

Sher Afzal granted bail
F.P. Report
ISLAMABAD: Granting protective bail to PTI leader Sher Afzal Marwat in a case registered against him in Kasur for two weeks, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday barred the Punjab Police from arresting him. Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri ordered Marwat to deposit bail bonds of Rs10,000 each besides appearing in the court in two weeks.

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ABBOTTABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif interacting with the children of Customs Inspector Shaheed Husnain Ali Tirmazi during his visit to his home.

IHC judges' letter CJP Isa-led larger bench to hear case on 30th

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Thursday constituted a new bench led by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa to hear suo motu case on the Islamabad High Court (IHC) judges' letter accusing spy agencies of meddling in judicial affairs.

The apex court bench was reconstituted after Justice Yahya Afridi recused himself from hearing the case earlier this month. According to a cause list issued by the apex court, a six-member bench led by CJP Isa and comprising Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhel, Justice Athar Minallah, Justice Musarrat Hilali and Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan will now hear the matter the on April 30 (Tuesday).

On Thursday, six judges of IHC had demanded CJP Isa to convene the judicial convention to consider the matter of alleged interference of intelligence operatives in the judicial functions or "intimidation" of judges in a manner that undermined independence of the judiciary. The IHC judges, including Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani, Justice Babar Sattar, Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir, Justice Tariq Mahmood Jehangiri, Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan and Justice Saman Rifat Imtiaz, had written a letter to the chief justice, who is also chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC).

Seeking guidance from the council on "interfer-

CJP says got no complaint of interference in judicial affairs under his watch

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Justice Qazi Faez Isa on Thursday said he did not receive any note of grievance from any high court judge claiming the meddling of other intuitions in the judicial process.

"Since I have been chief justice [of Supreme Court of Pakistan], I have not received a single complaint from any high court judge that there has been any interference in their work," Justice Isa said while speaking at Sindh High Court Bar Association (SHCBA). "Now, if there has been any interference in their work it has not been reported to me and all the incidents that were mentioned were before my watch... before I took the oath as the CJP. "So, this is a thing to bear in mind that interference is not acceptable but at the same time nothing has been reported to me during ... my watch." He said mention was made of the support that the SHCBA extended to the six judges of the Islamabad High Court (IHC), who had written to me as well. "I thank them on their behalf," the CJP added.

ence" of the spy agencies in courts' affairs, the judges wrote: "We are writing to seek guidance from the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) with regard to the duty of a judge to report and respond to actions on part of members of the executive, including operatives of intelligence agencies, that seek to interfere with discharge of his/her official functions and qualify as intimidation, as well as the duty to report any such actions that come to his/her attention in relation to colleagues and/or members of the courts that the High Court supervises."

Subsequently, the Supreme Court on April 1 took suo motu notice of the IHC judges' letter and formed a seven-member

bench led by CJP Isa to hear the matter. Following the maiden hearing of the case on April 3, Justice Yahya Aridi, who was part of the larger bench, recused himself from hearing the suo motu case, taken up under Article 184(3) of the Constitution. In his note, accompanying the written order issued after the first hearing of the case, the SC judge stated that the matters raised in the IHC judges' letter should be viewed in accordance with the Supreme Judicial Council's code of conduct. Justice Afridi further said: "High Courts are independent courts under the Constitution. Article 184/3 should not be invoked on independence of high courts."

containers inside the Governor House. Why do you put it outside?" the top judge said while stressing that encroachments should be removed even if they are within the premises of the SC itself. The case was then adjourned till Friday (today).

Furthermore, the SC also directed the authorities to sell the land and compensate the affectees of Nasla Tower — the residential complex razed on the apex court's verdict. The top court headed by then CJP Gulzar Ahmed had ordered the demolition of the 15-storey residential complex, located at the junction of Shahrae Faisal and Shahrae Quadeen, in June 2021 because the structure was constructed illegally.

Back then, the court had directed the builders to refund the affectees of the residential and commercial units within three months. Subsequently the apex court then also rejected a petition for review of its decision of the building's demolition.

SC reinstates Balochistan PA Speaker

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Thursday restored Balochistan Assembly's speaker Abdul Khaliq Achakzai and declared the ECP's decision as void.

The court also declared the order of re-polling on 12 polling stations of Chaman's PB-51 constituency. The court sends back the matter to the election commission with the consent of candidates, ordering the ECP to decide the matter within 10 days after hearing the candidates. "Under which rule the ECP ordered re-polling on 12 polling stations", Justice Ameenuddin Khan questioned. "The election commission saw 12 polling stations and ignored others," Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar said.

Justice Ameenuddin said that the election commission neither conducted inquire nor follow any principle. "Only those polling stations were checked where maximum turnout of votes pointed out in petitions," the ECP's DG Law said. Justice Mazhar said that the ECP should have conduct inquiry of the whole constituency. The election commission had ordered re-polling in constituency on the plea of a rival candidate Muhammad Asghar Achakzai. A three-member bench of the apex court headed by Justice Ameenuddin Khan heard the case.

The Election Commission had ordered the re-election at polling stations 56, 57, 61, 62, 79, 89, 90, 91, 95, 106, 129 and 130 of the PB-51 constituency. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) Captain (ret'd) Abdul Khaliq Achakzai was elected unopposed as Speaker of Balochistan Assembly in February.

Seven ordinances laid in Senate

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: As many as seven ordinances were laid in the Upper House of the Parliament on Thursday.

These ordinances included Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (Amendment) Ordinance 2023, Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (Amendment) Ordinance 2023, Pakistan Postal Services Management Board (Amendment) Ordinance 2023, National Highway Authority (Amendment) Ordinance 2023, the Criminal Laws (Amendment) Ordinance 2023, the Privatization Commission (Amendment) Ordinance 2023 and the Establishment of Telecommunication Appellate Tribunal Ordinance 2023. These ordinances were laid in the Senate under Article 89 of the constitution for information only as they have already been laid in the National Assembly and referred to the committees concerned.

The Frontier Post

PM suspends Commissioner

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Thursday removed Chief Commissioner Islamabad Captain (Rtd) Anwaar-ul-Haq from his post. According to the media reports, Muhammad Ali Randhawa is likely to be posted as Chief Commissioner Islamabad after the removal of Captain Rtd Anwaar-ul-Haq. Randhawa is a Grade-20 officer of Pakistan Administrative Service.

PM launches Shuhada Package for martyred federal govt officials

— resolves to eliminate smuggling

F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD / ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday launched the Shuhada Package to support the families of the federal government officials martyred in the line of duty, comprising cash assistance, housing allowance as well as free education and medical treatment.

The prime minister, who visited the family of late Customs Inspector Syed Hasnain Ali Tirmizi, who was martyred in a firing incident in Dera Ismail Khan a few days ago, handed over a cheque under the Shuhada Package to the grieved family and assured his government's all-out efforts for the security of the customs officials serving to purge the country of smuggling.

Offering Fateha for the martyred soul and sympathizing with the bereaved family, he said that the Shuhada Package, earlier announced by the Punjab government, had now been extended to the federal government and could be revised further considering the country's financial position.

Under the package, the family members of a martyred sepoy would get Rs 10 million cash assistance and Rs 13.5 million housing allowance besides free education and medical treatment. The family of a martyred customs inspector would be entitled for a Rs15 million cash and Rs25 million housing allowance along with free education and medical facilities.

The package will also apply to civilian officials, police and law enforcement agencies, the prime minister said who was accompanied by Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, PML-N leaders, and senior government offi-

Shehbaz chairs review meeting on power sector reforms

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Thursday chaired a high level third and final meeting to review reforms in the power sector. During the meeting, important decisions were taken about the transmission system of electricity and distribution companies. The prime minister approved in principle reforms and restructuring of the electricity transmission system especially reform and reorganization of National Transmission and Despatch Company. He formed a committee to finalize the recommendations for ensuring implementation of reforms and reorganization in this regard.

He also set up a cell in the Prime Minister House for ensuring implementation of reforms in the power sector. The cell would closely monitor the whole process. He sought a report on the project of his last government which was aimed at replacing high power consumption fans with low power usage fans. He also sought a comprehensive plan to provide low consumption power fans to low income consumers and another plan to provide electricity to the industrial sector at low rates. The PM said he himself would chair the monthly review meeting on the power sector reforms. He directed that industries should be provided electricity at lower tariff to ensure economic progress and increase exports. "Reforms are not possible in the government departments without a system of reward and punishment," he added.

cers. During interaction with the family members, the prime minister showed compassion and affection to the orphaned children and called them the "children of a hero" and his father the "father of a hero" of whom the whole nation felt proud.

The prime minister paid tribute to the late customs inspector who sacrificed his life while fighting against the smuggling and to save billions of dollars for the national economy.

He also lauded the patience and perseverance of the martyred customs inspector's father and apprised him of his government's ongoing efforts to curb smuggling, citing his multiple meetings on the subject. He said the Federal Board of Revenue, law enforcement agencies and interior ministry were in cohesion to curb the

menace of smuggling through collaboration with the provincial institutions.

"The elimination of smuggling is as essential as the recovery of the national economy. Economic stability cannot be achieved without curbing the smuggling. This is my foremost responsibility as well as of my government," he remarked. He also thanked Army Chief General Syed Asim Munir, KP government, provincial chief secretary, and Inspector General of KP Police for their support in the federal government's endeavour against smuggling so that people could use their produce and the country could earn foreign exchange through exports by legal means.

(Continued on Back Page)

FO rejects US State Dept human rights report

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday categorically rejected the recently released 2023 Country Report on human rights practices issued by the US State Department, terming its contents as 'unfair, based on inaccurate information, and completely divorced from the ground reality'.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a press statement issued here said that the US State Department's annual exercises of preparing such unsolicited reports lack objectivity and remain inherently flawed in their methodology. These reports use a domestic social lens to judge human rights in other countries in a politically biased manner.

"This year's report is once again conspicuous by its lack of objectivity and politicization of the international human rights agenda. It clearly demonstrates dou-

ble standards thus undermining the international human rights discourse," the statement read.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs maintained that it is deeply concerning that a report purported to highlight human rights situations around the world ignores or downplays the most urgent hotspots of gross human rights violations such as in Gaza and Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

The statement read that only a politically motivated report can ignore the alarming situation in Gaza, the weaponisation of humanitarian assistance and the massacre of over 33,000 civilians. Silence of the United States on the continuing genocide in Gaza runs counter to the stated objectives behind the so-called country reports on human rights.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs maintained that in line with its constitutional

framework and democratic ethos, Pakistan remains steadfast in its commitment to strengthen its own human rights framework, constructively engage to promote international human rights agenda, and uphold fairness and objectivity in the international human rights discourse.

"If the US must engage in this exercise, then we expect the US State Department to at least exercise due diligence when conducting assessment of complex issues, demonstrate objectivity, impartiality and responsibility in finalizing such reports. It should demonstrate the requisite moral courage to speak truth about all situations and play a constructive role in supporting international efforts for bringing an end to atrocities in the most urgent hotspots of gross human rights violations," the statement concluded.

3 terrorists killed in Khyber IBO

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: The forces claimed to kill three allegedly militants in an intelligence based operation carried out in Tirah Valley on Thursday.

In a press release, issued by the Inter Service Public Relation (ISPR) stated that on 24-25 April 2024, security forces conducted an intelligence based operation in Khyber District, on reported presence of terrorists.

During the conduct of the operation, intense fire exchange took place between the troops and terrorists, as a result of which three terrorists identified as terrorist ringleader Sohail @Azmato and Terrorist ringleader Haji Gul @Zarkavi were sent to hell.

Terrorists' hideout was also busted during the operation, it stated. Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the killed terrorists, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area, ISPR said. As per ISPR, locals of the area appreciated the operation. Sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other terrorist found in the area as security forces are determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism from the country.

Court bans PTI founder, spouse

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: An Accountability Court (AC) on Thursday prohibited the PTI, founder and Bushra Bibi from issuing statements against the state institutions and officials.

Accountability Court Judge Nasir Javed Rana issued the order regarding the matter of PTI's founder and his wife. The order stated that media should refrain from publishing politically provocative narratives targeting state institutions and their officials. The court said that it is alleged that founder of PTI had made political, provocative and biased statements against the honorable person of the state institutions.

SC orders removal of roadblocks, encroachments in Karachi

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Supreme Court (SC) has directed the authorities to remove the barriers placed outside various buildings including Sindh Rangers headquarters, Chief Minister House and Governor House and present the report within three days.

"No one is allowed to obstruct the free movement of people [...] Blocking roads and creating obstacles is illegal," Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa said on Thursday. CJP Isa's remarks came as he led a three-member bench, comprising Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan and Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, during the hearing of multiple cases including those relating to encroachment and Nasla Tower at the SC Karachi Registry.

At the onset of the hearing today, the chief justice underscored that the federal and provincial governments themselves are encroaching on the lands and directed the authorities

to "clear" the roads. Ordering the attorney general to inform the federal government, the apex court directed the authorities to send a copy of the court order to all concerned institutions, including those relating to security.

"The expenses related to the removal of encroachments should also be collected from the encroachers," CJP Isa said. Responding to the argument that barricades are raised due to security concerns, the top judge said: "The public continues to be attacked [but] you get to remain safe? What kind of law is this?"

"If you feel too scared, go and sit in a remote area," he added while directing the authorities to abstain from blocking the roads under the pretext of security. "Why don't you remove encroachments in front of [Sindh] Rangers headquarters?" the CJP said while questioning the law under which Jinnah Court premises were handed over to the Rangers.

"Place the [security]



Minister pace work on developmental projects

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Minister for Works and Services, Ali Hassan Zardari expressed disappointment over the slow pace of work and directed the authorities to complete the Sindh Judicial Academy project as soon as possible. He also reviewed the ongoing projects at the provincial Secretariat Karachi and directed the officials to ensure good quality work.

The Minister also visited the under-construction Anti-Corruption Complex and inspected the new residential flats being built for judges, officers, and staff. He directed the authorities to complete the work as soon as possible, warning that contractors who fail to meet deadlines will be blacklisted. During his visit to the New Sindh Secretariat, the Minister reviewed the quality of work and received a briefing from the officials of the Works and Services Department. He issued directives to complete the ongoing projects in Karachi on time.

PSCA completes training of 50 ASPs

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Safe Cities Authority (PSCA) has successfully completed the training of 50 Assistant Superintendents of Police (ASPs) from the National Police Academy.

The training focused on artificial intelligence-based modern policing methods, including the use of safe city technology and the virtual women police station.

The ASPs were briefed on the working of the Virtual Women Police Station, a first-of-its-kind initiative in Pakistan. They were also informed about the 19 traffic violation detection systems installed in Lahore, a first in South Asia. Additionally, they were briefed on the 100 modern emergency panic buttons and 50 location-based free Wi-Fi projects.

The training aimed to equip the young officers with the latest technology and modern policing methods to combat crime and provide better services to the citizens. Chief Administration Officer Shoaib Mahmood emphasized that the traditional policing era is over, and artificial intelligence is being used worldwide to combat crime.

PTDC plans to organize two-day tourism expo

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) in partnership with World Bank Group has planned to organize two-day Pakistan Tourism Symposium and Expo here from May 27 to 28.

Talking to APP here Thursday, the PTDC official said that the Tourism Symposium would be a two-day event focused on the theme of Building National Economy through tourism. He further said that a tourism Expo would also be organized to showcase Pakistan's rich tourism potential and create G2G, B2B and G2B linkages among the industry stakeholders.

Sindh, federal gov'ts establish committees to resolve WAPDA and consumer issues

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Sindh and federal governments have agreed to establish committees at the provincial and district levels to resolve WAPDA and consumer issues. Chief Minister of Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah met with Federal Energy Minister Owais Ahmad Khan Laghari in Islamabad.

In the meeting, Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah raised the issue of unannounced electricity load shedding across Sindh, including Karachi.

In the meeting, Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah expressed his dissatisfaction with the performance of HESCO and SEPCO, which are under the Federal

Ministry of Energy. He stated that the poor people are concerned about load shedding and cannot be left at the mercy of HESCO and SEPCO's incompetence.

In the meeting, the Federal Ministry of Energy raised concerns about line losses and non-payment issues.

Chief Minister Sindh Murad Ali Shah assured the Federal Ministry of Energy that the provincial government is ready to provide all possible assistance to the federal government. In the meeting, the parties also agreed to form committees at the provincial and district levels to resolve the problems of WAPDA and consumers. Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon and Provincial Energy Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah also participated in the meeting.



Inspection team from the Wafaqi Mohtasib's Office visited the Excise and Taxation Office

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: An Inspection Team from the Wafaqi Mohtasib's Office visited the Excise and Taxation Office, Islamabad under the directions of the Federal Ombudsman, Mr. Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi, with a view to ascertaining the difficulties being faced by the general public with regard to registration of vehicles. Headed by a Senior Advisor, the Inspection Team met with the people there and listened to their complaints for prompt redressal.

The Inspection Team has submitted its report to the Wafaqi Mohtasib, who directed that a one window facilitation desk may be established therein to provide all facilities to the public under one roof. The Inspection Team was informed by the ETO Office that facilities relating to registration of the vehicles, transfer of registration and payment of token tax etc. are currently available Online. Moreover, the ETO Office is also providing such facilities at the residence of the applicants by payment of a nominal fee of Rs. 1900/-. It further informed that the mobile teams from the

ETO Office are also providing the registration facilities to the general public at the public parks and other public places daily after 4 p.m.

Commending the provision of facilities, the Wafaqi Mohtasib directed the ETO Office to launch an awareness campaign in this regard for the benefit of the common man. During the visit, some of the petitioners present informed the Inspection Team that the agent mafia active there, was charging Rs. 200/- for providing one registration form, whereas, Rs.50 are being charged for making a single photo copy. The fact of the matter, they say, is that the registration form for vehicles should be made available for free and the official rate for photocopy i.e. Rs.05 and Rs.10 respectively, be enforced.

The Inspection Team instructed the administration to prominently display the respective requirements for registration, transfer and submission of token tax of the vehicles on the sign boards in English and Urdu, apart from providing the relevant information regarding Online registration.

‘Gujranwala Expressway to complete by April-end’

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Minister for Communication and Works Sohaib Ahmed Bherth has said the Gujranwala Expressway will complete by the end of this month [April], as his department, with the help of Forest Department Punjab, is planting trees on both sides of the road, making it the greenest road of the province. He expressed these views during his visit to Gujranwala Expressway to inspect its construction work, said a hand-out issued here on Thursday.

Sohaib Bherth was accompanied by Minister for Specialised Health Punjab Khawaja Sulman Rafique, Secretary C&W Sohail Ashraf and other officials. The minister said the expressway would

reduce the travel time from Lahore to Gujranwala to only 45 minutes with a fast and smooth travel for travelers. He disclosed that another portion of 74-km expressway from Gujranwala to Kot Sakhi Sarwar was under progress and on the stage of laying of Asphalt layer. "This expressway will make travel fast and smooth and will link Gujranwala to Hafizabad and Lahore Islamabad Motorway," Bherth disclosed. He also said that CM Punjab Maryam Nawaz had been taking too much interest in providing better travel facilities to masses and five mega expressways were also being constructed in south Punjab, which would link almost a dozens of districts.



LAHORE: PHA workers taking out weeds from a park near Lahore Railway Station.

CM addresses passing-out ceremony of lady constables

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif appreciated women on Thursday as they work like superhumans as mothers, daughters, sisters and professionals. Addressing the passing-out ceremony of lady constables at Police Training College Chung, she said: "Women are very hard working and they are an asset to society." Maryam said, "The passing out lady constables are very active and alert. I am happy to see that Pakistan has been blessed with so much talent. No one can imagine how hard women work; I salute all for their dedication and commitment to work."

The chief minister said, "I am happy that this time the police gave sword of honor to a young woman. My sisters, daughters! I am proud of you all." She added, "The training of lady police constables has been conducted in line with the International best practices and modern requirements. It was a pleasure, indeed, to see the professionalism of lady police

constables undergoing training." She said, "If you need any kind of help for training at college, let me know. I am always there to facilitate you."

Maryam Nawaz said, "I have directed the IGP Punjab to increase the number of lady police officers, as 7,000 women police officers are not enough." She said, "Time will come when the number of lady police will surpass 50 per cent."

The chief minister said, "After wearing the police uniform for the first time, I have realised that being a police officer or being sworn in as a CM is a very responsible job." She added, "In the Chief Minister's office, we take decisions, and you get them implemented, you have a heavy responsibility." She explained, "Women are soft-hearted and quick to forgive, but lady police constables! you have to do justice only. All your sympathies should be with the oppressed; there should be no place in your hearts for the oppressors. The oppressor must be punished." She

added, "I don't feel revenge in my heart, it hurts while punishing the wrongdoer even." She highlighted, "In a society where there is no justice, society is destroyed. Therefore, take care of the oppressed and do justice."

CM Maryam Nawaz congratulated the passing out lady police constables and their families, and said, "Your daughters will make you proud." She added, "I feel pleasure when my father's face brightens after listening to my daylong activities of the public service." The CM explained, "I have to prove myself to reach this position; I have waded through a river full of fire." CM Maryam Nawaz greeted all parents, and asked them, "Trust and support your daughters; they will make you proud." She said, "I would like to pay tribute to Nawaz Sharif and Shehbaz Sharif because wherever we see development in the country, only their names come into one's mind." She added, "I have a heavy responsibility to carry forward the development legacy of Nawaz Sharif's era."

