

Memberships suspended
F.P. Report
ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Friday suspended the membership of two lawmakers belonging to the Opposition for the remaining of the current session over the use of uncivilized language, causing ruckus and hurling threats during President Asif Zardari's address to the joint session of the Parliament.

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President, PM flay attack
F.P. Report
ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday strongly condemned a suicide attack that took place in Karachi, lauding the timely response by the police to avert casualties. In separately issued statements, both the president and prime minister said that the timely action by the police averted a huge life loss, and reiterated their firm resolve to wipe out terrorism.

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing a meeting regarding country wide anti-smuggling drive.

Shehbaz directs to accelerate countrywide anti-smuggling drive

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, while reiterating the resolve to purge the country of smuggling, on Friday directed the authorities concerned to accelerate the countrywide drive against the menace.

The prime minister, chairing a high-level meeting to curb smuggling, paid tribute to Army Chief General Syed Asim Munir for his full cooperation with the government in its endeavor against smuggling.

A report of the investigation committee headed by AD Khawaja was also presented in the meeting. The prime minister lauded the committee for identifying the elements involved in misuse of Afghan Transit Trade for smuggling and the officers facilitating them.

The prime minister was told that a list of smugglers, hoarders, and their facilitating officers have been forwarded to the law enforcement agencies and provincial governments. The prime minister directed for removing the identified officers from their respective posts and initiate disciplinary proceedings against them.

Prime Minister Shehbaz also asked the law enforcing agencies (LEAs) and intelligence agencies to cooperate with each other to curb the smuggling. Calling for punishing the smugglers and drug dealers, the prime minister asked the Law Ministry to carry out immediate necessary legislation for the purpose.

Affirming no leniency for looters of public money and their facilitators, Prime Minister Shehbaz directed for the measures to provide alternative earning opportunities and conducive atmosphere to the youths living in the frontier regions. He emphasized more swift and effective monitoring of sale and smuggling of Afghan Transit

Trade goods in the country, and called for third party audit of the monitoring system.

The prime minister ordered to ensure complete elimination of sugar smuggling and immediate release of funds to examine the prevalence of drugs consumption at the national level. The meeting was apprised of the smuggling, misuse of Afghan Transit Trade, drugs, besides sugar, wheat, fertilizer, petroleum products and illegal weapons.

It was told that, after consultation with the stakeholders, a national anti-smuggling strategy was in final stage which would be presented for approval. The meeting was told that the law enforcement agencies raided a godown of smuggling goods a couple of days ago in Mastung and confiscated goods worth over Rs10 billion. The prime minister appreciated the law enforcement agencies for their accelerated efforts to curb smuggling. Federal ministers Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi, Jam Kamal Khan, Ahad Khan Cheema, Rana Tanweer Hussain, Dr Musaddik Malik and Azam Nazeer Tarar, Chairman of Federal Board of Revenue, attorney general, personnel of law enforcement agencies and senior officers attended the meeting.

Shehbaz for further strengthening economic, trade ties with Turkiye: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif reiterated the government's resolve to further strengthen economic relations and trade partnership with Turkiye. He was talking to a delegation of the Turkish investors which called him here at the Prime Minister Office.

The Turkish investors, expressing confidence in the leadership of the prime minister, took keen interest in investing in Pakistan's diverse areas. The prime minister said the people of

Pakistan and Turkiye had a long-standing brotherly relationship spanning centuries.

He said reforms had been made in the system to take full advantage of the potential of foreign investment in Pakistan. Ambassador of Turkiye to Pakistan Mehmet Pacaci, CEO Terminal YAPI Cenk Coskun and other Turkish and Pakistani officials participated in the meeting.

Federal ministers Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Khawaja Muhammad Asif and Ahad Khan Cheema, Prime Minister's Coordinator Rana Ehsan Afzal and relevant senior officials also attended the meeting. The delegation thanked the prime minister for the warm welcome.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif expressed deep grief and sorrow over loss of previous lives and property due to heavy rains in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces.

He in a message, prayed for the elevation of ranks of the departed souls in paradise and offered condolences to the bereaved families. The prime minister also prayed for early recovery of the injured as a result of various incidents occurred due to torrential rains.

He directed the National Disaster Management Authority and other concerned departments to speed up the relief activities in the affected areas. The federal government stood with the provincial governments of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and would provide all possible assistance in relief operations, the prime minister said. He directed not to spare any effort in providing relief to the victims. Besides he also asked to expedite the work for opening roads that had been closed due to rains and landsliding.

No criticism on Pakistan allowed in Parliament

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Attaullah Tarar on Friday lambasted the Opposition benches for hurling criticism against the state and warned that no criticism against the country would be allowed.

Speaking on Point of Order at the National Assembly, the Minister said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) had damaged the country's interests through its concocted narrative of foreign conspiracy that allegedly resulted in the regime change and put a dent to the foreign policy of the country. He said the PTI's founder had been jeopardizing the foreign interests of the country and he compromised the confidentiality of the entire diplomatic communication. The PTI leadership had been accusing foreign countries for interference in the country which was retracted by the spokesperson of the PTI through its official social media handles, he added.

The Minister underscored that the country's economy was stabilizing which was discussed globally by prestigious institutions like Bloomberg, UNDP, Asian Development Bank that claimed that investment was coming to Pakistan and it was leading to its economic revival and would help in ending inflation.

"We demand that a joint resolution should be tabled for the friendly countries and no criticism should be allowed against them from any quarters or political parties. The PTI founder from Adiala Jail is guiding his party members to make anti-state narrative which would never be permitted," he said.

PTI founder's interim bail extended

F.P. Report

LAHORE: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Friday extended the interim bail of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder and former prime minister Imran Khan in three cases including Jinnah House attack case till April 26.

As per details, the ATC judge heard the interim bail pleas in three cases pertaining to attack on Jinnah House, Askari Tower and Shadman Police Station. The court sought arguments from the lawyers on next hearing and directed to make sure the attendance of PTI founder Imran Khan via video link from Adiala Jail.

It's worth mentioning here that LHC was informed earlier, Punjab government allocated seven cells for convicted PTI founder Imran Khan in Adiala Jail, while 14 security personnel have been appointed for his security. "An accommodation of six cells had been made for Imran Khan in addition to his cell to ensure proper security for him," AGP Punjab Khalid Ishaq told the court. "One personnel is deployed on security of 10 inmates in Adiala jail, however, 14 police personnel have been deployed for Imran Khan's security in Adiala Jail, the report added.

Violent clashes broke out across Pakistan after the former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf founder Imran Khan were arrested at the Islamabad High Court (IHC). The protests were held in remote and major cities as the party workers were agitated due to their chairman's arrest, with Balochistan, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Islamabad summoning the armed forces to ensure law and order. Army installations and Corps Commander's house in Lahore, also known as Jinnah House, came under attack during a protest by 'PTI workers'.

All 5 Japanese nationals unhurt in suicide attack

Two terrorists killed in Karachi

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Police officials on Friday said that all the foreigners travelling in a vehicle that was targeted in a suicide attack in the Landhi area were safe and shifted to an undisclosed location.

They told media that five foreign nationals were in the car when it came under attack in Landhi's Mansehra Colony earlier today killing two terrorists involved in the attack.

DIG East Azfar Mahesar said that the attackers were on foot, as per preliminary investigation. He added that police recovered six hand grenades, an SMG, and three magazines from militants. "The attackers also had two bottles of petrol. All the items were in a bag with the attackers," said the police official.

The DIG said that a vehicle and a motorcycle nearby were damaged in the blast after a terrorist blew himself up. A police mobile was parked at a nearby petrol pump which reached the spot after hearing the explosion, he said, adding that the personnel of the Sharafi Goth police station also confronted the terrorists.

The DIG East revealed that the attack was carried out at 6:50 am this morning. The DIG further stated that there was a company vehicle with security guards as well behind the targeted one carrying the employees. He added that the terrorists opened fire on the van, while the security guards behind the van retaliated the attack.

"One terrorist was killed in firing by security guards, while the other terrorist approached the van and blew himself up," he said. The police official said efforts will be made to identify the slain terrorist using his fingerprints. He also revealed that the police were already on alert after having received security threats regarding foreigners in the city.

He added that a security plan for China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and non-CPEC projects was prepared. Earlier following the incident, the police said that the van was targeted by the terrorists who were on a bike. They added that a bag filled with grenades and Kalashnikov was found from the crime scene.

SSP Malir Tariq Mastoi confirmed that it was a suicide attack. The police official said that another vehicle was also damaged in the explosion. Gunfire sounds

were also heard, they said. As per initial reports shared by the police, the second terrorist killed in the encounter was also a suicide bomber.

"A suicide jacket and a grenade are tied to the terrorist's body," they said, adding that a bomb disposal team is reaching the site of attack. Following the attack, the injured were being shifted to a nearby hospital, they added. Meanwhile, the nationality of the victims has not been ascertained so far. The law enforcement agency also shared that the foreign nationals were working in the export processing zone.

A security guard, who was with the nationals and witnessed the incident, told media that they had left Zamzama in two vehicles. He added that a loud explosion was then heard near Mansehra Colony. "After the explosion, a terrorist was firing at the vehicle," the security guard said.

Later, speaking to the media at the crime scene, Counter Terrorism Department In-charge Raja Umar Khattab told journalists that the foreigners were travelling in three vehicles. He added that the suicide bombers were waiting nearby and attacked the vehicle when it slowed down due to a speed breaker. "The security guard fired at the attackers and thwarted the attack," he said, adding that the terrorists arrived on a motorcycle and were chasing the car. They, he added, stepped down from their motorbikes near the scene and approached the vehicle on foot before opening fire at the van.

Meanwhile, Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah has sought a report of the Mansehra Colony blast from Inspector General of Police Ghulam Nabi Memon. The chief minister directed the police to obtain all the information about who the terrorists were and where they came from as well as probe about their facilitators. He maintained that anti-national elements wanted to disrupt peace and order in the country and lauded the police's timely action following the attack.

One of the injured in the attack, a 45-year-old security guard Noor Muhammad, succumbed to his injuries during treatment. Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre's administration told media. The security guard, who was deployed for security of the foreigners in the vehicles, was placed on a ventilator after his condition continued to be critical.



KARACHI: Security officials inspecting the site of an attack on foreigner's convoy.

Palestine UN membership: Pakistan 'regrets' US veto

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has regretted the United States (US) decision to veto the draft resolution seeking Palestine's full membership of the United Nations (UN), as well as expressed its disappointment on the UN Security Council's inability to reach a consensus on the matter.

"Pakistan is deeply disappointed by the result of last night's debate at the UNSC and its inability to reach a consensus and recommend Palestine's membership to UN General Assembly," Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said in her weekly press briefing on Friday. "We regret the US decision to veto the draft resolution granting full membership of the UN to Palestine," she added.

The Security Council blocked Palestine's bid to become a full member of the UN due to a US veto on a widely-supported resolution that would have recommended the granting of such status. The proposal, submitted to the 15-member Council by Algeria, received 12 votes in

favour, with the US casting a negative vote and Switzerland and the United Kingdom (UK) abstaining.

The UNSC resolution required at least nine votes in favour and no vetoes from its five permanent members — China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States — to pass. "We believe, the time has come for admission of Palestine to the UN. This will be a step towards correcting the historic injustice suffered by Palestinians for over 75 years. It will affirm their right to self-determination," she remarked.

The spokesperson said that the people of Palestine had their inherent right to live in a sovereign Palestinian state with the pre-1967 borders and Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. To a question, she said the upcoming summit of the OIC in Gambia would consider several proposals including those on Palestine, Jammu and Kashmir as well as Islamophobia.

The spokesperson said that during the recent visit of a high-powered Saudi delegation to Islamabad, Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and his

Saudi counterpart Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud had also called for de-escalation, immediate ceasefire, and lifting of the siege in Gaza. The stumbling block in the implementation of the ceasefire is the Israeli occupation authorities, she added.

Apprising the media of the diplomatic engagements during the last week, she started with the visit of a Saudi delegation to accelerate discussions and enhance cooperation in the follow-up of the understanding reached between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud during the former's recent visit to the kingdom.

She said at the investment conference held during the visit, both sides discussed investment projects in energy, mining, IT, construction, human resource development, and exports. Baloch said during the "very positive and constructive" visit, Pakistan discussed several projects for Saudi investment and expressed the hope that both sides would conclude their negotiations soon to materialise the projects.

President confers award on Turkish General

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari conferred Nishan-i-Imtiaz (Military) award on Chief of Turkish General Staff, General Metin Gurak in recognition of his illustrious services and contribution to strengthening Pakistan-Turkiye defence relations.

The award was conferred at a special investiture ceremony held at the Aiwan-e-Sadr on Friday and attended by services chiefs and parliamentarians.

As per the citation read out at the ceremony, General Metin Gurak is an officer of high intellect and his excellent administrative qualities earned him the reputation of being a courageous and professionally competent officer. General Metin Gurak has played a vital role for implementing peace and stability around Turkiye.

General Gurak, during his outstanding military career served on different staff and command appointments which prominently include Commander of 2nd Armored Brigade, Chief of Communication Department of TGS, Commander of Military Academy, Commander of Army Aviation School, Commander of 4th Corps, Commander of Land Forces TRADOC, Communications Services Support Training, Chief of Staff of Land Forces Command and Deputy Chief of Turkish General Staff. He was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General in 2015.

Death tolls increases to 36 in KP rain related incidents

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The death tolls increased to 36 people with 46 other were injured in the rain-flood related incident across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and filling of this report heavy rain continued since last night in most part of the province for which high alert has been issued to all district administration, a report of the Provincial Disasters Management Authority (PDMA) said here Friday.

The PDMA report said that as a result of accidents due to heavy rains and flood in various districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province 20 children, 8 men and 8 women are among the dead while 9 women, 33 men and 11 children are among the injured.

A total of 2391 houses were damaged due to the collapse of walls and roofs in different districts, in which 388 houses were completely damaged and 2003 houses were partially damaged. PDMA report said.

Due to heavy rains, life and financial accidents occurred in different districts of Khyber, Dir Upper and Lower, Chitral Upper, Swat, Bajaur, Shangla, Mansehra, Mohmand, Malakand, Karak, Tank, Mardan, Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera, Buner, Hangu, Battagram, and Bannu, North and South Waziristan, Kohat, Dera Ismail Khan and Orakzai, the PDMA report issued here revealed.

On the special instructions of the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur,

15 killed in torrential rains in Balochistan

F.P. Report

QUETTA: The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Balochistan revealed on Friday that 15 people were killed and 10 injured during the recent torrential rains in the province.

In a report, the PDMA said that the casualties were reported since April 12 as the heavy rainfall also damaged the infrastructure. It added that the rain wreaked havoc in 11 districts of the province. The PDMA maintained that 12 roads and two bridges have been damaged in different districts. The report read that 220 houses were damaged, out of which 60 were completely destroyed and 160 partially affected. "Necessary relief materials have been provided to 16 districts," the PDMA said. The report added that a survey is being conducted to ascertain the actual number of property losses.

It is pertinent to mention here that the rainfall played havoc with various parts of Balochistan submerging the port city of Gwadar. Hundreds of villages have been drowned, link roads and bridges were damaged by water after heavy rainfall on Pak-Iran coastal belt. Sporadic spells of heavy rainfall lashed border town of Chaman and adjoining areas. Additionally, a great deal of mud dwellings have been destroyed by flash floods brought on by persistent rain on the nearby slopes. The disruption of a railway track resulted in the suspension of train services between Quetta and Chaman. Train service between Sibi and Harnai has been interrupted due to damage to another track at the Spintangi area in the Sibi-Harnai segment.

PDMA has released 110 million rupees to the administration of the districts affected by the recent rains for financial assistance and relief activities to the families of those who lost their lives.

PDMA has provided relief materials to the affected districts of Swat, Chitral Lower, Bajaur, Kohistan Lower, Peshawar, Nowshera, Mohmand, Dir Upper, Tank and Dera Ismail Khan. The relief supplies include tents, mats, kitchen sets, blankets, beds, tarpaulins, solar lamps and other daily life

items, the PDMA report said.

The report said that PDMA along with all related organizations are carrying out relief activities in the rain-affected districts across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The rains are likely to continue intermittently till April 21 and PDMA had already issued a letter to all district administrations to be alert and take precautionary measures. PDMA Emergency Operation Center is fully operational. People should report any untoward incident at 1700.



KARACHI: Governor Sindh Kamran Tessori meeting with Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan Khazar Farhadov at Governor House. —APP Photo

Health minister outlines plan for healthcare reforms in Punjab

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Minister for Health and Emergency Services Khawaja Salman Rafique has outlined ambitious plans to overhaul the province's healthcare system. In a meeting with representatives of the National Centre for Healthcare Workers USA here on Friday, he emphasised the need for innovative solutions to revitalize healthcare infrastructure, particularly in transforming basic health units into fully functional hospitals.

"We are committed to leveraging all available resources to elevate the standard of healthcare in Punjab," the minister stated. He highlighted upcoming initiatives, including advanced training for nursing staff to meet international standards and the enhancement of diagnostic capabilities to control diseases effectively.

He also unveiled plans to introduce private practice within government hospitals through public-private partnerships, aiming to enhance accessibility and quality of care for the public. Moreover, he underscored the importance of leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) in healthcare services to optimize patient outcomes. Chairman of the National Centre for Healthcare Workers USA Shahab Tanveer commended the minister's dedication to healthcare reform and pledged full cooperation in advancing nursing sector improvements.

The meeting concluded with an agreement between the minister and the delegation to collaborate closely on implementing modern reforms, strengthening nursing departments, and expanding healthcare coverage through initiatives like health cards. Additional Secretary Nursing Usman Khalid, CEO Punjab Health Initiative Management Company Dr. Ali Razzaq and Manager Monitoring and Evaluation PHIMC Hasnat Ahmed were present.

Commissioner for integrated efforts to make Karachi encroachment-free

KARACHI (APP): Commissioner Karachi Syed Hassan Naqvi on Friday said that all the departments concerned need to work together to get rid of encroachment in the city. He was chairing a meeting in his office to review efforts to eradicate encroachment in the city. He said that the deputy commissioners anti-encroachment force, land ownership agencies and police should make coordinated efforts.

Director anti-encroachment force Razi Tariq informed the meeting about the progress of the encroachment removal from the government land, details of the procedure and future planning to eradicate the encroachment. It was decided that the deputy commissioners will take effective measures to prevent encroachment from the cooperation and help of the relevant institutions. The commissioner said that the deputy commissioners should prepare a list of encroachments in their respective areas and take steps with the help and cooperation of the police and the relevant civic bodies and the anti-encroachment force.

Karachi receives maiden direct flight of Azerbaijan Airlines from Baku

KARACHI (APP): The maiden flight of Azerbaijan Airlines from Baku touched the ground at Jinnah International Airport late Thursday night making the metropolis the third Pakistani city having direct air connectivity with the Central Asian State.

Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori, Sindh Minister for Industries and Commerce Jam Saifullah Dharejo, CEO Trade Development Authority of Pakistan Zubair Motiwala, President Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ifkhar Ahmed and other representatives of business and trade community welcomed the crew and passengers of the inaugural flight. Ambassador of Azerbaijan in Pakistan Khazar Farhadov was also present at the occasion.

Azerbaijan Airlines' first flight to JIAP Karachi that carried over 90 passengers was welcomed with water canon salute on the run-

way. The airline was already operating direct flights to Islamabad and Lahore and it expanded its direct flight operation to Pakistan by starting two weekly flights to Karachi.

Governor Sindh Kamran Tessori speaking at the occasion termed expansion of air operations as a welcome sign for mutual relations of Pakistan and Azerbaijan and felicitated Azerbaijan Envoy, Pakistani officials and business and industrial communities of both the countries.

He said that Pakistan-Azerbaijan bilateral trade volume was \$ 10 million that has witnessed a three time growth after start of direct flight operation. He hoped that air connectivity with the biggest city of the country will help bolstering the trade relation between the brotherly countries.

Karachi is not only economic and financial hub of Pakistan but it is gateway to

a number of tourist places, he said and hoped that it would help strengthening people to people contacts as well as tourism in both the country.

Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov, while talking to APP on the occasion, said that direct flights will open new avenues for bringing people of both the brotherly countries more closer who were tied in bonds of brotherhood from centuries.

We are historically very close and leadership of both the countries had taken significant steps to develop a mechanism for bringing people of both the countries closer, he said adding that it would contribute to strengthen bilateral relations of Azerbaijan and Pakistan.

On a question he said "two drafts of preferential trade agreement and transit trade agreement were under constitution between both the countries and our trade will increase more and more."

Minister advocates for IT sector growth

LAHORE (APP): Minister of State for Information Technology and Communications Shaza Fatima Khawaja has reiterated the government's dedication to enhancing the IT industry by endorsing and aiding the private sector.

Addressing the participants at the Global Digital Summit during the 24th ICTN Asia Conference at the Expo Centre here on Friday, she lauded the collective zeal for technology and its role in transforming economies and societies. She underscored the value of such summits in fostering collaboration and exchanging knowledge among stakeholders from both public and private sectors.

She emphasised the government's efforts, under Prime Minister Shehbaz Shari's vision, to review policies and legislation to better support the private sector's growth and innovation. The minister stressed creation of a conducive environment in Pakistan for the private sector, focusing on business culture, technology, and the ecosystem.

The minister pointed out

cybersecurity and the skills gap as major challenges, but also as opportunities, especially in leveraging Pakistan's young population for national development. She highlighted the need to modernise education systems to address immediate lack of skilled labour and employable graduates.

She referenced the industry-academia bridge programme that facilitates on-job training for university students, ensuring their employability upon graduation. She also called for a quicker adaptation of university curricula to keep up with the fast-paced industry changes.

The minister outlined the complexities universities face with industry advancements and the importance of international exposure for Pakistan. She announced plans for a National Digitization Plan, focusing on governance, economy, and society, which will incorporate modern concepts like the Pakistan stack to streamline services for individuals.

Shaza Khawaja emphasised the government's commitment to engaging

with citizens and inviting collaboration for the success of digitization initiative. She discussed the importance of public-private partnerships, ongoing policy developments in data protection and cybersecurity, and the need for an environment conducive to international business.

The minister expressed aspirations for G-20 participation and called for efforts to expand the economic pie. She encouraged the private sector to prepare for upcoming opportunities and emphasised the government's role in supporting the IT industry through incentives and investments, like venture capital funds.

Concluding her address, Shaza Khawaja urged the industry leaders to prioritise both hard and soft skills and to take bold steps in developing alternatives to global technologies. She replied to the media questions, stating that while internet shutdowns were not encouraged, they were sometimes necessary for security reasons. She concluded by presenting achievement awards to top achievers in the IT sector.

817 held for selling roti at higher rate in 5 days

LAHORE (APP): A meeting, chaired by Punjab Chief Secretary Zahid Akhtar Zaman at Civil Secretariat, was informed here on Friday that implementation of reduced price of roti was being ensured across Punjab on the orders of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz.

The meeting was told that 817 people had been arrested over violation of the orders, 347 cases registered and Rs. 11.7 million fine imposed collectively during the last five days. A report regarding the actions was presented during the meeting.

The administrative secretaries of industries and food departments, Chairman PITB and officers concerned attended the meet-

ing, while all divisional commissioners and deputy commissioners participated through video-link.

The chief secretary said that reduction in the price of roti was a great initiative of the Punjab government to provide relief to people, adding that implementation at new rates would be ensured in any case. He mentioned that the new price of roti was fixed, keeping in mind the cut in the price of flour and other expenses, adding that there was no justification for selling roti at a higher price now. He directed that price control magistrates to remain active in the field for monitoring rates.

The secretary industries gave a detailed briefing at the meeting. He said that so

far more than 22,000 "Tandoors" had been inspected and 94 of those sealed. In 10 districts including Lahore, Rawalpindi, Faisalabad, the price of roti had been fixed at Rs. 16, while its price had been fixed at Rs 15 in 26 districts.

He maintained that the price of Roti in Dera Ghazi Khan and Rajanpur had been set at Rs. 13, while it has been fixed at Rs. 12 in Muzaffargarh and Kot Addu. He said that as per the instructions of Punjab CM, banners showing new price of roti had been displayed at "Tandoors" and in case of overcharging the citizens could lodge complaints on the Qeemat App or complaint cell No. 08000-2345.

