

Man with 45 passports held

KARACHI (PPI): The Airport Security Forces (ASF) on Monday arrested a passenger traveling to Iran from Jinnah International Airport, Karachi, and recovered 45 Pakistani passports from his possession. According to the ASF spokesperson, the incident occurred during baggage scanning at Jinnah Terminal, where the passports were discovered in the possession of the individual.



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MAKKAH MUKARAMAH: Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif kisses Hajr-e-Aswad as part of Ziaarat of Al-Masjid-e-Haram.

Saudi Arabia to celebrate Eid tomorrow

RIYADH: The Shawwal crescent moon was not sighted on Monday evening, Ramadan 29, announced Saudi Arabia's Supreme Court. Tuesday will be the final day of the holy month, and Eidul Fitr celebrations will commence on Wednesday, April 10.

Eidul Fitr prayer will take place across the Kingdom on Wednesday shortly after sunrise, with thorough arrangements made to accommodate worshippers for the annual Eid prayer. Saudi Minister of Islamic Affairs, Dawah, and Guidance Sheikh Abdullah Al-Asheikh recently issued directives to hold Eidul Fitr prayers 15 minutes after sunrise, in accordance with the Umm Al-Qura calendar.

In a circular, the minister said Eidul Fitr prayers should be conducted at the designated open prayer grounds, as well as in all mosques except for those adjacent to prayer grounds. He emphasized the importance of early preparations for holding Eidul Fitr prayers in the designated prayer grounds and mosques, ensuring all necessary services, including maintenance, cleaning, and operation, are in place so that worshippers can perform their rituals with ease and comfort.

Mohammed Aslam, employed at a travel agency in Riyadh, told Arab News:

Ruet-e-Hilal committee to meet today

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee presided over by its Chairman Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad will meet here in Islamabad tomorrow (Tuesday) for sighting of Shawwal-ul-Mukarram crescent.

Members from various institutions, including Ministry of Science and Technology, Pakistan Meteorological Department, and The Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission will also participate in the meeting. Zonal members from Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Quetta, and Peshawar will also contribute to the deliberations. Emphasizing the importance of public involvement, Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad has encouraged citizens to actively engage in moon sighting efforts for Shawwal-ul-Mukarram.

"Eidul Fitr is a joyful and blessed occasion. It is a day when Allah Almighty bestows rewards upon all believers who have sincerely dedicated their time during the holy month of Ramadan to invoke His goodwill." Majed Abdullah Al-Hedayan, a lawyer in Riyadh, said: "The moon sighting signifies the conclusion of Ramadan, and the week-long festivity introduces the most celebratory occasion in the Islamic calendar, with families arranging gatherings, feasts, exchanging gifts, and sweets.

"As the day unfolds, individuals visit friends and family to exchange greetings and partake in the joyful moments. We celebrate with our relatives. Additionally, some families reserve istirahas (resorts)

and arrange family gatherings to share in the joyous occasion," he added.

Earlier, on Sunday, Saudi Arabia's Supreme Court called upon all Muslims throughout the Kingdom to sight the Shawwal crescent moon on Monday evening, Ramadan 29, corresponding to April 8. In its announcement, the court urged any individual who observes the Shawwal crescent with the naked eye or through telescopes to report it to the nearest court and record their testimony. Ramadan commenced in Saudi Arabia and in most Arab and other countries on March 11. Eidul Fitr is the holiday celebrated for the first five days of Shawwal, the 10th month of the Islamic Hijri calendar. — Arab News

President to address joint parliament on 16th

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari is due to deliver an address to the joint session of the parliament on April 16, marking the commencement of the parliamentary year following the general elections. The joint session is scheduled for Tuesday, April 16th, at 4:00 PM, as announced by a press statement from the President House.

This address falls under the constitutional provision outlined in Article 56(3), which mandates that "At the commencement of the first session after each general election to the National Assembly and at the commencement of the first session of each year, the President shall address both Houses assembled together and inform the Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament) of the causes of its summons." President Zardari has summoned the joint parliamentary session exercising the authority vested in him under Articles 54(1) and 56(3) of the Constitution.

Bilawal visits Wali Bagh

F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: PPP's Chairman, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari visited Wali Bagh, district Charsadda on Monday wherein he expressed condolence with the President of Awami National Party (ANP) Asfandiyar Wali Khan, the death of his wife.

The PPP chairman mEet both Asfandiyar Wali Khan and Aimal Wali Khan to express condolence with them. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari offered fateha for the eternal peace of the wife of Asfandiyar Wali Khan and mother of Aimal Wali Khan and fortitude to her other family members.

Those who accompanied Bilawal Bhutto Zardari were included president PPP KP chapter, Mohammad Ali Shah Bacha, Senator Yousaf Raza Gilani, Senator Sherry Rehman, Faisal Karim Kundi, Naveed Qamar, Nasir Shah, Shazi Khan, Kiramat Chagarmati, Hamayun Khan, Asma Arbab Alamgir and other party leaders.

Local PPP leaders including Amjad Khan Afridi, Farzand Wazir, Ibrar Saeed, Ziaullah Afridi, Arbab Zarak Khan, Zahir Ali Shah, Shoaib Alam, Naeem Khan Umerzai, Bacha Said, Arif Gul and Pir Aftab Uthmanzai also accompanied the party chairman and expressed condolence with Aimal Wali Khan.

Shakil Bashir Umerzai, Farooq Khan Sheikh, Gohar Ayub, Afzal Bashir, Alam Khan and other ANP leaders were also present on the occasion.

The Frontier Post

Nepra hikes power tariff F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Another big shock for the citizens as the government increased electricity tariff by Rs4.92 per unit under the monthly fuel adjustment. According to the notification issued by the NEPRA, the electricity prices are increased by Rs4.92 per unit. The power regulatory body hiked the price for February which would be charged from the consumers from the bills of April 2024.

PM, Saudi Arabia Crown Prince discuss bilateral ties

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia affirm commitment to expedite first wave of \$5 billion investment package

MAKKAH (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif met Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister, His Royal Highness Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud at Iftar on Sunday and discussed bilateral ties and matters of mutual interest.

The Prime Minister along with his delegation was invited at Iftar by His Royal Highness Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif conveyed prayers and best wishes for the health and well-being of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, His Majesty King Salman bin Abdulaziz.

He expressed gratitude for the warm welcome accorded to him and his delegation by the Saudi authorities. Both leaders appreciated the upward trajectory of longstanding fraternal relations. The two leaders reaffirmed common resolve to further strengthen bilateral ties. After Iftar, a bilateral meeting was also held followed by a one on one meeting between the Prime Minister and His Royal Highness the Crown Prince.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif met with Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud here wherein the two countries affirmed their commitment to expediting the first wave of the previously discussed investment package worth \$5 billion.

The bilateral ties and regional as well as global developments of mutual interest, including the worrying situation in Gaza were discussed in the meeting that took place at Al-Safa

Palace here on Sunday during Prime Minister Shehbaz's three-day visit to the Kingdom, according to a joint statement issued on Monday.

The discussions centered on fortifying the fraternal relations between the two brotherly nations and exploring avenues for enhanced collaboration across various sectors. Emphasis was laid on the Kingdom's supportive role in Pakistan's economy and the mutual desire to strengthen trade and investment ties, the statement added.

The two countries called for efforts by the international community to halt Israeli military operations in Gaza and mitigate humanitarian impact besides emphasising the need to advance the peace process. Both sides underscored the imperative for the international community to pressure Israel to cease hostilities, adhere to international law, and facilitate unhindered humanitarian aid access to Gaza.

Two sides discussed the need for advancing the peace process in accordance with relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly as well as the Arab Peace Initiative aimed at finding a just and comprehensive solution, to establish an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. The two sides stressed the importance of dialogue between Pakistan and India to resolve the outstanding issues between the two countries, especially the Jammu and Kashmir dispute to ensure peace and stability in the region.

The Crown Prince congratulated Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on

assuming the office and expressed warm wishes for his tenure. Prime Minister Shehbaz also conveyed gratitude for the Kingdom's steadfast support and hospitality and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to bolstering bilateral ties and economic cooperation. PM Shehbaz invited the Crown Prince to undertake an official visit to Pakistan at the earliest convenience which he accepted.

PM performs Umrah: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif performed Umrah and offered Nawafil inside Kaaba as he was granted access inside Baitullah, as a special gesture.

The prime minister, who is on a three-day visit to Saudi Arabia, performed Tawaaf - the circumambulation of Kaaba - and other obligations. He prayed for the country's progress and prosperity, the Muslim Ummah's unity, and global peace.

Prime Minister Shehbaz specially prayed for the salvation of the oppressed Muslims particularly those of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and Palestine from the subjugation. The federal cabinet members and Punjab chief minister accompanied the prime minister.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, on Monday, left for Lahore after wrapping up his visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). At the Jeddah International Airport, the prime minister was seen off by Governor Jeddah Prince Saud bin Abdullah bin Jalawi, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

Senate chairman, deputy chairman elections

IHC objects to PTI's plea seeking delay

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The registrar of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday raised an objection to the petition filed by five PTI senators in which they had sought a court order for delaying elections for the seats of Senate chairman and deputy chairman unless elections for the Senate seats from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) are held.

The senators had also prayed to the court to declare the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) notification, dated April 2, 2024, of postpone-ment of the Senate elections in KP as null and void and give order to hold the elections in the province.

The registrar said that since the Peshawar High Court (PHC) was already hearing the KP Senate seats' election case; therefore the PTI was asked to approach the high court for

the purpose. Separately, the PTI has also filed a motion against the election of Senate chairman at the Senate Secretariat on Monday. The PTI application bears the signatures of Senators Zarga Taimoor, Saif Abro, Falak Naz Chitrali, Fauzia Arshad and Saifullah Niazi.

IHC judge asks Bushra Bibi's lawyer to file contempt plea against Adiala Jail admin: Showing his strong displeasure over the failure of Adiala Jail, Rawalpindi superintendent of Bushra Bibi, wife of former prime minister and ex-PTI chairman Imran Khan, with her husband in the light of the court order, Islamabad High Court (IHC) judge Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb on Monday asked Bushra's lawyer to file a contempt of court plea in the case.

During the hearing of the petition, seeking imple-

mentation of the IHC order in which it had said that Bushra should be allowed to meet Imran, the court also summoned the advocate general, Islamabad.

The judge wondered how on earth the court's order could be ignored. Justice Aurangzeb recalled that earlier the court had disposed of the petition with directions. Usman Gul, Bushra's lawyer, informed the judge that despite the court order, the two were not allowed to meet each other. "And that is why we have submitted another petition, seeking my client's meeting with her husband in the light of the court order," he said.

The lawyer prayed to the court to order the jail administration to now arrange the meeting on Eidul Fitr, saying the administration had the authority to do so. Later the court gave a break in the hearing until the arrival of the advocate general.

KP CM briefed on ADP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A meeting on the Annual Development Program (ADP) was held here at Chief Minister's House the other day, with Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur in the chair. Advisor to Chief Minister for finance Muzammil Aslam, Additional Chief Secretary Planning and Development Syed Imtiaz Hussain Shah and other relevant officials attended the meeting.

The chief minister on the occasion, was briefed in details about the volume and other related matters of annual development program. Matters related to timely completion of important public welfare projects were also came under discussion. The chief minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur has directed the authorities concerned that the projects due for completion, be funded on priority basis, adding that development projects should be completed within the stipulated timelines without compromising on their quality.

The chief minister further directed them to make the monitoring system more effective in order to ensure quality of development projects being executed across the province. "We need to put in place an effective and strong monitoring mechanism for complete prevention of malpractices in developmental activities", he remarked and added that promoting a transparent governance system in the province is among the priorities of incumbent provincial government and for this purpose, it is inevitable to completely block the way of corrupt practices.

Arsenic found in letters sent to judges

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The investigators have found out that the chemical found in the threatening letters sent to the Supreme Court and the high courts' judges was different from ordinary arsenic, sources said on Monday.

The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) teams went to different stores to purchase arsenic. And when they looked at it, they found

out that unlike the arsenic found in the letter which was white, the one they had purchased was yellow, sources said, adding this led them to decide that now they would seek assistance from drugs and chemicals manufacturing companies.

The investigators had now prepared lists of pharmaceutical companies, they disclosed. Around six days ago, eight judges of the Islamabad High Court (IHC), including the high

court Chief Justice Aamer Farooq, received letters laced with a chemical, which was initially thought to be arsenic.

The incident took place a few days after six of these judges wrote a letter to the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) in which they had alleged interference by the country's intelligence agencies in their work, prompting the Supreme Court (SC) to take suo motu notice of it.



PESHAWAR: Chief Justice of Peshawar High Court, Muhammad Ibrahim Khan in a group photo with judges on the occasion of his retirement.

More than 300 aid trucks enter Gaza

GAZA: Israel has announced the entry of more than 300 aid trucks into Gaza, the highest daily volume since its war on the besieged territory began six months ago. But Monday's delivery still falls far short of what the United Nations says is the minimum required to feed millions of people – most of them refugees – on the brink of starvation.

Under growing international pressure, Israel on Monday said 322 aid trucks were inspected and allowed to enter the heavily bombed Palestinian territory. In a statement on X, Israel's Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) said 228 of the trucks, which represents 70 percent of the total number, were carrying food.

Al Jazeera monitored some of the trucks going through the southern Rafah crossing with Egypt. Other trucks also went through the Karem Abu Salem crossing, known as Kerem Shalom to Israelis, according to Al Jazeera's Tarek Abu Azzoum, reporting from Rafah. He said most of the humanitarian convoys were loaded with water, sugar, flour and other basic necessities.

None of the trucks from the south, however, was allowed to reach the

northern part of Gaza, which according to the UN and other humanitarian groups, is facing famine, he added. A spokesman of the authority managing the crossing in Rafah also told Al Jazeera that the delivery is just a fraction of what was going through before the war. "The strip is suffering from major famine, especially in the northern regions and Gaza City. The south is also suffering from a major humanitarian catastrophe. Therefore, bringing aid in this daily manner is not sufficient," Hisham Adwan said.

UN aid agencies and other humanitarian groups now say Gaza needs at least 500 to 600 trucks of humanitarian aid and commercial goods daily to sustain the dire situation in the besieged territory. According to estimates, about 1.5 million of those displaced from northern and central Gaza are now sheltering in the southernmost city of Rafah, whose future remains uncertain in the face of constant Israeli bombardment and threats of a ground invasion.

Severe restrictions imposed by Israel have resulted in an average of 20 to 25 trucks being turned away every day in Gaza. On some days since October 7, only about 100

to 150 trucks were allowed to enter. In recent weeks, the United States warned Israel it must commit to protecting civilians and aid workers and delivering more humanitarian aid or risk losing UN support.

Israel said measures are being taken to accelerate the inspection, transfer and distribution of aid to Gaza, adding that 257,530 tonnes of food in 12,197 trucks have entered Gaza since October 7. But Sean Carroll, head of the American Near East Refugee Aid organisation, said daily deliveries have to be much higher, and that agencies still do not have proper security assurances from Israel when they enter Gaza.

"To make up ground to meet the extreme gaps in food and other essentials for living, we need to see more than 500 trucks a day," he told Al Jazeera. "The real issue is, who is going to deliver all these aid," he asked, adding that UNRWA, the UN relief agency for Palestinians, is blocked from delivering aid to northern Gaza. Following the deadly incident involving seven World Central Kitchen staff, he said, humanitarian workers are "extremely nervous" to do their work in Gaza. — Arab News



PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur chairing a meeting regarding Annual Development Program.

CM Murad reviews city law, order situation

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Monday chairing a meeting to discuss the law & order situation in the city praised the police for successfully rescuing two kidnap victims from Baldia.

He expressed his desire to cultivate this spirit of dedication and hard work in the police force so that the city could become a peaceful and livable megalopolis.

The meeting was attended by Additional IG Karachi Imran Yakoob, DIG Mukadas Hyder, and the police party that participated in the operation to rescue two kidnapped persons.

They include SSP AVCC Zafar Siddiqui, DSP Qaiser Shah, Inspector, Abid Hussain, Sub Inspector Ghulam Rasool, Head Constable Tariq Samad, Khawar Yusuf, lady police Constable Ms Aresha Naz.

Shah said that he was not

satisfied with the law & order situation in the city. "I know the police were working hard but special focus was needed in the hotspots where the crime rate was high," he said and directed additional IG to strengthen such police stations where the crime ratio has increased.

Additional IG Karachi Imran Yakoob told the CM that the crime rate in the city has been recorded at 166 cases per day means less than one per police station. He added that the crime rate in the other big cities of other provinces was high but even then, the situation was being controlled through extensive checking, patrolling and intelligence.

The CM said that every day people were being killed for resisting the robberies. "This is quite painful, and it becomes our responsibility to protect the life, liberty and property of the citizen by

hook or by crook," he said and directed the Adl. IG to replace the lethargic police officers with efficient and hardworking.

Adl IG Police Imran Yakoob informed the CM that a raid was conducted on Sunday, April 7th, 2024, with the assistance of modern technical devices at Baldia No.02, near Food Street at Plot No.F.247 Baldia site in Karachi. During the police encounter, four kidnappers - Sabir, Inayat Rehman, Hazrat Ali, and Wahidullah - were arrested in an injured condition on the spot. The abductees, Shahid, and Abdullah were successfully rescued from the clutches of the accused.

The CM was further informed that a gang of criminals, operating from a UAE state, was involved in kidnapping innocent people for ransom. Imran Yakoob stated that he had traced all

the clues and data of the gangsters and would arrest them with the support of UAE authorities.

The CM appreciated the police force's hardwork and dedication and stressed the need for a similar spirit in the future to make the city peaceful and liveable. The police have been provided with the latest technology, weapons, and gadgets, which can aid in controlling crime.

Murad Ali Shah said that he has sent Inspector General of Police Ghulam Nabi to visit the Riverine area and ensure the safe recovery of kidnapped persons.

The CM expressed concern over the increasing street crime in the city and kidnapping for ransom in the Kutch area, he emphasized that the police, with the support of Rangers and other law enforcement agencies, must take strict actions to eliminate the criminals.

LHC sentences lawyer to 6 months in jail for misbehaving with judge

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Monday handed down six months imprisonment to a lawyer for misbehaving with a judge.

The court also imposed a fine of Rs 100,000 on the lawyer, Advocate Zahid Mahmood Goraya.

LHC Chief Justice Malik Shahzad Ahmad Khan announced the decision after proving the charge of contempt of court against Advocate Zahid Mahmood Goraya.

The chief justice conducted proceedings for more than three and a

half hours on the reference and recorded evidence from three witnesses, with Syed Farhad Ali Shah serving as the prosecutor during the proceedings.

The lawyer requested time and again to adjourn proceedings after Eid holidays, besides tendering an unconditional apology.

Lahore High Court Bar Association President Asad Manzoor Butt also requested to pardon the lawyer, adding that they would pay a visit to Justice Sultan Tanvir Ahmad

and seek an apology.

However, the chief justice observed that he had taken an oath under the Constitution.

After the announcement of the decision, the police took the lawyer into the custody. Justice Sultan Tanvir Ahmad forwarded a reference to the chief justice for taking action against the lawyer on charges of committing misconduct in his court. In the previous hearing, the chief justice had indicted the lawyer and directed to present witnesses on April 8th.

All BHUs RHCs across Punjab to be revamped: minister

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister for Communication and Works Sohaib Ahmed Bherth paid a surprise visit to a rural health center Balkhasar to check the building infrastructure and health facilities being provided to people.

Sohaib Ahmed Bherth inspected different wards and rooms and held discussion with patients and their attendants on treatment facilities and availability of medicines. He also observed medicine stocks and the temperature at which medicines were kept.

"The Punjab government under the leadership of CM Punjab Maryum Nawaz Sharif had started revamping BHUs and RHCs across the province. As a pilot project four BHUs and RHCs have completely been revamped, aligning them with modern infrastructure equipped with modern health facilities", Bherth added.

He said that it was the top most priority of CM Maryum Nawaz to provide better health facilities to the masses living in remote and far areas of the province so that they could have better health facility with modern infrastructure.

Crackdown on begging mafia continues

LAHORE (APP): Police intensified efforts against professional beggars across the city. As a result, 766 cases have been registered this year, leading to the arrest of 759 individuals.

