

Bomb targets cops

BAJAUR (INP): A bomb was exploded near a police vehicle deployed for election duty in Bajaur District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Sunday. Luckily, all the policemen on board the vehicle escaped any injuries. The police van was slightly damaged in the blast. The bomb explosion occurred when the police vehicle was passing by in Darra area of Tehsil Salarzai in Bajaur district.



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Ball in our court now, we must deliver: Aurangzeb

Jalil Afridi

WASHINGTON DC: Finance Minister of Pakistan, Muhammad Aurangzeb while interacting with Pakistani journalists at Pakistan's Embassy in Washington DC stated that Pakistan has over whelming support in Washington DC and from our the world therefore the "ball is in our court now and we must deliver."

The minister also informed that the IMF delegation will be arriving in Pakistan some time in May and that Pakistan should be receiving the next potion of the loan sometime in June or July.

Mr Aurangzeb especially thanked Mr Ajay Banga the President of the World Bank for promoting Climate, Digitization and Human Capital in Pakistan. With regard to World Bank, the minister also highlighted their cooperation in Health, Education and Child Stunting in Pakistan which are long programs extending upto ten years.

Regarding making the Tax collection more transparent and timely, the Minister said that 1.3 Trillion Rupees worth Tax related cases are pending in the Tribunals and that there "should be some decision taken at least in these tribunals."

With regard to Tax collection, the Minister also informed that the Tax authority needs to go towards digitalization and few consultants have been short listed in this regard. "Action has to speak louder than the words" the Minister added and assured that implementations in this regard are in progress.

When asked by The Frontier Post about the credibility of influential politicians who wear 15 million Rupees worth watches but according to their tax returns they have only declare 3 million Rupees worth jewelry in their tax returns so how will Pakistan comply with the demand of IMF when it asks that the tax base should be increased in Pakistan.

The minister replied that through Data Analytics and Digitization information about such individuals can easily be traced and they will be charged accordingly.

To another question by The Frontier Post

Whether Pakistan should give more importance to trade with India or Afghanistan, Mr Aurangzeb replied by saying "why not do trade with both of them."

During the briefing one journalist congratulated the Minister on his successful trip to Washington DC where as this scribe told the Minister that the trip would have been great had the U.S. State Department not announced placing sanction of three Chinese companies who are providing equipments to the Ballistic Missile Program of Pakistan. It is pertinent to mention here that there is no data available to ascertain how much financial loss will happen to Pakistan due to such sanctions announced by the U.S. State Department.

Iranian President to arrive Pakistan today

ISLAMABAD (APP): President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Dr. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi will arrive here on Monday on an official visit from April 22 to 24. During the visit, President Raisi will meet the President and the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Chairman Senate and Speaker, National Assembly. He will also visit Lahore and Karachi and meet with the provincial leadership.

"The Iranian President will be accompanied by his spouse and a high-level delegation comprising the Foreign Minister and other members of the cabinet, senior officials as well as a large business delegation," Foreign Office Spokesperson, said in a press release on Sunday. This will be the first visit by any Iranian head of state to Pakistan after the general elections in February 8 this year. The two sides will have a wide-ranging agenda to further strengthen Pakistan-Iran ties and enhance cooperation in diverse fields including trade, connectivity, energy, agriculture, and people-to-people contacts.

By-elections 2024 PML-N takes lead as results pour in

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): The ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has taken the lead in the by-polls held on nearly two dozen national and provincial seats on Sunday, as per unofficial and preliminary results.

Following the swearing-in of the new assemblies, Pakistan's first by-elections on 21 vacant national and provincial assembly seats were held amid sporadic incidents of clashes between workers of different political parties in Punjab. Major political parties including Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-backed Sunni Ittehad Council and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) participated in the by-polls.

The voting on the by-polls, conducted after the February 8 general elections, started at 8am and concluded at 5pm today.

During the polling

process, the federal government suspended mobile phone services temporarily in several districts of Punjab and Balochistan in a decision that was taken to safeguard the integrity and security of the electoral process.

Meanwhile, at the request of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), the government also deployed Pakistan Army and Civil Armed Forces (CAF) troops during the polling process.

Several workers of the PML-N and SIC clashed in several constituencies, leading to death of one PML-N worker, Muhammad Yousaf in Narowal.

Police said that the PML-N worker was taken to hospital where he succumbed to injuries, adding that the polling was stopped in this constituency.

The elections were held on five NA seats, 12

Punjab Assembly seats, two each in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan Assemblies and one in Sindh Assembly.

The NA seats include NA-8 and NA-44 (KP) NA-119 and NA-132 (Punjab) and NA-196 (Sindh). Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has won one seat in the form of NA-207, Nawabshah from where Aseefa Bhutto Zardari has been elected unopposed.

The provincial assembly seats include PK-22 and PK-91 (KP), PB-20 and PB-22 (Balochistan) and PS-80 (Sindh). The Punjab Assembly seats where the by-polls are taking place include PP-32 (Gujrat), PP-36 (Wazirabad), PP-54 (Narowal), PP-93 (Bhakkar), PP-139 (Sheikhupura), PP-147, PP-149, PP-158, PP-164 (Lahore), PP-266 (Rahim Yar Khan) and PP-290 (Dera Ghazi Khan).

KP torrential rains leave 63 dead, 78 injured: PDMA

PESHAWAR (INP): The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) issued a report on Sunday of the loss of lives and property in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) due to heavy rains.

So far, 63 people have died and 78 people have been injured, the report added. According to the report, "Around 33 children, 15 men, and 15 women are among the killed, while 17 women, 37 men, and 24 children are among the injured."

A total of 3,202 houses were damaged due to the collapse of walls and roofs in different districts, of which 477 were completely damaged and 2,725 were partially damaged.

Due to heavy rains, life and

financial accidents occurred in various districts, including Khyber, Dir Upper and Lower, Chitral Upper, Swat, Bajaur, Shangla, Mansehra, Mohmand, Malakand, Karak, Tank, Mardan, Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera, Buner, Hangu, Batagram, Bannu, North and South Waziristan, Kohat, DI Khan, and Orakzai.

On the special instructions of the Chief Minister of KP, PDMA released Rs 110 million to the administration of the affected districts in the recent rains for financial assistance and relief activities for the affected families. Apart from this, at least 90 million rupees have been released for relief activities in the tribal districts as well.

Along with financial support,

PDMA also provided relief materials to the affected districts of Swat, Chitral Lower, Bajaur, Kohistan Lower, Peshawar, Nowshera, Mohmand, Dir Upper, Tank, Shangla, Torghehar, and DI Khan.

The relief items include tents, mats, kitchen sets, blankets, beds, tarpaulins, solar lamps, and other daily life items. Relief activities are ongoing in the rain-affected districts by PDMA and all related agencies.

As the rains are expected to continue intermittently until April 21, PDMA has already issued a letter to all district administrations to be alert and take precautionary measures. PDMA's emergency operation center is fully functional. People should report any untoward incident to 1700 around the clock.

Pakistan sends 8th shipment of aid to Palestine

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In accordance with the Government of Pakistan's instructions to provide humanitarian support to

the people of Gaza, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in collaboration with Al-Khidmat has coordinated to send another commercial cargo ship

for 8th tranche of relief assistance. Additional Foreign Secretary Mr. Ahmed Amjad Ali, Palestinian Ambassador to Pakistan Mr. Ahmad Rabaie,

Representatives of Al Khidmat Foundation, Senior officials of NDMA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Armed Forces attended the send-off ceremony at South Asia Pakistan Terminal (SAPT) Karachi.

The shipment is destined to reach Said Port, Egypt for further distribution to People of Gaza.

This 8th relief consignment comprises of 350 tons of aid including medicines, hygiene kits, Female Dignity kit, dry ration, ready to eat food, jerry cans, and tents as per needs at Gaza.

Earlier, NDMA has sent six relief consignments comprising 630 tons of aid which included special winterized tents, blankets, surgical supplies, medicines, and food packs.



LAHORE: Eminent religious scholar Dr. Raghīb Hussain Naeemi calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Punjab Assembly's pre-budget session called today

LAHORE (INP): The Punjab government has decided to summon the pre-budget session of the Punjab Assembly, scheduled to commence on April 22, Monday. As per sources, Ministry of Law has dispatched the summary for the pre-budget session to the Governor of Punjab for approval. The pre-budget session, slated for tomorrow, will primarily focus on deliberating suggestions and recommendations for the fiscal year 2024-25 budget.

Members of the government, as well as opposition representatives, will participate in discussions regarding budget proposals and allocations. Notably, Members of the Provincial Assembly (MPAs) are expected to provide input and suggestions pertaining to the needs and development priorities of their respective constituencies during the session.

According to sources of the Punjab Assembly, the Governor of Punjab will issue the official notification for the pre-budget session. Preparations for the pre-budget session have been initiated.

Arms smuggling bid foiled

TORKHAM (INP): The customs department foiled an attempt to smuggle foreign-made weapons, ammunition and arrested two accused here on Sunday.

On a tip-off, the customs department searched two cargo vehicles at Torkham border. During search of the vehicles, foreign-made three M3 Rifles, two American pistols, 4000 bullets and 8000 bullets of 9MM were seized and two smugglers were arrested. The customs department seized the recovered weapons, ammunition and detainees were being interrogated.

PM renews pledge to realize Allama Iqbal's vision of Pakistan

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday said that Allama Muhammad Iqbal had dreamt of a 'Pakistan' that would be a cradle of peace, political forbearance and brotherhood and stressed upon renewing of pledge to achieve Iqbal's vision by making strenuous efforts.

He said that Allama Iqbal wanted the youth to take the country to acme of progress and development with their constructive approach. In a message on the observance of the 86th death anniversary of Dr Muhammad Iqbal, the prime minister said that the entire nation had been praying for the high ranks of Allama's departed soul on the day and paid rich tribute

to his contributions. "Dr Muhammad Iqbal, through his thoughts and teachings, had stressed the unity of Muslim Ummah. He especially focused upon youth and played an important role in getting them acquainted with the sacrifices of their forefathers, prestige and the forgotten inheritance," PM Office Media Wing, in a press release on Sunday, quoted the prime minister as saying. The prime minister further said that Allama Iqbal taught the youth to wage consistent struggle and exhorted them to carve paths in the future through gaining knowledge, carrying out research and learning from the past glorious periods of Muslims. Iqbal's philosophy of self-hood

(Khudi) was a beacon of light for all and by emulating his philosophy, the exquisite qualities of mankind could be achieved, he said, adding that not only the modern universities in the region but across the globe were also conducting research upon his philosophy and teachings.

The prime minister said, moreover, Iqbal's verses and writings in Persian and Urdu languages had been popular in the world.

Allama Iqbal had dreamt of a separate homeland for the Muslims of the Indo-Pak sub-continent which was realized by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and other leaders of the Muslim League by striving day and night.

Two more customs officials shot dead in DI Khan

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (INP): At least two Customs officials were killed and two were injured in a firing incident near Parking Plaza in DI Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, police sources said.

Unidentified assailants opened fire as the Customs officials were targeted near Parking Plaza. DSNQ vehicle of a private Tv news channel also came under the fire, luckily the staff remained safe.

The attackers escaped the scene after the shooting incident. The bodies and injured were moved to the District HQ Hospital. On 18 April, at least four Customs officials were killed in a firing incident near Sagu road in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's DI Khan. Last month, at least two soldiers of Pakistan army embraced martyrdom in DI Khan suicide attack.

According to Inter-Services-Public-Relations, two security personnel embraced martyrdom as a vehicle-borne suicide bomber exploded himself on a security forces' convoy in Dera Ismail Khan District. In February this year, at least five cops were martyred and two others sustained injuries as explosion occurred near police vehicle in Kulachi.

PM condemns attack on Customs officials in DI Khan: Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday strongly condemned an attack on Customs officials in Daraban area of Dera Ismail Khan.

In a statement, the prime minister reiterated that such cowardly acts could not shake the resolve of the government and the fight against terrorism and smuggling would continue till their complete elimination.

Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif prayed for the departed souls of Shaheed officials and for the bereaved families to bear the losses with fortitude, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

He said that looking after the bereaved families of Shuhada was now a responsibility of the government and directed the chairman Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to prepare Shuhada package for the bereaved families.

Those Shuhada who had been sacrificing their lives for the motherland and laying down their lives in performance of duties, were alive before Allah Almighty, he added.

It is to be noted that in the current week, at least six customs officials have been martyred in Dera Ismail Khan.



WASHINGTON DC: Finance Minister Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb's interaction with Pakistani media at Pakistan Embassy.



LAHORE: A large number of people attending Vaisakhi Mela organized by Parks and Horticulture Authority Late night at Hazuri Bagh. —APP Photo

Normalizing relations with Israel for financial gains not acceptable: Naeem

LAHORE (INP): Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman has said that any attempt to normalize relations with Israel for financial gains and the two-state solution to the Palestine issue is not acceptable at all. Addressing a Palestine Solidarity March in Lahore, he reiterated his stance against the government, which he said came to power through fraudulent means, asserting that the people have lost faith in it to champion the cause of Palestine. Nevertheless, Hafiz Naeem u Rehman emphasized that the JI demanded the government to raise its voice

for Palestine or brace itself for the wrath of the people. Referring to Quaid-i-Azam's stance, he denounced Israel as an illegitimate state, formed by seizing Palestinian Muslim land. He said Pakistani rulers now are being offered dollars to recognize Palestine and relinquish Kashmir, warning that the nation would vehemently resist such schemes. The Ameer JI called for a summit of Muslim nations and non-Muslim states sympathetic to the Palestinian cause to advocate for a ceasefire. He urged Islamabad to extend medical

assistance to Gazans, especially children, as a minimum gesture of support. This march marked the first public gathering led by JI Emir after assuming office. Thousands, including children and women, attended the solidarity rally. Hafiz Naeem condemned the US, Israel, and India as the three foremost terrorist countries responsible for civilian bloodshed and gross human rights violations. He hailed the people of Gaza for their historic resilience, considering it a lesson for the entire Muslim community. He emphasized that a

cowardly life held no honour and respect, foreseeing a not-too-distant future where Palestine would be liberated, reshaping the map of the Middle East. He decried Israel's indiscriminate killing of civilians, lamenting US support for its aggression while Muslim leaders looked to Washington for a ceasefire. Ameer JI highlighted global solidarity with the people of Gaza, with many in Western nations speaking out against the injustice and advocating for a ceasefire, contrasting sharply with their leaders' support for Israel's actions.

Azma condemns PML-N worker's killing in Narowal

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari on Sunday condemned the killing of a PML-N worker Muhammad Yousaf in Narowal, who was allegedly tortured by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) workers. In a statement issued here, she expressed condolences with the family of the deceased. She said the law-enforcers should arrest the killers immediately. Azma said it was very unfortunate that the PTI was using all negative tactics to rig by-polls.

New rain spell likely to hit

LAHORE (PPD): Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) said today that a new rain spell which will enter Punjab from April 23 (Tuesday). In this regard, a PDMA spokesman said that there is a possibility of light rain in the areas of Upper Punjab on April 23. Thunderstorm and hailstorms are likely to occur in Upper Punjab from April 26 to 29, said the PDMA spokesman. Rain alert has already been issued across Punjab from 18 to 21 April, spokesperson said. PDMA warned farmers should harvest the wheat crop keeping in view the weather conditions. Director General PDMA said that according to the directives of Chief Minister Punjab, the administration is on round the clock alert. The district administration of the entire province has been informed about the new weather situation.

124 connections disconnected in Punjab, KP and Islamabad; Rs 43.7 million fine imposed

F.P. Report

LAHORE: During the ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, SNGPL continued raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad, disconnecting another 124 connections; Rs 43.7 million fine imposed. In Lahore, the regional team disconnected 9 connections on illegal use of gas. The team also imposed fine of Rs.1.26 against gas pilferers. In Multan 7 connections were disconnected on illegal use while another two disconnected on use of compressor. In Peshawar and Karak, the company disconnected 81 connections on account

of direct use of gas and illegal use of gas and amount of Rs 4.4 million against gas theft cases. The team also lodged 4 FIRs against gas thieves. The regional team of Rawalpindi disconnected 2 connections on illegal use of gas while imposing fine of Rs 0.10 million against gas theft cases. In Sahiwal one connection was disconnected on illegal use of gas. In Faisalabad the team disconnected 1 connection on illegal use of gas while imposing fine of Rs 0.43 against gas pilferers. The regional team of Bahawalpur disconnected 1 connection on illegal use of

gas while another four on use of compressor. In Gujranwala four connections were disconnected on illegal use of gas while three on use of compressor. The team also impose fine of Rs 37.4 against gas theft cases. The regional team of Mardan disconnected 05 connections on illegal use of gas and also imposed fine of Rs 0.1 against gas theft cases. In Sargodha three connections were disconnected by the team on illegal use of gas. The regional team of Gujrat disconnected 1 connection on illegal use of gas while imposing fine of Rs 0.1 million against gas pilferers.

6 arrested in violent clashes outside polling stations

LAHORE (INP): Violence marred the polling process in Lahore and Ferozswala, on Sunday as clashes erupted between rival political factions, resulting in arrests and injuries. In Lahore's NA-119 constituency, tensions flared between workers of the Sunni Ittehad Council and the PML-N at Polling Station No. 171 near the University of Engineering and Technology (UET). The dispute reportedly centered around the set-up of a camp, escalating into a physical altercation. Police intervened and arrested four individuals in connection with the inci-

dent. Meanwhile, in Ferozswala's PP-139 constituency, a confrontation between two groups outside the Government High School Nizampur turned violent, with gunfire being exchanged. Three people sustained injuries during the altercation. Law enforcement authorities swiftly moved in, arresting two suspects and suspending the polling process at the affected polling station. The clashes have raised concerns about the security and integrity of the electoral process in these areas. Both incidents have under-

scored the simmering tensions and rivalries that often characterize election days in the country. Polling for by-elections in 21 constituencies of the National and provincial assemblies across the country has commenced at the scheduled time of 8am and will culminate at 5pm. By-elections are being held in five constituencies of the National Assembly and 16 seats of three provincial assemblies. At some polling stations, a large number of presence of voters is being reported, while some paint a deserted look even a couple of hours into the polling process.



LAHORE: Women selecting old books from a roadside at Mall Road. —APP Photo

CM grieves over death of two Rangers jawan

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister (CM) Syed Murad Ali Shah expressed grief over two Rangers jawans' death in Nangarparkar accident on Sunday. According to the Spokesman, CM Murad said, 'I am very saddened by the death of two jawans'. He directed to provide the best medical treatment to the injured jawans. The accident occurred due to tyre bust in the Nangarparkar, the Spokesman added.

Two stabbed to death in separate incidents

LAHORE (INP): Two including a rickshaw driver were killed in separate incidents of violence in different localities of the provincial capital on Sunday, police said. After exchange of hot words between drivers of qinqi and auto rickshaws in Shafiqabad area, accused Shahid stabbed other rickshaw drive to death with sharp edged weapon. Police arrested the accused. Another 37-year-old man identified as Zahid was stabbed to death by unknown culprits after serving intoxicant material at Bedian Road of Kahna. The bodies were shifted to different hospitals and police after registering separate cases at respective police stations started investigations.

Lanjar grieves over killing

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Home Minister Ziaul Hasan Lanjar on Sunday expressed grief and sorrow over the killing of two Rangers jawans in a road accident in the Nangarparkar area of Umerkot. He prayed for granting courage to the bereaved family members of jawans. The minister said that the provincial government of Sindh stood in this hour of grief with the bereaved families. He also prayed for the speedy recovery of injured Rangers jawans.

PML-N working to solve public problems: CM

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif said on Sunday that the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N), under the leadership of Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, is sincerely trying to solve public problems. In her message to PML-N voters on the day of by-elections, she said PML-N voters were coming out, which is a welcome sign. "We have given relief,

relief and only relief to the people of Punjab in a short span of time," she said. The CM highlighted that "the Ramadan Nigehban Relief Package, 20,000 bikes, low-priced flour and bread are proof of our few days' performance. Labourers, farmers, students and women of Punjab are at the top priority of the government. The Rs 130 billion farmer package reflects Nawaz Sharif's agriculture-friend-

ly vision." She said, "My team and I always strive to make things easier for the common man. Laptop and iPad schemes are also going to be introduced in Punjab soon." All candidates of PML-N will succeed with a clear majority, Inshallah, she hoped. "My mission is to carry forward the vision of your and my leader Muhammad Nawaz Sharif" she concluded.

Polling process continues peacefully on NA-196 bye-election

KARACHI (APP): The polling process for the by-elections on National Assembly constituency NA-196 Kambar Shahdadt is in progress on Sunday which will continue till 5 pm. According to spokesman of the provincial Election Commissioner Sindh, more than 423000 eligible voters will use their right of fran-

chise during polling on National Assembly seat vacated by PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. Total 303 polling stations were set up in the constituency, of which 81 were declared as most sensitive while 77 are said to be sensitive where strict security measures have been adopted for smooth conduct of the

bye-election. Pakistan People's Party and Tahreek Labaik Pakistan candidates are contesting the election on NA-196. Meanwhile, provincial Election Commissioner Sindh Sharifullah said that all resources were being utilized for conduct of fair, free and impartial election on NA 196.

Police remain fully alert for peaceful by-election

LAHORE (APP): Lahore police remained fully alert for peaceful and secure conduct of by-elections 2024. A spokesperson for Lahore Police told the media on Sunday that the police with 24 SPs, 45 SDPOs, 168 Inspectors, SHO's and In-charges Investigation, along with more than 17,000 police officials, performed security duties during the by-election. He said that lady police constables were also on duty for security of women polling stations and women

voters. As many as 195 pickets were established on entry and exit routes of Lahore and polling stations across the city were on high alert. To ensure peace during the electoral process, voters were allowed entry into polling stations after three-tiered security clearance. Additionally, Anti-Riot Forces and Reserve Forces were on stand-by to handle any untoward situations. The spokesperson added that senior police officers were continuously monitoring the situ-

ation in the field. Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) Lahore Bilal Siddique Kanyana stated that Lahore Police provided foolproof security for peaceful and secure conduct of the by-elections. He mentioned that actions were taken in accordance with the Election Commission of Pakistan's Code of Conduct on the polling day. CCPO Lahore underlined that Lahore Police strictly followed a zero-tolerance policy on the display of weapons and firing incidents.