Sharjeel flays Gohar's criticism on Zardari

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, Mass Transit, Excise, Taxation, Narcotics Control Sharjeel Inam Memon has said that Barriest Gohar attempted to increase his stature through criticism of President Asif Ali Zardari, Gohar, who attempted to halt aid by writing a letter to the IMF, criticism on Asif Ali Zardari, is ridiculous.

In his statement, Sindh's senior minister, Sharjeel Inam Memon, remarked that following Shaheed Bibi, Asif Ali Zardari emerged as a symbol of strengthening the federation. Asif Ali Zardari represents a

metaphor for promoting democracy and discouraging non-democratic forces. Additionally, President Asif Ali Zardari renamed KPK, and Gilgit-Baltistan was granted the status of a province.

He remarked that President Asif Ali Zardari strengthened the federation by championing the slogan of "Pakistan Khappe." Additionally, President Asif Ali Zardari bolstered the federation by granting rights to the provinces through the Eighteenth Amendment. The tradition established by Asif Ali Zardari, exemplified by bringing ANP to the Senate, remains unprecedented in the political history of Pakistan.

Sharjeel Inam Memon highlight-

ed that the policies and actions of President Asif Ali Zardari played a crucial role in stabilizing democracy in the country and yielding positive effects on the nation. President Asif Ali Zardari, through strategic initiatives such as Vision 2025, worked tirelessly to enhance Pakistan's position in the global economy.

He further emphasized that national development, stability, economic reforms, increasing investment, and job creation have been the primary objectives of President Asif Zardari. It is crucial to acknowledge the significant role played by President Asif Ali Zardari in the development and prosperity of Pakistan.

Lanjar orders security high alert across Sindh

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Home Minister Ziaul Hasan Lanjar has issued security high alert orders across Sindh till further orders, here on Friday.

He said that the security measures should be made foolproof in mosques, Imambargahs and other open places during Friday prayers. The Home Minister directed the district Senior Superintendents of Police (SSPs), and Sub-divisional police officers (SDPOs) to be in field. Lanjar said that Station House Officers (SHOs) should be very diligent and alert for security purpose. He said that special focus should be placed on snap-checking, picketing and patrolling. He further said that communication strategy should be made effective.

25 PEF students to take part in prestigious online course

LAHORE (APP): Twenty-five students from the Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) schools have been selected to attend a prestigious online course, offered by Sundar STEM School.

In collaboration with the Virtual University, the Sundar STEM School would provide these students with high-quality education through online courses. Thousands of students from all corners of Pakistan had applied for the courses, with 5,000 students shortlisted for the competition. Eventually, 335 students were selected nationwide, including 25 from the Punjab Education Foundation schools, said a spokesperson for the PEF.

IGP Sindh chairs meeting on foreigners' security

KARACHI (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sindh Ghulam Nabi Memon chaired a high-level meeting at the Central Police Office (CPO) Karachi to review security arrangements for foreign nationals.

The IGP Sindh emphasized the need to establish a dedicated unit within the Special Branch equipped with modern security techniques tailored for the protection of foreigners.

He stressed the strict implementation of the standard operating procedures issued by the Government of Sindh regarding the security of foreign visitors/delegates and regular issuance of security advisories by the concerned officers.

Supervisory officers at the range, district, and zone levels were instructed to reassess security measures for foreigners to formulate a concrete and effective police strategy and submit a review report within three days.

The meeting also addressed the recent suicide attack on foreigners in Mansehra Colony, Landhi, Karachi. The IGP Sindh commended the swift and effective response of the police, which prevented the attack and ensured the safety of all foreigners involved.

Further discussions centered on enhancing security measures for all Chinese residents, experts and staff, and other foreign guests/delegates in Sindh.

IGP Memon reiterated the commitment of Sindh Police and security agencies to remain vigilant and foil any terrorist threats.

"The proactive stance and preparedness of law enforcement agencies underscore their determination to safeguard the lives and interests of foreign nationals within the province," he added.

The meeting was attended by Additional IGPs from Karachi, CTD, DIGPs, Special Branch, CPCC, SP Foreigner's Security Cell, and other senior police officers. DIGPs from Hyderabad, Sukkur, Larkana, MirpurKhas, and Shaheed Benazirabad Police Ranges participated via video link.

Rauf Iftikhar Ahmed calls on Governor Punjab



F.P. Report

LAHORE: Kidney Transplant Surgeon, Dr. Brigadier (Rtd) Rauf Iftikhar Ahmed called on Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rahman at Governor House Lahore. Director Vigilance Punjab Human Organ Transplantation Authority, Adnan Ahmed Bhatti was also present in the meeting. During the meeting, measures to improve the kidney transplant sector was discussed.

Talking on this occasion, Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rahman said that Dr. Brigadier (ret'd) Rauf Iftikhar Ahmed's services for the ailing humanity are commendable.

He said that he will also draw the attention of concerned authorities to give civil award to Dr. Brigadier (Rtd) Rauf Iftikhar Ahmed in recognition of his services.

Kidney Transplant Surgeon Dr. Brigadier (Rtd) Rauf Iftikhar Ahmed informed the Governor Punjab about the performance in the field of Kidney Transplant. He said that he has done more than two and a half thousand successful kidney transplants in CMH Rawalpindi and other hospitals. Dr. Brigadier (ret'd) Rauf Iftikhar Ahmed thanked Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rahman for his encouragement.

Meanwhile, Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rahman congratulated the elected office bearers of Lahore Education Reporters Association "LIRA".

He expressed good wishes for President Mehran Ajmal Khan, General Secretary Diba Mirza Senior, Vice President Talha Qureshi, Vice President Daniyal Umar, Joint Secretary Zeeshan Chishti, Finance Secretary Muhammad Asim Raja and Rafia Ikram.

GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA
COMMUNICATION & WORKS DEPARTMENT

NOTICE INVITING E-BIDDING
(Single stage two envelope E-Bidding System)

(1) C & W Department (Highway Division, Bannu), Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa invites electronic Bids from the eligible firms/bidders in accordance with KPPRA procurement rules 2014 on single stage two envelope procedure for the following works:

S.No	Name of Work	Required category of PEC	Tender Form Entry Fee	Bid Security+S/Duty	Period of completion	Last date of submission of Bids and time	Date of opening of Technical Bid	Date of opening of Financial Bid
1	Construction of Road and Bridges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa ADP No.1533/210456 (2023-24). 1. SH:(1) Widening and improvement of Black Topped Road from DWA Sark at Norang, Kakki Bannu Road to Kotka Mir Afzal Wajid / Ishaq Korona connecting Nazardin Adda.(II) PCC Roads Kotka Nar Najeib Wajid Ishaq Korona and Kotka Haji Gulab Korona Karak Painda Khel. 2. SH: PCC Roads Attak Korona to Khan Malook Korona Painda Khel.	C-3	0.03%	2% on E/Cost + Stamp Duty	As per Work Order	10/05/2024 At 12:00 PM	10/05/2024 At 12:30 PM	Date of opening of Financial bid will be announced after the approval of Technical bids from the competent authority
		C-4	-do-	-do-	-do-	-do-	-do-	-do-

2. Bid documents and instruction to bidders can be downloaded from C&W web site (www.cwd.gkp.pk) before the submission date/time.

INSTRUCTIONS TO BIDDERS (KPPRA Single stage two envelop bidding procedure)

(1) Technical bid/ proposal should accompany the following: (a) Certificate that that Bid Security in the shape of Call deposit (original) has been enclosed in financial bid. (b) Enlistment Order of C&W Department (photocopy). (c) Renewal of registration for CFY 2023-24 (Photocopy). (d) National Identity Card (CNIC Photocopy). (e) Copy of the valid Pakistan Engineering Council registration. (f) Form H of the Company / Firm. (g) Documents showing general capabilities, financial soundness, general and relevant experience record, personnel capabilities, equipment capabilities and Income Tax / NTN Certificates. (h) Any other document to support the technical bid.

(2) Technical evaluation will be carried out on marks threshold in passing all the fields including PEC Registration, Enlistment with C&W Deptt., Tax Payer proof, Relevant experience in past 05 years, Performance, Technical Personnel, required Equipment, Financial status, Auditors report, Managerial capabilities, Litigation status etc. (3) Incomplete/ Conditional / Electronic bids and bids received after closing time shall not be entertained. Bids shall be signed by authorized persons. (4) Bid security 2% in shape of call deposit (in Original) and 0.03% Tender Firm Entry Fee of the estimated cost in cash (non-refundable) should be enclosed along with bidding documents. (5) The contractors quoting their bids upto a limit of 10% below Engineer Estimate shall submit bid security to the extent of 2% of Engineer Estimate only. (6) The contractor quoting their bids more than 10% below upto 20% below on Engineer Estimate shall submit along with their bids 8% Additional Security of Engineer Estimated Cost in addition to 2% bid security. If the bid is not accompanied with the required amount of Additional Security then it will be considered as non-responsive and the 2% bid security shall be forfeited in favour of Govt. and the 2nd lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly. (7) Similarly, a contractor quoting bid more than 20% below shall submit with his bid an additional security on Engineer Estimated Cost equal to the differential amount of submitted bid and Engineer Estimate along with detail rate analysis. In case of more than 20% below bids if the bid is not accompanied by the detailed rate analysis and / or required amount of additional security then the said bid shall be considered as non-responsive. All the securities submitted along with such non responsive bid shall be forfeited in favour of Govt. and the 2'd lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly. (8) In case detailed rate analysis submitted with the bids is, in view of the Procuring Entity, not convincing, the Head of the Procuring Entity may declare such bid as non-responsive without any forfeiture of bid securities and record reasons thereof. (9) The procuring entity may offer the contract to next lowest bidder after due diligence in the context of financial difference between such two bids are may advertise procurement opportunity afresh. (10) After commencement of work by the successful bidder, the procurement entity may replace the additional security with a bank guarantee of the same amount from the schedule banks, if the already deposited security is not in the form of bank guarantee. (11) The additional security shall be released to the contractor in (04) Four installments i.e. 1" Installment of 25% to be released upon completion of 25% of the project 2nd Installment of 25% to be released upon completion of 50% of the project 3rd Installment of 25% to be released upon completion of 75% of the project & the 4th Installment of 25% to be released after 100% completion of the project. (12) Any bidder who provides incorrect information, take documents should be disqualified. (13) Time allowed for completion of the work is as specified in the NIT which will start from the issuance of work order. (14) Bids will be valid for Ninety (90) days. (15) Successful Bidder should sign the agreement with the department within stipulated time after acceptance of bid. (16) Call Deposit of Scheduled Banks shall be acceptable. (17) If the evaluated bid costs of two or more than two bidders are same then the successful bid will be declared through draw. (18) A copy of the technical proposals in the required format is mandatory and to be uploaded as a part of E-Bidding before submitting Financial Bids. (19) Scanned copy of bid security i/c Tender Entry Fee shall be submitted electronically along with technical bid on E-Bidding System. (20) Bid security of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd lowest electronic bidder for the specific work will be retained by the Department till the approval of bids. (21) The bidder must be enlisted with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority as per KPPRA Rules. (22) Pay Order is not acceptable as per Notification No. of KPPRA vide No. KPPRA/M&E/Estt/-1-12/2017-18, dated: 05/04/2018. (23) The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Finance Act XXVII of 2019 2nd Schedule under S.No.14, in case of projects funded under the Government's ADP Budget, Tax shall be charged at the rate of Two Percent (2%). (24) Venue of bids opening is **office of the Executive Engineer, Highway Division Bannu.**

Note :- (1) Differential amount, if a contractor quote e.g. 25% below Engineer Estimate bid than he has to deposit alongwith his bid 2% bid security and 25% Additional Security of Engineer Estimate. (2) It is mandatory to all contractors, who are participating in the bidding should sign every page of their procher with page numbering and mentioning here total No. of Pages i.e. 1 of 200 before submitting in the office of the undersigned, unsigned procher will not be considered in the bidding process.

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER Highway Division Bannu

INF(P): 744/2024



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali with others offering funeral prayers of the custom intelligence officials who were killed in DI Khan.

Marker-based subjects introduced in educational institutions

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Higher Education, Meena Khan Afridi has said that subjects that are compatible to need of modern era have been introduced in educational institutions.

He was chairing a meeting that was convened to discuss problems being faced by girls' degree colleges. The meeting was also attended by Secretary Higher Education, Arshad

Khan and principles of Bacha Khan Girls Degree College, City Girls Degree College, Hayatabad College and Frontier College for Women.

On the occasion, the minister was briefed about problems of girls' colleges and shortage of staff in these institutions.

Chairing the meeting, provincial minister said that necessary steps have been taken for promotion of girl education that is

among top priorities of government. He said that market-based subject have been introduced in college keeping in view demands being witnessed in existing scenario.

He also suggested devising a plan and utilizing people fund for immediate hiring of teachers to fill posts that are lying vacant due to leaves of teachers.

He said that e-transfer policy is under considera-

tion that would also help resolving issues relating to transfer of teaching staff.

The minister said that committee has been constituted for improvement of education institutions adding that it would take practical steps after compiling data of educational institutions.

He also stressed upon principals to focus quality of education and work for capacity building of youngster.

KPRA, USAID-ERDA arrange on spot registration for women entrepreneurs

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority (KPRA) and USAID's Economic Recovery and Development Activity (USAID-ERDA) organized a training and registration session for women entrepreneurs of the province in Peshawar.

The session was held at a local Hotel, where more than 80 businesses operated by women were provided on-the-spot registration facility by KPRA.

Over 80 women-operated businesses were initially registered with KPRA as per Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sales Tax on Services Act

2022 to bring them into the tax net and 44 businesses were given grant agreement by USAID's ERDA at the occasion.

Teams of KPRA were present at the occasion to assist the women in getting their National Tax Numbers (NTN) and getting their businesses registered with KPRA on the spot. The KPRA teams provided them with training on how to pay their monthly sales tax on services and file their monthly sales tax returns with KPRA.

Director General KPRA Fouzia Iqbal was the chief guest at the occasion and she thanked USAID-ERDA for arranging the

session and assisting KPRA to bring the businesses under the tax net. She extended her full support to the participants and said, "all businesses associated with the services sector in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are required to be registered with KPRA as per KP Sales Tax on Services Act 2022, and KPRA team has registered most of the beauty parlors operating in the province and they are paying their monthly tax and playing their role in the development of the province."

USAID's ERDA Monitoring Specialist Inamullah Khan in his opening remarks wel-

comed the participants of the workshop and thanked the KPRA officials for attending the training session and providing on the spot registration facility to the participants who would get benefits from the USAID's program. He shed light on the USAID-ERDA's activities in the province particularly related to the empowerment of women and farmers.

It is to mention here that USAID-ERDA is financially and technically assisting women entrepreneurs in businesses by providing them facilitation in getting equipment and training to run the businesses.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur chairing a meeting of Provincial Task Force for polio eradication.

Transforming education sector from job hunters to job creators

PESHAWAR (APP): In an era of rapid technological advancements and evolving economic landscapes, the traditional approach to education is undergoing a profound transformation owing to the mushroom growth of digitalization, artificial intelligence, and information technology started bringing about positive changes in people's lives.

This paradigmatic change in the education system strongly reflects a growing recognition of the need to equip young learners for a piece of meaningful knowledge and inculcate the positive energy necessary to navigate an increasingly competitive job market following the completion of their 16 years of education.

"Gone were the days when a college or university degree alone guaranteed a secure career path. Today, employ-

ers prefer graduates, who possess a diverse skill set, adaptability, and willingness to perform in comparative industrial and digital markets with a will to innovate and deliver quickly," said Professor Dr. Zilakat Malik, former Chairman Economics Department at the University of Peshawar while talking to APP.

Professor Dr. Zilakat Malik said that higher education was a rich cultural and scientific asset that prepares students in diversified fields besides promoting economic, technological, and social change in society.

Dr Zilakat said it is the public sector universities and higher educational institutes (HEIs) that exchange knowledge, research, and innovation besides equipping students with the necessary skills and expertise needed for overseas employment and

expediting the engine of economic growth.

The financial crisis in most universities of KP has been deepened after nonpayment of the promised annual provincial grants of Rs 3,000 million, impacting negatively on the universities' abilities to maintain infrastructure, support academic programs, and research studies, and ensure quality in education disciplines.

As many as 20 out of 34 universities were likely to face budget deficits while 27 universities allocate more than 50pc of their budgets to establishment expenditures, needing realignment of priorities on a priority basis.

Dr Zilakat said the report has exposed the poor health of the majority of universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. "The job creators would emerge only by providing financial autonomy to public

universities and make focus on modern research as per the markets demands".

Ehtisham Qaiser, a BS Urdu literature graduate said that he applied for government and private jobs through various testing agencies and walk-in interviews but his applications were rejected due to lack of professional experience.

He urged the government to increase the scope and stipends of the national internship program and explore new job markets for the youth abroad.

Educationalist Dr Zainullah said that improving employment opportunities through education requires a multifaceted approach that addresses both the quality and relevance of education.

Citing a Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) 2021 Report, he said the number of out-of-school chil-

Governor attends funeral prayers of custom officials

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali here Friday attended funeral prayers of two officials of custom intelligence that were killed in D I Khan.

The funeral prayers of two customs officials, Shehab Ali and Iftikhar Alam was also attended by Inspector General Police, Akhtar Hayat Gandapur, Inspector General Frontier Constabulary, Major General Noor Wali, Chief Secretary, Nadeem Aslam Chaudhary and senior custom officials.

Governor also prayed for granting courage to bereaved family members to bear the loss with fortitude. He also condemned the incident and said that culprits involved in the incident would be brought to court of law.

Condolence reference held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A Condolence Reference was held today at FBR Headquarters in memory of the officials of Directorate of Intelligence & Investigation Customs (Peshawar) who embraced martyrdom during an intelligence based operation in Dera Ismael Khan on April 18th, 2024.

Chairman FBR Malik Amjed Zubair Tiwana along-with the Members, officers and staff lauded the extreme sacrifices of the martyres in the line of their duty and offered Fateha and Dua-e-Maghferat for the departed souls.

Minister inspects work on college

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Forests and Environment, Fazal Hakim Khan on Friday paid a detailed visit to the under construction building of Jahanzeb College in Saidu Sharif, Swat and inspected progress of the work so far made.

Accompanied by MPA Akhtar Zaman Advocate, the minister stressed for using quality material and in time completion of the college building for handing it over to the institution. During the visit, the principal of Jahanzeb College and relevant officials were also present.

The minister was told that Jahanzeb College, Said Sharif consisted of four stories and the construction work was in final stages. It was further told that the building would soon be handed over to the relevant quarters.

The minister also inspected various sections of the under-construction college and said that historical values of the college must be preserved during the construction work.

He said in time construction of the college was necessary for imparting quality education to the students.

Saif assures transparent, peaceful by-elections

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif, has stated that the provincial government has issued directives to relevant authorities to ensure the conduct of by-elections elections in a peaceful and transparent environment.

In a statement issued Friday, he said that in this regard, nine thousand police personnel have been appointed for six thousand polling stations.

The provincial government will provide a peaceful environment for the people to exercise their right to vote. These remarks were made by him

through a video message issued from his office regarding the preparations of the provincial government for the upcoming interim elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The Information Advisor has appealed the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to participate in the electoral process wholeheartedly and to use their vote in favor of PTI candidates.

He stated that strengthening Pakistan and ensuring real freedom is only possible through the votes of the people. Barrister Saif expressed hope that the Election Commission will not allow the misuse of Form 45 this time and will not provide the opportunity for Form 47's results and complaints.

The Information Advisor warned the Election Commission officials that if, God forbid, any such incident occurs, it will have serious consequences. Neither the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf nor the provincial government will permit any such actions. He demanded the Election Commission to fulfill its responsibilities honestly and dutifully for the sake of Pakistan's constitution, democracy, and developmental system, and to refrain from any party's patronage and supervision.

He cautioned the Election Commission that if, God forbid, any such incident occurs, its consequences will be severe for the state of Pakistan and its people.



PESHAWAR: Motorcyclists on their way towards their destination while covering themselves with plastic sheets as city received heavy rainfall on Friday.

PHC rejects bail plea of alleged robber

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court single member bench of Justice Sahibzada Asadullah rejected bail plea of alleged robber involved in dacoity of Rs6.5 million, on Friday.

According to prosecution, the alleged culprit Waisal has committed armed robbery at a motor-

car bargain in Jandai area of Takhtbhai and fled with 6.5 million rupees. The police have recovered the looted amount from his possession.

The counsel Asadullah Khan Yousafzai advocate argued that there is solid evidence against the accused, including CCTV footage as well as the culprit is identified in identification parade.

He further added that the trial is ongoing and the accused's release on bail may affect the proceedings.

On the other hand, the accused's lawyer claimed that there is no concrete evidence against his client. PHC's Justice Sahibzada Asadullah rejected the bail plea of the alleged robber after conclusion of arguments.

Heavy rainfall causes drainage issues: WSSP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar (WSSP) has reported that heavy rainfall has resulted in overflow and pressure on the drainage system at various locations in the city.

The WSSP spokesperson said that overflows are occurring due to excess water beyond the system's capacity. WSSP staff is

actively working on overflow locations, and personnel are conducting cleanliness operations in the field to ensure proper drainage.

Hotspots are being closely monitored, and machinery is being utilized. Additionally, drainage lines were cleaned before the rainfall.

WSSP Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Dr Hassan Naseer and other officials are supervising the opera-

tion.

The spokesperson mentioned that plastic bags and other non-biodegradable materials are causing blockages in drains, prompting the deployment of additional staff in the field to ensure timely clearance.

Citizens are urged to cooperate with authorities and dispose of garbage and waste only at designated spots.



In brief

Heavy rains in Buner continue F.P. Report

BUNER: After a two-day break heavy downpour hits once again in Buner which had lowered the temperature. Due to the continuous and heavy rains, the attendance in the markets, schools, offices and courts was very low and even for the performance of Friday prayers. Moreover, the elderly citizens and number of their children accompanied by. According to the guidelines of the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), the district administration has appealed to the citizens to stay away from unpaved buildings and draining rivers and not to leave their homes. It is worthy to mention that Buner is a hilly in which most of the people livelihood depending upon agriculture and cattle while current downpour had impacted both sectors. Now, the government must act to compensate damages of local residents as high inflation had already compelled middle classes people for starvation.

NHA to install steel bridge F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: National Highways Authority (NHA) along with other relevant authorities will install the steel Bridge on the Sahianwala Motorway from Faisalabad on Saturday 2024-04-20. Meanwhile, keeping in mind the safety of road users, the Sahinwala Motorway from Faisalabad will be partially closed from six in the morning (06:00) to (10:00) in the day. Meanwhile, officers of Motorway Police, NHA, District Police and City Traffic Police will also be present on the spot to assist. Traffic from Faisalabad to Lahore or Islamabad can enter the motorway from Chak Jhamra Road or Faisalabad Expressway from Sahianwala Interchange. The traffic that will come towards Faisalabad will be able to get out of Sahianwala and enter Faisalabad from Expressway or Chak Jhamra Road. Police commits for elimination of crimes: District Police Officer (DPO) Ibadat Nisar has said that the criminals are enemies of the country and the nation. He said that talking exclusive conversation with daily The Frontier Post at his Office, DPO said that the police is working day and night to bring the criminals to justice and eliminate crimes, create an atmosphere of peace and protect the lives and property of the citizens, eliminating crimes from the area is one of my top priorities. He added that in the cultures of police stations across the district as well as in the attitudes of police personnel. It is necessary to organize open court at the police station level for change, the police is playing its effective and active role to solve the problems faced by the citizens in the police stations, the police cannot solve the problems without the cooperation of the citizens, he said. The cooperation of the citizens is very important for the elimination of hostile elements.

PO arrested F.P. Report

SHAHDADKOT: A crackdown is underway against criminal across Shahdadt district in which one alleged culprit is held, on Friday. According to details, police recovered arms, stolen motorcycle and mobile phone were recovered. A case was registered. Tufail Ahmed Ahmadani and his staff acted on secret information from the merchant's place. A proclaimed offender Sajid Kambho was arrested and the pistol and bullets used in the crime were recovered from his possession and a case was registered.