Minister launches special ‘Meat Safety Task Force’

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Food Minister Bilal Yasin launched a special 'Meat Safety Task Force' in the Punjab Food Authority (PFA), here on Thursday.

The force would consist of meat specialist doctors to ensure detailed inspection of meat, being supplied across province.

While talking to the media, he said meat safety teams would conduct detailed inspections of slaughter houses, frozen meat units, meat shops, and meat processing units on daily basis. The force will also check the meat supplied at the entry points and meat markets of all districts

including Lahore. A complete record of traceability of meat coming from poultry farms, slaughterhouses will also be compiled and strict checking of entry points will be ensured in the morning hours.

The Food Minister said that Punjab Food Authority discarded 60 thousand kg of substandard meat during checking of meat shops and entry points in a few days. He said that elements hostile to health will never be allowed to do business and continuous checking is going on to ensure quality milk, meat and food.

"A historic reduction of 800 rupees

in the price of a 20 kg bag of flour is ensured and the common man is getting all the fruits of our efforts", he added. He said that steps are being taken to reduce the price of chicken, however, chicken is available in Lahore at Rs 100 less than Peshawar, but the price will be brought down further. Government is planning to ban the export of chicks so that the prices of chicken come down within the country.

Answering a question, the Minister of Food said that due to weather changes, the process of harvesting wheat has not started properly. Due to the high moisture content of wheat, it cannot be procured immediately.

NOTICE FOR PUBLIC AUCTION

Notice is hereby given for auction of the mortgaged property detailed hereunder under Section 15 of the Financial Institutions (Recovery of Finances) Ordinance, 2001.

NAME AND ADDRESS OF THE MORTGAGEE.

- M/s. Natover Lease & Refinance Limited in liquidation, 5th floor, New Building, High Court of Sindh, Karachi.....Financial Institution.

NAME AND ADDRESSES OF THE MORTGAGOR.

- M/s. Ali Khan Flour Mills & Allied Industries (Pvt) Ltd., Mouza Shergarh, Tehsil Thakh bhai, District Mardan, KPK.

NAME AND ADDRESS OF DIRECTORS OF THE MORTGAGOR.

- Haji Niaz Muhammad, 2. Mrs. Sani Gul W/o Haji Niaz Muhammad, 3. Mr. Ashfaq Ali S/o Haji Niaz Muhammad, Mohallah Haji Abad, Idgah Road, Mardan, KPK.....borrowers.

DETAILED PARTICULARS OF THE MORTGAGED PROPERTY UNDER AUCTION.

All that piece and parcel of land excluding all machinery bearing Khasra Nos.2089-2085-2065-2064-949-2063-2062 and Khata No. 367/805 to 810, 705/1188, measuring 13 kanals and 5 marlas, in Mouza Shergarh, Tehsil Thakht bhai, District Mardan, KPK with building constructed thereon.

AMOUNT OF THE OUTSTANDING MORTGAGE.

For recovery of an amount of Rs.54,563,149/- as on 16.08.2023 with cost of fund continued to be charged at the prescribed rate till the realization/payment of all outstanding liabilities. Reserve Price is Rs. 233,927,338/- below which no bid will be entertained.

SCHEDULE OF AUCTION

Visit of the mortgaged property and inspection of mortgaged documents on 06.05.2024 from 9.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m.
Date of Auction on 13.05.2024 at 11.00 a.m.
Place of Auction: Inside lawn of Ali Khan Flour Mill, situated in Mouza Shergarh, Tehsil Thakh bhai, District Mardan, KPK.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF AUCTION

(i) Property will be sold through an open public auction in accordance with the schedule. (ii) In case there are more than one bidders with competitive offers, the undersigned auctioneer being Official Liquidator of the financial institution (mortgagee) shall determine and declare the highest bidder as the successful bidder. (iii) The bidder shall contest in open auction for the highest bid and the successful bidder on acceptance of the bid shall deposit minimum 25% of the bid amount. (iv) The remaining amount shall be deposited within 15 (fifteen) days from the date of the initial deposit. (v) In case of failure of the bidder to deposit the remaining amount within 15 (fifteen) days time, the mortgagee shall take the deposited amount as reduction of liability of the borrower mortgagor and re-initiate the auction proceedings for recovery of the remaining amount. (vi) That through the public auction only the right, title and interest of the borrower namely M/s. Ali Khan Flour Mills & Allied Industries (Pvt) Limited shall be sold and the purchaser must satisfy himself as to the said Company's title to the property. (vii) The possession of the property being auctioned has been lying with the Official Assignee who has deputed security guards there. (viii) The prospective bidders may inspect the mortgaged documents in the office of the Official Assignee of Karachi against written request as well as may inspect on 06.05.2024 from 9.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. at the time of inspection of M/s. Ali Khan Flour Mill. (ix) The mortgaged property may be inspected by any prospective bidder on 06.05.2024 from 9.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. (x) The expenses incurred in issuance of sale certificate, revenue fees and miscellaneous expenses are to be borne by auction purchaser. (xi) Further information, if any, may be obtained from the undersigned against written request. Telephone No. 021-99203129 and Cell No. 0334-2080801.

(DR. CHAUDRY WASIM IQBAL)
OFFICIAL ASSIGNEE OF KARACHI / OFFICIAL LIQUIDATOR
M/S. NATOVER LEASE & REFINANCE LTD.
5TH FLOOR, NEW BUILDING, HIGH COURT OF SINDH, KARACHI.



ISLAMABAD: Ms. Kanni Wignaraja, United Nations Assistant Secretary General (ASG), Asia, and the Pacific calls on Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur addressing a ceremony in connection with PTI Foundation Day.

Muhammad Bilal awarded Mphil degree



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Scholar Muhammad Bilal has been awarded his MPhil degree in Urdu literature. His dissertation, titled "Historical and Cultural Study of the Novel Hazrat Mahal," was successfully defended. Dr. Ghuncha Begum, Chairperson of the Urdu Department at Sarhad University of Peshawar, supervised the paper, with Dr. Ishaq Wardag, Associate Professor at Government Speer Science College, serving as one of the external examiners. Lecturer Ubaid Bazgh acted as the assistant supervisor. Among the other participants were Abdullah and Muaz Ahmed from the Department of Examinations. Muhammad Bilal's thesis defense was successful, and he has been awarded the degree.

Faiq for aggressive foreign policy

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Muhammad Faiq Shah, founder and chairman of the Amun Taraqqi Party stressed adopting aggressive foreign policy, diplomacy and following doctrines of enhancing investment and export of the country.

Speaker vows to run assembly affairs indiscriminately

PESHAWAR (APP) Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Babar Saleem Swati on Wednesday asserted to run the affairs of provincial assembly indiscriminately by giving equal chances to both the treasury and opposition benches. Talking to Press Gallery Reporters led by President Gulzar, GS Rasool Dawar here, he expressed strong desire to create and promote harmonious and pleasant environment in the assembly and foster respectful relations between both sides of the divide. Babar Swati said that the leader of opposition wrote a letter for requisition of assembly session, adding that the speaker could call a meeting of assembly on requisition of the opposition but it was not having required number of MPs for assembly requisition.

He said the speaker couldn't convene assembly session until the government requests for it, adding that whenever the government would sends requisition of assembly, the session would be convened and oath to elected representatives would also be administered and pictures would be shared.

The speaker said that assembly session could not be held during senate elections. He said that an inquiry was ordered into entry of election staff in the house on election day. Babar said that every institution should work within its own constitutional ambit, adding that action would be taken against the responsible in accordance with the report of inquiry committee.

KPITB, STZA sign pact to declare PDC as Special Technology Zone

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Technology Board (KPITB) and the Special Technology Zones Authority (STZA) signed an agreement in a ceremony devoted to the "Zone Development Agreement of Pakistan Digital City Haripur (PDC)." The event, which officially declared PDC Haripur as a Special Technology Zone, is a significant step towards fostering innovation and technology-driven growth in Pakistan.

Under this agreement, PDC Haripur will enjoy tax incentives, making it a tax-free zone for enterprises operating within its premises. IT businesses affiliated with PDC Haripur will benefit from a 10-year tax exemption, incentivizing investment and fostering a conducive environment for technological advancements.

Distinguished guests attending the ceremony include Mr. Khalid Latif Khan, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister for Science & Technology and Information Technology; Mr. Syed Muhammad Ali Shah, Secretary ST&IT; and representatives from STZA and KPITB.

During his address at the ceremony, Mr. Khalid Latif Khan high-



lighted the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government's commitment to digital transformation under Chief Minister Mr. Ali Amin Gandapur's guidance.

The investment of 1642 million rupees in Pakistan Digital City, overseen by NESPAK and National Logistics Cell, signifies KP's vision to establish itself as Pakistan's digital hub.

The Pakistan Digital City project, an evidence to this vision, aims to stimulate economic growth by attracting national and international IT businesses, thereby creating job opportunities for the youth—an essential priority for the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government. Mr.

Khalid also shared that nearly 30 percent of the project work has already been completed, marking significant progress towards this transformative initiative.

This agreement signing marks a pivotal moment in Pakistan's technology landscape, showcasing a collaborative effort to create an ecosystem that encourages innovation, growth, and economic prosperity in the digital age. The establishment of PDC Haripur as a Special Technology Zone underscores the commitment of KPITB and STZA towards accelerating digital transformation and positioning Pakistan as a hub for technology-driven ventures.

Terrorism is national issue to be dealt with collective efforts, says Saif

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The recent spike of targeted attacks on security forces, customs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is a national issue, with collective efforts of the government, police, Army and other law enforcement agencies we can overcome the menace of terrorism, Barrister Dr Saif says here on Thursday.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Advisor on Information and Public Relations Barrister Dr Saif has said that terrorism is national issue, police, security forces and other law enforcement agencies are fighting war against terrorism. He stated that hundreds of civilian and security forces have loss their lives during the recent terrorists

attacks. Police and security forces remain determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve. He reiterated that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and the entire province stood with the security forces in the war against terrorism. He stressed that we will fight the war against

terrorism and militancy with political responsibility and collective wisdom.

Barrister Dr Saif said the Police, Army and law enforcement agencies are resolutely committed to eliminating the scourge of terrorism in the province.

He added that the war against terrorism would continue until the menace was completely eradicated from the province.

Ms Aminah successfully defends her Mphil thesis



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a scholarly pursuit that resonates with the complexities of the current international climate, Ms. Aminah Fahd of the Department of International Relations has successfully defended her MPhil thesis, "A mer i c a n Exceptionalism's Impact on Pakistan's Foreign Policy Towards Israel," under the astute supervision of Dr. Saima Gil.

Her research critically examines the ideological sway of American exceptionalism on Pakistan's diplomatic engagements with Israel, a topic of great relevance as global alliances continue to evolve. Simultaneously, Ms. Zahra Zahid Durrani has contributed to this academic discourse with her MPhil thesis on "US Foreign Policy Towards Pakistan Under Democrat and Republican Parties (Sep 2001 - Jan 2020)," supervised by Dr. Minhass Majeed Khan.

Her comparative study of US foreign policy under successive administrations provides invaluable insights into the bipartisan impacts on Pakistan's international stance.

PHC asks response from Chief Secretary Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A two-member bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice Shakeel Ahmad and Justice Dr. Khurshed Iqbal issued notices to the Chief Secretary of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Senior Member of Board of Revenue and relevant Deputy Commissioners to submit their reply in a plea seeking transfer of Revenue Courts to the new Judicial Complex in Charsadda, on Thursday.

The counsel argued that despite the construction of the new complex Revenue Courts have not been shifted there, and cases are still being heard in the old building.

This has caused difficulties for lawyers and litigants, as they have to travel to different locations for different cases.

The counsel Ahmad Zeb argued that the new Judicial Complex was inaugurated by the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and even the former Chief Justice had taken notice of the issue but the Revenue Courts have still not been transferred to the new complex.

Peshawar High Court's divisional bench of Justices Shakeel Ahmad and Justice Dr. Khurshed Iqbal sought a response from the relevant authorities and issued notices in this regard while adjourned further hearing after arguments.

Federal Tax Ombudsman to protect taxpayers rights

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor Federal Tax Ombudsman Sardar Ali Khawaja has said that the mission of FTO is to redress the legitimate grievances of taxpayers in a timely manner and to fully protect their rights through prompt justice.

He shared his views during a meeting with the heads of various educational institutions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa regarding tax matters at Regional Office Peshawar.

A representative delegation of the School Officers' Association, led by Principal Riaz Ahmed Bahaar and Principal Samiullah Khalil, thanked the Federal Tax Ombudsman and thanked the institution for high-



lighting the tax-related issues faced by the principals and headmasters and that the long-standing issue of tax rebates was resolved, however the delegation pointed out that refunds of tax illegally levied in previous years are still due.

Sardar Ali Khawaja assured the delegation that in the light of the directives of the FTO Dr. Asif Mehmood Jah, the heads of all the educational institu-

tions which are registered with FBR and regularly submit their income tax returns are being treated as per the law.

He added that tax rebate will be given and their arrears and tax refund issues will be resolved on priority basis.

The delegation was informed that instructions have been issued to all regional tax offices in this regard.

Constructing plazas, parks for revenue generation

Minister directs WWB authorities to identify land

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa minister for labor department Fazal Shakoor Khan on Thursday directed the concerned authorities of Workers Welfare Board (WWB) to identify the commercial land of WWB aimed at bringing the land into use for revenue generation.

In this regard, the KP minister also directed to form a committee comprise of three member from WWB officers and the committee will prepare various ideas and suggestions on the identified land within 2 weeks while a detail report will present in next meeting of the board.

He said that construction of plazas, shops, parks etc on the commercial land will play a vital role in rev-

enue generation of WWB. The provincial minister issued these directives while chairing meeting of WWB held at the committee room of the board.

Secretary WWB Muhammad Abrar Hussain Shah, Chairman Muhammad Fakhr Alam, director Administration Muhammad Shoaib, director education Professor Anjad Khan, director coordinator Dr. Muhammad Bilal, director works Majeed Asif, member governing body WWF Islamabad Muhammad Iqbal, Law and litigation officer Zewar Shah and other officers attended the meeting.

The KP minister for labour department was briefed about the WWB. In the briefing, vocational, technical and gener-

al educational institutions run under the WWB came into discussion while various committees including finance committee, implementation committee, rationalization committee, 5 TORs committee and other were also discussed on the occasion.

Labour colonies and illegal occupation of houses in the colonies and a proper solution for this issue also came into discussion.

In the briefing, the provincial minister was also informed about the WWB employee regularization.

However, it is said that WWB this year will sent 10 industrial workers to Saudi Arabia for performing hajj and the 10 lucky was selected through lucky draw.

Chairman KPPSC presents annual report to Governor

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chairman Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Service Commission, Sikandar Qayum here Thursday called on KP Governor and presented annual report of the year 2023.

Governor was informed that appointment recommendations of 1876 candidates were sent to various departments during 2023 and 107 tests were held for recruitment.

He was told that 141473 candidates appeared in ability tests and 10697 interviews were conducted in 2023 abiding by policy of merit and transparency.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor appreciated efforts of KPPSC to ensure transparency and directed to further improve the recruitment procedure adding that



selection of suitable candidates directly affects the service delivery system.

He said that KPPSC is a constitutional body that

is striving to bring forwards able and suitable candidates for facilitation of public and improve performance of public sector departments.

Journalists demand actions

Syed Waliullah Shah

PESHAWAR: Nowshera Press Club (NPC) condemned the recent attack on the club and argued police for stern actions against preparators, on Thursday. The meeting was presided over by the NPC president Mostaq Paracha and attended by various journalists and media representatives. The meeting was attend-

ed by several prominent journalists and media representatives, including Pir Taj Mir Shah, Nasser Khan, Haji Zuhur Ahmad, Jahanzeb Khattak, Muhammad Shahid, Syed Qasim Shah, Fida Muhammad, Waliullah Shah, Noor Khalid Khattak, and Bakht Saeed.

The participants argued the police and administration for immediate action

against the culprits and provision of security to the press club.

They also demanded that the government take steps to prevent such attacks in the future.

The participants also thanked the Peshawar Press Club's president, Arshad Aziz Malik, and other media organizations for their support and solidarity.



In brief

Event at KUST inaugurated F.P. Report

KOHAT: Kohat University of Science and Technology here Thursday organized two-day colorful event named Aman Mela. The event was inaugurated by Vice Chancellor of KUST Professor Dr. Muhammad Na-seeruddin and Station Commander Brigadier Moinuddin. Addressing the event, Vice Chancellor KUST highlighted the importance of co-curricular activities for capacity building of students and said that these events should be organized for improving mental and physical health of students. He appreciated efforts of organizers and said that these activities would be continued for betterment and improvement of youngsters that are our guarantee to usher country into phase of development and prosperity. Later, Vice Chancellor various stalls being set up by students and lauded their talent. The event was attended by large number of students and faculty members of various departments.

15 teachers hurt in road accident

NATHIAGALI (INP): At least 15 female teachers sustained injuries on Thursday when a Toyota Hiace van carrying school teachers overturned near Barmi Gali, but fortunately no causality has been reported yet. According to Rescue 1122 sources, a rescuer van en route from Abbottabad to Nathiagali carrying morning shift female teachers, when reached near Barmi Gali, overturned. As a result, 15 teachers sustained injuries. The rescue medical team, while responding to the incident, provided initial medical assistance to all teachers and shifted them to Nathiagali Hospital. Subsequently, due to the critical condition, some teachers were shifted to the Ayub Medical Complex.

Police recover liquor and arms

BADIN (PPI): Badin district police on Thursday claimed to have recovered liquor, stolen vehicles, arms in different raids and arrested accused. SHO Pangrio Inspector Khair Muhammad NAhrio, along with his staff, raided a liquor making den and seized 1160 liters of local liquor. During the operation, the den owner Piyaro Machhi, along with three other drug sellers, Khairo Machhi, Khameesoo Machhi, and Noor Muhammad Machhi, managed to flee. In another raid, SHO Tando Ghulam Hyder Inspector Muhammad Yaqoob Jakhrani, with his staff, intercepted a Corolla car during checking and recovered 312 bottles of whisky. Police arrested drug seller Muhammad Haneef Khoso who was riding in the car, while another suspect, Hussain Mazarai, managed to escape. Separately, SHO Rajo Khanani Inspector Tafail Ahmed Jalalani, with his staff, conducted a raid and arrested a drug seller Osman alias Shahrh Chando with 10 liters of local liquor while SHO Tando Ghulam Ali Inspector Mukhtiar Ahmed Dero, along with his staff, arrested a drug seller Qurban Ali Lund during an operation in Tando Ghulam Ali. The accused who was wanted in drug cases. SHO Kario Ghanwar Sub Inspector Ailawal Khaskheli, with his staff, conducted an operation in Traye Dhadarko Lank Road, thwarting an attempted crime and arresting two suspects. The arrested suspects have been identified as Somar Khaskheli and Ghulam Qadir Khaskheli.



QUETTA: Motorists and bikes on their way as city received heavy downpour.

Prizes distribution ceremony arranged

F.P. Report

BUNER: The parents day organized at Refugee Camp School at the Buner Afghan in which special guest Assistant Commissioner Mandanr Maryam Bukhtawar distributed awards and prizes among the position holder students. The ceremony was attended by Helvetad Pakistan's Harith Ahmed, Manager Samira Qazi, Field Officers Muhammad Alam and Shahin, Afghan Shura President Pir Zada Zdran, Haji Ghulam Nasir, parents, and children.

During the ceremony, children presented speeches, recited poems, and sang songs, highlighting the importance of education. The participants praised the efforts of Hello Pakistan in providing education to Afghan refugee children.

Maryam Bukhtawar emphasized the significance of education, stating that it is our basic need. She commended Hello Pakistan for their efforts in educating Afghan refugee children and expressed hope that this initiative will continue to grow.



Helvetad Pakistan's Field Officers Muhammad Alam and Shahin stated that the organization is currently providing education to 3,720 children in 68 centers across six districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including 600 children from the Koga camp. They mentioned that these children were previously collecting garbage and were deprived of education due to poverty. Hello Pakistan also provides free books, uniforms, shoes, and sports equipment to these children.

The organizers expressed their commitment to starting middle school education with the help of their donors. They have already enrolled 400 children who passed the

fifth grade into other middle schools in the area, with 60% of them being girls.

Afghan Shura leaders Pir Zada Zdran, Haji Ghulam Nasir, and Nazak Mir thanked Hello Pakistan for their efforts, stating that the organization has achieved in a short time what others could not. They requested Hello Pakistan and its donors to expand their services to include middle school education, enabling these children to become useful citizens of society.

The ceremony concluded with the distribution of shields to outstanding students, teachers, and guests, and Pir Zada Zdran presented a cash award of PKR 5,000 to the Hello Pakistan team for their excellent performance.

Tribesmen flay presence of ghost schools in Waziristan

F.P. Report

WANA: A reliable source said that many schools are non-functional in lower Waziristan and these two mentioned responsible officers do not even bother to come to lower Waziristan to take notice of the dysfunctional schools.

Local political leaders and elders told media that lower Waziristan was greatly backward in the field of education and it was hoped that the Education department would have its own district heads in Wana to do away with the backwardness following bifurcation of ex-South Waziristan into two separate districts. But, regrettably, district heads still live in Tank and other posh localities of the country instead of sitting in lower Waziristan and have no sympathy for the poor students to be educated as future builders.

