been shifted to jail for identification parade, he added. Superintendent of Police, Potohar, Nisar Nawaz directed the police to make efforts to net other members of the gang.

Four nabbed for decanting LPG

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi District Police under an ongoing operation against illegal decanting of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) conducted raids and arrested four accused. According to police spokesman, Taxila Police arrested three accused Shoaib, Dilawar and Ajmal Khan for operating illegal LPG agencies. Similarly, Dharmyal police held the accused Khalid. Police confiscated LPG cylinders and refilling gadgets from their possession and registered separate cases against the accused, he added. He said police would continue their operation against the rules violators and the illegal petrol and LPG agencies would be sealed. Divisional SPs warned the violators to stop the illegal business immediately otherwise strict action in accordance with the law would be taken.

07 illegal arm holders held

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested seven illegal arm holders and recovered arms and ammunition from their possession during crackdown here on Monday, informed police spokesman. Naseerabad police conducted raid and held three illegal arm holders namely Irfan, Sarhad Khan and Muhammad Iqbal. Police have recovered 02 rifle 30 bore and 01 pistol 30 bore from their custody. Similarly, Westridge police nabbed Salman and recovered 01 pistol 30 bore from his possession. Following operation, Mandra police held Nasir and recovered 01 pistol 30 bore from his possession.



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Defence, Khawaja Muhammad Asif presenting a souvenir to Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), H.E. Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al Zaabi.

Youm-e-Ali commemorated with processions

ISLAMABAD (APP): Youm-e-Ali, the martyrdom anniversary of fourth pious caliph of Islam, Maula Ali ibn Abi Talib, was observed with deep reverence and devotion. Hazrat Ali met his fate tragically on the 21st of Ramadan, 40 AH (661 CE), succumbing to fatal injuries inflicted by a Kharijite dissident, Ibn Muljim, during his journey to perform the Fajr prayer in the city of Kufa, Iraq.

Throughout the country, majalis were held where zakireen narrate and expound upon the life and teachings of Hazrat Ali. Processions, a hallmark of this solemn occasion, traverse the streets, symbolizing unity and remembrance. In Islamabad and Rawalpindi, processions commenced on Sunday

night, culminating at Sehr on Monday.

The main procession in Islamabad, originating from Imambargah Zainabiya, followed its traditional route to Imambargah Asna Ashri.

In Rawalpindi and Peshawar, processions have concluded their routes. However, in Lahore, Karachi, and other regions, processions are underway. Notably, Lahore's main procession commenced from the historic Mubarak Haveli in Mochi Gate, destined for Karbala Gamey Shah outside Bhati Gate, amidst elaborate security measures. Stringent security arrangements were in place nationwide, with participants passing through walk-through gates and metal detectors. CCTV sur-

veillance monitors procession routes, while over 5,000 personnel ensure participant safety along the way. In Karachi, the main procession, starting from Nishtar Park at 1 pm, necessitated road closures secured by containers. Over 5,000 police and Rangers personnel safeguarded procession attendees, with the route concluding at Hussainiya Iranian.

Multan also observed the day with solemnity, as the main procession departs from Imambargah in Chah Boharwala. Twelve processions and fifteen majalis are scheduled, guarded by over 1,800 policemen.

As faithfuls pay homage to Hazrat Ali, security remains paramount, ensuring a peaceful and reverent observance of Youm-e-Ali across Pakistan.

HEC announces April 14 deadline to apply for SEE-LAW test

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has announced that April 14 is the deadline to apply for the Special Equivalence Examination (SEE-Law) a pre-requisite test to appear in Bar Entrance Test - Law-GAT. According to official sources, HEC is conducting SEE-Law for Law Graduates of foreign universities recognized by HEC/PBC.

They must pass the SEE-Law before appearing in the Law Graduate Assessment Test (Law-GAT), which is mandatory to apply to the Bar Council for enrollment as an advocate. It is also to mention here that the SEE-Law test will be held on April 28, 2024 (Tentative).

HEC encouraged the students to register at etc.hec.gov.pk.

ANF accelerates operation to bust gangs supplying drugs to students

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) has accelerated its ongoing operation to bust gangs involved in supplying drugs to students, said an ANF spokesman here on Monday. He informed that the crackdown on drug-supplying gangs in educational institutions in twin cities had been stepped up. In an operation, 2.4 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of a BS Computer Science student netted from Khanna Pull area. Another accused, student of a local university was also arrested with six kg hashish near Waheedabad Colony on Lahtrar Road.

During the investigation, the accused confessed to supplying drugs in different hostels. It is alarming situation that students are also involved in drug peddling, the spokesman said adding, that ANF would continue its efforts in the fight against drug trafficking.

Stopping the spread of the scourge of drugs is not possible without the cooperation of the parents and teachers, he added. In order to maintain the sanctity of the educational institutions, it is necessary for the administration to keep a close vigil on the students and the hostels to curb the menace of spreading drugs.

Jam Kamal, Envoy reiterate to boost Pak-Japan trade relations

ISLAMABAD (INP): Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan and Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, WADA Mitsuhiro have reiterated to strengthen trade relations and mutual trust between Japan and Pakistan.

The Japanese Ambassador congratulated Jam Kamal Khan on his recent portfolio, expressing a commitment to enhancing bilateral ties.

Notably, the ambassador extended an invitation to Pakistani businessmen to participate in World Expo 2025 which was scheduled to be held in Osaka Japan in 2025 to promote economic cooperation.

Despite the optimism, challenges faced by the Japanese business community in imports were brought to light by Ambassador WADA Mitsuhiro.