This was stated by the Lahore Police spokesperson in a statement issued, on Monday. The spokesperson mentioned that arrests were made in various divisions of the city, including 208 in City Division, 54 in Cantonment Division, 111 in Civil Lines Division, 167 in Saddar Division, 80 in Iqbal Town Division and 139 in Model Town Division.

Capital City Police Officer Lahore Bilal Siddique Kamyana emphasized that groups involved in begging, including those exploiting children and women, did not deserve any leniency. He reiterated that Lahore Police were strictly implementing a zero-tolerance policy against begging.

MCL removes 788 encroachments

LAHORE (APP): The Metropolitan Corporation Lahore (MCL) carried out an anti-encroachment operation and demolished illegal structures in the provincial capital.

An MCL spokesperson told the media here on Monday that an anti-encroachment squad removed 788 encroachments in 71 operations last week from various locations of the city.

Over 72 encroachments were removed from Ravi zone, 140 from Data Ganj Bakhsh zone, 82 from Samnabad zone, 91 from Gulberg zone, 155 from Allama Iqbal zone, 54 from Shalimar zone, 46 from Nishtar zone, 42 from Wahga zone and 106 encroachments were cleared from Aziz Bhatti zone during the operation.

During the operation, 2,241 banners and streamers were removed and various sale points of meat for charity, popularly known as 'cheel gosht', were cleared.

Sharjeel chaired eleventh meeting of the Board of Directors of Sindh Mass Transit Authority in Karachi



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, chaired the eleventh meeting of the Board of Directors of Sindh Mass Transit Authority in Karachi.

In the meeting, the minutes of the tenth board meeting of the Board of Directors of the SMTA Board were approved.

The Karachi Mobility Project Yellow Line bus

service was also discussed in the meeting, along with the construction of bus depots, bridges, and underpasses. Speaking at the meeting, Senior Provincial Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that with the increasing population, the need to enhance facilities is inevitable.

He stated that the number of buses will be increased according to the needs of the people in the province so that individuals can benefit from improved, comfortable,

and affordable travel facilities. Sharjeel Inam Memon emphasized that the Sindh government is committed to completing the transport projects as soon as possible, aiming to provide the best travel facilities to the people.

The meeting was attended by Mayor Sukkur Arsalan Islam Sheikh, Secretary of Transport Asad Zaman, Managing Director of Sindh Mass Transit Authority Kamal Dayo, and other officials.

4 lakh job seekers, 67,000 employers registered through PITB's Job Centre

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Job Center, a collaborative initiative of the Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) and the Labour & Human Resource Department (L&HRD) has enrolled over 400,000 Job Seekers and 67,000 Employers since its launch in August 2022. This emerged during a progress review meeting presided over by PITB Chairman Faisal Yousaf here on Monday.

The Punjab Job Center, acting as a vital link between employers and job seekers, has played a crucial role in fostering connections between 67,000 employers from both the public and private sectors and potential

candidates. This online platform acts as a bridge among employment exchange agencies, promoters, and workers, catering to the diverse needs of the job market.

In his remarks on the occasion, Chairman Faisal Yousaf emphasized the significance of the Job Center in assisting and empowering youth to secure meaningful employment opportunities. He highlighted that the initiative not only aids industrialists but also empowers employers by offering access to a varied range of skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled workforce.

The online job portal, accessible at jobcenter.punjab.gov.pk, houses a com-

prehensive database encompassing a wide range of human capital from both public and private sectors. This includes skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled individuals, creating a dynamic platform for potential job seekers and employers alike.

Individuals looking for employment opportunities or seeking to fill job positions in both the public and private sectors are encouraged to register on the platform as business owners or citizen workers. The Job Center's commitment extends beyond mere registration as it actively maintains a robust database of available human resources across Punjab.

CM takes notice of girl's murder

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz took notice of a murder of a daughter in front of her father during a dacoity in Lahore.

The chief minister sought an immediate report from the inspector general of police and ordered the arrest of the accused immediately involved in the heinous crime. Maryam Nawaz expressed her sorrow with the affected family and stated that such nefarious elements were a scourge of the society and must be brought to justice.

HRCP demands immediate restoration of law and order

KARACHI (PPI): The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) on Monday expressed concern and demanded immediate restoration of law and order to ensure the safety of the citizens in Karachi.

The HRCP spokesperson stated that the law and order situation in Karachi has deteriorated to a dangerous level, as thousands of street crimes have been reported to the police in 2023. The spokesperson expressed concern as the first quarter report of 2024 also shows an increase in street crime while several hundred people were reportedly killed during resisting robbery incidents in Karachi. The HRCP spokesperson expressed utter shock at the government's failure to tackle the escalating crime rate in Karachi, meanwhile, factors such as economic depression, and unemployment also need to be addressed on an immediate basis.

Fraudster impersonating

LAHORE (INP): The police arrested a fraudster impersonating as Special Services Group (SSG) official during a crackdown in Anarkali area of Lahore on Monday. According to details, Petrolling Officer Muhammad Zeeshan signaled to stop a motorcycle carrying a man wearing SSG shirt over violation of traffic rules. The suspect got furious after police asked him to provide his identified and bike documents. However, the patrolling official held the suspect later identified as Adil and sent him behind the bars at Old Anarkali police station.

COAS hosted an Iftar Dinner for Pakistan Cricket Team at Army House

F.P. Report

RAWALPIND: General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS) hosted an Iftar Dinner for Pakistan Cricket Team at Army House Rawalpindi. Pakistan Cricket Team underwent and concluded physical training at Army School of Physical Training (ASPT) camp in Kakul, Abbottabad. Chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), Mohsin Naqvi along with PCB officials also attended the Iftar. COAS while talking with the players wished them all the best in their future endeavours. The cricketers thanked COAS for the excellent training extended provided to them at Kakul and the role Army plays in supporting the games in Pakistan.



NTDC to ensure uninterrupted power supply on Eid-ul-Fitr

LAHORE (APP): In compliance with the instructions of Ministry of Energy (Power Division), the National Transmission and Despatch Company Limited (NTDC) has completed all necessary preparations to ensure uninterrupted power supply throughout the country on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr.

A central control room has been set up to maintain close liaison with National Power Control Center and all distribution companies (DISCOs) which will work

round the clock during Eid-ul-Fitr holidays, according to the company's spokesmen here Monday.

Regional control rooms have also been set up in Islamabad, Multan and Hyderabad to deal with any emergency situation. All control rooms will be connected with each other through video link. These control rooms has been working throughout Ramadan ul Mubarak.

The teams of Asset Management (North) and (South) have also been

constituted for immediate response in case of any fault at NTDC grid stations or transmission lines across the country. The concerned officers will remain present at the grid stations all the time during Eid-ul-Fitr holidays.

Managing Director NTDC, Engr. Dr. Rana Abdul Jabbar Khan has directed the relevant NTDC formations to remain vigilant to ensure smooth power supply throughout the country on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr.

Wildlife combing operation going on in Punjab

LAHORE (APP): On the special instruction of senior Provincial Minister Maryam Aurangzeb, wildlife combing operation is going on in an effective and coordinated manners in Punjab. Director General Wildlife & Parks department Mudasser Riaz Malik is directly monitoring this on going operation in the province and as result of which a large number of protected animals and birds have been recovered in various successful operations in the Province during the last three days. As many as 88 accused guilty of violation were arrested, 74 accused were fined seven lakh rupees while the cases of 14 accused were sent to the courts.

The department has conducted Wildlife combing operation in 24 districts of Chakwal, Talagang, Mianwali, Sargodha, Layyah, Bahwalnagar, Khushab, Okara, Sahiwal, Vehari, Khanewal, Toba Tek

Singh, Multan, Dera Ghazi Khan, Jhang. Raids were conducted at various places in Gujrat, Faisalabad, Wazirabad, Narawal, Gujranwala, Lahore, Kasur, Attock and Rawalpindi where a large numbers of illegally kept protected wild animals and birds were recovered including 01 female Black Bear, 01 Pangolin, 10 Monkeys, 168 Parrots, Macaws, plum headed, Rose Ringed, Bajrigar, 51 Quails, 25 Partridges, 18 Chakurs, 10 Peacocks, 02 Crane and hundreds of innocent birds are included. A total of 88 accused were arrested in these successful operations out of which 74 accused were fined a total Rs. Seven Lac Rupees. 01 female Black bear, 01 monkey and 11 parrots shifted to Bahwalnagar Zoo, 01 Monkey, 01 Jungle cat, 40 Parrots of different species, 02 White peacock and 01 quail sent to Pirowal Wildlife Park, 01 rare Pangolin, dozens of other wild birds.

Sheikh calls for immediate actions to protect citizens

KARACHI (PPI): Haleem Adil Sheikh, the President of PTI Sindh, on Monday expressed grave concern over the deteriorating law and order situation in Sindh.

In his statement, he highlighted the alarming escalation of violence in Karachi, stating that the peace and security scenario in the province has reached at an alarming.

He said over the past three months, more than 80 citizens have lost their lives in the city during robbery incidents.

Sheikh emphasized a significant surge in street crimes in Karachi, a deliberate conspiracy to destabilize the peace in the city. He highlighted the reemergence of political criminals and thieves, which suggests a breakdown in the ability of law enforcement agencies to uphold peace and order.

According to Sheikh, citizens are being abducted and taken to remote areas of kacha where they are tortured, and videos of their ordeal are uploaded on social media platforms.

Areas like Kashmore, Kandhkot, and others have become hotspots for criminal activities.

PAF BASE, KOHAT TENDER NOTICE

1. Pakistan Air Force Base, Kohat invites sealed bids from firms / contractors, registered with Income Tax and Sales Tax Departments for **Conservancy Services** (FY 2024-25), regarding removal of garbage etc, from PAF Base, Kohat and its Lodger Units, including Technical and Domestic areas, as per requirements for the period, from 01 July, 2024 to 30 June 2025 (01 Year).

2. Bidding documents, containing detailed Terms and Conditions, procedure for submission of bids, Bid-security, Bid-validity, opening of bid, evaluation criteria, clarification / rejection of Bids, performance guarantee etc are available for the interested bidders, at office of the O i/c, Personnel Squadron, PAF Base, Kohat. **Bids submitted under any pattern, other than specified patterns** (available in O i/c Personnel Squadron office) **will not be acceptable**. 2% bid security of the total bid value should be submitted along with bid, in the shape of CDR / Demand draft in favour of Officer Commanding, Admin Wing, PAF Base, Kohat; otherwise, bid will not be accepted.

3. The bids, prepared in accordance with the instructions, given in the bidding documents, must reach at office of the O i/c, Personnel Squadron, PAF Base, Kohat, on or before **25th April, 2024**, at 1000 hrs. Bids will be opened on the same day, at 1200 hrs. The concerned authority reserves the right to accept / reject any / all tenders, on technical grounds. This advertisement is also available at PPRA's website : ppra.org.pk.

Officer Incharge, Personnel Squadron
PAF Base, Kohat
Ph: 0922-9260092 Ext: 5031

Holidays of tourism police, staff canceled — to facilitate tourists during Eid

PESHAWAR (APP): Zahid Chanzeb, Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism, Culture, Archeology & Museums, has canceled the holidays of the tourism police officers and tourism staff posted in tourist areas in view of Eid-ul-Fitr and has directed that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA), Tourism Facilitation Centers (TFCs) and Tourism Police will ensure the provision of all possible facilities to the tourists during Eid-ul-Fitr.

He issued these instructions while presiding over the meeting held regarding tourism arrangements during Eid-ul-Fitr holidays here on Monday.

Secretary Tourism and Culture Department Mohammad Bakhtiar Khan, DG KPCTA Barkatullah Marwat and other senior officers were present on this occasion.

Zahid Chanzeb clarified

that under the instructions of Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, the provincial government will provide all possible facilities to the tourists on Eid-ul-Fitr. Tourists can visit the serene places of the province without any fear.

He said that all the regional tourism authorities have also been instructed to ensure the provision of facilities for the tourists while the Tourism Police and Rescue 1122 officials will be on duty all the time to keep the traffic flowing smoothly at the tourist spots.

Hence he said the tourists can plan their tours and get route information by contacting Tourism Helpline 1422 before their trip.

This helpline is active 24 hours and tourists can seek help even in case of their vehicles faults anywhere. Similarly, he said, all the TFCs of KPCTA including Chitral, Kaghan,



PESHAWAR: Advisor to CM on Tourism, Culture, Archeology & Museums Zahid Chanzeb presiding over meeting regarding tourism arrangements.

Food Authority releases performance report

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority on Monday released its performance report for the month of Ramadan, highlighting significant actions taken against food adulteration and ensuring public health safety.

According to the report released on Tuesday, a total of 9,755 food-related businesses were inspected during the holy month of Ramadan, with approximately 46,825 kilograms and liters of substandard and hazardous food items seized and disposed of. Additionally, fines and licenses worth over Rs. 1.58 crore were imposed on violators.

The report further revealed that out of the total inspections conducted, 1,051 bakeries, 1,372 meat and chicken shops, 705 hotels and kebab shops, and 650 milk vendors were inspected. Among the confiscated substandard food items, 12,652 kilograms of various bakery products were discarded, while 51 bakeries were also sealed.

Moreover, approximately 2,150 liters of hazardous beverages and 7,262 liters of milk were also discarded due to health hazards. In efforts to enforce health regulations, warnings were issued to 763 businesses, and total 113 were sealed.

Highlighting the authority's commitment to ensuring food safety, Director

General of the Food Authority Wasif Saeed expressed determination to combat malpractice within the food industry.

Provincial Minister for Food, Zahir Shah Toru, commended the authority's efforts and emphasized the government's policy to guarantee food accessibility, affordability, and quality.

The authorities reiterated their dedication to fulfill their responsibilities and vowed to remain vigilant against the exploitation of consumers by the mafia.

They emphasized the continuous surveillance of food operations to eradicate malpractices and ensure the provision of safe and hygienic food products to the public.

Eid prayer scheduled at central Eid Gah

PESHAWAR (APP): The Auqaf department has announced that Eid ul Fitr prayers will be offered at the central Eid Gah Mosque on Charsadda road Peshawar at 7:30 AM.

Provincial Chief Khateeb, Moulana Muhammad Tayyab Qureshi, will lead the Eid

prayer.

The speech will begin at 7:00 AM, followed by prayers at 7:30 AM.

The central and provincial Ruet-e-Hilal (moon sighting) committees are scheduled to convene on Tuesday, April 9, to deliberate on the sighting of the Islamic month of

Shawwal's crescent.

The security plan for Eid ul Fitr has been finalized by the Capital City Police in Peshawar.

According to the plan, more than four thousand police officers and personnel will fulfill their security duties during the festival to ensure peace and tranquility.

DCs, DPOs directed to ensure bar of aerial firing

PESHAWAR (APP): The Commissioner, Peshawar Division Riaz Khan Mehsud has directed the Deputy Commissioners (DCs) and District Police Officers (DPOs) of all five districts of the division to utilize their all capabilities on complete prevention of aerial firing on moon-sighting night.

He issued these directives while presiding over a meeting regarding prevention of aerial firing and maintenance of smooth flow of traffic on the occasion of Eidul Fitr in the division here on Monday.

Besides, the Deputy Commissioners (DCs), District Police Officer (DPOs) of all districts of the division, authorities of traffic police, Water Supply & Sanitation Programme (WSSP) and administrative officers of the Capital Metropolitan Government also attended the meeting.

The Divisional Commissioner directed Police in all districts of the division to begin patrolling from the afternoon of the day of moon-sighting night and beside police, the concerned Assistant Commissioners should also ensure presence in their respective areas of jurisdiction.

The officers of the district administration have been directed to take stern legal action against those involved in aerial firing and not released such elements on bail at any cost.

Furthermore, the administration of all five districts have also been directed to accelerate public awareness campaigns against the aerial firing and deployment of additional traffic Sargent at crucial crossings and squares and roundabouts to ensure the smooth flow of vehicular traffic.

Similarly, the administration has also been directed to make special cleanliness arrangements on roads towards Eidgahs and sites of other big Eid congregations.

In the meanwhile, the officers of the district administration have also been issued instructions for showing no leniency towards the commuters' fleeing transporters and tightening of noose around kite flying and users of chemicalized kite threads.

Rain predicted

PESHAWAR (APP): The Regional Meteorological Department on Monday predicted five days rains starting April 10 to 15 in most parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

According to a notification issued by Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) stated that Regional Met Office Peshawar has informed that a new spell of rains is starting.

People are urged to take all precautionary measures to avoid any loss of life, damages to infrastructure and crops and animals.

All concerned authorities asked to take the safety measures.

Tourists to be informed about weather forecast, ensure availability of all emergency services staff and machineries and all resources, and all concerned line departments to remain vigilant in restoring road links.

In case of any occurrence contact with PDMA, active round the clock via helpline 1700.



PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Choudhry and IGP Akhtar Hayat Khan addressing a review meeting regarding Eid arrangement.

PHC full court reference held

PESHAWAR (APP): A full court reference of the judges of Peshawar High Court was held in honour of outgoing Chief Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan here on Monday.

Besides judges of Peshawar High Court, advocate general Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and additional attorney general, the full court reference was also attended by vice chairman KP Bar Council, president and general secretary of high court bar associations, president & general secretary of Peshawar bar association, lawyers, director general KP Judicial Academy, district and sessions judges.

Addressing the full court

reference here at PHC, the Chief Justice said that today marked a significant milestone in his life to stand here after serving on different key positions during his long 31 years and nine month service.

Highlighting his rich education background and professional experience in the field of law, the Chief Justice said that he has passed thousands of judgments while remaining judge of district judiciary, and around 15000 judgments since elevation, adding 509 judgments were challenged in Supreme Court out of which 279 were upheld whereas 188 are still sub-judice and only

Meeting held to review progress

PESHAWAR (APP): Under the directives of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur, a session was convened to review the progress of foreign-funded projects chaired by Additional Chief Secretary of Planning and Development Department, Syed Imtiaz Hussain Shah.

The meeting saw the participation of relevant secretaries, Chief Economist, project directors, and representatives from various sections of P&D.

The progress achieved thus far was assessed, with a directive from the Additional Chief Secretary to accelerate activities and improve coordination among stakeholders.

Polio eradication efforts: EOC Coordinator emphasizes media's crucial role

PESHAWAR (APP): Special Secretary of Health Department and Coordinator Emergency Operation Center (EOC) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Abdul Basit has said that eradicating polio is a national duty and the positive role of media in achieving this goal is of fundamental importance.

He expressed these views while talking to the media in a ceremony held at Peshawar Press Club (PPC) on Monday.

On this occasion, President PPC Arshad Aziz Malik, UNICEF Communication Officer Shadab Yoonus, PPC Vice President Tayyab Usman, General Secretary Irfan Musazai, Joint Secretary Gul Rehman Haqqani, Finance Secretary Rizwan Shaikh, members of Governing Body and large number of members and journalists were also present.

Abdul Basit while handing over 4 inverter air conditioners, a 75 inch LED and 3 multipurpose printers

and copiers to PPC President Arshad Aziz Malik lauded the cooperation between the PPC and the EOC.

He said that the Emergency Operation Centre is a body comprising of government and non-government stakeholders under one roof to eradicate polio in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

While Peshawar Press Club is the apex body of journalists in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, with more than 600 journalists working for print, electronic, and digital media as its members.

The signing of an MoU between PPC and EOC is a new milestone towards the eradication of polio from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Abdul Basit said that, unfortunately, only Pakistan and Afghanistan currently have polio virus in the world.

In the National cause of Polio eradication, our brave polio workers continue to strive for the success of

anti-polio campaigns despite all kinds of challenges, difficult conditions, and harsh weather conditions.

He said that due to these efforts, there is a significant reduction in polio cases, which can be judged from the fact that in the year 2022, 20 cases of polio were reported in our province, while only four cases were reported last year.

It is gratifying that not a single case of polio has been reported this year.

He said that certain elements have been creating negative and misleading propaganda regarding anti-polio campaigns but as a result of the active and effective support and cooperation of the media, this propaganda has been successfully tackled.

He said that now parents have come to know that the polio vaccine is safe in all respects and polio has been successfully eradicated worldwide, including Saudi Arabia and other Islamic

KPCTA holds Easter gala

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) organised a colourful gala to entertain members of Christian community and celebrate Easter in Khyber district.