The public circles demanded the authorities to take strict notice of the absence of both of them and said that if the government does not make them sit in Wana, the headquarter of lower Waziristan, they would protest in Wana bazaar. It is pertinent to be mentioned here that most of the schools in lower Waziristan are dysfunctional, in which students do not attend classes due to the continuous absence of teachers and the students remained deprived of education in the 21st century.

Admn commits eradication of polio

F.P. Report

LARKANA : A meeting of the Task Force of the Department of Health was held in the commissioner's office on the campaign against polio in Larkana, which was presided over by Commissioner Larkana Division Ghulam Mustafa Phal. They should focus on whatever problems there are and report on them wherever the teams cannot reach.

He expressed these views while presiding over a meeting of the Divisional Task Force on Polio at the Commissioner's Office in Larkana today. He further said that you should give a complete report that the staff is not working during the campaign so that a report can be sent to the higher authorities. During the meeting, he instructed all the DHOs and said that they should give accurate reports about their areas so that no child is left out of drinking polio drops.

Speaking on this occasion, Deputy Commissioner Larkana Sharjeel Ahmad Chana said that we have bound WHO regarding the micro-plan so that in the next campaign, they should work fully and work hard to make the campaign successful. While the Deputy Commissioners and DHOs of Jacobabad, Shikarpur and Kashmore Kandhkot participated in the meeting on video link and informed about the performance done during the previous campaigns in their districts and also informed about the upcoming campaign, saying that some children were left behind due to shifting to other places.

Army Commander visits martyred officials home

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Eight Customs officials laid their lives in the line of duty in Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in two separate incidents in April 2024.

In due recognition of this selfless sacrifice in fight against illegal spectrum and as an expression of solidarity, Senior Army Commanders visited the martyrs' families at their home towns to express condolences, pay tribute & pledge unflinching support on behalf of COAS.

The families expressed their gratitude to the Army for the support and respect. Shuhadas and Ghazis are our pride and their respect



and honour is binding on each Pakistani. We must never forget that the peace and freedom we enjoy today is due to the ultimate

sacrifices rendered by these brave sons of soil. We as nation salute Shuhada families for sacrificing their loved ones for Pakistan.

DPO directed ta act against persons using LEAs uniform

F.P. Report

MARDAN: The city Mayor Mardan Himayatullah Mayor advocate has requested and asked the district police officer Mardan through a written application, to take legal action against persons dully armed with unauthorized weapons and persons wearing unauthorized alike uniform of armed forces, para military and police.

A copy of the written application by the city mayor Mardan to DPO Mardan Zahoor Babar Afridi has also been received by The Frontier Post.

In the application Himayatullah Mayor stated, "In continuation of this office letter No.176 dated 18.10.2022 on the above noted subject, it is again brought into your kind notice that it is witnessed in routine life at all places and gathering, it becoming a fashion that Land Mafia,

Sood Khor, Drug Peddlers and Gangsters and others are exhibiting authorized and unauthorized weapons or having security guards clad in unauthorized alike uniform of LEAs (forces)".

He alleged and pointed out that those persons were involved in land grabbing, Usury, Narcotics or other illegal business or posing themselves to be men of importance. The city mayor lamented that there were also some Jehadi centers in Mardan city and persons affiliated with those Jehadi centers were also roaming dully armed in the streets and markets without any check.

He feared that those armed persons and groups were open threats to peaceful environment. Likewise, he also pointed out, on one hand they were challenging writ of the state and on the other hand, they were motivating youngsters to join them or organize their own armed groups.

In his written application, the mayor city local government Mardan Mr. Himayatullah Mayor stated that therefore it was once again requested that strict legal action might please be taken against those groups and persons in the larger interest of the peaceful citizens. Mayor also claimed that he had sent other copies of the said application to Secretary Home Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Provincial Police Chief Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Deputy Inspector General of Police Mardan with the purpose that the matter could be taken seriously. The relevant police officials confirmed that they had received a copy of the above mentioned application when The Frontier Post contacted them in this connection. They said that the authorities concerned were taking serious and effective measures to subdue the matter appropriately.



QUETTA: MPA Zamurk Khan Achakzai addressing during a press conference.

Balochistan suitable region for investment: Bugti

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti on Thursday said the province was a suitable region for international investment and the provincial government would provide all facilities under one roof to domestic and international investors through one-window operation.

He made the remarks during a call on paid by Kanni Wignaraja, Assistant Secretary-General, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to him where both the sides discussed the projects of UNDP in Balochistan. On the occasion, the Balochistan government and the United Nations Development Programme agreed on cooperation in various fields.

Sarfraz Bugti said that Balochistan was facing challenges of climate change. He added that due to abnormal rains, crops and houses were facing massive damage. Chief Minister, Mir Sarfaraz Bugti said that Balochistan government had been taking serious efforts on the formation of climate change policy. He said that work was in progress on alternative sources of energy to meet the needs of electrical energy.

Assistant Secretary

General, UNDP, Kanni Wignaraja said that under the UNDP, a district development plan had been created for 20 districts of Pakistan including 10 districts of Balochistan. She said UNDP would cooperate with the Balochistan government in the fields of climate change, education and health sector. She said UNDP was assisting the Balochistan government on rehabilitation of flood-affected people, alternative energy, rules of law and SDGs.

Bugti approves transfer of five Deputy Commissioners: Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti on Thursday approved the transfer of five Deputy Commissioners (DC) of the province.

He also directed the Deputy Commissioners of Sibbi, Panjgur, and Gwadar to report to the Services & General Administration Department. Additionally, he has appointed Jahanzeb Shaikh, currently serving as Deputy Secretary of the Interior Department, as the new Deputy Commissioner of Sibbi.

Meanwhile, Zakir Ali, the Deputy Commissioner of Qila Abdullah, has been reassigned to Panjgur, while Hamudul Rehman, the Deputy Commissioner of Ziarat, has been trans-

ferred to Gwadar. Earlier to this development, Bugti said that a parliamentary committee would be formed to deliberate on violence and insurgency in Balochistan to resolve the issue permanently. He said the committee would be tasked to devise a consensus roadmap for the government to deal with the insurgency and terrorism in Balochistan and engage those disgruntled elements who wanted to shun violence.

Its recommendations would be forwarded to the Federal Government for taking effective measures to eradicate the menace from the province forever, he added. Talking to journalists along with provincial ministers, he said the state would not allow anyone to resort to violence for their vested interests. The government, however, was ready to hold dialogue with the disgruntled people within the ambit of the Constitution, he asserted.

"The committee will hold talks with the tribal notables and seek their suggestions as to how to improve the law and order situation in Balochistan. In case of the failure of such exercise, the government will on its own decide the course of action to root out the menace."

Functions and walks held to mark world malaria day

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Speakers at a function held at Timergara said that precious lives could be protected by raising awareness among communities regarding the spread of Malaria. The function and an awareness walk were arranged by the Indus Hospital and Health Network (IHHN) at Timergara to mark World Malaria Day here on Thursday.

The Walk was attended by government officials, community leaders, minority representatives and representatives from diverse backgrounds. The prominent participants were social activist Akbar Khan, ANP activist

Khalid Lalkhani, Lal Badsha, Adesh Kumar, Kinan Pasha and Shah Hussain from Population Welfare department, Umar Khitab, Zakriya from the health department. The speakers said that Pakistan had seen a surge of 2.1 million more malaria cases in 2024 as compared to 2022, leading the WHO to designate it as a moderate to high endemic country.

Dr Jehan Zeb from the district health office highlighted the necessity for an equitable healthcare system grounded in gender equality and human rights as essential for preventing as well as treating malaria. District coordinator Malaria program and IHHN Ibrash Pasha

informed the gathering about preventive measures and harms of malaria.

He said that precious lives could be saved by raising awareness among the communities. He called for heightened actions against malaria. He said that with an approach grounded in health equity, gender equality, and human rights, the IHHN aimed to foster a healthier, more resilient and make the country malaria free. The district entomologist Abdul Waris informed the participants about how to protect from malaria and prevent the deadly disease. He asked people to use insecticidal bed nets and repellents against malaria.



Migrants undeterred by deaths to continue Channel crossing attempts

LONDON (BBC): The wind, which picked up during the day and made it impossible for small boats to attempt more Channel crossings, now looks to be easing. Already, around Calais, there are indications that, despite yesterday's deaths, smugglers are starting to shepherd migrants towards the dunes along the coast to prepare for more launches.

We saw a group of Vietnamese, who have recently begun arriving in northern France in large numbers, setting off by bus. The French police estimate that the Vietnamese, many of whom appear to be escaping debts to gangsters at home, now make up 20% of all those attempting to cross the Channel. In the seaside resort town of Wimereux, locals have been digesting the news that 10 people have now died on their beaches this year, with five drowning off a slipway in January, and five more now dying in the waters off a long beach near the golf course north of the town.

The Mayor of Wimereux, Jean-Luc Dubaële, told the BBC that he was reaching breaking-point and angry: "At some point, we'll have to find lasting solutions and stop pretending that everyone is trying to fix things. No one is fixing things, it's getting worse." Mr Dubaële has already argued that "the British are the ones responsible". He had previously suggested that the UK needed to tighten its employment regulations since it was the prospect of finding work there that he believed lured so many people into attempting the crossing. He has now told French TV "the British are the ones responsible".

Three suspected smugglers who'd been on the overcrowded boat have now been arrested in the UK. They'd continued their journey despite the deaths and reached British waters several hours later. But there's no indication that the arrests, or the deaths, will have any significant impact on the smugglers' operations here in France. We've spoken to a number of prospective migrants, and to one UK-based leader of a smuggling network, who all said that it remained, in effect, business as usual.

"The boats are good quality. When the sea is calm it's easy," shrugged Noorislam, a 27-year-old from Afghanistan. He's been in Calais for a year and said he'd made 10 failed attempts to cross the Channel, each



time being thwarted by French police. The smuggling boss, who spoke to a BBC colleague - a Syrian - by phone, believing he was a migrant looking for a seat on one of his boats, insisted there was nothing to fear.

"Don't worry. There's no danger at all. As soon as you're in the boat, call the coast guard. They will escort you," said the smuggler. He also dismissed the threat of deportation from the UK to Rwanda. "Don't worry about this Rwanda issue. It is kaput," he claimed. French and British police are investigating what happened before dawn, but it is already clear that the main cause of the deaths was a dangerously overcrowded boat, which two separate groups of migrants attempted to board.

We were on the beach when it happened, and despite the chaos and the darkness, it was clear that as one main group of migrants emerged from the dunes and charged towards the sea, dragging their inflatable boat with them, a second group suddenly joined them from further south. This second group had no boat of their own, and appeared, to us, to be acting on the spur of the moment, presumably hoping to catch a ride on the other group's inflatable.

Was there fighting inside the boat between the different, and presumably rival groups? It was impossible to tell what was happening just offshore in the half-light. There were some screams and shouts, and it was clear the boat was dangerously overloaded. Did the smugglers clash violently over who should be allowed onboard? Or did the five who died, including a seven-year-old Kurdish girl, simply

fall victim to an already chaotic situation, with twice as many people as usual all scrambling for a spot on a crowded boat? News of the deaths spread quickly through the migrant communities waiting in their makeshift camps near Calais, Boulogne and Dunkirk. As we spoke to one group of Eritreans, someone - presumably a smuggler - threw a stone at us in an attempt to prevent us talking. It is clear that the smugglers use violence, or at least threats of violence, to keep their paying clients in line.

"We're not scared. If we're to die in the Channel, that's what God wanted. It is nothing compared to what we've already been through," said one Eritrean man. The French police continue to defend their handling of such incidents. They point to growing evidence of violence from the smugglers, such as we witnessed, which makes it increasingly difficult to intervene without making the situation even more dangerous. Meanwhile, Botswana's foreign minister said his country had been approached by the U.K. to take some of what he called their "unwanted immigrants" but declined the request.

Lemogang Kwape's comments in a telephone interview with South African television channel Newzroom Afrika came hours after the British Parliament finally passed legislation allowing a contentious plan to send some migrants to Rwanda to move ahead. British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said the first flights to Rwanda in East Africa would now leave in July. Kwape didn't say when the U.K. approached the southern African nation of Botswana.

Raisi says Israel must be brought to justice

COLOMBO (AP): Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said Israel must be brought to justice for "usurpation and oppression" of the Palestinian territories, if not there won't be a guarantee that others would not do the same in other lands. Raisi was delivering a statement during his one-day visit to Sri Lanka. "When it comes to the oppressor, when it comes to the usurper, the Zionist Israeli regime has been committing oppression against the people of Palestine for 75 years, they have been usurping their territory," Raisi said.

"First of all we have to expel the usurpers secondly we should make them pay the cost for all the damages they have created and thirdly we have to bring to justice the oppressor and usurper," he said. Raisi inaugurated a hydropower and irrigation project in Sri Lanka and said his country has proven the West doesn't have a monopoly on technology. Raisi is the first Iranian leader to visit Sri Lanka since former President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad visited the country in 2008. "The Western countries tried to convince all others that knowledge and technology is exclusive to those countries," Raisi said, addressing Sri Lanka's President Ranil Wickremesinghe and other top officials. He said the "idea" was rooted in "colonialism and arrogance" and that Iran was now able to share its knowledge with others, currently having projects in 20 countries. The Uma Oya project, in the central Badulla district, was constructed with Iranian technical assistance. Valued at \$514 million, it was started in 2010 by Iran's FARAB engineering group and Iran initially provided \$50 million. But in 2013, funding could not be continued because of international sanctions against Iran. The Sri Lankan government then decided to complete the project with its own funds using the same Iranian contractor. The project was scheduled for completion in 2015 but was delayed by international sanctions against Iran, technical issues and the COVID-19 pandemic, the government said in a statement ahead of Raisi's visit. The project will add 290 GWh of electricity annually to the national grid and irrigate 4,500 hectares (11,100 acres) of new land and 1,500 hectares (3,700 acres) of existing agricultural land. Raisi and Wickremesinghe witnessed the signing of five memoranda of understanding covering areas including tourism, science, technical media, films and sports. Raisi arrived in Sri Lanka from Pakistan, where the two countries agreed to strengthen economic and security cooperation.

"The impact [or Russian strikes] on the electricity system of Ukraine is very high," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said. "I cannot give you a precise figure because it is very appalling ... It is one of the most important targets of the Russian attack. You know why: because electricity is needed for everything and for everybody." "Today we received the decision we were expecting: the package of American support. For which we fought so much. A very important package, which will be felt by our soldiers on the front lines, our cities and villages that suffer from Russian terror," said Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in a statement. One of the most important aspects of the new defence aid package is

that it will for the first time include Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS) with a range of 300km (186 miles). Ukraine has been requesting ATACMS for over a year. Zelenskyy confirmed the news after speaking with Biden. US Senate Intelligence Committee chairman Senator Mark Warner told CBS News that the missiles would be on their way to Ukraine "by the end of the week". The new ATACMS put virtually all of Crimea within Ukraine's striking range. Zelenskyy also said the first US aid package since House approval of a supplemental spending package "will strengthen our anti-aircraft, long-range and artillery capabilities". Ukraine's capabilities beyond a range of 150km (93 miles) have mostly been confined to slow-flying, easily intercepted drones of its own manufacture. Russian reactions ranged from the cynical to the vitriolic. "Due to political strife inside Washington, they are looking for different modalities to continue providing aid to Ukraine," said Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov. "It is about provoking Ukraine into further hostilities down to the last Ukrainian, putting guaranteed money in the pockets of the US."

Peskov was referring to the fact that of the \$60.84bn allocated to Ukraine, \$23bn was to replenish US stocks already drawn down for shipment to Ukraine. Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy head of the Russian National Security Council and a close confidant of President Vladimir Putin, called it "a vote of joyful US b*****" on Telegram. "I can't help but wish the USA with all sincerity to dive into a new civil war themselves as quickly as possible," Medvedev wrote. "Which, I hope, will be very different from the war between North and South in the 19th century and will be waged using aircraft, tanks, artillery, MLRS, all types of missiles and other weapons. And which will finally lead to the inglorious collapse of the vile evil empire of the 21st century - the United States of America."

Russia's foreign ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova portrayed the vote as an attempt to bolster Biden ahead of the November presidential election. "The agency of Zelenskyy and his inner circle is being dragged out, and ordinary Ukrainians are being forcibly driven to slaughter as cannon fodder," she said in a statement. "Frenzied attempts to save Zelenskyy's neo-Nazi regime are doomed." Her boss, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, told Sputnik News that Russia is not willing to engage in peace talks with Zelenskyy, and if talks were to take place, Russia would not agree to a ceasefire. — Aljazeera

Ukraine wins bipartisan US support, strikes Russia from afar

KYIV: After months of delays and debates, the US Congress has approved a \$60.8bn military aid package for Ukraine, lifting the spirits of Kyiv's forces this week as special operations destroyed Russian air defences, a long-range bomber, a unique ship, and oil refineries. For weeks, everyday Ukrainians have watched their cities bombarded and power stations incinerated because of a lack of anti-missile defences. Overall, Ukraine has acquired a renewed sense of hope for the longer term, even as a minority believe their occupied lands can be entirely liberated.

Meanwhile, Russian forces continued to make small tactical gains in Ukraine's east, clawing away fields and villages west of Avdiivka, but failing to make headway in the strategic town of Chasiv Yar. The United States House of Representatives overrode months of resistance from Republicans allied with presidential hopeful Donald Trump to vote for a \$95bn defence supplement. One hundred and one Republicans sided with all 210 Democrats to deliver a majority of 311, versus 112 Republicans who voted against. The bill cleared the Senate with an overwhelming majority of 79, including 31 Republicans.

The bipartisanship was important, demonstrating that Washington was not deadlocked on a matter of national security, nor in thrall to Trump or Russian narratives. "It's a dangerous time. Three of our primary adversaries, Russia and Iran and China are working together ... their advance threatens the free world and it demands American leadership," said US House Speaker Mike Johnson, who has been the target of intense criticism this year for not moving on a vote sooner. US President Joe Biden requested the aid last October; Ukrainian troops have struggled to defend their airspace and hold their front line in the face of severe shortages of air defence missiles and artillery rounds.

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Ethnic Karen guerrillas in Myanmar leave a town

BANGKOK (AP): Guerrilla fighters from the main ethnic Karen fighting force battling Myanmar's military government have withdrawn from the eastern border town of Myawaddy two weeks after forcing the army to give up its defense, residents and members of the group said. Their withdrawal came after a contending armed Karen group, which has occupied the town and claimed responsibility for its security, provided assistance to army soldiers who had fled to a riverside spot there for safety.

The soldiers came from the army's Infantry Battalion 275, whose base, about 4 kilometers (3 miles) to the west of Myawaddy, was captured on April 11 by the armed wing of the Karen National Union -- or KNU - and allied pro-democracy forces. The fleeing soldiers reestablished themselves in an area next to one of Myawaddy's two bridges connecting it to Thailand's Mae Sot district. The complicated maneuvering is the latest development in the nationwide conflict in Myanmar that began after the army ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021 and suppressed widespread nonviolent protests that sought a return to democratic rule.

Despite its advantage in arms and manpower, Myanmar's army had been on the defensive since last October, when an alliance of three ethnic rebel groups launched an offensive in the country's northeast. Resistance forces since then have captured major swaths of territory in northern Shan state on the border with China, made significant gains in Rakhine state in the west, and continue to pressure the army elsewhere. The soldiers now encamped next to the 2nd Thai-Myanmar Friendship Bridge were given at least tacit protection there by Kayin state's Border Guard Force, another armed Karen group that had been nominally affiliated with the military but announced last month they were cutting their ties and establishing themselves independently under the name of the Karen National Army. The border guard units had been accused of providing protection to casino resorts in the Myawaddy area that have been decried as centers for organized crime, including online scam operations and human trafficking. KNU spokesperson Padoh Saw Taw Nee told journalists that its forces had withdrawn temporarily from Myawaddy as Border Guard Force units brought the soldiers hiding near the bridge to the abandoned Infantry Battalion 275 base, where they raised Myanmar's national flag in place of the standard hoisted by the guerrillas when it occupied it. Photos and video clips of a handful of soldiers raising Myanmar's flag were circulated by supporters of the military government on the Telegram social network. It wasn't clear if any of the soldiers remained at the base after the photo opportunity, or if they returned to their camps by the bridge.

The KNU is preparing to defend against an expected counterattack by the military government, and it keeping its units mobile rather than trying to hold territory. A member of the Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army-Peace Council, another Karen organization based in Myawaddy, told The Associated Press that the border guards had helped arrange the safe flight of the soldiers to their bridge encampment two weeks ago and provided them with food and weapons. He spoke on the condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to release information. Myawaddy's residents say the Border Guard Force has played a major role in taking charge of security measures in the town. The Karen guerrillas launched a small attack aided by drones against the soldiers hiding near the bridge, and Myanmar's military responded with airstrikes, dropping several bombs nearby for two days, and forcing about 3,000 residents to seek shelter in Thailand.