Minister Jam Kamal Khan responded by assuring government support to

facilitate ease of doing business for local and international entrepreneurs.

Emphasizing sustainable economic development, Minister Jam Kamal Khan highlighted key sectors such as automobile, steel, machinery, textiles, minerals, and IT HR for potential collaboration with Japan. Moreover, Minister Jam Kamal Khan disclosed the Ministry of Commerce's comprehensive five-year plan aimed at streamlining business processes and attracting both local and foreign investors.

Both dignitaries reaffirmed their commitment to fostering a balanced trade environment and strengthening the longstanding bilateral relations between Pakistan and Japan. They also agreed to work towards enhancing the trade volume, which stood at \$1.26 billion USD in 2022-23, according to sources from FBR and TDAS.

Sheikh Rashid says he already predicted Shehabz will prevail over Nawaz in politics

RAWALPINDI (PPI): Awami Muslim League chief and former interior minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed on Monday said he had already predicted Shehabz Sharif will prevail over Nawaz in politics.

Talking to media outside the anti-terrorism court in Rawalpindi, Rashid said copies of three cases relating to May 9 incident had been provided to them.

He said 17 cases about

May 9 were pending against them in courts. Out of these cases, 11 cases were under adjudication in the anti-terrorism courts. He said he will appear before the court on the next hearing date.

He said he had predicted long ago that Shehabz's politics will prevail. The former federal minister said those who had to run the government should run it but innocent people should be released.

"The jails are full. Our silence will bear fruit. We will defend ourselves in court. We are not begging for our release orders," said the senior politician.

The former minister said, "We want stove of the poor to keep burning. Pakistan should move forward because the poor people's woes were on the rise and their condition was really bad. On 27th of Ramadan, the power that be should announce pardon for the poor."

DCs directed to visit RBISE examination centers to check arrangements

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Engineer Aamir Khattak here on Monday directed the Deputy Commissioners (DCs) of the division to visit examination centers made by Rawalpindi Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (RBISE) and inspect the arrangements.

Presiding over a meeting held here regarding the board exams, the Commissioner said that providing conducive environment to the students and ensuring transparency of examination process should be prime responsibility of the administration.

The arrangements at the examination centers

should be reviewed and the working of the supervising staff should also be checked, he instructed the DCs.

The examinations are the main means to test the ability of the students, Aamir Khattak said adding, the district administration should fully support the education boards in conducting transparent examinations. In case any irregularity is reported anywhere, immediate action should be taken and a FIR should also be lodged against the rules violators, he directed. Every student should enter the exam room with the confidence that no one else could steal the fruits of his hard work through dishonesty, he said.

Engr. Aamir Khattak

said that cheating and interference by unauthorized persons would not be tolerated in the examination centers. DC Chakwal had registered an FIR against the staff concerned of Government Boys High School Nurpur Kahar Chakwal, found involved in the irregularity, the Commissioner said.

FIR was registered against Khalid Latif Shah Clerk, Supervisor Kamran Naem, Superintendent Hasan Imran and RI Muhammad Irfan, who allowed the students to use unfair means in the examination, he added. All possible steps should be taken to rid the examination centers of cheating mafia, Engr. Aamir Khattak ordered.

April 30 deadline set for shopkeepers' registration

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has set April 30 deadline for traders including small shopkeepers to get themselves registered with the Board.

According to a report on Monday, the FBR has set the registration deadline for owners of stores, shops, dealers, retailers and warehouses.

The tax will be collect-

ed from the traders based on the annual rental value of the shops included in the tax net.

According to the FBR directive, small shopkeepers will have to pay at least Rs1,200 per year as tax.

The FBR has extended by one month the tax registration in six major cities of Pakistan under special scheme.

Shopkeepers who are not in the tax net will be forcibly brought into the tax net after the deadline, the FBR said and added a central database of traders and shopkeepers will be created through the Tajir Dost app.

The collection of tax from the shopkeepers who have joined the tax net will started from July 15 of the next financial year.

Ophthalmologist stresses adopting preventive measures to avoid eye allergies

RAWALPINDI (APP): Leading ophthalmologist at Al-Shifa Trust, Dr. Tayyab Afghani on Monday said that pollen allergy effects could be avoided through preventive measures.

Talking to media, he said that the springtime brings an extremely high pollen count, which can cause burning and redness in the eyes, adding eye allergies can cause watery and puffy eyes, but the same therapies and self-care practices that relieve the symptoms of slurred allergies also work for eye allergies.

In addition to sneezing and a stuffy runny nose, the symptoms can include red eyes, irritation, itching, tearing or runny eyes, swollen

eyelids, soreness, burning, or pain, he added. Dr. Tayyab said that optical allergies result from the body overreacting to an allergen like any other allergy. "The immune system produces antibodies that release histamine and other chemicals from the eyes, causing red, watery eyes and irritation," he added.

Typically, seasonal allergies occur in early spring during the summer, he said and added that allergens in the atmosphere such as spores from mold and pollen from grasses, trees, and weeds, were known as triggers. He claimed that aside from causing momentary blurriness, ocular allergies, commonly known as allergic

conjunctivitis or eye allergies do not significantly endanger vision. In many cases, symptoms appear as soon as the allergen comes into contact with the eyes. Dr. Tayyab Afghani said the first step was to avoid triggers by staying inside during high pollen count periods which were often mid-morning and early evening. In order to protect their eyes from pollen people should drive with closed windows and wear sunglasses or eyeglasses, he suggested.