Jointly organised by the KPCTA, Tourism Wing for Merged Districts and Christian community on the special directives of Adviser to Chief Minister on Tourism, Culture, Archaeology and Museums Zahid Chanzeb and KP Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry, the event was attended by more than 150 youths from across the Khyber district.



The youths participated in various games and healthy activities, including tug of war, musical chair, throwing ball, archery, traditional cuisines, henna designs competitions, face-painting and various other competitions among couples.

Holding the Easter gala was aimed at ending the inferiority complex among the youths hailing from Christian community and highlighting the pivotal role of youths in society and honing their capabilities in various fields.

The participants said that interfaith harmony among the youths of different religions was the need of the hour for which joint efforts should be continued at all

DI Khan's Sohan Halwa, Rajjar sweets attract shoppers

PESHAWAR (APP): Sohan Halwa, a special sweet of Dera Ismail Khan districts, Rajjar Methai of Charsadda and Mardani Peera here Monday attracted a large number of shoppers prior to Eidul Fitr celebrations.

In Peshawar, the sohan halwa of DI Khan, Gajar 'halwa' of Bannu, Mardani Pera of Mardan and Rajjar Methai of Charsadda districts are being sold like a hot cakes these days as special Eid sweet items.

Known as the land of hospitality, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is a unique province of Pakistan where traditional sweets including Sohan Halwa of Dera Ismail Khan become an important food item in Eid celebrations, weddings and birthday parties due to its delicious taste and energy perspectives.

Several varieties of

sohan halwa are brought from different districts including Multan to Peshawar as special Eid items, however, the Dera Ismail Khan's variety attracts a substantial number of buyers due to its unique flavor, taste and being cost-efficient.

Noor Ali alias Pehlwan, who run a famous sweet shop at Qissa Khawani Peshawar told APP that he had brought 60kg sohan halwa stock from DI Khan and all of it were sold out till today.

"My son had visited DI Khan last night to bring additional 50KG sohan halwa stock to fulfill people's pressing demands for Eid celebrations and upcoming wedding parties," he said.

The ingredients required for the special halwa include milk, khoya, soni,

fine flour, sugar and ghee besides dry fruits, which make it more delicious and tasty. He said the traders from different parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, Balochistan, Azad Kashmir and Punjab have placed heavy orders for Eid and extra labour was hired to meet their pressing demands for sweets and confectionaries.

Like other food items, he said the prices of DI Khan and Multani sohan halwa were also increased in local market due to soaring price hike and one KG was available on ranges of Rs500 to Rs600 per KG in Peshawar, which was economical than Multani sohan halwa that was being sold at Rs550 to Rs700 per KG.

"My entire family likes DI Khan sohan halwa due to its delectable taste and energy perspective," said

Ehtisham Khan, a lecturer of Urdu literature at Qissa Khwani bazaar. "I purchased four KG sohan halwa including two kg for my married daughter as a special gift on Eid," he said.

Like sohan halwa, the Rajjar Methai made of pure "Gur" of Charsadda district also attracts a large number of buyers for Eid parties due to its appetizing taste and affordable prices.

Located about one kilometer north of Charsadda city, Rajjar bazaar has now turned into a sweets market where a great rush of buyers are being witnessed in all bakery shops on the eve of Eidul Fitr celebrations.

The traditional sweet was brought in substantial quantities in Peshawar, Charsadda, Swabi, Nowshera and Mardan districts where Rajjar sweets were being sold like hot

cake.

Yaqoob Khan, an owner of Razzar sweet told APP that this hard earned business was started by his grandfather Israruddin alias Chacha Halwai in 1930 and he belonged to the third generation running it today to support his family.

The delicious quality of the sweet differentiates it from the rest of confectioneries due to its better taste, chemically free and affordable price. The people served it to relatives and guests as a special item besides on joys occasions of Eid, weddings, engagements and children birthday strengthening the bond of love and friendship.

"Personally, I like Rajjar sweet due its palatable taste and cost-efficient," said Riaz Khan, a retired government employee, adding people of all social status

can afford it. "I purchased four KG Rajar sweets at Rs 400 per kilogram for my family members and friends as a special marriage gift," he added.

Haji Yaqoob said the recipe for the popular sweet changed over the years and only butter, flour and gur were used in its preparation by my father as sugar was not available in those ancient days in Charsadda.

He said presently it was being prepared with various ingredients including deshi ghee, milk, butter, gur and white flour enhances its taste and delectability. The popular sweet also attracted traders from Afghanistan and Central Asian Republic while marching to the sub-continent via Charsadda and Peshawar through GT Road.

The local people also send the sweets as a gift to

their friends and relatives, living in other parts of the country as well as abroad. It is also being exported to Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Iran, Syria and several Middle East countries besides send to USA, UK and other western countries as a special gift for friends and relatives.

Similarly, mardani pera sweet prepared of milk and butter beside other ingredients, also attract buyers. "Mardani sweet is my first choice for Eid parties. I purchased 10 kilograms of sweets including five KG each for my married sisters, maternal uncles and relatives as special Eid gifts," Professor Dr Naeem Khan of Swabi University told APP.

He said Pakistan can earn valuable foreign exchange by exporting the traditional confectionery to

international markets. Focus should be made on its marketing by involving foreign missions to explore new avenues for these popular products besides social and digital media to be used for its proper projection overseas.

The manufacturers and shopkeepers of these traditional sweets said that they had suffered great financial losses due to the corona pandemic and 2022 devastating flood and urged the government to financially support the affectees besides providing interest free loans to them.

This would enable the affected shopkeepers and manufacturers to strengthen their business besides providing jobs to labourers.

They also demanded industry status to DI Khan's sohan halwa and Rajar methai of Charsadda.



In brief

Free clothes distributed F.P. Report

LARKANA: Last day in Larkana, a famous social organization of Sindh, Alzahra Foundation Pakistan distributed Eid ration to 200 poor families in Ramzan Sharif. Eid ration distribution ceremony was held at Abdul Latif Nizamani Labor Hall in which Chairman Al Zahra Foundation Pakistan Sadruddin Sheikh, Senior Vice Chairman Abdul Wahid Sheikh President Atif Sheikh, General Secretary Ahmar Rehmat Sheikh, Asif Jokio, Babu Mazhar, Gul Sheikh and Tariq Sheikh Rasheed 200 Rations were distributed among the affected and poor deserving families. On this occasion, the social leaders said that the effects of inflation are in front of everyone, the middle class is facing difficulties in completing the monthly expenses due to which the conditions of the poor and middle class have become worse. That poor people can be helped. He said that welfare and improvement work is going on with the help of Sarandi people in purchasing and supplying ration.

Man dies, son injured

SHEIKHUPURA (INP): An elderly person was killed and his son was critically injured when a reckless driven mini-truck ran over pedestrians here on Monday. According to details, a mini-truck got out of over speeding and crushed two pedestrians walking along Lahore road near a housing society. As a result of accident, 75-year-old Muhammad Yousaf was killed on the spot while 50-year-old Riaz Yousaf was critically injured. The body and injured were shifted to hospital and police after registering a case against mini-truck driver started investigations.

11 water pilferers booked

SARGODHA (INP): Irrigation authorities caught eleven farmers involved in water theft across the district. Police said on Monday, the teams conducted raids at village Mateela, Ahmadwala, Vijh, Mid Ranjha and caught 11 farmers over watering the farms from government canals. They were-- Waris, Aslam, Iqbal, Gulzar, Sharif, Falak Sher,Pervaiz, Siddique and others. On the reports of authorities, police registered separate cases.

Beggars s warm markets F.P. Report

ATTOCK: As Eid ul Fitr draws nearer, hordes of beggars have flocked the markets, shopping malls, traffic signals and streets in district attack. The beggars, mostly women and children, are being witnessed at commercial places, including Pindi Gheb, Jand, Fatehjang, Hazro, Hassanabdal and Attock City bazaars and Markets. The women, mostly carrying newborn babies, are seen sitting at pedestrian bridges, centers of markets and bus stops. They also show 'medical reports or prescriptions' to passengers at bus stops, outside medical stores and hospitals, asking them to help them in getting treatment. As per reported by our district representative faisal munir that the beggars cause inconvenience to pedestrians and people visiting bazaars for shopping. On the other hand, the local administration and police have not chalked out a strategy to deal with the influx of professional beggars.

Newly elected MNA and Dy Speaker KP PA warmly welcomed

F.P. Report

CHITRAL: Newly elected Member of National Assembly from Chitral, Abdul Taif, and Member Provincial Assembly from Upper Chitral District, Suraya Bibi, who is also Deputy Speaker of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, were warmly welcomed on their arrival to Chitral.

Workers of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf went to Lowari Tunnel to receive and welcome them and brought them to Chitral in procession. During this time, the workers were waiting for them at various places in Ziarat, Ashriat, Drosh, Sayedabad, Buroz, Chamerkan and Chitral and greeted them by putting garlands in their neck. In Chamerkan, two cute babies daughters of Syed Mukhtar Ali Shah Advocate welcomed the visiting parliamentarians by offering them a bouquet of flowers.

A brief ceremony was also held on the top floor of a plaza in Drosh presided over by Haji Gul Nawaz Khan, President of Tehsil Drosh. On this occasion, he congratulated the newly elected members of the assembly and also advised them as a veteran politician



that this seat of power (ruling) is temporary if you serve the people selflessly, you can be successful again, otherwise the people will reject you as they rejected formers representatives.

Speaking at the event, Member National Assembly Abdul Latif said that he has entered politics with the determination to serve the nation. He said that Chitral is a best tourism spot but even than a backward district and here There is no factory, industry or big business.

We have great potential of sources of tourism and if we take concrete steps to promote tourism, it will also give development to this area. He said that in order to develop tourism,

the first thing is to improve condition of roads, but unfortunately the condition of the roads of Chitral is very bad. Will pick up on the floor to assembly. He also urged the people to remain satisfied and bring to their notice whatever issues are happening in their area. Haji Sultan senior worker of party, Deputy Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Suraya Bibi and others also expressed their views in the event.

When the convoy reached Chitral, they were received by Tehsil Chitral Nazeem Prince Amanur Rehman at Governor's Cottage and an Iftar party was also offered in their honor, which was attended by a large number of people.

4 children killed in road mishap F.P. Report

T T SINGH: Four students died when a speeding tractor-trolley rammed a minivan carrying the children to school in Toba Tek Singh on Monday morning. Another eight students were injured in the accident occurred near Motorway bridge in Tehsil Pir Mahal of Toba Tek Singh.

Rescue personnel rushed to the accident site and shifted the bodies and the injured to a hospital. Three of the four deceased students were identified as four-year-old Husna, four-year-old Muhammad Mugheer, seven-year-old Muhammad Ahmad. All children were residents of 341GB. The school van was taking 14 students to school from Shorkot Road to Pir Mahal.

A tanker filled with 48,000 litres of oil was overturned on the main highway in Sadiqabad on Monday morning, prompting authorities to shut down the road for traffic as a precautionary measure. The accident happened after the oil tanker driver fell asleep and the highway was closed for traffic as the fuel started to leak from the tanker. Later the authorities sealed the whole area where the accident occurred. The oil tanker was travelling from Mahmoodkot to Karachi.

ZAB's death anniversary observed F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: The 45th death anniversary of late Prime Minister and founder of Pakistan People's Party Zulifkar Ali Bhutto observed here. In this connection a ceremony held at resident of District President PPP Hafizabad Muhammad Arshad Mehind.

Peer Syed Waseem-ul-Hasan Naqvi, Professor Noor Muhammad, Khaleeq Ahmad Qaisar, Syed Musaddaq Ghaznavi, ShaifqRahi and other workers attended the ceremony. Addressing on the occasion, Muhammad Arshad Mehind said that Zulifkar Ali Bhutto kept foundation of PPP and raised slogan of 'Rooty', 'Kapra and 'Makan' bread, cloth and residence and took different measures to uplift the poor.

He said that he gained popularity during a short span of time contrary to any other politician in the country. He created awareness among people about their democratic rights and declared that people were source of power. He said that Zulifkar Ali Bhutto launched work on atomic programme and gave constitution of the country but he was hanged to death on April 4, 1979 and closed bright era of progress and prosperity of the country.

Theft and robbery incidents increased in South Waziristan

F.P. Report

WANA: In Wana district of Lower South Waziristan, theft and robbery have increased owing to inaction of police and other law enforcement agencies. Thieves robbed people of transformers, water pumps, electric wires and sheep a great number of valuable things especially in nights. The local police are not taking any action against these habitual thieves in the area.

According to public circles, some notorious thieves, have been stealing from various villages on a daily basis in Wana district of Lower Waziristan for the past one year, but no thief has been arrested so far. Professional thieves stole all essential equipment from the tube well of local journalist Irfanullah and his brother Mustafa tonight, and two days ago, these thieves tried to steal a motorcycle at gunpoint in Dab kot village, but the local people failed their nefarious attempts on time.

On the other hand, reliable sources have revealed that the thieves in the area have the support of a few

police personnel. Finally, the public has demanded the police force and law enforcement agencies to identify the said thieves through DNA. On the other hand, the leaders of all the political parties in Wana told the media representatives that if the police do not stop the thefts at night times in Lower Waziristan, then we would protest on a large scale and would mobilize people to get thefts stopped through collective efforts.

Meanwhile, due to the lack of passport papers, hundreds of applicants in Wana district of Lower South Waziristan have lost their jobs abroad and have faced lot of problems. Five months ago, a large number of applicants wished to go abroad to earn livelihood for their families, have submitted applications for getting normal passports from the office.

But till now passports could not be generated. The applicants said that the passports are given to the people who submitted the urgent passports on time, but the applicants who submitted only the for normal passports, have faced diffi-

culties. In the case of foreign countries, hundreds of labor people were deprived due to which they had to suffer a loss of lakhs of rupees, they expressed their anger and said that there is no shortage of papers in the case of making an urgent passport, but there is no passport paper in making a normal passport, it is highly regrettable.

On the other hand, Wana Passport Manager Noor Ahmed told the media that the passport papers have expired since December 10, 2023 across the country due to which the applicants are facing severe problems. He said that a small amount of papers is available for urgent basis applicants, and applicants submitting to obtain passport on normal fees, have great difficulty due exhaustion of papers in passport offices.

According to Manager Noor Ahmed, the number of normal passport applicants in Wana passport office has reached about 300, but due to lack of papers, they are now losing their foreign jobs. The government should take timely measures to address this issue.

Muslim world urged to support Palestinians

F. P. Report

LOWER DIR: Speakers at a function held at Balambat urged Muslim countries to forge unity against the brutal Israeli forces and support the innocent Palestinians. The function was arranged by the Ahya ul Uloom Balambat, a religious seminary run by the Jamaat-i-Islami Lower Dir on completion of a 42-day 'tafseer e Quran' class.

Hundreds of the JI activists and local citizens attended the function which was addressed by prominent religious scholar Maulana Hidayatullah, nazim Ahya ul Uloom Mufti Irfanuddin, seminary's head Sheikh Ihsanullah Khalis, JI district general secretary Hafiz Yaqubur Rehman and others. A total of 123 male and 98 female students were awarded with certificates on completion of their courses at the seminary.

The speakers said that religious seminaries were rightly called the forts of Islam while the Quran was not only a sacred book but it was a complete code of life for the Muslims. They said that people following the Islamic teachings in their life were successful in

both the worlds. One of the speakers said that Quranic teachings were not being followed and implemented in Pakistani courts. He said the Holy Quran should have been the supreme law in the country.

The speakers regretted that none of the Islamic states had a real Islamic system. They asked the graduating students of the seminary to devote their lives for serving humanity and countrymen irrespective of their religious and political backgrounds.

Tajik Milli Ittihad: The Tajik Milli Ittihad (TMI), an organization representing Tajik clan in parts of Pakistan, arranged an iftar dinner to mark its foundation day at a local hotel in Timergara. Elders of the Tajik and Deegan tribes attended the dinner. The meeting discussed the arrangements for the golden jubilee celebrations on the 50th foundation day of the organization.

The TMI central president Sardar Javed Akhtar advocate, central chairman Ihsanul Haq Tajik, Sindh provincial president Habib Ahmad, KP provincial president Muhammad Shaer Tajik, district president Nawab

Ali and others.

The speakers said that Tajik across Pakistan, Afghanistan and central Asian countries had a great and ancient history. They said the TMI was organizing the tribe on district, provincial and national level in Pakistan so that a central cabinet could be announced through consensus. They also suggested the publication of a magazine of the organization and funds' raising on national level.

Stored grapes: The residents of Timergara demanded of the district administration to keep a check on the sale of cold storage grapes in the markets. Talking to local journalists the residents said that cold storage grapes containing poisonous chemicals were sold openly during the Holy month of Ramadan. They said the adulterated grapes could cause serious health hazards so the administration should keep a check on its sale and the fruit should be tested at a reputable laboratory for chemicals. They pointed out that the fruit was being imported from Afghanistan and Iran and sold at high prices of Rs 500 per kilogram during the Holy month.

AWKUM introduces new disciplines: Prof. Dr. Zahar

Anees Takar

MARDAN: Abdul Wali Khan University under the guidance of Professor Dr. Zahar Shah is undertaking proactive measures to equip its students with the skills necessary to tackle contemporary challenges. In an informal gathering held recently Professor Zahar Shah, accompanied by department chairman Professor Muhammad Zeb, engaged in discussions with students regarding the prevailing educational and societal challenges.

Professor Zahar Shah reiterated the importance of education in fostering progress, emphasizing the need for an adaptable educational system that meets the demands of the current era. Recognizing the significance of market education and technical skills, Abdul Wali Khan University has collaborated with various institutions and societies to incorporate interdisciplinary curricula, including emerging fields like Artificial Intelligence, aimed at preparing students to confront present challenges.

Highlighting the university's commitment to excellence, Professor Zahar Shah lauded Abdul Wali Khan



University as one of the nation's premier educational institutions. Every year, hundreds of graduates from the university actively contribute to the nation's development, reflecting the institution's dedication to producing skilled professionals.

Addressing the pressing issues facing the country, particularly the energy crisis, Professor Zahar Shah emphasized the pivotal role of universities in finding solutions. Abdul Wali Khan University prioritizes research and innovation, with a keen focus on emerging fields like Artificial Intelligence, which hold promise for addressing societal needs while also providing employment opportunities.

Furthermore, Professor Zahar Shah disclosed initiatives aimed at enhancing practical training for stu-

dents, including partnerships with hospitals and industry stakeholders. The establishment of research centers and media collaborations underscores the university's commitment to providing students with a comprehensive educational experience that extends beyond the classroom.

In conclusion, Professor Zahar Shah emphasized that education is indispensable for progress, and universities play a crucial role in addressing contemporary challenges. He reiterated the university's dedication to providing students with a holistic education that prepares them for both academic and professional success. With Abdul Wali Khan University's continued efforts and focus on innovation, the institution remains at the forefront of shaping the future of education in Pakistan.

Revamping police department: A call for comprehensive reforms

Sajid Mumtaz Khan

IN the tapestry of a nation's governance, the police department stands as one of the most crucial threads. It is the institution tasked with upholding law and order, safeguarding citizens' rights, and maintaining societal harmony. In Pakistan, however, the fabric of law enforcement has been frayed by decades of systemic challenges, leaving behind a patchwork of unfulfilled promises and unrealized potential. Despite numerous pledges and intermittent efforts to reform the police department, the grand tapestry of transformation remains unfinished, with the public and police officials alike grappling with a sense of disillusionment.

The issue at hand transcends mere cosmetic changes or superficial adjustments; it strikes at the very core of public trust and confidence in law enforcement. A significant aspect of this trust is rooted in the appearance and professionalism exhibited by police officers. When citizens encounter law enforcement personnel, their perception is profoundly influenced by the officers' demeanour, attire, and conduct. Unfortunately, in Pakistan, this aspect has often fallen short of expectations. Outdated uniforms, inadequate equipment, and a lack of emphasis on professional demeanour have contributed to a perception of law enforcement as unapproachable or untrustworthy in the eyes of the public.

To truly effect change, reforms must extend beyond the surface and delve deep into the institutional framework of the police department. Internal

issues, such as corruption, inefficiency, and a lack of accountability, have eroded the department's effectiveness from within. Despite sporadic efforts to address these issues, they persist as entrenched challenges, undermining public confidence and hindering the department's ability to fulfill its mandate effectively. Corruption, in particular, has been a persistent stain on the reputation of law enforcement in Pakistan, breeding a culture of impunity and undermining the rule of law.