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SAO PAULO (AP): An Indigenous group in Brazil said its members detained 12 people for allegedly mining illegally in the Amazon and handed them over to police. The non-profit Urihi Associação Yanomami said in a statement that the incident took place in the northern state of Roraima, which borders Venezuela. The organization said its move was aimed at avoiding the risk of water contamination by mercury in mining. Brazil's Indigenous Peoples Ministry confirmed that a dozen alleged miners, including 10 men and two women, were in police custody. The Yanomami group filmed some of its members carrying bows and shotguns as they took the alleged miners to police. The detainees did not make comments in the video. The Associated Press could not find a spokesperson for them. The Yanomami community is the Amazon's largest Indigenous tribe living in relative isolation, and many of its members are contaminated with mercury coming from widespread illegal gold mining, according to Brazil's top public health institute.

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Chinese student jailed in US

BEIJING: A Chinese music student has been jailed for nine months in the United States after threatening to cut off the hands of a fellow student at a prestigious music institute in Boston after she posted pro-democracy fliers on campus. Xiaolei Wu, 26, was arrested in December 2022 after threatening another Berklee College of Music student who had put up fliers saying "Stand With Chinese People" and "We Want Democracy".

Wu made a series of threats to the victim via the WeChat messaging app, email and Instagram, including to "chop your b***** hands off" if more fliers were posted. Wu also warned the victim, referred to in court only as Zooey, that he had informed the public security agency in China about her actions. He carried through on the threat by reporting her to his mother, a Chinese government official. He also posted her email address publicly. He was found guilty in January on charges of cyberstalking and threatening behaviour. Prosecutors had called for a nearly three-year sentence to send a message to Beijing that the US would not tolerate attempts by the Chinese government to silence people of Chinese descent who held differing opinions to Beijing. Judge Denise Casper said a custodial sentence was warranted to deter similar behaviour by other Chinese nationals who travel to the US to study and ensure they know that "no one can engage in criminal conduct, particularly conduct to suppress free speech". She opted for a nine-month sentence because Wu's harassment campaign while "egregious"

lasted only two days and he had no previous convictions. Wu, who was in the US on a student visa to study jazz, will be deported after completing his sentence. He apologised in court for his "reckless behaviour", saying he needed "to take responsibility and accept what I have done".

"For making Zooey feel threatened, I feel very sorry," he said. There have been growing concerns in North America and Europe about China's influence operations attempts to silence its critics, not only on university campuses, where there are worries about the impact on academic freedom, but also in politics.

People of Chinese origin who are not nationals of China have also expressed outrage at Beijing's attempts to enlist them in "telling China's story". — Aljazeera

Indonesia declares Prabowo president-elect

JAKARTA (AP): Indonesia's electoral commission formally declared Prabowo Subianto president-elect in a ceremony, after the country's highest court rejected challenges to his landslide victory lodged by two losing presidential candidates. Subianto, who is currently defense minister, won the election with 58.6% of the votes, or more than 96 million ballots, more than twice the amount received by either of the other two candidates. But his rivals alleged that his victory had depended on large-scale fraud and widespread state interference.

Authorities blocked streets leading to the General Election Commission compound, where more than 4,200 police and soldiers were deployed. Wearing matching long-sleeved white shirts, Subianto and vice president elect Gibran Rakabuming Raka waved to

their supporters as they arrived at the building. "The race has finished ... the tough contest, with sometimes heated debates, is over," Subianto said during the ceremony, attended by the country's political elite, including rival candidate Anies Baswedan and his running mate Muhaimin Iskandar. "And now our people demand that political leaders must work together and collaborate for the people's welfare and to eliminate poverty and corruption in Indonesia," Subianto said. Subianto will take office in October, succeeding the popular Joko Widodo, the country's first president from outside the Jakarta elite. The General Election Commission certified the election results on March 20, but the formal declaration ceremony was put on hold following legal challenges from rival candidates, former Jakarta Gov. Anies Baswedan and former

Central Java Gov. Ganjar Pranowo, who sought to annul the result and demand a revote. They also alleged nepotism, challenging the candidacy of outgoing President Joko Widodo's eldest son, Raka, as Subianto's running mate. Baswedan and Pranowo argued that Raka, 37, should have been disqualified because the minimum age for candidates is 40, and they asked the court to bar him from a revote. Before the election, Raka was granted a controversial exception to that requirement by the Constitutional Court, which was then led by Anwar Usman, Widodo's brother-in-law. Usman was later forced to resign as chief justice for failing to recuse himself. In a 5-to-3 decision, the Constitutional Court rejected the arguments, saying the legal teams of the losing candidates had failed to prove allegations that Subianto's victory was the

result of widespread fraud. That verdict cannot be appealed. The case was decided by eight justices instead of the full nine-member court because Usman, who is still on the court as an associate justice, was required to recuse himself. Baswedan and Iskandar conceded and congratulated Subianto and Raka shortly after the Constitutional Court's decision was read out, saying they are committed to maintaining the principle of peaceful transfer of power and that "we choose to be part of continuing to build the quality of Indonesian democracy." Pranowo and his running mate, Mohammad Mahfud, also congratulated Subianto. "We accept and fully respect the decision of the Constitutional Court," Pranowo said. "Like or dislike, we have to accept it because it's final, legal and binding."

if we stop Putin doing what he is trying to do in Ukraine, in the end, it will cost all of us a great deal less. "I think it is reasonable to reduce the civil service to the size it was pre-Covid, and I'm confident we can do that with more efficient delivery of public services." Mr Hunt confirmed the spending, which will gradually increase over the next six years, would be £20bn more than if spending stayed at its current level of 2.3% of GDP. The additional funding will also help resource MoD programmes already under way - such as an order for new naval frigates, the development of a new fighter jet, and the modernisation of Britain's nuclear weapons systems. These programmes are proving to be very expensive and the MoD has been struggling to make ends meet on its existing resources. Labour's shadow defence secretary John Healey said his party "wants to see a fully funded plan" to reach this level. But the Tories had "shown time and time again that they cannot be trusted on defence", he added.

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Protectionist moves

IN a latest sign that protectionism has reared its ugly head in Europe, the European Commission has launched an investigation into China's public procurement of medical devices, purportedly to determine if European suppliers of devices have been given fair access in the country.

The probe, the first under the European Union International Procurement Instrument, could lead to the bloc imposing restrictions on Chinese medical device companies bidding in EU public tenders if there is substantial evidence to support the claims by some European companies that they are being treated unfairly in China in terms of market access. The investigation was launched on Wednesday, just a day after the European Commission raided Chinese security equipment company Nuctech's Dutch and Polish offices — seizing its IT equipment and employees' mobile phones — on the pretext that the company, which makes airport, freight and baggage scanners, has received unfair State subsidies which put its EU peers at a disadvantage. The unusual step the EU has taken against the Chinese company is, as Financial Times noted, "awkward" for the European Commission as it "signed off on spending EU funds to buy those products for use by national customs authorities". The media outlet provided an inkling of the motivation for the move as the company is one of those that the United States has targeted claiming that it is involved "in activities contrary to the national security interest of the US".

Given that the bloc is able to verify and resolve any issues through various other means, such as communication with the enterprise or relevant government departments, the raid on Nuctech and the investigation into China's public procurement of medical devices are worrying signs that the EU is willing to employ high-handed means to demonstrate to Washington that it is not soft on Beijing. It is common that trading partners have differences and disputes. Yet rather than conducting dialogue and consultation to resolve them, the EU has instead sought to take unilateral actions against China — its third-largest partner for exports of goods and largest partner for imports of goods. This will inevitably and unnecessarily ratchet up trade tensions and undermine the mutually beneficial cooperation between them.

The EU has always taken pride in being the most open market in the world, with its international trade in goods and services accounting for around one-fourth of its GDP. Yet the series of steps that it has taken recently to suppress and restrict Chinese enterprises, with no justification, have raised concerns about the bloc turning against free trade. The EU already launched a major probe into imports of Chinese electric vehicles in October, while also looking into alleged subsidies received by Chinese suppliers of wind turbines and solar power equipment destined for Europe, which could lead to the group slapping much higher tariffs on Chinese products.

The EU's raids on Nuctech prompted the China Chamber of Commerce to the EU to lodge a protest, saying they "send a detrimental message not only to Chinese enterprises but to all non-EU companies conducting business in the bloc". Europe turning increasingly protectionist bodes ill for the development of the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and the EU. There is a high degree of complementarity and shared interest between the Chinese and EU economies. The EU should honor its words of commitment to the open market and the principle of fair competition, and stop wantonly going after and restraining Chinese companies under various pretexts. The two sides should strengthen their communication and coordination to solve the problems that exist between them.

What's expected

THE Chinese side's nonchalant attitude to the Shanghai leg of US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's three-day visit to China, which is about culture, education and business, poses a sharp contrast with the positive attitude it showed toward that part of US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen's visit from April 6 to 9.

That is a manifestation of Beijing's dissatisfaction with what the US side has done to improve ties since the two heads of state agreed on the importance and urgency of repairing bilateral relations in their talks via telephone on April 2. Reinforcing the discrepancy between the words and deeds of the US, the US House of Representatives passed two bills on Saturday providing weapons worth billions of dollars to China's Taiwan island, and banning TikTok, with the latter bill passing the Senate on Wednesday. Besides, the largest US-Philippine joint military drill in decades was launched on Monday in waters close to Taiwan in the South China Sea. And days before that the US installed middle-range missiles in the north of the Philippines' Luzon island covering not only Taiwan and its surrounding waters, but also the whole southeast coastal region of the Chinese mainland. If that's not enough, the US side has recently begun scaremongering about China's "overcapacity", and it has threatened to triple its already punitive tariffs on Chinese steel and aluminum products, and ban Chinese electric vehicles and solar panels.

That's a typical Chinese diplomatic approach signaling Beijing's discontent with the US side doing exactly the opposite of what it said it would do on April 2. The points Beijing has laid out for Blinken are the five pillars of the San Francisco Vision that was an outcome of the common understanding reached between the Chinese and US leaders at their summit in November. That was hatched from the principles of the United Nations-centered international relations, reflecting the Chinese side's long-term commitment to promote Sino-US relations on an equal footing, with mutual respect and through win-win cooperation. However, what the US has done shows the Joe Biden administration has only intensified its endeavors to define and steer bilateral ties "from a position of strength". That was something that the Chinese side firmly rejected during the first face-to-face meeting between senior officials of China and those of the Biden administration in Anchorage, Alaska, in March 2021. In the face of the Biden administration not honoring its words with deeds, China deserves credit for the strategic composure it has shown and restraint it has exercised. Despite the US' continuous attempts to bully, coerce and provoke, which the US side disguises under the cover of competition, cooperation and confrontation, Beijing has held fast to the belief that cooperation is both possible and the key to friendly relations. Although, as some Western media noted, no red carpet was rolled out for Blinken at the Shanghai airport upon his arrival, the top US diplomat should be well aware that as well as the redlines his hosts have demarcated, they still view the visit as an opportunity to expand common ground so long as those redlines are respected.

Important Notice

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Modi wants to turn India's election into a war

INDIAN Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have decided that they will contest this seven-phase national election as champions of Hindu interests. They have also made it clear that protecting Hindu interests means protecting them from Muslims.

According to them, the Hindu majority face danger as the opposition Congress party is conspiring with the Muslim community to rob them of their wealth and entitlements and hand them over to Muslims. On Sunday, the prime minister told a rally in Rajasthan that if the opposition comes to power, it will take Hindus' wealth and give it to those "who have more children", clearly referring to Muslims. He then went on to call the Muslim community "infiltrators".

Modi's comments caused outrage in some quarters. Citizens and organisations from across the country have asked the Election Commission of India (ECI) to take action against him for his hate speech. The rights group People's Union of Civil Liberties has even demanded that Modi be disqualified from contesting elections for that overt communal incitement. These reactions did not result in any change of rhetoric; in fact, the prime minister doubled down two days later.

On Tuesday, in his address at another election rally in Rajasthan, Modi once again claimed that the Congress was conspiring to take the wealth of Hindus and distribute it among "select" people. To ensure that there was no ambiguity, Modi went on to suggest that the Congress was going to take away the share of reservations - or quotas in education, employment, government schemes etc - for backward classes, scheduled castes, and tribal people and give it to Muslims. This was a clear attempt to scare the backward and Dalit sections of the Hindu electorate into voting for the BJP. Also on Tuesday, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh state Yogi Adityanath said the Congress wanted to implement Islamic law. This was a clear attempt to raise the scare of Islamisation of India.

Apoorvanand

Modi is considered an expert in dog-whistling. He has mastered the art of insulting, mocking, and attacking Muslims without uttering the word Muslim. For example, during his time as chief minister of Gujarat state in 2002, riots took place that evicted thousands of Muslims from their homes and forced them into relief camps. When the state government started demolishing these camps and faced criticism over it, Modi said he could not allow "children-producing factories" to operate. Without uttering the word Muslim, he said these were

wrong to conclude from his speech that he has accepted that his voters are only Hindus. Other leaders of his party have made that clear as well. Last year, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma declared that he did not want the votes of Miya (Bengali-speaking Muslims). Some analysts feel that the BJP has become desperate as it has not received the expected support in the first phase of the elections. This desperation has driven it to try its old formula of Hindu polarisation by generating the fear of a Muslim takeover

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people whose motto was "We are five, ours are 25". That referred to Muslim men supposedly marrying four times and having 25 children. In his subsequent speeches, he continued pitting Hindus against Muslims with the help of innuendos, such as "pink revolution" (non-vegetarianism) and "white revolution" (vegetarianism) or graveyards (referring to the Muslim burial practices) and crematoriums (referring to the Hindu practice of burning remains). In Sunday's speech, Modi directly referred to Muslims as "those who produce more children" and "infiltrators", evoking a sinister conspiracy theory that the Muslims are outsiders and aim to outnumber the Hindu majority.

The prime minister is clearly playing a dangerous game, turning the election into a war between Hindus and Muslims, and the BJP is openly calling itself the party of Hindus. It is not

of India. But if we look at Modi's speeches since the beginning of this election campaign, we can see that right from the start, he has been giving statements that portray the opposition parties as anti-Hindu. For example, he said the Congress manifesto bore the "imprint of the Muslim League", referring to the political party founded under British colonialism to secure Muslim rights. He also claimed that the opposition leaders had the mind-set of Mughals, India's 16-18th century Muslim rulers, and that they insulted Hindus by eating fish during sacred Hindu occasions and eating meat during the Hindu holy month of Sawan. He said they do so to please their "own" voters. Who can these voters be but Muslims?

That the opposition leaders are indulging in anti-Hindu practices to appease Muslims is a completely absurd assertion given that the opposition also needs

Hindu votes and cannot afford to do anything to alienate them. But lack of logic has not stopped Modi and the BJP from repeating these claims in an attempt to provoke Hindus against Muslims. This is a clear violation of the ECI's Model Code of Conduct, according to which, no one is allowed to solicit votes or campaign on religious or communal grounds. It is also a violation of the People's Representative Act, which treats communal propaganda as a crime. The law says, "Appeals by a candidate, or any other person with the consent of a candidate, to vote or refrain from voting on the ground of his religion, race, caste, community or language is a corrupt electoral practice." If found guilty under this provision, an individual can face up to six years in jail.

It was this provision of the Act that led to a six-year election ban in 1999 on Bal Thackeray, the founder of the Shiv Sena party, over his attempts at communal incitement. Despite calls for action to stem the BJP's use of inciting speech in the ongoing elections, the ECI has been completely silent on the issue. That is because it is a compromised body. In December, the BJP managed to push legislation through parliament that changed the composition of the selection committee tasked with appointing election commissioners. Earlier the chief justice of India (CJI) was part of it, along with the prime minister and the leader of the opposition. Now the CJI has been replaced with a minister to be selected by the prime minister. That is how the ECI lost its independence. It has been behaving like a government body ever since, issuing notices to the opposition leaders for small lapses and taking no action on grave violations by the leaders of the BJP. This effectively means that elections in India are also compromised.

As BJP's inciting campaign continues, Muslims are being advised by their well-wishers not to react as it will make Hindus gravitate towards the BJP. Muslims are keeping quiet, but so are the ECI and the courts. In this deafening silence, we are mourning the death of democracy in India.

Aljazeera

Pearranged attacks alter rules of Iran-Israel confrontation

Mohamed Chebaro

WE know the world's governance system is splintered. We also know that the rules of warfare have shifted in the last three decades. This is partly due to technological progress, but also due to the parties to conflicts increasingly investing in asymmetric warfare, proxies and "little green men" - agents of chaos and disruption in the name of their paymaster general, whoever that might be.

But what no one imagined is that missile and drone strikes, such as the ones exchanged by Iran and Israel this month, could be prearranged and approved by supposed arch-enemies.

Finely calibrated warfare is what Iran and Israel seem to be embarking on. The question is for how long can this system of warfare potentially achieve the aims of each party without causing large fires due to a miscalculation?

It is certain that last week's Israeli strike close to the central Iranian city of Isfahan appears to have caused no significant damage. Although Israel is thought to have struck deep inside Iran before, and as recently as last year in Isfahan, this strike - as "feeble" as it looked - demonstrated an Israeli attempt to keep escalation to a minimum. This is despite the fact the attack was supposed to be a response to Iran's direct targeting of Israeli territory proper for the first time on April 13, when it fired more than 300 drones and missiles that were largely ward off by Israel's air defenses.

The fiery rhetoric aside, many in the Middle East have long looked suspiciously at the Israel-Iran relationship, describing it as always on the brink but never escalated to the point where it might harm the strategic interests of the Islamic Republic or its survival, or those in Israel that seek to maintain the country's supremacy at all costs.

Though Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has for years made Iran's nuclear program an electioneering issue, as well as a topic to drum up sympathy with Israel whenever he felt he needed to, this month's open tit-for-tat exchanges are likely to present his government with new, less comfortable, rules of engagement. Up until recently, it was possible for groups loyal to Tehran to target Israel from Gaza and the West bank, south Lebanon and, less frequently, from Syria. Since Oct. 7, missiles and drones have also been directed toward Israel from as far away as Yemen and Iraq. The deterrence that has been in place - with Israel always having the upper hand in terms of superior capabilities - was questioned by Iran's April 13 attack.

Iran's leadership, on the other hand, must feel emboldened, as it is clearly reaping the benefits of its years of investment in militant Arab groups, which have been effective in upholding Tehran's interests in the region. These groups are involved in activities ranging from rallying the masses to the cause of liberating Palestine to actively recruiting, training and

arming militants. Their meddling has undermined the legitimacy and unity of some Arab countries. Lately, weapons arsenals supplied to these groups by Tehran have been used as a potent force. They have rained down conventional missiles and drones, some with state-of-the-art targeting systems, on Iran's signal, giving Tehran an edge of plausible deniability.

The region and the wider world might be breathing more comfortably after further escalations were avoided due to successful backchannels preapproving the attacks and responses, but one immediate implication of the exchange was the removal, at least temporarily, of the criticism faced by Israel related to its conduct in Gaza. Once again, Netanyahu's government, with or without the approval of its Western allies, looks free to see through its job of destroying Hamas, even if it means the loss of further innocent Palestinian lives and even more of Gaza being turned to rubble. Peace or even a ceasefire remain elusive despite all the mediators' efforts.

Iran, for its part, draws comfort from the latest developments because it dared to twist the rules of the game and shift its confrontation with Israel from the shadows, where it had been for decades, into the open. Many in Iran believe that the early signs of a more emboldened regime are reflected in acts such as it clamping down on those opposing it and apprehending more women who defy the mandatory wearing of the hijab.

Across the Arab Palestinian Middle East, one cannot but sense admiration for Iran, even though its missiles and drones failed to reach their targets. This is also despite the fact that, short of this calibrated attack launched directly against Israel, many believe Tehran's leadership would prefer to leave Hamas to go on fighting until the last civilian in Gaza. Others are not impressed by the apparently rehearsed and choreographed spectacle of Iran and Israel trading blows.

If anything, the tit-for-tat attacks have vindicated the Iranian leadership and propped it up in the eyes of its core supporters inside Iran and across parts of the Arab world. And the Israeli PM, hated by most of his people, seems to have bought himself a bit more time. Meanwhile, the Palestinians in Gaza stare at the rubble of their destroyed homes, with empty stomachs, cheating death amid the continued Israeli military activities.

Preapproved or agreed strikes present warring parties with new options that might prevent escalation and allow them to save face. In this chapter of open confrontation between Iran and Israel, I am minded to believe that the former has succeeded in changing the rules of the game for years to come. This time, Israel came under attack directly from Iran. Next time, it might not be able to rely on the rushed help of its allies, in case it succumbs to more episodes of direct attacks, whether pre-arranged or not.

Arab News

West stronger than Russia

Boris Bondarev

conference in the hope of determining how a peaceful resolution to the conflict can be reached. Russia has not been invited, and has characteristically managed to take offense at this. But it is obvious that a fruitful discussion would be impossible with Russian delegates present.

The meeting should simply approve Zelensky's plan, possibly with some additions and changes, as a basic platform on the basis of which Ukraine and the countries that support it are ready to talk to Russia. China, which has pushed for direct talks between Russia and Ukraine has yet to confirm whether it will take part in the conference. However, even if China does not attend, the conference still has the potential to be meaningful.

It is an opportunity for Kyiv and its Western allies to push for specific objectives and demands in language that is as precise as possible. A spe-

cific plan is hard to build a consensus around because each country has its own views on Ukraine's situation and what should be done. But a more poorly-defined plan is no easier to implement because each signatory will interpret it in its own way. The question arises as to how far the countries of the Global South which will agree to participate are willing to go. So far, there have been no tectonic shifts in their attitude toward Russian aggression. The Swiss organizers have started managing expectations ahead of the conference, realizing that it is unlikely that they will be able to boast of any serious diplomatic breakthroughs.