He advised the eye patients to use eye drops provisionally to treat severe chronic ocular allergies while prolonged use of these drops can lead to negative effects.



ISLAMABAD: Visitors feeding Zebras on roadside Zoo at the green belt area of Sector F-8 in Federal Capital.

Uplift projects discussed

KABUL (Ariana News): Mohammad Yunus Akhundzada, Acting Minister of Rural Rehabilitation and Development met with Indrika Ratwatte, deputy head of UNAMA and UN Humanitarian Aid Coordinator in Afghanistan. Ratwatte promised more UN cooperation in rural projects. Akhundzada meanwhile said the implementation of development projects was an important step and that priority should be given to fundamental projects over humanitarian aid.

Afghan refugees found dead

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Turkish police announced that two Afghan refugees died inside a truck's fuel tank due to lack of air, while 52 others were detained. According to reports, two refugees lost their lives due to lack of air during transportation, and the condition of seven others is said to be critical. The Turkish police stated that these refugees were arrested in the city of Gaziantep while hiding inside the fuel tank of a truck.

Asia is comparable to a living body composed of soil and water. The heart that beats inside the body is Afghanistan. The destruction of Afghanistan would be the destruction of Asia. And in its progress and prosperity lies the well-being of Asia. - Allama Iqbal

IEA: Some Western circles seeking to magnify Daesh

KABUL (Ariana News): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), in response to claims about the strengthening of Daesh in Afghanistan, says that some Western circles are seeking to magnify Daesh.

The Islamic Emirate's spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid says that Daesh has been suppressed in Afghanistan and does not have the ability to launch attacks from Afghanistan against any country.

Recently, the former commander of the US Central Command (CENTCOM) claimed that Daesh is planning to attack America and other Western countries from Afghanistan.

Following the recent deadly attack on a concert hall near Moscow, the group made headlines around the world.

Many Western media organizations have reported that ISIS-Khorasan – or Daesh in Afghanistan – was responsible for the attack and that the group has gained strength.

In an interview with ABC News on Sunday, the former CENTCOM commander retired General Frank McKenzie said Daesh is planning to attack America and other Western countries from Afghanistan.

He said the group has a "strong



desire" to attack the US and other foreign powers and that the threat is only growing.

"We should believe them when they say that. They're going to try to do it," McKenzie told ABC News.

"I think the threat is growing," McKenzie continued, pointing to the dangers from affiliates like ISIS-K after the broader group took responsibility for a deadly attack in Moscow earlier this month. The group also said it was behind a mass bombing in Iran in January.

"It begun to grow as soon as we left Afghanistan, it took pressure off ISIS-K. So I think we should expect further attempts of this nature against the United States as well as our partners and other nations abroad," McKenzie said. "I think this is inevitable."

McKenzie also raised the issue of the US troops withdrawal in August

2021 and said a contingent should have been left behind to fight Daesh.

While US President Joe Biden said at the time that an "over-the-horizon capability" to "act quickly and decisively" in Afghanistan would be maintained, McKenzie disputed that.

"In Afghanistan, we have almost no ability to see into that country and almost no ability to strike into that country," he said.

That is a boon to the Islamic State and similar such militants, he said.

"If you can keep pressure on them ... in their homeland and their base, it makes it hard for them to conduct these types of attacks," he said. "Unfortunately, we no longer place that pressure on them, so they're free to gain strength, they're free to plan, they're free to coordinate."

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), however, says that some Western circles are seeking to magnify Daesh. The IEA has said Daesh has been suppressed for more than two years and is unable to launch attacks outside of Afghanistan.

However, experts believe that the threat of Daesh will increase with the passage of time, and to fight this group, all countries need to work closely together and repel the threats.

US drones seen over Kandahar, provinces

KANDAHAR (Khaama Press): Media outlets reported that drones were seen in Badakhshan, Panjshir, Kunar, Laghman, and Kandahar skies.

The residents of these provinces said that drones have been seen in the skies of these provinces, including Badakhshan, Panjshir, Kunar, Laghman and Kandahar.

The Taliban spokesperson, in response to the flight of these drones, accused America of "violating" Afghanistan's airspace.

Zabihullah Mujahid has told the media that the Taliban have repeatedly protested against America's "violation" of Afghanistan's airspace.

Media outlets cited Mujahid as saying, "These aircraft are undoubtedly associated with America, flying over the airspace of some neighbouring countries and coming to Afghanistan and everyone should understand their responsibilities in this regard and stop the trespassing."

American drones believed to have come from neighbouring countries were sighted in several Afghan provinces, sparking concerns over violations of Afghanistan's airspace. The Taliban condemned these flights, accusing the US of encroaching on Afghan sovereignty.

This comes amid a devastating explosion that rocked Kandahar last week, causing significant casualties and destruction. The incident has heightened tensions in the region, with authorities scrambling to investigate the source of the blast amidst fears of further violence.

Kabir chairs political commission meeting



KABUL (Ariana News): A meeting of the Political Commission of the Deputy Prime Minister's office was held on Sunday and chaired by the deputy prime minister Mawlawi Abdul Kabir.

After reviewing the latest developments in Afghanistan's relations

with the region and the world, there was an exchange of views on further developments of the Islamic Emirate in the political field.

Discussions were also had on how to solve and improve some political issues and on the construc-

tive and positive relations of the Islamic Emirate based on a balanced policy with the region and the world.

Also, members of the political commission decided on some issues and the agenda of the next meeting was discussed.