HYDERABAD: Students on her way, walking under the cover of an umbrella to protest herself from direct sunlight.

Youth guarantee for successful future: Zehri

F.P. Report

HUB: The youth is the backbone of any nation and guiding the youth in the right direction for the future is the national responsibility of all of us. These views were expressed by the senior leader of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) spokesperson of President Asif Ali Zardari and the successful candidate from PB21 Hub, met a delegation of youth from Balochistan. He said that the youth of Balochistan are the guarantors of our bright future and our capital.

Our youth are no less than anyone else. It is only a matter of getting opportunities. He said that the youth of Balochistan are the architects of our coming

future. Our leader Bilawal Bhutto Zardari who is also a youth and he has the passion to do a lot for the youth in the true sense. Balochistan. The new government of Pakistan Peoples Party will take substantial steps for the higher and professional education of the youth as well as for their bright future and in this regard better opportunities will be provided for the youth while meeting the requirements of modern education, because the youth has an important role in the long-term and rapid development of Balochistan.

Mir Ali Hassan Zehri said that one's rights can never be achieved by the force of a gun, while instead of a gun, pen-time is needed. No nation can

develop without education. The youth of Balochistan are showing their technical and intellectual abilities in every field and are making the name of their beloved country Pakistan known all over the world.

He said that today's youth has become conscious and knows his good and bad and they should know very well that the development and future of nations depends on the youth. Mir Ali Hassan Zehri while talking to the delegation said that in today's era of competition, the nation will pay attention to its youth and guide them in the right direction. The same nation will be guided and will raise the flags of success on the map of the world and will develop.

The greatest threat

Ghulam Nabi Khan

OUR dear homeland (Pakistan) is in a tight grip of two threats. The first one is the unbridled corruption which is the result of lawlessness, injustice, mismanagement, the struggle for power among the powerful institutions, and the second greatest threat is its reckless, careless, irresponsible, indifferent, Facebook and social media addicts, style and fashion mongers, sluggish and lazy, emotional, fight seekers "youth" which is considered as a vibrant factor in the progress and development of a nation and country especially in the case of Pakistan is proving the opposite is a serious threat to Pakistani society.

They directly need to be serious towards their responsibilities for their motherland as they will be the next rulers and to be ruled. They must know the principles to rule and to be ruled, otherwise they will drag this country more and more into the deepest abyss. Very few of them are performing very well but most of them are not what they should be.

They must know that they are not simple individuals but they are the sons of this country and the life of this country undoubtedly depends upon them and their every action they perform. I have no personal grudges against them but wish them reformed, enlightened, responsible and strong backbones for this country where they should live with honour and respect and show to the world that they are not 'nekame' and 'nakatoo' (incapable and non-competent) but the real children and pride of this country.

The nation has attached great expectations with its youth force that constitute a huge portion of our population. Here I would like to advise my youths to not leave the homeland just for earning abroad but to display your potential in making this country a leading one. Youths should equip themselves with the modern education of science and technology in a true sense so that they could compete with the rest of the world in the field of research and innovation.

PML-N to support JI in by-poll for tehsil mayor

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz Lower Dir chapter announced its full support for the Jamaat-i-Islami candidate for the Balambhat chairman slot in a by-election to be held on April 28. Speaking at a news conference at Timergara the district president Malik Farooq Iqbal, general secretary Sardar Javed Akhtar, tehsil president Abdul Qayyum Tajik and Muhammad Naeem Rughani said that the PML-N voters would support the JI candidate in the April 28 by-election.

JI former MNA Sahibzada Yaqub Khan, district general secretary Hafiz Yaqubur Rehman, Shad Nawaz Khan and others activists were also present on the occasion. The PPP and JUI-F have already announced withdrawn their candidates in the favour of Imranud Din advocate, the JI nominee for the slot. PML-N leaders said that due to absence of the tehsil chairman the council had been facing numerous issues. They said that funds were not available to make functional out of order water supply schemes.

Meanwhile the district food controller Kashif Ihsan along with assistant food controller Riaz Ahmad and food inspector Shabir Ahmad visited different markets in Timergara city and checked the weight and price of 'rooti' at bakeries. Several bakers were booked for selling less-weight rooti and overcharging commuters. Talking to local journalists, Kashif Ihsan said the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government had reduced the price of roti and the department would ensure it at any cost.

Also, the Timergara tehsil chairman Mufti Irfanud Din and Maulana Nabi Shah of the JUI-F visited a surgical market in the city and expressed sympathy with the

affected traders whose equipment were damaged due to recent torrential rains.

Local traders Sajid Hussain, Attaulah and Rashid Khan informed them that rain-water had entered the market that stood there for days. The traders said that rains had inflicted huge losses to their business while the government had not taken any notice of their losses. They demanded the government to compensate the affected businessmen of Timergara.

One PO held: The Samarbagh police claimed to have arrested an accused and recovered three stolen cows from his possession. Briefing local journalists at Samarbagh, the SHO said that police on a report of cows' missing lodged by Naik Muhammad they started investigation and traced the accused identified as Qari Noor Zamin, an Afghan national currently staying in Bajaur. He said that two cows and a calf were recovered from his possession. Police said the accused was also proclaimed offender kidnapping case. The accused was presented to the media on the occasion.

Timergara jail inmate commits suicide: A prisoner of the district jail Timergara identified as Shafiullah, a resident of Taran Maidan allegedly ended his life by jumping into a water drum at the jail here on Thursday night. Talking to local journalists, the jail superintendent Riaz Khan confirmed the report and said the prisoner had killed his wife in the month of Ramadan over domestic issue and he was in the jail for the last 14 days.

The official said the prisoner felt uneasy and faced with severe stress. He said that after a judicial inquiry and proper autopsy the deceased was handed over to the heirs on Friday. Later the deceased was laid to rest at his ancestral graveyard in Taran Maidan.

Master plan for S Waziristan uplift chalked out

F.P. Report

WANA: Before the merger of Fata into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Waziristan had been controlled by the Federal Govt since the inception of Pakistan in 1947 as a separate status. South Waziristan has great potential in all areas, but unfortunately, its potentials were not properly utilized owing to the slackness of officials of that time. Now, civil administration has chalked out a Master plan for the merged district of South Waziristan to mitigate the longstanding deprivation of it.

According to the proposed Master plan, a network of roads, highways, bridges and transportation system will be enhanced to have sufficient intra district connectivity and with other neighboring regions." Roads, highways and transportation would facilitate trade, goods and accessibility to basic amenities in the vast South Waziristan." It was learnt from a source that in the short and long term projects have encompassed in the prepared documents which will pave way for effective allocation and implementation of developmental projects in South Waziristan; the geographical and historical importance has been explicitly mentioned in the said Master plan as the district has borders with Afghanistan and can be used as a border crossing district for trade with Afghanistan and Central Asian countries. Now, bilateral trade activities are being carried at one crossing point, Angoor Adda.

But there are other routes that can be made operational for cross border trade and would provide people of the area with livelihood and trade opportunities. So, roads and highways projects have been given importance in the Master plan as compared to other projects. South Waziristan is still underdeveloped and its true potential has not been utilized till now, although the area is rich in mineral resources and agricultural products. There are conifer forests on 312503 acres of land which produces 13080 tons of Chaghoza every year. And still 44000 acres of land is uncultivable and can be made cultivable through innovative projects and developmental schemes.

It is pertinent to be mentioned here that by promoting agriculture, forest, trade, tourism and untapped natural resources in South Waziristan would prove a milestone in creat-

ing job opportunities and alleviating abject poverty in the merged districts. Except South Waziristan, no other merged district has so much potential to ameliorate the lot of the people of the entire erstwhile Fata region in the near future.

An authentic source told this scribe that as 70% of the South Waziristan consists of plain land therefore projects relating to irrigation, have been included in the Master plan to have a prosperous generation in South Waziristan in future. Security forces and other law enforcement agencies have also extended complete cooperation according to their capacity in preparing the Master plan project for South Waziristan. It is worthy to mention here that 70 % land in South Waziristan is plain and according to a rough estimate of the agriculture department; about more than 90 thousand tons of fruit and vegetables are annually produced in South Waziristan.

Meanwhile, a grand meeting was organized by Gangi khel Society to make government middle school for boys and government primary school for girls Karez kot functional. In the meeting it was decided that a formal committee would be formed, which will work to improve the existing govt schools in the entire area of the tribe.

The main plan of this committee will be to convey the message of importance of education to every house of Karez Kot, gangi Khel. All members of the committee will be bound to request the parents to equip their children with the ornament of education to brighten their future, they stated. They decided in the meeting that all street children should be admitted to schools and madrassas in lower Waziristan, and society workers of their area would take practical steps to improve the educational environment.

A unanimous decision was also taken in the grand meeting that along with the educational awareness campaign, they would meet civil administration and education officers for the selection of best school staff to improve the schools. The workers of this committee will go to every house/mosque of Gangi Khel and try hard to explain the importance of education to parents, and encourage them to enroll their children in schools.

SWABI: A Doctorate of Philosophy (Ph. D) Muhammad Sohail Anwar, Department of Pharmacy, University of Swabi has successfully defended his PhD thesis, on Friday.

The PhD thesis titled as "Evaluation of Traditional Medicines for Heavy Metals, Steroids and Microbial Bioburden in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa" was supervised by Associate Professor Dr. Abad Khan. The thesis was evaluated by two professors Prof. Dr. Muhammad Delwar Hussain, Department of Pharmaceutical and Biomedical Sciences, College of Pharmacy, California Health Sciences University, United States, Prof. Dr. Dorota Formanowicz, Head of the Chair and Department of Medical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine, Poznan University of Medical Sciences, Poland, and Prof. Dr. Fazli Nasir, Chairman Department of Pharmacy, University of Peshawar.

The project was funded by Directorate of Science and



Technology (DOST), Peshawar. The work has been carried out in Department of Pharmacy, University of Swabi, Peshawar University, and Comsat University. Sohail has published two publications in the journals of international repute.

Prof Dr. Fazli Nasir, Chairman Department of Pharmacy, University of Peshawar was the external examiner, who after thorough evaluation and examination recommended Sohail for the award of PhD degree. The PhD public defence was attended by the faculty members and research scholars of University of Swabi and other Universities and research institutions of the country.

The external examiners,

scholars and participants appreciated the work and recommended that it will be a helping hand for legal and drug regulatory bodies of the country to frame and constitute regulations for streamlining the rational use, dispensing and marketing of traditional medicines, which is currently a hot issue and pivotal point of discussions among the health and regulatory bodies.

It has been pointed out that the outcomes of this study must be practically applied for the standardization of traditional medicines and their dose optimization. The supervisor appreciated the cooperation and support provided in this study by all the stakeholders.

Of what is the PTI the name after all?

Asfandiyar Shinwari

'Never has a pretender', wrote Marx about popularity chasing Napoleon Bonaparte, 'speculated more stupidly on the stupidity of masses.' Little did he know that this pretender was not the last, and a separate category of his likes would keep aflame the torch of Bonapartism. Imran Khan, essentially the concentrated image of the PTI, belongs to the same peculiar coterie of 'superhumans' who come to the reins of power usually riding on the backs of the middle class. His particularity in the Trumpist era of populism, however, was his close relations with the men in uniform which makes him more of a Bonapartist than an ordinary populist figure.

Trotsky defined Bonapartism as an instrument of 'order' facilitated by a bureaucratic military-police alliance that has risen above the interests of struggling classes. The 'stupidity', identified by Marx, continues to dominate the political milieu of Pakistan even after the dominant sections of the establishment divorced the PTI, and tortured,

incarcerated, and humiliated its members.

At the present conjuncture, the phenomenon of Imran Khan has further disturbed the socio-political equilibrium of Pakistan. With the tables of power turning after the saber abandoned the PTI, all the contradictions have come fiercer to the fore. The PML(N), feigning all anti-establishment formerly, is now pandering to the establishment again; the PTI, except for a few of its members, has now assumed the same role of pretender of being anti-establishment.

The self-styled constitutionalist, and moralist judges of the country have betrayed their charters and shallow promises made in the name of democracy and civilian rule. The digital spaces, formerly filled with hymns sung in honour of the military, are now bombarded with tirades against them by the common PTI workers. Geo has become the ARY and the ARY Geo. The bourgeoisie wrongly assumes that the PTI is the main culprit in bringing the country to bankruptcy; the masses mistakenly consider the PTI a force of resistance and redemp-

tion.

The erstwhile staunch political defenders of the center are currently playing allies of the periphery; the opportunist peripheral leadership has sided with the forces protecting centralism. In short, what is happening is startling and extremely confusing. But as Marx reminds us in The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louise Bonaparte what seems like clashes between representative individuals and institutions are essentially the expressions of the struggle between different classes.

Already written about it by many analysts, the PTI is a middle-class dream party. This class, not to mention the working class, has been left financially maimed by the recent economic crisis of the country. These professionals, shopkeepers, small traders and peasants, entrepreneurs, state officials, real estate dealers, etc., because of their specific relation to production, bear a tendency to search for a solution to their political problems in the personality of a superhuman who could represent them because active politics has not been their vacation in Pakistan historically.

Although a large section of it has been politicized recently, they are still short of providing any viable political program and are limited mainly to sloganeering and campaigning in the name of good governance. The working class lent support to the PTI only as a reaction against the existing order. The crux is this: because of the growing accumulation, exploitation, and pelf, the discontent in society has risen to new heights; and, because of the absence of an organic working-class movement and its representative Left due to the discontent has not been channelized into a real political struggle that can guarantee its end. Therefore, it would be right to think that the PTI has been very successful in mobilizing the hate that people of this godforsaken country have for the bourgeoisie affair of things.

It is the bourgeoisie, and civilian, and landed classes of Pakistan that in alliance with imperialism safeguard the rule of capital in the country. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) reported \$17.4 bn granted to these classes in 2019 only, which amounts to roughly 6% of the economy of

Pakistan. These classes influence the policies of the government because of their direct representation in parliament, either in the form of bourgeois parties like the PML(N), PML(Q), and PPP or 'electable', and also through the postcolonial state structure which bears no qualms about its allegiance to the rich.

The militarized capital also protects its profits in this game of interests, and thus cannot remain an apolitical and a subservient state institution. It is the fear of the bourgeoisie and landed classes that wrongly blames the PTI for bringing the country to the brink of default. The truth is that the bourgeois parties have lost all political credibility and that Imran Khan is trying hard to make this class believe that only he is the relevant person to be entrusted with the task of representation of capital.

February 8 was a farcical expression of the class struggle in Pakistan. The people of Pakistan resisted the capitalist establishment. That they thought polling stations are fight arenas, and the PTI is anti-establishment is a different matter. More importantly, the election was a manifestation of rejection of

exploitation, oppression, totalitarianism, and injustice albeit in a very strange and contradictory way. Without obsessing over elections and paying only necessary attention to them in post-colonial Pakistan, political workers know that oppressed classes and nationalities mostly wage battles on the streets and, sometimes, mountains.

But it cannot also be ignored that the election has also set a new convention of defiance that will mark the future of politics in the country in formal politics as well. Now, it is the PTI that has become the biggest and the only relevant symbol of resistance in that sphere of politics however unjustified one may call it. The small parties of the likes of the ANP, not to mention the JI, both almost wiped out now, have received the message of the new game very well. The political situation in Pakistan can best be recapitulated in Gramsci's words: 'The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum, a great variety of morbid symptoms appear.'

The writer is PhD candidate at the University of Edinburgh, UK.



GAZA: Emergency services continue to scour collapsed buildings in the Nuseirat refugee camp for bodies after Israeli forces withdrew after a days-long incursion.

Dozens of pro-Palestinian protesters arrested in Columbia

COLUMBIA: More than 100 pro-Palestinian protesters have been arrested on the campus of New York's Columbia University as police cleared an encampment set up by students demonstrating against Israel's war in Gaza. Several students involved in the protest said they also were suspended from Columbia and its associate institution, Barnard College, including Isra Hirs, who is the daughter of Ilhan Omar, a Democrat in the United States House of Representatives.

Columbia's president, Nemat Shafik, said she had authorised police to clear the dozens of tents set up by protesters because they had breached the university's rules and policies against holding unauthorised demonstrations and were unwilling to engage with administrators. New York City Mayor Eric Adams said police made more than 108 arrests for trespassing. Two people were also charged with obstructing government administration.

"Students have a right to free speech, but do not have a right to violate university policies and disrupt learning on campus," he said. Move to clear the camp came after a congressional hearing at which Shafik

was questioned on alleged anti-Semitism on campus. She was also challenged by Omar on alleged targeting of pro-Palestinian protesters. Columbia, one of the most prestigious universities in the United States, has emerged as a centre for student activism since the Israel-Gaza war began more than six months ago, with protests both in support of the war and against it.

But the university has drawn particular scrutiny, given its prominence and its attempts to crack down on unauthorised gatherings. Columbia said it had started to suspend the students who had taken part in the latest camp. "We are continuing to identify them and will be sending out formal notifications," a university spokesperson said by email.

Writing on social media, Hirs said she will not be intimidated and will continue to push for transparency on Columbia's investments, divestment from "companies complicit in genocide" and amnesty for students facing "repression". "We will stand resolute until our demands are met," she wrote on X after being suspended. The clash, reminiscent of the demonstrations against the Vietnam War at

Columbia more than 50 years ago, is the latest in a series of demonstrations that have disrupted university campuses, bridges and airports since Israel began its assault on Gaza on October 7.

Separately, about 500 demonstrators marched at the University of Southern California in support of Asna Tabassum, a Muslim student whose valedictorian speech was cancelled by the university, which cited safety concerns. Tabassum and her supporters say the university sought to silence her because of her opposition to the Israeli assault on Gaza. Protesters marched with signs of "Let Her Speak" and chants of "Shame!" directed at the USC administration.

"It feels really important especially right now for the Jewish voice at USC, the anti-Zionist Jewish voice at USC, to be very loud and very present," said demonstrator Katya Urban, 23, part of the Jewish Voice for Peace contingent at USC. Israel's assault on Gaza, which has killed at least 33,970 people, according to the territory's Health Ministry, began after Hamas launched a surprise October 7 attack on Israel in which the group killed 1,139 people and abducted more than 200. — Aljazeera

Did cloud seeding cause Dubai floods? Why experts say no

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) was inundated with water after storms dumped more than a year and a half's rain in just a few hours, flooding roads as well as the international airport based in the metropolis of Dubai. Neighbouring Oman also witnessed heavy rains and flooding that killed at least 20 people.

Speculation was rife on social media, linking cloud seeding, which involves the manipulation of existing clouds to induce rain, to the unprecedented precipitation. But experts say the record rainfall was likely caused by climate change. Here is what we know about the reasons behind the record rainfall and subsequent flooding in the UAE and Oman.

The storm had initially hit Oman before it pounded the UAE, knocking out power and causing flight disruptions. The deluge inundated houses, caused traffic chaos and trapped people in their homes in Dubai. The UAE witnessed

the heaviest rainfall on record, authorities said. The state-run WAM news agency called it "a historic weather event" that surpassed "anything documented since the start of data collection in 1949." That's before crude oil was discovered in the energy-rich Gulf country.

By the end, more than 142mm (5.59 inches) had soaked Dubai - home to more than three million people. Close to 127mm (5 inches) of rain fell at Dubai International Airport, where about 76mm (3 inches) of rain is normal in an entire year. According to authorities Oman received around 230mm (9 inches) of rain. The average rainfall in the capital, Muscat, is about 100mm (4 inches) per year. Bahrain, Qatar and Saudi Arabia also witnessed rains. Reports quoted meteorologists at the UAE's National Centre for Meteorology (NCM) as saying Dubai flew six or seven cloud-seeding flights before the rains started. Flight-track-

ing data analysed by The Associated Press news agency also showed one aircraft affiliated with the UAE's cloud-seeding efforts flew around the country.

Cloud seeding, which was initiated in the 1990s, has been a part of the country's effort to solve water shortages. According to reports, the NCM said the seeding took place. Omar Al Yazeedi, deputy director general of the NCM, told the NBC news agency that the organisation "did not conduct any seeding operations during this event".

"One of the basic principles of cloud seeding is that you have to target clouds in its early stage before it rains, if you have a severe thunderstorm situation then it is too late to conduct any seeding operation," he added. Rainfall is rare in the UAE and elsewhere on the Arabian Peninsula, which is typically known for its dry desert climate. Summer air temperatures can soar

above 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit). The UAE and Oman also lack drainage systems to cope with heavy rains and submerged roads are not uncommon during rainfall.

Experts and officials have debunked the speculations that cloud seeding caused the rainfall. "If that occurred with cloud seeding, they'd have water all the time. You can't create rain out of thin air per se and get 6 inches [152.4mm] of water," said Ryan Maue, former chief scientist at the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The deluge was likely due to a normal weather system that was exacerbated by climate change, experts say. Global warming has resulted in "extraordinarily" warm water in the seas around Dubai, where there is also very warm air above, said Mark Howden, director at The Australian National University's Institute for Climate, Energy and Disaster Solutions. — Aljazeera

65 Haitian migrants back to Haiti on March 12 after their vessel was intercepted near the Bahamas. In addition to stopping such returns, rights advocates and civil society groups have called on the US government to extend and redesignate a programme called Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haiti.

The US government grants TPS to nationals of countries where temporary conditions make it too dangerous to return, including cases of armed conflict or environmental disasters like earthquakes and hurricanes. Recipients can remain in the US without fear of deportation and work in the country. Haiti's TPS designation is set to expire in early August. "An upsurge in the already extreme violence in Haiti has left citizens reeling," US-based migrant rights group Al Otro Lado wrote on X after news of the deportation flight first broke. "Gangs control key ports, the largest airport + much of the capital city of Port-au-Prince. People are on the brink of famine. Sending [people] back [to Haiti] could be a death sentence." — Aljazeera

US sends dozens to Haiti on deportation flight

WASHINGTON: The United States has sent dozens of Haitian citizens back to their country on a deportation flight, despite a surge in deadly gang violence and widespread instability in the Caribbean nation. A spokesperson for the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) told Al Jazeera that one of its agencies - Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) - "conducted a repatriation flight of around 50 Haitian nationals to Haiti".

"Individuals are removed only if they were found to not have a legal basis to remain in the United States," the spokesperson said in an email. The brief statement did not say where in the US the flight took off from, or where it was scheduled to land in Haiti. Al Jazeera has requested further clarification.

The Miami Herald first reported that US authorities informed Haiti's Office of National Migration that 74 Haitians were aboard an ICE flight to Cap-Haitien in northern Haiti. The plane had left the US state of Louisiana and was scheduled to make a stop in Miami, Florida, before continuing to Cap-Haitien, the

Herald said. It is the first US deportation flight to Haiti since January. The US newspaper's report drew immediate condemnation, with rights advocates accusing President Joe Biden's administration of sending Haitians into a dangerous and potentially deadly situation in their home country.

"It's unconscionable for the [Biden] administration to continue deporting people given Haiti's catastrophic human rights and humanitarian situation," Nathalie Cotrino, a researcher at Human Rights Watch, wrote on social media. Haiti has experienced widespread gang violence in recent years, particularly after the assassination of President Jovenel Moise in July 2021 created a power vacuum. But the already dire situation escalated further in late February, when powerful armed groups attacked prisons, police stations and other state institutions across Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince. The unrest forced Haiti's unelected Prime Minister Ariel Henry to announce plans to step down and spurred a shaky political transition, which

continues to unfold. Meanwhile, attacks have not abated in Port-au-Prince and other parts of the country. Hundreds of thousands of Haitians have been displaced, according to United Nations figures, and rights advocates have warned of a deepening humanitarian crisis. Meanwhile, in the US, activists and lawmakers have urged the Biden administration to stop deportations to Haiti amid the crisis. "Haiti is facing one of the world's worst humanitarian crises right now," US Congresswoman Cori Bush, a member of Biden's Democratic Party, told reporters in a press call last week.