LAHORE: Police officials stand alert outside the polling station during the by-election 2024 at Bajaline. —APP Photo

Man gunned down in DHA Karachi

KARACHI (PPI): A man shot dead his friend near Phase 5 of the Defence Housing Authority (DHA) in Karachi on Sunday. According to the police, Fahad Khan made 55-year-old Humayun get out of the car he was driving and then sprayed him with bullets, resulting in his instant death. Giving further details, the police said that the deceased was sitting with his friends in an apartment near Sea View area of the city when Fahad came there and had an exchange of hot words with him. However, their friends intervened and calmed them down. And when later Humayun left for his home along with his friend in a car, Fahad followed him to his home, the Force said, adding there he intercepted him, made him alight from the car and then pumped bullets into his body. Police said they had taken over 15 empty shells of bullets, they had found at the crime scene, into their possession. They informed bullets pierced through the back side of the deceased's car. Police, however, said they were trying to figure out what led to the murder. They informed that the manhunt for the assassin had also been launched.

By-elections

Voting continues amid suspension of internet, mobile phone service

LAHORE (INP): Voting has begun on Sunday morning in by-elections on five national and 16 provincial assembly seats amid suspension of internet and mobile phone service and tight security. The process of voting was extremely slow in the PP-158 constituency as only two votes were cast in women's polling station by 9:30 am. Similarly, three votes were polled in a men's polling station and seven in another. There was not a single voter in the polling stations at around 8:15 in the morning due to a Sunday close. Even there was no polling agents were present in the camps set up outside polling stations to guide voters. Rangers and army officials were deployed in some sensitive constituencies. Mobile phone and internet service was suspended in 13 cities of Punjab early in the morning and likely to remain off till late night. The Punjab Home Department wrote a letter to the Ministry of Interior

seeking suspension of internet. Cellular and internet services will remain suspended in Lahore, Sheikhupura, Kasur, Dera Ghazi Khan, Talagang, Gujrat, Alipur, Zafarwal, Bhakkar, Chakwal, Sadiqabad, Alipur Chattha and Kot Chattha. Elections were originally scheduled for 23 constituencies. However, the results of two of those seats, one provincial and one national, have already been announced. THE POLLING Polling will be held from 8 am until 5 pm without any break. There are five National Assembly, 12 Punjab Assembly, two Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Assembly and two Balochistan Assembly seats are up for grab. Women polling staff sealing a ballot box in Balochistan Assembly constituency PB-22 Lasbela before start of voting on Sunday. Approximately 2.55 million voters will use their right to franchise for the NA constituencies,

while around 3.61 million people will cast votes for 16 provincial assembly seats nationwide. The Election Commission (ECP) has provided 6.23 million ballot papers to the returning officers (ROs) concerned which were handed over to presiding officers from their camp offices on Saturday. MONITORING AND CONTROL ROOMS According to a spokesperson of the ECP, an Election Monitoring and Control Centre has been established to monitor the by-elections. The center will have the facility for people to contact and register their complaints regarding the election. The spokesperson said a prompt action would be taken to resolve the complaints in a timely manner. For this purpose, trained staff has been appointed in the control centre. Control centres have been set up at four levels for registration of voter complaints and their prompt resolution.

Tandoors defying govt orders; Only selling 200 gram roti

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A large number of naanbais in different areas across Peshawar have stopped selling the 100 gram roti rather selling just 200 gram roti for thirty rupees thus defying the orders of the government. Recently, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had announced a cut of Rs.5 in the price of roti to 'provide relief to people'. However, the naanbais are selling

only 200 gram roti at a price of Rs30. The residents of Peshawar are also complaining about the weight of the 200 gram roti and said that they are getting lesser weight roti at Rs30. When this scribe contacted a number of naanbais, they said that when they started selling 100 gram roti at Rs15, people started quarreling with them by saying that this is less weight roti which is not enough for one person. Some individuals also said that

during the day, the weight of the roti is approximately equal, while at night the naanbais reduce the weight, when they were sure no one from the government department would be there to check. Interestingly, this practice has been going on for the last couple of days and yet no action has been taken by the government. People have asked the government to take notice of the situation.



PESHAWAR: KP Chief Minister's Advisor on Culture and Tourism Zahid Chanzeb talking to delegation of Kaghan Development Authority.

Tourism Advisor hints on reducing funding, staffing

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism, Culture and Archeology Zahid Chanzeb on Sunday stressed on the accomplishment of tourism projects and activities on emergency basis as well as achieving 100 percent of the set goals for the development of tourism in the province. He made it clear to the authorities that the present KP Government will evaluate the performance of the departments on the basis of achievement of targets and not mere claims. He said that the funds and staff of the department or institution that failed to meet the targets will be reduced, while the institutions that perform well will be strongly encouraged and funded. He expressed this in the meeting and briefing of Kaghan Development Authority (KDA) and delegations of the elite of Mansehra. In the meeting of KDA, Director General Mohammad Shabbir apprised the Adviser tourism about the progress

of Mansehra to Lake Saif Al-Muluk hotel management, tourist facilities on highways and other schemes related to tourism industry under his instructions. Briefing was given on ongoing and new schemes for tourism development, while the managers of various sections of KDA shed light on the functioning of their institution and its performance for the promotion of tourism sector in the area. Zahid Chanzeb was also briefed about opening the Mansehra Naran to Jhalkot (MNI) road besides the measures to deal with the weather conditions and told that this major road managed by the National Highway Authority, is usually closed every year in the winter season due to immense weather conditions, and henceforth steps are underway to reopen it, wherein the KDA is fully supporting the National Highway Authority in this regard. The Tourism Adviser expressed satisfaction over the progress made so far, however he issued clear instructions to the KDA to take concrete steps to develop tourism in the area

and provide maximum facilities to tourists. He said that the development strategy for the tourist areas must include that apart from ensuring quality services in hotels and restaurants, special arrangements should be made for washrooms and potable water on the sides of the highways at a suitable distance while its maintenance be handed over to local hotel owners. He said that the main cause of most diseases is contaminated water, so the authorities should pay special attention to these facts because he said we do not want tourists to suffer due to any kind of problems on their return to home from travel and tourism. He said that the provincial government and the Tourism department will fulfill its prime responsibility of promoting tourism on a solid basis throughout the province and making tourists journeys and tours memorable, pleasant and healthy in all respects while for this purpose, comprehensive action plan based on set targets and goals is being adopted for the next five years, he concluded.

Roof of a house caved-in, six including four children injured

PESHAWAR (APP): The roof of a house collapsed due to rains near Beri Bagh, Kohat Road on Sunday, officials of the Rescue 1122 said here Sunday. Initially, 4 children and

2 men were trapped under the debris of the roof, the officials of the Rescue 1122 said. As soon as the information was received, Rescue 1122 teams reached the spot and started

rescue operations. Rescue 1122 personnel pulled out all the injured from under the debris and the medical team provided first aid to all the injured and shifted them to Lady Reading

Hospital. The injured persons identified as Jameel aged 30 years, Sher Zaman age 30 years, Asfandiyar age 13 years, Naveed age 12 years, Adnan age 12 years and Shayan age 8 years.

IGFC North hails Mohmand social workers

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Social workers from Mohmand district were acknowledged for their remarkable contributions during a meeting with Inspector General Frontier Corps North, Major General Noor Wali Khan, at Fort

Balahisar Peshawar. The meeting highlighted the dedication and talent present among the tribal youth, with a commitment from the Pakistan Army and Frontier Corps North to empower them through education and skill development initiatives. Major

General Noor Wali Khan praised the efforts of social workers in Mohmand district and emphasized the importance of tapping into the potential of tribal youth. He reiterated the ongoing collaboration between the Pakistan Army and Frontier Corps North to provide edu-

cational opportunities and vocational training to the local community. Among the notable individuals recognized was Najeebullah, who established the Mashaal Library in Yukaghund in 2014 with the support of Frontier Corps. In 2021, he expanded the library to accommodate children from the area and established the Mashaal Skill Center to empower local women. Additionally, Siraj Khan Safi, an engineer from Mohmand district, was commended for his global representation of Pakistan at various youth conventions and forums. He has also played a significant role as a member of the FATA Youth Jirga, contributing to youth empowerment initiatives in the region.



PESHAWAR (APP): The weather will remain partly cloudy and cold in all across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and in the next 24 hours, there is a possibility of rain in most of the districts of the province, an official of the Meteorological Department said here Sunday. The minimum temperature has been recorded as low as 16 degrees Celsius and it is likely to rise to a maximum of 23 degrees Celsius,

the official of the Meteorological Department said. The humidity in the air has been recorded up to 80%, the official added. Landslides are also feared in Upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa due to heavy rain and there is a fear of damage to standing crops and houses due to strong winds, hail, thunder and heavy rain, the official of the Meteorological Department

said. Risk of inundation of low-lying areas due to rain and during the last 24 hours, there was rain with wind and thunder in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Malam Jabba 58mm, Dir (Upper 49, Lower 34), Kakul 43mm, Bacha Khan (Airport 41), Takht Bai 35mm, Darosh and Saidu Sharif recorded up to 28 mm of rain, the official of the Meteorological Department said.

Reforms to alter the outdated system stressed

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Muhammad Faiq Shah, founder and chairman of the Amun Taraqqi Party expressed grave concern over the performance of the incumbent government, saying that rulers have committed murder of people' hopes. Shah said rulers have completely failed to provide relief to masses. He added that the right to live has been snatched from people. The party leader said the dynastic politics has served only personal interests and brought division, hate and destruction in the country. Shah called the present government a sequel of the previous regime, which is only focused to align crippled economy with foreign aid and loans. He said real public' issues have been put into the backburner in the fight for gaining power and distribution of high positions among cronies. Besides, he added no step was taken to arrest economic slide and control over inflation. On the other hand, he said political discord and economic chaos further worsened the situation. The ATP chief said the poor are becoming poorest and the rich are becoming richer, making clear that no change would come under the prevalent tyrant system. Talking to reporters here on Sunday, the party chief said reforms must be introduced to bring change in this outdated system. He said a joint forum is the solution to all issues for which his party has already given proposals. We are ready to provide assistance to the government, institutions and relevant stakeholders to put the economy on track and resolve public issues on priority basis. The ATP leader asked the rulers and politicians to think above their personal interests and work together for people and country betterment.

Pakistan: A land of tourism, archeological wonders

PESHAWAR (APP): Internationally recognized as home to six United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) heritage sites, second highest mountain peak, long coastline and vast cultural and religious heritage, Pakistan offers plenty of tourism activities for local and foreign tourists. It is also a unique country with enchanting deserts, mesmerizing plains and snow covered peaks, adventurous sea shores and plenty of cultural and archeological sites, ancient Muslim architecture and religious sites of Buddhism and Sikhism. Archeological wonders of Mohenjo-Daro in Sindh, Harappa in Punjab, Buddhist Ruins in Takht Bhai and Sahri Bahlol in Mardan and Taxila, ancient Indus and Gandhara civilizations, Thal and Thar deserts and architecture of ancient rulers especially Mughal era can be future hot spots for tourism. Five highest mountains peaks of above 8,000 meters, including the second highest peak – the K-2 (8611m), 108 highest peaks of above 7000 meters, Deosai plain, cultural diversity of Sindh, Punjab, KPK, Balochistan and Azad kashmir, historical monuments and much more across

Pakistan are other hallmarks of our tourism treasure. Although local tourism flourished visibly in recent years yet unfortunately these bounties remained untapped to the maximum due to multiple reasons like insufficient projection, facilities for tourism and law and order situation due to turmoil in the region. Since Pakistan has a meager share in global revenue earning from tourism, the experts believe that if the government fully employs the latest digital techniques and social media to highlight these hidden destinations, it can earn billions of dollars annually. "Today is an era of digital tourism. Technological advancements has fast started transforming the travel and hospitality industry even in developing countries," said Abu Zafar, President Alpine Tourism Club of Pakistan. "We have the most beautiful skiing spots, picturesque valleys, rivers and brooks, hiking tracks, polo grounds, ice hockey fields, deserts for car rallies, sea surfing and mighty peaks for scaling." But, he said, most of our areas remained insufficiently highlighted across the globe. "Therefore, we need to fully employ the power of social and digital media as well as



ensuring amicable environment for tourists." Despite its diverse potential, Pakistan's share in global tourism economy is too low. Therefore, at a time when international media predicts full recovery of tourism industry during 2024, Pakistan needs to tighten belts for securing its due share from trillions of dollars tourism economy. UNWTO has recorded an estimated 1286 million inter-

national tourists (overnight visitors) around the world in 2023, an increase of 34% over 2022 as international tourism recovered 88% of pre-pandemic levels. The Middle East led the recovery being the only region to overcome pre-pandemic levels with arrivals 22% above 2019, Europe reached 94%, Africa recovered 96% and the Americas 90% and Asia and Pacific recovered 65% with the start

of 2023. Following a strong rebound in 2023, the sector's outlook reflected in the latest UNWTO Tourism Confidence Index survey, reveals 67% of tourism professionals indicating better or much better prospects for 2024 compared to 2023. "Our share is too meager as compared to international tourism earning. We secure just a billion or so dollars out of this trillions dollar

economy," remarked Ex-Chairman Economics Department, Peshawar University, Professor Dr Muhammad Naeem. "This is pathetic and urge us to transform our efforts keeping in view the modern trends, exploiting all latest tools for projecting our potential." "I expect from the new government to appoint digital professionals and experts to promote tourism to harness our due share in tourism economy," he stated. Besides nature's bounties in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan, there are ancient and religious sites in Sindh, Balochistan and Punjab to attract millions of foreign tourists. "Scientific advancements and modern technological inventions have virtually turned the world into a global village. Therefore, we should vigorously project our amazing sites and archeological wonders," remarked Manzoorul Haq, former ambassador. "As developed nations have replaced conventional publicity methods with digital tourism, so we also need to exploit global positioning system (GPS) and artificial intelligence for quick dissemination of information and pro-

jection of our sites," he stated and proposed to patronage v-loggers, bloggers and social media groups for the purpose. Although Pakistan's foreign tourism has witnessed 115% increase during 2023 as mentioned by the then Caretaker Minister of State for Tourism Wasi Shah, yet it earned just US\$ 1.3 billion. 'World Tourism Barometer' published by World Tourism Organization of the United Nations, had also mentioned that Pakistan had made a remarkable recovery in tourism to pre-pandemic levels. Showing 115% increase, is just start of a journey towards an overall revolution in this sector that may reach 500% or even thousands percent provided that it is transformed on modern lines projecting Pakistan's potential. It is unfortunate that a country having much more potential than other nations, earn much lower than them that directly needs right person for the right job, political will and modern approach to excel in this arena. This approach should be multi-dimensional, promoting natural, religious, cultural and adventure tourism on war footing to bring in precious tourism associated foreign exchange to support our economy and move forward for economic sustainability.



In brief

Notorious robber killed

FAISALABAD (INP): A notorious robber wanted in various criminal cases was killed in a police encounter here on Sunday. The exchange of fire took place after police launched crackdown in jurisdiction of Peoples Colony police station. In cross firing, a notorious robber Abdul Qadir who had shot injured a transporter over payment of ransom was killed. The killed robber was wanted by police in several cases of extortion, robberies and other crimes and body for shifted to hospital.

Two labourers killed

FAISALABAD (INP): Two labourers were killed and two others injured when dilapidated wall of a house collapsed here on Sunday, rescue sources said. According to details, a group of four labourers was engaged in demolishing dilapidated wall in Model City near Chak No.208-RB Canal when it fell over them. As a result, two labourers including 22-year-old Sabir s/o Anwar and 27-year-old Shehbaz s/o Allah Dita were killed while Ali Ahsan and Rehan were injured. The bodies and injured labourers hailing from Chak No 87/6 Sahiwal were pulled out from the debris and shifted to hospital.

780 profiteers held in April

DG KHAN (INP): Commissioner DG Khan Division Nasir Mahmood Bashir has said that crackdown against profiteering was continued during which 780 shopkeepers have been arrested for selling commodities at high rates. Presiding over a meeting to review performance of price control magistrates on Sunday, the Commissioner said that as per directives of the Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, all possible measures were being taken to prevent profiteering for public facilitation. Nasir Mahmood Bashir said that 119 price control magistrates of the region have got registered FIRs against 182 shopkeepers over profiteering and imposed fine of over Rs 7.3 million. He said that from April 1, the price control magistrates have checked 14,1054 shops and found profiteering by 12,253 shops. He maintained that the district officers had also sealed 78 business points over violations. The Commissioner DG Khan Division directed the price control magistrates to speed up action against profiteers to provide maximum relief to masses.

World Earth Day today

B A H A W A L P U R (INP): The Environment Protection Department, Government of Punjab plans to observe World Earth Day here on Monday, 22nd April 2024. According to a press release issued here, Assistant Director, the Environment Protection Department, Ansar Abbas Siyaal has said that his department had made preparations to observe World Earth Day. He said that the motive of observing the day was to raise awareness among the masses about environmental dangers to our earth. He said that people had been advised to avoid adopting measures which caused air pollution. He said that the use of plastic and later burning it on a large scale is also a danger to the earth. Ansar Abbas Siyaal said that the burning of plastic makes the air polluted and poisonous. He said that the Environment Protection Department would also organize a walk in collaboration with civil society in this regard.



HYDERABAD: A view of migratory birds sitting on the water pond as they started arriving in Pakistan before the start of summer season.

Ahsan alleges PTI activists of killing PML-N worker

NAROWAL (INP): Federal Minister for Planning, Ahsan Iqbal has alleged that activists of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) have killed innocent PML-N worker and I will call him a political martyr.

Talking to media persons in Narowal on Sunday, he pledged to root out all kinds of oppression and hooliganism from Zafarwal.

Ahsan Iqbal said that he

strongly condemns the hooliganism that PTI has done against the PML-N workers in the country.

He alleged that PTI people have resorted to high tactics after seeing the defeat of their thuggish domain.

The federal minister said that PML-N workers are our soldiers who started movement for development of peace.

Ahsan Iqbal said, "I will call them political martyrs. They stood for a good cause and were punished for it. Murderers of the party workers can't escape the grip of law."

He said that those who were supervising all what was happening would be brought to book and all kinds of oppression and hooliganism will be eradicated from Zafarwal.

Father, son killed over petty issue

F.P. Report

BUNER: Young age Arshad Husain and his son Murad Ahmed killed by cousin Ashfaq Ahmed over petty issue of kids fighting.

The tragic murder of father and son reported from village Cheena police station City Swari. Shahzad son of killed arshad Husain and brother of killed Murad Ahmed has registered FIR against cousin Ashfaq Ahmed. The complainant stated the reason behind double murder fighting among kids.

The complainant has told in his report that all the families are living separately inside a compound. He added the day of occurrence both the families exchanged hot words when the third uncle Fazl Akbar and his wife rushed to the rescue. Meanwhile, Ashfaq Ahmed, son of Fazal Wahid, took out a pistol and started firing, as a result of which his father Arshad Hussain, brother Murad and aunty Mst (sh) received bullet injuries. As a result his father Arshad Husain died on the spot, while brother Murad Ahmed scammed injuries on way to hospital.

The City police station lodged FIR and the investigation team initiated and investigation. However, the accused yet to be arrested as raids were conducting on informations, police claimed.

Students protest over closure of IBA

MIRPURKHAS (APP): Students of IBA Sukkur Mirpurkhas Campus including over 155 middle-class students, mostly girls protested against the sudden closure of their campus on Sunday.

According to APP Correspondent, braving the scorching heat, they held placards and banners, urging authorities to reconsider their decision.

The students emphasized that IBA Sukkur Mirpurkhas Campus is the only standard educational institution in the area and its closure would deprive them of quality education.

They appealed to top officials including the President, Prime Minister and Education Ministers to intervene and save their campus, ensuring a secure future for over 150 students.

All set to elect Tehsil Chairman on April 28

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The election commission has set up a total of 99 polling stations (19 for female voters and 80 for male voters) with 266 polling booths including 116 for female voters for the Balambat tehsil chairmanship by-election scheduled to be held on April 28.

The seat fell vacant when the PTI elected tehsil chairman Asim Shuiab failed to return to the council despite repeated calls as he is wanted by police in the May 9, 2023 riots in a number of cases. Since then he has been in hiding and according to some sources the tehsil chairman had left the country long before.

The ECP announced a by-election on the spot. According to the ECP, 49 polling stations have been declared sensitive, 31 most sensitive and 19 as normal. The number of male registered voters in the council is 80,388 while the number of female registered voters is 65,261.

According to the securi-

ty plan a total of 800 police officials would guard the polling stations.

The PPP, PML-N, JUI-F and ANP have withdrawn their candidates to support the JI in the by-election. A close contest is expected between the PTI's Shakir Shuiab and JI's Imranud Din as another PTI disgruntled Syed Alam Shah is also in the running.

Shakir Shuiab is the brother of former tehsil chairman Asim Shuiab who had won the seat with a huge margin.

The Awami National Party announced to withdraw its candidate Muhammad Hayat in favour of the Jamaat-i-Islami nominated candidate for the Balambat tehsil chairman during a press conference held here the other day.

The ANP district president Haji Bahadar Khan, general secretary Malik Muhammad Zeb, Malik Muhammad Ayub and tehsil councillor Noor Khan while speaking at a news conference, said the ANP voters would fully

support the JI candidate Imranud Din advocate.

The ANP village councils' chairmen were also in attendance. Speaking on the occasion the ANP leaders said that they were supporting the JI despite ideological differences for the welfare and development of the area.

They said the JI, PPP, ANP, PML-N and JUI-F all were on the same page to give a tough time to the PTI in the council. They said the PTI leadership had ignored the area during the past ten years. The JI candidate Imranud Din and Shad Nawaz Khan thanked the ANP leadership for supporting them.

Speaking on the occasion they alleged the PTI had done nothing for local masses despite its government in the province and at the center.

They said the PTI lawmakers had kept silent on the flood situation in the district and they were doing nothing to build even a single bridge on the Talash stream that had claimed several precious human lives so far.



GILGIT: A blacksmith busy in making saw in traditional way on his work place at River view road.

Police ensures safety measures for minorities

ABBOTTABAD (INP): Following the directives of District Police Chief (DPO) Abbottabad Omar Tufail on Sunday, a security assessment was carried out by DSP Headquarters Cadet Nazir, along with personnel from the churches of RI Police Line, Cantt Police station and City bound-

aries. During the assessment, DSP Headquarters Cadet Nazir issued necessary instructions to the deployed officers and personnel.

Additionally, detailed discussions with administrative authorities covered security and other pertinent matters, resulting in the

assurance of foolproof security measures.

Emphasizing their commitment to peace and security, including the protection of minority communities, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police reaffirmed that all necessary measures are being implemented in this regard.