CEO of NDC visit QoshTepa canal



BALKH (Ariana News): Abdul Rahman Attash, CEO of the National Development Corporation (NDC), visited the QoshTepa canal this week to assess work done on the second phase of this project.

During his visit he directed provincial officials involved in the project to speed up work so as to get phase two completed as soon as possible.

Phase two of the QoshTepa canal, which is

177 kilometers long, is taking place in the Dawlatabad district of Balkh province.

Several bridges still need to be built across the canal at various points.

The excavation work of the second phase of the large QoshTepa agricultural canal will be completed in another year.

Attash also spoke to officials, engineers and workers responsible for the QoshTepa canal dam proj-

ect and urged them to "work round the clock to complete it as soon as possible."

QoshTepa Canal, which is the largest agricultural and national development project currently underway in Afghanistan, will irrigate a large area in northern Afghanistan once complete.

It will also help the industrial sector. The water will be drawn from the Amu River.

Chamtal residents lack access to potable water

MAZAR-I-SHARIF (PAJhwok): Some residents of the Chamtal district of northern Balkh province complain about the shortage of potable water and want the problem to be addressed urgently. Local officials, acknowledging the problem, promise the issue will be resolved.

Gul Mohammad, an inhabitant of Chamtal, told PAJhwok Afghan News they walked daily several kilometres to fetch water.

He said: "Our children fetch water from a distant river and are deprived of education. We want the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) to dig up water wells for us."

Sakhizada, another resident of the district, said about 600 families in the Pasham Qala area of the district had no access to clean drinking water.

He also asked the relevant government agencies and partner organisations to address the problem on a priority basis.

Mohammad Nazir, a tribal elder, confirmed a large number of residents did not have access to potable water and consumed contaminated water. Other Chamtal residents of district claim no attention had been paid to sorting out the issue despite a sting of requests for the supply of drinking water.

At the same time, Chamtal administrative chief Noorullah acknowledged the problem and assured locals of an early solution. He said: "About 30 villages of the district lacked access to potable water." He sought cooperation from higher-ups in Kabul on addressing the problem.

Several other districts of the province have also been faced with the scarcity of safe water, with residents urging the government to take action on the issue.

Tailoring business booms in Kabul as Eidul Fitr approaches

KABUL (TOLOnews): With the arrival of Eid al-Fitr, the tailoring market in the capital, Ankara has flourished.

Some tailors say that as Eid al-Fitr approaches, their customers increase more than ever before, and sometimes they are forced to work until late at night.

Noroz Ali, who has been busy tailoring for over ten years, says that these days, the market for traditional Afghan clothes is hotter than ever, and for this reason, he and his apprentices work on their customers' orders until late at night.

Noroz Ali told TOLOnews: "It's Eid, business, by the grace of God, is very good, especially for shirts, pants, and vests."

Samiullah, a tailor, said: "For Eid, there are only nine to ten days left, work on shirts, pants, and vests is less, but the work on shirts and pants is very good, usually, at this time, most of our customers are mujahideen [Taliban]."

Zeinullah, another tailor, says: "Our business is 24/7, employees, by the grace of



God, work both at night and during the day, just here is where the collection is made, and in the workshop, it's very large, where they sew."

The Kabul Municipality on the other hand says that it has set and distributed a rate list for tailors in all areas to sew clothes for the

residents of Kabul.

Nematullah Barakzai, a representative of the Kabul Municipality, said: "Specifically, in the areas of Baharestan, Shahr-e-Now, and Wazir Akbar Khan, the fee for adult clothing is four hundred Afghani [over \$5], and for children under twelve

years, specifically two hundred and fifty Afghani [\$3.5] in all areas."

Every year, with the arrival of Eid al-Fitr, Afghans order clothes for themselves and their families in preparation for Eid and celebrate on the days of Eid.

Jawzjan nomads seek aid and permanent shelter

JAWZJAN (TOLOnews): A number of nomads living on the outskirts of Sheberghan city, the center of Jawzjan province, are facing serious challenges due to unemployment and poverty.

They are asking the caretaker government and aid agencies to construct permanent shelters for them and to provide humanitarian assistance. The Pul-e-Khorasan River on the outskirts of Sheberghan city is home to dozens of nomadic families lacking basic living facilities.

"Our demand is that a medical center be built in this area and drinking water be provided for us as no

attention has been paid to this place so far," said Tawakal Qaryadar, a representative of the nomads.

"We are incapable of providing facilities for ourselves in this area. Attention must be paid to provide us with drinking water," said Noor Mohammad, a resident of Jawzjan.

"We don't even have a proper shelter; the government should provide us with shelter and also build schools and medical centers," said Hekmatullah, another resident of Jawzjan.

According to the nomads, the lack of clean drinking water and medical centers is another challenge

they face.

Local officials in Jawzjan acknowledged the nomads' challenges in the province and pledged to address their demands.

"The problems faced by these people have been communicated to the officials, and, God willing, it is planned to be addressed," said Gholam Nabi Samim, the head of Borders, Ethnicities, and Tribes in Jawzjan.

The nomads in Jawzjan criticized the previous government's lack of attention, saying that despite numerous promises, the past government did not address their challenges.

Floods damaged over 540 homes



KABUL (TOLOnews): The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said that in the past ten days, rainfall in Afghanistan has resulted in the deaths of seven people and nearly 400 families

have been affected.

According to OCHA's report, 1,500 acres of agricultural land have been destroyed and more than 540 homes have been demolished.

The report said that the residents of Faryab,

Nangarhar, and Daikundi provinces have suffered the most damage.