"The United States government has a moral responsibility to adopt a humane approach to helping Haitian immigrants fleeing these horrific conditions," Bush urged Washington to indefinitely suspend deportations, among other measures. Some 13,000 migrants were sent back to Haiti from neighbouring countries in March, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) recently said. The US Coast Guard also sent

dozens of Haitian migrants back to Haiti on March 12 after their vessel was intercepted near the Bahamas. In addition to stopping such returns, rights advocates and civil society groups have called on the US government to extend and redesignate a programme called Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haiti.

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EU proposes youth mobility agreement with UK

BRUSSELS (AP): The European Commission proposed to start negotiations with the United Kingdom to allow young people to move freely, work and study in both regions after Brexit - the U.K.'s departure from the EU four years ago.

According to the EU, the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU following a referendum in 2016 has damaged mobility between the two areas. "This situation has particularly affected the opportunities for young people to experience life on the other side of the Channel and to benefit from youth, cultural, educational, research and training exchanges," the Commission said.

When the U.K. was still a member of the economic and political bloc, its nationals had the right to live and work freely in the EU, with reciprocity for EU nationals in the U.K. Under the agreement proposed by the EU's executive arm, EU and UK citizens between 18 and 30 years old would be eligible to stay up to four years in the destination country.

The deal would also allow equal treatment of EU and UK students in the field of university tuition fees. Most EU students must now pay international tuition fees if they want to study in the U.K. The Commission says these vary between 11,400 and 38,000 pounds (\$14,200-\$47,300) per year and are a strong deterrent for EU students who generally don't have to pay as much within the bloc. The Commission's recommendation will be discussed by EU member countries who must give the green light before the executive arm can start negotiations with the UK. "We have successful Youth Mobility Schemes with 13 countries, including Australia and New Zealand, and remain open to agreeing them with our international partners, including EU member states," the British government said in a statement.

The U.K. has its own Youth Mobility Scheme, which it has offered to some EU member states. The Commission believes the British plan is less ambitious than its own proposal. "Our agreements provide a valuable route for cultural exchanges providing partner countries are also willing to offer the same opportunities for young British people," the British government added.

Court overturns ex-President's prison sentence

THIMPU: A court in the Maldives has overturned the conviction of former President Abdulla Yameen and cancelled his 11-year prison sentence. The High Court said that his 2022 trial had been unfair and ordered a new trial.

"The lower court ruling was not fair," Judge Hassan Shafeeu said while reading out a lengthy decision that was broadcast live. The decision was made three days before the Indian Ocean archipelago nation holds a parliamentary election, in which Yameen is fielding candidates from a political party he formed while serving his sentence.

Yameen was convicted on two charges when a court found he had accepted a bribe to grant a lease on an islet for tourism development while he was in power from 2013 to 2018. Ruling set that verdict aside. The high court overturned the prison sentence due to procedural irregularities and ordered a lower court to restart the trial on charges of bribery and money laundering. Yameen is also on trial for separate bribery charges at the court. Yameen's co-accused Yusuf Naem, a businessman who was said to have paid the alleged bribe of \$1m, was also freed. Yameen, 64, had been held at the high-security Maafushi Prison but was transferred to house arrest the day after his ally, Mohamed Muizzu, won presidential elections in September. The pro-China former leader had borrowed heavily and built thousands of houses and other infrastructure during his five-year tenure. — Aljazeera

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UN resolution on Srebrenica Thousands of Bosnian Serbs hold rally

SREBRENICA (AFP): Several thousand Bosnian Serbs protested in Banja Luka against a potential UN resolution to declare July 11 an international day to remember the Srebrenica genocide. Alongside a massive Serbian flag unfurled in the city's streets, thousands responded to the call of Bosnian Serb secessionist leader Milorad Dodik.

"We do not want to live with you, who want to tell the Serbian people that they are genocidal," he told the crowd. Bosnian Serb forces captured Srebrenica -- a UN-protected enclave at the time -- on July 11, 1995, a few months before Bosnia's inter-ethnic war ended. In the following days they summarily killed some 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys from the eastern town. The remains of most of the victims were later found in mass graves in eastern Bosnia, where the perpetrators moved them from original burial sites to cover up

the crime. Europe's worst single atrocity since World War II was deemed genocide by international justice. Under a settlement to end the war, Bosnia was divided into two semi-autonomous zones, one run by Bosnians and Croats, and another by Serbs, with Banja Luka as its capital. Dodik, president of the Serbian entity, has been demanding greater autonomy. According to a draft resolution prepared by Germany and Rwanda, which was seen by AFP from next year, which will be the 30th anniversary of the massacre, July 11 would become the "International Day of Remembrance of the Srebrenica Genocide". Dodik, who has repeatedly denied that the Srebrenica massacre was a genocide, labelled the resolution unacceptable. "I regret every victim," but "it is a lie that 8,000 people were killed in seven days," he told RTRS radio.

"They want to impose historical responsibility on the Serbs," he added, hoping for "more than 40,000 people" at the protest. "Those who carried out genocide against our and other people in Europe want to stick us a label that belongs to them," Dodik said on X in a video with nationalist rhetoric calling for the protest. In 2007, Dodik, who had been a darling of the West in the late 1990s, said that he knew "perfectly well" that the massacre was a "genocide".

A decade later, he declared "with full awareness" that "there was no genocide in Srebrenica". Dodik, a close ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin, regularly pays tribute to Bosnian Serb wartime leader Radovan Karadzic and his army chief Ratko Mladic. They were both sentenced to life in prison by a UN court for war crimes during Bosnia's 1992-1995 conflict, notably for their role in Srebrenica.

French PM announces action on teen violence

PARIS (AFP): French Prime Minister Gabriel Attal announced measures to crack down on teenage violence in and around schools, as the government seeks to reclaim ground on security from the far-right two months ahead of European elections.

France has in recent weeks been shaken by a series of attacks on schoolchildren by their peers, in particularly the fatal beating earlier this month of Shemseddine, 15, outside Paris. The issue has come to a head with the far-right National Rally (RN) accusing Attal of not doing enough on security as the anti-immigration party soars ahead of the government coalition in polls for the June 9 election.

Speaking in Viry-Chatillon, the town where Shemseddine was killed, Attal condemned the "addiction of some of our adolescents to violence", calling for "a real surge of authority... to curb violence". "There are twice as many adolescents involved in assault cases, four times more in drug trafficking, and seven times more in armed robberies than in the general population," he said, also noting increased "Islamist" influences. Measures will include expanding compulsory school attendance to all the days of the week from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm for children of college age.

"In the day the place to be is at school, to work and to learn," said Attal, who was also marking 100 days in office since being appointed in January by President Emmanuel Macron to turn round the government's fortunes. Parents needed to take more responsibility, said Attal, warning that particularly disruptive children would have sanctions marked on their final grades. Promoting an old-fashioned back-to-basics approach to school authori-

ty, he said "You break something -- you repair it. You make a mess -- you clear it up. And if you disobey -- we teach you respect." Attal also floated the possibility of children in exceptional cases being denied the right to special treatment on account of their minority in legal cases.

Thus 16-year-olds could be forced to immediately appear in court after violations "like adults", he said. In France, the age of majority is 18, in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Macron and Attal face an uphill struggle to reverse the tide ahead of the European elections. Current polls point to the risk of a major debacle that would overshadow the rest of the president's second mandate up to 2027. A poll this week by Ifop-Fiducial showed the RN on 32.5 percent with the government coalition way behind on 18 percent.

Germany arrests two dual nationals

BERLIN: Germany has arrested two German-Russian dual nationals on suspicions that they were plotting sabotage attacks on US military sites in the country to undermine Western military support for Ukraine.

German prosecutors said that the two men, identified as Dieter S and Alexander J, were arrested a day earlier in the town of Bayreuth in the southeastern state of Bavaria after their homes and workplaces were searched on suspicion of "having worked for a foreign intelligence service". They said in a statement that Dieter was in contact with an interlocutor linked with the Russian secret service, and exchanged information that was gathered.

Alexander began assisting him from March 2024, the prosecutors added. Dieter's secret communication started in October last year, and he was prepared to "carry out explosive and arson attacks" on military infrastructure and industrial sites in Germany, including facilities of the US military. Dieter and Alexander allegedly scouted a number of targets, taking photos and videos of military transports and goods, among other things, which were passed on to the Russian contact.

According to Der Spiegel, a German magazine, the facilities included the Grafenwoehr army base in Bavaria where Ukrainian soldiers receive training to use US Abrams tanks. German authorities said Dieter was active in eastern Ukraine between December 2014 and September 2016 as a fighter in an armed unit of the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR), a Moscow-backed breakaway region of Ukraine that was annexed by Russia in 2022, and possessed a firearm in this context. Dieter faces an additional charge of belonging to "a foreign terrorist organisation" for his activities in Ukraine. The

arrests come amid intense fighting more than two years into Russia's invasion of Ukraine, with Germany one of the biggest suppliers of military aid to Ukraine.

"Our security authorities have prevented possible explosive attacks that were intended to target and undermine our military assistance to Ukraine," German interior minister Nancy Faeser said. "It is a particularly serious case of alleged spy activity for [Russian President Vladimir] Putin's criminal regime." The announcement of the arrests coincided with a surprise trip to Ukraine by German economy minister Robert Habeck to offer more support.

Habeck is also expected to meet with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who has repeatedly bemoaned a lack of strong air defences as Russian attacks increasingly target energy infrastructure. — Aljazeera

Kenya's military chief dies in a helicopter crash

NAIROBI (AP): Kenya's military chief Gen. Francis Ogolla died in a helicopter crash west of the country, President William Ruto announced and declared three days of national mourning. The helicopter was carrying 11 people, including Gen. Ogolla, when it crashed and caught fire in a remote area near the border with Uganda, killing nine people onboard, the president said.

It is unclear what caused the crash. Gen. Ogolla, 61, was on a tour

of the country's troubled western region that has seen frequent attacks by local bandits. He was appointed Kenya's Chief of Defense Forces in April last year after Gen. Robert Kibochi retired. Political controversy surrounded Ogolla even before his appointment, when he was accused by the country's electoral commission chairperson as being part of a national security council delegation that tried to influence the outcome of the 2022 general election against

President Ruto. Ruto later explained that he called Gen. Ogolla before his appointment and said that, despite the election controversy, he was the most qualified for the job. Gen Ogolla joined Kenya's military force 40 years ago. He was a graduate of École Militaire de Paris, the National Defence College of Kenya, Egerton University and the University of Nairobi. Gen. Ogolla is survived by his wife Aileen, two children and a grandson.

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US vetoing Palestine's UN entry

THE vote on April 18 for granting the Palestine state full membership at the United Nations Security Council underlines the quest of the Palestinian people for independence and statehood. However, by vetoing the application from 13.5 million Palestinians, despite 12 "yes" votes and two abstentions, the US has once again positioned itself against an overwhelming majority of the global community in matters of conscience.

This action has not only thwarted the aspirations of the Palestinian people but also prompted scrutiny over the fairness and immediacy in addressing their rights. Doubts cast on Palestine's ability to govern and its peace commitments are only a means to divert attention from what are their fundamental rights. The insistence on direct negotiations overlooks the shifting dynamics in the region, including the decreasing support from Israel for a two-state solution. It's Israeli settlement expansion on the western bank of the Jordan River that has re-stricted the space for a Palestine state since the time it applied for UN membership in 2011. It's the superpower's unwarranted support of Israel that eroded the basis of a two-state solution, which is the only path toward lasting peace.

At a time when Israeli forces are still in Gaza and an attack on Rafah is still possible, it's more urgent now than at any time in history to accept the Palestine state as a full UN member. It's also time for the US to realign with the course of history that favors justice and peace.

Restraint required to stop Gaza crisis spreading

IN a new development that marks a worrying escalation of the conflict in the Middle East, Iran launched hundreds of drones and missiles toward Israel early Sunday morning in what Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps described as a "large-scale military operation" against multiple targets inside Israel.

According to an Israeli military spokesman, more than 300 projectiles were fired at Israel, the "vast majority" of which were shot down by Israel's anti-missile defense system and US forces in the region. Iran had previously vowed to retaliate after an air strike on an Iranian consulate in Syria earlier this month killed seven members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' elite overseas wing.

Sunday's attack has been condemned by the US as being "reckless and unprecedented", with US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin calling on Teheran to halt any further strikes. "We do not seek conflict with Iran, but we will not hesitate to act to protect our forces and support the defense of Israel". US President Joe Biden convened a meeting of the G7 leaders on Sunday to develop what he called a united diplomatic response to Iran's "brazen attack".

But it is Israel's brazen attack on the Iranian consulate in Damascus that the group should be first addressing — for as Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said, it was a "gross violation of international conventions", which protect diplomatic missions — as well as Israel's continued escalating of air strikes on Iranian and Hezbollah targets in Syria and Lebanon. Of course, this is unlikely to happen as the US has given its wholehearted support to Israel's military campaign, making it a proxy for its strategy of aggression in the Middle East.

Since an Israeli air strike on a charity convoy in Gaza on April 1 resulted in the deaths of seven aid workers, including US, Australian and United Kingdom citizens, the US has softened its pro-Israeli rhetoric to some extent. But it has continued to give Israel its unwavering support. Its hard-line stance in support of Israel is driven by the hegemonic view of global relations that is driving the US' foreign policy in pursuit of a US-centered world in which the US will emerge unscathed to build the world anew. It is imperative that countries do not fall into the trap of the US' design. All the parties concerned in the region should remain calm and exercise restraint to avoid any further escalation of tensions. As the Chinese Foreign Ministry said, the pressing task now is to earnestly implement UN Security Council Resolution 2728 and end the conflict in Gaza as soon as possible.

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We must avoid double standards in foreign policy

Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik

WITH brutal wars unravelling in Ukraine and Gaza, and escalatory attacks between Iran and Israel, defending international law has never been more necessary. Many have argued that the West's support for Ukraine, often couched in terms of respect for international law, has been undermined by the same countries' lacklustre support for Gaza. This has given rise to a larger foreign policy debate about alleged double standards of the West. The claim is that Western countries are concerned with violations of international law only when it serves their own interests.

If I speak for my own country, Norway, I can say that the accusation is off the mark. We have been clear that a real commitment to international law demands condemning Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine but also calling out Israeli violations of international law in Gaza.

Avoiding double standards in our foreign policy has been a longstanding Norwegian priority. Successive Norwegian governments have, as a matter of principle, come to the defence of international law regardless of who violates it. Whether it is the ongoing war in Gaza, conflicts on the African continent, Israel's illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories, Britain's violation of international law in the Chagos Archipelago or Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, Norway has been principled and clear. We have not shirked from calling out any of these violations for what they are, regardless of who committed them.

Is this the right approach? There are those who have been sceptical. It has been argued that countries should be careful not to criticise allies and partners when they violate international law. The argument is that the world is fraught with peril, and all states, perhaps especially smaller states such as Norway, should be careful not to alienate their allies and partners, even when

they act inconsistently with international law.

This is, however, a mistaken approach. Real security depends ultimately on a peaceful international community equipped to resolve global challenges. That in turn requires that we work to ensure that international law is respected. Unless all countries are committed to international law, the system will eventually collapse. That would invariably lead to less security and more uncertainty for everyone.

A 100 years ago, Francis Hagerup, a prominent international lawyer and Norwegian prime minister, observed that the principle of sovereign equality of states was the Magna Carta of the world's states. Still today, any move away from anything other than an unwavering commitment to international law would be disastrous for the international community. It is the very bulwark against a situation where might is right, against what the International Court of Justice called, in its first ruling after the second world war, "the manifestation of a policy of force".

Could our consistent defence of international law, including in relation to Western allies, be misconstrued as acceptance of the narrative propagated by Russia and China that the West is hypocritical? Only if one deliberately tries to misunderstand. It is true that Western states, too, have committed violations of international law.

The invasion of Iraq by the United States and Britain in 2003 is one example. In the face of such a policy of force, a country such as Norway must, as we did 20 years ago, have the courage of its convictions. Only then can we, with the benefit of real credibility, criticise states that truly and systematically base themselves and their foreign policy on double standards.

It is only then that we can credibly punch holes in Russia's narrative that it is the valiant advocate of international law on behalf of the Global South. There

is apparently no limit to how appalled Russia has been by the killing of civilians under bombardment in Gaza, while Russia at the same time has been bombing schools and hospitals in Ukraine. As our Western allies are coming to understand, this cynical double standard can be countered effectively only if one is principled. Norway's consistent stance as regards both Ukraine and Gaza allows us to point out such contradictions in a way that actually cuts through. The same is the case now with the attacks on the Iranian consulate in Damascus and Iran's retaliatory strikes against Israel; having criticised Israel for the first event, which not all states were willing to do, Norway can, with the benefit of consistency and credibility, criticise Iran for the second.

Some have argued that it is unrealistic to be equally concerned about every violation of international law all of the time. Yet, Norway's commitment to counteract conflicts and crises consistently does not preclude us from implementing a foreign policy based on realistic priorities. It is intuitively understandable that a war in a neighbouring country concerns people more than if it is taking place in a far-flung place on another continent. It is logical that it is particularly alarming for Norway that Russia, a country with which we share a long border, is attempting to annex Ukrainian territory through the illegal use of force. A war in our own neighbourhood inevitably has serious security policy implications likely to outweigh those of a conflict far away.

Norway cannot, therefore, be accused of double standards for providing materiel to the Ukrainian defence struggle or for giving a historically large aid package to Ukraine. We must, however, be careful not to create the impression that Russia is assessed according to special rules. Accordingly, we have, in our criticism of Russia, as of other states, emphasised the violations of the United Nations Charter and of

other universally accepted rules of international law.

Similarly, Norway has not shied away from being critical of Israel's policy of annexation of the occupied Palestinian territory. Norway made this clear in its submissions in February 2024 before the International Court of Justice in the ongoing advisory opinion proceeding concerning Israel's policies in the occupied Palestinian territory. In our oral submissions before the Court, we were clear that Israel's actions in Gaza amount to indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force. We are now working to ensure that Palestine is granted full membership in the United Nations. What is crucial for Norway - what underpins our foreign policy across the board - is that we insist that similar cases be treated similarly, and that all states be subject to the same rules.

This is a position that should inspire all states. Every state has a stake in upholding universally agreed rules on the use of force, free and fair trade, human rights and the uses of the oceans and their resources. Our common future depends on respect for international law. This requires countries in the Global North and the Global South to be able to see international law as a fair set of rules; in turn, this means that the rules must be applied consistently. All states must resist the temptation, based on short-term national interest, to violate the tenets of the international legal order.

If there was one common thread running through the works of Norway's foremost playwright and poet, Henrik Ibsen, it was the insistent calling out of the double standards of polite society. Ibsen's insistence may, at times, have irked those who felt called out; it was nevertheless the right position. For Norway, the position is clear. Our most important contribution to a peaceful and just world order - and to our own national security - is to avoid double standards in foreign policy and to work to ensure that other states do so too.

Aljazeera

EU must act decisively as geopolitical challenges grow

Andrew Hammond

A red-letter day is one that is of special significance. The phrase's origins date back to the days of the Roman Empire, when important occasions were colored red on calendars. Fast forward about two millennia and the EU had its latest big moment of significance this week, with former Italian Prime Minister Enrico Letta delivering his potentially landmark report on the future of the European Single Market. While this is a topic intrinsically economic in origin, geopolitics are also driving what is a sweeping set of recommendations.

According to Letta, the need for change reflects the vastly different international political context the EU has faced in recent years, even with long-standing allies. He has specifically warned that a "Trump 2 (second US presidential term for Donald Trump) will be different from Trump 1 ... the single market of the beginning was for a small world, now we need a single market with teeth for a big world."

What Letta is pointing to here is how much the world has changed since 1993, when the single market, which allows the free movement of goods, services, people and capital within the EU, came into being. While this initiative is widely seen as one of the bloc's biggest achievements, there are growing concerns that it needs a reboot to reflect the vastly changed world of the 2020s.

Whereas the EU accounted for about 20 percent of global gross domestic product 30 years ago, it is nearer half that today (about 13.3 percent) and still declining. While one constant is that the US remains an economic peer of the EU, the massive Asian emerging markets of China and India are the new kids on the block, providing a major new set of challenges, as well as opportunities.

Letta is clear in his almost 150-page report that the single market faces its greatest ever threat as the EU recovers from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath and the war in Ukraine. He argues that "no single member state can compete with the US on gas or oil prices, as they are the world's largest fossil producer ... Nor Europe can replicate some advantages that China's state-controlled economy can deploy."

He added: "But the EU has a continental scale energy market united by a modern, sophisticated regulatory framework unmatched around the world." Letta indicated that the bloc increasingly needs to find continent-wide solutions, including looking at how subsidies "can become a more European tool and less a national tool." His conclusion, therefore, is that "the EU must step up its efforts to develop a competitive industrial strategy capable of counteracting instruments recently adopted by other global powers, such as the US Inflation Reduction Act."

The report has a strong focus on integrating the energy, telecommunications and finance industries, with a roadmap to achieve progress in the next half-decade. For example, Letta asserts that the EU should further integrate on energy.

Specific ideas proposed include: adopting a cross-border cost-benefit allocation methodology to expedite the rollout of regional offshore wind projects; developing cross-border systems for procuring flexibility and joint auctions for renewables; developing green bonds to support energy infrastructure projects; revising the EU gas supply security framework; and setting up a mechanism for the joint purchasing of critical minerals.

So, the goal is to advance the EU's green and digital transitions while boosting its strategic autonomy and industrial, trade and market competitiveness. According to various stakeholders, including former European Central Bank chief Mario Draghi, and wider stakeholders such as the European Trade Union Confederation, this means plugging a funding gap between Europe and other economic peers like the US in terms of investment that may be equivalent to about 500 billion (\$531 billion) a year, or more than 3 percent of the bloc's GDP.

The Letta report was due to be discussed this week by the EU's senior leaders, including its 27 presidents and prime ministers. Moreover, it will be given an added boost by the synergy it has with a forthcoming report on the broader topic of European competitiveness by Draghi, another former Italian prime minister.

Draghi has also clearly indicated that Europe must respond to the ongoing massive changes in its external environment. Specifically, he has highlighted that three of the key pillars it has long relied on - Russian energy, Chinese exports and the US security umbrella - are all potentially transforming, albeit for different reasons.

In this context, Draghi believes that the EU needs to take bold, decisive action, from lowering energy prices to reducing regulatory burdens. However, he also argues that massive investments are needed in the green and digital transitions.

Draghi highlights these twin transitions as being key for Europe with good reason. On the digital transition, the region risks failing to capitalize on the next technology revolution of artificial intelligence and quantum computing, just like it did with the early 2000s internet technology boom. On the green transition, meanwhile, the EU is placing much emphasis on this policy area through its European Green Deal. However, this is not always matched by commensurate resources. Meanwhile, America's \$369 billion Inflation Reduction Act is widely seen as a game-changer and China continues to offer significant state support to its firms.

The Letta and Draghi reports both reflect major moments in Europe's political economy. The key question now is whether, in the midst of a big election year and alongside other crises like Ukraine and the Middle East, the EU will be able to act decisively. The key next step will be to successfully marshal a bloc-wide consensus around a bold set of reforms and the funding to deliver this, with a potential window of opportunity in the next European Commission from late 2024.

Arab News

How the Lebanese can secure their country's future

Khaled Abou Zahr

THIS week marked the 20th anniversary of the passing of my father, Walid Abou Zahr, the founder of Al-Watan Al-Arabi. During his lifetime as an engaged Lebanese media owner and publisher, he faced more than eight assassination attempts.

Starting from Lebanon, where the office of the newspaper Al-Moharrer was attacked with heavy artillery, these attacks culminated with a car bomb attack on the offices of Al-Watan Al-Arabi in Paris in 1982. In the end, it was cancer that claimed his life in 2004, one year before the same patrons that had targeted him unleashed a ruthless and systematic assassination scheme across Lebanon, including the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in February 2005.

If I were to name all the presidents, prime ministers, politicians, journalists, lawyers, judges and thinkers who fell victim to these evil

forces in Lebanon throughout this time, it would probably take up the entire space of this article. Has anything changed in the last 40 years? Unfortunately, the answer is no. Only last week, Pascal Suleiman, a coordinator for the Christian Lebanese Forces party in the Byblos region, was abducted and later discovered dead.