Heirs of deceased prisoner protests in Jamrud

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Relatives of a late prisoner, who died of a cardiac attack, suspended the Pak-Afghan highway in Jamrud by putting body on the road on Sunday against the incident.

According to the Jamrud police, the deceased was identified as Noorul Amin son of Thameen, resident of Nai Abadi, Jamrud who had been taken in the last days of Ramadan from Tedi

Bazaar in case of narcotics.

As the prisoner was a heart patient, on Saturday night he felt pain in his chest and after providing first aid, he was rushed to Hayatabad Medical Complex for necessary medical treatment; however he passed away on Sunday morning.

Relatives of the deceased said that two days before Eid-ul-fitr, their innocent kin was apprehended and later on charged him with

having two kilogram Ice.

They blamed Adnan Afridi, Station House Officer, Jamrud police station and District Police Officer (DPO), Khyber Saleem Abbas Kulachi for conducting what they said the whole drama that was an injustice to them.

They demanded the police highup to immediately transfer the SHO and DPO otherwise they had no other option but to continue their agitation.



SARGODHA: A man busy loading solar panel on loader tricycle after purchasing near Shaheen Chowk.

Cattle farming vital to alleviate poverty in rural areas

SARGODHA (APP): Livestock is considered a precious asset not only to run the kitchen smoothly on a daily basis but also help meet expenditures in emergency situations.

About 67 percent of the rural population in the culturally rich region of Sargodha division is directly linked to the livestock sector. The presence of animals is like a cheque which can be encashed at any time.

Livestock has over a 14pc share in gross domestic product (GDP) of the country. It has immense potential not to alleviate poverty in rural areas but can also revolutionize the living standards of the people. Pakistan is ranked fifth in milk producing country. The production of milk and meat could be enhanced significantly by working on animal genetics. The best semen quality could play a vital role in improving ani-



mal health, milk and meat production. Similarly, it could also help generate maximum income for the farmers as well as the country's economy.

At the national level, about 10 million people are rearing cattle. According to the animal census and Economic Survey Report, there are 58.7million big animals in the country. Similarly, the country has 83.3 million small animals (goats). As per the last Economic Survey Report,

the production of milk increased from 63,698million tonnes to 69,784 million tonnes.

Apart from this, district Sargodha owned 4,611,324 big animals (buffaloes, cows), 2,882,689 small animals (goats, sheep) and 1,975,816 rural poultry. Besides this, the farmers also rear 919 camels, said sources in the Livestock Department. In rural areas, it is easy to rear animals because of the cultural environment, easy access to

infrastructure and nutrition. In rural communities, the role of women farmers in cattle rearing is highly important. Without women farmers' participation, the livestock sector could not be managed properly, said Deputy Director Livestock Dr Wajid Ali here on Sunday while talking to APP.

He said that livestock was performing an important role in poverty alleviation in rural areas. He recalled that the government had launched a special initiative to provide buffaloes and cows to widows, especially hailing from rural areas. The government had a very unique idea to provide animals to widows whose children were availing school education. The Livestock Department provided a good number of small and big animals to widows after thorough verification from schools concerned. The widows are

now successfully running their kitchen.

Kosar Nooreen, a widow and a resident of Shah Nikdur in Sillanwali, who got a big animal in 2020, told APP, "I own one buffalo and one calf and it is a good source of my regular income".

She said that she had also earned Rs180,000 by selling three calves. She expressed pleasure and thanked the government for the provision of the buffalo which helped her overcome economic woes.

Rauf, a resident of Farooqa, said that he was eager to sacrifice an animal on Eid ul Azha. He said that he had purchased a small animal against Rs20,000 and nurtured it for the whole year. He expressed pleasure that he had sacrificed the animal for first time in his life.

Similarly, Nadia Bibi and Ruksana Bibi, who are widows and farmers, and

live in Sobhaga, also shared their success stories and praised the government for creation of economic opportunities on a regular basis for their families.

Naila Bibi, another female farmer from Noorpur, said that she got animals on a sharing basis from an investor a few years ago. Rimsha recalled that she was a poor maid before starting the profession of cattle rearing and now she owned 26 animals.

Muhammad Usman from Eeeni, another cattle farmer, who completed a six-month diploma for cattle farm manager from Sargodha Institute of Cattle Farming, said that he had 16 animals. He said that his son was also a student at the institution. Usman recounted that he used to sell an animal for payment of a semester fee. "Animals are a good asset in an emergency situation. I also managed expenditures on marriages of my two

younger brothers by rearing cattle," he added.

Dr Wajid said that the Livestock Department had launched various programmes including calf fattening, save buffalo calf, advisory service, provision of free of cost animals, poultry units at subsidised prices. He stated that production of meat and milk could be enhanced by following certain steps including silage, promotion of Rhodes grass etc. "High genetics animals should also be promoted. In case, there is no price capping on milk and meat, there can be more growth because people will invest in the sector. Although, there will be competition but it will surely enhance profitability and ultimately lead to immense productivity," he added.

He maintained that the Livestock Department was also vaccinating animals as it had imported vaccinations recently.



Bill to ban TikTok in US moves ahead in Congress

WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): The US House of Representatives approved a bill Saturday that would force the wildly popular social media app TikTok to divest from its Chinese parent company ByteDance or be shut out of the American market.

US and other Western officials have voiced alarm over the popularity of TikTok with young people, alleging that it allows Beijing to spy on users. It has 170 million in the United States alone.

These critics also say TikTok is subservient to Beijing and a conduit to spread propaganda. China and the company deny these claims.

The bill, which could trigger the rare step of barring a company from operating in the US market, now goes to the Senate for a vote next week. It passed the House on Saturday with strong bipartisan support, by a margin of 360 to 58.

President Joe Biden has stated he will sign the legislation. He reiterated his concerns about TikTok in a tele-

phone conversation with Chinese President Xi Jinping early this month.

The ultimatum to the social media app was included in a broader text that provides aid for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan.

TikTok quickly complained Saturday after the vote, saying in a statement "it is unfortunate that the House of Representatives is using the cover of important foreign and humanitarian assistance to once again jam through a ban bill that would trample the free speech rights of 170 million Americans, devastate 7 million businesses, and shutter a platform that contributes \$24 billion to the U.S. economy, annually."

Under the bill, ByteDance would have to sell the app within a year or be excluded from Apple and Google's app stores in the United States.

The House of Representatives last month approved a similar bill cracking down on TikTok, but the measure got held up in the Senate.

Steven Mnuchin, who served as

US treasury secretary under former president Donald Trump, has said he is interested in acquiring TikTok and has assembled a group of investors.

TikTok has been in the crosshairs of US authorities for years, with authorities saying the platform allows Beijing to snoop on users in the United States.

But a law banning it could trigger lawsuits. This bill gives the US president the authority to designate other applications as a threat to national security if they are controlled by a country deemed hostile.

Elon Musk, the billionaire owner of X, formerly Twitter, came out Friday against banning TikTok, saying it went against freedom of expression. "TikTok should not be banned in the USA, even though such a ban may benefit the X platform," Musk said in a post on the social network he acquired in 2022.

"Doing so would be contrary to freedom of speech and expression," said Musk.

Israel holds Palestinian economy captive, say analysts

JERUSALEM (AFP/APP): The Gaza war is speeding up Israel's "annexation" of the Palestinian economy, say analysts, who argue it has been hobbled for decades by agreements that followed the Oslo peace accords.

While the Israel-Hamas war raging since October 7 has devastated swathes of Gaza, it has also hit the public finances and wider economy of the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Israel is tightening the noose on the Palestinian Authority, which rules parts of the West Bank, by withholding tax revenues it collects on its behalf, economist Adel Samara told AFP. Palestinian livelihoods have also been hurt by bans on labourers crossing into Israel, and by a sharp downturn in tourism in the violence-plagued territory, including a quiet

Christmas season in Bethlehem.

Samara said that "technically speaking, there is no Palestinian economy under Israeli occupation -- our economy has been effectively annexed by Israel's".

The Palestinian economy is largely governed by the 1994 Paris Protocol, which granted sole control over the territories' borders to Israel, and with it the right to collect import duties and value-added tax for the Palestinian Authority. Israel has repeatedly leveraged this power to deprive the authority of much-needed revenues. But the Gaza war has further tightened Israel's grip, Samara said, with the bulk of customs duties withheld since Gaza's rulers Hamas sparked the war with their October 7 attack on Israel. "Without these

funds, the Palestinian Authority struggles to pay the salaries of its civil servants and its running costs," said Taher al-Labadi, a researcher at the French Institute for the Near East.

In February, Norway reportedly transferred to the Palestinian Authority about \$115 million from Israel following a deal to release some of the frozen taxes. Almost all Palestinian workers have also been forbidden from entering Israel for work, driving up unemployment across the territories. The Palestinian prime minister Mohammed Mustafa bemoaned an "unprecedented financial crisis" during which his government's deficit had soared to \$7 billion, more than a third of the territories' GDP according to the latest budgetary figures.

Maldives votes in the shadow of India-China rivalry

MALÉ (AFP/APP): Voting got under way in the Maldives Sunday in a parliamentary election likely to test President Mohamed Muizzu's tilt towards China and away from India, the luxury tourism hotspot's traditional benefactor.

Among the first to vote was Muizzu, 45, who cast his ballot at the Tajuddin school in the capital Male.

Election chief Fuad Thaufeeq urged the 284,663 eligible voters to cast their ballots early. Polling stations across the archipelago will be open for nine and a half hours.

Primarily known as one of the most expensive holiday destinations in South Asia, with pristine white beaches and secluded resorts, the atoll nation has also become a geopolitical hotspot in the Indian Ocean. Global east-west

shipping lanes pass the nation's chain of 1,192 tiny coral islands, which stretch around 800 kilometres (500 miles) across the equator.

Muizzu won last September's presidential poll as a proxy for pro-China ex-president Abdulla Yameen, freed last week after a court set aside his 11-year jail term for corruption.

This month, as campaigning for the parliamentary elections was in full swing, Muizzu awarded high-profile infrastructure contracts to Chinese state-owned companies.

His administration is also in the process of sending home a garrison of 89 Indian troops who operate reconnaissance aircraft gifted by New Delhi to patrol the Maldives' vast maritime borders. The current parliament, dominated by the

pro-India Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) of Muizzu's immediate predecessor Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, has sought to stymie his efforts to realign the archipelago's diplomacy.

"Geopolitics is very much in the background as parties campaign for votes in Sunday's election," a senior aide of Muizzu told AFP, asking not to be named.

"He came to power on a promise to send back Indian troops and he is working on it. The parliament has not been cooperating with him since he came to power."

Since Muizzu came to office, lawmakers have blocked three of his nominees to the cabinet and refused some of his spending proposals.

Splits in all the main political parties, including

Muizzu's People's National Congress (PNC), are expected to make it hard for any single party to win an outright majority.

But Muizzu's prospects received a fillip with the release of his mentor Yameen from house arrest on Thursday.

A court in the capital Male ordered a retrial in the graft and money laundering cases that saw Yameen sent to prison after he lost a re-election bid in 2018.

Yameen had also backed closer alignment with Beijing while in power, but his conviction left him unable to contest last year's presidential poll himself.

He instead put forward Muizzu as a proxy, and after leaving the High Court, Yameen vowed to continue the anti-India campaign that helped his ally to victory.

Violence-battered Ecuadorans vote on anti-crime measures

QUITO (AFP/APP): Ecuadorans vote in a referendum Sunday on proposed tougher measures to fight gang-related crime as the country grapples with a shocking rise in violence that has seen two mayors killed just this week.

The once-peaceful South American country has recently found itself in the grips of a terrorizing wave of violence blamed on gangs with links to transnational cartels using its ports to ship drugs to the United States and Europe.

President Daniel Noboa declared in January a state of "internal armed conflict" with about 20 criminal groups blamed for a spasm of violence sparked by the jailbreak of a major drug lord, still on the run.

Gangsters kidnapped dozens of people, including police and prison guards, opened fire in a TV studio during a live broadcast, and threatened random executions in the days-long outburst that caused about 20 deaths. Noboa imposed a state of emergency and deployed soldiers to retake control of the country's prisons, which had become the nerve center for gang

operations and a bloody battleground that has claimed the lives of more than 460 inmates in three years -- many beheaded or burned alive.

Despite these efforts, the violence has persisted, which Noboa has taken as "a sign that narcoterrorism and its allies are looking for spaces to terrorize us."

Two mayors have been killed in the past week, making it five in a year and three in less than a month.

Since January last year, at least a dozen politicians have been killed in Ecuador, including presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio, who was gunned down last August after a campaign event.

On Sunday, the president will seek popular backing for his plans to clamp down even harder on those responsible for such acts.

Citizens will be asked to approve an expansion of military and police powers, significantly boosting gun controls and imposing harsher penalties for "terrorism" and drug trafficking. Noboa is also proposing changing the constitution so that Ecuadorans wanted abroad for organ-

ized crime-related offenses can be extradited.

Nearly 13.6 million of the country's 17.7 million inhabitants are eligible to cast a "Yes" or "No" vote Sunday. The majority of the referendum questions are related to crime prevention -- a priority even as Ecuador also grapples with widespread corruption, a crippling electricity shortage and a diplomatic spat with Mexico.

Last year, the country's murder rate rose to a record 43 per 100,000 inhabitants -- up from a mere six in 2018, according to official data. In a publication Friday, polling firm Gallup said no other region in the world, excluding active war zones, felt less secure in 2023 to residents than Ecuador's Guayas province.

Other polls show a majority of Ecuadorans will likely vote for Noboa's reforms. "People are endorsing the decisions... taken on the issue of security," political scientist Santiago Basabe of the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (Flacso) told AFP.

The vote will take place in the same week that

Ecuadorans faced power cuts of up to 13 hours as drought left key hydroelectric reservoirs nearly empty. The government ordered workers to stay at home for two days in a bid to save scant energy resources.

Noboa has put some of the blame on "sabotage" without naming anyone in particular.

"They wanted to ruin us with sabotage... with a dirty campaign, and they have even tried with international pressure to sanction us as a country... because they are nervous," Noboa said ahead of Sunday's referendum, adding he was confident that "'Yes' will win."

Noboa, who took office last November at the age of just 35, is also dealing with the backlash from Ecuador's raid on the Mexican embassy in Quito this month to arrest former vice president Jorge Glas, wanted on corruption charges.

Glas had been granted asylum by Mexico, and Ecuador's move has been widely condemned. Mexico has filed a lawsuit at the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

shipping lanes pass the nation's chain of 1,192 tiny coral islands, which stretch around 800 kilometres (500 miles) across the equator.

Muizzu won last September's presidential poll as a proxy for pro-China ex-president Abdulla Yameen, freed last week after a court set aside his 11-year jail term for corruption.

This month, as campaigning for the parliamentary elections was in full swing, Muizzu awarded high-profile infrastructure contracts to Chinese state-owned companies.

His administration is also in the process of sending home a garrison of 89 Indian troops who operate reconnaissance aircraft gifted by New Delhi to patrol the Maldives' vast maritime borders. The current parliament, dominated by the

pro-India Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) of Muizzu's immediate predecessor Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, has sought to stymie his efforts to realign the archipelago's diplomacy.

"Geopolitics is very much in the background as parties campaign for votes in Sunday's election," a senior aide of Muizzu told AFP, asking not to be named.

"He came to power on a promise to send back Indian troops and he is working on it. The parliament has not been cooperating with him since he came to power."

Since Muizzu came to office, lawmakers have blocked three of his nominees to the cabinet and refused some of his spending proposals.

Splits in all the main political parties, including

Muizzu's People's National Congress (PNC), are expected to make it hard for any single party to win an outright majority.

But Muizzu's prospects received a fillip with the release of his mentor Yameen from house arrest on Thursday.

A court in the capital Male ordered a retrial in the graft and money laundering cases that saw Yameen sent to prison after he lost a re-election bid in 2018.

Yameen had also backed closer alignment with Beijing while in power, but his conviction left him unable to contest last year's presidential poll himself.

He instead put forward Muizzu as a proxy, and after leaving the High Court, Yameen vowed to continue the anti-India campaign that helped his ally to victory.

Left-wing separatist Bildu eyes historic win in Basque vote

MADRID (AFP/APP): Spain's northern Basque Country votes Sunday in a regional election that polls suggest will be won by the left-wing separatist coalition Bildu, seen as the heir of the political wing of the defunct armed separatist group ETA.

The outcome could leave Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez's ruling Socialist Worker's party in the difficult position of having to decide between two key parliamentary allies.

Surveys predict a victory for EH Bildu, which groups several parties including the Basque socialist Sortu party. Bildu is seen as the heir of the political wing of ETA, the now defunct armed separatist group whose bloody campaign for an independent Basque homeland claimed 850 lives before it rejected violence in 2011.

With a large following among young people thanks to its strong stance on social issues, EH Bildu has climbed steadily in the polls and now looks set to win the most votes in Sunday's election, inching ahead of the centrist Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) that has ruled the region for almost 44 years with only a brief three-year pause. "Before, the only party looking after Basque interests was the PNV, so everyone voted for them regardless of their political leanings," 40-year-old social worker Elena Garcia, 40, told AFP in Bilbao, saying the ETA era was now well in the past.

"But now if you are left-



wing and more socially minded, you will vote for Bildu," Garcia added.

Polls show it will be a tight race with neither party set to win an absolute majority, leaving the regional branch of the Socialist party as kingmaker. Sanchez's Socialist-led government relies on key support from a network of regional allies, including both the PNV and Bildu, to govern, meaning the decision could cost him.

But Eurasia Group analyst Federico Santi said it was "unlikely that the result of the election would threaten the stability of (Sanchez's) government".

Until now, the PNV has governed the Basque Country in coalition with the Socialists, whose regional leader has already ruled out supporting Bildu. The latter's leader, Arnaldo Otegi, was convicted of ETA membership but later credited with helping steer the group away from violence.

"Condemning terrorism is (Bildu's) outstanding

debt to Basque society and as long as they do not do that... we will not make any type of deal with them," the Socialist candidate Eneko Andueza told public radio.

But the issue hardly came up until earlier this week when Bildu's candidate for regional leader, Pello Otxandiano, sparked a backlash after he failed to call ETA a "terrorist organisation", referring to it only as an "armed group".

"Even if Bildu wins, it will not be able to govern because no party will be willing to make an alliance with it," said Pablo Simon, a political scientist from Madrid's Carlos III University. Some 1.8 million voters are eligible to cast their ballots to choose the regional parliament's 75 lawmakers as polls open at 9:00 am (0700 GMT) on Sunday. Polling stations close at 8:00 pm.

With 2.2 million residents, the Basque Country has the second highest regional income per capita in Spain, after Madrid, which averages around

36,000 euros (\$38,400). Its economy accounts for 5.9 percent of Spain's gross domestic product, ranking fifth of Spain's 17 regions, Caixabank research figures indicate.

It is also the region with the lowest unemployment figure in Spain at 7.9 percent, according to Basque government figures.

The father of Basque nationalism was Sabino Arana, who set up the PNV in 1895. His ultra-Catholic, anti-Spanish ideology grew out of his vehement opposition to the thousands of Spaniards flocking to the area as a result of the industrial revolution.

ETA emerged in 1959 out of a split within the PNV's youth movement who were angered by what they saw as the party's inability to stand up to the Franco regime.

In its first recorded act of bloodshed, ETA militants shot dead a policeman on June 7, 1968 in the city of Villabona, according to Spanish interior ministry documents.

Bolsonaro to hold Rio rally against 'threat' to free expression

RIO DE JANEIRO (AFP/APP): Brazil's former president Jair Bolsonaro is set to rally supporters in Rio de Janeiro on Sunday in defense of freedom of expression, which he says is under threat in the country, as tech tycoon Elon Musk faces a legal showdown there over claims of censorship and disinformation.

The rally is planned for 10:00 am (1300 GMT) Sunday at Rio's famed Copacabana beach.

"The whole world is aware of how threatened our freedom of expression is," the 69-year-old far-right leader said in a video posted Thursday on his social media accounts.

"Let's do our peaceful act, in defense of democracy, for our freedom, without signs or banners," he added.

Brazilian authorities are

investigating whether Bolsonaro plotted an attempted coup to prevent his 2022 election opponent and current President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva from assuming office in January 2023.

Bolsonaro has already been barred from public office for eight years for baselessly trashing Brazil's voting system ahead of the 2022 poll.

Last month, federal police also recommended he be charged for falsifying his Covid-19 vaccination records. He has denied all charges against him.

Musk, the billionaire owner of social media platform X, is also under investigation in Brazil after he accused a Supreme Court justice this month of censoring social networks, calling him a "dictator" and vowing to disobey rulings

to block users found to be spreading disinformation.

The judge, Alexandre de Moraes, has waged a crusade against disinformation, especially attempts by far-right supporters of Bolsonaro to discredit Brazil's voting system.

Users blocked by Moraes exclude figures like far-right ex-congressman Daniel Silveira, who was sentenced to nine years in prison in 2022 on charges of leading a movement to overthrow the Supreme Court. Musk had vowed to reinstate blocked accounts, saying: "We will probably lose all revenue in Brazil and have to shut down our office there" but "principles matter more than profit."

He has not followed through on his threats, however, and the Brazilian office of X has said it will comply with court orders to

block users spreading disinformation.

Moraes has responded to Musk's attacks by ordering fines of 100,000 reais (around \$20,000) a day for any blocked account that X reactivates.

Accusing Musk of "criminal instrumentalization" of the platform, Moraes also placed the Tesla and SpaceX boss under investigation for crimes including conspiracy and obstruction of justice. Brazil is part of a growing international debate about the limits of free speech on social media, where some say allowing a free-for-all endangers democracy.

Bolsonaro's Rio rally planned for Sunday follows a Sao Paulo gathering of his supporters in February that researchers said attracted around 185,000 people.

Landslides injure 6 as southern China braces for 'once a century' floods

BEIJING (AFP/APP): Landslides in southern China injured at least six people and trapped others, state media reported Sunday, as the region braced for severe floods "seen around once a century".

Torrential downpours across swathes of Guangdong province since Thursday have swollen rivers in the Pearl River Delta and triggered deluges in mountainous areas.

State broadcaster CCTV said Sunday that rains had sparked landslides affecting six villages in the northern Guangdong town of Jiangwan, "causing people to become trapped".

Photographs published by CCTV showed water-front homes destroyed by a wall of brown mud, and people in fluorescent-coloured ponchos sheltering in a soaked public sports

court.

No deaths were immediately reported and the total number of trapped people was not specified.