However, there are grounds for optimism. The US Congress has finally approved a \$60 billion aid package for Ukraine. This is a signal to the entire international community that the United States still supports Ukraine and is not out of the

game yet. But there is the question of exactly how this assistance will be distributed and how effective it will be. Will Washington change its vicious approach of supplying Ukraine with arms at the rate of a teaspoon per hour? If this practice continues, we cannot expect a change in the course of the war.

There is also a risk that this aid will arrive too late. It is plausible that Putin, faced with the prospect of massive supplies of Western weapons to Ukraine, may try to dramatically increase recruitment for the army to compensate for the Ukrainians' more sophisticated weaponry. The appearance of hundreds of thousands or even a million additional soldiers, even if they are comparatively poorly armed, could become a very serious test for the Ukrainian defense. This, in turn, threatens the West with an unpleasant choice: either accept Ukraine's defeat or intervene in the war directly to save Kyiv from total collapse.

The battle for the minds and hearts of the global community lies not so much in diplomatic tricks and propaganda slogans, but first and foremost in the willingness and determination of each side to pursue the matter to a victorious end. Countries and governments in the Global South value human life much less than in the West and are more likely to see force as an acceptable way to solve problems. These countries will value the will to win above everything else. To them demands for an unconditional peace are not a sign of good will, but weakness and insecurity. Western countries still face the same challenge as in early 2022 - demonstrating that they are as willing to stand up for what is right as Putin is to continue the war. The majority of the world will not side with the most morally righteous country, but with the strongest. The West has every reason and resources to be the strongest. All that remains is the political will and understanding of what needs to be done to make this fact ignorable.

The Moscow Times

How Ukraine war stretching Russian workers to their limits

Jeremy Morris

Whether the Ukraine war has been good for Russia's working class is a question that Putin's inner elite is obviously concerned about. Few in Russia can avoid the obvious fact that it is the sons of the poor, rural and ethnic minorities who are doing the fighting and dying. Looking at the experiences of these workers in-depth exposes numerous problems in understanding the developing relationship between society and the regime, Russia's creaking infrastructure, and the faults in the war economy.

The issue is in part a demographic one. Yet Russia already has 30% fewer able-bodied young people than it did 10 years ago because of the huge drop in births since 1991. The law of supply and demand says this should be great for blue-collar wages. In line with this, there is evidence of war industries and the army itself out-bidding the rest of the economy for these precious men younger than 30.

However, the argument that working-class Russians are beneficiaries of the war does not match up with the reality of blue-collar labor in the country. Historically, pay for these jobs has been very low. Workers have also struggled with high levels of job insecurity, miserable working conditions and some of the worst labor relations in the developed world.

This vacuum-cleaner effect on labor is how some people explain the apparent uptick in accidents and breakdowns in critical infrastructure, such as the mass heating failures in January and the floods across the Urals and western Siberia in April. But a better explanation is simply that Russia has suffered from corruption, neglect and lack of investment during a period when urban areas have seen huge expansion in housing without commensurate investment in utilities.

The same is true of the string of suspicious fires in factories, especial-

ly those linked to the war effort. Production within the existing factory and workshop spaces cannot be ramped up without huge risks. There is clear evidence that the culture of cutting corners on safety is worse than ever, especially because of the moratorium on spot checks by the authorities. This negligence is usually a more likely explanation than sabotage. Workers in critical industries are sometimes tag-teaming in three shifts in an aging plant that the higher-ups expect to run nearly 24/7.

For example, in March, more than a dozen gold miners in the Amur region were trapped over 100 meters underground after a rock slide. Alarminglly, the authorities' rescue efforts were so inadequate that mine workers were forced to dig out their comrades because of inadequate rescue efforts from the authorities, indicative of the general culture of callousness and negligence that reigns in many industries. The search for the miners was eventually called off.

The fact is that Russia's informal economy remains huge, thought to make up 38.2% of GDP. Instead of creating a reserve army of labor, but a temporary refuge for many millions of men from poor quality waged work. Furthermore, undertaking informal work could be a way of avoiding military mobilization by effectively going dark on the authorities, potentially on the same level as working in reserved industries like metallurgy that are exempt from the draft. But little is known about this because, by its very nature, it is hard to research.

The war effort is eating up an increasing amount of state spending. Now that Russia is entering uncharted territory by printing money to fund the war, inflation is back with a vengeance and is most acutely felt in

the devalued salaries of ordinary people. At the start of the war, inflation shot up by an estimated 20%. In 2023, some said the actual rate, because of devaluation, was more like 60%. What this means for the average worker, even those in favored occupations, is a progressive erosion of their disposable income - even after accounting for efforts to switch to Chinese imports and domestically produced goods.

This is far from the military Keynesianism that was supposed to trickle down into general consumption and services. On the contrary, as analyst Nick Trickett showed, the Russian economy is very brittle, and shocks from the war lead to bottlenecks, halts in production due to faulty equipment and accidents. Trickett calculates that average incomes are still lower in real terms than in 2013. For traditional blue-collar workers in manufacturing, living standards are noticeably deteriorating. As one worker told me, wage rises are "like a dog chasing its tail" - the tail being the cost of living.

There is simply not enough money to go around. So much has gone into paying soldiers and compensating their families, as well as replacing lost materiel, that the average worker feels like little has gotten better. My long-term contacts work in metallurgy, refining, metalworking and raw materials production. Many of these industries are considered so critical, workers are exempt from mobilization. They are careful what they say and self-censor, but their answers are still enlightening. While they report things like receiving a 20% pay rise they also complain about the cost of petrol, the difficulty of getting spares for foreign-made cars, and the increase in the cost of staples like eggs and medicine. Positive state-

ments like "I'm a patriot and a consumer. There is still something in the fridge to eat. I have everything I need," are revealing because of how equivocal they really are. They indicate that behind a facade of normality, even well-placed workers are feeling the pinch.

Some are more forthcoming, saying that wage and pension indexation is a myth. There was a mortgage boom in 2023, but this is subsidizing now rates are high. One young man works for a booming fastenings manufacturer. He has a family and should be eligible for a subsidized mortgage. But says of getting on the housing ladder, "You must be kidding - I haven't even looked. I know it's not realistic to get a loan." Going into debt to buy white goods and cars with an average interest rate significantly over 10% has become the norm. Many refinance even small loans at disadvantageous rates, relying on bailouts from relatives; 2023 also saw a boom in unsecured payday loans under \$1,000. The average loan is just 8,000 rubles (\$86). Considering that most take out the maximum sum offered and use it to meet their immediate needs, this reveals the pressure working-class Russians are under.

Fundamentally, even salaries in weapons manufacturing are too low to attract the labor it needs. Moreover, many weapons producers are located far from Russia's core European regions, meaning they are unattractive to potential labor migrants. Even under wartime conditions, unauthorized strikes and production slowdowns are increasing. The economic unsustainability caused by the war aside, the social contract is fragile. Putinism was built on the bargain of political voice for sustained growth in economic well-being. If Putin's war means stagnation, then what's the point of Putinism?

A path beyond Thucydides trap for China, US

Wang Huiyao

Peloponnesian War almost inevitable.

If we look at today's global landscape, we will realize that no country in history has risen as rapidly and extensively in such a short time as China. From a country where, till the 1990s, 90 percent of the population lived on less than \$2 a day, China has not only succeeded in eradicating extreme poverty but also become the world's largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity.

The fact that this remarkable transformation has occurred in four decades and is unprecedented, has made the US uncomfortable because, having shaped the post-World War II international order and being the only superpower after the end of the Cold War, it cannot bear to see the rise of an equally powerful country. This is where the Thucydides trap comes in. Moreover, trade tensions, geopolitical challenges, and issues such as the Taiwan question have become flashpoints in US-China relations, emphasizing the need to avoid the "Thucydides trap", because now, more than ever, collaboration is crucial.

During the book launch, Allison used a compelling analogy to illustrate the intricate China-US interdependence. He likened the two countries to "conjoined twins", sharing vital organs but with two distinct heads and minds, and bound by the existential imperative to "coexist or perish". This drives home the point that engaging in harmful actions, even if momentarily satisfying, ultimately results in self-harm. This concept aligns with the Chinese phrase, you are in me, and I am in you, which the top leader quoted during a meeting with a bipartisan US Senate delegation, which included Democrat Charles Schumer, on Oct 9, 2023. This notion is rooted in Chinese culture and contrasts with the often binary "black and white" thinking that marks discourse in the US, advocating instead for a more intertwined and connected approach.

The Chinese president was the first global leader to truly explore the concept of "Thucydides trap", even before the publication of *Destined for War*: Can America and China Avoid Thucydides' Trap? in 2017. He has often said that there is no inherent "Thucydides

trap" in the world but that strategic miscalculations among major powers could inadvertently create one. As a student and colleague of former US secretary of state Henry Kissinger, Allison shares Kissinger's perspective that Sino-US relations are perilously poisoned, yet insists that coexistence is achievable. He believes that through steadfast communication and thoughtful diplomacy, major powers can transcend the historical inevitabilities that Thucydides described.

In his role as a Harvard professor and former US government official, Allison significantly influences the narrative on US-China relations. He argues that cooperation between the two countries is not just mutually beneficial but also essential for survival. So the two powers should work together by setting aside their differences and focusing on their fundamental interests - chief among them being national survival. The idea of interconnection has broader implications, especially considering the fragmented nature of the current global order, which lacks a common goal for collective action. It further underscores the necessity of exploring strategies to bridge divides and establish a framework for peaceful competition. Such was the impetus behind Allison's seminal work, *Destined for War*.

His follow-up work, *Escaping Thucydides' Trap*, directly responds to his earlier analysis based on our robust dialogue on how to prevent conflicts. This dialogue critically examines the triggers that could lead to war and proposes viable strategies for steering clear of the Thucydides' trap, drawing on historical lessons that underscore the possibility and necessity of peaceful coexistence.

In his new book, Allison refutes the "fatalist" view on potential conflict between the US and China, asserting that a conflict is "not inevitable" and, instead, advocates for adjustments in behavior and proactive steps to prevent a tragedy of historic proportions. Unlike many Western figures who continue to view China as a threat, Allison objectively views China's progress, respects its right to development, and lauds its achievements, and supports constructive competition, comparing it to the Olympics.

The China Daily

American dream under threat from harsh realities of inflation

Dali Al-Aqidi

In the wake of the surge in inflation seen in recent years, the economic landscape in the US is undergoing a seismic shift, one marked by escalating prices and dwindling purchasing power for millions of Americans. Despite the Biden administration's assurances of swift action and effective policy implementation, the reality on the ground paints a grim picture of economic distress and uncertainty. From the aisles of grocery stores to monthly energy bills, the cost of living continues to soar, leaving families grappling to make ends meet and casting doubt on the government's ability to effectively address this pressing issue.

Once a manageable concern, inflation has spiraled out of control since the COVID-19 pandemic, reaching levels not witnessed in decades. Annual inflation in the US has averaged more than 5 percent since 2021. Meanwhile, consumer prices have surged once more, jumping by 3.5 percent for the 12-month period ending in March, as indicated by the latest Consumer Price Index figures. Basic necessities such as food and shelter have become increasingly unaffordable for many, exacerbating financial hardships and widening the gap between the haves and the have-nots.

The impact of inflation is perhaps most acutely felt in the price of groceries, with the cost of essential food items having skyrocketed, placing an immense strain on household budgets. Families across the country find themselves struggling with the harsh reality of choosing between putting food on the table and meeting other financial obligations. The rising cost of food has disproportionately affect-

ed low-income households, exacerbating food insecurity and pushing vulnerable populations further into poverty.

But the burden of inflation extends far beyond the grocery store. The cost of energy, from gasoline to electricity, has also surged, further squeezing already stretched budgets and compounding the financial strain on households. With high gas prices and utility bills soaring, the ability of working families and individuals to make ends meet has become increasingly precarious. Commutes to work have become prohibitively expensive, while the heating and cooling of homes has become a luxury that many can no longer afford.

Despite assurances of effective governance and a commitment to addressing the nation's economic challenges, the Biden administration's response to the inflation crisis has been woefully inadequate. In spite of campaign promises to tackle inflation head-on and deliver relief to struggling Americans, the White House has failed to implement effective measures to address the root causes of the crisis. Instead of enacting policies to rein in inflation and alleviate the financial burden on households, the White House has pursued reckless spending initiatives that have only exacerbated the problem.

The Build Back Better agenda, touted as a solution to America's economic woes, has only contributed to inflationary pressures, rapidly increasing government spending and further fueling inflationary expectations. While promising much-needed investment in the nation's crumbling infrastructure, the massive package

comes at a steep cost to taxpayers.

Rather than addressing the immediate needs of struggling Americans, the administration has prioritized partisan agendas over pragmatic solutions, leaving millions to suffer the consequences. Furthermore, the Federal Reserve's monetary policies have only compounded the problem, with loose monetary policy fueling inflationary pressures and eroding citizens' purchasing power. Despite warnings from economists and policymakers, the Fed has remained steadfast in its commitment to maintaining accommodative policies, further stoking inflationary fears and undermining confidence in the economy.

As the cost of living continues to rise and inflationary pressures show no signs of abating, the Biden administration must take decisive action to address the crisis and provide relief to struggling Americans. This requires a comprehensive approach that includes targeted fiscal measures to support households and businesses and prudent monetary policies to rein in inflationary pressures and restore economic confidence.

First and foremost, the administration must prioritize policies that directly address the root causes of inflation, including supply chain disruptions, labor shortages and rising production costs. This may require targeted interventions to support key industries and alleviate bottlenecks in the supply chain, as well as initiatives to boost productivity and incentivize labor force participation. Second, the administration must reassess its spending priorities and focus on initiatives that deliver tangi-

ble benefits to the American people without exacerbating inflationary pressures. This step may require scaling back on ambitious spending proposals and redirecting resources.

Third, the Federal Reserve must adopt a more hawkish stance toward monetary policy and take decisive action to rein in inflationary pressures. It must tighten monetary policy to reduce inflationary expectations and restore economic confidence. Additionally, the Fed must communicate its policy intentions clearly and transparently to avoid further exacerbating uncertainty and volatility in financial markets.

The American dream, once a beacon of hope and opportunity, now stands threatened by the harsh realities of inflation. The dream of homeownership and financial stability has become increasingly elusive for young professionals striving to carve out a future for themselves and their families. The soaring cost of living, marked by escalating rent prices and stagnant wages, has left many struggling in an economy that seems stacked against them.

It is clear that inflation has emerged as a defining issue that could shape the outcome of this year's elections. According to the latest Wall Street Journal poll of swing states, 74 percent of respondents believe that inflation has moved in the wrong direction over the past year. This is a sentiment echoed across the country, as families grapple with the relentless squeeze on their budgets and wonder whether their elected leaders genuinely understand the challenges they face. Inflation has become more than just a policy issue; it is a tangible threat to the aspirations and livelihoods of millions of Americans.

Climate change has the region both in drought and flooded

Zaid M. Belbagi

The opposite ends of the Arab world are experiencing two extreme weather conditions simultaneously; while the UAE and Oman in the east recover from last week's unprecedented rain and flash floods, Morocco in the west is experiencing its sixth continuous year of drought.

Flooding killed at least four people in the UAE and 20 in Oman, while others face clean water shortages, travel disruptions and power and internet outages. In Morocco, persistent drought-like conditions have reduced water levels, significantly impacted the country's agricultural production potential and led to unemployment and overcrowding in urban areas. With the country seeing a 70 percent reduction in rainfall over the past eight months, dry tracts of land have damaged crop yields, which in turn impacts the country's export revenue.

Climate change is the common link between the extremes of flash floods and droughts. The Middle East and North Africa region is warming twice as fast as the global average and could be 4 degrees Celsius hotter by 2050. Rising temperatures have resulted in heat waves, erratic rainfall and a reduction in the amount of arable land. Moreover, the Arabian Gulf is the hottest sea in the world, posing an ever-increasing threat to marine biodiversity.

Another notable climate chal-

lenge in the region is the impending collapse of the Gulf Stream weather system, which could take place between 2025 and 2095. It is alarming that the high rate of warming has left the region facing two opposite and unpredictable consequences: extreme heating and extreme rainfall and flooding.

Three of the region's most important rivers - the Nile, the Tigris and the Euphrates - have had lower water levels in recent years. According to studies, the flow of the Nile has, over the last five decades, reduced from 3,000 cubic meters per second to 2,830 cubic meters. Forecasts show that this flow reduction may reach 70 percent by 2100 if the present conditions persist. Similarly, the Tigris-Euphrates river system faces the risk of drying up by 2040.

While dams, the mismanagement of wastewater and unsustainable agricultural and industrial practices are contributory factors, climate change is the primary driving force. Drought-like conditions and high temperatures have resulted in these rivers slowly drying up.

The recent flooding in the UAE and Oman has drawn attention to two aspects of the preparedness required to address the consequences of climate change. Firstly, countries must account for climate adversities in their urban planning. Given the typically low levels of rainfall in the Gulf, the existing

infrastructure was unable to bear the volume of water flow, as sewage drains overflowed and electricity grids failed. In recent years, Dubai has frequently upgraded its drainage management system prior to the November-March period, when it tends to receive rain. Yet, unprecedented weather changes call for further investment in climate-resilient infrastructure across the region. This is particularly important given the dual challenge of increasing rainfall and rising temperatures.

The latest freak weather events also highlight the need to earmark the necessary funds to mitigate the impact of climate change. Global temperatures are rising rapidly and leading to climate-related adversities, meaning regular investment in mitigation strategies is required.

The MENA region has typically received a minority share of global climate financing despite being one of the most vulnerable to climate change. A mere 6.6 percent of the total financing in 2023 from the three largest international climate funds - the Green Climate Fund, the Global Environment Facility and the Climate Investment Funds - went to the region. Moreover, these limited funds are distributed unequally across the region, with the vast majority going to Morocco and Egypt, along with Tunisia and Jordan.

It is imperative that international organizations and global climate financiers turn their attention toward mitigating environmental adversities in the MENA region. Any significant alteration in the climate here will consequently impact the climate of neighboring regions. MENA countries have actively participated in international environment conferences such as COP28 and MENA Climate Week. However, there remains an urgent need to divert more climate financing to the region and share best practices to establish climate-resilient infrastructure.

Further, climate change has a tangible impact on the economy. A few days of disarray at Dubai International Airport due to the flooding have significantly disrupted international travel, given the centrality of Dubai's airspace in connecting continents. Similarly, shortfalls in Moroccan agricultural production can cause food shortages in Europe, given the continent's dependence on Morocco for the import of goods. Most importantly, the economic impact of climate change will be felt most by the youth of the region, as employment opportunities reduce and the quality of life weakens. Thus, the region must build a robust climate change mitigation strategy, with the support of the international community, to ensure its ongoing socioeconomic development does not fall prey to environmental risks.

How Trump's tabloid ally pecked holes in his case

Norman Eisen & George T. Conway III

After a solid start for former President Donald Trump on day one of his New York criminal trial with defense attorney Todd Blanche's effective opening statement, the former president's case suffered two substantial blows on Tuesday. We had predicted that Trump's contempt hearing was going to be bad for him - and it was even worse, with Justice Juan Merchan telling the defense that they were "losing all credibility" in arguing that Trump tried "very hard" to comply with his gag order.

The judge reserved his decision, so we'll see what happens next. Whatever it is, it almost certainly won't be good for Trump, who stands to face sanctions on some and perhaps all of his statements attacking witnesses and jurors. We are guessing fines and a stern warning that if he continues he will face possible confinement.

But as negative as that was for Trump, when we got back to witness testimony a little after 11 a.m., what ensued with former American Media CEO and National Enquirer publisher David Pecker's testimony may have been even more damaging.

Remember, the prosecution's theory here includes allegations that Trump engaged in "an illegal conspiracy to undermine the integrity of a presidential election" in 2016 (and then took steps "to conceal that illegal election fraud" through helping promulgate Stormy Daniels (Act 5) - that we will hear about on Thursday when Pecker continues his testimony.

And this was even more persuasive because Pecker is no "Never Trump" adversary. He is someone who was, as he explained to the jury, a close Trump friend and supporter who was intimately aware of the former president's business practices.

Interfere with the election that he so convincingly testified about.

Pecker talked persuasively and at length Tuesday about the formation of the conspiracy, but his testimony cut (or will cut) across all five acts of the Shakespearean drama here. His August 2015 meeting with Trump and former Trump lawyer Michael Cohen is Act One that laid the foundation for the "catch-and-kill" schemes later implemented to benefit Trump's campaign. But Pecker's testimony also included his attempts to silence allegations by doorman Dino Sajudin that Trump had fathered an illegitimate child or engaged in a yearlong affair with model Karen McDougal: Acts Two and Three, respectively.

Pecker brought that to life, acting as a tour guide and bringing the jury inside the scheme. Because he took them into the rooms and onto the phone calls with Trump and/or Cohen to influence the election, it will be easier for the jury to understand how that same plan and alleged corrupt intent unfolded in the next two acts of the drama - the panic set off by the Access Hollywood scandal (Act 4), followed by the parody to buy the silence of Stormy Daniels (Act 5) - that we will hear about on Thursday when Pecker continues his testimony.