According to the army, he was murdered in a carjacking by members of a Syrian gang, who then transported his body across the border. At the funeral, tearful tributes and anger pushed mourners to express their doubts about the army's explanation. The insecurity and the dreadful current situation have blurred the lines and made killings easier. Moreover, Hezbollah has bullied and eroded every single sovereign institution.

The interior minister called for an open investigation. Unfortunately, the reality is that the Interior Ministry, just like the army, is incapable of taking action

and this investigation will be buried like all those before it. Can anyone stop a new wave of political assassinations from taking place today? Once again, the answer is no.

One thing is clear every time the regional equilibriums are put to the test: the Lebanese pay the price. Usually, they say that whenever a politician faces pressure on the domestic front, he looks for an international crisis to get him out of it. In Lebanon, it is the opposite. Every time the region faces a crisis, the Syrian regime or Hezbollah will target the domestic scene and hit it harder than ever.

We are now in one of those dangerous cycles. As tensions between Israel and Iran and its proxies heat up, Lebanon is at risk of being dragged into the confrontation. It is once again the hostage in a situation where it is being unwillingly anchored to the Iranian

regime's aggressive policies, which it carries out through Hezbollah. Although I think both countries are looking to avoid a full confrontation in a US presidential election year, mistakes do happen.

Geography and demography have put Lebanon in the middle of these cycles. And despite the resourcefulness and creativity of its people, they have been unable to escape this predicament. There is, nevertheless, a change this time compared to previous crises. The current economic and political situation has stripped the country of its regional symbolism. It has lost its favorite child status and is now the forgotten one. It is no longer the center of the crisis and no one is looking to save Lebanon because it has been saved too many times already. How many international initiatives, financial support schemes and more have been given to Lebanon, only to be

completely lost? If we add to the greed and protection of the banking sector's Ponzi scheme, we reach the level of revision.

In short, no one will come to the rescue of Lebanon this time. It is high time for the Lebanese to save themselves. I might sound like a broken record, but the only way forward - even if it is not a guarantee of success - is federalism. The more local we go in terms of decision-making, the greater the chances of success.

This is also how each community can protect itself and express its opinion, as well as aligning with whomever they wish regionally. The killing of Suleiman, whether by a Syrian gang or not, highlights the risks of singling out and targeting a specific community. This is also part of the vicious circle of divide and rule, which can lead to secession.

Now, it is true that this solution does not change the hegemony of Hezbollah in

the country or its hijacking of the defense, security and foreign policies. But it allows for a new voice to emerge. It allows the Lebanese to continue to live while Hezbollah chooses death. Moreover, it is of the utmost importance in this time of crisis to present a plan for a better future for the country that is by the Lebanese and for the Lebanese. And none of the plans I hear bring a real possibility of change except federalism.

In my father's obituary, Asharq Al-Awsat gracefully described him as "the reader of geopolitical volatility or swings." Even as sickness was taking over, he foresaw the upheaval that came to Lebanon in 2005. And so, for all the victims of these geopolitical swings and for the future of the country, let us work on a new political and social pact that keeps Lebanon immune from this; it starts with a plan for federalism.

Britain’s defence policy is more like one big declaration of war

IN our increasingly destabilised present, it is difficult not to see echoes of the run-up to the first world war. Back then, a standoff between two great power blocs led to a fatalism that a disastrous war was simply inevitable. If history does indeed repeat itself, that would be catastrophic for two reasons. First, because the mass slaughter turned out to be the warm-up act for worse in the rest of the 20th century. In many ways, we are still living in the aftermath. Second, because such a repetition would in fact prove the best case scenario; a nuclear inferno that devours human civilisation is a more probable outcome.

In two newspaper articles last week, Sir Keir Starmer committed Labour to retaining nuclear weapons and to hiking defence spending to 2.5% of GDP. Prevailing political wisdom would suggest this offers necessary distance from his predecessor, though it should be noted that Labour's 2017 and 2019 manifestos both promised to retain Trident and keep defence spending to at least 2%, the target Nato members are committed to reach.

But the truth is that this country cannot have a sensible discussion about defence. The Ministry of Defence is not far removed from George Orwell's Ministry of Peace, given "defence" in practice has meant "offence". Even though our media and political climates make these the policy and spending suggestions seem like utopian ideals, a truly rational approach would look rather different.

First, we have to abandon creeping fatalism over a coming

war. Over half of Britons think another world war is likely within the next five to 10 years, while 59% think nuclear weapons would be used if it breaks out. Mass resignation to nuclear annihilation strikes me as a problem. Such fatalism has been fuelled by top military officials declaring we must prepare for all-out war with Russia in the next two decades, while the defence secretary, Grant Shapps, calls for us to prepare for further wars involving China, Russia, Iran and North Korea within five years. Gen Sir Patrick Sanders, the head of our army, even calls for society to be placed on a war footing. Well, spare a moment for the unlucky survivors of a nuclear apocalypse who will be rather ruefully wishing more had been done to avoid their plight. More thought should be put into de-escalation, rather than repeating the pre-first world war error.

Second, we must prevent a repetition of the calamitous 21st-century wars of "intervention", which - in addition to destabilising Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and others - killed 636 British service personnel (in Iraq and Afghanistan) and made us less safe. The UK intelligence services warned that "the threat from al-Qaida" and "other Islamist terrorist groups" would increase if Iraq was invaded, while we know the war in Libya played a pivotal role in radicalising the Manchester Arena bombings. Israel's war in Gaza, framed by the UN as potential genocide, will surely prove one of the greatest mass radicalisation events of our age, and British complicity will expose us to the

lethal consequences. It can hardly be said that these wars were about "defence". Deterring terrorism is indeed a key plank of national security: abandoning offensive wars and support for mass slaughter is central to that.

As for Trident, "the expense is huge and the utility ... nonexistent in terms of military use". Not my words: those of Tony Blair, who only renewed our nukes to maintain Britain's pretence as a great global power. As Greenpeace put it in evidence to the House of Commons defence select committee: "The only way that Britain is ever likely to use Trident is to give legitimacy to a US nuclear attack by participating in it." Britain is at no more risk of invasion than European nations that don't fritter billions on warheads.

Britain should pare back defence spending so it means just that: defence, or protection from invasion, assistance for humanitarian disasters, and international peacekeeping operations. As Richard Reeve, coordinator of the thinktank Rethinking Security, puts it, other "middle powers" - think Japan, Germany, Italy, Canada - don't have global military pretensions. "Why do we believe we have a right and responsibility to act globally," he says, "despite our resource constraints and legal norms?"

That doesn't mean producing only weapons for repelling hypothetical invasions: for example, supporting Ukraine's defence against Russia's brutal invasion is a legitimate example of arms exports, whereas the Saudi-led war on Yemen is not. That means producing significantly fewer weapons. Claims made about the

economic benefits of the defence industry often intrude, but they are a mirage. As work by the thinktank Common Wealth reveals, despite defence production receiving on average 35% of UK public research and development funding between 1987 and 2009, defence adds less to the economy and employs fewer people than automotive manufacturing.

Indeed, the sector offers rich rewards to asset managers and investment firms such as BlackRock, Vanguard and State Street, but if prosperity for local communities is what you want, then why is Barrow-in-Furness - where Britain's nuclear submarines are built - so afflicted with poverty? What really happens is that the taxpayer shells out vast sums - between 2012/13 and 2021/22, the MoD offered up £78bn worth of contracts to its top five suppliers alone, while in the same period, those suppliers paid out £15bn to shareholders (based on their revenue from all global customers).

It is true that Nato membership calls for arms spending of at least 2% of GDP, but in practice most states flout that. The real threats faced by Britain include pandemics - as you'll probably recall - and cyber-attacks. Helping to stoke an arms race, and resigning ourselves to a future global conflagration, will hardly prove an effective means to protect our national security if it culminates in nuclear extermination. Focusing on actual threats, and ensuring we have a defence sector that can stave off a theoretical invasion, would be a more rational approach. What a tragedy that our political culture makes this almost impossible.

The Guardian

Tackling Sudan’s humanitarian crisis after a year of war

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

Asolemn occasion was marked on Monday: one year since the outbreak of the devastating conflict in Sudan. What began as a clash between the army and paramilitaries has spiraled into a protracted war, leaving a trail of destruction and despair in its wake. With more than 8 million individuals forcibly displaced since April 15, 2023, and thousands seeking refuge in neighboring Chad and South Sudan, the crisis is of catastrophic proportions.

Among the myriad issues raised by the conflict, the collapse of Sudan's healthcare system stands as one of the most pressing. With between 70 percent and 80 percent of hospitals in conflict-affected areas rendered inoperable, civilians are left without access to essential medical services. The indirect health consequences of the war are equally dire, with poor living conditions, a lack of clean water and limited access to vaccinations exacerbating the spread of disease. The lack of adequate healthcare infrastructure has also turned preventable illnesses into life-threatening conditions, further compounding the suffering of the already vulnerable population.

Another critical and growing concern is the rampant malnutrition plaguing Sudanese civilians. Food shortages and disrupted supply chains have led to widespread hunger, with many individuals, particularly children, suffering from severe malnutrition. The inability to access nutritious food has not only stunted physical development, but has also left countless individuals vulnerable to a host of health complications.

Malnutrition is not merely a consequence of the conflict but a direct result of its devastating impact on the country's infrastructure and economy.

In addition, the refugee crisis stemming from the conflict in Sudan has placed immense strain on neighboring countries, particularly Chad. Already grappling with their own socioeconomic challenges, Sudan's neighbors are now burdened with the responsibility of hosting and providing for a massive influx of refugees.

The strain on resources, infrastructure and social services is palpable, exacerbating existing tensions and further destabilizing the region. Without significant international support, these countries risk being overwhelmed by the sheer scale of the humanitarian crisis unfolding on their doorstep.

But it is vital to also address the inadequacy of the humanitarian response. In spite of the commendable efforts of humanitarian organizations, the response to the crisis in Sudan remains woefully inadequate. This is most likely due to limited funding, logistical challenges and accessibility restrictions that have hindered the delivery of essential aid to those in need. Millions continue to suffer without access to adequate food, shelter, healthcare and other basic necessities. Without a sustained effort to address the root causes of the crisis, humanitarian interventions will continue to fall short of meeting the overwhelming needs of the affected population.

In order to address the inadequacy of the humanitarian

response to the crisis in Sudan, several key steps must be taken. First of all, increased funding from both governmental and non-governmental sources is essential. Donors must prioritize allocating sufficient resources to the support of emergency relief operations, including food distribution, healthcare provision, shelter assistance and sanitation services.

Additionally, efforts should be made to streamline the delivery of aid by addressing logistical challenges and improving coordination among humanitarian organizations. This could involve establishing dedicated supply chains, enhancing communication networks and investing in transport infrastructure to ensure the timely and efficient distribution of aid to remote and hard-to-reach areas.

Moreover, access restrictions imposed by the warring parties must be addressed through diplomatic negotiations and advocacy efforts to ensure unimpeded access for humanitarian actors. By addressing these challenges and implementing robust solutions, the international community can work toward alleviating the suffering of millions of Sudanese civilians and building a more resilient and sustainable future for the region.

Urgent political action from the international community is also crucial to bringing an end to the protracted conflict in Sudan and alleviating the suffering of millions caught in its crossfire. Diplomatic efforts must be intensified to facilitate negotiations between the warring factions and to secure a lasting ceasefire.

The Jeddah Declaration of

Commitment to Protect the Civilians of Sudan provides an effective and pragmatic framework for action, emphasizing the need to prioritize the interests and well-being of the Sudanese people. This includes ensuring safe passage for civilians to leave areas of active hostilities voluntarily, along with respecting international humanitarian law and human rights obligations.

Furthermore, the international community must ramp up its financial and logistical support for humanitarian operations in Sudan's neighboring countries. Increased funding is needed to scale up aid delivery, strengthen healthcare systems and address the root causes of malnutrition and food insecurity.

Finally, as we reflect on Sudan's war one year on from its inception, we must also recognize the resilience and strength of the Sudanese people in the face of adversity. Their plight should serve as a rallying cry for solidarity and compassion, inspiring us to redouble our efforts to alleviate their suffering.

Only through collective action and unwavering commitment can we hope to bring an end to Sudan's war. In a nutshell, the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Sudan demands a robust and coordinated response from the international community. The first anniversary of the conflict's eruption serves as a vital reminder of the urgent need to act. The suffering of millions cannot be allowed to continue unchecked. It is time for world leaders to rise to the occasion, heed the calls for help and work together to bring an end to the crisis in Sudan.

TODAY, most observers of international affairs agree that the world is moving toward a multipolar structure. After the end of the Cold War, there was a clear unipolar moment, and some in the West who believed that heralded "the end of history" dreamed of a Pax Americana era that would ensure peace and prosperity with unprecedented wealth and power. Unipolarity brought a period of hyper-globalization that generally lifted global growth and contributed to a rising Global South.

The problem, nonetheless, was the hegemon drowned in its own hubris and lost the ability to act with self-restraint. It's a common problem with those who wield too much power: they believe their way is the only way. Hence, the "Great Delusion" led to a series of reckless wars and domestic divisions that ultimately weakened the very foundation of the rules-based international order. The reason is very simple: if the rules don't apply to the principal player, then who would willingly want to come and play?

It is likely that the world today is experiencing an "interregnum", argues Glenn Diesen in his book The Ukraine War & the Eurasian World Order, noting that "500 years of Western hegemony has ended, while the global majority's aspiration for a world order based on multipolarity and sovereign equality is rising". And yet, a mul-

tipolar Westphalian world order has not taken shape even though the liberal hegemony is fatally flawed. Just like the supremacy of the US dollar, which is all known to serve the interests of the United States and is a tool of exploitation and illegal punishment. But it seems there's no viable alternative to replace the dollar that could play a better role as standard, medium and reserve. The problem is actually threefold: the powerholder's refusal to give up its vested interests, the stakeholders' fear of chaos and concerns about the feasibility of an unproven new system, and the lack of consensus on the principle of fair share in the reconfiguration of the international order. In all, the world is truly stuck in a place where it is inevitably moving toward multipolarity, but no one is sure what kind of future lies ahead because their visions and interests are so diverse, even mutually oppositional.

Anxiety significantly increased with the multipolar trend, just as unbalanced globalization created economic winners and losers and a polarized political landscape inside most participating countries. The weaponization of finance and trade as well as the borderization of physical and cyber spaces make many scholars believe that the future multipolar world will be an unpredictable, unstable and dangerous war zone, where great power politics and its signature

Zhao Hai

"rule of the jungle" will return. States will be forced to join security alliances for protection, economic blocs for supply chain safety and like-minded groupings for political and institutional stability. The fragmentation of the international system will unravel global governance that took many decades to develop, and destroy the ability to meet the common challenges that human society now faces. More importantly, if the multipolar world slips into uncontrollable and unmanageable "fierce competition", a dark future of artificial intelligence led nuclear Armageddon will no longer be a far-fetched sci-fi scenario we see in the movies.

But enough of the gloom and doom. There is no shortage of bad news in everyday headlines. Given the exhaustion of the existing order, what new order should the world strive for? Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi laid out China's principled position at a news conference on March 7 during this year's two sessions - the annual gathering of China's top legislative and political consultative bodies. He called for "an equal and orderly multipolar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization".

Wang elaborated that equal means "equal rights, opportunities and rules for every nation" and orderly means "all should observe the purposes and principles of the

United Nations Charter, and uphold the universally recognized basic norms governing international relations".China, and for that matter the whole of the Global South, wants an improved UN-centered international system and is opposed to any attempt to weaken or circumvent it.

The foundation of this Chinese proposition is that the UN represents the real multilateralism that ties multiple powers together in a set of rules agreed and respected by all. UN multilateralism is based on the hard-won victory against fascism and the painful experiences of the two world wars, but it has been constantly violated and broken by bipolar, unipolar power struggles or monopolies. Yet never before has real multilateralism been so urgent and so promising. What the world needs now is not a divisive framework of Western democracy versus autocracy, but working multilateralism to govern and solve present and potential multipolar frictions and problems.

In this respect, the international community requires like-minded countries to stand together and invest in multilateral mechanisms and institutions under the UN umbrella. China stands at the forefront of this new path toward a new multipolar world order, promoting its global security, development and civilization initiatives and acting as a mediator for peace. The more countries join the effort, the quicker the world can emerge from the present "interregnum".

Starmer can’t dodge Europe question for ever

Martin Kettle

‘Who do you think will lead the Labour government’s revolt on Europe?’ asked my walking companion, steeped in politics, as we battled a cold morning headwind on a Chiltern hillside this week, the hedgerows around us suddenly in full leaf again and the chalk-land remarkably dry after that pitiless early April rain, before he added: "And when will it come?"

These are both good questions. But they are hard to answer in a fierce wind and going uphill. Back in the dry, I have mulled them more carefully. The revolt on which my companion and I speculated would be a revolt to push Keir Starmer to go further on Europe than he says he is willing to go. The answer is that the pivotal factor may not be geopolitical- and security-related, as some may assume amid the increasingly dire conflict with Russia in Ukraine. More probably, it would be the state of the economy over which Labour finds itself presiding as Starmer's government reaches its midterm point.

At present, Labour is keen to lock a future government's relations with Europe in the pre-election long-stay car park. Starmer wants the forthcoming contest to be about Conservative economic failure, not about Brexit. Even Labour's most passionate pro-Europeans have accepted that getting elected must come first. The party's reluctance to air the European question too loudly before that is understandable. But this does not mean the question is going to go away in government.

One thing can be said with complete confidence. The change in the UK-EU relationship if Labour returns to power will be complicated not simple, evolutionary not explosive, and contextual not doctrinaire. It will not be a stark in-out choice, as it was in 2016. In many ways it would be crazy if it was, in the light of the civic and practical damage that the referendum and its aftermath inflicted on our still wounded country. A second-referendum moment is still at least another decade away, and it quite possibly will never come.

But a changing and closer relationship with Europe is nevertheless a certainty if Labour is elected. The threat from Russia matters here, of course, as do the climate and migration crises. But Britain's relationship with Europe cannot avoid being a key dynamic of any long-term national renewal project for Britain of the kind that Starmer

promised to the Labour conference last year. Repair with Europe cannot be dodged indefinitely, whether in the context of domestic politics, international security or the economy.

Many variables, some highly volatile, will have an impact. Domestic politics cannot be ignored. The election result itself will be crucial, especially if it is close. Likewise if the Conservatives and Reform do better than expected in the pro-Brexit "red wall" seats. A period of electoral unpopularity for Labour - surely a when not an if factor - may foster caution about Europe, too. Any signs of a Conservative revival, especially under a fanatical leave leader or with Nigel Farage brought on board, will do the same. If Donald Trump is in the White House, Labour will be even more between a rock and hard place.

Europe's own political context is also a source of volatility. The picture differs from one country to another. A better disposed Britain will not be automatically welcomed by all. June's European elections in the EU's 27 member states will give a snapshot of the public mood about the continent's current trajectory. A big shift towards the nationalist right will dampen Labour ambitions. But the political makeup of the new European Commission that will follow the elections could be more lastingly significant. This commission will be in office until 2029, the entire period of what Starmer hopes will be only his own first term. Whether it will be a partner with which a Labour government can do the useful business that it hopes to do remains to be seen.

This week, the shadow foreign secretary, David Lammy, set out his case for a Labour foreign policy centred on "progressive realism". He repeated that Brexit is "settled" and that Labour will not seek to rejoin the EU, the single market or the customs union. Instead, he advocated what he called a more "formal means of cooperation" with Europe. One reading of this is that Lammy wants to negotiate for Britain to attend meetings of the EU foreign affairs council on a regular basis.

Central to this strategy would be a security pact with the EU. Note that this is not a proposal for a pact with Nato, of which the UK is a founding member. In fact, it would not primarily be a defence pact as such. Instead, in Lammy's words,

the EU pact would embrace "a wide variety of military, economic, climate, health, cyber and energy security issues". Later, he adds that "there are plenty of pragmatic steps we can take to rebuild trust and cooperation and reduce barriers to trade". In other words, it is potentially an across-the-board deal on everything short of formal membership.

Lammy's phrases are capacious. It is not hard to see that they could imply extremely close alignment of rules on some very large issues such as emissions trading, critical raw materials and even migration. All have genuine security dimensions. Potentially, the list could be even longer, extending to things such as data, pharmaceuticals, student mobility, science research and some industrial products and standards.

Once Labour is talking to the EU in detail about issues such as these, and assuming - which may be over-ambitious - that the EU is equally willing to talk in detail with the UK in return, this is a process with a lot of momentum. It will be hard to keep it from bumping up against Britain's position outside the EU. It is at that point that the questions we posed on a windblown Chiltern hillside would become very real indeed.

The answers to them depend more than anything else on Britain's economic performance over the next three or so years. Suppose growth has become strong and the forecasts in 2026-27 are even better. In that case, as the 2028-29 general election comes into view, Labour will be more inclined to sit tight, strengthening its agreements with the EU where it can but determined not to contemplate going further.

Yet suppose, on the other hand, that growth is more faltering, that forecasts remain modest and that public-realm renewal and green-energy transformation are still lagging behind. In that case, and especially amid global instability of the kind being faced in 2024, the pressure for smoother links with Britain's closest and largest trading market will grow louder. If circumstances of that kind apply, then the argument in favour of, for example, putting customs union membership on the agenda will revive. But it will not be led by the diplomats, the military or the scientists or by the ministers who represent their interests. It will be led by economic interest, and thus by the chancellor of the exchequer, Rachel Reeves.

Is hyperinflation coming to US?

Gregory K. Tanaka

HYPERINFLATION appears to be coming to the US, and soon. The price of cocoa has signaled this by rising sharply, and Simon White of Bloomberg contends the sudden jump in cocoa price prefigures a corresponding increase in silver prices.

But even before this jump in cocoa prices, the US dollar had already begun to show signs of weakness as a global reserve currency vis-à-vis other currencies. Weakness in the dollar can itself be a signal that inflation, if not hyperinflation, is coming in the months ahead. Thanks to commentators such as Dave Janda (January 8, 2024), Tyler Durden of ZeroHedge (December 15, 2023)- and writers for the SGT Report and the X22 Report (December, 2023)- we also know that the Federal Reserve Bank (the Fed) harms the average American citizen through inflation. According to these intellectuals, the Fed has been doing this in three principal ways.

First, the Fed treats the dollar as a form of debt upon which American taxpayers must pay interest. Is there evidence of this? Yes, you can just look at the top of each newly printed US one-dollar bill and see that it states in capitol letters, "FEDERAL RESERVE NOTE." What this means is that each US dollar is not an asset at all but instead "a promissory note" upon which Americans must pay

interest. This is a form of inflation that silently eats away at all savings and retirement accounts held by Americans. Second, private central banks throughout American history have been using a distribution pattern for newly printed bills that cheat the average American. The sequence that operates inside the United States is as follows. Any new dollar bills printed by the Fed are distributed first to the New York banks that sent representatives to Jekyll Island in 1911 to write US legislation that created the Fed. After that, the new dollars are distributed by the Fed to wealthy individuals and top US government officials. Later, they are distributed to US corporations and other banks. Only after traveling this elongated path does any of the new money reach the average American citizen in the form of wages for past work performed (upheld in Supreme Court case of McCulloch vs. Maryland, 17 US 316, 1819).

What this means is that by the time any new money reaches the American middle class, working class, and underclass, it will have become greatly reduced in value due to the cumulative effects of inflation at every step along the way. This form of harm to everyday citizens was demonstrated by French-Irish economist Richard Cantillon who first explained in 1755 how all

newly created currency initially delivers greater value to the upper class-the elites-than to the average citizen who receives the new money much later in time.

Third, the Western elites who control the Federal Reserve know beforehand when to buy stocks and when to sell them, depending on whether they will soon be stimulating the economy or slowing it down. In contrast, the average American does not even hear about these changes in policy until after the fact.