But CCTV said six people who were "trapped and injured" in the landslides had been airlifted to the nearby city of Shaoguan.

Emergency workers were racing to restore communications to the stricken area "as soon as possible", CCTV said.

It added that more than 80 rescuers were working "through the day and night" to assist people in the disaster zone.

The Pearl River Delta is China's manufacturing heartland and one of the country's most densely populated regions, with Guangdong alone home to around 127 million people.

Aerial footage by CCTV on Sunday showed

murky flood-waters lapping close to street level in some towns, leaving riverside promenades and pavilions inundated and a pagoda protruding from the deluge.

Authorities have launched a level-two emergency response in the Pearl River Delta, the second-highest in a four-tier system.

The national weather office imposed weather alerts across central Guangdong and warned of major storms in coastal areas through Sunday evening and into Monday.

Citing the provincial hydrology bureau, CCTV said three monitored locations in the Bei River basin would "experience flooding seen around once a century... due to the impact of heavy precipitation".

Floods of up to 5.8

metres (19 feet) above the warning limit would strike the areas starting early Monday morning, according to CCTV.

Several other monitored tributaries in the basin would endure the kind of floods seen once every 50 years, it said.

There were no initial reports of mass evacuations.

Parts of the neighbouring provinces of Jiangxi and Fujian were also forecast to see severe rainstorms on Sunday evening.

China is no stranger to extreme weather but recent years have seen the country whiplashed by severe floods, grinding droughts and record heat.

Climate change driven by human-emitted greenhouse gases makes extreme weather events more frequent and intense, and China is the world's biggest emitter.

voters cast ballots, the Central Election Commission said (CEC).

The figures suggested a boycott of the vote that would fail if the trend continues.

For the election to be valid turnout has to be above 50 percent.

CEC spokesman Valmir Elezi urged voters to "exercise their right and vote whether or not they want to have the current mayors".

Tensions in Kosovo's troubled north have been smouldering for months, following local elections won by the ethnic

Albanian mayors in April last year.

Ethnic Serbs boycotted the elections and Serb protesters later clashed with Kosovo police and NATO troops as the Albanian mayors tried to take office. Around 30 NATO peacekeepers were injured.

Led by the largest Serb and Belgrade-backed party, Serb List, thousands of citizens of North Kosovo's four municipalities signed petitions in January for the dismissal of all the current mayors in the north by a referendum. But despite previ-

ously favouring the new vote, organising the mass collection of signatures and using the opportunity to take control of the local administration, the Serb List surprisingly called for a boycott.

"The position of Serb List is to not participate in the vote," said the head of the vote, Zlatan Elek.

Although he cited a disagreement with Kosovo's ethnic Albanian leadership it remains unclear why the Srpska List decided to shun a vote which had been its target since boycotting the last election.

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Pakistan's Financial Path Forward

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb's recent interaction with Pakistani journalists at the embassy in Washington DC sheds a promising light on Pakistan's economic trajectory. The minister's confidence in having "overwhelming support" from Washington and globally signals an opportune moment for Pakistan — a moment that must not be squandered. Minister Aurangzeb's outline of upcoming engagements with the IMF and the anticipated flow of funds is a testament to Pakistan's ongoing efforts to stabilize its economy. Expected in May, the IMF delegation's visit is a critical juncture that could define the financial landscape of the country for the coming months. It is imperative that Pakistan prepares diligently to meet the IMF's expectations and secure the next portion of the loan, slated for June or July. Furthermore, the acknowledgment of World Bank President Ajay Banga's role in fostering initiatives in climate, digitization, and human capital within Pakistan is noteworthy. These areas are crucial for sustainable development and speak to a broader vision of progressive governance. The World Bank's involvement in long-term projects focusing on health, education, and combating child stunting aligns with essential developmental goals that Pakistan must prioritize. However, challenges remain, particularly in tax reform. The Finance Minister's concern over the Rs. 1.3 trillion worth of pending tax cases highlights a significant bottleneck in fiscal management. The push towards digitalization of tax collection is a step in the right direction, promising efficiency and transparency. Yet, action must follow swiftly. The disparity between the lifestyle of influential politicians and their declared assets underscores a broader issue of tax evasion that needs immediate redress. Through digitization and data analytics, Pakistan can enhance its tax net, ensuring that all due contributions are accurately collected and reported. The Minister's pragmatic response to enhancing trade relations with both India and Afghanistan illustrates a forward-thinking approach to regional cooperation. This mindset should be harnessed to bolster Pakistan's trade frameworks, potentially stabilizing the region economically. However, external challenges such as the recent U.S. sanctions on Chinese companies assisting Pakistan's ballistic missile program remind us of the geopolitical intricacies that Islamabad must navigate. The financial repercussions of such sanctions are yet unclear, but they underscore the importance of maintaining strategic international relationships and adapting to global economic shifts. In conclusion, as Minister Aurangzeb rightly stated, the "ball is in our court." It is time for Pakistan to deliver on its promises and implement robust reforms. The path ahead is fraught with challenges, but with concerted efforts and strategic planning, Pakistan can achieve economic stability and growth. The government must act decisively, ensuring that its actions indeed speak louder than words.

Pakistan's economic landscape is complex, with several structural challenges that need addressing to improve stability and growth

Here are some key areas where economic improvements could be strategically implemented: One of the most critical areas for improvement is the tax system. Pakistan has a relatively low tax-to-GDP ratio, which limits the government's ability to spend on public services. There needs to be a significant effort to broaden the tax base, ensuring that more entities and individuals are brought into the tax net. Moreover, simplifying the tax code to make it more understandable and reducing the number of tax exemptions can increase compliance and revenue. The energy sector in Pakistan is marred by inefficiencies, including substantial transmission and distribution losses, reliance on expensive imported fuels, and underinvestment in renewable sources. Reforming this sector by reducing dependency on imports, investing in renewable energy, and improving infrastructure could reduce costs and increase energy security. Diversifying the export base beyond textiles and agriculture and moving up the value chain into more complex products can help stabilize foreign exchange inflows. This can be achieved through policy incentives, improving quality standards, and investing in technology and innovation. Education and health are foundational for economic development. Improving access to quality education and healthcare ensures a healthy, skilled workforce ready to meet the demands of a modern economy. Initiatives like vocational training and higher education that focus on technology and science can prepare the youth for the jobs of tomorrow. Strengthening Pakistan's financial sector by promoting financial inclusion, enhancing the regulatory framework, and fostering a culture of saving and investment can catalyze economic growth. There is also a need to expand access to credit, particularly for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which are crucial for job creation and innovation. Transparency and accountability in government processes help build investor confidence and improve international perceptions. Tackling corruption and ensuring efficient governance can significantly improve the business environment, making Pakistan more attractive to both domestic and international investors. Developing infrastructure, including roads, ports, and telecommunications, can improve business efficiency and attract foreign investment. A well-connected national infrastructure facilitates trade, reduces costs, and improves overall economic productivity. As a sector that employs a large portion of the population, agriculture in Pakistan needs modernization. This includes introducing efficient water management practices, better quality seeds, and more accessible markets for farmers to sell their produce. These improvements can increase productivity and reduce vulnerability to price shocks. Each of these improvements requires commitment and coordination between various stakeholders, including government, private sector, and international partners. By addressing these areas, Pakistan can create a more resilient and robust economic environment.

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Why US voters are looking beyond Biden and Trump

Andrew Hammond

As the 2024 presidential race heats up, a central paradox is becoming ever clearer: Many voters are growing disenchanted with, and are certainly not enthused, by the two main candidates, Joe Biden and Donald Trump, who are 81 and 77 years old, respectively.

With a little over six months to go before election day on Nov. 5, this can be seen in Biden's relatively low approval ratings. Meanwhile, Trump's ever-growing list of controversies and court cases might be buoying his populist political base but they are turning off many independents and more moderate Republican voters.

One of the key implications of all this is the high possibility that their choice of running mates will be unusually important this time around, in historical terms, not least because of the greater than usual possibility that whichever of them triumphs in the presidential election might face challenges, given their age.

Therefore, their choices of vice president will be very important, which challenges the traditional view of this secondary office. The usual perspective on the office was rather colorfully summarized by John Nance Garner, who held the post between 1933 and 1941 under Franklin D. Roosevelt, when he said that "vice presidents never get to go anywhere ... the office is not worth a bucket of warm spit."

Even if Biden or Trump, the oldest presidential candidates nominated by the two main parties in American history, manage the next few years, their energy could flag significantly during their time in office. Their running mates might therefore wield major influence in the White House.

There are at least two, more general reasons for this, beyond the ages of Biden and Trump. Firstly, the office has assumed more power and resources in recent decades, with recent vice presidents such as Biden, Dick Cheney, and Al Gore ranking among the most influential in US history.

The power that those three were entrusted with reflected not only their own great political experience and strong relationships with Presidents Barack Obama, George W. Bush and Bill Clinton respectively. It was also a function of the enhanced status of the vice president.

1984; and Gore in 2000. Three former vice presidents have been elected president: Nixon in 1968, George H.W. Bush in 1988, and Biden in 2020.

As noted, the next vice president has a higher than normal chance of assuming the top job at some point between 2025

capable of effectively assuming the office of president upon the death or incapacitation of the incumbent.

Take, for example, the 2008 election, in which Republican nominee John McCain, then 71, selected as his running mate Sarah Palin, who was widely viewed at the time as being too inexperienced and gaffe-prone to be a heartbeat away from the presidency.

Barring any last-minute change of mind, it looks most likely that Vice President Kamala Harris will once again be Biden's running mate, despite the fact that she is widely perceived as not having performed strongly since taking office in 2021.

In 2016, Trump chose former Gov. Mike Pence, someone even many of his partisan opponents would concede could have potentially assumed the presidency in an effective manner had the situation warranted it. It remains unclear, however, whether in 2024 Trump will pick a similarly suitably competent individual.

One candidate reportedly under consideration to be his running mate is Kari Lake, who said during a rally last Sunday that Trump supporters should prepare for a "difficult" six months ahead of the election, and called on the military and police veterans among them to stand ready.

Remarkably, she then added: "What do we want to strap on? We're going to strap on our seat belt. We're going to put on our helmet or your Kari Lake ball cap."

We are going to put on the armor of God. Then maybe strap on a Glock (a type of gun) on the side of us, just in case. You can put one here and one in the back or one in the front, whatever you guys decide."

Taking all of this together, we can see why the choice of vice president will really matter. The next holder of the office will not only have significant powers in their own right, they will also have a higher than usual chance of taking over as president should Trump or Biden be unable to perform as president.

There are at least two, more general reasons for this, beyond the ages of Biden and Trump. Firstly, the office has assumed more power and resources in recent decades, with recent vice presidents such as Biden, Dick Cheney, and Al Gore ranking among the most influential in US history. The power that those three were entrusted with reflected not only their own great political experience and strong relationships with Presidents Barack Obama, George W. Bush and Bill Clinton respectively.

dency, reflected not only by larger staffing budgets but also greater proximity to the center of power via a West Wing office in the White House; weekly one-on-one meetings with the president; and the authority to attend all presidential meetings.

Secondly, the office has become perhaps the single best transitional step to the presidency, as exemplified by Biden. Even if the next president manages past 2029, the next vice president could be on a "fast track" to the Oval Office at the 2028 election, or at some point in the 2030s.

Since 1960, four sitting vice presidents earned their respective party's presidential nomination but lost the election: Richard Nixon in 1960, Hubert Humphrey in 1968; Walter Mondale in

and 2029. And history shows us the crucial effect that stepping up in this way can have on the future prospects of a vice president.

This is perhaps best exemplified by Harry Truman, who was vice president for just a few months, from January to April 1945, before becoming president when Roosevelt died in office. Within weeks of taking over, Truman had made several highly consequential, controversial decisions, not least the order to drop atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August that year. He subsequently won the 1948 presidential election.

In this context, the electoral stakes have grown in the nuclear age for failing to select a deputy perceived as being

UN must start treating Myanmar crisis with the urgency

Dr. Azeem Ibrahim

The April 4 meeting of the UN Security Council on Myanmar was not just a diplomatic formality, it was an urgent call to action in the face of escalating violence and humanitarian crises. The fact that this meeting was long overdue, with the previous session held in February 2019, speaks volumes about the international community's failure to adequately address the deepening crisis in Myanmar.

Myanmar's junta has intensified its brutal crackdown on civilians, resorting to airstrikes and blocking vital humanitarian aid. This has led to a dire situation, with innocent people forced to flee their homes and seek refuge in neighboring countries like Bangladesh, China, India and Thailand. Among these displaced individuals, the Rohingya people face particularly harrowing challenges, undertaking perilous journeys by sea to find safety in countries like Indonesia and Malaysia.

Despite the gravity of the situation, the response from the Security Council has been disappointingly inadequate. While the Human Rights Council passed a resolution on April 4 calling for restrictions on the Myanmar military's access to jet fuel, the council failed to take decisive action. This failure to act swiftly and decisively sends a troubling message to the perpetrators of violence in Myanmar and undermines the credibility of the UN as a guarantor of global peace and security.

The consequences of inaction are dire. Without urgent intervention and concerted efforts from the international community, the situation in Myanmar is poised to deteriorate further. The junta, out of desperation to maintain its grip on power, has resorted to forced conscription, including targeting minority groups like the Rohingya, who are not even recognized as citizens. This aggressive military stance has led to hundreds of desertions and defections, further destabilizing the region.

The recent loss of control of Chinshwehaw, a strategic town on the border with China, to ethnic armed groups underscores the vulnerability of the military regime. In response to battlefield losses, the military's imposition of mandatory conscription reflects its increasingly desperate tactics. The targeting of Rohingya individuals, both by the military and other armed groups like the Arakan Army, highlights the grave human rights violations occurring within Myanmar's borders.

It is imperative that the UN, in collaboration with regional bodies like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, takes immediate and decisive action to address the crisis in Myanmar. This includes imposing targeted sanctions, restricting arms sales and intensifying diplomatic pressure on the junta to cease its violent crackdown and engage in meaningful dialogue with all stakeholders.

But it is not just the UN that is at fault. ASEAN's response to the crisis in Myanmar, particularly in the aftermath of the

Rohingya genocide, has been widely criticized for its inadequacy and lack of effectiveness. Despite being a regional organization with a stated commitment to promoting peace, stability and cooperation among its member states, ASEAN has failed to address the grave human rights violations and humanitarian crises unfolding within its borders.

The Rohingya genocide, which saw the systematic persecution and displacement of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar's Rakhine State, presented a significant challenge to ASEAN's credibility and commitment to upholding human rights and fundamental freedoms. Despite calls from the international community to take action, ASEAN's response has been characterized by a reluctance to intervene in what it considers to be the internal affairs of a member state, as well as a lack of consensus among its members on how to address the crisis.

One of the key shortcomings of ASEAN's response has been its adherence to the principle of noninterference in the domestic affairs of member states, which has prevented it from effectively addressing the human rights violations and atrocities committed by the Myanmar military against the Rohingya population. This stance has been criticized for prioritizing state sovereignty over the protection of human rights and allowing the perpetuation of impunity for perpetrators of violence.

Furthermore, ASEAN's consensus-based decision-making process has hindered its ability to take decisive action on issues related to Myanmar. Member states with close economic and political ties to the junta have resisted efforts to impose meaningful sanctions or exert pressure on the regime to end its crackdown on dissent and respect the rights of minority groups.

Overall, ASEAN's failure to effectively address the crisis in Myanmar, particularly in the aftermath of the Rohingya genocide, highlights the limitations of regional organizations in responding to complex humanitarian emergencies and underscores the need for greater international cooperation and accountability in upholding human rights and preventing mass atrocities.

Furthermore, the international community must prioritize the protection of civilians, ensuring unimpeded access to humanitarian aid and supporting efforts to address the root causes of conflict and displacement in Myanmar. Failure to act urgently will only prolong the suffering of innocent civilians and perpetuate a cycle of violence and instability in the region.

The April 4 meeting of the UNSC was a missed opportunity to address the worsening crisis in Myanmar.

The international community must urgently come together to take meaningful action to protect the lives and rights of the people of Myanmar and prevent any further escalations of violence and humanitarian suffering.

BBC

Texas' skyscrapers are going dark to keep billions of birds safe

Riley Farrell

About two billion birds fly through Texas in the spring – and lit-up buildings pose a deadly risk. Turning off the lights at night could save countless fatal collisions.

It was a foggy Thursday morning when animal services supervisor Josh Henderson received news of a mass mortality. On May 4, 2017, 395 migratory birds died after smashing into one office tower in Galveston. Texas. Henderson rushed to the scene to witness the gruesome spectrum of feathers from yellow and orange to blue and grey of the lifeless small-feathered birds.

"It was awe-inspiring and tragic," says Henderson, who is now the executive director of the Humane Society in Galveston.

Most of them were warblers: small, bright, colourful birds that are particularly abundant in Texas. They had been on their home-

coming spring migration, an epic journey that takes them from wintering sites as far south as Mexico to nesting sites as far north as Canada, according to the National Audubon Society, a US-based bird conservation group.

For birds, Texas is a major flyover state: approximately two billion birds, or one in three birds migrating through the US, fly through the Lone Star State in the spring. It is snugly situated at the convergence of two major migratory flyways – the broad north-south routes that many different bird species all use to migrate. Both the Central Americas Flyway, which stretches from the Canadian Arctic to the southern tip of Argentina, and the water-rich Mississippi Flyway, beloved by migratory waterbirds, pass through Texas.

Along the route, hazards abound – including bright city lights. Though the Galveston collision was a

particularly dramatic example, birds hitting buildings is a common phenomenon. Every year, between 365 million and one billion birds are thought to be killed in building collisions in the US. The risk increases when they migrate and pass through cities in large numbers.

More than half of those fatal crashes are actually with low-rise buildings, such as people's homes. Birds may collide with them in small numbers per building, but it adds up, as houses are so widespread. However, as the Galveston case and mass bird crashes in other US cities show, big lit-up buildings such as skyscrapers, convention centres and office blocks can pose a disproportionate threat, killing hundreds of birds at once, because of each building's sheer scale. In October 2023, nearly 1,000 birds died in a single night during their autumn

migration from striking a lakeside convention centre in Chicago.

The scene of the mass collision in Galveston was a 23-floor skyscraper called One Moody Plaza. The tallest building in downtown Galveston used four corner spotlights pointing straight up in the sky and a glowing green halo of LED lights around the top of the tower.

"You could be seven miles offshore in a boat and the first thing you'd see was the green light," Henderson tells BBC Future Planet.

Not unlike the title character in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, the birds appeared to be fatally attracted to this alluring green light.

The influence of artificial light in urban spaces is a well-known phenomenon among birds, but is still not fully understood. Birds tend to migrate by night, and use the stars to navi-

gate. By day, they use the position of the Sun to orient themselves. During nocturnal migration, they are often seen gathering around or crashing into lit-up windows and structures, or gathering around beams of projected life. The artificial glow of cities also appears to attract them for stopovers. One explanation is that they may generally fly towards light sources, but also, that the artificial light confuses, traps and disorients them.

"Every tragedy is an opportunity to educate," says Henderson. He sorted and identified the bodies of the deceased birds, which were then entered into the natural history collections at Texas A&M University and Louisiana State University. Henderson's team was able to save and rehabilitate three birds.

"It was determined that the building's illumination may have played a part in attracting and disrupting the birds during the storm,"

says Scott Campbell, the senior vice president of corporate communications at American National. "We did not take the incident lightly."

The accident prompted Houston Audubon, a bird conservation organisation, and American National Insurance Company, which occupies the building, to take action and jointly develop a science-based response.

At the time, several existing, successful campaigns in the US and Canada encouraged building owners, developers and businesses to switch off non-essential lighting to help travelling birds. One was Toronto's Fatal Light Awareness Programme (FLAP). The National Audubon Society also had Lights Out campaigns in several cities and states, which encouraged businesses and individuals to switch off unnecessary outdoor lights at night.

We are closer to nuclear disaster today than at any point in the Cold War

COULD the world now be more dangerous than it was during the Cold War? Those who lived through that infamous time before the collapse of the Soviet Union will recall that there was a general expectation – not a vague fear but a literal expectation – that there would be a third chapter in the 20th century’s saga of world wars, and that it would be a final life-extinguishing event.

Then, with astonishing suddenness, the Communist empire imploded, apparently taking with it the apocalyptic threat of a global nuclear cataclysm. Liberated from this mortal danger, the Western countries proceeded to turn their swords into ploughshares. Trading in their spending on defence for bountiful domestic projects presented a vision of heaven on earth. Not only would we have indefinite peace abroad, but a “peace dividend” at home in the form of expanded social welfare and renewed infrastructure.

A generation on, where are we? In a volatile, anarchic void where the great superpower stand-off has given way to regional conflicts which threaten to explode in uncontainable ways. As I write, it is unclear whether the strikes and counter-strikes between Israel and Iran will ignite wider conflict, or are deliberately designed to avoid it.

Who is equipped to analyse this? What the West faces now is like nothing that the late 20th century anticipated. Back then, when two overwhelmingly powerful blocs competed for world domination, the confrontation revolved around a comprehensible argument. This was a dispute about how people should live: which sys-

tem, communism or capitalism, was most conducive to the greater good – which was generally taken to mean human happiness and fulfilment.

There were sincere adherents in both camps who, at various points, changed sides because they had been persuaded by the opposing view, or become disillusioned with their original ideals.

Of course, the purity of the ideological positions became corrupted by the eternal frailties of personal greed or the temptations of power. But nonetheless, at its heart this was a recognisable debate about what made life worth living. Communism and capitalism were both products of the Age of Reason. Their followers understood the force of evidence and the need to persuade, which is why the tools of propaganda and infiltration became so crucial.

So this was a fight (to the death, so we thought) about how life could be made better – more comfortable, more rewarding – for more people. How does this compare with the struggle between Islamism and the West?

The Iranian state, which presents itself as the embodiment of the purest form of Islamic doctrine, not only persecutes, and occasionally murders, those who defy its repressive commands, but sponsors forces in the region (and beyond) who seek to impose those commands on other populations. Communism did this too at one time. But it did so in the name of an idealised better life.

Extreme Islamism is a cult which, according to its own statements, regards this life as having no value. You may recall the state-

ment from the terrorists who perpetrated murderous attacks in Western cities: that they would inevitably triumph because, “you love life, we love death”. So our love of life – the motivating force of the previous global power struggle – had now become our greatest weakness.