Indeed, even though Pecker is primarily here to support the first half of the case - the scheme - his prox-

imity to Trump was such that he even bolstered the second part of the case: the allegation of a document falsification cover-up. Pecker testified that he witnessed Trump handling accounts payable paperwork like that at issue here, personally signing checks after carefully reviewing the attached documentation. Look for prosecutors to cite that to the jury as part of their proof that Trump did the same thing with the checks he signed here and the accompanying materials that make up the 34 allegedly falsified documents.

Further, Pecker is not Cohen, whom the defense has sharply criticized before Trump's former fixer even takes the stand. Pecker can corroborate both Cohen's testimony and the whole scheme - and that may make him the prosecution's most important witness. Of course, that's not to say that the day was all bad for the defense. For instance, Pecker said that while he assumed that directives to publish or suppress certain stories came from both Cohen and Trump, it's possible that Cohen may have acted on his own accord in an attempt to get involved in Trump's campaign. That lets Trump's attorneys challenge prosecutors' assertion that their client was aware of the full scope of his then-fixer's activities.

So, what happens next? On Thursday, prosecutors will continue their direct examination of Pecker before turning it over to the defense for cross-examination later that day or Friday. Because Pecker is so important, the defense really has to come after him - so stay tuned for fireworks. What that cross could look like will be the subject of this trial diary on Thursday morning.

CNN

IN the Court of Erum Bashir Civil Judge-V, Swabi. Suit No. 192/1 Institution 09-2023 Next date of hearing 04-05-2024. Cast Titled: Homal Gohar Vs Gohar Rahman, Notice to (1) Gohar Rahman Khan S/o Bahadar Sher Khan (3) Meera Jan S/o Noora Jan (4) Sadaat Khan S/o Meera Jan (1) R/o Bqquo No. 3 & 4 R/o Akora Khattak Miski Band Mera Teshil Akora Khattak District Nowshera. The defendants are informed through this notice to appear in this court on 04-05-2024. After this no excuse would be accepted and ex-parte proceedings shall be initiated against you. Given under my hand and seal of this court.



In brief

Hamza award Rs.10,000 cash

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar's rising international tennis player Hamza Roman was awarded Rs. 10,000 cash incentive prize by Vice President KP Tennis Association Umar Ayaz Khalil in the light of his out-standing performance in different tournaments. President Provincial Tennis Association and Deputy Director Intelligence Bureau Muhammad Salim Marwat, Coaches Roman Gul, Nouman Khan, Shehryar Khan, Davis Cupper, Saqib Umar, Barkatullah, Aqib Umar, Aziz, Cricket Coaches Parvez Khan, Bakhtiar Khan and Chartered Accountant Faisal were also present on the occasion. In his address, Umar Ayaz said that Hamza Roman won the gold medal in the Asian Tennis Championship, and was the runner-up in the ITF Junior Tennis Championship held in Islamabad this year. He said he was not given any attention on the part of Directorate General Sports, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. When contacted, Hamza Roman said that he requested Director General Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to give him Tennis racket and ball but his application request was pending for a long time. Hamza Roman was currently No. 1 in national ranking and ninth position in All Pakistan Senior Ranking in Men's Singles and hopefully he will win more national and international honors for the country in future.

Van Dijk questions desire

LONDON (BBC): Liverpool captain Virgil van Dijk questioned his side's desire to win the Premier League after a damaging defeat against Merseyside rivals Everton. With four games left, Liverpool are now hoping for slip-ups from leaders Arsenal, who lie three points clear, and c h a m p i o n s Manchester City. Defeat at Goodison Park was their second in three games as their season threatens to peter out. "Do they really want to win the league?" asked Van Dijk. Goals in each half from defender Jarrad Branthwaite and striker Dominic Calvert-Lewin set the Toffees on their way to their first home victory in the league over Liverpool since October 2010. It was another setback after being beaten 1-0 at home by Crystal Palace 10 days ago as they missed the opportunity to go back level on points with the Gunners. A scathing Van Dijk told Sky Sports: "If you play like this overall in the game and not win any challenges and give the referee an opportunity to give a free-kick away then we have no chance to win the title. "Very disappointed in so many ways. Everyone has to look in the mirror and look at their own performance and think if they gave everything. "It is a tough one and obviously we have to do better against a side near the relegation [positions]. "If you play like today we have no chance to consider ourselves in the title race." Van Dijk mentioned Liverpool's next game being an early kick-off at West Ham on Saturday. Former Everton and England striker Wayne Rooney, a studio guest for Sky's match coverage, said: "The worrying thing there is - and I think it's happened a lot throughout the season as well - again we are hearing about 12:30 kick-offs after he's just lost a derby.

ICC T20 World Cup 2024 trophy unveiled

ISLAMABAD (APP): The ICC T20 World Cup 2024 Trophy was unveiled here at the Shakarparian National Park on Thursday with a sense of excitement and anticipation. As it got unveiled, it was greeted by enthusiastic fans, eager to catch a glimpse of the coveted trophy.

The trophy's three-day tour of Pakistan is a symbol of hope and unity, bringing together cricket enthusiasts from all walks of life.

From Islamabad the trophy would travel to

Abbottabad thus giving a chance to the city's fans to gather around and marvel at its sleek shimmering silver design. In Pakistan, the trophy's final stop would be Lahore, the heart of cricketing culture.

The trophy would be the centerpiece at the Gaddafi Stadium, during the last T20 International between Pakistan and New Zealand on Saturday.

The trophy's presence would be a reminder that with hard work and dedication, the dreams of lifting

the coveted prize could become a reality.

The stage was set for the main event (ICC T20 World Cup 2024) to be held in the USA and West Indies from June 2 to 29, where world's top teams would compete for the ultimate prize.

The trophy was also pictured outside the Parliament house and Faisal Mosque. The trophy's tour of Pakistan is a testament to the power of cricket to unite and inspire cricket fans all around the world.

I can win world title in my 50s, says O'Sullivan

LONDON (BBC): Seventime champion Ronnie O'Sullivan believes he is capable of winning a world title in his 50s after he thrashed Jackson Page 10-1 to reach the last 16 at the 2024 event.

O'Sullivan, 48, is already the oldest snooker world champion after winning in 2022, aged 46, and would need to lift the trophy again in 2026 or later to become the first winner aged 50 or over.

"I know the ability is there it's just finding the right formula," O'Sullivan told BBC Two. "I've already broken the rules for snooker, I'm still going at 48, 49 and I'm seeing what's possible now.

"Can I win a World Championship at 50, who knows? I'm probably the only player able to do that but let's see, let's have an experiment."

O'Sullivan is aiming to win his eighth title and move clear of Stephen Hendry's mark of seven Crucible successes in the 1990s, and he began Thursday's play with an emphatic 8-1 lead over his 22-year-old opponent.

A break of 79 took O'Sullivan one frame away and he clinched victory soon after.

He will now play another Welsh player in Ryan Day, who defeated 15th seed Barry Hawkins 10-8 in Wednesday's evening session.

Last-16 matches are best of 25 frames, so first to 13, and the first session will take place on Sunday (10:00 BST), with the match then resuming later that day at 19:00 before being played to a finish on Monday afternoon (14:30).

O'Sullivan's winning margin was the joint largest at this year's competition, matching Kyren Wilson's 10-1 victory over Dominic Dale.

Before the tournament O'Sullivan said he did not consider himself the greatest snooker player of all time, but he was in more bullish mood after his victory.

"To do what I have done in this season, I have done over a whole career," he added. "I have been doing it for 30 years. I've had the greatest career of any snooker player.

"How many people can say they have been the best, or most successful, in their job ever? I have to really give myself a pat on the back because I don't, I am hard on myself. Nobody has achieved what I have achieved on a table statistically."

Hendry, speaking on BBC Two, feels O'Sullivan would benefit from a number of seeds being eliminated already, and could sweep through the tournament.



ISLAMABAD: The trophy ICC T-20 World Cup 2024 being displayed at National Monument as trophy has arrived in Islamabad.

Bruno leads Man United to victory

MANCHESTER (BBC): Manchester United captain Bruno Fernandes led from the front to ensure another chaotic performance eventually ended in victory against relegation-threatened Sheffield United at Old Trafford.

With the visitors taking the lead twice, Erik ten Hag's side were staring at a humiliating loss to a side who have won just three times this season.

But Fernandes levelled from the penalty spot before driving Manchester United in front from 25 yards nine minutes from time. The Portuguese created a first goal since February for striker Rasmus Hojlund four minutes later to move his side up to sixth spot and earn praise from his manager.

"He showed his leadership," said Ten Hag. "He tried to encourage the team and he is also in good form. We put him in the right position and when he is there, he makes the right decisions.

"He can create a lot, score, assist and make key actions. We are very happy with his performance and his attitude."

Fernandes has now scored seven goals and collected two assists in Manchester United's past five games.

In total, there have been 27 goals in that period. Manchester United have conceded and scored at least two in all of those games.

In entertainment terms, it is sensational. However, there is zero sense of structure and it can only be wondered what new technical director Jason

Wilcox made of it as he watched from the Old Trafford directors' box for the first time since his appointment was confirmed last week.

Ten Hag had railed against the media the day before the game, labelling critical coverage of his side's FA Cup semi-final victory on penalties over Coventry "embarrassing" and "a disgrace" - but his team failed to follow up by convincing on the pitch.

Without a win since February, Sheffield United led twice, through Jayden Bogle in the first-half and Ben Brereton Diaz in the second.

Harry Maguire's deft header pulled the home side level on the first occasion, before Fernandes took control.

Ten Hag has faced problems of injury and form among his squad in recent weeks. Goalkeeper Andre Onana, during the turbulence, had been a reliable figure.

The Cameroon goalkeeper seemed to have put his poor early-season form behind him. His recent performances had deserved credit, given he has been standing behind one of the Premier League's leakiest-ever defences in terms of shots allowed to the opposition. A defence that cannot push high has not allowed him the exhibit his full passing range, but he had generally done well.

Against Sheffield United, though, Onana had a moment to forget. In passing the ball towards Diogo Dalot from inside his own six-yard area, the goalkeeper allowed

Jayden Bogle to charge on to it. The 23-year-old's forceful burst took him to within shooting range and he expertly drove his effort into the far corner.

On the touchline, Ten Hag looked a lonely figure.

The Sheffield United fans had some fun at the Dutchman's expense, as they reminded him they rarely win away from home. To be completely accurate, they have rarely won anywhere this season. The last of their previous three triumphs came at Luton in February.

It is this kind of damage Manchester United cannot stop inflicting on themselves - and it makes winning matches so much harder than necessary.

Even after Maguire had turned home Alejandro Garnacho's cross to bring them level before the break, they still fell asleep in their own penalty area to gift Sheffield United the lead for a second time.

Fernandes, with two goals and an assist, stepped in to save them. His second, a brilliant 25-yard drive, was the highlight - but the industry that created Hojlund's goal was worthy of praise as well.

The overall display is not a recipe for sustained success, although after the past few weeks, Ten Hag is probably just grateful to get the win.

In a season of almost unrelenting gloom at Bramall Lane, this represents one of the undoubted high points.

Back in September, the Blades led at Tottenham heading into injury time, but lost.

Olympic Games Paris 2024: How teams qualified

ISLAMABAD (APP): The countdown to the Olympic Games Paris 2024 has hit double digits and the excitement continues to mount within the global hockey community. With all 12 men's and women's teams now qualified and placed into their respective pools, we are taking a look back at how each team secured their spot in the Olympics, said a press release.

Men's Pool A Netherlands: Since missing out on the medal positions in the previous edition of the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020, Netherlands have been a side on a steady rise and qualified for Paris 2024 by winning the gold medal at the EuroHockey Championships 2023 which gained them a direct spot at the Olympics, without having to play in the FIH Olympic Hockey Qualifiers. Germany: Reigning world champions Germany were placed in the FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers in Oman after finishing fourth in the Euro Hockey Championships 2023. They came away from the Qualifiers unbeaten, winning the final and finishing in the first position to secure their place in Paris 2024, after finishing fourth in the previous edition. Great Britain: Great

Britain nearly secured direct qualification to the Olympics at the Euro Hockey Championships 2023, but a close 2-1 loss in the final to Netherlands, meant they had to qualify through the FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers, which they did by finishing second in the qualifiers in Oman, Spain: Following a 6th place finish in the Euro Hockey Championships 2023, Spain qualified to play in the FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers in Valencia, where they rode a fantastic home support to reach the finals, which resulted in a loss to Belgium, but a second place was enough to see them seal a place in Paris 2024.

France: France qualified for the Olympic Games Paris 2024 as hosts. South Africa: South Africa were the winners of the 'African Hockey Road to Paris 2024' competition which secured them direct qualification to the Olympic Games Paris 2024 as the continental champions from Africa. Men's Pool B-Belgium: Belgium finished in third place at the Euro Hockey Championships 2023, which left the reigning gold medalists from Tokyo 2020 to qualify through the FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers in Valencia. With a flawless performance in Valencia,

where they won all 5 matches, including the finals against hosts Spain, Belgium secured their spot in Paris 2024, where they will aim to defend their title.

India: The Bronze medalists from the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020, secured their spot among the 12 teams in Paris 2024 by winning the gold medal at the Asia Cup, which gave them direct qualification to the upcoming Olympic Games as continental champions of Asia.

Australia: Australia missed out on the gold medal in the previous edition of the Olympics, by the narrowest margins through a shoot-out loss in the gold medal match, but will be back in the competition aiming to go one step higher on the podium, thanks to their victory in the 2023 Oceania Cup, which sees them proceed to Paris 2024 as the continental champions from Oceania.

Argentina: Along with India and Australia, Argentina will be the third team in men's pool B that have secured their place in Paris 2024 directly as the champions of their respective continents. Argentina won gold at the Pan American Games 2023 to qualify for the Olympics, where their last medal came in the form of gold in Rio 2016.

New Zealand: As the runners up of the Oceania Cup 2023, New Zealand had to settle for a place in the FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers in Oman. A third place finish in the Qualifiers, with a particularly thrilling victory over Pakistan in the bronze medal match, saw them take the last available spot to Paris 2024, from the qualifiers in Oman.

Ireland: As the winners of the Euro Hockey Championship II, Ireland qualified to play the FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers in Valencia, where they scripted a fairytale run to finish third in front of a huge Irish travelling contingent of vociferous fans and qualified for the Olympic Games Paris 2024!

Women's Pool A Netherlands: The reigning Olympic and world champions continued their dominance by securing a direct spot in Paris 2024 as continental champions, through their gold medal victory at the Euro Hockey Championships 2023. Belgium: Belgium finished second at the Euro Hockey Championships 2023 behind the indomitable Netherlands, which meant they had to finish in the top-3 at the FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers in Valencia to

qualify for Paris 2024, after missing out on the two previous editions of the games. Belgium flourished at the qualifiers staying unbeaten to finish first and qualify for the upcoming Olympic Games.

Germany: Germany finished as the bronze medalists at the Euro Hockey Championships 2023 and had to play in the FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers in Ranchi, India. Germany won all their matches in the qualifiers, including a tense shoot-out win against India in the semi-finals, to secure their place at Paris 2024.

Japan: Japan finished fourth in the Asian Games 2023, and qualified for the FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers in Ranchi, India. Their campaign reached a make-or-break point after losing the semi-final against USA, when they faced hosts India in the third place match. A closely fought victory in the bronze medal match against India secured their place at the Olympic Games Paris 2024.

China: A stellar campaign in the Asian Games 2022, at home in Hangzhou, saw China win all their matches and qualify for the upcoming Olympic Games Paris 2024 as the continental champions of Asia.

France: France qualified for the Olympic Games Paris 2024 as hosts.

Women's Pool B Australia: Australia qualified for their 11th straight appearance at the Olympic Games in women's hockey by winning the Oceania Cup 2023, which sent them directly to Paris 2024 as the continental champions from Oceania. Argentina: With 6 medals in the previous 7 editions of the Olympic Games, Argentina are one of the most successful teams in Olympic hockey history. They qualified for their 11th straight appearance in the games by winning gold at the Pan American Games 2023, and will be aiming to get their first ever Olympic gold at Paris 2024.

Great Britain: Great Britain qualified for the Olympic Games Paris 2024 by finishing third at the FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers in Valencia, Spain.

They had to do it the hard way though, as they faced off against continental rivals Ireland in a do-or-die third place match. A narrow 2-1 win in the bronze medal match sent them to Paris 2024, where they will arrive on the back of three consecutive podium finishes in the previous three editions of the Olympics.

Spain: A sixth place

finish at the EuroHockey Championships sent Spain into the FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers in front of their home crowds in Valencia. Cheered on by their massive crowds, Spain went all the way to the finals in the qualifiers, and while that game finished in a close loss, a second place finish was enough to send the Red Sticks to the Olympic Games Paris 2024.

United States: Following a few lean years at the international level, United States look like a much more confident side under new head coach David Passmore and the benefits were evident at the FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers in Ranchi, where United States went all the way to the finals, before falling to Germany, but a second place finish was enough to send them back to the Olympic Games Paris 2024 after having missed out on the previous edition in Tokyo.

South Africa: South Africa join Argentina and Australia as the third team to be placed in Pool B as direct qualifiers from the continental championships. South Africa won gold at the 'African Hockey Road to Paris 2024' and will make their sixth appearance in women's hockey at the Olympics, during Paris 2024.



In brief

Persian collection titled on April 27

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL) would organize an unveiling ceremony of Persian collection of Dr. Aslam Ansari titled 'Gulbang-e-Arzoo' on April 27. The Academy has recently published "Gulbang-e-Arzoo" in Persian by well known Urdu and Persian poet Dr. Aslam Ansari. The launching ceremony of this book will be held at the Seminar Hall, Radio Pakistan, Multan, which will be presided over by Dr. Najiba Arif, Chairperson PAL. Dr. Aslam Ansari will be the chief guest, while Dr. Arshad Mahmood Nashad will deliver the keynote address. After the opening ceremony, Chairperson PAL and Director General PAL Sultan Nasir will also interact with the local scholars and writers. Chairperson PAL Dr. Najiba Arif told APP that the initiative of holding book launching ceremony in Multan, was part of Academy decision to interact with scholars and writers of far-flung areas, aiming to recognize and appreciate their literary work. "By acknowledging their contributions, we can encourage them to continue writing valuable literary work and also bring their unique perspective and ideas to the forefront," she added.

IRSA releases 163,300 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 163,300 cusecs water from various rim stations with an inflow of 110,500 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1447.05 feet and was 49.05 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 31,400 cusecs and 5,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1140.60 feet, which was 90.60 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 46,400 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 58,800, 87,400, 51,000 and 27,600 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 66,800 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 10,200 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

Eight drug peddlers, bootleggers netted

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi police in an action against suspected drug peddlers, bootleggers, illegal weapon holders and other lawbreakers here on Thursday arrested eight accused besides recovering over 2980 grams charras, 670 grams heroin, 21 liters liquor, a 30 bore pistols, ammunition and other items from their possession. A police spokesperson said that Rawat police held Aziz Ahmed for having 1150 grams charras while Sadiqabad police rounded up Muneeb with 1250 grams charras. An Ashfaq was sent behind the bars for having a 30 bore pistol and ammunition. R.A.Bazar police netted Danish for possessing 670 grams heroin while Taxila police arrested Ghulam Hussain with 570 grams charras. Rawat, City and Civil Lines police held Javed, Shah Zaib, Asad and Numan and recovered 21 liters liquor from their possession. Separate cases have been registered against all the accused while further investigations are underway. City Police Officer, Rawalpindi had directed the police officers to accelerate ongoing operations against drug peddlers, bootleggers and other lawbreakers, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq planting a sapling of Magnolia Grandiflora in front of Parliament House.

High-profile UK delegation explores collaborative opportunities at NUST

ISLAMABAD (APP): Marking a significant milestone in bilateral higher education relations between the UK and Pakistan, a high-powered British delegation is currently on an official visit to Pakistan to explore collaborative opportunities.

The delegation, accompanied by senior officials from the British Council and the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan, visited the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST). Led by Sir Steve Smith, UK Government International Education Champion, the delegation comprised eminent personalities from the government and academia, seeking to explore opportunities for academic collaboration and research partnerships, said a news release.

Engr Javed Mahmood Bukhari, Rector NUST,

greeted the guests upon arrival at the university. Ensuing was a comprehensive discussion, encompassing the university's national and global accomplishments, Research and Development initiatives and efforts towards building a sustainable knowledge economy through a robust ecosystem of research, innovation, entrepreneurship and commercialisation.

While appreciating NUST's growth, Sir Steve Smith underscored that NUST's active collaborations with as many as 247 universities across 52 countries reflect the university's forward-thinking approach and commitment to fostering a globally interconnected academic environment that promotes knowledge exchange and cross-cultural understanding.

Rector NUST emphasised that the visit not only signifies strengthening of

educational ties between the two nations but also underpins the shared commitment to fostering cross-cultural understanding and nurturing the next generation of global leaders.

Facilitated by the HEC-Pakistan and the British Council (BC), the UK delegation's visit will support the objectives of the flagship initiative "Pakistan UK Education Gateway" launched in 2018, which aims to enhance partnership between the higher education sectors of Pakistan and the UK under a structured programme jointly funded by the Government of Pakistan and BC.