The report said: "This is the third time that the northern region has experienced flooding in less than a month, with seven people killed and 384 families

affected in heavy rains that occurred on 21 and 26-27 March."

"Recently, due to the rains, there were floods that harmed a number of our farmers, and the provinces that have been affected by these floods should work together and projects should be implemented for them," said Mirwais Hajizada, deputy head of the Afghanistan Chamber of Agriculture and Livestock.

A number of affected individuals in Faryab province are requesting more assistance from the Islamic Emirate and relief agencies.

"The flood came just a few days ago, destroying our agricultural lands," said Ziauddin, an affected individual.

According to the Ministry of Disaster Management, in the past month, due to snow and rain, more than 1,600 homes have been destroyed, and more than 177,900 livestock have also died.

Baz defeats French opponent

KABUL (TOLOnews): Afghan MMA fighter Baz Mohammad Mubariz defeated his French opponent last night by decision.

The competition between Mubariz and his French opponent, Johan Van de Hel, took place in the "M2MMA" organization in Ko Phuket, Thailand.

Ultimately, after three rounds of competition, Afghan MMA fighter Baz Mohammad Mubariz succeeded in defeating his French opponent by a score difference.

This fight was in the 74kg weight class and consisted of three five-minute rounds between Baz Mohammad Mubariz and his French opponent.

With this victory, Baz Mohammad Mubariz extended his winning streak in MMA competitions.

His current record is twelve wins and six losses.

Call for restoration of at-risk historical sites

HELMAND (TOLOnews): Residents of Helmand express concern over historical site deterioration, seek government intervention.

Residents of Helmand are expressing their concerns over the potential collapse of historical sites within the province, urging for reconstruction efforts by the interim government.

They point out that most historical sites have been put at risk of destruction due to past conflicts, natural disasters, and neglect by authorities, with Qala-e-Bost, Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi's palace, and the sites of Zamin Dawar, Sarawan, and Amir Krur being notable examples.

Afghanistan is culturally rich, yet due to historical conflicts, many of its historical and ancient sites across the nation have been damaged or are under

threat of destruction. Adam Khan, a resident of Helmand, told TOLOnews, "In the era of Mohammad Daoud Khan, this site attracted many tourists, and it was enjoyed by the local populace for its beauty."

Saifuddin, another resident of Helmand, remarked, "During the previous administration, efforts to restore this historical site began but were halted again with the resurgence of conflict."

Abdul Wahid, a resident of Helmand, stated, "Qala-e-Bost, once a beautiful site, is now ruined. It needs to be restored so tourists can visit and a positive image of this place can be portrayed."

However, officials from the Helmand Directorate of Information and Culture have indicated that with budget allocation, they would proceed with the

restoration of the province's historical sites.

Sultan Mohammad Hanif, head of the cultural department of the Helmand Directorate of Information and Culture, commented, "We have established a protection security unit to protect encroached historical sites. So far, we have managed to liberate many historical locations from encroachment and remain committed to preserving the nation's historical treasures into the future."

According to the Helmand Directorate of Information and Culture, Qala-e-Bost, Sultan Mahmud's palace, and the sites of Sarawan, Zamin Dawar, Bolan Pir Sabz, and Mukhtar are among the province's significant historical and ancient landmarks, with some dating back thousands of years.

PHC adjourns hearing on oath-taking of reserved MPAs till today

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Waqar Ahmad on Monday has cliff pleas against High Court decision linking Senate of Pakistan Election to oath's administration of reserved Members with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Speaker Babar Saleem Swati review petition in this regard while adjourned hearing for today (on Tuesday).

The counsel Syed Sikandar Hayat Shah and Ali Zaman advocate appeared on behalf of former Senator Azam Swati while argued that PHC had ordered suspension of Senate of Pakistan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa until oath taking of members nominated on Reserved seats.

Advocate Syed Sikandar Hayat Shah argued that Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly had filed review petition against PHC orders regarding linking Senate Elections with oath taking of reserved members.

PHC's divisional bench comprised Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Waqar Ahmad cliff the plea with Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly review petition while adjourned further hearing for today. It is worthy to

note that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Speaker Babar Saleem Swati filed a review petition against the Peshawar High Court's (PHC) order wherein it directed him to administer oaths to opposition MPAs elected to reserved seats. The opposition and provincial government are at odds over the assembly session for the oath-taking of MPAs elected on reserved seats for women and minorities.

The opposition and provincial government are at odds over the assembly session for the oath-taking of MPAs elected on reserved seats for women and minorities. Last month, a controversy had emerged as KP Governor Haji Ghulam Ali had summoned the assembly session for March 22, but the provincial government declared the move against the rules as well as the Constitution, and refused to implement it.

The opposition members later demonstrated against the government, accusing it of trying to block the right of women and non-Muslim MPAs to participate in the Senate polls slated for next month. On March 25, more than a dozen candidates of the province's opposition, who were notified by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on

reserved seats, urged the PHC to ensure they are administered the oaths before the Senate elections scheduled for April 2 (Tuesday). Among the petitioners were six women MPAs-elect of the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) and eight returned candidates of the PML-N and PPP.

On March 27, the PHC had ordered Swati to administer the oaths to the MPAs elected on reserved seats for women and non-Muslims, and facilitate them to cast votes in the Senate elections. A PHC division bench consisting of Justice Syed Mohammad Attique Shah and Justice Shakeel Ahmad accepted three almost identical petitions filed by around 20 opposition MPAs elected on reserved seats, and directed the speaker to include the matter as agenda item No. 1 of the first business day of the session requisitioned for the upcoming Senate elections.