With such differential and invisible outcomes, the impact of inflation is little understood but found increasingly worrisome by the average American. To demonstrate how inflation has begun to impact US citizens in their daily lives, the prices of food, gasoline and rent have already started to rise. As reported by Tyler Durden of ZeroHedge on February 21, 2024: "Food spending's share of disposable income hits the highest level in three decades." Increases in the prices of food, gasoline and rent constitute another way of imposing inflation on Americans, slowly but surely. Taken together, the broader implication for inflation seen in the sudden jump in the prices of cocoa, silver and other commodities can have far greater implications for households-with the combined effects potentially proving hyperinflationary.

The China Daily



ISLAMABAD: Advisor to KP CM on Finance Muzammil Aslam addressing a press conference.

Prompt resolution of taxpayers' issues Federal Tax Ombudsman Commends FBR

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Tax Ombudsman Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah held a meeting with Member Inland Revenue (Operations) Mir Badshah Khan Wazir and his team in his office and discussed matters relating to taxpayers' issues. Federal Tax Ombudsman commended the performance of FBR for prompt

redressal of problems of the taxpayers and quick implementation of FTO's decisions.

Member IR (Operations) expressed gratitude to the Federal Tax Ombudsman and assured to resolve taxpayers' concerns on priority basis.

He said that revenue generation performance of FBR would further

improve under the guidance of FTO.

On the occasion, Federal Tax Ombudsman also awarded certificates and shields to Member IR (Operations) and other officers including Chief Refunds Muhammad Intiaz, Chief Formations Mirza Nasir Ali, Secretary Revenue Budget Bilal Zamir and Secretary IT Ehsan Ullah Mehsood.

PSX turns bullish, gains 619 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bullish trend on Friday, gaining 619.79 points, a positive change of 0.88 percent, closing at 70,909.90 points against 70,290.12 points the previous trading day. A total of 475,833,699 shares valuing Rs.23.220 billion were traded during the day as compared to 440,314,409 shares valuing Rs.24.362 billion the last day.

Some 370 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 200 of them recorded gains and 149 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 21 remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were Pak Refinery with 49,662,377 shares at Rs.30.09 per share, Cnergyico PK with 26,777,007 shares with Rs.4.47 per share and Kohinoor Spinning with 22,834,000 shares at Rs.4.96 per share. Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.200.00 per share price, closing at Rs.20,900.00, whereas the runner-up was Hoechst Pakistan Limited with a Rs.97.49 rise in its per share price to Rs.1,397.49. Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.30.10 per share closing at Rs.8,350.00, followed by Services Industries Limited with Rs.9.50 decline to close at Rs.602.50.

Seminar on bolstering trajectory of Pak strategic ties with China held

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Centre for Aerospace and Security Studies (CASS), Lahore, hosted a seminar titled "Bolstering the Trajectory of Pakistan's Strategic Ties with China" to examine the dynamic partnership between the two countries and propose strategic recommendations to further solidify the Pakistan-China relationship.

The seminar began with opening remarks by Ambassador Muhammad Haroon Shaukat (Retd), Director of Foreign Affairs at CASS, Lahore, who emphasised the importance of Pakistan-China ties within the evolving regional landscape.

This was followed by an address by Ambassador Masood Khalid (Retd), the former Pakistani envoy to the People's Republic of China, who discussed China's role in global and regional geopolitics. Ambassador Moin ul Haque (Retd), another former envoy to China, highlighted the importance of strengthening the strategic partnership between the two countries.



Dr Suhail Saleem, Director General of the Punjab Board of Investment and Trade (PBIT), elaborated on the Special Economic Zones and industrial development in the context of Pakistan-China ties. Lastly, Dr Hassan Daud Butt, an Associate Professor at Bahria University, explored leveraging the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) beyond 2030 for sustainable economic growth and connectivity.

In his concluding remarks, Air Marshal Asim Suleiman (Retd), President CASS, Lahore, highlighted Pakistan's

deep and enduring friendship with China, forged through shared experiences and mutual trust. He hailed CPEC as a symbol of China's confidence in Pakistan and a key factor in the latter's progress.

In the defence sector, he noted China's collaboration with the Pakistan Armed Forces, highlighting the flagship project JF-17, the major induction of J-10C fighters, and the planned acquisition of J-31 Gyr Falcon Stealth Fighter.

The seminar brought forth several key points. The speakers unanimously stressed Pakistan's need to prioritise cementing and

diversifying its strategic partnership with China. Clearing impediments for Phase II of CPEC was emphasised for industrial growth in Pakistan.

The seminar placed special emphasis on ensuring the safety of Chinese personnel working in Pakistan. Moreover, the government was urged to promote ease of doing business and to address the external trade gap with China.

Finally, the seminar underscored the importance of avoiding bloc politics to foster mutually beneficial relations with great powers while maintaining strategic autonomy

MOL Pakistan donates academic books to QAU

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to bolster educational resources and foster a culture of learning, MOL Pakistan Oil and Gas Company B.V. donated academic books to the School of Politics and International Relations at Quaid-e-Azam University (QAU).

The formal handover ceremony, held at QAU, was attended by Mr. Zsolt Adam Laszlo, CEO of MOL Pakistan, and Prof. Dr. Niaz Ahmad Akhtar, Vice Chancellor of QAU, along with senior officials from both organizations.

With a firm commitment to advancing education in Pakistan and nurturing young talents, MOL Pakistan underscores its Corporate Giving Initiatives by donating a

substantial number of academic books to enrich the educational experience at QAU.

This initiative seeks to elevate educational standards within communities by enhancing access to a diverse range of academic literature across various subjects, empowering students with knowledge and insights vital for their academic journey.

Addressing the gathering, Mr. Zsolt Adam Laszlo, CEO of MOL Pakistan, remarked, "Today, we reaffirm our commitment to fostering educational growth and empowering the leaders of tomorrow."

I am proud to announce our continued support to Quaid-e-Azam University through the donation of books. Education is the cornerstone of progress, and

by providing these resources, we aim to cultivate a culture of learning and innovation.

Our longstanding partnership with Quaid-e-Azam University reflects our dedication to nurturing talent and driving positive change in the communities we serve. Together, we can build a brighter future fueled by knowledge and opportunity." Expressing his gratitude for the generous donation, Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Niaz Ahmad Akhtar stated, "We extend our heartfelt appreciation to MOL Pakistan for their steadfast support towards education. This contribution, along with their continuous support in the past, will undoubtedly enrich the learning environment at our institution and enable our students to broaden their horizons."

IAP apprises CEO Pesco about industrialists' issues

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A delegation of Industrialists' Association Peshawar (IAP) held a meeting with chief executive officer of Peshawar Electric Supply Company (Pesco) Engr Akhtar Hamid Khan in Wapda house.

Members of the delegation apprised the CEO Pesco about industrialists' issues. A statement issued here on Friday stated that the delegation headed by Chairman Industrialists Association Peshawar (IAP) Standing Committee on Pesco Riaz Arshad while other members include the association senior vice president Haris Mufti, vice president Farhad Asfandiyar, senior vice chairman IAP Standing Committee on Pesco Malik Niaz Ahmad, the association member Usman Elahi and secretary Wasiullah Khan.

Members of the delegation during the meeting presented number of pro-

posals for resolution of the industrialists' issues, through which demanded appointing SDO EI as member of the IAP standing committee on Pesco while devising mechanism in extension of bills payment by reviewing methods/policy, being adopted other provinces for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The delegation called for uniformity in the billing cycle by following the procedure that had been adopted for Gadoon Industrial Estate.

Riaz Arshad while speaking on the occasion highlighted the issue regarding NEPRA rule on disconnections, emphasizing that no connection should be disconnected due to a one-month bill default.

The IAP committee head urged that PTW activities should only be conducted on Sundays, twice a month, and in two shifts. Furthermore, he emphasized timely communication of PTW

schedules to the focal person for notifying units about expected power outages, utilizing SMS notifications.

The Pesco chief assured early resolution of bifurcation of the 11 KV Olympia Feeder, aiming to energize the feeder within one week. Engr Akhtar Hamid informed that there are only two linemen available for 24 hours at Sub-Division Offices IE and assured appointment of additional three linemen.

The Chief of PESCO directed the Manager of Commercial PESCO to resolve audit-related issues.

The Manager of Commercial has requested a list of affected parties along with their consumer numbers to facilitate resolution of the matter, the meeting said. During the meeting directions have been issued that a vehicle will be issued by the CEO strictly for official use.

First flight from Azerbaijan arrives in Karachi

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The first flight arriving in Karachi from Azerbaijan received a warm welcome last night with a grand salute from water cannons at Karachi's Jinnah International Airport.

Governor Sind Kamran Tesori and Provincial Minister for Commerce and Industries Jam Ikram, along with Civil Aviation's Director of Operations, Director of Security, and acting Airport Manager, greeted the crew and passengers of the inaugural flight.

The Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan, Khazar Farhadov, honored the event, which also featured a cake-cutting ceremony. Azerbaijan Airlines currently runs two flights each from Islamabad and Lahore.

GM and Ford count on gas-powered trucks as EV growth slows

DETROIT (Reuters): U.S. automakers General Motors (GM.N), opens new tab and Ford (F.N), opens new tab face a challenge in common when they report first-quarter results next week: Explaining to investors where profit growth will come from in the months ahead as EV growth slows.

The slowdown in global electric-vehicle demand, intensifying competition from Chinese automakers and high U.S. borrowing costs have forced the U.S. automakers to delay investments and ratchet down costs over the past 12 months. With China's economy slowing and U.S. inflation running hot, a macroeconomic growth boost looks a long way off.

That has companies like GM and Ford focusing on sales of their core gasoline-powered vehicles, from which they derive most of their profit. GM and Ford are scheduled to report results on Tuesday and Wednesday, respectively.

GM CEO Mary Barra will get a lift from strong demand for the automaker's highly profitable Chevrolet and GMC brand pickup trucks and SUVs. Barclays earlier this month boosted its target price for GM shares by 10% to \$55, citing robust sales for GM's truck and SUV lineup.

GM Chief Financial Officer Paul Jacobson said the year was off to a good start and the company felt positive about where demand was trending, while Ford CFO John Lawler, in reaffirming the company's full-year profit outlook, said vehicle prices were holding up better than expected.

Legacy U.S. automakers, which rely heavily on sales of large trucks and SUVs, have been bogged down by higher expenses related to electrifying their vehicle lineups and bumpy demand for battery-electric vehicles.

Evercore ISI analyst Chris McNally said in a research note that the momentum has shifted for the previous winners like Tesla (TSLA.O),

opens new tab as growth in EV sales slows. Investors have refocused instead on GM.

Stellantis (STLAM.MI), opens new tab, Toyota (7203.T), opens new tab and others that rely less on EVs, he added.

The high ratio of gas-burning trucks to EVs in GM's North American sales mix will help offset a projected loss in the automaker's operations in China. GM said first-quarter U.S. vehicle sales slipped 1.5% on lower commercial-customer deliveries, but retail sales jumped 6%.

Barra has yet to outline specific plans for restructuring GM's China business. Last year, GM delivered 2.1 million vehicles in China, down almost half from the 4.04 million it reported in 2017.

Meanwhile, investors want an update at GM's struggling Cruise robotaxi unit. Barra has not said how GM will fund relaunching and rebuilding the business after a serious accident

forced the company to halt driverless ride operations. GM has said it will slash spending by \$1 billion this year at Cruise. The unit has lost more than \$8 billion since GM acquired it in 2016.

Cruise said on April 9 it will put some vehicles back on the road in Phoenix, Arizona, with human drivers. The Detroit automaker's shares jumped in January when it signaled more cash would be returned to shareholders.

Ford, too, is getting power from its combustion truck business, as well as its Ford Pro commercial vehicle operations. The automaker reaffirmed its forecast for \$10 billion to \$12 billion in core profit this year.

The automaker earlier this month said it would slow two major electric-vehicle programs. CFO Lawler told an investor conference that future EV investments will not go forward unless they can "stand on their own" to show a profit.

KPEZDMC, PCSIR Lab join hands to transfer of technology

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a significant move towards environment friendliness, sustainable development and technological advancement, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development & Management Company (KPEZDMC) and PCSIR Laboratories Complex Peshawar. CEO KPEZDMC Javed Khattak represented his company while Director General PCSIR Jahangir Shah were among the signing parties. Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa on Industries, Commerce and Technical Education Abdul Karim Tordher graced this ceremony as a chief guest.

The agreement aims to facilitate the transfer of technology and establish a mechanical plant for the alternate use of marble and granite slurry. A vast amount of non-biodegradable waste is generated during mining and processing operations of dimensional stones such as marble. This, over the years has become a global nuisance by damaging the environment. Therefore, it has become necessary to find a technique to safely dispose or reuse marble waste.

Marble processing units often grapple with the environmental issue of marble slurry, posing a significant challenge to sustainability. In response, KPEZDMC has initiated proactive strategies within the newly established Mohmand Economic Zone to tackle this pressing concern. The province of KP is a major producer of marble products comprising of around 80 operational marble industries. This MoU signifies a collaborative effort towards technological innovation and sustainable utilization of resources, initiated by the Government of KP.

It paves the way for economic development and envi-

ronmental conservation through the efficient management of marble and granite waste.

The collaboration seeks to acquire technical know-how for the installation of a mechanical plant at Mohmand Economic Zone in District Mohmand, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. PCSIR Laboratories Complex Peshawar has willingly agreed to transfer the necessary technology for this purpose.

The key measures being implemented are construction of sedimentation tanks, provision of dumping area, mining waste/industrial residual management, and slurry manage-

ment plan.

This progress reflects the dedication of Special Assistant of Industries, Commerce, and Technical Education, Abdul Karim Khan, in fostering sustainable industrial development for the region. His steadfast commitment to addressing environmental challenges and promoting innovative solutions has been instrumental in driving positive change. These initiatives underscore the Government's commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainable industrial practices in the province, emphasizing the importance of a green environment in light of pressing issues like

climate change. By adopting innovative solutions and fostering collaboration among stakeholders, KPEZDMC aims to mitigate the environmental impact of industrialization while promoting economic growth and resource efficiency, contributing positively to the fight against global warming and ensuring a sustainable future for generations to come.

Addressing this gathering, the Special Assistant to the Chief Minister expressed elation over achievement in spearheading the national mission of Green KP and Clean KP. Collaborating with PCSIR, he highlighted our endeavor to transform marble

waste into artificial or cultured marble, facilitated by the establishment of a dedicated plant. Furthermore, he emphasized the utilization of these waste materials in various other sectors, underscoring the significance of this agreement in advancing environmental conservation.

The Special Assistant reiterated the provincial government's commitment to fostering industrial growth and ensuring sustainable economic stability. Encouraging investors to capitalize on the incentives available for waste management across diverse business models, he invited them to participate in this transformative initiative.



In brief

Davis Cup Finals
Group Stage schedule

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 2024 Davis Cup Finals Group Stage schedule has been revealed with 16 nations set to compete in round robin events taking place in Bologna, Manchester, Valencia and Zhuhai from September 10 to 15. On day one, 2023 runners-up Australia will take on France in Group B (Valencia), while defending world champions Italy get their campaign underway on Wednesday 11 September against Brazil in Group A (Bologna), said a press release. Elsewhere, 32-time world champions USA face Chile on day two in Group C (Zhuhai), while Great Britain against 2022 world champions Canada on the final day in Group D (Manchester) also catches the eye. The top two teams from each group would progress to the Final 8 knockout stage in Malaga from November 19 to 24.

Vondrousova
stuns Sabalenka

STUTTGART (AFP): Marketa Vondrousova on Friday reached her first semi-final since clinching the Wimbledon title last July when she stunned world number two Aryna Sabalenka at the Stuttgart clay-court tournament. The sixth-seeded Czech came through 3-6, 6-3, 7-5 in just over two hours. It was the 24-year-old's first win over Sabalenka in six years after losing four in a row between 2018 and 2023. Australian Open champion Sabalenka had been attempting to make the Stuttgart final for a fourth successive year. The powerful Belarusian crunched 35 winners to Vondrousova's 17, but committed 48 unforced errors compared to 19. Wimbledon champion Vondrousova crucially converted seven of eight break points while Sabalenka only capitalised six times from 15 opportunities. Vondrousova will face either third-ranked Coco Gauff, the US Open champion, or Marta Kostyuk of Ukraine for a place in Sunday's final. Earlier fourth-seeded Elena Rybakina defeated Jasmine Paolini 6-3, 5-7, 6-3. She will face either two-time defending champion and top-ranked Iga Swiatek or former US Open winner Emma Raducanu for a place in the final.

PSA World Tour
Finals in June

ISLAMABAD (APP): The PSA World Tour Finals would head back to the United States for the first time in a decade when Bellevue, Washington hosts the season-ending tournament from June 18 to 22. The PSA World Tour Finals was the final event of the 2023-24 season and includes both a men's and women's tournament featuring eight players each, bringing together all Platinum title winners as well as the reigning PSA World Champions, said a press release. Any remaining places were allocated to the highest-ranked players on the PSA World Tour Finals Leaderboard, with points on offer at all PSA World Tour events during the season. A round-robin, best-of-three games format was used in the group stage, with the top two from each group qualifying for the knockout semi-finals. The finals revert to the traditional best-of-five games format used in the majority of regular PSA World Tour events. Bellevue will host the showpiece tournament for the first time, while it will become the first US city to stage the PSA World Tour Finals since Richmond, Virginia in 2014.

Man City suffer
Haaland injury
scare before FA
Cup semi-final

LONDON (AFP): Pep Guardiola has revealed Erling Haaland could miss Manchester City's FA Cup semi-final against Chelsea at Wembley on Saturday.

Haaland was substituted before the start of extra time in City's Champions League quarter-final second leg defeat against Real Madrid on Wednesday. Guardiola said after the penalty shoot-out loss that the Norway striker asked to be withdrawn but did not give a reason why.

The City boss has now confirmed Haaland suffered an injury against Real and suggested it was not certain his leading scorer would recover in time for the FA Cup holders' clash with Chelsea. "We will see. It was a tough game, a lot of action, high intensity for both sides," Guardiola told reporters on Friday.

"Erling felt something, a muscular issue. That's why he told me he could not continue. "The doctor said he had a little bit of niggles, a little problem, we will see how his evolution is in the next hours." While Guardiola sweats on Haaland's fitness, City midfielder Kevin De Bruyne should be involved against Chelsea after being taken off during extra time against Real due to fatigue. Given City's hectic schedule, Guardiola conceded it is understandable that players are tired at this stage of the season. "It's normal with the amount of games we are playing this season and the previous seasons and not much recovery, and extra time and high intensity," he said.

"We put a lot of pressure in our game and that's why the fatigue is there. They are human beings. They are not a machine. We are used to it." The agonising shoot-out defeat by Real ended City's hopes of winning a Premier League, Champions League and FA Cup treble for a second consecutive season. But they remain on course to repeat the domestic double and Guardiola is determined to ensure the Premier League leaders bounce back from their European frustration. "We don't have another option. I don't want us to feel sorry for ourselves," he said. "In football, you lose games. We performed at our best and we were not able to win. You have to accept it. "We did everything. We know it, they know it, all the world know it, but it was not enough. When it's not enough, it's a bad night. So congratulations (to Real) and, tomorrow, FA Cup."

O'Sullivan eyes
eighth snooker
world title amid
more retirement talk

LONDON (AFP/APP): Ronnie O'Sullivan may be the most gifted snooker player of his generation, but even the prospect of winning a modern-day record eighth world title has not stopped him from talking about retirement once again.

O'Sullivan threatening to quit snooker is almost as much of an annual event as the World Championships -- which start on Saturday -- themselves, but it's not one officials can disregard lightly given the 48-year-old Englishman remains the sport's biggest drawcard.

O'Sullivan has won both the UK Championships and the Masters, snooker's next two most important tournaments, this season but remains unsatisfied with his own form.

Days out from his latest attempt to break the mark of seven world titles he shares with Stephen Hendry, the 'Rocket' said he planned to give himself 12 months to see if he still wants to compete at the highest level.

"I'm in that situation at the moment where I've just got to get myself in a frame of mind for maybe the next however long," O'Sullivan, who faces Jackson Page of Wales in the first round, told Eurosport.

"I've given myself a year to the end of next year's World Championship to work with Steve (Peters - psychologist) and hope, you know, to get back to where I feel it's acceptable."

He added: "I'll only retire if I think I'm not playing well enough for long enough, which has been going on a while now. That's obviously something that distresses me enough to think. 'I don't want to keep doing that.'" O'Sullivan also made headlines last week by calling for the World Championships to be moved from the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield, northern England -- the tournament's home since 1977 -- while suggesting larger venues in China and Saudi Arabia as alternative locations.

- 'Going blind' -

Further proof of O'Sullivan's unrivalled ability among snooker players to cut through a British sporting landscape dominated by Premier League football came at this year's Masters, where he told his younger rivals their brains were too slow and they needed to raise their game "because I am going blind, I have a dodgy arm and bad knees -- and they still can't beat me".

Nevertheless four-time world champion Mark Williams, who beat O'Sullivan 10-5 in the Tour Championship final earlier this month, remains a threat.

So too does Mark Selby, another multiple world champion, who whitewashed O'Sullivan 6-0 in February.

Australia's Neil Robertson, the 2010 title-winner, lost in final qualifying but Belgium's Luca Brecel, the reigning world champion and China's Zhang Anda will lead an international challenge at an event long dominated by players from Britain and Ireland.

Snooker has changed a lot since England's Joe Davis won 15 consecutive world titles from 1927-46, often in one-off and lengthy challenge matches rather than today's tournament format. But just as Davis was the one snooker player in his era most fans of other sports could name without hesitation so too, for better or worse, the same is true of O'Sullivan.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Table
Tennis Provincial League
Inaugurated at Peshawar

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Table Tennis Provincial League, jointly organized by the Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP) and the Higher Education Commission, Pakistan (HEC) was inaugurated at the Qayum Stadium, Peshawar Sports Board. Mr. Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan, Chairman PMYP, was the chief guest at the event, while other senior officials and players also attended.

Addressing the ceremony, the Chairman PMYP said that the program is committed to unleashing the potential of youth and empowering them to face the challenges of the future. He hoped that Pakistani youth is capable of resolving 21st-century challenges like terrorism, intolerant society and climate change.

He said that table tennis is a sport that promotes mental and physical agility. It is a sport that teaches young people discipline, focus, and how to compete in difficult situations.

He said that PMYP is committed to providing equal opportunities to youth across the country to participate in sports competitions. He urged young people to actively participate in positive and



extracurricular activities to play a vital role in building a peaceful, tolerant and healthy society.

Mr. Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan said in his address that the Talent Hunt Youth Sports League is a unique initiative in Pakistan's history. He said that under this league, for the first time, the Higher Education Commission has been assigned the responsibility of organizing trials for 12 different sports at 25 locations across the country in collaboration with universities, conducting provincial and national

leagues, and bringing youth back to sports fields from negative activities and providing them with opportunities to flourish in the field of sports. Sooner, Sports Endowment Fund is going to be established, he added.

He said that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Table Tennis Provincial League is also being held under the same objective. He said that trials were conducted in five major districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including Peshawar, Bannu, Swat, Hazara, and Mardan, to select all boys and girls between the ages of 15 and 25 who were

the best table tennis players.

He said that the highlight of this league is that all players have equal opportunities to qualify for the national league. He said that the players who are selected for the national league will represent Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He urged all players to give their best performance. He said that training camps will also be organized soon for the SAF Games and other international championships. At the end of the ceremony, the distinguished guests met the players and encouraged them.

Women's One-Day tournament

Multan beat Rawalpindi, Quetta beat
Peshawar, Lahore beat Karachi

FAISALABAD (APP): Gull Feroza's century helped Multan beat Rawalpindi by 141 runs in the second round match of the National Women's One-Day Tournament, played at the Bohranwali Cricket Ground, here on Friday.

Opening batter Feroza, scored 142 off 140 balls, which included 19 boundaries to help her side post 240 for seven in 50 overs. Rawalpindi's captain Humna Bilal was the pick of the bowler with three for 25 runs.

In reply, Noor-ul-Iman (three for 23) and Tasma Rubab (two for 19) shared five wickets between them and dismissed Rawalpindi for 99 in 25.5 overs.