There can be no point in disputes about what is most valuable in life when life itself is considered without value. How do you argue with such a belief? How do you even begin to come to terms with the meaning of it? This is not a political battle in any sense that we can recognise: it is a confrontation between the modern era and a Dark Age whose principles are unintelligible within the moral frame of reference that prevails in the West.

But it is not just Iran itself and its peculiar interpretation of Islam that presents a mortal challenge. Its rulers have joined an alliance with Russia, which has reinvented itself as the spiritual guardian of the Eastern Orthodox church, China, whose government is running an imperialist form of state capitalism that calls itself communist, and North Korea, which operates an absolutist totalitarian regime that harks back to medieval Asia. What do these disparate societies have in common? Only one thing: the wish to undermine and ultimately destroy the West.

From their various and often contradictory philosophical positions, they come to a useful agreement: the liberal democratic way of life, which permits social freedom and economic self-determination, must be defeated.

For Iran, this is to do with religious prohibitions, particularly the

treatment of women whose personal liberty is anathema to fundamentalist Islam. For Russia, it is the embittering legacy of the lost prestige and influence of the Soviet dissolution. For China it is a ruthless determination to displace America’s domination of the world economy.

What North Korea’s bizarre ruling family want, apart from their own perpetuation, is difficult to see, but they are making themselves indispensable by providing armaments for some of the most unsavoury military actions of the moment.

All of this certainly does seem to suggest that there is more danger today than when the developed world was carved up into spheres of influence that could be carefully monitored through back channels. The worst moments of the Cold War – over the Berlin Wall and the Cuban Missile Crisis – were defused by backroom operations; while the great powers may have been openly antagonistic to one another, they shared an understanding of what government – whether it was democratic or authoritarian – was for. Above all, they accepted as a basic proposition that everybody wanted to live.

It is that fundamental desire for a life worth living which will – because it must – get us through this frightening time. It is the direction of travel that matters. There are no hordes of migrants risking everything they have, to get into Russia or Iran or China. The young for whom the lust for life is most urgent are rebelling against the regime in Iran, and they are leaving Russia in such numbers that it is producing a demographic crisis. The most basic and essential human instinct will not be defeated.

Opinion: Trump followers were asleep at the switch

“We are most deeply asleep at the switch,” wrote Annie Dillard, “when we fancy we control any switches at all. We sleep to time’s hurdy-gurdy; we wake, if we ever wake, to the silence of God.”

Dillard’s line — from her short meditative book titled “Holy the Firm,” published in 1977, two years after she won the Pulitzer Prize at the age of 29 — invoked the role of the switchman, whose alertness was crucial in making sure trains got routed on the right track before the advent of automated switches.

If America’s political leaders control any switches at all, some have been asleep at the switch for a while. When the Senate voted to send new aid to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan two months ago, House Speaker Mike Johnson took no action. The House leadership also refused to act on a bipartisan bill to address the surge of migrants across the southern border.

In both cases, Republicans in Congress were partly heeding the wishes of former President Donald Trump, who opposed more aid for Ukraine and wanted to prevent President Joe Biden from scoring any more legislative victories.

That was weeks before Trump went on trial in a Manhattan courtroom, where the man who labeled Biden “Sleepy Joe” appeared to doze off several times Monday and Tuesday while the court started the process of selecting jurors.

And it was also well before Iran directly attacked Israel for the first time. Israel responded, and while those strikes appeared to cause only limited damage, it showed the potential for wars to spiral out of control and made it even less politically tenable for the House leadership to be seen stalling on military aid measures.

When a defendant nods off, it doesn’t stop a trial from going for-

ward. When a nation naps in the middle of international crises, the consequences can be profoundly scary.

Last week, Johnson finally acted, making clear he supports the foreign aid package, though he broke it up into four bills and added a fifth on border security. With the help of Democrats, the House approved aid to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan on Saturday. “Despite fierce opposition from MAGA Republicans within his caucus, Speaker Johnson has decided that the imperative of the US providing this assistance is more important than pleasing all the members of his caucus,” wrote Julian Zelizer.

“Without this support, international adversaries, including Russia, Iran and China, would read the failure of the US Congress to pass legislation as a sign that MAGA’s America First agenda was triumphant. They might conclude that the age of internationalism, entrenched into American politics since World War II, had come to an end.”

“The problem for Johnson is that his decision to move forward might very well cost him his job,” added Zelizer, noting Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene’s fierce criticism of Johnson and a House rule allowing just one member to bring about a vote to oust the speaker — which led to Kevin McCarthy’s downfall six months ago. Biden backed bipartisan legislation on the border, but in the view of Fareed Zakaria, he has missed an opportunity to take firm executive action after House Republicans scuttled the bill and launched the doomed effort to impeach and remove Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas.

“Biden must show he can fight. He should declare a national secu-

Richard Galant

rity emergency, send the National Guard to the border, work with Congress to suspend the asylum process and propose a new one that basically makes it impossible to get asylum if you just show up at the border,” Zakaria wrote.

“Many will scream, and it will all be challenged in court. But it will signal that Biden is taking the problem seriously. Bill Clinton often says that the American people don’t always need you to succeed, but they want to catch you trying. Joe Biden needs to be caught trying to solve the immigration crisis.”

Donald Trump’s campaign denied reports that the former president dozed off several times in court last week. But no one should be surprised at the sight of a criminal defendant seeming to nod off, noted Elliot Williams, a former prosecutor who has logged countless hours in court.

“Courtrooms don’t lend themselves to keeping people awake. They are notoriously quiet places where people are required to remain seated almost all of the time. The air is often stagnant and the ever-so-distracting handheld devices that are our lifelines to (and barrier from) the world around us are strictly forbidden ... the gears of justice are not made for the 24-hour news cycle. What might be resolved in an 8-minute final segment of an episode of ‘Law and Order’ might be drawn out over days of painstaking testimony. It can take months, if not years (even in cases in which a defendant is not deliberately attempting to slow proceedings down) before a matter finally gets to trial.” Still, the selection of the jury that will pronounce a verdict on the hush money trial moved faster than expected last week. There were speed bumps though, as Patrick T. Brown noted,

“One potential juror who underwent questioning ... was subsequently struck for cause after Trump’s team found social media posts from the juror referencing Trump that say, ‘Get him out’ and ‘Lock him up.’”

“Indeed, it seems unlikely that this case would be being prosecuted with the same vigor and creative legal theorizing if Trump were an everyday citizen. After all, Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg came into office promising to focus on the ongoing investigation of Trump, and would have likely felt political heat from New York Democrats had he decided to close the investigation without bringing charges.”

“In the end, as The New York Times reported in March 2023, Bragg’s office took a ‘circuitous and sometimes uncertain road’ to filing criminal charges, reviving a dying investigation that originally focused on Trump’s business practices with a renewed focus on hush money payments.”

Will the trial be fair? Jeffrey Abramson, author of a book on the jury system, noted, “Impartiality is the key to jury justice, but we can hardly expect jurors to approach the case without strong opinions about Trump. Indeed, it would be disturbing to seat jurors whose only qualification was their ignorance about major news events of the day.”

“Fortunately, an open mind does not require an empty mind. We can find fair jurors who understand the difference between law and politics.” Don’t call it a hush money trial, urged Norm Eisen.

“The core issue ... is not the payments to adult film star Stormy Daniels in October 2016 to conceal her claimed affair with Trump (he denies the affair took place). The core issue is why Trump made them.

“Paying hush money by itself is

Accelerating recycling to sustain the electric vehicle boom

IN the dystopian sci-fi novel The Circuit of Heaven, the earth is strewn with layers of electronic waste, remnants of a consumerist society obsessed with the latest technological gadgets. Towering piles of discarded electronics form the backdrop of a world where nature has been obliterated by silicon and metal, a stark warning of the unbridled consequences of technological neglect. While our current reality is not as dire as the one depicted in this fictional universe, the surge in adoption of renewable energy sources and electric vehicles (EVs) has led to an increased reliance on batteries. This transition, although beneficial for reducing carbon emissions, introduces a significant challenge: the efficient recycling and disposal of these batteries, ensuring that our steps towards a greener future don’t inadvertently create a new environmental quandary.

Aditya Sinha

critical. More than 20 countries, alongside numerous automakers, have committed to significant electrification targets, necessitating an increased demand for critical battery materials such as nickel (Ni), cobalt (Co), manganese (Mn), lithium (Li), and graphite. This surge has heightened the pressure on raw material supplies, with projections indicating potential shortages, particularly for Li and Co, which are critical to battery manufacturing.

A 2020 report by the International Energy Agency (IEA) forecasts a significant surge in electric vehicle numbers, estimating that there could be up to 145 million EVs on the road by 2030. This growth in EV adoption will lead to a corresponding increase in the number of batteries that will need recycling at the end of their life cycles, highlighting the urgent need for effective recycling processes and technologies.

The Global Battery Alliance, in its 2021 vision paper, emphasises the importance of establishing a circular battery value chain.

The paper discusses the potential to reduce the environmental footprint of batteries, recover valuable materials like lithium, cobalt, and nickel, and support the sustainable growth of the EV market. The alliance advocates for a systemic approach to battery recycling, one that includes the development of standards and policies to encourage the reuse and recycling of battery components.

In terms of the technical challenges, the University of Birmingham’s research underscores the complexity of battery recycling processes. The study details the need for advanced methods to efficiently and safely disassemble batteries, separate their valuable components, and purify these materials for reuse in new batteries. This requires not only technological innovation but also significant investment to scale up recycling capacities.

Modern lithium ion batteries (LIB) come in various formats—cylindrical, prismatic, and pouch cells—each with unique disassembly and pre-treatment requirements that complicate recycling processes. For instance, the adhesive bonding of cells in some modules can significantly hinder material recovery efforts.

Moreover, the continuous advancements in battery technology, such as Tesla’s “tabless” battery design and BYD’s blade battery pack, introduce new complexities for recycling methodologies, particularly for direct recycling methods that require detailed disassembly and separation of components.

Material evolution adds another layer of complexity. The transition from LiCoO₂ (LCO) to nickel-rich NMC (LiNiMnCo_{1-x-y}O₂) cathodes, aimed at enhancing energy density and reducing costs, necessitates adaptable recycling processes that can handle diverse and evolving material chemistries. Anode materials are also evolving, with shifts from graphite to silicon-based and eventually lithium metal anodes, each presenting unique recycling challenges and opportunities.

From a commercial perspective, scaling up LIB recycling to handle the anticipated millions of tonnes of spent LIBs by 2030 is a critical hurdle.

The current recycling rate of less than five per cent needs to be significantly increased to manage the projected waste and supply secondary materials to the battery market. Economic viability remains a concern, as the profitability of recycling processes is heavily dependent on the recovery of valuable materials like cobalt, which is increasingly being phased out in new battery chemistries.

The European Union’s Battery Directive aims to address these challenges by mandating the collection, treatment, and recycling of batteries within its member states. It sets forth ambitious recycling efficiency targets, including a 50 per cent recycling efficiency rate for lithium-ion batteries, to ensure that the battery industry progresses towards sustainability.

Moreover, a 2019 study published in the journal Nature highlights the potential for recovering up to 95 per cent of certain battery components using advanced recycling methods. This demonstrates the feasibility of high recovery rates for critical materials, which can reduce the need for virgin material extraction and lower the environmental impact of battery production.

Developing robust, efficient, and sustainable recycling infrastructures is essential to mitigate the impending strain on raw material supplies and to prevent environmental degradation.

The task is multifaceted: it demands technological innovation to handle the diverse and evolving battery chemistries, strategic policy-making to incentivise recycling, and substantial investment to scale recycling operations.

Given the stark environmental and resource implications highlighted in narratives and studies alike, it is paramount for global stakeholders to collaboratively forge pathways that lead to a circular economy for batteries, ensuring that the transition to electric mobility does not trade one ecological crisis for another.

Khaleej Times

Sudan needs a new approach to aid — and fast

THE crisis in Sudan, exacerbated by violence between the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces that broke out in April 2023, has unfurled a cataclysm of suffering with profound repercussions for the region. Despite the continuing conflict, the traditional mechanisms of international aid have been remarkably ineffective, creating a necessity for rethinking the global community’s response to Sudan’s needs and those of neighboring countries.

To date, the civil war has resulted in an unprecedented displacement catastrophe, with more than 8.6 million people uprooted. Harrowing images of indiscriminate violence against the populace, including gender-based brutalities and signs of ethnically targeted mass killings in Darfur, raise the urgency of considerable humanitarian demands to critical levels. The sobering realities on the ground — with the

stark underreporting of casualties, currently at 14,700, and the looming specter of famine endangering almost 5 million people — are not merely a snapshot of a prevailing chaos but also demand immediate action.

In parallel, the ramifications of the war reverberate throughout the region. Both South Sudan and Chad are suffering from the conflict’s spillover. South Sudan’s hunger crisis has worsened, plunging the nation into socioeconomic insecurity and rising food scarcity. Chad, meanwhile, is now host to over a million refugees, even as it grapples with a grave lack of resources for its own population.

The unfolding crisis exposes the sheer deficiencies in current approaches to international aid that insist on temporary fixes where comprehensive surgery is necessary, given the glaring discrepancies in the funding-to-needs ratio. Up until the International Conference on Sudan held in Paris on April 15, international responses

stood at a mere 42 per cent of the \$2.57 billion required in Sudan and less than 40 per cent of the \$1 billion targeting refugee assistance — a colossal underfunding now contributing to Sudan’s worsening woes. Such affronts in a swelling crisis are neither sustainable nor strategic. The April 15 conference among almost 60 countries, where donors pledged about \$2.1 billion in humanitarian aid, stands as a welcome relief, and a positive sign that Sudan has not yet been forgotten.

However, pledges do not automatically translate to direct, immediate and comprehensive apolitical support that is also immune from the polarizing dynamics of yet another proxy war. Promises of help will not feed a third of Sudan’s 51 million people who now suffer from hunger, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Nor will those most at risk suddenly gain uninterrupted access to ade-

quate nutrition, medical care or stable living conditions, such as the 200,000 children, pregnant women, and mothers with newborns at risk of malnutrition in the coming months.

It would be unfair to allow pessimism to temper well-intentioned aims to deliver relief to those desperately in need. The trouble, as always, is not in the “what,” but in the “how,” due to the inherent flaws in current aid delivery systems that oscillate between emergency aid and no aid. It is a system that has stubbornly resisted reform despite the increasing severity and frequency of humanitarian crises around the globe. In the northeast Africa context, piecemeal assistance being a normative response to burgeoning crises not only intensifies existing systemic governance and socioeconomic challenges, but also makes future conflicts and regional conflagrations inevitable.

Instead, what Sudan

Hafed Al-Ghwel

needs — and what the sub-region really needs — is recalibrated approaches to aid, which necessitate innovations beyond the reactive; it calls for intertwining assistance with sustainable development initiatives, local-level engagements, and tackling of climate change’s cumulative impacts. In lieu of armed intervention, which carries its own manifold complexities and potential for further aggravating crises, Sudan and its neighbors need a new approach and fast — and preferably one that deals with the immediate need for basic sustenance and, ultimately, the enduring support that will be critical for long-term stability and growth.

First, such a system must be grounded in what experts call “integrated support,” which targets the consequences of a confluence between episodic violence, conflict, and historical governance failures. This convergence created systemic difficulties, for

instance, where inadequate infrastructure, catalyzed by war, goes on to exacerbate impacts to sanitation, healthcare, and access to essential public services.

Thus, the Paris conference, and others like it, while commendable, must realign priorities to not only provide relief, but also make the development of robust civil systems foundational, rather than an afterthought. With millions internally displaced and critical infrastructure decimated, an integrated aid approach is more than humanitarian benevolence — it is a strategic necessity to stabilize and eventually rebuild a nation.

Second, neighboring countries directly affected by Sudan’s civil war also need new approaches built on the underexplored potential of local actors and community-based initiatives. These vital groups are often at the front line of humanitarian responses due to their accessibility and inherent understanding of the conflict landscape,

from the cultural to the logistical. They exist on the periphery of larger aid agencies’ operational scope, and have consistently emerged as beacons of resilience and responsiveness in areas that are inaccessible. Current and future fundraising successes must, therefore, be channelled to empower well-placed local entities to deliver targeted interventions that help stem widespread violence pushing some communities to the brink.

Lastly, climate change, particularly in Sudan’s context, where food production and distribution networks have virtually collapsed not only due to conflict but also due to climate anomalies. International aid must, therefore, include strategies for climate resilience in tandem with urgent humanitarian relief. Integrating climate adaptation with aid not only addresses immediate survival concerns, but also lays the groundwork for sustainable agricultural recovery and resilience for the country’s predom-

inantly agrarian society.

Given these imperatives, the global community must rise to the challenge of increasing humanitarian aid through a collaborative, multidimensional approach that weaves together development assistance and the agency of local actors. This would fulfill both the immediate requisites for basic sustenance and the enduring structural needs critical for Sudan’s long-term stability and growth.

Rising to meet Sudan’s needs with a revamped approach is not merely a necessary response but a moral imperative. Absent boots on the ground, it is crucial to revise traditional frameworks for humanitarian aid delivery and foreign assistance, by committing to a new playbook targeting the intersecting challenges of conflict, instability, and climate change. A new strategy would also be the greatest commitment to safeguarding human security in the pursuit of actionable peace, justice, and strong institutions.

Arab News



Finance Minister met to representatives of S-P Global, Fitch Ratings

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Muhammad Aurangzeb, met with the representatives of S&P Global and Fitch Ratings on the sidelines of the IMF/World Bank Spring Meetings in Washington D.C.

During the meetings, he highlighted positive indicators of the country on the back of the Standby Arrangement (SBA) signed with International Monetary Fund (IMF), said a press release issued here on Sunday.

He provided details on the government's ongoing reforms in priority areas, including taxation, energy, and privatization over short, medium and long-term horizons. He also referred to his recent engagements with Managing Director of the IMF, President of the World Bank, and heads of multi-lateral institutions including Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and Asian Development Bank (ADB). He reaffirmed that the World Bank's agenda aligns with Pakistan's priorities on climate change, digitalization, and human development.

The Finance Minister also mentioned potential investments in the pipeline from Saudi Arabia.

He also addressed the rating agencies' concerns related to Pakistan's external position, inflation levels, primary fiscal balance, and interest rate regime. Other engagements of Finance Minister included interaction with officers of the Embassy of Pakistan, Washington D.C., media interviews with the Voice of America and The National and Press Conference with Pakistani media. Finance Minister is leading Pakistan's delegation in the IMF / World Bank's 2024 Spring Meetings being held in Washington DC. Other delegates include Mr. Imdadullah Bosal, Finance Secretary, Dr. Kazim Niaz, Secretary Economic Affairs Division, Mr. Jameel Ahmed, Governor State Bank of Pakistan and Mr. Adil Akbar Khan, Senior Joint Secretary, Economic Affairs Division.

Panda bonds will unleash potential in Pakistan for the first time this year: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, indicated in an interview that he hopes to issue up to USD 300 million of panda bonds for the first time this year, due to issue renminbi-denominated bonds would allow Pakistan to diversify its funding sources and reach investors in new markets. Panda bonds are bonds denominated in renminbi, or Chinese yuan, but issued by foreign borrowers, including companies,

multilateral agencies and governments, says a report carried by Gwadar Pro.

"Frankly, we should have considered this a long time ago. China is the second largest and deepest bond market in the globe, and leveraging the Chinese bond market is the right thing for Pakistan given that it has issued dollar bonds and Eurobonds."

The finance minister said that the first batch of panda bond issuance will be approximately USD 250 million to USD 300 million, as well as further issuances will follow.

Aurangzeb said that the government's cash balances were strong enough, and it was able to pay its debts on time. The payments were unlikely to put pressure on the currency, and he expects the rupee to remain stable, he added.

In a global context, onshore renminbi bonds saw record issuance in 2023, as the market continues to develop. China's Panda bond market is gaining momentum and attracting new issuers, thanks to lower funding costs and a policy push.

Issuance of Panda bonds by offshore borrowers in China's interbank market reached RMB 111.7bn (USD 15.3 billion) in the first nine months of 2023, a record for the period, according to data from the

National Association of Financial Market Institutional Investors (NAFMII).

The amount has already exceeded the full-year total of RMB 80.5 billion in 2022. Landmark deals include the first African sovereign Panda bond, from the Arab Republic of Egypt, as well as a debut offering by German car-maker Volkswagen.

Despite the surge in issuance volume, the Panda bond market currently only comprised of a relatively small portion of China's bond market, signaling strong potential for growth.

As China further opens its capital market, related experts expect more multinational corporations and international investors will pay attention to the potential of the Panda bond market as the liquidity and depth of the market further build up. "We've seen the increasing usage of RMB as cross-border payments, albeit slowly, as more countries are trying to reduce their dependence on the US dollar. In the long run, it will support the demand for RMB assets and funding," said Ivan Chung, a Moody's associate managing director. According to data from payment network Swift, the renminbi is the fifth most active currency for global payments by value, with a share of 3.71% in September 2023.



LAHORE: A vendor displaying raw dates to attract the customers at his roadside setup.

Shaza Fatima visit to Airlink Communication's state of the art smartphone manufacturing facility

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Airlink Communication Ltd, one of the largest manufacturers, distributors and retailers of Pakistan, was honored to welcome the distinguished presence of the Minister of state for IT and Telecommunication, Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja, to its state-of-the-art smartphone manufacturing facility, where Airlink partners with global giants Xiaomi and Tecno. During the visit, the Minister commended Airlink's commitment to innovation and its remarkable inclusion of women in the labor force, which stands at an impressive 25 to 30%.

She stated, "I am truly impressed by the technological advancements and commitment to gender inclusivity demonstrated by Airlink in this facility. The government recognizes the importance of the smartphone manufacturing industry in driving economic growth and job creation. Our goal is to provide full support to individuals and businesses in the smart-



phone manufacturing sector, ensuring that Pakistan becomes a leading exporter of technology products in the future."

In response to the minister's remarks, Airlink's Group CEO, Muzaffar H Piracha, highlighted the company's vision for technology transfer and its role in positioning Pakistan as a global technological hub. Piracha stated, "Pakistan's smartphone industry, now producing 97% of the mar-

ket share domestically, has immense potential to contribute to our economy. We estimate that the export of smartphones alone could bring in up to 10 billion USD in foreign exchange, further strengthening Pakistan's position in the global market. With our sights set on expanding into Electric Vehicles (EV) and advancing the landscape of the Internet of Things (IoT) products in Pakistan, we envision a future where our

technological innovations not only meet domestic demand but also drive significant foreign exchange through exports."