Addressing appearance and professionalism: Addressing Appearance and Professionalism in law enforcement is not just about the outward presentation of officers; it's about instilling a culture of professionalism and accountability that resonates with the public. The image projected by police officers significantly influences public trust and confidence, shaping the dynamics of law enforcement interactions. However, achieving a standard of professionalism goes beyond simply updating uniforms and equipment; it requires a comprehensive approach that includes training, workshops, and courses with international institutions, especially for low-ranked officers and field personnel.

Firstly, training programs can be tailored to instill the importance of professionalism, etiquette, and effective communication skills. Low-ranked officers and field personnel often have direct and frequent interactions with the public, making it imperative for them to embody professionalism in their conduct. Workshops focused on conflict resolution, de-escalation techniques, and cultural sensitivity

can equip officers with the tools to navigate diverse and potentially volatile situations with professionalism and respect.

Furthermore, courses conducted in collaboration with international institutions can offer valuable insights into global best practices and standards of professionalism. By exposing officers to different policing methodologies and approaches from around the world, these courses can broaden their perspectives and enhance their understanding of the role of professionalism in law enforcement. Training modules on topics such as community policing, procedural fairness, and human rights can help officers develop a holistic understanding of their responsibilities and obligations as public servants.

Addressing appearance and professionalism in law enforcement requires more than just superficial changes; it demands a concerted effort to instill a culture of professionalism and accountability throughout the department. By providing training, workshops, and courses with international institutions for low-ranked officers and field personnel, Pakistan can elevate the standards of professionalism within its police force, thereby enhancing public trust and confidence in law enforcement.

Internal overhaul for efficiency: Internal Overhaul for Efficiency within the police department is imperative to address systemic issues such as corruption, inefficiency, and a lack of accountability. A crucial aspect of this overhaul involves reforming the methods of induction or recruitment to ensure transparency, meritocracy, and professionalism from the outset.

Firstly, the recruitment process should be standardized and conducted through a transparent and merit-based system. This entails establishing clear criteria for selection, including educational qualifications, physical fitness standards, and psychological assessments. By implementing standardized recruitment procedures, the department can mitigate the risk of nepotism, favouritism, and other forms of undue influence in the hiring process.

Additionally, establishing a unanimous policy for promotion is essential to ensure fairness and transparency in career progression within the police department. Promotion criteria should be clearly defined, merit-based, and consistently applied across all ranks. Key performance indicators, such as demonstrated leadership abilities, exemplary conduct, and contributions to departmental objectives, should be used to evaluate candidates for promotion. By establishing a standardized promotion policy, the department can incentivize excellence and foster a culture of professionalism and accountability among its personnel.

Moreover, performance evaluation mechanisms should be implemented to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of police officers at all levels. These evaluations should be based on objective criteria, such as crime reduction rates, response times, community satisfaction surveys, and adherence to departmental policies and procedures. By regularly evaluating performance against established benchmarks, the department can identify areas for improvement, recognize exemplary conduct, and hold officers accountable for their

actions.

Incentives and rewards should be instituted to recognize and incentivize outstanding performance among police personnel. This could include commendations, awards, and career advancement opportunities for officers who consistently demonstrate excellence in their duties. Conversely, disciplinary measures should be swiftly implemented to address misconduct, negligence, or other breaches of professional conduct. By instituting a system of rewards and punishments, the department can promote a culture of accountability and integrity while reinforcing the importance of professionalism and ethical behaviour.

An internal overhaul for efficiency within the police department requires comprehensive reforms in recruitment methods, promotion policies, performance evaluation mechanisms, and incentives and disciplinary measures. By prioritizing transparency, meritocracy, and professionalism at every level, Pakistan can build a police force that is more responsive, accountable, and effective in serving and protecting its citizens.

Welfare measures for police personnel: Welfare Measures for Police Personnel are essential to ensure the well-being, morale, and effectiveness of officers who bear the responsibility of maintaining law and order. The provision of comprehensive welfare initiatives is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic investment in the overall capabilities and performance of the police force. In line with this understanding, it is crucial to expand welfare measures for police personnel in Pakistan, drawing inspiration from suc-

cessful models such as those implemented by the Pakistan Army.

One key aspect of welfare measures is providing healthcare facilities for police personnel akin to those provided to military personnel. This includes establishing well-equipped medical facilities, hospitals, and dispensaries that offer comprehensive healthcare services, including preventive care, emergency treatment, and specialized medical care. Additionally, access to quality healthcare should extend to officers' families, ensuring that they receive the support they need to maintain their health and well-being.

Education is another critical component of welfare measures for police personnel. Ensuring access to quality education for officers' children can alleviate financial burdens and contribute to upward mobility within police families. This can be achieved through the establishment of schools or educational scholarships that support the academic pursuits of police personnel's children, providing them with opportunities for personal and professional growth.

Social support programs are essential for addressing the diverse needs of police personnel and their families. This may include counselling services, financial assistance programs, and support groups aimed at addressing issues such as stress, trauma, and family dynamics. Additionally, community centres specifically tailored to the needs of police families can serve as hubs for social interaction, recreation, and access to resources and support services.

(To be continued)



Tuesday, April 09, 2024

Record flood waters rise in Russia's Urals

MOSCOW (Reuters): Flood waters were rising in two cities in Russia's Ural mountains after Europe's third-longest river burst through a dam, flooding at least 10,000 homes and forcing thousands of people to flee with just their pets and a few belongings.

Some of the worst floods in decades have hit a string of Russian regions in the Ural Mountains and Siberia, alongside parts of neighbouring Kazakhstan in recent days. The Ural River, which rises in the Ural Mountains and flows into the Caspian Sea, swelled several metres due to melt water, bursting through a dam embankment in the city of Orsk, 1,800 km (1,100 miles) east of Moscow.

The mayor of Orsk, Vasily Kozupitsa, was quoted by Russian news agencies as saying a second river in the town, the Yelshanka, had also burst its banks. Measures were being undertaken to evacuate residents from affected areas. More than 6,100 people have already been evacuated from the city of 230,000, according to local authorities. Fifteen of 40 schools in the school had been flooded. Footage published by the Emergencies Ministry showed people making their way through neck-high waters, rescuing stranded dogs and travelling along flooded roads in boats and canoes. State news agency TASS reported that six adults and three children had been hospitalised in Orsk, but their condition was not life-threatening.

Agencies quoted authorities as saying the Samara River in the town of Buzuluk, further west in Orenburg region, was also rising quickly. Measures were taken to keep residents safe. President Vladimir Putin ordered Emergencies Minister Alexander Kurenkov to fly to the region. The Kremlin said that flooding was now also inevitable in the Urals region of Kurgan and the Siberian region of Tyumen. Putin had spoken to the governors of the regions by telephone, the Kremlin said. In Kurgan city, which has a population of 310,000, authorities ordered residents of one riverside neighbourhood to evacuate urgently, saying that flood waters would soon arrive in the city. The Orenburg region's governor, Denis Pasler, said the floods were the worst to hit the region since records began.

He said that flooding had been recorded along the entire course of the 2,400-km (1,500-mile) Ural River, which flows through Orenburg region and then through Kazakhstan into the Caspian Sea. Russian media cited Orenburg region authorities as estimating the cost of flood damage locally as around 21 billion roubles (\$227 million) and saying that flood waters would dissipate only after April 20. In Kazakhstan, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev said the floods were his country's largest natural disaster in terms of scale and impact for 80 years. North Korea leader Kim Jong Un expressed sympathy to Putin about the flood, state



media KCNA said, underscoring stronger ties between Moscow and Pyongyang after the leaders met last year. "Our people will always be with the Russian people," Kim said.

Flood warnings were issued in other Russian regions and Kurenkov said the situation could get worse very fast. "The water is coming, and in the coming days its level will only rise," said Sergei Salmin, the mayor of Orenburg, a city of at least 550,000 people. "The flood situation remains critical." Emergencies Minister Kurenkov said bottled water and mobile treatment plants were needed, while local health officials said vaccinations against Hepatitis A were being conducted in flooded areas. Local officials said the dam in Orsk was built for a water level of 5.5 metres (18 feet) yet the Ural River rose to 9.6 metres (31.5 feet). Federal investigators opened a criminal case for negligence and the violation of safety rules over the construction of the 2010 dam, which prosecutors said had not been maintained properly.

The Orsk oil refinery suspended work due to the flooding. Last year, the Orsk Refinery processed 4.5 million tons of oil. Russia's government declared the situation in flood-hit areas in the Orenburg region a federal emergency, with preparations for possible flooding underway in three other regions, state media reported. The floods, caused by rising water levels in the Ural River, forced over 4,000 people, including 885 children, to evacuate in the Orenburg region, the regional government said. State news agency Tass said that a further 2,000 homes were flooded, bringing the total to nearly 6,300 in the region. The total damage from the flood in the Orenburg region is estimated to amount to around 21 billion rubles (\$227 million), the regional government said. Russia's Emergency Situations Minister Alexander Kurenkov arrived in Orsk - one of the most hard-hit cities - to supervise rescue operations.

"I propose classifying the situation in the Orenburg region as a federal emergency and establishing a federal level of response," the minister said, according to RIA Novosti. The move means federal assistance and coordination can supplement state and local efforts. Orsk, less than 20 kilometers

(less than 13 miles) north of the border with Kazakhstan, suffered the brunt of the floods that caused a dam to break, according to Orsk Mayor Vasily Kozupitsa. By 4,500 residential buildings in the city of 200,000 were flooded and evacuation efforts were still ongoing, Tass said. A criminal probe has been launched to investigate suspected construction violations that may have caused the dam to break. Local authorities said the dam could withstand water levels up to 5.5 meters (nearly 18 feet). The water level reached about 9.3 meters (30.51 feet) and rising. Kozupitsa said. The level in Orsk reached 9.7 meters (31.82 feet), according to Russia's water level information site AllRivers. Authorities in Orsk reported that four people had died, but said their deaths were unrelated to the flooding.

Officials in the regional capital, also called Orenburg, some 250 kilometers (155 miles) away from Orsk, wrote on Telegram that the situation in the city was getting worse, as water levels increased by 28 centimeters (11 inches) compared with the previous day. Over 1,300 homes flooded and 428 people were evacuated, they said. Footage from Orsk and Orenburg showed water covering the streets dotted with single-story houses. The designation of the situation as a federal emergency reflects the risk of flooding beyond the Orenburg region. Russia's Ministry for Emergency Situations evacuated around 820 people in the neighboring Samara region, the ministry's regional directorate said. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that Russian President Vladimir Putin had spoken with Kurenkov, as well as the heads of the Kurgan and Tyumen regions, located in the Ural Mountains area, to discuss the situation and "the need ... for early adoption of measures to assist people and their possible evacuation."

Preventative evacuation began in two districts of the Kurgan region, the regional department of Emergency Situations Ministry wrote on Telegram. The Ural River, about 2,428 kilometers (1,509 miles) long, flows from the southern section of the Urals into the north end of the Caspian Sea, through Russia and Kazakhstan.

Ukraine war: UN body urges restraint

KYIV (BBC): A new drone attack on Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia power plant has raised the risk of a "major nuclear accident", the UN's atomic watchdog has warned. Russia said Ukraine was behind the attack, which it said injured three people. Ukraine has denied involvement. The giant Russian-held nuclear plant, with six reactors, is on the frontline of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

The UN's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has repeatedly warned against such attacks. IAEA head Rafael Grossi said drone strike was "reckless" and "a major escalation of the nuclear safety and security dangers" facing the plant. The Zaporizhzhia plant, in southern Ukraine, is the largest in Europe. Russian forces seized it shortly after launching their February 2022 full-scale invasion and have occupied it ever since. The IAEA, which has a team of experts at Zaporizhzhia, confirmed "physical impact of drone attacks" at the plant, including at one of the reactors. The plant's Russian-installed administration said radiation levels were normal and that there was no serious damage. The IAEA said the damage had not compromised nuclear safety, but it warned that "this is a serious incident with potential to undermine [the] integrity of the reactor's containment system". Mr Grossi specified there had been "at least three direct hits" against the plant's "main reactor containment structures". "This cannot happen," he said. "No one can conceivably benefit or get any military or political advantage from attacks against nuclear facilities. This is a no go."

Both Russia and Ukraine regularly accuse each other of shelling the plant and risking a serious nuclear accident. The plant's Russian administration has said Ukraine's armed forces were behind the attack, but Ukraine has denied the allegation. "Ukraine was not involved in any armed provocations on the site," Ukrainian Main Intelligence Directorate spokesman Andriy Yusov told the Ukrainska Pravda news website. The plant is "illegally occupied by Russia," he added. Mr Yusov accused Russia of endangering the nuclear facility, the civilian population and the environment by carrying out strikes on the plant itself. Last month the IAEA said its team of experts at the plant had heard explosions every day for a week. At the time, Mr Grossi said: "For more than two years now, nuclear safety and security in Ukraine has been in constant jeopardy. We remain determined to do everything we can to help minimise the risk of a nuclear accident that could harm people and the environment, not only in Ukraine."

Ecuador and Mexico were feuding

MEXICO CITY (AP): A spat between Ecuadorian President Daniel Noboa and Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador spiraled into a full-blown diplomatic crisis when Ecuadorian police raided Mexico's embassy in an extremely rare show of force that legal experts, presidents and diplomats have deemed a violation of long-established international accords.

With Noboa's authorization, police broke into the embassy to arrest Ecuador's former Vice President Jorge Glas, a convicted criminal and fugitive who had been living there since December. In the months before officers stormed the diplomatic facility, relations between the countries became strained and then Mexico's Foreign Relations Secretariat announced that Glas, who was on parole, had shown up at the embassy in Quito, the capital, and asked for "entry and safeguard," fearing for his "personal safety and freedom."

The agency said he had been allowed in "as a guest" based on Mexico's legal framework of international protection of persons and other constitutional and legal norms. Ecuador's government immediately requested that Mexican officials ask Glas to leave the embassy.

Latin American govts rally around Mexico after embassy raid in Ecuador

QUITO (Reuters): Latin American governments, including regional heavyweight Brazil, rallied around Mexico after its embassy in Ecuador was raided to arrest a controversial politician who had been granted asylum by Mexican authorities.

The seizure of Jorge Glas, Ecuador's former vice president who was detained on graft charges, triggered a suspension of relations with Quito by Mexico City, with the government of Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador blasting the unusual diplomatic incursion and arrest as an "authoritarian" act as well as a breach of international law and Mexico's sovereignty. The government of Ecuador's President Daniel Noboa had argued asylum protections were illegal because of the corruption charges Glas is facing.

Still, under international law, embassies are considered the sovereign territory of the country they represent. Governments across the political spectrum in Latin America - including Brazil and Colombia on the left, and Argentina and Uruguay on the right - sharply criticized the arrest of Glas, who had sought refuge in the embassy since December. He could be seen on video circulating on social media being taken by police convoy to the airport in the capital Quito, flanked by heavily armed soldiers. He then boarded a plane en route to a jail in Guayaquil, the Andean nation's largest city. Photos on social media, including one posted by Cuba's foreign minister, showed what appeared to be the

embassy's wall being scaled by armed police or soldiers. Reuters could not immediately confirm the authenticity of the photos.

Brazil's government condemned Ecuador's move as a "clear violation" of international norms prohibiting such a raid on a foreign embassy. Ecuador's move against the embassy "must be subject to strong repudiation, whatever the justification for its implementation," according to a statement from Brazil's foreign ministry, which stressed Brasilia's solidarity with Mexico. US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller in a statement said the United States condemns any violation of the convention protecting diplomatic missions. The statement added the United States encourages "the two countries to resolve their differences in accord with international norms."

Mexico's top diplomat Alicia Barcena expressed shock at Ecuador's incursion into the country's embassy, located in Quito's financial district, calling it "a violent attack" perpetrated by the police. "Mexico reiterates its condemnation for the violation of the immunity of its embassy in Quito and the attack on its staff," she said in a message shared on X late, adding that 18 would return to Mexico.

"(Mexico) reiterates that it will appeal to the International Court of Justice and all relevant regional and international bodies after this clear and flagrant violation of international law." Earlier in the day, she said that Glas was granted asylum after an exhaustive analysis of

the circumstances surrounding the accusations he faces. Also, the Washington-based Organization of American States issued a call for dialogue to resolve the escalating dispute between Ecuador and Mexico, adding in a statement that a session of the body's permanent council will be convened to discuss the need for "strict compliance with international treaties, including those that guarantee the right to asylum."

Colombian President Gustavo Petro, meanwhile, argued in a post on X that Latin America "must keep alive the precepts of international law in the midst of the barbarism that is advancing in the world." Petro's government noted it will seek human rights legal protections for the now-detained Glas, according to a separate statement. Glas, convicted twice for corruption, had been holed up in the embassy in Quito since seeking political asylum in December, a request Mexico granted.

Ecuadorian authorities had unsuccessfully sought permission from Mexico to enter the embassy and arrest Glas. In 2017, Glas, the former second-in-command to ex-President Rafael Correa, also a leftist, was sentenced to six years in prison after he was found guilty of taking bribes from Brazilian construction firm Odebrecht in exchange for awarding it government contracts. As he faced a fresh arrest warrant on separate graft charges, Glas has claimed he is the victim of political persecution, a charge Ecuador's government has denied.

Conservative opposition leads Tusk's party

WARSAW (AP): An exit poll released after Poland's local and regional elections showed Prime Minister Donald Tusk's pro-EU party trailing the conservative opposition party that governed Poland for eight years until December. But the socially liberal mayor of Warsaw, a Tusk ally, easily won another term in the capital.

Elections were the first electoral test for Tusk's coalition government nearly four months since it took power. Poles voted for mayors, local councilors and representatives to the nation's 16 regional assemblies. The exit polls have a small margin of error and final results are not expected until Monday. But they indicated that Law and Justice, the conservative party that governed Poland from 2015-2023, remains a political force to be reckoned with in the nation of 38 million people.

According to the Ipsos

exit poll, Law and Justice won 33.7% of votes and Tusk's Civic Coalition won 31.9% in elections to the regional assemblies. Law and Justice leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski declared victory, and said the result was a message to those who had counted the party out. "As Mark Twain once said, the news of my death is somewhat premature," Kaczynski said, loosely quoting the American author. Runoff votes will take place April 21 in cases where mayoral candidates did not win at least 50% of the vote.

Warsaw Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski will avoid a runoff after winning nearly 60% of the vote, according to the exit poll. Another Tusk ally, the mayor of Gdansk, also won outright. Tusk called Trzaskowski the "hero" of the evening but acknowledged that conservative regions that favor his opponents appeared more mobilized. He said he believed some of his usual

supporters might not have voted due to the good weather, with being an exceptionally warm and sunny day. Several other parties trailed the two main groups, including the Third Way coalition with a projected 13.5%, the Left with 6.8% and the radical right-wing Confederation party with 7.5%. The Third Way and the Left belong to Tusk's coalition at the national level. Together they won the fall national election. The result spelled the end of eight years of rule by Law and Justice, which was accused by the European Union of violating democratic standards with changes to the judicial system and public media. Tusk won on promises to reverse many of those changes and is trying to implement that program, but it isn't easy. For example, a promise to liberalize the strict abortion law is being hampered by conservatives in Tusk's own coalition.

Farmers in India hit hard by extreme weather

GUNTUR (AP): There's a pungent odor on Ratna Raju's farm that he says is protecting his crops from the unpredictable and extreme weather that's become more frequent with human-caused climate change. The smell comes from a concoction of cow urine, an unrefined sugar known as jaggery, and other organic materials that act as fertilizers, pesticides and bad weather barriers for his corn, rice, leafy greens and other vegetables on his farm in Guntur in India's southern Andhra Pradesh state. The region is frequently hit by cyclones and extreme heat, and farmers say that so-called natural farming protects their crops because the soil can hold more water, and their more robust roots help the plants withstand strong winds.