The next day, the ECP had hinted at postponing Senate elections if the KP assembly speaker kept on delaying the oath-taking. On Saturday, the assembly secretariat said it had not received any government orders to call a sitting of the house for the swearing-in of the lawmakers.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Turkmenistan to Pakistan, Mr. Atadjan Movlamov, called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Senate elections to be held today

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has finalized the arrangements for the upcoming Senate elections, scheduled to take place today (Tuesday). According to the commission, voting will be conducted in both the National and provincial assemblies from 9 am to 4pm.

In preparation for the elections, a motion to utilize the National Assembly hall for the Senate election will be presented and approved during today's Lower House session. Ballot papers have been printed in four different colours for the Senate elections to represent various categories of seats. White papers will be used for general seats, green for technocrat seats, pink for women seats, and yellow for minority seats.

The delivery of election materials, including ballot papers, to the returning officer has been completed, ensuring the smooth conduct of the electoral process. In some assemblies, candidates have been elected unopposed. All 11 candidates from the Balochistan Assembly have been elected unopposed, along with candidates on seven general seats from the Punjab Assembly.

However, in other regions, contests are underway. In Islamabad, two candidates each are competing for general and technocrat seats. In Punjab, there are four candidates for women's seats, and three each for technocrat and uluma seats. Moreover, two candidates are contesting the minority seat in the province.

On the other hand, there are 11 candidates for general seats and three for women's seats from Sindh. There are four candidates for technocrat seats and two for minority seats. From Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, there are 16 candidates running for general seats and four candidates for women's seats. Moreover, there is a contest among six candidates on uluma and technocrat seats.

Kabul confirms detention two Americans

KABUL (INP): Afghanistan's government has arrested two United States nationals over violations of law in the country, spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid said on Monday.

Mujahid did not reveal the identities of the detained individuals and said that other foreigners have also been arrested. "I think there are two Americans, and the reasons for their arrest are not clear yet; but whatever the reasons, anyone coming to Afghanistan is obliged to observe the laws of Afghanistan. Anyone who gets an Afghan visa means they agree to follow our laws," he was quoted by TOLO News as saying.

American officials have already said that two of their nationals are in Afghan custody. They had even identified one of the men as Ryan Corbett. The US officials had also claimed that the Americans were being detained 'without reason'.

International relations analyst Rashid Qutbzada said that it was possible that the Taliban might ask for the release of someone they want in exchange for the two detained Americans. The State Department had said in a February briefing that America was continuously pressing Afghanistan over the release of its citizens.

Asif hopeful of thaw in Islamabad-New Delhi ties

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif on Monday expressed hopes for betterment in bilateral ties with India after the neighbour comes out of its election phase commencing from April 19 and ending in June.

Regional arch-rivals — Islamabad and New Delhi — have a long history of strained relations, primarily due to Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) dispute which led to several wars while tensions usually rise on the occasions of countrywide elections in India.

"Our relations with India could be improved after elections there," the defence minister expressed his views while speaking to reporters outside the Parliament House in Islamabad, adding that Pakistan and India ties have its "own background".

As the country which borders with China, India, Afghanistan, and Iran witnessed tensions with other neighbours, except for China, following crossborder attacks from Iran and Afghanistan, Asif is hopeful for a turn of event in terms of improvement of bilateral ties with New Delhi after the neighbour completes its upcoming election phase. It is noteworthy to mention here that India will begin voting in phases starting April 19 to elect a new parliament, the world's largest election in which nearly one billion people are eligible to cast ballots, Reuters reported.

The election pits two-term strongman Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his regional allies against a bickering alliance of two dozen opposition parties, with surveys suggesting a comfortable win for Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Epicentre of recent wave of terrorism in Pakistan is Afghanistan until the neighbouring country takes decisive action against the banned outfit Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) safe havens there.

The defence minister said that he, along with a high-level delegation, visited Afghanistan to request the Taliban government there to take effective steps to stop terrorism. However, the solution proposed

by Kabul was not practically possible, he added. "Our options are now reducing day-by-day for the neighbour due to fluctuation in Afghan interim government's attitude towards Pakistan," Asif said. He added that Pakistan has always stood besides Afghanistan, rendered sacrifices for them, and even fought wars with them.

He stressed treatment of Pak-Afghan border like other borders around the globe which restricts cross-border movement to visa holders under international laws. He was of the view that the movement of people from Afghanistan without visas allows terrorists to enter Pakistan. He also signalled on behalf of the federal government taking concrete steps in the coming days to the complete elimination of terrorism.

Elaborating on ongoing probe into the attack on Chinese nationals in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Asif said that joint investigation teams of Pakistan and China found some leads, and they would soon dig up all facts regarding the terrorist attack. Five Chinese citizens, including a woman, and a Pakistani driver were killed when their vehicle was attacked in Shangla's Besham city as a suicide bomber crashed his explosives-laden vehicle into the car carrying the victims on March 26. To a question, the minister replied that Islamabad is successfully fulfilling targets of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), however, the government would be able to provide relief to the nation after at least 1.5 years.

He detailed that cases related to tax recovery worth Rs2,700 are currently pending, whereas, billions of rupees are being drained from the national exchequer due to electricity and gas theft. He, however, was optimistic of providing relief to the masses within next six months by taking effective moves. To another question regarding restrictions on the Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline project, Asif replied that the United States should give an alternative solution to fulfilling energy needs of the country. He added that Washington must have to consider weak economic situation of Islamabad as the country reserves right to purchase gas on low prices from its neighbour.