Airlink has already invested in Xiaomi LED production factory and will start its production in the coming months. Through strategic partnerships and a steadfast commitment to excellence, Airlink continues to drive progress and empower communities through technology.

Road to Mecca Project

F.P. Report

KARACHI: A two-member delegation from Saudi Arabia paid a visit to Jinnah International Airport (JIAP) in Karachi. Accompanied by the Saudi Consulate General in Karachi, the purpose of their visit was to inspect the airport's facilities and discuss the arrangements

for the route to the Makkah project.

Upon their arrival, the delegation was warmly welcomed by the Civil Aviation Authority's acting Airport Manager (APM), as well as representatives from other agencies. During their visit, APM provided the delegation with a comprehensive tour of the airport's facilities.

The delegation was shown the path Hajj pilgrims would take starting from the main entrance and leading them to the immigration area.

The delegation showed particular interest in the entry process for intending pilgrims and the allocation of immigration space. Other key points discussed were related to allocation

of immigration hall, private Hajj pilgrims, differentiating between government and private scheme pilgrims, among others.

Furthermore, emphasis was placed on the importance of pilgrims arriving at least 5 hours prior to their flight, ensuring sufficient time for necessary procedures and preparations before their departure.

Millat Tractors Ltd starts exports to Govt. of Madagascar

F.P. Report

LAHORE: A high level delegation from the Government of Madagascar led by Mrs. Oliva Rafalimanana, representing PADAP Madagascar, (World Bank Project) and Mr. Solofo Rabezanahary, representing Massey Ferguson, Madagascar, visited Millat Tractors Limited, factory on 19-04-2024 to inaugu-

rate the Exports of Millat Tractors Massey Ferguson model: MF-360 (4wd), 27 units to Madagascar.

These tractors are being exported under the special trade initiative i.e. "The Madagascar Project", which is funded by The World Bank, through MTL's principal AGCO-USA, who are the owners and producers of the world renowned brand Massey Ferguson. This

project is aimed at uplifting the Agricultural growth and farm mechanization in Madagascar through use of the world's most affordable and top quality tractor i.e. the Millat Tractors Ltd MF models manufactured in Pakistan. The delegation members thoroughly visited the technical facilities, production systems and acknowledged the quality standards being

strictly maintained by the company.

MTL is highly thankful to its Principal AGCO & the Government of Madagascar, for their trust, support and dedication to deliver these finest quality products in the African region, enabling Madagascar to utilize MTL's cost effective and high efficiency tractors for accelerating rapid agricultural prosperity.

Nonstop borrowing escalates production cost, debt vulnerability: Anjum Nisar

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairman Businessmen Panel (BMP) of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Mian Anjum Nisar has said that the nonstop debt growth carries significant fiscal costs and exposes the country to huge debt vulnerabilities.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, he emphasized that persistent fiscal deficits and debt repayments have resulted in consistently high annual gross financing needs, averaging 28 percent of the GDP over the past decade. This level is notably higher than the emerging market threshold of 15 percent.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that in the past two decades, Pakistan has witnessed two consecutive years of the highest budget deficits in 2023 and 2024. He pointed out that for the current fiscal year, a budget deficit of 7.7 percent of the GDP is anticipated, a staggering Rs1.3 trillion above the government's target. He expressed concerns over these persistent large budget shortfalls, which have led to the rapid accumulation of public debt. This, in turn, has crowded out private investment and contributed to macro-economic volatility.

Referring to the SBP data, he unveiled an alarming 39 percent increase in the external debt of the federal government, reaching Rs24.2 trillion within a year. A substantial

Rs6.7 trillion increase in external debt was primarily attributed to currency depreciation. As of Feb 2024, external debt stood at Rs17.6 trillion, excluding the International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s liabilities.

Out of the total external public debt of \$85.12 billion, the government owed \$62 billion to multilateral and bilateral development partners including IMF (i.e. 75 percent) of the total external public debt was on concessional terms with a longer maturity, 16pc (i.e. \$13.5 billion) from international capital markets and foreign commercial banks.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that this unsettling trend has raised concerns about fiscal sustainability and the adverse impacts of steep currency devaluation come at a time when the World Bank has cautioned Pakistan about the growing risks of its macro-economic framework. For the past one and half year, the country is facing a serious financial crunch and continually relying on borrowing to meet its financial needs.

He said that high cost of doing business has proved to be dangerous for businesses, as ever-increasing cost of production is the real threat to the economy amidst frequent upward revisions in policy rate and continuous fluctuations in rupee against dollar. The FPCCI former president and Businessmen Panel chairman said that the government liquidity

provinces. Consequently, the sales tax rate has been reduced to zero to limit provincial revenue collection. Most of the transport sector runs on HSD. Its price was considered highly inflationary as it is mostly used in heavy transport vehicles, trains and agricultural engines like trucks, buses, tractors, tube wells and threshers, and particularly adds to the prices of vegetables and other eatables. Petrol, on the other hand, was mostly used in private transport, small vehicles, rickshaws and two-wheelers and has a direct bearing on the budget of middle- and lower-middle class.

Faheem Saigol said the industrial and general consumers will be feeling the pinch of high transportation costs as petrol and diesel prices have swelled very high. He strongly condemned the massive hike in petroleum products, saying it would fuel the inflationary pressures and push up the cost of doing business — which was already the highest in the region. He questioned how the existing export orders can be met profitably after the double blow of electricity and petroleum price hikes.

The PIAF chief

expressed his concerns that domestic and international demand for Pakistani products would be at an all-time low as inflation has severely affected the purchasing power of the domestic consumers and for international and regional markets, local products have become uncompetitive. He criticized the massive hike in petroleum prices, which would not only impact industrialists but also exert severe economic pressure on the general public.

He lamented the government for affecting the public's budget by raising petroleum levies and taxes, following the terms set by the International Monetary Fund. He said that inflation was on higher side due to the impact of government's economic policies of soaring fuel rates, enhancing power and gas tariff, depreciating the local currency and imposing exorbitant duties on imported industry raw material. Faheem Saigol urged the government to take concrete measures for easing out inflation that has further increased due to rise in oil prices and other essential commodities. He said that oil prices and inflation were closely connected in a cause-and-effect relationship.



In brief

No series before C-Trophy

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan Cricket Board Chairman Moshin Naqvi Sunday said it was not possible to host any other series before the conclusion of Champions Trophy. PCB chief said that the National Stadium in Karachi lacked facilities, adding that soon designing and decoration of various stadiums will be conducted by international companies. He was talking to the media after inaugurating the Club Cricket Tournament in Lahore. After the inauguration, the PCB chief also met with the players and inquired about their fitness. On the occasion, Moshin Naqvi urged the players to work hard and prove their abilities, adding that the tournament was aimed at the promotion of talent in the country. PCB chairman said that the medical board has been constituted under the guidance of Dr Javed Ikram for the treatment of Ehsan Ullah, adding that if the medical board recommends, he will be sent to the US for medical treatment. Naqvi further said PCB hoped that cricketer Azam Khan was also recovering from injury, adding that hopefully, Azam Khan would join the team during the next series.

Rybakina beats Kostyuk

STUTTGART (Agencies): World number four Elena Rybakina claimed her third title of the year, beating Marta Kostyuk 6-2 6-2 to win the Stuttgart Open. The 24-year-old from Kazakhstan broke the Ukrainian to love in the opening game and cruised through the first set. Rybakina, the 2022 Wimbledon champion, started the second set with a break and there was no way back for Kostyuk. The victory for Rybakina comes after titles in Brisbane in January and in Abu Dhabi the following month. She had booked her place in the final with an impressive win over world number one and two-time defending champion Iga Swiatek on Saturday. Kostyuk's only chance of a comeback came in the second set when she forced break three points when 3-2 down, but she failed to take advantage and looked frustrated and close to tears. "I want to congratulate Marta of course, been a great tournament, great matches you played here, you're playing really amazing and hopefully we'll play many more finals," said Rybakina.

Nuggets beat Lakers

LOS ANGELES (AFP): The defending champion Denver Nuggets, powered by 32 points from Nikola Jokic, shook off a slow start to beat LeBron James and the Los Angeles Lakers 114-103 in game one of their NBA playoffs first-round series on Saturday. The Nuggets, who swept the Lakers in four games in the Western Conference finals on the way to their first title last season, continued their dominance of star-studded Los Angeles, who had dropped all three regular-season meetings. The game was the finale of the first day of the playoffs, which saw the Minnesota Timberwolves beat the Phoenix Suns 120-95, the New York Knicks beat the Philadelphia 76ers 111-104 and the Cleveland Cavaliers beat the Orlando Magic 97-83. In Denver, Jokic added 12 rebounds and seven assists, Jamal Murray added 22 points with 10 assists and Michael Porter Jr. scored 19 for the Nuggets, who used a 13-0 scoring run to take charge in the third quarter — in which they limited the Lakers to 18 points.

New Zealand outplay Pakistan by 7 wickets in third T20I

ISLAMABAD (APP): New Zealand batter Mark Champan unbeaten 87 stormed New Zealand to a seven wicket victory over Pakistan in the third Twenty20 International at Pindi Stadium, Rawalpindi on Sunday.

Chasing Pakistan's score of 178 runs, he smashed 87 runs on just 42 balls with nine 4s and four 6s. Champan was also declared player of the match for his outstanding innings.

Champan was helped by batters Dean Foxcroft (29-ball 31), Tim Robinson (19-ball 28) and Tim Seifert (16-ball 21) to chase the target of 179 runs. James Neesham also remained not out on 6 runs. Among all Pakistani bowlers Abbas Afridi and Naseem Shah were lucky in bagging three wickets.

Afridi grabbed two for 27 while Shah bagged one for 44 runs, respectively.

Earlier Pakistan, posted a total of 178 runs for the loss of four wickets.

All-rounder Shadab Khan (41), Skipper Babar Azam (37), Saim Ayub (32), Irfan Khan (30) and Mohammad Rizwan (22) led Pakistan to 178 for 4 in Rawalpindi on Sunday.

Shadab hit a 20-ball 41 including two 6s and four 4s while Azam scored a 29-ball 37. Opener Saim Ayub scored 32 runs on 22 balls with five 4s and a six while Irfan Khan contributed with a 20-ball 30 not out with three 4s and a six.

Rizwan's 22 came on 21 balls. Rizwan also felt discomfort in his right hamstring while batting and as a precautionary measure, the medical team pulled him out from rest of the match. For New Zealand, Ish Sodhi took two wickets for 25 runs while Micheal Bracewell and Jacob Duffy grabbed a

wicket each for 40 and 39 runs, respectively.

Meanwhile, Josh Clarkson and Ben Lister were both ruled out of Sunday's match due to illness. The national selection committee has also announced wicketkeeper and batter Haseebullah as the replacement player for Azam Khan, who was sidelined from the T20I series against New Zealand due to a tear in his right calf muscle. Haseebullah would be available for selection in the remaining two T20Is scheduled to be played in Lahore on Thursday and Saturday, respectively.

This was 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.



KARACHI With three needed off one, Karishma Ramharack scored a four to take West Indies to a thrilling win.

Messi double keeps Miami on top in MLS

FORT LAUDERDALE (AFP): Lionel Messi scored twice and created another for Sergio Busquets as Inter Miami beat Nashville 3-1 on Saturday to maintain top spot in Major League Soccer's Eastern Conference.

Miami suffered an early setback when their defender Franco Negri deflected a corner from Daniel Lovitz into his own net in just the second minute of the game at Chase Stadium. Gerardo Martino's team have now failed to keep a clean sheet in each of their last 11 games and it could have been worse when three minutes later Josh Bauer blasted a shot against the bar.

But Messi soon had Miami on level terms — the Argentine set free by a clever flick from Diego Gomez saw a shot parried out by Nashville keeper Elliot Panico, but after Luis Suarez directed the loose ball back to him Messi slotted home to make it 1-1 in the 11th minute.

Two minutes later, Messi took advantage of some sloppy play from Nashville but his low right-foot shot came out off the post.

Everything Miami was creating was coming through Messi, who flashed a snapshot wide before moments later whipping in a cross for a Gomez header which was saved by Panico's feet.

Six minutes before the interval, Messi's former Barcelona team-mate Busquets found the net for the first time in MLS, meeting the World Cup winner's corner with a fine glancing header at the near post.

But there was a blow for the home side just before the break when Paraguay international Gomez was stretched off with an ankle injury, the latest in a series of injuries for Miami. His replacement, Brazilian born youngster Leonardo Afonso, had the ball in the net but his effort was ruled out for offside.

Nashville came out strongly after the break but despite dominating possession for the opening 20 minutes of the half, they had little to show for their efforts other than a couple of off-target long-range efforts from German Hany Mukhtar.

Nine minutes from the end, Miami were able to put the game to bed when Afonso was ruled to have been brought down inside the box by Bauer and Messi slotted home the penalty.

Nida reaches 100-wicket milestone but West Indies win

F.P. Report

KARACHI : Nida Dar became the second Pakistan women's bowler and 27th overall to reach the 100-wicket landmark, but the West Indies Women took a 2-0 lead in the ICC Women's Championship 2022-25 fixture by pulling off a dramatic last-ball victory with two wickets to spare at the National Bank Stadium on Sunday.

The visitors, after being 213 for five in 48 overs while chasing 224 for victory, had needed six runs off the last over, and three runs off the final ball before a boundary off an outside edge of Karishma Ramharack's bat broke the hearts of the local girls.

The West Indies Women were in total control of the proceedings when they reached 180 for three in 41 overs, before Nida Dar triggered a middle-order collapse. Nida, who had joined Sana Mir as only the second Pakistan bowler to take 100 wickets by dismissing opener Rashada Williams, accounted for Chedean Nation, Aaliyah Alleyne and Chinelle Henry to leave the West Indies in disarray at 219 for seven after 49 overs.

Fatima Sana conceded two runs off the first five balls and also picked up the wicket of Afy Fletcher, but was left dejected and disappointed after watching the ball cross the boundary after finding the outside edge of Ramharack's bat. Nida finished with impressive figures of 9-0-52-4, while Umm-e-Hani bagged two for 38. Sadia Iqbal and Fatima Sana picked up a wicket each.

Stefanie Taylor was the architect of the West Indies' win with a well-constructed 73 off 90 balls with nine fours before she became the fifth batter to be dismissed, falling to Sadia. This was her 41st career half-century in 156 matches. Taylor, a former top-ranked batter, stitched an 88-run partnership

for the third wicket off 106 balls with Shemaine Campbelle who contributed a fine 73-ball 52 with four fours. Campbelle had earlier added 39 runs for the second wicket skipper with Hayley Matthews who fell to a stunning catch by substitute Diana Baig after scoring 44 off 63 balls with three fours.

Earlier, in front of A Sports cameras, half-centuries by Bismah Maroof and Sidra Ameen lifted Pakistan to 223 all out in 48.5 overs. Bismah scored a 105-ball 65, her 21st half-century in 135th match, with three fours and Sidra struck four fours in a 70-ball 50 (eighth half-century in 65 matches) as the two batters added 80 runs for the second wicket from 115 balls.

The next best partnership was for the seventh wicket when Bismah and Najjha Alvi (25, 28 b, 1x4) added 31 runs for the seventh wicket off 27 balls. Sadia Iqbal and Najjha added 22 runs from 28 balls for the last wicket.

For the West Indies, Chinelle Henry bagged three for 37, Karishma Ramharack snapped up three for 48 and Afy Fletcher scooped two wickets for 46 runs.

Scores in brief:

West Indies Women beat Pakistan Women by two wickets

Pakistan Women 223 all-out, 48.5 overs (Bismah Maroof 65, Sidra Ameen 50, Najjha Alvi 25; Chinelle Henry 3-37, Karishma Ramharack 3-48, Afy Fletcher 2-46)

West Indies 225-8, 50 overs (Stafanie Taylor 73, Shemaine Campbelle 52, Hayley Matthews 44, Chinelle Henry 23; Nida Dar 4-52, Umm-e-Hani 2-38)

Player of the match — Stafanie Taylor (West Indies Women)

Third ODI — Tuesday, 23 April, National Bank Stadium (3.30pm start)

First ODI — West Indies Women won by 113 runs.



STUTTGART: Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan poses with the champions trophy after defeating Marta Kostyuk of Ukraine in the final.

Chinese Grand Prix 2024

Max Verstappen wins with Lando Norris second

SHANGHAI (Agencies): Max Verstappen annihilated the competition to win the Chinese Grand Prix.

The Dutchman was in a league of his own again — even over his team-mate Sergio Perez — in a race punctuated by two mid-race safety cars in quick succession.

Safety cars broke up Red Bull's cruise to a one-two finish, shuffling Perez behind McLaren's Lando Norris and Ferrari's Charles Leclerc.

The Mexican soon picked off Leclerc but Norris drove an exceptional final stint to hold on to second ahead of Perez. Verstappen underlined his superiority over everyone, including Perez, with a crushing first stint of the race.

The world champion converted his pole position into a lead at the first corner while Perez was passed around the outside by Fernando Alonso's Aston Martin, which started third.

It took Perez until lap five to pass Alonso, by which time Verstappen was five seconds up the road.

And over the eight laps before his pit stop, Verstappen lapped at least

0.5 seconds faster than Perez to extend his lead to 10 seconds by the time he stopped for tyres for the first time on lap 13, a gap large enough for Red Bull to pit both cars on the same lap without losing any time.

The next demonstration of Verstappen's superiority came three laps later when he caught and passed Leclerc — he had made up a pit stop's worth of race time over a man battling for the final podium place in just 16 laps.

After that, he calmly navigated the rest of the race, well clear of the rest of the field, to take his fourth win in five races this year — victorious in all the events he has finished.

Safety-car drama and chaos

Perez looked to be cruising to a comfortable second place behind Verstappen, but the safety cars, which came in quick succession, changed the complexion of the race for the remaining podium places. First, Valtteri Bottas pulled off with an engine failure at Turn 11 on lap 20, and there will be questions as to how long it

took the race director to deploy first the virtual safety car and then the safety car with marshals on the track trying to remove the car.

Leclerc had dropped to eighth on the first lap after a jink to hold off an attack by team-mate Carlos Sainz at the first corner allowed Mercedes' George Russell and Haas driver Nico Hulkenberg both past.

But as the first stint developed, and Leclerc found his tyres in good shape but his pace not special, Ferrari began to think about a one-stop strategy in an attempt to beat Norris, who was initially planning two.

The Bottas incident allowed first Leclerc and then Norris to pit and save time compared to Perez, leap-frogging them in front of the Red Bull. And when a second safety car immediately followed the first because of two incidents on the restart on lap 27, Norris also switched to a one-stop, and the race came down to whether Perez could catch and pass both Leclerc and Norris to reclaim the one-two.

Huzaifa staged a strong comeback by winning the second set to tie the tally 1-1. It was the third and decisive set in which Usman Ahmad raced up to victory at 13-11, the score was thrice tied at 9-9, 10-10 and 11-11.

In the second match Swat faced tough resistance against Bannu Region by 2-0. International Shayan of Swat recorded victory against Shaharyar of Bannu by 2-1, the score was 7-11, 11-9 and 11-9 and in the second match Sangeen beat Huzaifa by 2-0, the score was 11-9, 11-8 and in the third match Kashif defeated Muhammad Yousaf by 2-0, the score was 11-9 and 11-8.

In the Girls Team event Peshawar Region and Bannu Region recorded victories against their respective rivals Hazara Region and Swat Region. Peshawar defeated Hazara Region

by 3-1. Zainab Peshawar lost to Kainat of Hazara by 2-0, the score was 11-9 and 13-11, Alishba of Peshawar beat Noor of Hazara by 2-0, the score was 13-11 and 11-9. In the third match Shafina beat Shaista by 2-0, the score was 11-7, 11-9 and in the last reverse singles Alishba of Peshawar registered victory Kainat by 2-0, the score was 11-8 and 11-9.

In the second match of the Girls Team event Bannu beat Swat Region by 3-2 in a hot fought contest witnessed by a capacity crowd present on this occasion. Former President Sports Writers Association and father of Pakistan top two players international Fahad Khawjah and Ummam Khawjah, Nadir Khawjah was the chief guest on this occasion and before the start of the match the players were introduced to him. Director Sports Islamia

College University and Organizing Secretary Ali Hoti, HEC representative Muhammad Owais Mirza, Assistant Coach Nawaz Ahmad, President KP Table Tennis Association Nawaz Ahmad, players and officials were also present.

In the first singles of the Girls Team event Wajeetha of Bannu beat Sumaiya of Swat by 2-0, the score was 11-9 and 11-7, in the second match Insha of Bannu beat Khadija of Swat by 2-0, the score was 11-6 and 11-9. Maryum of Bannu lost to Atika of Swat by 2-1, the score was 7-11, 11-9 and 13-11. In the received singles Wajeetha of Bannu beat Khadija of Swat by 2-1, the score was 11-9, 8-11, and 13-11 and in the last and fifth singles Insha of Bannu beat Sumaiya of Swat by 2-1, the score was 11-8, 9-11 and 11-9.

Pakistan beats India 2-1 in Karate Combat 45 competition in Dubai

ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan edged India out 2-1 in the Karate Combat 45 competition in Dubai on Saturday night, with an "unstoppable" Shahzaib Rind convincingly beating India's Rana Singh to seal the win.

Karate Combat is a professional martial arts league featuring full-contact karate bouts. Karate Combat hosts events around the world, showcasing bouts between skilled fighters from different weight classes and countries.

The match between the two countries was decided in the final round after Pakistan's Rizwan Ali and India's Himanshu Kaushik won the first and second competition of the match, respectively. "Shahzaib Rind is just unstoppable inside the pit!" Karate Combat wrote on social media platform X. "Pakistan beats India 2-1 with this victory."

The competition began with Ali facing India's Pawan Gupta. The bout was a one-sided one, with Ali knocking out Gupta soon earlier on and ending the match in Pakistan's favor.

India then leveled the match when its fighter Himanshu Kaushik overcame Pakistan's Faizan Khan in the second fixture, making it 1-1 before Rind delivered decisive blows to Singh to seal the victory for Pakistan 2-1. The fixture between India and Pakistan was a much-awaited one, especially due to the pre-match hype between fighters of the two countries. At a pre-match news conference on Friday, Rind slapped Singh before both were separated by their team members. The video of the altercation went viral on social media.



DUBAI: Shahzaib Rindh in action against Rana Singh during last round of 3 vs 3 team fight.