At the Iqbal Stadium, Quetta's Rameen Shamim's successive all-round performance led her side to a 16-run over Peshawar.

Batting first, Quetta was dismissed for 175 in 49 overs, with Arijah Haseeb (46, 59b, 6x4s) and Rameen (27, 45b, 4x4s) contributing runs. Aleena Shah, Mahnoor Aftab and Momina Riyasat bagged two wickets each.

In turn, Peshawar were bowled out for 159 in 47 overs. Off-spinner Rameen bagged four wickets for the winning team.

At Jawad Sports Complex Ground, Lahore scored 138 for four in 43 overs, with Iram Javed scoring an unbeaten 49. The play was stopped due to rain and when play resumed, Karachi were given a revised target of 167 to win in 43 overs.

Karachi, in turn, was bowled out for 166 in 43 overs. Esha Rahupoto (35) and Yusra Amir (34) were contributors with the bat.

Quatulain and Noreen bagged three wickets each for Lahore. In Super Over, Lahore achieved the two-run target in four balls without losing any wicket.

Scores in brief:

Multan beat Rawalpindi by 141 runs at Bohranwali Cricket Ground

Multan 240-7, 50 overs (Gull Feroza 142, Rabia Rafi 35; Humna Bilal 3-25)

Rawalpindi 99 all out, 25.5 overs (Aima Saleem 20; Noor-ul-Iman 3-23, Tasma Rubab 2-19)

Player of the match -- Gull Feroza (Multan)

Quetta beat Peshawar by 16 runs at Iqbal Stadium

Quetta 175 all out, 49 overs (Arijah Haseeb 46, Rameen Shamim 27; Momina Riyasat 2-12, Aleena Shah 2-27, Mahnoor Aftab 2-37)

Peshawar 159 all out, 47

overs (Tayyaba Imad 44, Ayesha Zafar 22; Rameen Shamim 4-19, Kniza Wahab 2-27)

Player of the match -- Rameen Shamim (Quetta)

Match Tied -- Lahore beat Karachi in the Super Over at Jawad Sports Complex.

Lahore 138-4, 43 overs (Iram Javed 49 not out, Dua Majid 30, Noreen Yaqoob 29; Anosha Nasir 3-7).

Karachi 166 all out, 43 overs (Esha Rahupoto 35, Yusra Amir 34; Noreen Yaqoob 3-30, Quatulain 3-41)

Player of the match -- Iram Javed (Lahore)

Next round fixtures:

Quetta vs. Karachi, Bohranwali Cricket Ground; Lahore vs. Multan, Iqbal Stadium; Rawalpindi vs. Peshawar, Jawad Sports Complex Ground.



FAISALABAD: Players in action during cricket match played between Quetta Women Cricket & Peshawar Women Cricket teams during National Women's One Day Cricket Tournament 2024. —APP Photo

Aleem Dar sets major
umpiring record

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Renowned Pakistan-based umpire Aleem Dar added another feather to his cap as he became the first umpire to officiate international cricket matches for 25 years.

Gujranwala-hailed Dar made his umpiring career debut in February 2000 when he officiated a One-Day International (ODI) fixture between Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

His precision and pinpoint decisions soon brought him on the radar of the International Cricket Council (ICC), and the apex body, soon inducted him into the international panel of umpires.

He continued to flourish in the role and became a part of the ICC Elite Panel of Umpires in 2002, the same year of its inception.

Aleem Dar, who won the ICC Umpire of the Year Award thrice in

his decorated career, has officiated in 231 ODI matches, 145 Test matches and 70 T20 Internationals.

Notably, his tally of international matches is the highest by any umpire.

Dar also holds the record of umpiring in the most number of T20 World Cups (five).

He also supervised the finals of the ICC Champions Trophy in 2006 and 2009, Men's ODI World Cup finals in 2007 and 2001. He was also one of the on-field umpires in the 2009 Women's World Cup.

Furthermore, he is the youngest umpire to officiate in 100 Test matches and is also among the top three umpires who have umpired more than 100 Test matches. He remained a part of the ICC Elite Panel of Umpires for a staggering 19 years before relinquishing his role in March 2023.

"It has been a long journey, but I

have enjoyed every bit of it. I have had the pleasure and honour of umpiring the world over and what I have achieved is something I did not even dream of when I started in the profession," Aleem Dar was quoted saying by the ICC.

"Though I am still keen to continue as an international umpire, I felt it was now the right time, after 19 years on the road to step away from the Elite panel and provide an opportunity to someone from the International Panel. My message to umpires the world over is to work hard, maintain discipline and never stop learning.

"I thank the ICC, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), and my colleagues on the panel for their support over the years. I would also like to thank my family; without whose support I could not have gone on for so long. I look forward to continuing to serve the game as an umpire."

Pakistan,
New Zealand
teams not to
train on Friday

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and New Zealand would not take part in any practice and training sessions on Friday at the Pindi Stadium, Rawalpindi.

Pakistan team had already announced on Thursday that they would rest on Friday while the Blackcaps cancelled their training due to rain.

The Pindi Stadium will host two matches on Saturday and Sunday, respectively, while Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium will stage remaining two matches on Thursday and Saturday next week.

This would be the third five-match series between both sides inside a 12-month period. Last year, Pakistan and New Zealand drew the series at two-all in Pakistan, while New Zealand clinched the series 4-1 earlier this year in their backyard.

Squads- Pakistan: Babar Azam (c), Saim Ayub, Mohammad Rizwan, Usman Khan, Iftikhar Ahmed, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Shadab Khan, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Naseem Shah, Mohammad Amir, Abrar Ahmed.

New Zealand: Michael Bracewell (c), Mark Chapman, Josh Clarkson, Jacob Duffy, Dean Foxcroft, Ben Lister, James Neesham, Tim Robinson, Ben Sears, Tim Seifert (wk), Ish Sodhi.

National
Women's
Football C'ship
postponed

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) announced the postponement of the National Women's Football Championship 2024, originally scheduled to commence on May 5 in Karachi.

This decision comes in response to feedback from representatives of various clubs, who expressed concerns regarding potential clashes between the championship schedule and the academic commitments of their players, said a press release.

In view of these considerations, PFF has made the difficult but necessary decision to postpone the event. However, the revised schedule for the National Women's Football Championship 2024 would be announced in due course, following further consultation with club representatives and careful consideration of all relevant factors.

Blind Cricket
Trophy from
April 20

ISLAMABAD (APP): The one-day format National Tournament 'A. S. Ali Blind Cricket Trophy (Season 2023-24)' was set to take place in Peshawar from April 20 to 25.

The tournament was being organized by the Pakistan Blind Cricket Council (PBCC) in collaboration with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) Sports Department, said a press release. The said event serves as a platform to celebrate the remarkable talent of the visually impaired cricketers from all corners of the nation.

A total of five provincial teams including Sindh, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, and Islamabad would compete for the coveted title, showcasing their exceptional skills and determination on the cricket field.

The teams would be led by captains, each bringing their leadership and expertise to the tournament. Nisar Ali would captain Islamabad Team, Mohsin Khan will lead Punjab, Badar Munir will skipper Sindh, Naimat Ullah will lead Balochistan, while Sanauallah Marwat will captain Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The tournament would kick off with two matches on the opening day. The first match would see KP facing off against Islamabad at the Hayatabad Sports Complex, while Punjab will take on Sindh at the Peshawar Gymkhana Cricket Ground.

The opening ceremony of the Cricket Trophy National Tournament was scheduled to take place on April 20, at the Hayatabad Sports Complex Cricket Ground in Peshawar.



In brief

Death anniversary of Imtiaz Ali Taj

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 54th death anniversary of famous Urdu writer and playwright Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj was observed on Friday. He was born in Lahore on October 13, 1900, during his student days, his literary skill came to the fore as he translated and directed many English plays he hosted the daily feature Pakistan Hamara Hai on Radio Pakistan and conducted popular radio programmes for several years. After studying in Lahore, he first worked in his father's publishing house, Dar-ul-Ishaat Punjab. In addition to his many translations of Shakespeare's plays into Urdu, including A Midsummer Night's Dream as Sawan Rain Ka Sapna. He also wrote several plays himself, the most notable being Anarkali and Chacha Chakkan, which continue to be performed today. Imtiaz Taj also wrote short stories, novels, radio plays, and stories for films. Imtiaz Ali Taj was murdered while asleep in his bedroom by unknown assassins on April 19, 1970.

IRSA releases 127,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 127,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 201,800 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1433.71 feet and was 35.71 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 38,000 cusecs and 5,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jehlum at Mangla Dam was 1125.05 feet, which was 75.05 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 24,900 cusecs and 17,400 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 74,400, 116,400, 35,300 and 7,800 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 82,900 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 17,400 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala

Muhammad Ali remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 93rd birth anniversary of legendary Pakistani actor Muhammad Ali was observed on Friday. The Lollywood superstar Muhammad Ali was born on April 19, 1931, at Rampur in India. Beginning his career as a broadcaster at Radio Pakistan Hyderabad station in 1956, Ali later transitioned to Radio Pakistan Karachi, where he found guidance and mentorship from the then Director General Zulfiqar Ali Bukhari, propelling him into his acting career. In 1962, he ventured into the film industry, ultimately starring as the lead actor or 'hero' in 94 films. His remarkable talent earned him the prestigious Nigar Awards a record ten times. Renowned as 'Shahansha-e-Jazbat' (Emperor of Emotions) among his fans, Ali remained a dominant figure in Pakistani cinema for over two decades, symbolizing the golden era of Lollywood. Married to fellow actor Zeba, the duo was affectionately referred to as 'Ali-Zeb'. Ali also established the Ali-Zeb Foundation during the pinnacle of his career, dedicated to supporting impoverished artists across the nation. With over 250 movie credits to his name, Muhammad Ali was recognized as one of Asia's top 25 actors by an international media survey.



ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Turkish General Staff, General Metin Gürak called on Minister for Defence & Defence Production, Khawaja Muhammad Asif.

Turkish CGS calls on Minister for Defence

ISLAMABAD (APP): Turkish Chief of General Staff (CGS), General Metin Gürak called on Minister for Defence and Defence Production, Khawaja Muhammad Asif here on Friday. The Defense Minister extended warm welcome to the esteemed Turkish defence delegation,

a news release said. He described the bilateral defence relations between Pakistan and Türkiye as robust. The Defence Minister acknowledged the active role being played by Türkiye for controlling the situation and suffering in Gaza. The visiting dignitary

commended Pakistan's efforts in fostering regional peace and stability, as well as Pakistan Armed Forces' role in combating terrorism. Both sides acknowledged the strong relationship between their Armed Forces and committed to further expand defense collaboration.

Possession of PHAF I-12/1 apartments must be handed over to allottees at earliest: Pirzada

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Housing and Works, Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada here on Friday presided over the balloting ceremony for the Pakistan Housing Authority Foundation (PHAF) I-12/1 project. Amidst the event, 75 apartments, previously cancelled, were re-balloted under the Minister's supervision after fulfilling all procedural requirements.

During the ceremony, the Minister underscored the urgency of promptly handing over possession of the I-12/1 project to its rightful allottees.

Emphasizing on the timely completion of

ongoing projects, he aimed to ensure the provision of contemporary residential amenities to both federal government employees and the general public.

The Minister lauded Shahid Hussain, Managing Director of PHAF, for his commendable efforts in ensuring the timely execution of the project.

In the occasion, Shahid Hussain informed the Minister about the recent success of a membership drive, which attracted approximately a hundred applicants, resulting in the successful balloting of 75 cancelled apartments. He informed that the I-

12/1 project, initiated in 2016, encompasses 3200 D&E type apartments, with construction nearing completion at 90 percent.

Furthermore, the equal allocation of apartments for both the general public and federal government employees signifies a fair and inclusive approach in the recent membership drive.

The ceremony was also attended by the Dr. Shahzad Khan Bangash, Secretary of Housing and Works, alongside other senior officials from the ministry and PHAF, reflecting the collective commitment towards addressing the housing needs of the populace.

WAPDA awards contract to supply 2 GSU transformers for Mangla power project

ISLAMABAD (APP): Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) has awarded contract Package III C amounting to US\$ 6.28729 million for design and supply of two 220 KV, 168.75 MVA Generator Step-up (GSU) Transformers for Unit No. 9 and 10 of Mangla Refurbishment Project and the Chinese Contractor will complete the task in 400 days.

The contract signing ceremony was held at WAPDA House, said a press release. General Manager (Hydel) Development WAPDA Mr. Ihsan Ullah and Chief Representative of the Chinese firm CHINT Mr. Zephyr Zhao signed the contract on behalf of their organizations.

Member (Finance) WAPDA Naveed Asghar Chaudhry and Member (Power) WAPDA Mr. Jamil Akhtar witnessed signing of the contract. PD Mangla Refurbishment Project along with the officers concerned, representatives of the Consultants and the Contractor also attended the ceremony.

WAPDA is implementing Mangla Refurbishment Project with an approved PC-I cost of Rs.52,224 billion. The Project is being carried out in various phases, wherein the generating units are to be refurbished by closing down one tunnel (two generating units) at a time.

Refurbishment of the first two units has been completed in 2022, while

refurbishment of all 10 generating units is likely to be accomplished by year 2027-28 in a phased manner.

Mangla Refurbishment Project, on its completion, will enhance generation capacity of the existing Mangla Hydel Power Station from 1000 MW to 1310 MW, thus registering an increase of 310 MW. The average annual generation of Mangla Hydel Power Station will also increase from 5 billion units to 6.6 billion units.

USAID is providing US\$150 million as grant and AFD France is providing Euro 90 million as loan for Mangla Refurbishment Project, while rest of the amount is being arranged by WAPDA through loans and from its own resources.

Renowned comedian Umer Sharif remembered on his birth anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): Renowned comedian Umer Sharif was remembered on the occasion of his birth anniversary on Friday. Born on April 19, 1955, Umer started his career in Karachi as a stage performer at the age of 14 in 1969. He joined theatre, using the stage name Umer Zarif, modeled after his favorite comedian Munawar Zarif, but later renamed himself Umer Sharif.

He started off his career by the name Umer Zarif, but later he changed his name to Umer Sharif. He began his career as a stage performer.

Two of his very famous comedy plays included "Bakra Qiston Pe" and "Buddha Ghar Pe Hai". Overall he acted in over 50 stage plays in his career and was called as King of comedy.

Umer Sharif became a very popular star

and much of the success came from the fact that he started to record his stage shows and his videotapes were rented out similarly to movies.

His first movie was Hisaab (1986) but he's better known for Mr. 420 (1992), a movie where he not only acted but also directed, wrote, and sang its songs as well. Overall he acted in 35 films, his last movie being Chand Babu (1999).

He received two National Awards for Mr. 420 in the category of Best Actor and Director. Furthermore, he received 10 Nigar Awards.

Umer received the prestigious Tamgha-e-Imtiaz for his contributions to the Pakistani industry as an actor, producer, and comedian.

He died in a hospital in Nuremberg, Germany at the age of 66.

ANF establishes rehabilitation center in Quetta

RAWALPINDI (APP): A rehabilitation center has been established at Baleli Road, Quetta for the treatment of drug addicts under the management of Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF).

According to an ANF Headquarters spokesman, A 45-bed rehabilitation center for the treatment of drug addicts has been made operational. The rehabilitation center would provide quality treatment facilities for drug addicts.

The newly established center is equipped with modern facilities.

Professional doctors, psychologists, social workers and paramedics have been deployed in the rehabilitation center.

Drug addicts would be provided free treatment facilities for 45 days in the rehabilitation center.

ANF is also committed to countering drug trafficking and providing rehabilitation services.

ICP continues crackdown against smoke emitting vehicles

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) has intensified action against smoke emitting and pressure horns vehicles for the purpose of environmental protection.

A public relations officer on Friday said that, following the special directions of the SSP Traffic Muhammad Sarfraz Virk, the Islamabad capital police have intensified the crackdown against vehicles causing environmental pollution and using pressure horns.

In this regard all Zonal DSPs have been directed to take stern action against vehicles involved in polluting the environment. Mobile squads of Islamabad Capital Police have been formed to implement the campaign against the smoke-emitting vehicles. These squads patrol in various areas and important boulevards of the city and are directed to take legal action against those vehicles involved in noise and smoke pollution.

Meanwhile, special squads had been constituted as per the directions of SSP Traffic in order to conduct regular checking and issued fine tickets against vehicles involved in noise or other environmental pollution in the city.

Interior ministry decides to launch joint operation in Kacha area of Sindh

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi, after consultation with all stakeholders in the interior ministry decided to conduct a joint operation in Kacha area of Sindh province, with full force to clear the area from dacoits.

An important meeting of the National Action Plan Implementation Review Committee was held at NACTA headquarters here on Friday under the chairmanship of the Interior Minister which was attended by Federal Interior Secretary, Head NACTA, DG FIA, Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. IGs and provincial secretaries Interior besides National Coordinator NACTA, all teams of National Action Plan and Intelligence agencies and Chief Commissioners also attended the meeting.

The top brass after detailed brainstorming, decided to conduct a joint operation in the Kacha area with full force and close coordination between the provinces and all stake holders to clear the area from dacoits. Detailed consultation and consideration was made to provide new modern technology to the police across Pakistan.

The meeting also carefully reviewed the measures taken regarding the security of Chinese citizens while All the IGs gave a detailed briefing on security and safety measures for Chinese citizens in Pakistan. The meeting also decided to restrict the movement of those tourists who do not follow the prescribed SOPs. The meeting also reviewed the foolproof security arrangements in Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad during the Iranian President's visit.

FGCTA commends role of education ministry for granting higher time scale

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Government College Teachers Association (FGCTA) has applauded the Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training for granting higher time scale to teachers.

This decision has garnered appreciation from various quarters, highlighting the significance of recognizing educators' contributions to the education sector.

Dr. Rahima Rehman, President of the FGCTA, while talking to APP, extended her heartfelt gratitude to the Education Ministry for elevating the status of the teachers. She specifically acknowledged the pivotal role played by Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani, the Secretary Education, whose directive paved

the way for the issuance of the notification for the promoted teachers. Despite encountering delays in the process since the initial meeting held on January 5, 2024, Dr. Rahima emphasized that Ahmad Wani's intervention expedited the process, ensuring timely recognition for the deserving teachers. Furthermore, Dr. Rahima expressed appreciation towards the Promotion Cell of the Ministry, led by Rashid Ahmed Marwat, a dedicated Section Officer. She also commended the officials of the CP Section of FDE for their efforts in facilitating the process, highlighting the collaborative measures that contributed to the successful implementation of the initiative.

CDA urges residents to approach helpline in case of emergency during rainfall

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has urged the citizens to approach helpline of the Authority in case of any emergency during the heavy rainfall in the federal capital.

According to spokesman of the Authority, the teams comprising of CDA, Municipal Corporation Islamabad (MCI) and district administrations are fully equipped to address all the complaints of the residents during the rainfall.

He said the CDA's workforce and machinery are swiftly addressing water drainage on the roads.

"All the supervisory staff and the machinery of the CDA are present in the field for canal oversight," he added.

The spokesman said that all the emer-

gency response centers in Islamabad were operational which was managed by the CDA. He said the CDA is vigorously monitoring all the place including roads, nullahs and water passages in federal capital.

The spokesman said special teams, consisting of personnel from the CDA, MCI, and district administration are also assigned to both sectoral and non-sectoral areas. He said the duties of relevant staffers in mountainous regions have been further intensified.

About the traffic flow in the federal capital, he said that traffic is flowing normally on all roads in Islamabad.

The spokesman said that the stringent monitoring measures are being implemented in hilly areas.

3-day training program on AI in teaching practices concluded at AIOU

ISLAMABAD (APP): A three-day faculty training program on "Empowering Educators: Integrating AI into Teaching Practices" was organized at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU). Teachers and students from 37 universities from all over the country participated. The workshop was organized by AIOU in collaboration with the Commonwealth Educational Media Center for Asia (CEMCA) as a part of the university's professional development program.

In addition to Pakistan, resource persons from America, the United Kingdom, Sri Lanka, New Delhi, and Ireland shared their insights on the use of artificial intelligence in

teaching and research processes during various sessions. Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood presided over the closing ceremony. Dr. Nasir stated that artificial intelligence has become a crucial necessity in every aspect of life, including teaching and learning.

AIOU will be conducting more workshops to train its teachers and officers on artificial intelligence since faculty development is their top priority. Director CEMCA, Bashir Ahmed, while speaking online from New Delhi, India, acknowledged the vital role played by AIOU in creating a skilled workforce for Pakistan. He

expressed his desire to continue collaborating with AIOU, which has proven to be very useful. Director, Directorate of Academic Planning and Course Production, Dr. Zahid Majeed explained the aims and objectives of the workshop and said that 32 teachers from 37 universities participated physically while the rest of the teachers participated online.

The participants found the workshop extremely useful and thanked the Directorate of Academic Planning and Course Production for organizing it. At the end of the workshop, the Vice Chancellor distributed certificates to all the participants.



ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi chairing the meeting of National Action Plan Coordination Committee at NACTA Headquarters.

Turkish doctors arrive in Kabul

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Ministry of Public Health reports that a team of Turkish doctors has arrived in Afghanistan to treat children. The ministry updated on Thursday, April 18th, in a post on the social media platform X, stating that this team of Turkish doctors has come to Afghanistan to perform complex and pediatric urology operations in collaboration with Afghan doctors at the Ataturk Children's Hospital free of charge.

6,000 acres of land cleared of poppies

BADAKHSHAN (Ariana News): Badakhshan Police Command says it has cleared more than 6,000 acres of poppy fields in northern Badakhshan province. The anti-narcotics department of Badakhshan Police Command says that since the beginning of the campaign to destroy the poppy fields in this province, they have cleared more than 6,000 acres of land. According to these officials, poppies have however been planted in more than 10 districts this year.

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

250,000 Afghan children need homes, food, education after returning from Pakistan



KABUL (Ariana News): In the wake of an announcement by Pakistan that it intends to start Phase Two of deportations of Afghans, Save the Children said Thursday that almost a quarter of a million Afghan children need proper homes, food, and access to education after returning from Pakistan in the past seven months.

In a statement issued by the organization, Save the Children said more than 520,000 Afghans have returned from Pakistan since September last year, after Pakistan said all undocumented foreigners must leave the country voluntarily or face deportation.

Nearly half of all the returnees are children.

A survey by Save the Children of families who have returned to Afghanistan – and the communities who are hosting them – found that nearly all (99%) do not have enough food for the next one to two months. About three-quarters of returnees and families in host communities reduced portion sizes or restricted the food consumption of adults so small children could eat.

About 40% of returnees and host families surveyed had to borrow food or rely on friends and relatives for at least three days a week – with 13% of returnees and 9% of host families saying they had to get food from others every day.

Almost 8 million chil-

dren in Afghanistan – or one in three – are facing crisis levels of hunger.

Nearly one in six families live in tents, according to the survey, with most returnees having little or no means to support themselves. Only a third had managed to bring assets back with them from Pakistan.

Nearly half (47%) said there were no jobs available in Afghanistan, with 81% saying that they do not have any skills that could lead to employment.

Almost two thirds (65%) of children who have returned to Afghanistan have not been enrolled in school. The majority (85%) told Save the Children that they don't have the neces-

sary documents to register and enroll in school.

In Pakistan, more than two thirds of these children had been attending school.

Arshad Malik, Country Director for Save the Children in Afghanistan, said: "Families are returning to Afghanistan with virtually nothing. Most are relying on relatives or friends to support them – and these communities already have little to support themselves.

"The return of so many people is creating an additional strain on already overstretched resources. Children need support and stability. Many undocumented Afghan children were born in Pakistan – Afghanistan is not the place they call home," he said.

He added that in addition to the returns from Pakistan, 600,000 Afghans arrived from Iran last year. Also, "families have been forced from their homes by multiple disasters, including the series of earthquakes in Herat and the ongoing drought. Afghanistan is also now home to the second largest number of internally displaced people in the world – or roughly 1 in 7 people," Malik said.

According to him, Afghanistan not only needs urgent funding from international donors and governments – but also needs long term, community-based solutions to help all displaced Afghans rebuild their lives.