Israeli troops withdraw from Shifa Hospital

DEIR AL-BALAH (AFP): The Israeli military withdrew from Gaza's largest hospital early Monday after a two-week raid, leaving behind several bodies and a vast swath of destruction, according to Palestinian residents.

The military has described the raid on Shifa Hospital as one of the most successful operations of the nearly six-month war. It says it killed scores of Hamas and other militants, including senior operatives, and that it seized weapons and valuable intelligence. It confirmed forces had withdrawn Monday. The UN health agency said several patients died and dozens were put at risk during the raid, which brought even further destruction to a hospital that had already largely ceased to function. Days of heavy fighting showed that Hamas can still put up resistance even in one of the hardest-hit areas of Gaza.

Mohammed Mahdi, who was among hundreds of Palestinians who returned to the area, described a scene of "total destruction." He said several buildings had been burned down and that he had counted six bodies in the area, including two in the hospital courtyard. Video footage circulating online showed heavily damaged and charred buildings, mounds of dirt that had been churned up by bulldozers and patients on stretchers in darkened corridors.

Another resident, Yahia Abu Auf, said there were still patients, medical workers and displaced people sheltering inside the medical compound after several patients had been taken to the nearby Ahli Hospital. He said army bulldozers had plowed over a makeshift cemetery in Shifa's courtyard. "The situation is indescribable," he said. "The occupation destroyed all sense of life here."

Israel has accused Hamas of using hospitals for military purposes and has raided several medical facilities. It says it launched the raid on Shifa after Hamas and other militants had regrouped there. Health officials in Gaza deny those allegations. Critics accuse the army of recklessly endangering civilians and of decimating a health sector already overwhelmed with war-wounded. Palestinians say Israeli troops forcibly evacuated homes near Shifa Hospital in downtown Gaza City and forced hundreds of residents to march south.

At least 21 patients have died since the raid began, World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus posted late Sunday on X, formerly Twitter. He said over a hundred patients were still inside the compound, including four children and 28 critical patients. He also said there were no diapers, urine bags or water to clean wounds, and that many patients suffered from infected wounds and dehydration.

The military had previously raided Shifa, Gaza's largest hospital, in November, after saying Hamas maintained an elaborate command and control center inside and beneath the compound. It revealed a tunnel running beneath the hospital that led to a few rooms, as well as weapons it said it had confiscated from inside medical buildings, but nothing on the scale of what it had alleged prior to the raid. The war began on Oct. 7, when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking around 250 people hostage.

Israel responded with an air, land and sea offensive that has killed at least 32,782 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. The ministry does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its count but says women and children have made up around two-thirds of those killed. The Israeli military says it has killed over 13,000 Hamas fighters, and blames the civilian death toll on Palestinian militants because they fight in dense residential areas.

The war has displaced most of the territory's population and driven a third of its residents to the brink of famine. Northern Gaza, where Shifa is located, has suffered vast destruction and has been largely isolated since October, leading to widespread hunger. Israel said late last year that it had largely dismantled Hamas in northern Gaza and withdrew thousands of troops. But it has battled militants there on a number of occasions since then, and the two weeks of heavy fighting around Shifa highlighted the staying power of the armed groups.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to keep up the offensive until Hamas is destroyed and all of the hostages are freed. He says Israel will soon expand ground operations to the southern city of Rafah, where some 1.4 million people — more than half of Gaza's population — have sought refuge. But he faces mounting pressure from Israelis who blame him for the security failures of Oct. 7 and from some families of the hostages who blame him for the failure to reach a deal despite several weeks of talks mediated by the United States, Qatar and Egypt.

Hamas and other militants are still believed to be holding some 100 hostages and the remains of 30 others, after freeing most of the rest during a ceasefire last November in exchange for the release of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel. Tens of thousands of Israelis thronged central Jerusalem on Sunday in the largest anti-government protest since the country went to war in October. Deep divisions over Netanyahu's leadership long predate the war, which still enjoys strong public support.

IHC orders Fawad's release in NAB case

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court Monday granted bail to former information minister Fawad Chaudhry in the case of misappropriation in construction projects in Jhelum.

The court, approving the politician's bail, issued the orders during the hearing of the case in which Chaudhry was arrested by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) in December last year. IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri granted bail to the politician who remains imprisoned in Adiala Jail on judicial remand in the said case.

His lawyer, Advocate Qaiser Imam, appeared in the court on his behalf. During the hearing of Chaudhry's plea, the NAB prosecutor said: "We have a witness who says that Fawad Chaudhry took a bribe of Rs500,000." The IHC chief justice asked him how does Rs500,000 come under the jurisdiction of NAB.

The prosecutor responded saying that the case is still at an inquiry stage and NAB is getting more details. "I have written to all relevant institutions including the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (ECNEC)," the prosecutor. The chief justice questioned that NAB first arrested the man and later sought evidence. "What is the main evidence against Fawad Chaudhry with NAB?" CJ Aamer Farooq asked. The IHC chief justice got upset after the NAB prosecutor referred to the Supreme Court's verdict. "Leave the Supreme Court, mention the evidence first," he remarked.

NAB had taken Fawad into custody in aforementioned corruption case on December 16. The anti-graft body's Chairman Lt-Gen (ret'd) Nazir Ahmed Butt had signed an arrest warrant for Fawad after which he was taken into custody from Adiala jail — where he was incarcerated in the fraud case. The politician has been behind bars since November 4 last year after he was arrested from his Islamabad residence following a complaint filed against him in Islamabad's Aabpara Police Station for taking a Rs5 million bribe in exchange for a job.