Andhra Pradesh has become a positive example of the benefits of natural farming, and advocates say active government support is the primary driver for the state's success. Experts say these methods should be expanded across India's vast agricultural lands as climate change and decreasing profits have led to multiple farmers' protests this year. But fledgling government sup-

port across the country for these methods means most farmers still use chemical pesticides and fertilizers, making them more vulnerable when extreme weather hits. Many farmers are calling for greater federal and state investment to help farms switch to more climate change-proof practices. For many, the benefits of greater investment in natural farming are already obvious: In December, Cyclone Michaung, a storm moving up to 110 kilometers per hour (62 miles per hour) brought heavy rainfall across India's southeastern coast, flooding towns and fields. A preliminary assessment conducted a few weeks later found that 600,000 acres of crops were destroyed in Andhra Pradesh state. On Raju's natural farm, however, where he was growing paddy at the time, "the rainwater on our farms seeped into the ground in one day," he said. The soil can absorb more water because it's more porous than pesticide-laden soil which is crusty and dry. Planting different kinds of crops throughout the year - as opposed to the more standard single crop farms - also helps keep the soil healthy,

he said. But neighboring farmer Srikanth Kanapala's fields, that rely on chemical pesticides and fertilizers, were flooded for four days after the cyclone. He said seeing Raju's crops hold firm while his failed has made him curious about alternative farming methods. "I incurred huge losses," said Kanapala, who estimates he lost up to \$600 because of the cyclone, a substantial sum for a small farmer in India. "For the next planting season, I plan to use natural farming methods too."

Local and federal government initiatives have resulted in an estimated 700,000 farmers shifting to natural farming in the state according to Rythu Sadhikara Samstha, a government-backed not-for-profit launched in 2016 to promote natural farming. The state of Andhra Pradesh hopes to inspire all of its six million farmers to take up natural farming by the end of the decade. The Indian federal government's agriculture ministry has spent upwards of \$8 million to promote natural farming and says farmers tilling nearly a million acres across the country have shifted to the practice.

Ukraine war: Bucha's wounds still raw two years on

MOSCOW (BBC): In March 2022 invading Russian troops occupied the Ukrainian town of Bucha outside Kyiv, leaving a trail of death and destruction which shocked the world. Two years after their departure, the BBC's Eastern Europe correspondent Sarah Rainsford has gone back to see how its traumatised residents are trying to return to normal life.

When Russian soldiers killed Ludmila's husband, she had to wrap him in a blanket and bury him at the back of their garden. She then fled Bucha with her daughter. It was March 2022. The Russians had occupied the small town just outside Kyiv and taken over the pensioners' home. Soldiers drove a tank into their yard and used the house opposite as their headquarters. Two years on, Ludmila has finally installed a marble headstone on Valeriy's grave with his photograph. After Bucha was liberated, she was able to have him reburied properly at the local cemetery. The couple's home, destroyed in the fighting, is slowly being rebuilt. Ludmila has been planting bright coloured flowers in the yard. But when the house is finished, she will live there alone.

The building work is part of efforts to restore Bucha from the ruins left by retreating Russian soldiers. When Ukrainian forces retook the town, they discovered bodies strewn in Yablunska Street, where they had been shot. It was the first the outside world knew of the horrors Bucha had endured during 33 days of occupation. "We have a moral obligation to support the families who live on

that street, because more than 70 civilians were brutally killed and tortured there," explains the local mayor, Anatoliy Fedoruk.

Yablunska Street and the area around has been cleaned, spruced up and in some places rebuilt. But the Russians took over "almost every yard or house", according to the mayor, who estimates the total cost of repair at 1.6bn (£1.4bn; \$1.7bn). "Of course we don't have this sum. But we are doing whatever we can to return people to their houses." Just a few steps from Yablunska Street, Ludmila's new home is still just a shell. The builders have promised to finish it by summer, but she hasn't seen them for days. Homeless for two years, on top of her bereavement, Ludmila is anxious to move in.

"I'm trying to cope, but my blood pressure is high, which it never was before the war," she says, showing me around the building site. "I'm getting heart scans, signs of problems. It's all from the stress. From the memories." In 2022, I saw the burned-out wreck of Ludmila's old home not long after the Russians had pulled out. The yard was still heaped with alcohol bottles and wrappers from their military ration packs. It was the rubbish of men who had shot Ludmila's husband in the head when he surfaced for a moment from the cellar where the couple were hiding. She found Valeriy's body later that night, face down on their porch.

The investigation is still open, one of hundreds of suspected war crimes cases in Bucha. Ludmila was recently called in by police who had found new CCTV

footage and hoped she might help identify the soldiers on film. "Maybe they can be charged in absentia. I know Russia will never hand them over," Ludmila says, realistic about the chances of anyone being held to account for the killing. "Personally, I'd like to grab them by the throat and demand to know why they had to come here," she says, suddenly animated. "They are scumbags."

Behind the white walls of St Andrew's Church, where many were buried in a mass grave during the occupation, there is now a memorial wall of metal plaques. So far it displays 509 names. Some squares are still blank because there are more than 100 unidentified bodies at the town cemetery, unearthed from shallow graves all over Bucha and reburied. DNA samples were taken first, in the hope that someone would one day come looking for them. Other plaques on the memorial wall have no death date - only the month of March, when Bucha was under Russian occupation. Opposite is a sign that lists the dozens of people still missing. Among the names is Bogdan Kostarenko, whose wife Natalia I first met in 2022. I was investigating the killing of five men from Bucha whose bodies had been found beneath a children's summer camp. Natalia's husband had been taken away by Russian soldiers and she feared he might be one of the dead. He wasn't.

After months of searching, she finally traced Bogdan to a prison in Russia. "They took him to Belarus, then to Detention Centre Number Two in Bryansk [in Russia],"

Natalia says. Through other Ukrainians swapped for Russian POWs, she learned that he was then moved to a facility in Tula, south of Moscow. "Russia has officially confirmed he's a prisoner, but I had to find him through my own contacts," she tells me. "They should just give the civilians back, but they don't."

Bogdan retired from the army in 2019 with PTSD. As a civilian prisoner, Natalia fears his chances of being exchanged are slim, as only a few dozen non-combatants have been returned so far. "There are a lot of civilians from Bucha missing - people we know are in prison, but the Russians haven't confirmed. At least they've admitted to having Bogdan, officially." Natalia has heard nothing from her husband directly since he was taken. But she knows from others held in Bryansk that they were tortured. "They say it was really hard - they were not fed, they were badly beaten, including with electric shock and pipes," she tells me. "Now I don't know what else to do. I can't get him freed. I can't find any way to do it."

Natalia herself is ethnically Russian. Both her parents are from the country now holding her husband prisoner illegally and accused of abusing him. It was people like Natalia that Vladimir Putin used as his excuse for invading Ukraine. He claimed they needed saving from brutal treatment at the hands of a "Nazi" government in Kyiv. As we talk in the yard, children play football, laughing and shouting. Most of the pre-war population of Bucha has returned, including many who fled Ukraine as refugees.

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Urgency for climate change governance

PRIME Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has constituted a high-level committee to review Climate Change Governance and establish Mechanisms to access Climate Funds, adopt necessary legislation, and protocols, and coordinate at the national level. According to the details, the committee will be chaired by the Deputy Chairman Planning Commission comprised of government officials, parliamentarians, representatives from civil society and environmental NGOs, the private sector, research institutes, and experts/advisors with knowledge of specific topics. As said, the Committee will suggest approaches that involve mainstreaming climate considerations across all government organizations and operations, as well as integrating them into the development agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It will evaluate the effectiveness of existing and proposed institutional mechanisms and will coordinate with the National Climate Change Council (NCCC), SIFC, proposed Climate Change Authority, Climate Change Fund, National Disaster Risk Management Fund, and other key ministries/ departments.

Climate Change has shaped into a grave challenge and a major survival risk in Pakistan. Despite contributing to only 0.9 percent of Global Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, the South Asian Nation is highly vulnerable to the worst effects of climate change and a regular victim of the serious repercussions of global warming in the contemporary world. Pakistan is highly exposed to global warming and natural disasters because of its geographical location, topography, acute weather conditions, irregular growth, and untidy governance. Historically, Climate change has had significant impacts on Pakistan, particularly in the form of extreme weather events, water scarcity, glacial melt, and periodic heatwaves in the country. The Country faces severe challenges such as low agricultural productivity, increased flooding, droughts, and water and food insecurity that merit urgent attention from the leaders to avert the bulk of economic, monetary, and administrative challenges until they physically threaten the nation in the future. Historically, our nation has been facing climate-induced weather events including earthquakes, floods, landslides, cyclones, etc. that caused significant damage to the country's infrastructure, economy, and population. Presently, global warming has caused serious survival risks for the South Asian nation, as the 2022 superfloods caused nearly \$30 billion in economic losses, while monsoon floods have become a recurrent phenomenon on an annual basis.

Unfortunately, a wide range of domestic issues also regularly contributes to global warming wherein old coal-based energy generation plants, use of old imported vehicles, agricultural waste, traditional brick kilns, encroachment, and rapid urbanization are the major problems that massively contribute to pollution and global warming in the country. At the same time, the absence of proper Urban planning, massive industrialization, and inadequate infrastructure further aggravate the problems relating to global warming. Amid such a scenario, the foundation of a dedicated forum like the Climate Change Council is of utmost importance to promote climate resilience and mitigate the worst impact of global warming in the country. The council will make recommendations to strengthen climate governance, access climate, and carbon finance, and mobilize the private sector to drive the decarbonization of industry, integrate into green value chains, and boost exports in alignment with evolving international regulatory mechanisms such as carbon border adjustments. Meanwhile, the role of media, academia, and research institutions in policy advocacy and formulation will also be very crucial.

To address these challenges, Pakistan's climate change policy must broaden its scope. It should consider factors like deforestation, unsustainable agricultural practices, urbanization, and industrial emissions. Pakistan must take proactive steps to adapt to climate change and build resilience. Additionally, comprehensive policy reorientation at the national level is essential to mitigate the effects of climate change and promote environment-friendly policies and practices in the country. Hopefully, the Climate Change Council will address climate change issues and work to align all aspects of our national life from industry to agriculture, mining, farming, housing, businesses and academia, social, and civic life with the national climate strategy to achieve 100 percent results in this domains.

NAB's role against property frauds

THE National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has instructed individuals robbed by AAA Associates to submit their compensation claims to the NAB Rawalpindi bureau within the next two weeks. According to the reports, the Bureau was investigating the allegations of extortion of money, fraud, cheating, and false promises perpetrated by individuals working with or on behalf of AAA Associates, a real estate firm based in Bahria Town, Rawalpindi. According to the authorities, the victim individuals must provide supporting documentation, including a copy of their Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) and receipts, either via post or email within the next fifteen days, so regular legal proceedings against the culprits should be commenced.

The ungoverned real estate businesses and illegal construction of housing societies/projects have flourished across the country while this mournful activity has also grown unrestrictedly in the twin cities in the past years. The Property tycoons and builders are well-versed in the techniques of entrapping innocent citizens in fake and flimsy housing projects through social media campaigns and advertisements declaring invaluable barren land as residential and commercial plots, main boulevards, and business squares. Unfortunately, thousands of people lost their hard-earned money and lifelong assets to these white-collar criminals and burglars in the hope of getting their own adobe, but struck in unending wait or litigation cases in realization of their dreams. Countless people filed lawsuits and lodged complaints with the Police, the FIA, NAB and Federal Ombudsman office against this fake housing schemes and criminal conduct of property tycoons but the state institutions including the RDA and CDA failed in controlling/ regulating the real estate mafia. Fortunately, the NAB authorities have faithfully taken serious notice of this criminal attitude of real estate mafia and extensive investigations were launched into multiple fake and illegal housing schemes including the Arain City and AAA Associate. Previously, the NAB authorities successfully recovered over Rs 600 million looted money from Arain City owners and returned to 450 affectees of the Arain City housing project.

Currently, another fraudulent scheme namely AAA Associates is under Bureau's radar, and innocent victims of the fraudulent scheme are hopeful about the safe returns of the hard earned money. There are countless cases of property frauds and fake housing schemes in Rawalpindi/Islamabad that need due diligence and actions from the concerned authorities so the fraud property businesses and fake real estate scams could be stopped completely, while genuine and law abiding businesses serve the masses in a good faith and spirit.



NATO is not a hegemonic burden for the US

Carla Norrlof

WITH NATO marking its 75th anniversary last Thursday, the idea that it is free-riding on the US remains a live issue. While Donald Trump has repeatedly criticized America's transatlantic allies for spending too little on defense, it is worth remembering that presidents going back to Dwight Eisenhower (including John Kennedy, Richard Nixon and Barack Obama) also pressured the Europeans to share more of the burden.

After Lyndon Johnson's Defense Secretary Robert McNamara suggested that the US might reduce its troop levels in Europe if the Germans did not step up, the two countries entered an "offset agreement," whereby Germany would compensate the US by purchasing American goods.

But until February of this year, no US president or presidential candidate had ever directly jeopardized the safety of NATO allies by inviting foreign aggressors to attack "delinquent" member states. Trump's offensive comments misleadingly equated the NATO defense spending target (2 percent of gross domestic product) with direct NATO payments.

To some Americans, Trump's fairness concerns may seem valid. Why should the US pay twice as much as the average NATO ally when it is geographically removed from all major conflict zones?

Part of the answer is that America's massive military spending is not simply a function of its NATO commitments; rather, it follows from a strategic objective to maintain unmatched military and technological supremacy in the face of escalating great power rivalries. Like Greece (whose defense spending ratio is even higher than America's), the US exceeds the 2 percent target because doing so is in its interest. The cost of maintaining 200 US active-duty bases (90 percent of the total) around the world accounts for only 4 percent of overall US military expenditures. NATO is a common good that results from the pursuit of a private national good: US military superiority.

In Trump's view, the US is "a debtor nation, we spend so much on the mili-

tary, but the military isn't for us ... and many of these countries are tremendously rich countries." While a majority of Americans support NATO, Trump's position resonates with those who view America's global responsibilities in the context of their own dwindling economic fortunes.

But these concerns about fiscal overspending exaggerate the problem, not

risks, enhancing its ability to anticipate threats and counter strategic competitors like China and Russia. The US can and does use these tools to influence outcomes in key regions, support democracy and human rights and fight terrorism.

Alliances are a distinctive feature of America's global strategy, setting it apart from other great powers. By providing defense

No other country can broker the kind of cooperation that the US can. NATO's strategic shift to address the rise of China through engagement with Indo-Pacific partners underscores both the alliance's adaptability and America's unique coordinating power. Nor are these benefits confined to matters of great power rivalry. For example, the US Southern Command coordinates counternarcotics collaboration between NATO (specifically the Netherlands) and non-NATO countries such as Colombia and Panama.

least because they ignore the dollar's international status and the fact that a significant portion of US public debt is held domestically. Those arguing that military expenditures are a primary driver of US debt have little to no evidence and they consistently fail to weigh the costs against the benefits that such spending delivers. Asymmetrical security relationships allow the US to exert influence and sustain its preferred form of global order through strategic advantages, information sharing and diplomatic leverage, and to encourage adaptation across a broad network of dependent allies.

NATO is the blue chip in the US security umbrella - the instrument that allows it to respond rapidly to threats and challenges anywhere in the world. The forward presence of US military forces serves as a deterrent against potential adversaries, reducing the likelihood of conflicts and military challenges to US interests. This global network facilitates intelligence sharing among allies and provides the US with critical information on security

and security, the US can also foster economic cooperation and promote its own values. At a time when digital warfare respects no borders, NATO's intelligence sharing, joint exercises and collective cyber-defense mechanisms all reinforce America's ability to counter new economic and security threats.

Moreover, its position at the center of regional and global security networks gives the US an unmatched ability to facilitate or obstruct international cooperation as it sees fit. Almost no major decisions or missions can be carried out unless they serve US interests. No other country can broker the kind of cooperation that the US can. NATO's strategic shift to address the rise of China through engagement with Indo-Pacific partners underscores both the alliance's adaptability and America's unique coordinating power.

Nor are these benefits confined to matters of great power rivalry. For example, the US Southern Command coordinates counternarcotics collaboration between NATO (specifically

ly the Netherlands) and non-NATO countries such as Colombia and Panama. That not only bolsters security but also cuts down on illicit financial flows that could end up going to terrorist organizations and other bad actors.

By the same token, US-led allied efforts help to protect global trade routes - particularly vital sea lanes - ensuring the free flow of trade and energy supplies. A secure global commons provides the US with economic leverage over allies and partners, allowing it to shape economic policies, trade agreements and investment decisions according to its own interests.

Generally speaking, shaping norms and aligning interests across international networks reduces protection costs, alleviates the need for military coercion within the network and augments its effectiveness when used externally. From a security perspective, if the US becomes less willing to fund a potent military capability through NATO and less willing to engage with and protect its allies, it will start to look more like China or Russia. It would still be formidable; but it would be less influential and less benign.

Europeans are already preparing for the worst and pushing forward with their project of strategic autonomy. Citing vassal risks from great power competition, French President Emmanuel Macron favors reducing Europe's reliance on others, particularly the US. By adopting a more assertive stance against Russian belligerence, advocating for Ukraine's future NATO membership and leveraging EU enlargement as a geopolitical tool, France has realigned its position more closely with that of Poland, the Baltic countries and the Czech Republic.

Americans must understand that NATO is not just a mechanism for protecting allies; it is an essential part of a comprehensive strategy that promotes their own interests and sustains their country's global leadership position. The US would gain nothing by withdrawing from the transatlantic alliance. On the contrary, doing so would reduce US influence without significantly reducing its military spending.

'Resisting' Israel from Jordan, Iraq and Yemen

Baria Alamuddin

FOR the past six months, Iran and its proxies have toyed with the Gaza war; dialing tensions up and down for their own propaganda ends, while shying away from any significant escalation that could cast them fully into the conflict. Tehran has consistently sought to diminish threats facing it directly by dragging the maximum number of Arab states into the conflict's front lines, starting with Lebanon and Syria and expanding to Jordan, Iraq, Yemen and beyond.

Matters took a further escalatory turn last week, when Israel unleashed an unprecedented strike on Iran's Damascus consulate. Among the Revolutionary Guard fatalities was Quds Force commander Mohammed Reza Zahedi, the top official responsible for Iran's machinations in Syria and Lebanon. Iran's leaders have raged about retaliating via "our men" in the region. This alludes to the fact that Tehran itself will likely franchise out the risks of retaliation to distant proxies.

Iran gloated that the US got in touch to distance itself from the Damascus attack, dispatching its own written response saying that "the Islamic Republic of Iran warns US leadership not to get dragged in (Benjamin) Netanyahu's trap for the US: Stay away so you won't get hurt."

Iraq's Kata'ib Hezbollah has announced that it is preparing "to arm the Islamic resistance in Jordan" by donating 12,000 fighters and "tonnes" of weaponry, while threatening to sever land routes between Jordan and Israel. This occurs in the context of soaring tensions inside Jordan, with concerns that militants are exploiting mass pro-Palestinian protests to exert broader control, in a manner akin to the 1970 Black September disturbances.

Hamas leaders like Ismail Haniyeh have been energetically inciting unrest in Jordan, seeking to force Amman's hand on matters like its peace accord with Israel. Khaled Meshaal urged the "amassed nation" in Jordan to participate in the "Al-Aqsa Flood battle" and "mix Arab blood with Palestinian blood." There has been widespread Arab outrage at these inflammatory comments, given that any deterioration in Jordan's stability would be a gift to Israeli extremists, who have long promoted Jordan as an alternative Palestinian homeland, while putting millions of Jordan-based Palestinians in the line of fire. All this is particularly regrettable given that Jordan is one of about nine key regional states that had hitherto remained stable. None of this bodes well for the Palestinian cause, or Arab world stability.

Likewise, Iran's use of Houthi militias to attack unrelated ships passing through the Red Sea neither helps Palestinians nor inconveniences Israel, while having a massive wider impact on regional stability and trade and throwing Yemen back into open-ended conflict.

In a bellicose Quds Day speech, Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah threatened that the Damascus consulate strike marked a "turning point" and resistance forces were "ready" to respond, adding

"be certain the Iranian response is inevitably coming." Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said Israel would be "punished." Revolutionary Guards commander Hossein Salami thundered that: "No act by any enemy against our holy system will go unanswered and the art of the Iranian nation is to break the power of empires."

Iran has spent years supplying missile technology to its various proxies. If these paramilitaries desired, they could unleash tens of thousands of missiles and drones against hundreds of targets. Hezbollah alone is estimated to possess more than 150,000 missiles, some with a range in excess of 200 miles, along with tens of thousands of troops at its disposal. "We have not employed our main weapons yet, nor have we used our main forces," Nasrallah latterly warned.