The key areas of collaboration under this undertaking are: transnational education, innovative and collaborative research, higher education leadership, quality assurance and standard setting, distance learning, and international mobility.

Meeting regarding drug use in educational institutions held

RAWALPINDI (APP): A meeting regarding drug use in educational institutions was held here at Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Headquarters which was chaired by Director General (DG) ANF, Maj Gen, Abdul Moeed, HI (M). Senior officers of the federal and provincial ministries of education and regulatory institutions participated in the meeting.

All the stakeholders agreed on launching a national level campaign to tackle the drug menace.

In the meeting, the recommendations of the Higher Education Commission were also discussed for the effective implementation of the Tobacco Policy 2021.

DG ANF assured all possible cooperation to all the institutions for the success of the campaign.

60 FIRs for violating dengue SOPs

RAWALPINDI (APP): As many as 60 FIRs had been registered on violations of anti-dengue SOPs from January 1 to date in various areas of the Rawalpindi district, said District Coordinator Epidemics Prevention and Control Dr Sajjad Mahmood here Thursday.

Giving details of the penalty actions, the health officer said that the district administration, in collaboration with allied departments, had sealed 667 premises, issued tickets to 138 and a fine of Rs 258,000 was imposed on violations of dengue SOPs in 2024.

Dr Sajjad informed that around four confirmed cases had been reported in the district this year that were sent to their homes after treatment.

The health officer further stated that during indoor vector surveillance, the teams checked 1,335,552 houses and larvae were detected at 2,895 sites while during outdoor surveillance larvae were found at 708 spots while inspecting 351,498 places.

Meanwhile, Commissioner Rawalpindi Engineer Aamir Khattak directed the officials to accelerate field activities for tracing larvae and expedite surveillance in the graveyards, junkyards and under-construction sites which were the vulnerable places of dengue spread.

1000 E-Bikes to be given to students in five cities: Bilal

RAWALPINDI (APP): Provincial Minister for Transport and Mass Transit Punjab, Bilal Akbar Khan here on Thursday said that in first phase, 1000 motorcycles would be given to students in five cities of Punjab including Rawalpindi.

The Provincial Minister participating in an inauguration ceremony of Chief Minister Youth E-Bike Scheme said that 20,000 bikes would be given to the students in two phases and the female students would also benefit equally from this project. The event was organized at Rawalpindi Medical University (RMU) Rawalpindi. Secretary Transport Punjab, Ahmad Javed Qazi, Member National Assembly, Tahira Aurangzeb, Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi, Hasan Waqar Cheema and Vice Chancellor, RMU, Dr Muhammad Umar were present on the occasion. Bilal Akbar Khan said that Chief Minister Punjab wanted to make the students independent in terms of riding. In the

first phase, 1000 motorcycles would be given in five cities including Rawalpindi, he added.

Pollution is a big problem in Punjab and this project would help reduce the pollution, the provincial minister said.

Bilal Akbar said that the students of government and private colleges and universities would be able to apply for the scheme but, the students applying for the motorcycles must have driving license.

The students who would have driving learning permits would also be eligible for the motorbike, he added.

The provincial minister informed that an e-motorbike could travel 100 kilometers on a single charge.

Under the scheme, 30 percent of the amount would be paid by the Punjab government and there is no interest on it, Bilal Akbar said. A student from any province who is studying in Punjab is eligible for the scheme, he informed.

Use of digital media amid fostering exchanges with countries on environment crucial: Romina

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister's Coordinator for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Romina Khurshid Alam on Thursday underscored the need for engaging young graduates as interns, use of digital media, exchanges with countries having identical initiatives on environment and provision of equal access to information at all levels as crucial to address environmental degradation.

The Green Pakistan Programme Office hosted a special tree planting ceremony in connection to World Earth Day, graced by the Coordinator to the Prime Minister of Pakistan on Climate Change at the programme Office situated at Garden Avenue Shakarparian. Senior officers from the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination also participated, a news release said. During the ceremony, Romina Khurshid Alam planted a symbolic tree, marking the Earth Day celebrations and underscoring the programme's commitment to land restoration and environmental conservation. She lauded the programme's efforts in reviving forestry and wildlife resources across the country.

Impressed by the project's dedication and contribution to the overall biodiversity conservation, Madam Romina Khurshid Alam stressed on showcasing such impactful work to garner engagement and donorship from national and international agencies. She further highlighted the need to strategize the programme with a specific

focus on Protected Areas and Wildlife conservation linking it to Climate economy through market-based livelihood creation for local communities.

In response, the National Programme Director highlighted the programme's achievement stating that the programme had been able to ensure plantation of 2.2 billion, created approximately 1.2 million green jobs (man months) both for rural men women and had helped notified 103 Protected Areas in provinces/federal territories including 6 National Parks to be processed for Green Listing; a high value international standard of IUCN.

The revised phase of the programme submitted to Planning Commission has also a strong focus on Carbon facilitation mechanism (establishment of carbon endowment, creating in house capacities for designing carbon projects and facilitating provinces/territories), scientific management of forest resources, national/international exchanges for cross fertilization and increased knowledge management including media and awareness outreach. In her concluding remarks, Romina Khurshid Alam said being the flagship initiative of Pakistan, Upscaling Green Pakistan Programme remains steadfast in its commitment to environmental sustainability. The government has a strong commitment to continue the current as well as its other parallel initiatives targeting environmental sustainability and reducing the impact of Climate Change at large, she added.

Safari Park to welcome Madhubala elephant in May

ISLAMABAD (APP): Madhubala, a 16-year-old African elephant, is finally getting a new lease of life after spending years in solitary confinement at the Karachi Zoo as she will be relocated to Safari Park Lahore next month.

According to Zoo administration, the arrangements for the transfer have been completed, Madhubala will join two other elephants, Sonia and Malika after relocation to Safari Park.

The relocation is a result of the collaboration between Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) and Four Paws, a global animal welfare organization, said a private news channel.

Madhubala's story is one of resilience and hope. She was one of four African elephants treated by Four Paws in 2022 for a dental infection and pain caused by a broken

tusk. Her new home at the Safari Park promises to provide her with the care and companionship she deserves.

"We are thrilled to see Madhubala finally getting the life she deserves," said a spokesperson for Four Paws. "Her story is a testament to the power of collaboration and the importance of animal welfare."

The Safari Park, which is already home to two other elephants, is preparing a special sanctuary for Madhubala. The new enclosure will provide her with ample space to roam and socialize with her new companions.

Madhubala's relocation is a significant development in the efforts to protect and conserve animals in Pakistan. Her story serves as a reminder of the importance of animal welfare and the need for continued support and action.

DG Libraries inaugurates third day of book fair

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Director General of the Department of Libraries, Muhammad Arshad on Thursday inaugurated the third day of a three-day book fair organized by the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Administration. The day three began with Muhammad Arshad's insightful introductory remarks, followed by Sardar Irshad Shaheen's thought-provoking review of his book entitled "Physics and Sufi Cosmology: Creation of Universe and Life in the Light of Science and Philosophical Spirituality."

Shaheen's exploration of the connection between physics and Sufi cosmology sparked curiosity and bridged the gap between science and spirituality. Attendees left the session enriched and inspired. The book review session highlighted the profound impact of literature in fostering meaningful dialogue and intellectual stimulation. More enriching experiences are promised ahead as the celebration of reading and learning continues.

Private education sector demands allocation of funds for educational institutions

ISLAMABAD (APP): Malik Abrar Hussain, the central president of All Pakistan Private Schools and Colleges Association, had demanded the government of Pakistan to allocate some funds in the upcoming budget for private educational institutions to continue education for the children of this country.

Provision of facilities is the responsibility of the Government of Pakistan, he expressed these views in his statement released to the media on the occasion of meeting with senior leader Malik Deen Muhammad Awan.

On this occasion, Malik Abrar Hussain said that private educational institutions are carrying the educational burden of the government and fulfilling the responsibilities for imparting education to the people with utmost care. Under Article 25-A of the Constitution, it is the responsibility of the state to provide the children with good education.

There is a need to support educational institutions which are providing education at a low cost.

The private education sector is providing education to many children as well as providing employment to many people. The government is going to present the annual budget after a few days, he said.

In such a situation, we demand that public-private partnership should be made to take the education sector forward, he said. Adequate funds should also be allocated in the budget for the private educational sector to help the country move forward in the education sector.

Speaking on the occasion, Malik Din Muhammad Awan said that private education sector is helping the government, so the government should also help them. He said, it is the government's duty to support the private schools for educating children with nominal fee structure.

Govt committed to developing gems, jewellery sector: Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Industry and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain on Thursday said that the government was committed to bolster the gems and jewellery sector, which was crucial for the country's economic growth.

He expressed these views while addressing a closing ceremony of a four-day international training course on Value Addition of Gemstone Products for Compliance with International Standards, said a news release. The event was jointly organized by National Productivity Organization (NPO) and Asian Productivity Organization (APO) Tokyo, Japan.

The minister said all possible steps are being taken to enable Gems and Jewellery sector growth by enhancing value addition in the sector to boost productivity and exports.

Rana Tanveer said that the govern-

ment is committed to support this sector and believed that initiatives and platforms which connect such international practices can drive further development of the sector.

He expressed that Gems and Jewellery is indispensable for the country's economic growth.

The future potential collaborations among APO member countries to strengthen this sector particularly by establishing Gems testing, grading, certification and standardization facilities through international collaborations in Pakistan, with the active support/partnership of Gems and Jewellery Institute of Technology, Bangkok (GIT) & APO and resultantly achieving our export target of US \$ 2 billion, he added.

The government is closely monitoring key areas, devising policies and planning interventions to ensure the boost in Gems and ewellery sector, he

added. The minister said that he looks forward to enhancing productivity of the sector based on mutual learning and showing the rest of the world that how APO member countries can work together for innovation and development of Gems & Jewellery sector. He lauded the efforts of the organizers for hosting a successful event which got attention of APO member countries.

Chief Executive Officer NPO, Muhammad Alamgir Chaudhry also addressed the event, which was attended by delegates from APO member countries, local entrepreneurs, experts from Gems & Jewellery sector. The delegates from APO members States who attended the training included Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Fiji, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, The Republic of Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, The Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey and Vietnam.

Investors show keen interest

KABUL (BNA): In a meeting with investors from South Africa, Acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum referred to Afghanistan as a region abundant in natural resources, encouraging them to invest in the country. Sheikh Shahabuddin Delawar, Acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum, met with a group of scholars and traders from South Africa in Kabul. The South African traders found the investment conditions and opportunities in Afghanistan highly favorable.

Two tribes end dispute

KABUL (BNA): With the sincere efforts and mediations of Ministry of Borders and Tribal Affairs in Paktika, the 35 years long dispute between two tribes in Shkin, Paktika, has been turned into friendship. The disputes and conflicts on land between Banzai and Suleiman-zai tribes in Shkin, Paktika, which had persisted for 35 years and caused significant issues for both parties, have finally been resolved through the intervention of local authorities and tribal elders, leading to reconciliation.

Afghanistan now a ‘nexus for diplomatic endeavors’, says IEA

KABUL (Ariana News): In the wake of dozens of meetings between high-ranking Islamic Emirate officials and visiting officials from foreign countries, and other diplomatic advances, the IEA said on Thursday that in the current geopolitical landscape, Kabul now “serves as a nexus for diplomatic endeavors and political deliberations pertaining to global affairs.”

In a series of posts on X, the IEA’s spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid said diplomatic missions and political delegations from various nations, including Russia, Malaysia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, the European Union, and others, “are evident in the capital, highlighting its strategic importance in fostering

Islamic cooperation.”

He said: “Recently, the Minister of Transport of the Islamic Emirate, Hamidullah Akhundzada, led a significant delegation to Termez, Uzbekistan, for essential discussions aimed at enhancing bilateral relations.

“These discussions encompass a wide range of topics, from trade facilitation to security assurances, indicating a focused effort by the Islamic Emirate to strengthen and broaden its international engagements, thereby ensuring sustained development and stability.

“These initiatives, characterized by diligence and effectiveness, underscore Afghanistan’s enduring commitment to diplomatic engagement and its pivotal role in regional and global affairs,” he said.

Mujahid added that these initiatives “also emphasize the vital connection between diplomatic efforts and economic prosperity, promising favorable outcomes for Afghanistan’s socio-economic landscape.”

He pointed out that despite ongoing challenges, Afghanistan “remains steadfast in its pursuit of prosperity and resilience, defying pessimistic projections and charting a course towards political and economic renewal.”

He said: “Continued efforts are essential to fostering inclusive growth and impactful initiatives, thus advancing Afghanistan’s journey towards sustainable development and increased influence on the global stage.”

839 ex-govt members returned to Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLONews): The Commission for Contact with Personalities states that since its establishment, nearly 840 members of the former government have returned to the country.

Ahmadullah Wasiq, the spokesperson for this commission, assures the safety of individuals wishing to return and adds that in the past month, six former government figures have also returned to the country.

Ahmadullah Wasiq said: “The latest figure is that 839 people have returned to the country through the Commission for Contact with Personalities, including individuals who had not left the country but had served in the previous administration and have received immunity cards.”

Some of the figures who have returned to the country welcome the commission’s handling of their challenges.

Abdul Wasay Tawhidi, a former advisor to the High Council for National Reconciliation, said: “This



commission generally performs well; they have assured us and when some problems exist, they address them promptly.”

However, some political experts say that the interim government should provide necessary facilities for the returned figures.

Noor Rahman Jazeb, a political analyst, said: “When they want to come to Afghanistan, the government should provide all the facilities necessary for a human life.”

Salim Paigir, a political analyst, said: “Not only should they provide immunity cards but also create conducive working environments for them because the majority of military personnel who went to Iran and Pakistan left due to starvation.”

Previously, the Afghan Personalities Contact Commission had reported that more than twenty former government members had returned to the country in the past month.

Farmers complain about falling heng prices

KUNDUZ (TOLONews): Farmers in Kunduz province are complaining about the falling prices of heng.

According to them, in recent years, farmers’ interest in cultivating this medicinal plant has increased. They are requesting the interim government to make efforts to market heng products.

Mohammad Qadir, a farmer, said: “Previously, heng had a good market, and everyone tried to cultivate it on their lands; but for the past year, the market has weakened, and it can’t even cover labor costs; we are asking our government to help so that people can be

free from these problems.”

Mir Alam, another farmer, said: “We rent the land for about 10 to 11 thousand per year, and heng takes five years to yield; if the market remains like this, it can’t even cover its own costs. We request that marketing for heng be done.”

Faqir Mohammad, a farmer, said: “Heng has no market now; it used to be good, but currently, there is no market to sell it.”

However, officials at the Kunduz Directorate of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock assure efforts are being made to address the challenges faced by heng farmers in the province.

Salahuddin Waheedi, the Director of Agricultural Affairs at the Kunduz Directorate of Agriculture and Irrigation, said: “The Agriculture Directorate is always trying to find a market for the heng plant, which is a very strategic and new crop. Recently, heng has become quite popular, with about more than a thousand hectares planted in Kunduz province.”

According to statistics from the Kunduz Directorate of Agriculture and Irrigation, over the past years, more than 1,000 hectares of land in various parts of the province have been cultivated with heng.

Uzbekistan’s aid arrives in Balkh province



BALKH (Ariana News): A shipment of humanitarian aid from Uzbekistan was handed over on Thursday to the officials of Balkh in the trade port of Hairatan.

Local authorities said the aid, which includes flour, oil, wheat, sugar and meat, was handed over by Uzbekistan’s Surkhandarya governor to the governor of Balkh.

The governor of Surkhandarya stated the purpose of sending this aid was to support the people of Afghanistan and stressed the need for the development of good relations between the two countries.

Malaysian team meets with Minister

KABUL (BNA): In a recent meeting, Dr. Qalandar Ebad, the Acting Minister of Public Health, held talks with Mrs. Shazlina Zainul Abidin, Malaysia’s Prime Minister’s representative, and her delegation to discuss strengthening Afghanistan’s healthcare system and enhancing the capacity of Healthcare workers, as well as bilateral cooperation.

During the meeting, Dr. Ebad highlighted delivering healthcare services to remote regions as a core duty of the ministry and emphasized the need for intensified efforts to bolster the nation’s healthcare system and underscored Malaysia’s collaboration as crucial, urging bilateral cooperation.

He also mentioned that currently, there are 11,000 active beds across all healthcare facilities nationwide and There is a need to increase this number to 45,000 beds in order to provide healthcare services to the citizens of the country and to train Afghan specialists in various sectors.

In the end, the head of the Malaysian government delegation pledged continued support and collaboration in the healthcare sector.

5,000 Afghan migrants expelled

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations Affairs reports that over 5,000 Afghan migrants returned to the country after expulsion from Pakistan and Iran.

On Thursday, the ministry announced that 5,360 migrants from Iran and 481 from Pakistan entered the country after forced deportation.

According to the ministry, between the 22nd and 25th of April, migrants entered the country after expulsion via the Islam Qala and Torkham borders of Nangarhar province.

The Ministry of Migrants Affairs disclosed the return of migrants from Iran amidst a recent surge in expulsions of Afghan migrants from Iran and particularly Pakistan in recent months.

Amid a dire humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, the return of migrants adds to the country’s challenges. Most returnees confront a multitude of difficulties, including the absence of adequate shelter, clean water, medical services, and employment opportunities.

The lack of essential amenities exacerbates the already precarious situation, compounding the struggles faced by Afghan migrants. Their reintegration into Afghan society becomes even more challenging without proper infrastructure and support systems.

EU official emphasizes support for women

KABUL (Khaama Press): Raffaella Iodice, the European Union’s representative in Afghanistan, emphasized during a meeting with a delegation from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation that the voices of Afghan women must be part of any dialogue, interaction, and key discussions regarding Afghanistan.

The Charge d’Affaires of the European Union in Kabul announced in a message on Wednesday that Raffaella Iodice, the Union’s representative, met with Tariq Ali Bakheet, the special representative of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation in Kabul.

According to reports, discussions were held in this meeting on the human rights situation, especially women’s education rights, and the economic situation in Afghanistan.

Ms. Iodice stated that fundamental support for Afghanistan, particularly supporting women’s presence and ensuring girls’ education rights, is crucial and vital for the people.

The Acting Head of the European Union in Afghanistan added that “women’s voices should be part of any constructive dialogue and interaction in Afghanistan.”

The special representative of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation met with Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, the deputy political head of the interim government’s education department, to praise the value of girls’ education for Islamic countries and emphasize that Islamic countries are ready to cooperate with Afghanistan in educational sectors.

Since the Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan, they have persisted in banning girls’ education beyond sixth grade and university for the third consecutive year. Additionally, they have prohibited women from working with aid agencies and other organizations, drawing condemnation from domestic and international communities.

Despite widespread criticism, there are no indications that these oppressive policies against Afghan women will be lifted anytime soon.

Baradar urges more transit facilities for Afghan products

KABUL (BNA): During a meeting with the Iranian Ambassador in Kabul, the Deputy PM for Economic Affairs, advocated for enhanced facilitation of Afghan products’ transit to European countries via Iran.

In this meeting, attended by Mullah Abdul Latif Mansur, Acting Minister of Water and Energy, Mawlawi Ataullah Omari, Acting Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock, Mullah Khairullah Khairkha, Acting Minister of Information and Culture, and Mawlawi Fazl Mohammad Haqani, Afghanistan’s Ambassador to Tehran, discussions focused on strengthening political, economic, trade, and transit relations, as well as bilateral cooperation in various fields.

Emphasizing the positive nature of Afghanistan-Iran relations, the Deputy PM for Economic Affairs stressed the importance of collaborative efforts to further strengthen these ties.

Moreover, Mullah



Baradar mentioned that this year, abundant rainfall has allowed the Helmand River water to reach Nimroz province in Afghanistan and Sistan province in Iran after years of drought. This will help address the problems faced by both nations.

Additionally, The Deputy PM called for further facilitation of Afghan products’ transit to European countries through Iran, highlighting it as a crucial

step towards boosting transit levels and trade between the two countries.

He further emphasized that following his visit to Iran, technical committees from both countries are cooperating effectively and have achieved positive results in various areas.

In response, The Iranian ambassador expressed satisfaction regarding the arrival of water from the Helmand River to Sistan and affirmed

Iran’s readiness to collaborate with Afghanistan on banking issues, environmental protection, agricultural modernization, and increasing trade and transit through Iran.

Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar Akhund also addressed the challenges faced by Afghan refugees residing in Iran, urging for the cessation of forced deportations of Afghan migrants from the country.

Nearly 70 schools, madrassas in Uruzgan destroyed by rains, floods

URUZGAN (TOLONews): Shamsullah Kamran, the head of Education in Uruzgan, reports that recent rains and floods have completely or partially destroyed nearly 70 schools and madrassas (religious schools) in the province’s center and districts.

Kamran adds that the Uruzgan Education Department lacks sufficient funds to rebuild these schools.

The head of Education in Uruzgan stated: “As a result of the rains and floods, approximately seventy schools have been

completely or partially destroyed. If these schools do not receive attention from organizations, we will face significant problems.”

Moreover, several students and teachers in the province say that the destruction of schools has slowed the educational process.

According to them, most students from the destroyed schools are now studying in private homes or in open spaces.