In January, too, Fawad was taken into custody from his residence after he publicly "threatened" the members of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in a media talk outside former PTI chief Imran Khan's residence in Zaman Park. However, the then-coalition government said it had no hand in the politician's arrest. The politician, in June this year, issued an apology to the electoral watchdog for allegedly using "intemperate" language targeting the ECP and Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja.

Fawad was also among the thousands of party workers and leaders who were arrested during the crackdown on the PTI since May 9 for the party's alleged involvement in the riots that claimed at least eight lives and injured dozens of others.

KP, Balochistan marred by violence in first quarter

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: At least 92% of all fatalities and 86% of attacks, including those related to terrorism and security forces operations, were recorded in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces in the first quarter of 2024.

These key findings were revealed in the Q1 2024 Security Report issued by Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), detailing that the country witnessed at least 432 violence-linked fatalities and 370 injuries among civilians, security personnel and outlaws resulting from as many as 245 incidents of terror attacks and counter-terror operations. Among the 432 fatalities, 281 included that of civilians and security forces personnel.

The KP and Balochistan province alone have accounted for 51% and 41% of the total fatalities in Q1, 2024, respectively. The data indicates that the remaining regions were relatively peaceful, suffering less than 8% of all deaths. In addition to the casualties related to terrorism and counter-terrorism, 64 incidents of sabotage in the country, targeting properties of the government, politicians, private properties, and security properties were also recorded.

Percentage surged in violence, with the number of fatalities jumping to 178 from 91 in October to December — the fourth quarter of 2023. The Sindh province also saw a nearly 47% rise in violence, however, the number of fatalities was very low. Meanwhile, KP, Punjab and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) recorded an encouraging decrease in violence by 24%, 85% and 65% respectively, the report revealed. Despite a notable decrease in violence observed in GB during the period, the GB Home Minister Shamsul Haq Lone issued a terror threat alert on March 31, 2024, regarding the possibility of attacks by the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

The alert came in response to a recent suicide attack on a convoy of Chinese engineers — who were working on Dasu Dam project — in the Shangla district of KP. The attack claimed the lives of five Chinese nationals and a local driver. It is also worth noting that last year, GB had suffered the highest number of fatalities in

a decade, with 17 lives lost. In Q1 2024, civilians and security forces personnel suffered over 65% (281) of all fatalities in nearly 200 terror attacks, compared to outlaws suffering only 35% (151) in around 48 counter-terror operations.

The attacks on security officials and civilians outnumbered the security operations conducted against the outlaws, by almost fourfold. Moreover, civilians bore the heaviest brunt of violence suffering 154 fatalities (36%) which is more than any other category of victims and thus emerging as primary victims of violence in this period.

Compared to last quarter (Q4 2023), the fatalities of civilians and security officials combined surged by 17%, whereas the fatalities of outlaws, militants and insurgents combined decreased by almost 15% in the first quarter of 2024. Individually, there was a significant increase in the number of insurgents' fatalities, by 215%, a decrease of approximately 33% in militants' fatalities.

Interestingly, militant organisations claimed responsibility for less than 20% of the total casualties attributed to terrorism in Q1 2024. Surprisingly, certain terrorist outfits such as Tehreek-e-Jihad Pakistan (TJP), Lashkar-e-Islami (LI), and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) which were highly active the previous year, have abstained from claiming any acts of terrorism in this quarter. Only the TTP and Daesh took responsibility for some attack, while a new militant group Jabhat Ansar al-Mahdi Khorasan (JAMK), affiliated with the Gul Bahadur group, emerged in Q1 2024, the report said. Although the TTP claimed responsibility for only three terror attacks in Pakistan in this quarter, resulting in four fatalities, an unclaimed terror incident occurred in North Waziristan on March 16, 2024, led to the tragic loss of seven security officials, including a Lt Colonel and a Captain.

The insurgent groups, BLA, BLF, BRAS and SRA claimed responsibility for 18 attacks (three times more than the claims of the militant groups) this quarter causing 42 fatalities and 40 injuries. The prime targets of the insurgent groups were the security and government installations including Gwadar Port Complex, Mach Jail and Turbat Naval Base.



GAZA: Palestinians gathered around the burned and destroyed al-Shifa Hospital after Israeli forces withdrew.

New Delhi CM Kejriwal gets further detention in graft case

NEW DELHI (Reuters): An Indian court renewed detention on Monday for key opposition leader Arvind Kejriwal until April 15 in a graft case, his lawyers said, less than three weeks before voting begins in general elections.

In a move that sparked protests last month, India's financial crime-fighting agency arrested Kejriwal, the chief minister of Delhi, over graft accusations related to the city's liquor policy and remanded him to custody until April 1. Opposition parties say the

arrest, along with government action against other opposition groups and their leaders, shows the government is denying them a level playing field in the elections, charges it denies.

Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) says he has been falsely arrested in a fabricated case, but Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) denies political interference. Lawyers for the agency, the Enforcement Directorate, said on Monday that Kejriwal had

been non-cooperative and gave evasive replies, asking the court to hold him in custody for 15 days longer, the website Live Law said.

"These people have only one aim, they want to put him in prison during the elections," Kejriwal's wife, Sunita, told reporters, referring to Modi's government. "The people will give a response to this dictatorship." BJP spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi said the court's decision, based on the concrete evidence, raised moral and constitutional questions.