The miniscule American and Israeli death toll from such strikes indicates Tehran's desire to diminish attacks to irritating pinpricks; allowing posturing paramilitaries to style themselves as the heroic "Islamic resistance," while refraining from any actions that could have a strategic impact. Indeed, the vast majority of Lebanese and Arab citizens are hugely relieved at the resistance's failure to live up to its rhetoric - thus avoiding the horrifically ruinous specter of regionalized war.

When the US this February embarked on a serious response to some 170 missile strikes by Iraq-based militias, most of these factions timidly announced an immediate cessation of attacks. These factions calibrate rocket strikes with the objective of poking the bear, without goading him into full-on retaliation.

It is easy to be cynical about the acres of speculation in the Western media in recent days about the possible regional consequences of an Iranian response. Iran's response will likely be what it has always been after the dozens of occasions in recent years when Revolutionary Guard commanders or nuclear scientists have been assassinated: the bare minimum necessary to save face without bringing the sky down on their heads. Since Oct. 7, Israel has killed at least 18 Quds Force members, including four senior commanders. Hezbollah has named 267 members killed by Israel, along with dozens of Lebanese noncombatants.

Hezbollah and Tehran's predicament over retaliation boils down to fundamental contradictions in the objectives and propaganda of the "resistance axis," whose fundamental justification for existing and bearing arms is supposedly to confront the "Zionist occupier."

Despite the grotesque rhetoric and empty stunts, all these factions have achieved since Oct. 7 is to tie themselves in knots over conspicuous reluctance to engage in a straight fight with Israel - offering no material assistance to the people of Gaza while further destabilizing a succession of Arab countries. This highlights the fact that the primary enemy of these proxy forces has never been Israel, but is actually the legitimate governing authorities in the countries they occupy - with the ultimate goal of turning proud Arab nations into failed states and smoking ruins.

Arab News

Global majority remakes mankind's future

Herman Tiu Laurel

THE Global South should now be called the "global majority" to do justice to its socio-economic, geopolitical and civilizational impact on the shape of things to come in this world. The Global South is now consolidating around the growing power of BRICS Plus to recreate the world in the model of a multipolar, just, equitable and democratic new world order.

The consolidation and expansion of BRICS Plus in January has boosted the gravitas of the economic and geopolitical alliance of major developing countries from the representative regions of the world as it overtakes the developed nations of the G7 in economic and resources potential.

With the entry of Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates from North Africa and the Middle East in January, the BRICS bloc now represents more than 45 percent of the

world's population, controls around 45 percent of the world's oil production and accounts for a larger share (nearly 36 percent) of global GDP than the G7 countries (less than 30 percent) when adjusted for purchasing power parity.

Equally impressive are the achievements in economic exchange among member states of the original bloc that are bound to grow with the new membership. Among the bloc's original five members, trade rose 56 percent between 2017 and 2022 to \$422 billion, while BRICS-endorsed trade in local currency among these countries has significantly cut transactions costs.

BRICS also leads global discussion on the "de-dollarization" of the global financial and economic system, and the creation of digital currency and blockchain payment system. The last vestiges of the unipolar world and the era of Western colonialism are being irreversibly severed to ensure an equi-

table global system of trade, financial transactions and international commercial relations. One remarkable BRICS milestone is the establishment of the BRICS bank that has granted loans worth \$33 billion to date for a total of 98 projects in its five founding-member countries. This loan portfolio is clearly destined for even more dramatic growth with its five new members and over 30 other countries that have evinced interest to be part of the bloc in the near future.

While BRICS has acted primarily as an economic bloc, it recently made a welcome move to respond to the exploding humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. In a virtual summit chaired by South Africa, the BRICS group called for an end to Israel's military campaign in Gaza.

The interest in BRICS by some 30 other countries was first indicated by South Africa, the BRICS chair in

2023. Later, Russia, the 2024 chair, re-affirmed it. In President Vladimir Putin's words, "We will spare no effort to ensure that, while preserving traditions and being guided by the experience gained by the association in years past, we facilitate the harmonious integration of new participants in all formats of its activities."

BRICS' rotating leadership demonstrates the democratic spirit of the grouping that is based on the shared values of openness, cooperation and solidarity, all these based on its envisioned multipolar world. The very existence of BRICS and its dramatic growth demonstrates that these values work, hence the growing interest of nations to participate in this new, visionary project to advance the global majority in particular and humanity in general.

Today China is connecting the entire world with its Belt and Road Initiative, linking

Eurasia with Africa and the world via land, power and digital communications corridors, and the maritime nations through the Maritime Silk Road. As the global majority takes the initiative in this new era, a BRICS and BRI collaboration needs to be established to tighten BRICS solidarity and economic security.

Elements from the unipolar era continue to seek the failure of the global majority, instigating conflict and tensions all over the world and attempting to divide developing nations. One sad example is the Philippines, a country where I am from, that is being turned into a proxy to push conflict between

nations in Asia. Fortunately, Association of Southeast Asian Nations remains steadfastly independent and some even contemplate a coalition with BRICS.

There will be bumps on the road to realizing the ultimate vision of the global majority and BRICS but the future is certain: a multipolar world where all nations are equal and "forever wars" of the unipolar moment are forever gone to be replaced by the "forever peace and prosperity" of a remade world order under the leadership of the global majority also known as the Global South. As the global majority speaks and moves, the world now moves with it.

The China Daily

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Israel’s message: ‘Don’t feed Palestinians’

Andrew Mitrovica

THE invading Israeli army ought to have erected signs throughout Gaza that read: "Don't feed the Palestinians: Punishable by death." Here's why. To understand why seven aid workers were killed by Israel earlier this week in Gaza only requires a short-term memory. Their deaths were not a "tragic event ... that happens in war", as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claimed in a statement meant to blunt the "outrage" over the killings. No, the seven souls, employed by World Central Kitchen (WCK) travelling in a convoy in Deir el-Balah after unloading 100 tonnes of food aid at its central Gaza warehouse, were casualties of a directive issued by Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant on October 9.

Gallant's remarks were televised to convey to the world Israel's uncompromising resolve and intent. "We are imposing a complete siege on Gaza. There will be no electricity, no food, no water, no fuel, everything will be closed. We are fighting human animals, and we are acting accordingly," Gallant said.

Gallant has kept his word. Famine is rampant in Gaza. Israel's aim is to starve Palestinians into submission and capitulation. Anyone, from anywhere who feeds the Palestinians is, de facto, a legitimate military target and Israel has acted "accordingly". The WCK staff were not considered humanitarians by Israel's occupation forces, but collaborators aiding and abetting the Palestinians who perpetrated the October 7 assault on Israel and subsequently seized captives turned negotiating pawns.

That is why the WCK convoy was fired upon, and the occupants summarily killed. Gallant made clear the "rules of engagement" on October 9. No one of any conse-

quence in Washington, London, Paris, Berlin, or Ottawa demurred, let alone objected, to Israel's designs to lay "siege" to Gaza in any way, and by whatever means, it, and it alone, saw fit. That is also why the so-called "outrage" that the killings provoked in Western capitals has struck me as largely performative and hypocritical, as have the perfunctory demands for "independent" probes into the lethal attack.

Beyond offering Gallant their unqualified consent to do whatever he wanted to do in Gaza, the presidents and prime ministers now expressing their calibrated outrage have, year after disgraceful year, granted Israel carte blanche to imprison Palestinians, torture Palestinians, invade Palestinian homes, steal Palestinian land, destroy Palestinian crops, and, of course, shoot, maim and kill Palestinians at will.

These same, suddenly outraged presidents and prime ministers have watched, approvingly, as Israel has gone about systematically denying the Palestinians shelter by obliterating their homes and neighbourhoods; denying them care and comfort by storming and obliterating hospitals; denying them education by obliterating their schools and universities; denying them places of worship by obliterating their churches and mosques; denying them their roots and past by obliterating their libraries, museums and historical sites. These same presidents and prime ministers nodded in full-some agreement with Gallant: Israel's adversaries - without distinction - were indeed "human animals" and the inevitable consequences of the "siege" of Gaza were not only acceptable but warranted.

So, count me as unconvinced and unimpressed by this trite,

meaningless censure of Israel. For months, these same presidents and prime ministers have been spouting the same hollow bromide: Israel must do more to protect "innocent civilians"; otherwise, we will trot out the same hollow bromide. It is a pathetic pantomime. These presidents and prime ministers will always choose "Israel's right to defend itself" over international law and the "rules" of war and the disposable lives of seven humanitarian workers be damned.

Remember, these are the same presidents and prime ministers who instantly dismissed reports produced by human rights groups which established that, for decades, Israel has committed "the crime against humanity of apartheid" in its methodical persecution of Palestinians. The reports stood not only as indictments, but warnings of what was inevitably to come if the injustices set out in such clinical and persuasive detail were not finally acknowledged and addressed in tangible ways by a galvanised "international community".

Predictably, those prescient warnings went unheeded. The result: a still unfolding genocide and all the murderous madness on unrelenting display. Ah, but Israel's apologists will say: Israel admits its "errors" and punishes those responsible. In this "unfortunate" case, two Israeli officers have been "fired" and three others "reprimanded" for "violating" the "army's rules of engagement".

When the outrage ebbs - as it already has - the "punished" will, in due course, be rehabilitated since, as Israel's National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir has in effect said, the "abandoned" officers were just following Gallant's orders. "The chief of staff's decision to dismiss senior officers is an abandonment of the fighters in the middle of a war and a serious mis-

take that conveys weakness," the voluble minister wrote on X. "Even if there are mistakes in identification, soldiers are backed up in war." Their penance will be short. I suspect that most Israelis, like Ben-Gvir and Netanyahu, will close ranks behind "the fighters" who did what they were told to do by Gallant on October 9. When your foe is a "human animal", the only rule of engagement is "acting accordingly".

The other part of this pantomime is steeped in politics. Nervous Democrats can count. In recent presidential primaries, more than 500,000 Democrats have registered their fury with Joe Biden's embrace of Netanyahu's plan to erase Gaza and, ultimately, to absorb it and the occupied West Bank. They have voted "uncommitted" - or a variation of the term - in states that the president had carried by slim margins in 2020. So, to mollify a movement that some silly observers insisted was confined to Michigan's suburbs, Biden's reliable surrogates, including former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, are - surprise, surprise - signing a letter dipped in Pixie dust advising Biden to make US military support to Israel contingent on the protection of Palestinian civilians in the wake of the deadly ambush of the aid workers.

The letter is 33,000 dead Palestinians too late. It is not going to convince the growing legion of "uncommitted" Democratic voters that "Zionist" Joe is poised to change his engrained attitudes towards Israel or his steadfast support for razing Gaza along with extinguishing Hamas. Come November, the Democratic Party establishment will have to reckon with this fact: A Democratic president sacrificed the presidency and democracy - his strained rhetoric, not mine - to save Netanyahu and assuage Israel's killing rage. Well done, Sir.

A tale of China’s economic resilience should be retold

Liu Jun

WE live in a world where the growth momentum has weakened, and countries have taken on divergent recovery paths. Uncertainties in global trade, geopolitical tensions and monetary policies further complicate the picture. But despite the ups and downs of the global economy, China benefits from an integrated world as much as the world benefits from a prosperous China.

China remains a major global economic player as the world's second-largest economy. Yet an important but often overlooked question is: "What does China really mean to the global economy?" The answer becomes apparent through the lens of concrete historical data. During the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the stability of the renminbi was critical to preventing risk escalation, while the 2008 global financial crisis saw China's economic stimulus package helping other economies emerge out of recession. And during the 2011 European Union debt crisis, China increased exports to Europe to help ease the pressure the crisis had caused.

Besides, amid the US-China trade tensions in 2018, China acted as a responsible global player through active negotiations and concrete actions. During the three-year COVID-19 pandemic through delivering a swift rebound and a robust prop-up in manufacturing, China further demonstrated its pivotal role in the global supply chains. By 2023, China had consistently contributed more than 30 percent to the global GDP growth for a decade. At each critical moment of global or regional economic crises, instead of being the "next domino to fall" as many estimated, China positioned itself as a cornerstone and stabilizer of the global economy. The reasons for that are four-fold.

First, China has the most comprehensive industrial system in the world. It is the only country with all the industrial categories defined by the UN International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities. China became the world's leading manufacturer in 2010 and has maintained that status till date. In 2023, China accounted for about 35 percent of the global manufacturing output and 30 percent of the added value, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. China's economy of scale and interwoven industrial chain boost efficiency and reduce costs for itself as well as the rest of the world. The world's access to affordable, high-quality, made-in-China products plays a crucial role in tempering global inflation. Since 2020, geopolitical tensions and the West's efforts to "decouple" from the Chinese economy have disrupted global supply chains. While the US and the EU were busy sounding alarm bells of inflation, China kept its consumer price index at a reasonable level. As such, China's critical contribution to stimulating global economic growth while managing inflation merits greater recognition.

As a matter of fact, China's adherence to rule-based engagement in international trade has been richly rewarded, as it now stands at the very heart of global commerce. It ranks No 1 in the world in terms of trade in goods and second in terms of services. China has also forged strong partnerships with more than 140 countries. Having gained and done so much in the global commercial ecosystem, China would be the last one to break it. So even in the face of the complexity of modern trade, China will continue to be a dedicated player, working with other countries to perfect the rules. With development programs such as Belt and Road Initiative, the WTO reform proposal and membership of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, China has contributed to refinement of the global trading system. Giving a voice to all participants, big or small, South or North, developed or underdeveloped, is the key to devising fairer and more nuanced global economic norms.

Third, the significance of the opening-up of China's economy is a tale that can never be told enough. Four decades of experience shows that an

advanced manufacturing system emerges from deeper global integration. The inflow of capital in the form of foreign direct investment, and advanced technologies and talents to China has facilitated the country's industrial upgrading, with the Yangtze and Pearl river delta manufacturing hubs witnessing thousands of producers ascending to the medium-high end of global industrial chains by leveraging foreign know-how. China's recent push for a dual-circulation development paradigm might, at first glance, seem like a step toward more self-reliance. Yet on closer look, it indicates China will further open up its economy to the outside world. Perhaps China knows that enhanced synergy with the global economy is required for expanding and elevating domestic circulation more than any other country. Since the 1990s, at least some manufacturing in all countries has gone global. For more than three decades, companies have been strategically distributing operations worldwide. To make iPhone, for example, Apple assembles more than 1,000 parts from the United States, the Republic of Korea, Japan, China and other countries, which shows how intertwined the production process has become.

The story is the same on the consumption side. Countries rely on both local products and global trade, much beyond leveraging comparative advantages. Especially for innovative products, reaching scale means entering into markets at home and abroad. This strategy not only makes better use of resources and capital but also strengthens the global cooperation. China is rolling out the carpet. By promoting high-level opening-up, reducing restrictions on foreign investment and improving the business environment, it aims to swing its doors even wider to the outside world.

And fourth, China's high-quality development benefits the globe. China is pursuing high-quality development. It is a pursuit marked by a commitment to modernizing industrial systems and nurturing new quality productive forces. Central to these initiatives are advanced productivity, technological breakthroughs, and deep industrial transformation and upgrading. New industries, models and growth momentum that emerge in this process empower a paradigm shift in both scale and quality. However, China is not considering excessive stimulus. While short-term outcomes can be similar, transitioning the economy to a more efficient and resilient state requires a tech-driven and human-capital-centered approach.

The benefits of China's high-quality development extend far beyond its borders. China's upgraded domestic demand creates a huge market for foreign high-tech equipment and components. In 2023, China imported integrated circuits worth more than \$300 billion, 1.6 times of that in 2013. Shenzhen, called "China's Silicon Valley", alone aims to increase its import of integrated circuits to \$110 billion by 2025 to bolster local high-end industries. In turn, China's advanced exports enrich the global market, and its satellites support international scientific endeavors in space. Chinese robots, from coffee-makers to plane-welders, are revolutionizing services and high-end manufacturing. And drawing on its extensive rail network experience, China is exporting high-speed train technology to countries in Southeast Asia and Central and Eastern Europe, in order to improve local interconnectivity.

Fresh data on China's growth in 2023, issued recently, show the country's GDP was more than 126 trillion yuan (more than \$17 trillion), meaning it grew by 6 trillion yuan, which is equal to the GDP of a medium-sized country. But despite such impressive achievements, external skepticism vis-à-vis China persists. This leads to me to my points on the current state of China's economic development.

Looking into the broader stage, the global economy finds itself again at a critical juncture. Tensions arise. So do sentiments. Unilateralism, protection-

ism and populism are rearing their heads in some economies. All in the name of fixing what seems unfair in global competition. Yet the level playing field for instance is not a static ideal, but an inherently relative concept. Picture a giant vessel sailing into a confined lake, the water level rises because the vessel displaces huge volumes of water. As the world's manufacturing powerhouse, China has led global production for 14 straight years, contributing to one-third of global manufacturing output. China's entry into any field increases competition, as it provides the world with cost-efficient and high-quality goods. This illustrates the evolving nature of the international economic interactions. With China's participation, the playing field may change at the absolute level, but the leveling can be redefined by better products, fairer pricing and more fine-tuned rules.

Big names in auto industry, including Volkswagen, BMW and Toyota, are heading to China to build their EV platforms. Attracted by China's comprehensive industrial chains, cost-effective labor and logistics, and relaxed foreign investment regulations, they view the country as a prime destination to enhance their EV prowess. The playing field is level, even though it's poised for further elevation by global competitors. Going forward, advancing the global economy implies embracing digitalization and environmental sustainability. I have three key perspectives on the future economy.

One is the growing subjectivity of AI. Through deep learning with massive datasets and audio and video materials, AI is rapidly approaching human-like cognition, judgment and decision-making capabilities. Consider OpenAI's popular chatbots ChatGPT and Sora. Gen-AI shows itself not merely as a tool. It can evolve into an independent entity, disrupting the traditional distinction between producer subjectivity and tool agency. Such transformation puts ethical questions at the forefront of any AI development, including fair data use and the potential risks of deliberate model abuse. The solution lies in governing both carbon-based life and silicon-based life in line with the same ethical system. Two is to redefine goods to encompass "essential goods". "Essential goods", a concept I created, are vital or essential components to the digital economy and green economy. Examples include data, water, air and carbon emissions. Despite their importance, their value is often "invisible" in traditional economic models. Establishing the new accounting framework for essential goods becomes imperative, as we cannot manage what we do not measure. If digital information lacks a price, valuable data may never be generated.

Similarly, if the numerous benefits provided by ecological infrastructure to humans are absent from the national or corporate balance sheets, it only exacerbates the exploitation of Mother Nature. So the pricing, transaction and circulation of the essential goods should also be explored. The EU's initiatives, from the carbon market to digital market acts, underscore the significance and urgency of establishing a unified system to apply values to essential goods as they deserve, although the details can be debated through the lenses of cross-border cooperation and synergies. And three is the open and interconnected nature of the new economic paradigm. Technologies like the IoT, cloud computing and AI drive the new economic paradigm. They create a whole new level of global interconnectedness, reducing the relevance of physical borders. Every month, over a third of the global population uses Facebook, with the rise of digital nomads working from anywhere in the world has become normal.

While AI's reach is global, affecting far more than a few jurisdictions, viewing international competition as a simple win-or-lose game has become outdated. Instead, there are stronger incentives to act together, utilizing technologies to tackle universal challenges facing humanity. This holds especially true for fighting climate change, where the window of opportunity is rapidly closing.

AKP’s local election defeat may change several paradigms in Turkiye

Yasar Yakis

THE local elections held last week in Turkiye may herald the beginning of a new era in the country's domestic politics. The Republican People's Party, known as the CHP, was established more than a century ago, in 1923, and ruled Turkiye as a single party until 1950. After that, it came to power only for brief periods or in coalition with other parties. Last week, however, it won the most provinces and the largest number of votes.

However, the results of last week's elections look more like a consequence of the mistakes of the ruling party, the Justice and Development Party or AKP, rather than the main opposition party's success. Beating President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's party was, of course, a major achievement for the CHP, but one swallow does not make a summer. Turkiye's domestic politics is constantly moving. We have to see whether the CHP will be able to maintain stability. Erdogan's ability to come up with creative ideas has to be reckoned with. We will be able to draw more stable conclusions after the next elections.