Ten people killed by floods in Helmand

OCHA: 1,590 Families Affected By Flooding in Afghanistan

KAJAKI (Ariana News): Ten people have been killed and six others injured by floods in Helmand province in the past week, local officials said on Friday.

According to officials, seven of those were members of the same family, and they were killed in Kajaki district last night.

"Most of the people moved from vulnerable areas to high lands and mountains, and thanks Allah the number of casualties is low," Sher Mohammad Vahdat, the head of information of the Directorate of Information and Culture in Helmand, said adding rescue teams and security forces have been dispatched to help people. It is said that the telecommunication system has also been disrupted due to the effect of floods in Kajaki district. Floods have also destroyed thousands of acres of agricultural land.

MEANWHILE, The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said that flooding



in Afghanistan from April 10 to April 16 has affected almost 1,590 families.

According to OCHA, around 1,590 families have been affected, with 35 people killed and another 47 people injured, while 46 families have been displaced. OCHA said flooding has claimed the lives of 35 people in Afghanistan and injured 47 others.

The report also said that the most severely affected

provinces that had fatalities were Badghis (4), Farah (2), Helmand (5), Kabul (3), Kandahar (4), Laghman (2), Nangahar (1), Parwan (2) and Uruzgan (12).

More than 930 houses have been destroyed (198) or damaged (738), along with around 63,700 acres of agricultural land and at least 470 livestock reportedly killed.

The United Nations

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs emphasized that a new wave of rains is expected in the central, south, southeast and southwest regions of the country over the next week, with up to 30 mm of rainfall daily. These volumes are of concern because water reserves are filled to capacity, thus flooding is to be anticipated.

MSF 'deeply concerned' over new phase of deportations of Afghans from Pakistan

KAJAKI (Ariana News): Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) said it was deeply concerned for the rights and welfare of Afghan refugees in Pakistan in the wake of the recent announcement by Islamabad that it plans to start Phase Two of the deportation campaign.

Pakistan is home to an estimated 3.7 million Afghans, and a reported 500,000 have crossed the border so far.

Many Afghans living in Pakistan have been there for decades and have

spent more time in the country than their country of origin, without any legal recourse to remain in the only place they can effectively call "home".

For many Afghans, Islamabad's "repatriation" campaign means packing up their belongings and carrying them on a horse, cart, car and bus and traveling en masse to a country that is already struggling with widespread poverty, inadequate health services and increased restrictions on women, MSF said in a

statement.

The second phase of the deportations leaves an estimated 800,000 Pakistan-issued Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders vulnerable to return, while phase three is expected to result in the further deportation of UNHCR-issued Proof of Registration (PoR) card holders, MSF said.

MSF first started working in Pakistan in 1986, and today provides much-needed medical care to people in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and

Sindh provinces. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) and UN agencies estimate that more than half a million people have been deported from Pakistan or voluntarily returned to Afghanistan in the past six months.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees said last month that nearly two million Afghan refugees are living in Pakistan and that the agency needs \$368 million this year to assist these people.

IEA urges World Bank to resume work on 7,000 incomplete projects

KABUL (Ariana News): Officials at the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) say 7,000 incomplete projects of the World Bank are at risk of destruction in Afghanistan. They call on the World Bank to resume the work of these projects.

According to them, discussions have been held with the World Bank about these projects, but there has been no result yet.

"7,000 incomplete projects are being destroyed, and if the work is not started, these projects will be destroyed. We ask the World Bank to resume the work of these projects as soon as possible," said Noorul Hadi Adel, the spokesperson of MRRD.

Meanwhile, members of the private sector also ask international institutions to resume their work in Afghanistan.



According to the officials of this sector, with the start of these projects, job opportunities will be provided for thousands of people in the country.

"These projects create employment for our people and the country will grow a lot," said Mirwais Hajizadeh, a member of the private sector. However,

economic experts stated if the work of these projects does not start soon, they will be destroyed and the investments made in them will be wasted.

Victims of recent floods seek government assistance

KABUL (TOLOnews): Some victims of the recent floods in the country are calling on the Islamic Emirate to cooperate with them. They say the rains and floods have taken everything they own and they urgently need assistance.

Lawang Khan, a victim from Kandahar, said, "We have neither possessions nor homes left. You saw people becoming homeless." Hekmatullah, a victim from Uruzgan, said: "If the government helps us, it's good; if not, we will work with our wives to build our own shelter."

Meanwhile, the national meteorological agency has warned of heavy rains and flooding in the coming week in some provinces of the country.



Nangyali Samoon, spokesperson for the Kandahar Department of Agriculture, said: "In various districts of Kandahar, a large number of agricultural lands have been destroyed, and along with that, in some districts, livestock have also perished."

The Afghan Red Crescent Society said that it has delivered primary aid to most of the affected families and that this process is ongoing.

Mudassir Hamraz, spokesperson for

the Afghan Red Crescent Society, said: "Physical assistance has been provided to families affected by the floods, and our teams are still striving in all areas to transfer primary aid to the victims."

Commerce ministry inks 10 MoUs to boost development of small and medium-sized businesses

KABUL (Ariana News): The Ministry of Commerce and Industry said it has signed cooperation agreements with ten institutions to support the development of small and medium-sized enterprises.

Nooruddin Azizi, Acting Minister of Commerce and Industry, said: "In the implementation of projects, we must pay special atten-

tion to our activities and actions and try to make useful use of the projects according to the requirements and benefit the beneficiaries." These ten institutions are to present their projects, the total value of which is around over \$1.1 million. The projects will be carried out in Kabul, Baghlan, Ghor, Herat, Logar, Nangarhar, Balkh,

Badakhshan and Jawzjan provinces and provide direct jobs for about 1,000.

To date, the ministry has signed MoUs for 72 projects in total, collectively valued at about \$53.6 million. These agreements have been signed with domestic and foreign companies for the establishment of small and medium-sized businesses.

In accordance with the principles and laws of the Islamic Emirate and prioritizing the implementation of projects for immigrants and returnees and internally displaced people, the ministry said 635,865 people will benefit through jobs directly and over 4.3 million will benefit indirectly in 25 provinces once these projects are implemented.

Balkh Health officials note surge in cancer cases

BALKH (Khaama Press.): Health officials from the Balkh Public Health Department report a notable rise in cancer cases within the province.

"In 1401, about 2,613 OPD cases were registered with us. During the last year, 1402, these figures were 4,912 cases," said Ehsanullah Kaliwal, the head of the oncology department at Balkh Regional Hospital.

Some doctors attribute the sharp increase in cancer cases in Balkh to various factors, including genetic predisposition, environmental pollution, indiscriminate use of medications, and high consumption of meat. Additionally,



one doctor noted that cancer can also have hereditary roots. Stomach cancer accounts for a significant portion of cancer cases in Balkh. Many patients suffering from this disease have urged the government to enhance treatment facilities to address their needs.

Health officials reveal that during the first month

of this solar year (April), 423 cancer patients sought treatment at local hospitals, highlighting the urgency of addressing this health issue in the province.





ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari conferring award of Nishan-i-Imtiaz (Military) upon the Chief of Turkish General Staff, Turkiye, General Metin Gurak.

India votes in first phase of election as Modi seeks third term

NEW DELHI: Millions of Indians have voted in the first phase of the world's largest elections as Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeks a third term on the back of issues such as growth, welfare and Hindu nationalism.

The vote pits Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) against an alliance of two dozen opposition parties that promise greater affirmative action and more handouts while stressing what they call the need to save democratic institutions. Before polls closed on Friday, the Election Commission said voter turnout ranged from 40 percent in the sprawling northern state of Bihar to 68 percent in the small northeastern state of Tripura. In the multiphase 2019 polls, the average turnout was 67 percent.

"I urge all those voting ... to exercise their franchise in record numbers," Modi posted on the social media platform X before voting began. The main opposition Indian National Congress party urged voters to end "hatred and injustice" in a statement on X.

About 969 million people have registered to vote in the six-week elections, including 18 million first-time voters and 197 million who are in their 20s. This makes India's electorate bigger than the combined population of the 27 European Union member states. Friday's vote was the first of seven phases, and it covered 102 constituencies across 21 states and territories from Tamil Nadu in the south to Arunachal Pradesh on the Himalayan frontier with China. Voters in the violence-hit northeastern state of Manipur also turned out in large numbers to vote in the shadow of ethnic clashes that have killed at least 220 people in the past year.

Voters patiently assembled in a long and winding queue outside a polling station in the Hindu holy city of Haridwar in Uttarakhand state on the banks of the Ganges River before the booths opened. "I am here because I am happy about the direction the country is headed," autorickshaw driver Ganga Singh, 27, told journalists. "I will vote, keeping in

mind not personal welfare but the country's prosperity."

Voting took place through electronic voting machines. Voters pressed the blue button corresponding to the serial number, name and symbol of the candidate of their choice or chose the option "none of the above". While the voting process was generally peaceful, in Manipur, voting was soon disrupted over allegations of irregularities, Indian media reported. A paramilitary security officer in Bijapur district of the central state of Chhattisgarh was also injured in an "accidental" explosion, reports quoting the police said.

Surveys suggested the BJP will easily win a majority in the Indian Parliament even though voters are worried about unemployment, inflation and rural distress. Jobs were the chief concern for Mohammed Shabbir, a Muslim voter in Kairana in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh. None of his eight children has regular employment, the 60-year-old driver said.

"Even the Hindus are affected by a lack of jobs," he told the Reuters news agency, insisting that the problem outweighs the appeal of Hindu nationalism in the Hindu-majority nation. In Tamil Nadu, where the BJP is weak, voters seemed divided on whether Modi's strong push this time around would benefit his party.

"The BJP may not boost its vote share in Tamil Nadu, but nationwide, Modi will win hands down again," S Rajagopal, a three-wheeled taxi driver in the state capital, Chennai, told Reuters. Attacks on minorities, mainly Muslims, since Modi's rise to power and an alleged gag on free speech and media are also among the issues likely to affect the elections.

Modi's government has "controlled Muslims", Ramesh Chand, a Hindu biscuit baker in Kairana near Muzaffarnagar, told local media. BJP spokesman Mohan Krishna expressed confidence that his party would sweep the elections. "The opposition is in disarray," he told Al Jazeera. "The welfare schemes, ... a corrup-

tionless government," led by Modi has given "immense satisfaction as well as confidence to the people."

Krishna also said allegations of backsliding of democracy under Modi were "absolutely rubbish". "Democracy and the constitution are held high by the BJP, and we have proved that ... in the last 10 years," he said. But some BJP insiders and analysts said the party is worried about complacency or overconfidence among voters and party members and needs to draw more people to vote.

The opposition Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA), to which the Congress party belongs, has criticised the BJP for rising unemployment and corruption while also challenging the government's statements on inflation data. "The opposition's manifesto has laid stress on unemployment, on women's emancipation, for the farmers ensuring a minimum support price and also our essential plank of social justice, which is inclusive growth - something that the BJP has not done," Congress spokesperson Anshul Avijit told Al Jazeera.

Yet the INDIA alliance has struggled to forge unity. It has accused the government of hobbling its efforts by arresting its leaders in graft cases and issuing huge tax bills to its parties before the vote - a charge the government denies. Avijit said the opposition believes in the power of democracy and the people of India, who he said would rise up against the ruling party, which he said had undermined India's electoral system.

The second phase of the marathon election will be held on April 26 with 89 parliamentary seats up for grabs in 13 states. The following phase of voting will take place on May 7 for 94 seats in 12 states. On May 13, 96 seats in 10 states will be decided while on May 20 voters will cast ballots for 49 seats in eight states. The May 25 phase will cover 57 seats in seven states, and the last phase on June 1 will see polling in 57 constituencies across eight states. — Aljazeera

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia vow to boost ties

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: H.E Major General (Engineer) Talal Bin Abdullah Al-Otaibi, Assistant Minister of Defence, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) called on General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS), at GHQ.

During the meeting, matters of mutual interest and measures to further enhance bilateral defence collaboration including defence production and military training were discussed. COAS affirmed Pakistan Army's continuing support towards capacity building of Royal Saudi Land Forces.

The visiting dignitary acknowledged Pakistan Army's achievements and sacrifices in war against terrorism and Army's valuable contributions towards regional peace and stability.

The visiting dignitary also participated in the 5th Meeting of Pakistan-KSA Defence Collaboration at GHQ, which he co-chaired by CGS Pakistan Army.

The forum discussed challenges to global and regional security and their implications on Defence Forces. Forum noted that rapid advancements in modern technologies necessitated defence industrial cooperation in critical capabilities between the two brotherly countries. Both sides reiterated their resolve to solidify the efforts in defence collaboration with focused approach to target specific capabilities in land, air and sea domains. In this context, concrete proposals were deliberated by the forum to meet tangible objectives within specific timelines.

PHC orders CM to summon KP assembly session

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court has issued detailed judgement on petition filed against the non-administration of oath from elected members on reserved seats and ordered Chief Minister along with his cabinet to summon Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly within 14days under Article 105 of the Constitution, on Friday.

Justice SM Ateeq Shah authored the 24-page verdict, which has directed the Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for oath taking from the newly elected members on reserved seats before the Senate elections. The delay and stopping of elected members on reserved seats from administering oath is unconstitutional.

The detail verdict added that petitioners represent the marginalized communities. The Chief Minister and Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly ensure administration of oath from petitioners in accordance with the Constitution and Assembly rules.

The judgement further stated that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had declared Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) intra-party elections null and void. However, PTI candidates had participated in the elections as independents.

PTI backed victorious candidates joined the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) after general election held on 8th February. Latterly, SIC filed a petition with the Election Commission for allotment of reserved seats, which was rejected on 1st March and issued a notification in which petitioners were enlisted as Members on reserved seats.

However, Governor summoned Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly session on 22nd March for oath taking from the petitioners on reserved after PHC 14th March decision rejecting SIC plea, the detail judgment stated.

The petitioners approached PHC as Speaker didn't held Khyber Pakhtunkhwa session as summoned by Governor for administration of oath from members elected on reserved seats, the detail verdict concluded.

Opposition leader challenges KP's govt budget for a month: Opposition Leader at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Ibad Ullah Khan has challenged the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's approval of a one-month budget for necessary expenditures at Peshawar High Court (PHC), on Friday.

Tehran plays down reported Israeli attacks

— signals no further retaliation

DUBAI/JERUSALEM: Explosions echoed over an Iranian city on Friday in what sources described as an Israeli attack, but Tehran played down the incident and indicated it had no plans for retaliation — a response that appeared gauged toward averting region-wide war.

The limited scale of the attack and Iran's muted response both appeared to signal a successful effort by diplomats who have been working round the clock to avert all-out war since an Iranian drone and missile attack on Israel last Saturday. Iranian media and officials described a small number of explosions, which they said resulted from Iran's air defenses hitting three drones over the city of Isfahan. Notably, they referred to the incident as an attack by "infiltrators," rather than by Israel, obviating the need for retaliation.

An Iranian official said there were no plans to respond against Israel for the incident. "The foreign source of the incident has not been confirmed. We have not received any external attack, and the discussion leans more toward infiltration than attack," the official said.

Israel said nothing about the incident. It had said for days it was planning to retaliate against Iran for Saturday's strikes, the first ever direct attack on Israel by Iran in decades of shadow war waged by proxies which has escalated throughout the Middle East through six months of battle in Gaza. The United States received advance notice of Israel's reported strike on Iran but did not endorse the operation or play any part in its execution, US media quoted officials as saying.

NBC and CNN, citing sources familiar with the matter and a US official, respectively, said Israel had provided Washington with pre-notification of the strike. Various networks cited officials confirming a strike had taken place inside Iran, with CNN quoting one official as stating the target was not a nuclear facility.

The two longstanding foes had been heading toward direct confrontation since a presumed Israeli airstrike on April 1 that destroyed a building in Iran's embassy compound in Damascus and killed several Iranian officers including a top general. Iran's response, with a direct attack on Israel, was unprecedented but caused no deaths and only minor damage because Israel and its allies shot down hundreds of missiles and drones.

Allies including the United States had since been pressing hard to ensure any further retaliation would be calibrated not to provoke a spiral of hostilities. The British and German foreign ministers visited Jerusalem this week, and Western countries tightened sanctions on Iran to mollify

Israel. In a sign of pressure within Israel's hard-right government for a stronger response, Itamar Ben Gvir, the far-right national security minister tweeted a single word after Friday's strikes: "Feeble!"

Countries around the world called on Friday for both sides to avert further escalation. "It is absolutely necessary that the region remains stable and that all sides restrain from further action," EU Commission head Ursula von der Leyen said. Similar calls came from Beijing and from Arab states in the region. In financial markets, global shares eased, oil prices surged and US bond yields fell as traders worried about the risks.

Within Iran, news reports on Friday's incident made no mention of Israel, and state television carried analysts and pundits who appeared dismissive about the scale. An analyst told state TV that mini drones flown by "infiltrators from inside Iran" had been shot down by air defenses in Isfahan.

Shortly after midnight, "three drones were observed in the sky over Isfahan. The air defense system became active and destroyed these drones in the sky," Iranian state TV said. Senior army commander Siavosh Mihanpour was quoted by state TV as saying air defense systems had targeted a "suspicious object."

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi had warned Israel before Friday's strike that Tehran would deliver a "severe response" to any attack on its territory. Iran told the United Nations Security Council on Thursday that Israel "must be compelled to stop any further military adventurism against our interests" as the UN secretary-general warned that the Middle East was in a "moment of maximum peril."

By morning, Iran had reopened airports and airspace that were shut during the strikes. Still, there was alarm over security in Israel and elsewhere. The US Embassy in Jerusalem restricted US government employees from travel outside Jerusalem, greater Tel Aviv and Beersheba "out of an abundance of caution."

In a statement, the embassy warned US citizens of a "continued need for caution and increased personal security awareness as security incidents often take place without warning." Israel's assault on Gaza began after Hamas Islamists attacked Israel on Oct. 7, killing 1,200, according to Israeli tallies. Israel's military offensive has killed about 34,000 Palestinians in Gaza, according to the Gaza health ministry. Iran-backed groups have declared support for Palestinians, carrying out attacks from Lebanon, Yemen and Iraq, raising fears the Gaza conflict could grow into a wider regional war. — Agencies



RAWALPINDI: General (Engineer) Talal Bin Abdullah Al-Otaibi, Assistant Minister of Defence, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) called on General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff, at GHQ.

Polio eradication KP CM directs attention on sensitive areas

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: An important meeting of the Provincial Task Force (PTF) for Polio Eradication Initiative was held here at Chief Minister's House Peshawar on Friday with Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur in the chair.

The authorities concerned briefed the chief minister about the various aspects of Polio Eradication Initiative with special focus on challenges faced in this regard, future course of action and other important matters. Important decisions were also made on the occasion to achieve the cent percent goals of polio eradication drives by improving the existing strategy and making this whole effort more effective and result-oriented.

Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry, IGP Akhtar Hayat Khan Gandapur, Additional Chief Secretary Home Muhammad Abid Majeed, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Amjad Ali Khan, administrative secretaries of concerned departments, representatives from partner organizations and other relevant officials attended the meeting. Divisional and deputy commissioners also attended the meeting via video link.

The chief minister on this occasion, directed the relevant quarters to further

improve the coordination mechanism amongst all the stakeholders in order to achieve the desired targets of polio eradication campaigns, and said that we can make these efforts successful only through an effective and better team work. He further directed them to have special focus on addressing the issues of refusal cases in addition to making operational affairs of polio eradication campaigns better.

"We need to have targeted approach in order to convince the parents who are reluctant to administer anti polio drops to their children", he remarked and directed that Ulema-e-Kiram, Social mobilizers and elected public representatives be involved for this purpose. Refusal cases should be reviewed especially after each campaign, he added.

The chief minister also directed to pay special attention on sensitive areas adding that special funds be allocated for such areas so that polio virus can be eradicated completely from the province. Moreover, he directed to make post campaign monitoring system more effective so as to compile realistic data of results achieved through Anti-Polio Campaigns. He said that it is the responsibility of relevant commissioners, Deputy Commissioners and District Health Officers to go all out to make Polio

Eradication Campaigns successful; in case of any negligence, they would be held accountable.

He made it clear that being a national obligation, polio eradication is the collective responsibility of all of us. Parents, Teachers, Ulema-e-Karam, media and people from all other walks of life would have to play their pro-active role in this regard.

Balochistan cabinet takes oath

F.P. Report

QUETTA: The 14-member provincial cabinet of Balochistan took oath at a ceremony held in the Governor House in Quetta on Friday.

It is pertinent to mention here that except Balochistan, the cabinets have been formed in all other provinces as well the centre. Earlier on March 2, Pakistan People's Party's (PPP) Mir Sarfaraz Bugti was sworn in as Chief Minister of Balochistan.

After taking office on March 2 as chief minister, the chief minister Bugti hinted that the cabinet will be formed following the Senate elections. All eleven of Balochistan's Senators were elected unopposed in the Senate election on April 2.

Pak wants larger loan programme with IMF

WASHINGTON (INP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb has said that Pakistan wants to enter into a larger and extended loan programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Attending the Roundtable conference with Investors in Washington, the finance minister highlighted Pakistan's stable macroeconomic indicators including declining inflation, stable currency, strong growth of agriculture sector, strong remittances, rising forex reserves and buoyant stock market. He also discussed key priorities of the Government around taxation, energy sector reforms and privatization programme.

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb also met with Citibank officials in Washington DC and briefed them on the positive economic indicators including rising stock market, renewed interest of foreign buyers and institutional flows on the back of Stand-by Arrangement (SBA) signed with IMF. The Finance Minister said Pakistan has successfully repaid Eurobond on time. He said the government has initiated discussion with IMF on a larger and extended programme.

We will never be deterred by bullying tactics: Bilawal

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari responded to questions by the media representatives at the National Assembly on Friday. Chairman PPP said that the opposition members are afraid of Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari and that is why so much noise was made by them while Bibi Aseefa was taking oath. This shows that they are afraid of a Nihatti Larki (an unarmed girl). We will never be deterred by bullying tactics as we have faced dictators like General Zia and General Musharraf for the last three generations. We will face them with democratic means. Their actions are undermining the sanctity and reverence of the parliament.

Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that the Party has made a history yesterday when the President of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari addressed the parliament for the seventh time. In his address President Zardari pointed out the issues which is the need of the hours. We should think of the country instead of petty differences. We should think of Pakistan and its people. President Zardari gave a roadmap and a message to be united to deal with the issues confronting Pakistan at the moment. The representatives of the people have to play a role and fulfill the

responsibility. Unfortunately, the opposition does not have interest in playing their role in the parliament. We should resolve the issues of the people but the only objective of the opposition is to get personal political interests and to get the relief for their party leaders. The opposition protest was not democratic and mature. Unfortunately, this behavior of the opposition members compelled the Speaker to suspend membership of two opposition members but it was necessary to set the precedent so that every member should remain within the rules of the parliament.

Regarding a question about terrorism, Chairman PPP said Imran Khan's government policy regarding the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, terrorism and about the neighboring country, the way that government let free the terrorists from prisons and invited the terrorists who were in Afghan prisons before the fall of Kabul to enter Pakistan were all wrong. The parliament was not taken on board and the President of the time was giving the terrorists clemency. That was the policy of Imran Khan's government. We had criticized that policy then and now we should have a clear stance to see the issue as political but as an issue of national security. You cannot have the policy

of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds. This dual policy will not work and the Army, police, common people rendered great sacrifices to eliminate these terrorists in the past.

Responding to a question regarding opposition's hue and cry during President Zardari's address to the joint session, Chairman PPP said that every political party has the right to do politics but on the issue of foreign affairs, diplomatic issues etc. we should have displayed unity in front of diplomats. These diplomats will tell their countries about this opposition's behavior as well.

Speaking about the destruction by the floods in the modern country like United Arab Emirates, Chairman Bilawal said that the climate change is increasing in its intensity with time. Pakistan is an under-developed nation and we are trying to give relief to the people with our limited resources. The floods in 2022 caused huge destruction. We are constructing 2 million houses for those flood-hit people. We have to change our development strategy for the federal and provincial governments and make the infrastructure climate resilient and climate friendly so that we can protect the coming generations and President Zardari has also given a message in this regard in his address yesterday.