Sirajuddin Sirajmal, a teacher, said: “The students are in a situation where they have no place for

learning.”

Javid, a student, said: “We sit under the sun; we have nothing, and the teachers do not come, forcing us to go back home.”

Obaidullah, another student, expressed: “We ask the government to rebuild our schools so that we can continue our studies.”

The destruction of educational centers has also raised concerns among Uruzgan residents. According to the residents, this will negatively affect their children’s educational progress.

They call on the interim

government officials and aid organizations for the immediate reconstruction of the destroyed schools.

Gul Mohammad, a resident of Uruzgan, said: “The schools have no pillars and are all collapsing.”

The recent floods and rainfall have damaged dozens of schools in Uruzgan province, and previously, the provincial Education Department had reported that due to the lack of school buildings and teachers, 80,000 children were deprived of education this year.

German cyclist explores Afghan historical and natural wonders

KABUL (TOLONews): A German tourist who came to Afghanistan by bicycle has visited the historical remains and pistachio groves of Badghis province.

Daniel says that after visiting Herat, Kabul, and Badghis, he sees Afghanistan as a safe and amazing country.

“I arrived here ten days ago from Iran. I was in Herat first in Qala-e-Naw, I will spend some days here and then will go to pistachio forest and will enjoy my time. I will stay three more weeks in Afghanistan and then I will continue my journey to Tajikistan,” said Daniel, the German tourist.

In the past two and a half years, he has traveled to 30 countries by bicycle. Daniel says he wants to see the world.

Sayed Agha Erfagh, a cultural activist, said, “Currently, security in Afghanistan is ensured, and more foreign tourists are coming to the country. I request the government to further ensure the security of these tourists, facilitate their travels, and provide their necessities everywhere so that they can explore more and introduce Afghanistan as a safe and ideal place to the world.”

Local officials in Badghis say that in the last two years, the presence of foreign tourists in the province has increased.

They assure that facilities for these tourists have been provided.

Motiullah Muttaqi, the head of Information and Culture in Badghis, said, “The Directorate of Information and Culture has facilitated for tourists to visit anywhere and also see



historical sites.”

This German tourist has come to the country at a time when the presence of foreign tourists in Afghanistan has increased significantly over the past

nearly three years.

According to interim government officials, with the provision of nationwide security, the tourism industry in the country has been revived.

Cement production: Afghanistan strives for self-sufficiency

KABUL (TOLONews): Last solar year, the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum awarded three cement mining and production projects worth \$450 million to domestic and international companies.

Homayoun Afghan, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum, stated that these mines, located in the provinces of Parwan, Herat, and Kandahar, have been contracted with companies for 30 years.

The ministry emphasizes that with the start of practical work on cement extraction and production in these provinces, Afghanistan will achieve self-sufficiency in cement production.

Afghan told TOLONews, “Last year, we contracted out three major cement mines, including the Jabal Saraj cement project in Parwan, which was acquired by a Qatari company with two Afghan com-

panies for thirty years. The projects in Kandahar and Herat were also contracted with Afghan companies.”

The spokesperson added that currently, two cement factories, Jabal Saraj in Parwan and Ghori in Baghlan, are operating in the country, but their production cannot meet the country’s needs.

The Chamber of Commerce and Investment sees boosting the capacity for cement extraction and production as impactful for economic progress. The Chamber emphasizes that the necessary energy for mines and factories must be provided to increase the level of extraction and production.

Khanjan Alkozai, a board member of the Chamber of Commerce and Investment, told TOLONews, “This represents a very serious and sustainable revenue for a country.”

Meanwhile, some economic experts say that if cement mines in the country are extracted, processed, and produced to standard, the economy will grow, and the construction sector will also experience significant prosperity.

Abdul Zuhor, an economic expert, said, “Afghanistan is one of the countries rich in natural resources, particularly in mines, including cement mines. If properly managed, processed, and extracted, it will help reduce costs in the construction sector.”

According to information from the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum, cement mines in the provinces of Logar, Samangan, and Jowzjan have reached the announcement stage, and many domestic and international companies have shown interest in extracting these mines.



AUSTIN: Pro-Palestinian students protest on the campus of the University of Texas, the United States.

Search for Saudi woman, Pakistani driver continue

Haleem Asad

LOWER DIR: According to unconfirmed reports the Islamabad police traced the Saudi Arabian business-woman and her Pakistani lover in Karachi and took them into custody the other day.

However, the Lower Dir police told this scribe on Thursday that they had no information regarding the couple arrest. A Saudi businesswoman, Hanan Abdullah 37, who eloped with her Pakistani driver Abdul Ahad 22 s/o Shah Tamaz Khan, a resident of Khararai village in Shalkanai Khall went missing since April 18.

The woman, according to sources close to the family, was serving as a bank officer in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), her native country while the man from Lower Dir served as her driver. According to a web channel the woman, Sahoo bint Abdullah Al-Mahboob (real name Hanan Abdullah), is a Saudi businesswoman and owns multiple properties across the world but there is no official confirmation.

The man is already married and he has a daughter too. The news spread like a forest fire when it was circulated on social media platforms a few days ago and Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan, took serious notice of the matter after the intervention of the Saudi ambassador. Some sources said the KSA ambassador even talked to the prime minister Mian Shahbaz Sharif who directed the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Inspector General of Police to immediately recover the woman.



According to official sources the Islamabad police registered a case of kidnapping the KSA woman against the Pakistani driver Abdul Ahad on April, 18 at Margala police station.

A team of Islamabad police and a CIA team in this regard reached the Lower Dir to recover the Saudi woman. A police raiding team led by the acting district police officer Rashid Khan along with DSP Iqbal Khan and a heavy contingent of police raided the Khararai village here the other day and investigated the case. The officials also met with the area elders and asked for their cooperation in the safe recovery of the Saudi woman.

Several members of Ahad's family were also taken into custody and interrogated but freed on bail. The couple, according to the family members, had been in hiding for the last several days. "We, definitely, would have handed the couple over to police if we knew their roundabouts", a

relative told the raiding team.

The Lower Dir police continued its search to recover the couple in parts of the Khall teshil but to no avail. According to sources privy to the development the Saudi woman had fallen in love with her Pakistani driver and she reached the Lower Dir district on April 3 to meet her friend. The couple then toured Karachi and other parts of the country to enjoy the natural beauties of the country. The residents told Dawn on contact that the couple had left the village to avoid police raids when the Islamabad police registered a case against the man for kidnapping the women.

Meanwhile a local resident, while requesting not to be named, told Dawn that the couple had married and the nikah had been solemnized by a religious cleric. However, the Lower Dir police denied any such report and said the couple had not appeared so far in any court for a legal marriage.

IHC suspends Naan, Roti price cut notification

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has suspended the notification of slashing prices of naan and roti in the federal capital.

IHC Justice Tariq Mahmood Jahangiri took up the plea of Naanbai Welfare Association's president. In the plea, the Naanbai Welfare Association maintained that the controller general cut the price of roti from Rs25 to Rs16 and naan from Rs30 to Rs20.

The association maintained that the concerned authorities did not take them on board before making the decision. He told the court that the decision was made without consulting them and that the new prices were too low. The district administration representative told the court that the controller of general prices and suppliers was given powers to fix the rates of essential commodities including naan and roti.

The powers were handed over to the controller general after amendment in the law. Barrister Umar Aijaz Gilani, the lawyer of the Naanbai association, in his arguments, said the powers of the controller general were not by Section 3 as per the notification issue. Rent and flour prices are high in Islamabad, he added. The court asked the Islamabad district administration that was the association was asked about the rate of flour before slashing the prices. "Order was passed justice to make people happy." Later, the court summoning the detailed response in the case suspended the notification of slashing the prices of naan and roti in Islamabad until May 6.

Trump faces Supreme Court immunity test

NEW YORK: Former United States President Donald Trump faces legal tests in New York and Washington on Thursday in two separate cases that hang over his campaign to return to the Oval Office in the November election.

In New York, the third day of witness testimony is to be held in a historic criminal trial, the first against a US president. Tabloid publisher David Pecker is again expected to take the stand as prosecutors seek to paint a picture of a coordinated effort to influence the 2016 presidential election through malfeasance.

But Trump's attention may be elsewhere with the US Supreme Court set to consider whether Trump can be prosecuted or claim immunity in a federal case related to his efforts to overturn the 2020 election results. Trump had requested permission to skip the New York trial for the day to sit in on the Supreme Court session, but the request was denied.

"We have a big case today," Trump told construction workers in Manhattan during a brief campaign stop before the day's court proceedings. "The judge isn't allowing me to go." In New York, Trump has been charged with 34 felony counts of falsifying business documents related to payments made to adult film star Stormy Daniels. The falsification charges concern the alleged mislabelling of repayments that Trump made to his lawyer Michael Cohen, who had paid \$130,000 to Daniels in return for her silence over an alleged sexual encounter with Trump. — Aljazeera

Palestinians mourn dead from Israeli bombardment

GAZA STRIP, Palestinian Territories (AFP): Palestinians on Thursday mourned over people killed in Israeli bombardment of Rafah, the southern Gaza city where Israel says it is advancing plans for a ground invasion.

Global concern has mounted over the looming operation against Hamas militants in Rafah, where much of Gaza's population has sought refuge from more than six months of war in the narrow coastal strip. Aid groups warn any invasion would add to already-catastrophic conditions for civilians.

Israeli officials have for more than two months vowed to enter Rafah, near the Egyptian border, but even before any ground operation the area has been regularly bombed, including overnight Wednesday-Thursday. At the city's Al-Najjar Hospital on Thursday, two men knelt in front of a white body bag in grief, among other mourners gathered at the site.

Elsewhere in the city, Palestinians tried to salvage belongings from the rubble of bombarded buildings. Israeli government spokesman David Mencer said Israel was "moving ahead" with its operation to go after four Hamas battalions in Rafah. "They will be attacked," he said. The war began with an unprecedented Hamas attack on October 7 that resulted in the deaths of about 1,170 people in Israel, according to an AFP tally of Israeli official figures.

Israel vowed to destroy Hamas, with a retaliatory offensive that has killed at least 34,305 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the Hamas-run territory's health ministry. Thursday's toll included at least 43 more deaths over the previous day. During their attack militants seized hostages, 129 of whom Israel estimates remain in Gaza, a figure that includes 34 presumed dead.

Hamas on Wednesday released a video of an Israeli-American man who was one of those captured. Also on Wednesday, US President Joe Biden signed a law authorizing \$13 billion in additional military aid to close ally Israel. Much of that funding is to support the country's air defenses, which received an unpre-

cedented test this month with Iran's first-ever direct strike against its foe. Iran fired more than 300 drones and missiles toward Israel, the Israeli military said, but most were shot down by that country and its allies.

The Iranian barrage followed what it said was a deadly Israeli strike against Tehran's embassy consular annex in Syria. The US legislation also included \$1 billion in humanitarian aid for Gaza, with Biden demanding it reaches reach Palestinians "without delay." The United Nations has warned of imminent famine and "access constraints" on the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Germany said it would resume cooperation with the main aid agency in Gaza, the UN's agency for Palestine refugees, or UNRWA, after an independent review found Israel had not yet provided evidence for its allegations that its staff belonged to "terrorist" groups.

Regional tensions remain high as the Gaza war has led to violence between Israel and Iran's proxies and allies. Israel has struck increasingly deeper into Lebanon, while the Iran-backed Hezbollah movement has stepped up rocket fire and drone attacks on Israeli military bases across the border. The violence has fueled fears of all-out conflict between Hezbollah and Israel, which last went to war in 2006.

On Thursday Lebanese state media and a Hezbollah source said one person was wounded in an Israeli drone attack on a fuel truck near Baalbek, the latest such incident away from the southern border. In other regional fallout, US-led coalition forces shot down an anti-ship missile launched by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels, American authorities said on Thursday. The Israeli military on Thursday said its aircraft had struck more than 30 Hamas targets across Gaza over the previous day.

Witnesses reported clashes between militants and Israeli troops near the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza, as the world's attention is increasingly focused further south, on Rafah. Netanyahu in early April gave no details but said "there is a date" for the Rafah operation, over which the United States and others

have expressed grave concern because of the concentration of civilians there. Citing Egyptian officials briefed on Israeli plans, The Wall Street Journal has said Israel was planning to move civilians to nearby Khan Yunis over a period of two to three weeks, before gradually sending in troops.

The hostage in the video released on Hamas's official Telegram account identified himself as Hersh Goldberg-Polin, 23. In the video, the authenticity of which AFP has not been able to independently verify, Goldberg-Polin was missing a hand, a wound he suffered during his capture. In an apparent reference to Jewish Passover which began this week, Goldberg-Polin, likely speaking under duress, told Israeli government members that "while you sit and have holiday meals with your families, think of us, the hostages, who are still here in hell."

Hostage supporters and anti-government demonstrators have intensified protests — including again on Wednesday night in Jerusalem — for the government to reach a deal that would free the captives, accusing Netanyahu of prolonging the war. The European Union, the UN rights office and the White House have called for a probe into mass graves found at Gaza's two biggest hospitals after Israeli raids. "We want answers," US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said on Wednesday. "We want to see this thoroughly and transparently investigated."

Israel has repeatedly targeted hospitals during the war, accusing Hamas of using them as command centers and to hold hostages. Hamas denies the accusations. Gaza's Civil Defense agency said nearly 340 bodies were uncovered at Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis city. Israeli army spokesman Major Nadav Shoshani said on X that "the grave in question was dug — by Gazans — a few months ago." The Israeli army acknowledged that "corpses buried by Palestinians" had been examined by soldiers searching for hostages, but did not directly address allegations that Israeli troops were behind the killings.

India's poll panel seeks responses to complaints against Modi, Gandhi

NEW DELHI (Reuters): India's Election Commission said on Thursday it sought responses from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the opposition Congress on alleged violations of poll rules by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and opposition leader Rahul Gandhi. India is holding the world's largest election over seven phases, with votes due to be counted on June 4.

In their complaints to the commission, the BJP accused Gandhi and Congress accused Modi of making divisive speeches on religion, caste and linguistic issues, notices from the panel said. Modi, who is seeking a rare third consecutive term, referred to Muslims as "infiltrators" and "those who have more

children" during a campaign speech on Sunday, drawing widespread criticism from opposition groups and a complaint from Congress to the poll panel.

The BJP has said in its complaint that Gandhi sought to create divisions based on linguistic and cultural issues. The election panel has sought responses from BJP president JP Nadda and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge by April 29. As nearly a billion voters head to the polls, officials like Indian Forest Service official Surya Sen counter rapidly spreading online misinformation from election cells that also monitor television and public camera images.

"Social media is the primary ground for misinformation," said Sen, whose

team monitors social media from an office in India's Silicon Valley city of Bengaluru. Sen works with an external agency, where 30 people use keyword-tracking software and monitor high-profile influencers around the clock. His operation is one of hundreds nationwide coordinating with India's election commission.

At the same time, Sen's in-house team of 40 sifts online posts by political parties to detect everything from hate speech to fake news that violates polling rules. Just last week, two AI-generated deepfake videos of Bollywood stars criticising Modi and asking people to vote for the opposition Congress went viral, drawing half a million views.

Shuhada Package

(Continued from Page 1)

will become the biggest foreign exchange earner for Pakistan."

He said, "We will make all investments required to achieve our goals in the field of information technology so that the youth can become bread earners for their families and foreign exchange earners for Pakistan." He underlined the need for decreasing gender discrimination in the society, citing the example of Saudi Arabia where women were 40 percent of the workforce working in shopping malls, businesses, universities, and other places.

The prime minister said Pakistan was blessed with huge human resource in the shape of highly talented youth population of 15 to 30 years. The youth were a great asset of Pakistan and it was an opportunity and challenge to utilize the young population for the country's progress, he remarked.

He said fintech was playing an important role in increasing gross domestic product (GDP) of countries in the region including the Gulf states as with its help people were opening bank accounts in minutes and fast business transactions were taking place without any delay. He said Pakistan would gain a bright future by utilizing emerging technologies like artificial intelligence and robotics.

Earlier he gave away awards to women entrepreneurs and freelancers for their contributions in the field of information technology. He expressed the hope that many more young entrepreneurs would emerge in the future and win laurels for the country.

PM for political commitment, adequate investment to achieve goal of malaria-free world: As the world observes World Malaria Day, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif called for a vigorous political commitment and adequate investment strategies to reach the goal of a world free from the disease.

The prime minister, in a message on the Day, stressed the need to learn from each others' experiences and support each others' efforts in combating the disease. He said the theme for World Malaria Day 2024 was "Advancing health equity, gender equality and human rights" which was an undertaking to involve multiple stakeholders i.e. policy makers, donors, healthcare providers, community members from all walks of life in fight against malaria.

He said the research and academic institutions needed to flag scientific advances to both experts and the general public, international partners, companies and foundations to showcase their efforts and reflect on how to further scale up malaria control interventions. "The aim of Government of Pakistan, in this regard, is to get more people involved in the fight against the disease that affects more than 1 million Pakistanis every year," he remarked.

Prime Minister Shehbaz said that despite the country's achievements in malaria control, sustaining the gains still remains a challenge. "It is my belief that every individual has the right to live a healthy and prosperous life with dignity.

Kyiv uses longer-range US missiles for first time

KYIV (BBC): Ukraine has begun using longer-range ballistic missiles against Russia that were secretly provided by the US, American officials have confirmed. The weapons were sent as part of a previous US support package, and arrived this month. Officials said they were not announced publicly to maintain Ukraine's "operational security".

They have already been used at least once to strike Russian targets in occupied Crimea. Further US aid is now heading to Kyiv. More American weaponry is expected to be sent imminently, after President Joe Biden signed off on Wednesday a new package of economic and military support for Ukraine worth \$61bn (£49bn). The missiles that have already been quietly provided are the longer-range version of the Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS), a state department spokesman confirmed on Wednesday. The US previously supplied Ukraine with a mid-range version of the ATACMS, but had resisted sending anything more powerful, partly over concerns about compromising US military readiness.

Officials were also concerned that the Ukrainians could use the weaponry to strike inside Russian territory, causing the conflict to escalate, according to NBC, which first reported the news. The Ukrainians have long called for the systems, which can fire missiles up to 300km (186 miles). Mr Biden is said to have secretly given the green light in February.

Briefing reporters on Wednesday, the state department spokesman confirmed that the provision of the longer-range ATACMS had been "at the president's direct direction". The US "did not announce this at the onset in order to maintain operational security for Ukraine at their request", Vedant Patel explained. It is not clear how many of the weapons have already been sent, but US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said Washington planned to send more.

"They will make a difference. But as I've said before at this podium... there is no silver bullet," he said. The longer-range ATACMS give Ukraine the ability to strike deeper into Russian-held areas; particularly bases, storage facilities and logistics hubs.

CRBC tender to be floated by June: KP CM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: An important meeting regarding implementation of Chashma Right Bank Canal (Lift-cum-Gravity) project, was held at Pakhtunkhwa House Islamabad, on Thursday with Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur in the chair. Higher authorities from the relevant provincial and federal departments attended the meeting.

The participants of the meeting thoroughly discussed the various matters related to implementation of CRBC project and have unanimously decided to float tender of this important project by July this year, directing the authorities concerned to ensure that all the essentials are completed well in time for this purpose.

It was further decided in the meeting that the project would be executed according to the modalities already decided between the federal and provincial governments. 65% of the total cost of the

project would be provided by the federal government, and remaining 35% would be borne by the provincial government. The meeting has also decided to allocate Rs. 20 billion in the development program of the next fiscal year for the implementation of this project. Briefing about the various aspects and salient features of this project, the authorities told that the federal government has also made a commitment to allocate 10 billion rupees for the project in PSDP of the next financial year.

The project once completed, will irrigate 2,86,000 acres of barren land, thereby further increasing agricultural production, creating job opportunities and paving the way for agricultural self-sufficiency of the province. Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur has termed the CRBC project as indispensable for the food security of the province and said that this project is of vital importance not only for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but

for the entire country as well. With the implementation of this project, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will also be able to fully utilize its water share, the Chief Minister remarked.

He made it clear that implementation of the project has already been delayed a lot, that's why we cannot afford any further delay in this regard. The Chief Minister maintained that the provincial government will provide funds on a priority basis for projects that are a source of income for the provisional government.

He also directed the concerned authorities to take up the matter with WAPDA to transfer the CRBC project to the provincial government. In the meeting, it has also been decided to initiate another project to irrigate additional 90 thousand acres of land in the southern districts. The Chief Minister has directed the concerned authorities to start working on the proposed project without any delay.

PHC asks political parties to work together for redressal public grievances

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Shakeel Ahmad and Justice Dr. Khurshid Iqbal ordered submission of record of cases registered against Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur within one week, on Thursday.

The counsel Syed Sikandar Hayat Shah advocate, advocate general

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Assistant Attorney General Danyal Khan and Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Deputy Director Legal Abdur Rehman Afridi appeared before PHC.

During hearing Justice Shakeel Ahmed observed that political parties should put aside their differences and work together for the betterment of the nation. He emphasized that the current situation is dire, with people selling their children due to poverty and

inflation. He remarked that political parties must prioritize national interests over personal gains and work together to address the country's economic and social issues.

Justice Shakeel Ahmed observed that the increasing prices of electricity, petrol, and gas are affecting the common man. He stated that the political parties should work together to address these issues and provide relief to the people.