Several factors may explain the CHP's success and AKP's failure. The country's economic difficulties is one of them. The unequal distribution of income is another. And the rule of law is far from being what it should be. Erdogan announced during the recent election campaign that he might not run in the national elections in 2028. He may now have an addi-

tional reason to bring an end to his political career.

During a post mortem assessment meeting, Erdogan complained about the AKP making wrong choices for mayoral posts and members of the municipal councils. However, he was the top arbitrator for everything done during the elections. Therefore, he cannot blame others. He confessed that everyone has to assume their share of the responsibility. For a change, Erdogan did not blame so-called foreign actors for his party's failures.

The surprise of last week's elections was the emergence of the New Welfare Party of Fatih Erbakan as the third-largest party with 6 percent of the total votes. Its constituency grew 50 percent from the last general elections. It won elections in one metropolitan city, one province, 38 districts and 19 suburbs. This party is the continuation of the one established by its leader's late father, Necmettin Erbakan. Fatih Erbakan aims at an ambitious foreign policy that ranges from sending Turkish troops to Gaza, expelling the Israeli ambassador from Ankara, ending bilateral trade with Israel and closing down two radar stations, one in Incirlik and the other in Kurecik. Such wide-ranging measures would change the paradigms in the Middle East and Turkiye could hardly implement such drastic measures. The AKP's unofficial coalition partner, the

Nationalist Movement Party or MHP, saw its vote share reduced to 4.99 percent. With this percentage in a national election, it would not be able to form a group in parliament, so the AKP may be tempted to reassess whether it should carry on its shoulders a right-wing party that does not do it any good.

Meral Aksener's IYI Party has been harshly criticized for all the mistakes she made during last year's general elections. She said that she would convene the party's convention to make a final decision on her future. The best option seems to be for her to bring an end to her political career. Her party, together with what remains of the MHP, still constitutes a sharpened segment in Turkiye's active political life. At present, the right-wing electorate is slightly in disarray, but this group is composed of dedicated people. They are not likely to give up easily. Secular nationalists may gather again under the CHP, at least temporarily. Kurds continue to be a major issue in the southeastern region. In the province of Van, Abdullah Zeydan, the elected mayor, was preparing to assume his post, but the Ministry of Justice intervened five minutes before the closure of the offices. It said that, according to a decision made two years ago, there was a discrepancy that had to be corrected immediately. This was not possible. Fortunately, the Supreme Election Council decided in favor of the Kurdish party. Otherwise,

Zeydan, who received 55 percent of the votes, was going to be deprived of his title in favor of the AKP candidate, who had received only 27 percent.

After last week's election victory, the CHP may now prevail in many decisions adopted in the municipal councils. However, we might expect the central government authorities to block the implementation of some of these decisions. In the recent past, we have witnessed cases where the central authorities delayed, sometimes for several months, the government's approval of foreign credits. These funds were negotiated with foreign countries but the central Turkish authorities kept them on their desk for a prolonged period.

The results of these elections will necessarily raise the question of who is going to be No. 1 in the victorious party, the CHP. Ozgur Ozel, the party's chairman, has not so far claimed that he hopes to become president of the republic. Meanwhile, the metropolitan mayor of Ankara, Mansur Yavas, seems to be happy to remain in his present post. Ekrem Imamoglu, the metropolitan mayor of Istanbul, has given several signals that he is very much interested in becoming president. Erdogan is scheduled to go to the US next month. However, he will now make this trip as leader of a political party that lost the most recent elections in his country. This is an important minus before he visits the US.

NASA was America’s crown jewel

Douglas Brinkley

AROUND the start of this century, the world counted only two major players in manned space exploration: The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and Roscosmos, the Russian Space Agency. Ten years later, the heavens were crowded by comparison, with a number of private companies vying to restart the space race with Russia. Internationally, China had regular manned missions and the United Arab Emirates, Japan and the European nations were drawing close to success.

The turning point between the two eras was an unforeseeable tragedy: the disintegration of the Columbia space shuttle on February 1, 2003. It occurred almost exactly 17 years after a previous shuttle, the Challenger, burned just after lift-off. That 1986 disaster had resulted in a towering wave of public anger at NASA, mainly because top officials had been advised very specifically to scrub the launch. Simply put, the weather was too cold for the equipment. The intrepid American space program survived the Challenger horror, but NASA's self-doubt never subsided. Not even two decades later, after the Columbia exploded during re-entry, the two deadly failures broke the faith that many among the American people had in NASA.

Seven astronauts were onboard the Columbia for its 16-day mission, primarily to perform scientific

experiments. The launch in mid-January had been uneventful - except for one thing. The team assigned to review video of the voyage noticed what seemed to be a loose piece of the protective foam layer insulating the shuttle's external tank. Soon thereafter a chunk of foam about as big as a briefcase dislodged and struck the front of the left wing. The analysis of the malfunction was communicated to others at NASA, but the problem was considered minor.

Shuttles were invariably damaged during missions. It was only to be expected. "There's this term in NASA called accepted risk," explained Nancy Currie-Gregg, who flew four shuttle missions, the last in 2002, "There is no such thing as zero-risk space flight, but how do you decide how much risk is acceptable?"

Because other shuttle missions had returned safely with "shredded" surface tiles - and because the stalwart Columbia had brought astronauts home from 27 previous flights - many NASA officials were lulled into complacency. They went so far as to assure the pilot and commander via email that "there is no concern ... We have seen the same phenomenon on several other flights and there is absolutely no concern for entry." NASA officials also decided against enlisting spy satellite photography to examine the shuttle damage more thoroughly. If they had, it's possible that the astro-

nauts could have repaired the spaceplane or at least abandoned it for refuge on the International Space Station. Instead, as the Columbia made its descent from space, superheated atmospheric gases entered through the gaping hole left by the dislodged chunk of foam. The structure was compromised and the shuttle broke apart in midair. Wreckage spread over Texas and Louisiana. In the wake of the disaster, NASA Administrator Sean O'Keefe said in a statement, "This is indeed a tragic day for the NASA family, for the families of the astronauts who flew on STS-107, and likewise is tragic for the Nation."

As the Columbia Accident Investigation Board (CAIB) noted in its final report, "the NASA organizational culture had as much to do with this accident as the foam." All of NASA's launches were suspended for two years. While the shuttles eventually flew again, post-Columbia, the program was stunted and curtailed.

But as NASA floundered, Elon Musk's upstart SpaceX scheduled its own launches. Musk's undertaking initially proved just how hard rocket science is, though his company finally found success in 2008 with its reusable Falcon Heavy rocket. The billionaire's club was usurping NASA in space. At about the same time, Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin was developing rockets aimed mainly at suborbital flight. United Launch Alliance brought

two legacy aerospace companies together, Boeing and Lockheed Martin, in a concerted effort to develop and launch massive rockets. All four companies are thriving today in the space industry.

Virgin Galactic, an American company operated by Sir Richard Branson, is dedicated to space tourism rather than exploration. Likewise, Axiom Space was founded in 2016 to establish a space station for adventurers. And now, SpaceX has set its sight on returning humans to the moon. Space entrepreneurs were themselves launched into action, driven by the chance to make money during NASA's lull after the demise of the Columbia. NASA, far from feeling threatened, has encouraged many of the private companies with massive contracts. The agency already had a long history of dealing with sub-contractors, using its pocketbook to steer aerospace development; that tradition has adjusted seamlessly to the current space economy.

Whether the rapacious current era in space will be propelled by the idealism of President John F. Kennedy's American Moonshot is an uncertain question. Certainly, the seven astronauts doing round-the-clock experiments in physics on the Columbia had, just as JFK hoped, "set sail on this new sea because there is new knowledge to be gained, and new rights to be won, and they must be won and used for the progress of all people." *CNN*



CCP to conduct analysis of insurance sector

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has embarked on a Competition Assessment of the Insurance Sector. This study is being conducted under the IMF's Public Investment Management Assessment (PIMA) framework for Pakistan. This assessment aims to evaluate the government's footprint on key sectors of the economy through State-owned Enterprises and its implications for competition and the overall economic landscape.

The CCP's study aims to review the competitive landscape, identify any anti-competitive practices,

legal and regulatory framework, and barriers to competition in insurance sector. It will also examine the role of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) in insurance and reinsurance markets and analyse why this sector is underdeveloped in Pakistan and how it can be opened up to international players.

The insurance sector is vital for managing risk and capital generation. It plays a pivotal role in development of economy. Despite its significance, Pakistan's insurance industry has yet to realize its full potential due to regulatory constraints and competition barriers.

In comparison, the UK and other countries have

developed insurance markets worth trillions of dollars, employing thousands of people. Conversely, Pakistan is losing billions of rupees in potential, especially in reinsurance, which they have to pay to international companies.

The privatization of state-owned insurance firms is desirable to diminish public sector dominance, attract foreign investment and create a level playing field for the private sector to boost insurance penetration in the country. This will attract foreign insurance companies to enter Pakistani market. However, despite being on the government's privatization agenda for several

years, the privatization of insurance companies, including State Life Insurance Co. Ltd. and Pakistan Re-insurance Co. Limited, has yet to materialize.

CCP is currently engaged in analysing legal and regulatory frameworks of five other sectors of economy. The purpose of these studies is to open up the sectors to international players, enhancing competition and provision of better products. These sectors include Fertilizer, Insurance, Power, Road Construction, and LNG.

The insurance study's recommendations will be forwarded to the federal government in due course.



PESHAWAR: Vendor arranging and displaying artificial jewelry to attract customers at Shafi Bazaar.

Gold rates up by Rs600 to Rs245,700

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold witnessed an increase of Rs600 and was sold at Rs245,700 on Monday as compared to its sale at Rs245,100 on previous day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold increased by Rs 514 and was sold at Rs 210,648 against the sale price of Rs210,134 and 10 gram 22 karat gold also increased to Rs193,094 from Rs 192,622, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

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

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$5 to 2,355 from \$2,350, the Association reported.

Shipping activity at PQ

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity was reported at the port where three ships, Elephant, Swansea and FSM scheduled to load/offload Rice, Coal and LPG, berthed at Multi-Purpose Terminal, Bulk Terminal and Engro Terminal respectively on Sunday.

Meanwhile another ship, Gall carrying Palm oil also arrived at outer anchorage of the port during the same day. A total of ten ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, Ardmore Cherokee and Al-Khor sailed out to sea on Monday morning and another ship FSM is expected to sail on Monday afternoon.

A cargo volume of 103,518 tonnes, comprising 79,518 tonnes imports cargo and 24,331 tonnes export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 671 Containers (297 TEUs Imports and 374 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 05 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them an edible oil carrier Banglar Agragoti and another containers ship Maersk Santosa are expected to take berth at liquid Terminal and Container Terminal on Monday, while two more containers ships, MSC Nilgun and MSC Silvana are due to arrive at Port Qasim on same day, and two more ships, MSC Spring III and MSC United VIII are due to arrive on Tuesday.

SBP rolls out facilitation framework

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan has today issued a framework to onboard the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) Beneficiaries for receiving the social welfare payment into their accounts to be opened in all banks and MFBs across the country. The facilitation framework has been developed in consultation with the BISP and banks.

Under the framework, about 9.3 million BISP beneficiaries will be able to open a "BISP Sahulat Account" in a single visit to the designated bank branch within their vicinity.

The BISP has mapped its beneficiaries with a bank branch in the vicinity of the beneficiaries.

However, given the large number of beneficiaries, the framework will be implemented in phases.

Initially, a pilot phase will be run in Karachi and Lahore for onboarding about three hundred thousand (300,000) BISP beneficiaries.

Post-successful implementation of the pilot phase, the framework coverage will be extended to other cities in consultation with BISP.

The framework is expected to facilitate disbursement of social welfare payments to BISP beneficiaries in an efficient and transparent manner, enhance women financial inclusion, and promote digitization of financial services.

LCCI concerns over unauthorized visits

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) Monday expressed deep concern over unauthorized visits of the officials to various markets of Lahore and urged the Federal Board of Revenue to address this issue at the earliest.

President of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry Kashif Anwar told media here that various members of LCCI from different markets have informed that individuals, claiming to be officials from the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), have been conducting visits to various markets in Lahore. They are urging traders to register with the FBR Point of Sale (POS) system and are also inspecting their documents.

The LCCI president said that the lack of clarity and official communication regarding these visits has raised concerns among the business community. He said that it was essential for the FBR to clarify its stance on this matter and ensure that any directives related to the registration process are formally communicated to traders and shopkeepers through official notices.

Kashif Anwar said that if there was indeed a drive initiated by the Federal Board of Revenue to register traders in markets,

Laure Chamber of Commerce and Industry urge that the Chambers and Market Associations, including LCCI be kept informed and involved in the process.

He said that this collaboration will facilitate better understanding and cooperation among stakeholders, leading to smoother implementation and compliance.

The president of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry hoped that the Chairman Federal Board of Revenue would take immediate notice of the situation and address the genuine concerns of the business community.

Tokyo stocks end higher

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks ended higher on Monday as investors took heart from strong US jobs data and Israel's withdrawal of forces from the southern Gaza Strip.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index was up 0.91 percent, or 354.96 points, to end at 39,347.04, while the broader Topix index added 0.95 percent, or 25.70 points, to 2,728.32. The dollar fetched 151.78 yen, against 151.61 yen in New York late Friday.

The US economy added 303,000 jobs in March, beating analyst expectations in the latest sign of labour market strength.

This data indicates the US economy remains in

rude health but investors are optimistic that the US Federal Reserve will keep interest rates flat at its June policy meeting.

Adding to this are a weakening yen and "slightly waning concerns over geopolitical risks" linked to Israel's partial withdrawal on Sunday, Iwai Cosmo Securities said.

"These factors provided relief to investors, pushing the market, especially futures, higher", the brokerage added.

Among major shares in Tokyo, SoftBank Group added 0.73 percent to 8,600 yen, Sony Group gained 0.15 percent to 12,800 yen and Toyota surged 2.18 percent to 3,698 yen.

Prices of edibles checked

SUKKUR (APP): Following directives of the Provincial Government of Sindh, the price monitoring team of the district administration on Monday visited various markets of the city and checked the prices of edibles.

The team visited shops of vegetables and fruits, and bakeries to check prices and inspect the quality of food items. Shopkeepers were also penalized for ignoring directives of the district administration to display price lists.

They issued a stern warning to business owners dealing with food items, emphasizing the importance of complying with government-set prices or facing severe legal consequences.

PSX closed at historic high level of 69,619 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Monday, gaining 1203.20 points, a positive change of 1.76 percent, closing at historic level of 67,619.99 points against 68,416.78 points the previous trading day.

A total of 335,825,036 shares valuing Rs.15.315 billion were traded during the day as compared to 388,751,782 shares valuing Rs. 17.882 billion the last day.

Some 342 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 202 of them recorded gains and 121 sustained losses,

whereas the share prices of 19 remained unchanged.

In PSX, the three top trading companies were PTCL with 33,757,114 shares at Rs.17.02 per share, the Searle Company with 21,100,371 shares with Rs.61.86 per share and WorldCall telecom with 18,139,120 shares at Rs.1.38 per share.

Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.150.00 per share price, closing at Rs.8,350.00, whereas the runner-up was Mari Petroleum Company Limited with a Rs.48.88 rise in its per share price to Rs.2,565.86.

Hallmark Company Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.49.93 per share closing at Rs.615.80, followed by Al-Abbas Sugar Mills Limited with Rs.35.00 decline to close at Rs.550.00.

Rupee sheds 02 paise against dollar

Pakistani Rupee on Monday witnessed a devaluation of 02 paise against the US dollar in the inter-bank trading and closed at Rs277.94 against the previous day's closing of Rs277.92.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood

at Rs277.3 and Rs280.4 respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by 09 paise to close at Rs301.07 against the last-day closing of Rs301.16, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs1.83, whereas an increase of 10 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs350.97 compared to the last closing of Rs350.87.

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

Poultry, meat increases by Rs70 & Rs95 per kg

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of chicken increased by Rs 70 per kg, while the price of poultry meat

Vietnam's banking credit grows 1%

HANOI (APP): Vietnam's banking credit grew by 1 percent to 13.79 quadrillion Vietnamese dong in the first three months of 2024, VnExpress reported Monday, citing the State Bank of Vietnam.

The newspaper quoted the bank's deputy governor Dao Minh Tu as saying that outstanding loans at many lenders had grown by 3-5 percent during the cited period. "After two months of negative credit growth, this is a sign that the economy is absorbing capital," he said. The banking system can meet the credit growth target of 14-15 percent for the year, he said.

According to a business trend survey in the second quarter of 2024 conducted by the central bank, credit institutions predicted that the raised capital will increase by 3.5 percent in the first quarter and 9.9 percent in 2024. They said deposit and lending interest rates in the second quarter and the whole year will continue to stay low and change insignificantly compared to the previous period.

increased by 95 rupees per kg from the start of Ramadan by March 12th to April 08 2024 (1st of Ramadan to the 28th).

In the month of Ramadan from March 12th to April 28th, 2024, the price of poultry chicken increased by 15 percent and the price of poultry meat increased by 17 percent per kg.

On the Ramadan, the price of chicken was fixed at Rs 410 per kg, it increased to Rs 475 per kg, similarly, the price of chicken meat at the beginning of Ramadan was Rs 595 per kg, which increased to Rs 690 per kg by 28th Ramadan.

Meanwhile, it was observed that on April 6th (26th of Ramadan), the price of live chicken stood at Rs437 per kg and the price of meat was 634 rupees per kg. It increased by Rs 38 and 56 in only two

days and sold up to Rs 475 and 690 by Ramazan 28th.

In the last four weeks during the month of Ramadan, there was a 10 to 12 percent increase in the prices of poultry chicken and meat from normal days to weekends, Saturdays and Sundays, which caused severe inflation for the people during Ramadan.

Similarly, the price of eggs, which was Rs 220 per kg before Ramadan, increased by Rs 40 per dozen in the first week of Ramadan and by Rs 60 per dozen in the second week.

Poultry is a major source of protein for the middle class and lower middle class in the country and the increase in poultry prices during Eid is a cause of concern for middle-class consumers.

Talking to the APP, a school teacher Salma Hashmi, said that with the arrival of Ramadan, the

price of poultry along with other essential items increased. She said that the government must form a committee to probe the reasons of this hike.

A hawk, Irfan Khan said that earlier, he used to buy chicken twice a week for his family, but due to the recent increase in poultry products, he is now unable to buy chicken and meat.

He said that during Eid lower middle class will not be able to buy essential items for their children.

Meanwhile, talking to APP, the former Chairman of the Pakistan Poultry Association (PPA), Dr Sajjad Arshad said that the increase in the current prices of poultry was due to demand and supply factors. He said that many soybean ships have stopped at Karachi port, which has an inevitable impact on poultry prices.

Workers' remittances record \$3b inflow in March 2024

ISLAMABAD (APP): The overseas workers' remittances recorded an inflow of US\$3 billion during March 2024, the State Bank of Pakistan on Monday said.

In terms of growth, during the month under review, remittances increased by 31.3 percent on month on

month basis and 16.4 percent on year on year basis, said a news release here.

Workers' remittances inflow of US\$ 21.0 billion has been recorded during the first nine months of the fiscal year 2023-24 as compared to US\$ 20.8 same period of last year.

Workers' Remittances inflows during March 24 were mainly sourced from Saudi Arabia (US\$703.1 million), United Arab Emirates (US\$548.5 million), United Kingdom (US\$461.5 million) and United States of America (US\$372.5 million).

Mardani peera: A mouthwatering sweet attracts shoppers

PESHAWAR (APP): Encircled by customers with stretched hands, Abdullah Shah, a famous sweet seller of Mardani peera was seen asking his labourers to hurry up to fulfil the placed orders on Monday as the sun was dipping down over the Koh-e-Suafaid hills at Peshawar.

Known as Speen Lala, Abdullah is assisted by his son and three labourers in packing of the mouthwatering traditional sweet working against clock to meet the orders placed by the Eid shoppers for Eidul Fitr likely to be celebrated on Wednesday.

The sweet seller claimed of using pure milk, butter, dryfruits, almonds and sugar in Mardani peera being sold like a hotcake ahead of Meethi Eid.

Carrying forward the legacy of his grandfather, the 52 years old sweet seller said that he belonged to the third generation of his family associated with this prof-

itable business.