Peshawar boys, girls dominates in PM Youth Talent Hunt TT League

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar dominated in the boys and girls Team event category of the Prime Minister Youth Talent Hunt Boys and Girls Table Tennis Championship being played here at Arena Hall of the Qayyum Sports Complex on Sunday.

In the Boys Team event category Peshawar and Swat recorded victories against their respective rivals in the Boys Team event. Peshawar Region defeated strong rival Hazara Region by 3-1. With the services of international player Obaid Shah, who is basically hailing from Kohat and representing Pakistan in the South Asian Table Tennis Championship held in Karachi, recorded victory against talented player Azhar of Hazara by 2-0, the score was 11-7 and 11-8. In the second singles Haroon of Peshawar defeated Hanzala of Hazara by 2-0, the

score was 11-9, 13-11. Both Haroon and Hanzala gave each other a tough fight especially in the second set in which both stretched to 13-11, the set was tied at 5-5, 6-6, 7-7, 8-8, 9-9, 10-10 and 11-all before Haroon took the set. Haroon has full command over his spin serve and strong backhand drives. Hanzala tried hard to reach the spin serve of Haroon but he failed and thus Haroon took many points through his strong spin services.

In the third match Usman Ahmad of Peshawar defeated Huzaifa of Hazara by 2-1, the score was 11-9, 9-11 and 13-11. Both Usman Ahmad and Huzaifa played well with some good strong forehand and backhand shots and received a cheering response from the sitting spectators. Usman Ahmad took the first set 11-9 but he failed to click and

score was 11-9 and 13-11. Both Haroon and Hanzala gave each other a tough fight especially in the second set in which both stretched to 13-11, the set was tied at 5-5, 6-6, 7-7, 8-8, 9-9, 10-10 and 11-all before Haroon took the set. Haroon has full command over his spin serve and strong backhand drives. Hanzala tried hard to reach the spin serve of Haroon but he failed and thus Haroon took many points through his strong spin services.

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In brief

ICP combing operation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) on Sunday conducted a search and combing operation at Khanna, Industrial Area police stations' jurisdiction. A public relations officer said that, following the special directives of Islamabad SSP Counter Terrorism Department (CTD), the search and combing operations are being conducted in different areas of the city, to ensure the safety and security of the Islamabad citizens. Following these orders, a search and combing operation was conducted in different areas of Khanna and industrial Area police stations by CTD and local police teams. During the search and combing operation 126 suspicious persons, 72 houses, 13 motorcycles and 48 motor vehicles were thoroughly checked while the police team shifted three 12 bore rifles, one SMG rifle, four 30 bore pistols, ammunition, drugs, 10 suspicious persons and three without documents motorcycles to the Police station for further verification purpose. SSP CTD said that the purpose of the search and combing operations was to heighten the security in the federal capital. All zonal officers were directed to continue these operations in their respective areas. Citizens are also requested to cooperate with police during the checking.

FGRF provides one month ration

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Faizan Global Relief Foundation (FGRF) of Dawat-e-Islami under its relief efforts, has provided around one month's ration packs to 40,000 people, distributed vegetables among 2500 people and cash assistance to 1000 families in Gaza-Palestine. Head of Dawat-e-Islami, FGRF, UK, Syed Fuzail Raza Attari told APP on Sunday, "Alhamdulillah, about one hundred thousand cooked food boxes have been distributed to the victims in Gaza by Dawat-e-Islami along with other relief efforts." He said tents have been distributed among establish temporary homes for 200 families whose houses got damaged during the conflict. Moreover, hygienic kits have been distributed to 1,500 people, whereas a total of six containers including four containers of ration boxes and two containers containing 800 mattresses, 1,400 blanket kits and warm clothes have been distributed to the affected Muslims of Gaza, he added. Shah informed that three ambulances would be donated by UK FGRF Dawat-e-Islami to the Muslims of Gaza soon. Moreover, he said along with this, cooked food was being distributed to the impacted victims of Gaza on a daily basis and other relief activities were underway.

Geography Lab inaugurated

RAWALPINDI (APP): A state of the art geography lab was inaugurated in the Government College Asghar Mall, here on Sunday. The lab will provide sophisticated research and development opportunities to the geography students. A stunning ceremony in this regard was organized in the College's Geography Department where the College Principal Dr. Abdul Kabir Mohsin was the chief guest. During his address, he congratulated the students and teachers for the establishment of the lab saying that the lab would be an added facility for the students to enhance their research in geography studies. The college principal and the Head of the Department of Geography, in their addresses, expressed their special gratitude to the college alumni who generously contributed to the establishment of this lab and also remembered their alma mater.



ISLAMABAD: A graceful flock of pigeons takes flight along the roadside in the heart of the Federal Capital.

Strict action being taken against electricity thieves

RAWALPINDI (APP): Strict action is being taken against electricity thieves and since 2023, over 194 FIRs were registered against the accused while an inquiry against SDO, Chakri has also been ordered. According to a district administration spokesman, the officers concerned during a briefing informed the District Coordination Committee about performance of all the departments.

The spokesman informed that the meeting was chaired by Chairman, Qamar Islam.

The Health officials informed the committee that four cases of dengue were reported in Rawalpindi this year and the patients after medial treatment were discharged from the hospitals.

1273 dengue workers are working, the meeting was briefed and informed that another 1500 daily wages dengue workers have been recruited. Last year, 270 daily wage workers were dismissed due to negli-

gence on their part. During one year, medical treatment facilities were provided to 426,648 people in three major teaching hospitals of Rawalpindi including RIU and RIC. In one year, over 185,000 patients came to OPDs in hospitals for medical treatment while over 154,000 people were admitted, the meeting was briefed. After revamping of Holy Family Hospital, OPD is fully functional, the committee was informed.

Reconciliation council committees should be formed at the police station level.

Chairman Coordination Committee Qamar Islam directed and said that a mechanism should also be developed for crime prevention.

The incidents of mobile snatching and motorcycle theft are increasing day by day, he said adding, the number of personnel in police stations would be increased to control crime rate. Crackdown should also be launched against drug peddlers and criminal gangs, he said.

He said that there are 58 dams in Rawalpindi region. The work on Chahan Dam has been completed and the water supply lines would be completed by June, the Committee was informed.

There are 1807 government schools in Rawalpindi including 1039 Primary, 249 elementary, 452 high and 67 higher secondary schools. The 4 inch pipelines are being laid from Swaan Camp and Ranyal to address low gas pressure problem in Rawalpindi, the Committee was briefed.

There are total 594 housing societies in Rawalpindi, and action in accordance with the law is being taken against illegal housing societies, the Committee was informed. The meeting was also briefed that action was also being taken against those looting the people on the names of the housing societies. All-out efforts would be made to provide relief to people and all possible facilities would also be provided to the citizens, the Chairman DCC said.

RPO reviews security arrangements for PP-22 Talagang by-election

RAWALPINDI (APP): Regional Police Officer (RPO) Babar Sarfraz Alpa visited and reviewed the security arrangement of the polling stations of the by-election constituency PP-22 Talagang. DPO Chakwal Captain (Rtd) Wahid Mahmood gave a detailed briefing about the security arrangements over there.

The RPO reviewed the security arrangements and

issued necessary instructions. RPO Babar Sarfraz Alpa said that all 215 polling stations are being monitored with CCTV cameras and effective patrolling around polling stations is also being ensured.

Additional contingents of the force have been kept in standby position to deal with any untoward incident, adding police personnel have also been deployed at

77 category A sensitive polling stations.

Strict implementation of the code of conduct issued by the Election Commission will be ensured. Senior officers of the force posted at all polling stations from time to time to ensure checking and briefing. The best security arrangements will be ensured in every possible way for the conduct of free and fair elections, he concluded.

SSDO urges Punjab to conduct LG election as 100 days agenda

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Sustainable Social Development Organization (SSDO) has urged the Punjab government to prioritize holding local government elections within its first 100 days in office. "While ending the democratic crisis and forming a new government is a positive step, building a strong democratic system is crucial for long-term progress," Syed Kausar Abbas, Executive Director of SSDO said on Sunday. "Restoring the local government system isn't just a legal obligation, it's a cornerstone of democratic governance."

The SSDO argues that empowering local communities through elected representatives is essential. They propose that instead of allocating development funds to provincial and national assembly members, the government should channel those resources directly to locally elected officials. This, they believe, would empower local people to drive their own development.

"Pakistan's history demonstrates the importance of local government," Abbas

emphasized. "Local bodies have always played a key role in effective governance, citizen participation, and delivering essential services at the grassroots level." International examples further bolster SSDO's argument. Countries with robust local government systems often enjoy better service delivery, reduced citizen problems, increased local business activity, and greater political awareness. By devolving power, Pakistan can unlock the potential of its communities, he argued.

The Organization emphasizes that restoring the local government system is not merely an administrative reform, but a strategic necessity for achieving sustainable development. The SSDO calls on the government to engage with civil society organizations and local leaders to develop a comprehensive plan for reviving local government. This collaborative approach, they believe, will ensure a system designed to meet the evolving needs of Pakistani citizens and contribute to long-term sustainable development, he outlined.

Weeklong paper cutting exhibition to commence

ISLAMABAD (INP): A weeklong paper cutting exhibition themed "The Guiding Light" will commence at Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) tomorrow (Monday).

The PNCA has invited the famous Paper Cutting Artist Tufsi Ahmad to create and display Paper-cut Arts with different meanings. Tufsi is the paper cutting artist whose work depicts Islamic stories. Tufsi Ahmad has said, "One honor that I am particularly proud of is that I am the only paper cutting artist in the world that focuses on Islamic stories."

The art of paper cutting involves the

artist cutting a whole painting from a single piece of paper resulting in a painstakingly intricate and fragile piece of art.

"For the past 12 years, I have created hundreds of art pieces, exhibited in galleries around the world, and won national and international awards", he added. The exhibition would be followed by artist talk and workshop on "papercut art". For registration, the interested people can contact on WhatsApp 0330-1577680 or nag.vadevents@gmail.com. The show will remain on display till April, 28, 2024 (Saturday).

Tarar condemns killing of PML-N worker in Narowal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Sunday strongly condemned killing of a senior worker of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in Narowal that had the by-polls in one of its constituencies earlier in the day. Deceased Muhammad Yousaf was a worker of Muslim League-N, said the minister in a news statement while expressing condolences for the bereaved family over demise of Yousaf.

The minister regretted that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) had resorted to the violence and killing for winning the by-elections through rigging. "Muhammad Yusuf's blood will not go in vain," he said while vowing to bring the killers to justice.

Pakistan Environment Awards on June 4 to spotlight best green initiatives

ISLAMABAD (APP): Development Communications Network (Devcom-Pakistan) will confer the Pakistan Environmental Award upon the best green initiatives to mark the World Environment Day (WED) on June 4 and to celebrate and recognize the commendable efforts of organizations towards environmental stewardship through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and environmental compliance and conservation.

Speaking to this scribe about the new initiative on Sunday, Devcom-Pakistan Executive Director Munir Ahmed said a number of corporate organizations and projects have delivered exemplary outputs but lack due appreciation and recognition. The Pakistan Environmental Award will also encourage every organization in the corporate sector to adopt the green technologies, environmental compliance, and engage the communities in environmental conservation and protection. The event will include the presentations of best practices and a conference to explore the way forward for a climate resilient Pakistan.

Munir Ahmed said, in an era where the preservation of our planet is more crucial than ever, the corporate sector in collaboration with the government and the citizens can take numerous CSR initiatives besides playing a pivotal role in promoting sustainable practices. The industry shall take measures in mitigating the adverse impacts of business operations on the environment. CSR embodies the responsibility of organizations to operate in a manner that not only benefits their bottom line but also contributes positively to society and the environment. Pakistan's corporate sector organizations have numerous

906,011 children to be immunized against Polio in Rawalpindi

RAWALPINDI (APP): A week-long anti-polio campaign will commence in the three tehsils of the district from April 29 to cover more than 906,011 children under five years of age. Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the District Health Authority Dr Ejaz Ahmed told APP on Sunday that children would be vaccinated in the area of Rawalpindi City, Cantonment, Tehsil Rawalpindi (Rural), Gujar Khan and Taxila.

Meanwhile, District Superintendent Vaccination Dr Muhammad Nadeem of District Health Authority said that 2,834 mobile teams, 677 area incharges and 192 Union Council's Medical officers would participate in the drive to complete the immunisation task.

In addition, "269 fix centers will up set up to administer the drops", adding

anti-polio drops would also be administered at 125 transit points while teams would also be deputed at toll plazas so that no child could miss immunization.

Dr Nadeem added that the objective of regularly conducting anti-polio campaigns was to keep children through protective drops and increase their immunity.

He urged the citizens, particularly the parents, to come forward and play their role in eliminating the crippling disease from the society.

The parents should cooperate with special to achieve the set target, he added. Deputy Commissioner Hasan Waqar Cheema directed the officials of the health authority to perform their duty as a national responsibility, adding no negligence would be tolerated during the campaign.

No one to be allowed to indulge in illegal construction activities in Murree: DC Murree

RAWALPINDI (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Murree, Agha Zaheer Abbas Shirazi has said that no one would be allowed to indulge in illegal construction activities in Murree.

District administration Murree, on the instructions of Chief Minister Punjab, Maryam Nawaz, had launched a grand operation against illegal constructions, he said and informed that several illegal constructions, built on Bank Road Murree were demolished during the operation.

Officials from the district administration, Murree Municipal Corporation, Civil Defense and other departments concerned were taking part in the operation. On the instructions of Chief Minister Punjab, Maryam Nawaz, the operation would continue till the desired results are achieved and all ille-

gal constructions are demolished, DC Murree said.

He said that no one would be allowed to disrupt the ongoing operation. The operation launched against illegal constructions would continue and strict action in accordance with the law would be taken without any discrimination against the rules violators, he added.

Operation would be conducted on daily basis against illegal constructions in Murree, he said.

He warned that negligence on part of officials concerned would not be tolerated. Agha Zaheer Abbas Shirazi said that it is duty of the inspectors and enforcement staff to immediately stop illegal constructions. Strict legal action would be taken against those involved in illegal constructions, he added.

Over 5,000 policemen deployed

RAWALPINDI (APP): Regional Police Officer (RPO) Rawalpindi Babar Sarfraz Alpa on Sunday visited Pindi Cricket Stadium and reviewed the security arrangements for Pakistan vs New Zealand T20 series. Among others, SSP Operations Flight Lieutenant (ret'd) Hafiz Kamran Asghar and other senior officers were present on the occasion.

The SSP Operations also briefed the RPO Rawalpindi on the comprehensive security and traffic plans in place. More than 5,000 officers have been deployed to perform security duties diligently. RPO Rawalpindi inspected the point-wise security and traffic arrangements in and around the stadium and instructed the concerned officers to ensure fool-proof security at all times.

MoHR, National IT Board launches App for differently-abled child

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Information Technology Board (NITB) and Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR) have launched an online app for the parents of differently-abled child to connect them with the world around them.

According to details, the National IT Board is bringing approximately 30,000 out of school differently-abled children into the educational mainstream.

It will assist them in the selection of suitable educational institution near to their residence so that they can apply online without physical access to the relevant center.

The App will inform the people and parents about the services and facilities available in the DGSE's centres and institutes as well as in the FDE schools for inclusive education, it added.

It will be very useful for the children with different abilities living in the slum areas of Islamabad.

It was also informed about the status of their submitted applications and it will be helpful to bring out of school differently-abled children in the education system.

This application will connect them with the world around them, it stated.

IRSA releases 177,100 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 177,100 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 280,400 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1439.16 feet and was 41.16 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 46,900 cusecs and 5,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1132.00 feet, which was 82.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 81,400 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs respectively.

Daesh claims responsibility

KABUL (amu.tv): Daesh in a statement claimed responsibility for a magnetic bomb explosion that targeted a minivan in the Kota-e Sangi area of Kabul's Police District 3. According to initial reports from the Taliban, the attack resulted in the death of the driver and injuries to three civilians. However, Daesh alleged that the blast killed and wounded at least 10 people, including Taliban forces.

WHO trains healthcare workers

KABUL (Khaama Press): The World Health Organization has announced that over 500 physicians and health workers, including 204 women, have been trained in basic emergency care. The World Health Organization's office on Sunday, April 21st, broadcasted a training video on social media platform X to increase the capacity of health workers in emergency care and reduce premature mortality.

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

OIC delegates to discuss women's rights



KABUL (amu.tv): The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has announced that a high-level delegation is in Kabul to discuss women's rights with Taliban officials. The delegation includes the OIC's special envoy and three female officials from the human rights and women's departments, focusing on implementing resolutions concerning

Afghanistan, particularly those pertaining to women's rights. While the Taliban has banned women and girls from education and employment, the Taliban's Foreign Ministry stated that during a meeting with the OIC delegation, Amir Khan Muttaqi, the Taliban's foreign minister, highlighted the active role of women in sectors such as education, health, and commerce. He also claimed that the Taliban are attentive to women's fundamental rights, a statement that women activists have outright rejected as false. The discussions also involved Abdul Salam Hanafi, Taliban's deputy chief minister, where Muttaqi reiterated the involvement of women in various professional sectors and claimed the Taliban's commitment to fundamental women's rights. The remarks are expressed at a time when women and girls in Afghanistan are faced with bans from schools, universities, and most jobs in the public and private sectors. "The Taliban's claims about respecting and ensuring the Islamic and human rights and freedoms of women and girls are outright lies. I hope the OIC delegation has the courage to question the Taliban about these claims when women and girls in Afghanistan are deprived of their basic right to education," Mariam Arwin, a women's rights activist, said. The OIC, in its only press release regarding the delegation's visit, stated its commitment to pursuing resolutions focused on reopening schools, universities, and training centers for women and girls, and ensuring equal educational opportunities based on Islamic principles. They have also urged the Taliban to create employment opportunities for women to participate in society and the economy. Despite the continuous demands of the international community, human rights institutions, many Muslim countries, and other organizations, the Taliban have not retreated from the restrictions imposed on women and girls. On the contrary, their leader has declared a continued fight against Western human rights values to the extent of public stoning of women. "We call on these organizations to compel the Taliban to allow women to return to work and study. We must not forget that women are at the lowest educational levels and girls can only study up to the sixth grade," said Hadiya Sahebzada, another women's rights activist. Despite global demands for change, Taliban has not removed the restrictions on women and girls, and their leader has vowed to continue opposing Western human rights standards.

Educational institution provides online classes to 200 girls

KABUL (amu.tv): An educational institution, Anar Academy, has commenced online classes for at least 200 girls who are deprived of schooling amidst the Taliban ban on education. The academy offers a curriculum that blends international educational standards with the one implemented during the previous government in Afghanistan, covering grades seven through twelve. "I am very happy. With full motivation and capability, I am advancing through the programs and lessons arranged for me and am more determined than ever," said Sahar Nasiri, a student. Despite the joy of learning and having access to books and pens again, one of the major challenges these girls face is internet connectivity in Afghanistan. Hamidah Karimi, another student, said, "I have managed to continue my school education through this academy, although internet issues in Afghanistan present their own difficulties." Officials at Anar Academy stated that the mixed curriculum prepares girls for specific job markets outside Afghanistan. "We have added some courses, like nursing, to enable our students to integrate into European countries such as Germany, find opportunities, and continue their education," Sarah Nabil, spokesperson for Anar Academy, told Amu. Taliban banned girls from attending secondary schools in late 2021. According to UNESCO, since September 2021, over one million girls have been barred from schools in Afghanistan, with a total of 2.5 million girls and women currently excluded from educational opportunities.

At least 14 Afghan nationals executed



KABUL (Khaama Press): Human rights organizations in Iran have reported that in less than four months, from the beginning of 2024 until now, at least 14 Afghan nationals have been executed in Iranian prisons. Hengaw, a human rights organization based in Iranian Kurdistan, reported on Saturday, April 20th, that the implementation of the death sentence for five Afghan prisoners in central prisons of Mashhad and Tabriz has brought the total number of Afghan nationals executed in Iranian prisons since the beginning of 2024 to 14 cases. The organization, referring to the statistics registered at the Hengaw

Statistics and Documentation Center, reported that from the beginning of 2024 until now, less than four months, at least 14 Afghan nationals have been executed in Iranian prisons. Additionally, in 2023, the death sentences of 28 Afghan nationals in Iranian prisons were carried out. Iran annually executes dozens of Afghan citizens, placing it on the list of countries with high execution rates. The exact number of Afghan citizens executed annually in Iran is not clear because the Islamic Republic of Iran largely carries out the execution orders secretly, and reports as of Thursday have not been confirmed by the Iranian government.

Senior Red Cross official meets Muttaqi in Kabul



KABUL (Ariana News): Alexander Matheou, Asia-Pacific director for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, met with Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi in Kabul this week, the ministry said Sunday. During the meeting, Muttaqi hailed the IFRC and ICRC in Afghanistan for its services, cooperation and operations but pointed out areas in the country which are in dire need of assistance, the ministry's statement read. Matheou presented a report on the IFRC's operations and cooperation in Afghanistan, and extended their appreciation and gratitude to the Afghan government, in particular the foreign ministry, for ongoing cooperation. He said that in the past year, 28 million Swiss

francs (\$30 million) has been forthcoming which was used to provide health services, water supplies and other assistance, especially to about five million needy people and victims of natural disasters. Muttaqi told the Red Cross official to reflect the real picture of Afghanistan to the international community and asked the organization to speed up efforts to ensure comprehensive assistance and pay special attention to the health sector and equipment of hospitals so as to provide better services.

Returned migrants say they lack access to healthcare

KABUL (amu.tv): Several families who have been repatriated or deported from Iran and Pakistan say they originally left Afghanistan because of the two-decade-long wars but now face severe economic and social challenges upon returning. These individuals report lacking basic services such as food, drinking water, healthcare, and education. A family of four, who returned to Afghanistan from Iran more than two months ago, is pinning their hopes on Nasima, a family member. They returned to Herat and wish to go back to their hometown of Ghor but cannot afford the travel expenses. According to the family members, life's difficulties are overwhelming them. Nasima, speaking to a reporter, said, "My husband is disabled. I buy fuel, suffer from low blood pressure and stomach issues, and I don't have the money to see a doctor. We are struggling to get by." Additionally, families recently returned or expelled from Pakistan express concerns about their children's future. Lack of access to education, healthcare, job opportunities, and persistent poverty are the major worries for these returned or expelled migrants. Khan Ahmad, another returnee, added, "Since the recent wars, which displaced us seven years ago, we suffered greatly. Our schools were destroyed, our village clinic was demolished; every misfortune seems to fall upon us."

Despite these challenges, some returnees tell reporters that they left the country due to war and violence but now see no bright future upon their return. Safdar Khan, a returnee, stated, "This place is our home; we spent a lot of time here. We had schools, a clinic, and good places; life was good. In the recent wars, we lost everything. The wars forced us to migrate from one city to another." Meanwhile, Pakistan has intensified the forced expulsion of migrants, and the latest report from the Taliban's Ministry of Refugees states that more than 800 migrants have been forcibly deported from Pakistan to Afghanistan.

Bamyan farmers concerned

BAMYAN (TOLO News): Farmers in Bamyan have raised concerns about the lack of a proper market for selling their asafotida products. They are requesting that, in addition to professional training in asafotida cultivation, authorities should also assist them with reaching markets. Shir Agha, who recently began cultivating asafotida in a corner of Bamyan city, admits he is new to planting this crop and is worried about the absence of a market for it. He decided to cultivate asafotida due to drought and water scarcity, and he is seeking support and collaboration from officials in this sector. Shir Agha told TOLONews: "Our agricultural lands are dry, and this year asafotida prices have dropped, which is why farmers are worried." Other Bamyan farmers who have harvested asafotida products in the past two years report that they have been unable to sell their produce so far. Zarif, a local farmer, said: "Many people have planted asafotida, but so far it has not been profitable for farmers. However, if marketed properly in the future, asafotida cultivation can be beneficial."

Kabul's disabled and martyrs' families call for overdue pension



KABUL (TOLO News): A number of disabled individuals and families of martyrs in the capital have once again complained about pension cuts and non-payment of their dues. They face significant economic challenges and are calling on the Islamic Emirate to disburse their pensions. Bismillah, another disabled individual, stated: "The previous government used to pay us 60,000 Afghanis, but now we only receive 11,000 Afghanis and haven't received anything more." Belqis, a family member of a martyr, said, "I work in people's homes to support my family and I want the government to pay our pensions monthly." Mia Rahman, another disabled individual, expressed, "It's true that I am disabled, but my young children need to live. Look at my condition, I cannot work." Officials from the Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled stated that pensions are distributed through a mechanism that verifies disabilities and pays based on the degree of disability. Kalimullah Afghan, head of the finance department of the Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled, explained why some pensions are not paid: "Some disabled claim that they haven't received their pensions, which could be for two reasons: either their disability does not qualify under our law, or they are only physically disabled and have no mental impairment." According to the Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled, over 600,000 beneficiaries are registered, more 100,000 of whom are disabled.

Shopkeepers in Kabul seek alternatives



KABUL (TOLO News): Several shopkeepers in the capital voiced concerns about the potential demolition of their shops due to municipal development projects. Although they appreciate the improvements to the city's road infrastructure, these shop owners are urging the Kabul Municipality to provide alternative locations for their businesses. Niaz Mohammad, one of the dozens of shopkeepers in the Dogh Abad area of Kabul, regarding his shop being scheduled

for demolition, says: "Places that are being demolished are under expropriation; they should at least be allowed to remove their goods for sale because their expiration date is approaching." With the onset of development and construction of some capital's roads this year by the Kabul Municipality, shopkeepers and others whose livelihoods are affected by these projects are demanding the provision of alternative locations to continue their businesses. Mohammad Haidar, another shopkeeper, said: "It is a good thing; the Dogh Abad area will thrive, and while our shops are gone, so is our property. Previously, we were able to support our families through what we earned there." Meanwhile, the Kabul Municipality has assured compensation for the residential and commercial properties that are to be demolished. Nematullah Barakzai, a representative of the Kabul Municipality, stated: "Undoubtedly, when the Kabul Municipality undertakes road construction in certain areas, we remove obstacles, whether they are shops or homes, and the Kabul Municipality compensates for the land and shops." The Kabul Municipality has also reported that in the solar year 1403, it will implement 165 projects worth 6.4 billion Afghanis in the capital. These projects include road construction, canal building, green spaces, and other various projects.

5 killed, as many wounded in Afghansitan last week

KABUL (Pajhwok): Last week, a delegation of Afghans living abroad visited Kabul and held talks with government officials. Different global institutions resented the expulsion of Afghan refugees from Pakistan. Additionally, Washington stressed respect for Afghan women's rights. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) insists the rights of women are fully respected in light of Islamic teachings. Also last week, Tehran said IEA's political opponents living in Iran did not have permission for political activities. Last week, five people were killed and many wounded across Afghanistan in various incidents. According to reports, a young man was killed and an elder injured in a hand grenade blast. In Kandahar, one person was killed and two others were wounded as an unexploded mortar shell went off. Local officials said one person was killed and two others were wounded as a result of a family clash. In Kapisa province, two women were gunned down due to a family feud. Note: Casualty figures here are based on Pajhwok Afghan News reports. There is a possibility that some incidents may have gone unreported or sources could have provided wrong figures. During the previous week, 16 people had been killed and six others injured in different incidents nationwide. Before the regime change in Afghanistan in August 2021, hundreds of civilians and security personnel would be killed and injured every week. Save the Children said most children from Afghan families deported from Pakistan did not have access to adequate shelter, education, and food. The United Nations said in a recent report that due to the large number of refugees returning to Afghanistan from neighbouring countries, it was necessary to provide assistance to the country. Abdul Mutalib Haqqani, spokesman for MoRR, told mediapeople: "The fresh deadline for refugees' deportation from Pakistan is not official yet, the situation in the neighbouring country is normal and the return of any family to Afghanistan is a normal process." He said IEA had urged Pakistan to work on a joint mechanism and arrive at an agreement on the situation of Afghan refugees.

Israel pounds Gaza as West Bank violence surges

GAZA STRIP (AFP/APP): Israel carried out deadly strikes in Gaza, first responders in the war-battered Palestinian territory said on Sunday, as violence flared in the occupied West Bank.

The latest bombardments came as lawmakers in Israel's top ally, the United States, approved \$13 billion in new Israeli military aid even as global criticism mounts over the death toll and dire humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

However, fears of wider war breaking out in the Middle East have eased somewhat after Iran downplayed Israel's reported retaliation over its unprecedented missile and drone attack on the country a week ago. Attention has turned back towards the war in Gaza, which Israel hit with several strikes overnight, according to the Palestinian territory's Civil Defence agency. The bodies of 13 people, mostly children, were recovered after an Israeli strike hit the home of a family near the southern-most Gaza city of Rafah, the agency said. Other people were believed to be under rubble. A separate Israeli strike on a home in the Rafah area killed at least three people and wounded others, Civil Defence said.

Resident Umm Hassan Kloub, 35, said her children screamed when they "woke up to a nightmare of an explosion". "Every second we live in terror, even the sound of Israeli aircraft doesn't stop," she said. "We don't know whether we will live or die. This is not life."

Palestinian Red Crescent says 14 dead in Israeli West Bank raid: The

Palestinian Red Crescent said Saturday at least 14 people had been killed in an Israeli raid on Nur Shams refugee camp in the north of the occupied West Bank. The Israeli army said troops had killed 10 militants during the operation, which it said started on Thursday. AFP journalists saw bodies in the streets and houses hit by blasts as Israeli drones flew overhead and armoured vehicles moved through the camp. Since early last year, violence has flared in the West Bank, which Israel has occupied since 1967. It has escalated further since war broke out in Gaza on October 7. "So far, our crews have evacuated 14 martyrs from Nur Shams camp to the hospital," the Palestinian Red Crescent said.

Earlier, the Palestinian health ministry said it had confirmed 11 injured in the Israeli raid, seven of them "wounded by live gunshots". Among them was a paramedic shot while trying to get to the wounded, it added. Medics had been alerted to "a number of killed and injured" inside the camp, but the army was "denying them access to tend to the wounded", the ministry said. An AFP journalist said paramedics had tried to enter the camp but had been refused access by the army. Gunshots rang out and soldiers carried out door-to-door raids, the journalist said. The Israeli army said that it had "eliminated 10 terrorists" and made eight arrests around Nur Shams. Eight soldiers and a police officer were wounded, it added.

Israeli forces say their frequent

raids target Palestinian militants, but civilians are often among the dead. On Friday, the health ministry said 16-year-old Qais Fathi Nasrallah had been killed by Israeli troops in the nearby Tulkarem refugee camp.

Official Palestinian news agency Wafa said he had died after being "shot in the head by Israeli live gunfire". It was unclear exactly when he died. A 30-year-old man, Salim Faisal Ghanem, had been "killed by Israeli troops" on Friday in the Nur Shams camp, Wafa said.

Residents contacted by AFP on Saturday said there was no electricity in the camp and food was running short, but nobody was being allowed to enter or leave.

Minister Muayad Shaaban, head of the Palestinian Colonisation and Wall Resistance Commission, said residents were suffering from the "destruction of homes, shops, the electricity grid, the sewerage, the water network and infrastructure".

Around 480 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli troops or settlers in the West Bank since the start of the Gaza war, according to Palestinian official sources. Excluding annexed east Jerusalem, the West Bank is home to around 490,000 Israeli settlers who live in communities considered illegal under international law. On Saturday, an ambulance driver was killed in clashes between settlers and Palestinians in the West Bank village As-Sawiya, the Palestinian Red Crescent and the health ministry said.



LAHORE: Female voters casting their votes in a polling station during the by-election 2024 at Garhi Shahu School.

US House speaker, once strongly opposed to Ukraine aid, ushers it through

WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): Republican Mike Johnson came out of nowhere six months ago to become speaker of the US House of Representatives, before emerging as an ardent defender of military aid to Ukraine, which the chamber approved Saturday.

The evolution of this 52-year-old Southerner with carefully coiffed hair has been stunning.

An arch-conservative Christian from Louisiana, he shot to the top leadership position in the House in October after the unprecedented ouster of then-speaker Kevin McCarthy in a rebellion by far-right lawmakers allied with Donald Trump.

After several candidates were proposed, then discarded, Johnson's name came up -- he was a virtual unknown to the American public -- and with the blessing of Trump, Johnson became leader of the House and of a Republican congressional caucus at war with itself.

Johnson had for months blocked a vote on the aid desperately needed by Ukraine's army as it defends against Russian invasion forces.

But recently his tone began to soften. And then, in a head-spinning shift, Johnson last week emerged as a passionate defender of a long-delayed aid package. That culminated in the vote Saturday in which his chamber, by a strong bipartisan majority, passed more than \$60 billion of additional military and financial support

for Ukraine. "I believe Johnson has been convinced, gradually, that America must support Ukraine in our own interests, and that the far-right Republicans demanding otherwise were simply wrong," Larry Sabato, a political scientist at the University of Virginia, told AFP.

In December, as previously approved US funding for Kyiv was drying up, President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine made a last-ditch visit to Washington to plead for a new aid package.

Zelensky made his way through the halls of Congress accompanied by the Senate's top Democrat and Republican, both of them vocal supporters of President Joe Biden's request for \$60 billion.

But his meeting with Johnson was held behind closed doors.

Johnson afterward said Biden was asking for "billions of additional dollars with no appropriate oversight, no clear strategy to win, and none of the answers that I think the American people are owed."

Since then, however, a series of US and world figures -- including British Foreign Secretary David Cameron -- worked to persuade Johnson of the high stakes, with some warning that Ukraine could fall by year's end unless the US aid came through. On Monday, Johnson announced the House would, after all, take up separate bills to provide aid to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan, and that

he would support them.

Johnson did make one concession to Trump -- who had demanded that aid to Ukraine be at least partly in the form of loans -- making a part of the package subject to repayment.

But the debt can still be forgiven, and the aid package is almost exactly for the amount requested months ago by Biden. "He didn't want the fall of Ukraine on his hands," Sabato said.

Johnson provided further insight during a news conference Wednesday.

"To put it bluntly, I would rather send bullets to Ukraine than American boys," he said, before adding, his voice choking with emotion, that his son is about to enter the US Naval Academy.

"This is a live-fire exercise for me, as it is for so many American families," Johnson said.

It remains unclear whether some of the far-right legislators behind last year's ouster of McCarthy might work to unseat Johnson after the perceived betrayal.

The House Democratic leader, Hakeem Jeffries, struck a philosophical tone when describing Johnson's thorny choices.

"This," he said, "is a Churchill or Chamberlain moment" -- referring first to the wartime British prime minister known for his steely determination and then to Churchill's predecessor, his name forever linked to a policy of appeasement.

Saudi Arabian citizen kidnapped in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (INP): A Saudi Arabian citizen has been reportedly kidnapped from Sector F8 of Islamabad, prompting swift action from law enforcement authorities.

The Margalla police station has registered a first information report (FIR) at the request of an official from the Saudi embassy.

According to the FIR, the accused, identified as Abdul Wahid Shahid Khan, allegedly kidnapped Saudi citizen Hanan Abdullah al-Bashar. The FIR also highlights the urgency of the situation, emphasizing the need for the kidnapper to face legal consequences and for the prompt recovery of the abducted individual. The abduction has raised concerns about the safety and security of foreign nationals in the capital city, prompting heightened vigilance from both local authorities and diplomatic missions. The Saudi embassy, in particular, is closely monitoring the situation and is actively cooperating with Pakistani law enforcement agencies to ensure the safe return of their citizen.

One dead, seven missing after two Japanese military helicopters crash

TOKYO (AFP/APP): One died and seven people were missing Sunday after an accident overnight in which two Japanese military helicopters apparently collided before crashing into the sea, officials said.

A spokesman for Japan's Self-Defense Force (SDF) confirmed the late Saturday incident to AFP and said that one person was rescued but later confirmed dead.

Defence Minister Minoru Kihara said rescuers "spotted what are believed to be part of the aircraft in the sea, and we believe that the two helicopters crashed."

"At this point the cause is unknown, but firstly we do our best to save lives," Kihara told reporters.

Hours later, Kihara told reporters that the crew member who was rescued "was confirmed dead."

He also said the ministry "discovered the flight recorders in places close to each other," and so "possibility is high that (the two helicopters) collided."

The helicopters appear to have crashed during night-time training of countering submarines off the Izu Islands in the Pacific Ocean, officials said.

"The flight recorders are being analysed" while officials are interviewing crew of a third helicopter that was joining the drill but was not involved in the accident, chief of staff Ryo Sakai of the Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) told reporters.

Communication with one chopper was lost at 10:38 pm (1338 GMT) off the island of Torishima, and one minute later an emergency signal was received from this aircraft, broadcaster NHK reported.

Death anniversary of Allama Iqbal observed

ISLAMABAD (APP): The nation solemnly commemorates the 86th death anniversary of Allama Muhammad Iqbal today, paying tribute to his struggle and services for a separate homeland for the Muslims of the Subcontinent.

Born in Sialkot on November 9, 1877, Allama Iqbal is revered as the national poet of Pakistan, affectionately known as Muffakir-e-Pakistan (the thinker of Pakistan), Shair-e-Mashriq (the poet of the east), and Hakeemul Ummat (the doctor of the

Muslim Ummah).

Allama Iqbal's profound vision laid the foundation for the concept of an independent nation for Muslims, ultimately culminating in the establishment of Pakistan in 1947.

Renowned for his literary prowess in both Urdu and Persian, his works such as Asrar-e-Khudi, Payam-i-Mashriq, Bang-i-Dara, Bal-i-Jibril, Zarb-i-Kalim, and Armughan-e-Hijaz are cherished as masterpieces of literature.

On this day, various educational, political, social, and cultural organ-

izations come together to honor Allama Iqbal's legacy, organizing special programs to illuminate his philosophy, life, and contributions.

Revered as a Sufi poet for the modern era, Allama Iqbal's poetry resonates globally, having been translated into numerous languages, including Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, and English.

Iqbal's enduring legacy continues to inspire generations, fostering a spirit of enlightenment, unity, and patriotism among the people of Pakistan and beyond.

Russia claims advances near Chasiv Yar as Ukraine hails new aid

KYIV, Ukraine (AFP/APP): Russia said Sunday its forces had gained territory near the key battleground town of Chasiv Yar in east Ukraine, highlighting the pressure facing Kyiv as it gears up to receive \$61 billion in new US aid. After nearly a year-and-a-half delay, the United States House of Representatives finally approved the aid package in a vote Saturday, giving a morale boost to Ukrainian forces on the defensive.

Russia's defence min-

istry said Sunday it had taken control of Bogdanivka, a small frontline village less than three kilometres (two miles) northeast of Chasiv Yar.

"Units of the southern grouping of troops have completely liberated the settlement of Bogdanivka," the ministry said. Chasiv Yar, which had a population of about 13,000 before the conflict, has been largely destroyed by fighting and most residents have fled.

The Kremlin has sought to play down the impact of

the new package of US aid, which the Russian foreign ministry said would deepen Washington's "immersion" in the war. "Feverish attempts aimed at saving (Ukrainian President Volodymyr) Zelensky's neo-Nazi regime are doomed to failure," Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said. Ukrainian presidential aide Mykhailo Podolyak said the new US aid would lead to "de-escalation" and "punishment" for Russia.

Pakistan Navy continues rescue, relief operation in flood hit areas of Gwadar

GWADAR (INP): Pakistan Navy in the aftermath of recent unprecedented rain spells in Gwadar, Ormara and adjoining villages of Balochistan, was actively undertaking rescue and relief operation named 'Operation Madad' from past three days.

Immediate relief was provided to affected families on Sunday upon receiving information through local sources that large number of people were stranded

into houses due accumulated water in vicinity and were in immediate need of ration supplies.

Pakistan Navy Rescue teams immediately coordinated the efforts and air dropped ration bags to affected people of Muradi, Dando, Kulanch and adjoining isolated areas of Gwadar District. Pakistan Navy Sea King helicopters undertook multiple sorties to ensure ration supply to hundreds of stranded fami-

lies. Pakistan Navy has always assisted Coastal communities in every crisis situation and was committed to continue rescue operation until normalization of ongoing situation.

Prompt relief operation on the call of locals was practical manifestation of Pakistan Navy's strong ties with Coastal communities and demonstrates PN's resolve to assist fellow countrymen in every hour of need.



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Iran National Flags adorn on bridge in Federal Capital ahead of the Iranian President's state visit.

PTI former MPA Shabbir Gujjar arrested

LAHORE (INP): A former Member of the Provincial Assembly of Punjab (MPA) of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Shabbir Gujjar was arrested from the Lahore constituency PP-164 on Sunday.

Lahore police arrested him to maintain law and order during the by-election in the constituency PP-164 where the polling process was continued today. The Police also claimed that the PTI's former MPA Shabbir Gujjar has been detained as he was nominated in many cases.

On the other hand, the polling process was resumed after a scuffle outside the polling station in Lahore's constituency PP-139 Ferozwalla. Three people were injured in the scuffle outside the polling station at Ferozwalla and the polling process was suspended for three hours.

It should be noted that the polling process for the by-elections is going on across the country today.

According to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), more than 2.5 million voters are exercising their right to vote.

Armed men kidnap polling staff in PB-50

QILA ABDULLAH (INP): Armed men have kidnapped the polling staff deputed at several polling stations of PB-50, Qila Abdullah, Balochistan during voting in the constituency in connection with a by-election on Sunday. Members of the polling staff have been kidnapped from polling station number 33, set up at Girls' Primary School; polling station number 72 set up at Government Primary School; polling station number 96 set up at Government High School Norak; polling station number 97 set up at Rural Health Center Norak, and polling station number 99 set up at Government High School Norak.

People rejected PTI's narrative of falsehood by overwhelmingly voting PML-N in by-polls: Atta Tarar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Sunday called the victory of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) as a manifestation of the people's trust in the people-friendly policies of the government and a clear rejection of the narrative of falsehood worked out by the leadership of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) from behind the bars.

"Preliminary results of today's by-polls have validated the fact that the people of Pakistan firmly believe in the leadership of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and they fully welcome the people-friendly policies of its government led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif," said the minister in a video message on the by-polls held in multiple constituen-

cies today.

He said the economic reforms implemented by PM Shehbaz Sharif and his team had given a hope to the masses who shown their trust in the government by voting the PML-N that had kicked off the journey of economic stability in the country by curbing inflation and increasing foreign reserves. On the other hand, the minister said the people had rejected the false and misleading narrative of the PTI whose leadership was allegedly conspiring against the country from behind the bars to achieve their ulterior motives.

"They are issuing statements from jails that seriously damage credibility of Pakistan at international level," he said, adding the anti-state narrative was further pushed through such false statements.

The people of Pakistan had rejected the PTI founder's "politics of hatred, chaos, division, falsehood and hypocrisy", the minister remarked.

He said the performance of the PML-N governments in federation and Punjab spoke volume and the results of today's by-polls is its true manifestation.

PML-N stood victorious in most of by-polls today, he said vowing that the government was aggressively taking measures to restore stature of the country at international level and provide relief to the masses by stabilizing the economy. He paid tribute to the people for exercising their democratic right and standing by truth and burying the narrative of the falsehood.

He thanked the Almighty for the victory of PML-N in today's by-polls.

Trump postpones first rally since trial began, due to bad weather

WILMINGTON (AFP/APP): Donald Trump called off a rally on Saturday, the Republican candidate's first campaign event since his criminal trial in New York began this week, due to bad weather threatening the outdoor gathering.

Thousands of supporters had gathered for the event at the airport in the North Carolina city of Wilmington when he called in 30 minutes before the scheduled start.

"We want to make sure that everybody is safe above all and so they've asked us to ask people to leave the site and seek shelter," Trump said in the call broadcast over the loudspeakers, with thick dark clouds overhead and scattered lightning strikes.

"It's a pretty big storm. So if you don't mind, I think we're going to have to just do a rain check. I'm so sad." Trump promised to hold a "bigger and better" rally at the same venue another time, and the disappointed crowd quickly dispersed.

The event had been set to take place ahead of opening statements Monday morning in Trump's "hush money" trial in New York, after jury selection was completed on Friday.

Trump has pleaded not guilty to 34 counts of business fraud as part of an alleged plan to cover up payments to a porn star to keep the story of a sexual encounter from emerging just before the 2016 presidential election, in which he beat Hillary Clinton.

Trump has denounced the trial -- the first of a former US president -- as a political "witch hunt," and many of his supporters agree. "It's not... a criminal trial, really. It's just a political one," said Grace Miller, 58, a retiree from North Carolina who had come for the rally. "You can't just make something into a felony. I mean, they think we're stupid, but we're not."

Truck driver Stephen Prater accused Democrats of using the trial to prevent Trump's re-election. "The left is trying to try to pull every stop they can to keep him from getting to office," said Prater, 29. In a post on his Truth Social platform, Trump again complained the trial was impeding his ability to campaign.