As special Eid Offer, "we provide the commodity on Rs480 per KG against Rs600 being sold in open market," he said, adding despite skyrocketing price hike and inflation, its price has not been increased as per my father's will.

"Mardani peera is my first choice for Eid parties. I purchased 10 kilograms of Mardani peera including five KG each for my married sisters, maternal uncles and relatives as special Eid gifts," Professor Dr Naeem Khan of Swabi University told APP.

Mardani peera, sohan halwa of Dera Ismail Khan, Gajar halwa of Bannu and Rajjar Methai of Charsadda added colours to Eid celebrations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Known as the land of hospitality, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is a unique province of Pakistan where traditional sweets become an

important food item in Eid celebrations, weddings and birthday parties due to its delicious taste and energy perspectives.

Besides Mardani peera, several varieties of sohan halwa are brought from different districts including Multan to Peshawar as special Eid items, however, the Dera Ismail Khan's variety attracts a substantial number of buyers due to its unique flavor, taste and being cost-efficient.

Noor Ali alias Pehlwan, who run a famous sweet shop at Qissa Khawani Peshawar told APP that he had brought 60kg sohan halwa stock from DI Khan and all of it were sold out till today.

"My son had visited DI Khan last night to bring additional 50KG sohan halwa stock to fulfill people's pressing demands for Eid celebrations and upcoming wedding parties," he said.

The ingredients required for the special halwa include milk, khoya, soni, fine flour, sugar and ghee besides dry fruits, which make it more delicious and tasty.

He said the traders from different parts of KP, Sindh, Balochistan, Azad Kashmir and Punjab have placed heavy orders for Eid and extra labour was hired to meet their pressing demands for sweets and confectionaries.

Like other food items, he said the prices of DI Khan and Multani sohan halwa were also increased in local market due to soaring price hike and one KG was available on ranges of Rs500 to Rs600 per KG in Peshawar, which was economical than Multani sohan halwa that was being sold at Rs550 to Rs700 per KG.

"My entire family likes DI Khan sohan halwa due to its delectable taste and energy perspective," said Ehtisham Khan, a lecturer of

Urdu literature at Qissa Khwani bazaar. "I purchased four KG sohan halwa including two kg for my married daughter as a special gift on Eid," he said.

Like sohan halwa, the Rajjar Methai made of pure "Gur" of Charsadda district also attracts a large number of buyers for Eid parties due to its appetizing taste and affordable prices.

Located about one kilometer north of Charsadda city, Rajjar bazaar has now turned into a sweets market where a great rush of buyers are being witnessed in all bakery shops on the eve of Eidul Fitr celebrations.

The traditional sweet was brought in substantial quantities in Peshawar, Charsadda, Swabi, Nowshera and Mardan districts where Rajjar sweets were being sold like hot cake.

Yaqoob Khan, an owner of Razzar sweet told APP that this hard earned business was started by his

grandfather Israruddin alias Chacha Halwai in 1930 and he belonged to the third generation running it today to support his family.

The delicious quality of the sweet differentiates it from the rest of confectioneries due to its better taste, chemically free and affordable price. The people served it to relatives and guests as a special item besides on joys occasions of Eid, weddings, engagements and children birthday strengthening the bond of love and friendship.

"Personally, I like Rajjar sweet due to its palatable taste and cost-efficient," said Riaz Khan, a retired government employee, adding people of all social status can afford it. "I purchased four KG Rajar sweets at Rs 400 per kilogram for my family members and friends as a special marriage gift," he added.

Haji Yaqoob said the recipe for the popular sweet changed over the years and

only butter, flour and gur were used in its preparation by my father as sugar was not available in those ancient days in Charsadda.

He said presently it was being prepared with various ingredients including desi ghee, milk, butter, gur and white flour enhances its taste and delectability. The popular sweet also attracted traders from Afghanistan and Central Asian Republic while marching to the sub-continent via Charsadda and Peshawar through GT Road.

The local people also send the sweets as a gift to their friends and relatives, living in other parts of the country as well as abroad. It is also being exported to Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Iran, Syria and several Middle East countries besides send to USA, UK and other western countries as a special gift for friends and relatives.

Dr Naeem said Pakistan can earn valuable foreign

exchange by exporting the traditional confectionery to international markets. Focus should be made on its marketing by involving foreign missions to explore new avenues for these popular products besides social and digital media to be used for its proper projection overseas.

The manufacturers and shopkeepers of these traditional sweets said that they had suffered great financial losses due to the corona pandemic and 2022 devastating flood and urged the government to financially support the affectees besides providing interest free loans to them.

This would enable the affected shopkeepers and manufacturers to strengthen their business besides providing jobs to labourers.

They also demanded industry status to Mardani peera, DI Khan's sohan halwa and Rajar methai of Charsadda.



In brief

Monte Carlo Masters results

MONTE CARLO (Agencies): Britain's Dan Evans suffered a 70-minute defeat by Sebastian Ofner in the first round of the Monte Carlo Masters. World number 50 Evans, playing his second match of the season on clay, lost 6-1 6-4 to the Austrian. Evans had two break points in the opening game of the match but could not convert and went on to lose the next four games in a row. He dropped serve early in the second set and, despite a late wobble from Ofner, could not force a decider. British number three Evans has not won back-to-back singles matches on the ATP Tour this year. The event in Monte Carlo is one of the nine Masters tournaments, which are the biggest men's tour events outside of the four Grand Slams. Cameron Norrie faces Russian 15th seed Karen Khachanov later on Monday, while Jack Draper takes on Poland's 10th seed Hubert Hurkacz on Tuesday.

George inspires remarkable win

NEW YORK (Agencies): Paul George scored 23 points in the final quarter as he inspired the Los Angeles Clippers to a remarkable 120-118 win over the Cleveland Cavaliers. American George, 33, was in fine form, scoring 39 points with 11 rebounds and seven assists to help his side overturn a 26-point deficit. James Harden contributed 22 points, while Ivica Zubac, Terance Mann and Norman Powell scored 14 each. "It was a collective team win," said George. "I can't take credit for none of it without them. It couldn't have happened without those guys chipping in and doing what they do." George crowned his performance by sinking the go-ahead shot with seven seconds remaining before making a crucial block to preserve the Clippers' lead just before the buzzer. The victory boosts the Clippers' chances of securing the fourth seed in the Western Conference. Elsewhere, the Dallas Mavericks kept up their late-season charge with a third straight victory, a 147-136 overtime win over the Houston Rockets. Kyrie Irving topped scored with 48 points, while Luka Doncic recorded 37 points, 12 assists and nine rebounds as the Mavericks came back from 22 points down to prevail. The defeat rules the Rockets out of contention for the end-of-season play-offs. "No matter what's happening, there's an understanding that we're playing for one another. Houston gave us their best shot, we took it and found a way to win," said Mavericks coach Jason Kidd. "That's the beauty of our locker room - no-one caved, no-one let go of the rope, no-one quit." The Golden State Warriors defeated the Utah Jazz 118-110 with Klay Thompson scoring 32 points, while LeBron James was absent as the Los Angeles Lakers suffered a 127-117 loss to the Minnesota Timberwolves. The Miami Heat stumbled to a 117-115 defeat against the Indiana Pacers, while Tyrese Maxey scored 52 points for the Philadelphia 76ers as they beat the San Antonio Spurs 133-126 in double overtime for a fifth straight win. The Phoenix Suns lost 113-105 to the New Orleans Pelicans, the New York Knicks beat the Milwaukee Bucks 122-109 and the Boston Celtics defeated the Portland Trail Blazers 124-107.

Azhar Mahmood named Pakistan head coach for New Zealand T20Is

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Former Pakistan fast bowler Azhar Mahmood has been named as the head coach of the Pakistan men's cricket team for the upcoming five-match T20I series against New Zealand.

Azhar represented Pakistan in 164 internationals, taking 162 wickets and scoring 2,421 runs. Azhar's previous assignment with the Pakistan men's cricket team was from 2016-2019 when he was the bowling coach.

Wahab Riaz has been appointed as the senior team manager, while Mohammad Yousuf will be the batting coach.

Saeed Ajmal, who was the bowling coach on the last tours of Australia and New Zealand, will continue as the spin bowling coach.

Pakistan team player support personnel for New Zealand T20Is:

Wahab Riaz (senior team manager), Mansoor Rana (team manager), Azhar Mahmood (head coach), Mohammad Yousuf (batting coach), Saeed Ajmal (spin bowling coach), Aftab



Khan (field coach), Cliffe Deacon (physiotherapist), Drikus Saiman (strength and conditioning coach), Talha Butt (analyst), Irtiza Komail (security manager), Raza Kitchlew (media and digital manager), Zain Maqsood (videographer), Dr Khurram Sarwar (doctor), and Mohammad Imran (masseur).

Earlier on Monday, the national selection committee met Pakistan cricketers who featured in Kakul's physical training camp at a local hotel in Islamabad.

Among the 29 players who featured in the camp, only Mohammad Rizwan was not present, as he had left for Saudi Arabia to play Umrah on Sunday

night.

In the meeting, the selection committee took the players in confidence regarding the selection policy, which includes rotation policy and providing opportunities to new players.

The national selection committee members present at the meeting were Abdul Razzaq, Asad Shafiq, Bilal Afzal, Hasan Cheema, Mohammad Yousuf and Wahab Riaz. Usman Wahla – Director International Cricket Operations also attended the meeting.

New Zealand are slated to reach Pakistan on April 14, two days after Pakistan's squad announcement, for the crucial series, leading to the ICC Men's T20I World Cup.

Rawalpindi's Pindi Cricket Stadium will host the first three T20Is between Pakistan and New Zealand on 18, 20 and 21 April.

The two sides will then travel to Lahore to lock horns in the remaining two T20Is on 25 and 27 April, respectively.

Play as per demand of situation, don't care about run rate: Babar Azam

LAHORE (INP): Captain of Pakistan cricket team, Babar Azam has said that he plays as per demand of the situation and don't care much about the run rat.

Responding to criticism regarding his batting strike rate, he said that he tries to perform to best of his abilities but yet some critics remain in search for instance to criticize him.

Babar Azam and maintained that he always intends to win the match for his team rather concentrating on his personal interests during the match.

"You cannot satisfy someone all

the time, I am only focused on how to win matches for my team. How I have to build the innings, and how I have to maintain my strike rate, is my concern," Azam said.

"See, strike rate is a different story, building an innings, and winning a match are two different things. When you win a match, then both things are covered," he added.

The star batter emphasized that he adapts his batting style according to the match situation, as some matches require a cautious approach.

"Sometimes you cannot play

freely because you have to build the innings, and you have wickets in hand, you can play with a 200-strike rate as well," Azam stated.

Babar Azam also explained that every player has a different approach and role, but some people always take issue with his batting style.

"I cannot understand why people have issues with my strike rate, they will say it is 150. It should be 170. If I play with 170, they will say it should have been 200. Every player has his own playing style, I don't like to compare myself with anyone."

Pakistan in contention for Test C'ship final

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Pakistan cricket team is in race for the Test Championship final as the Green Shirts have to play four series for a place in the top two.

Pakistan is at the fifth position in the current Test Championship ranking.

The team started brilliantly by defeating Sri Lanka 2-0 on their home grounds. But it crumbled against Australia in an away series. The 3-0 whitewash at the hands of kangaroos reduced percentage which is currently 36.66 percent. It has 22 points tally after deduction of two points over slow over rate.

The future prospect depends on the coming four series as Pakistan will play three home series.

It will start a two match series against Bangladesh at their home ground in a two match Test series. Later, Pakistan will host England for a three-match Test series.

In December, Pakistan will visit South Africa for a two Test series and then host the West Indies for two Tests.

At present, India is at the top of the standings, followed by Australia, New Zealand and Sri Lanka.

SFP holds peace through sports day

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Softball Federation of Pakistan (SFP) organised a special event on the occasion of "Peace Through Sports Day" celebrated under the International Olympic Committee and the United Nations.

Addressing the occasion, former Pakistan hockey captain Olympian Islahuddin Siddiqui said the purpose of celebrating Peace Through Sports Day was to spread the message of peace in the whole world through sports, said a press release.

Pakistan Olympic and Softball Federation is showing its determination by waving white cards on this day to spread the message of peace and love from this platform to the whole world, he said.

Special Olympics Pakistan Chairperson Ronak Lakhani said Pakistan was a sports-loving nation. Sports is an important means of establishing peace and reconciliation.

Through sports, people from different cultures, religions, nationalities and languages are brought to a platform to spread the message of peace to the whole world, Lakhani said.

Softball Federation President Asif Azeem said sports was a powerful tool for bringing people together and building peace, it promotes friendship and draws lines of respect across borders.

The Federation Vice President Farah Saeed said we have to play our part to encourage healthy lifestyles and make sports widely accessible.

Chairperson Yasmeen Haider said people learn the values of dignity, teamwork, and tolerance of their competitors when people participate in sports activities. And learn to respect the importance of fair play and rules. On this occasion, the participants waved white cards and reiterated the message of peace through sports.

Everton docked two more points for breach of Premier League financial rules

LONDON (AFP): Everton have been given an additional two-point deduction for a breach of the Premier League's profitability and sustainability rules (PSR), it was announced Monday.

The decision followed a previous six-point PSR penalty imposed on Everton and left the Merseyside club just two points above the relegation zone with seven games left to play this season.

"An independent commission has given an immediate two-point deduction to Everton FC for a breach of the Premier League's profitability and sustainability rules (PSRs) for the period ending season 2022/23," said a Premier League statement issued Monday.

"Over a three-day hearing last month, the independent commission heard evidence and arguments from the club in respect of a range of potential mitigating factors for its admitted breach of £16.6 million, including the impact of its two successive PSR charges.

"Having done so, the commission determined the appropriate sanction to be a two-point deduction, taking effect immediately."

The Premier League added the independent commission "reaffirmed

the principle that any breach of the PSRs is significant and justifies, indeed requires, a sporting sanction."

Everton revealed an £89.1 million (\$112 million) loss for the 2022/23 season in their financial accounts published last month.

The Toffees' losses were a significant increase from the 2021/22 season, when their accounts showed a £44.7 million deficit.

The Goodison Park club, now 16th in the table, have blamed the indefinite suspension of sponsorship deals with key commercial partners as mitigation for the increased loss.

The original six-point penalty imposed on Everton earlier this season breaches related to PSR breaches during the 2021/22 campaign.

Protracted takeover

Under PSR regulations, clubs can lose a maximum of £105 million over a three-season period, or £35 million per term, before facing sanctions.

Under-fire majority shareholder Farhad Moshiri said in March he remains confident the protracted takeover of the club by 777 Partners will be completed soon, with Everton aiming to move to a brand new stadium at Bramley-Moore

Dock for the start of the 2025/26 season.

Everton, who have spent the past 70 years in the top flight of English football, said Monday in a statement they would appeal against the latest penalty.

"While the club's position has been that no further sanction was appropriate, the club is pleased to see that the commission has given credit to the majority of the issues raised by the club, including the concept of double punishment, the significant mitigating circumstances facing the club due to the war in Ukraine, and the high level of co-operation and early admission of the club's breach.

"Everton remains committed to working collaboratively with the league on all matters relating to PSR but is extremely concerned by the inconsistency of different commissions in respect of points deductions applied."

The statement added: "The club and its legal representatives have begun the preparations to appeal the commission's decision."

Everton's next play Chelsea at Stamford Bridge on Monday before facing fellow strugglers Nottingham Forest, who have been hit with a four-point PSR penalty of their own, at home on April 21.

Kamindu Mendis named ICC Men's Player of the Month for March 2024



DUBAI (Agencies): Kamindu Mendis, one of Sri Lanka's up-and-coming batters has been voted the ICC Men's Player of the Month for March 2024.

Mendis has beat off competition for Ireland pacer Mark Adair and New Zealand speedster Matt Henry to win the ICC Men's Player of the Month Award for March 2024.

Mendis became the third Sri Lankan after Prabath Jayasuriya and Wanindu Hasaranga to win the Men's prize. The batter sees this award as a source of inspiration for his future in international cricket.

"I am extremely happy to be named the ICC Men's Player of the Month, which I consider an inspiration for my international career," Mendis expressed. "A recognition such as this motivates and makes us as players work more and more to deliver in the middle for the team, country, and fans."

"I also wish the very best for the other two players who were nominated along with me, Mark Adair and Matt Henry, whom I consider excellent players and good competitors."

It has been a return to remember for the 25-year-old, who came back to the Sri Lanka setup for the first time since 2022. Mendis started the month with 68 runs in the three-match series against Bangladesh, of which 37 came in the second T20I off 27 balls.

He outshone himself in

the longer format, delivering an exceptional performance by scoring centuries in both innings of the first Test against the same opponents.

Walking in to bat when Sri Lanka were in big trouble at 57/5, he stitched a massive 202-run stand with Dhananjaya de Silva to take the team to a respectable total of 280. Both the batters got to a century, with Mendis scoring 102.

After skittling out Bangladesh for 188, the duo once again rescued the visitors and cemented their dominance over Bangladesh with individual centuries. Mendis, batting at No.8 with the score at 126/6, crafted a career-best 164 runs adorned with 16 fours and 6 sixes.

In doing so, Mendis became the first player batting at number seven or lower to hit two centuries in a single Test. Sri Lanka posted 418 and bowled Bangladesh out for 182, winning the match by a massive margin of 328 runs.

ICC Women's Player of the Month for March 2024 revealed: England batter Maia Bouchier has been named as the ICC Women's Player of the Month for March 2024 after a sensational run in New Zealand.



Bouchier beat competition from Australia star Ash Gardner and New Zealand's Amelia Kerr to win the ICC Women's Player of the Month award for March 2024.

The youngster was thrilled after achieving the award, thanking her family and teammates for the support. "First of all, thank you to everyone who voted for me! I am so happy and grateful to everyone: my family and partner and the staff and my teammates who have supported me whilst playing at the international level," Bouchier said.

"I am so honoured to have won this award and I hope there are many more to come. It's been such an amazing couple of months, from training through the winter with my coaches at home and transferring what I've been working on into this series, so I'm really glad I have been able to perform for the team. Thank you again!"

The 25-year-old debuted in 2021 and in the initial days slotted in the middle-order for England. However, in recent times a move up to the top-order seems to have benefitted Bouchier.

It showed in England's 4-1 T20I series win over New Zealand, where she batted in the top-order and was adjudged the Player of the Series for her 223 runs at an average of 55.75 and a strike rate of 129.65.

She also scored a career-best 91 from 56 balls, with 12 fours and two sixes, in the fourth match of the series. It helped set up England's series win in the fourth T20I in Wellington. Her other prominent scores in the series were a prominent 43* in the first T20I (which England won by 27 runs), and 71 (in a close loss for England, by three runs).

Bouchier would hope to build on her golden run in New Zealand, and cement her place in the side ahead of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2024 later this year in Bangladesh.

Khattak Junior Gambat wins Ramadan District Night Football Challenge Cup

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Khattak Junior Gambat wins Ramadan District Night Football Challenge Cup

Tournament 2024 Kohat.

The Ramazan ul Mubarak District Night Football Challenge Cup Tournament 2024 started in cooperation with the District Administration Kohat under the direction of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Adviser on Sports and Youth Affairs Fakhar Jahan and Director General Sports, concluded at Kohat Sports Complex.

32 best teams of the district participated in the Tournament. Final of the tournament was played between Rising Star Football Academy Kohat and Khattak Junior Gambat which was won by the later by 5-4 through penalty shootouts.

Huge gathering of the players and fans of Football were participated



and encouraged the best teams and players.

Regional Sports Officer Kohat Sajid Afridi was the chief guest of the concluding ceremony who in a colorful program besides giving away the Winner and Runner Up Trophies, also distributed individual cash prizes and shields.

The Winner Team was given a trophy and Rs.15000/- cash prize while the Runner Team was given a trophy and Rs.10000/- cash prize. Likewise, the Referee Panel was also given Rs. 10000/-cash award.

Korda beats Maguire in fourth straight Tour win



LAS VEGAS (Agencies): Nelly Korda beat Leona Maguire to win the T-Mobile Match Play at Shadow Creek in Las Vegas for her fourth straight LPGA Tour victory.

American Korda, 25, won four of the first seven holes as she beat Ireland's Maguire 4&3. Korda, ranked number one in the world, is the first woman to win four straight tournaments since Mexico's Lorena Ochoa in 2008.

"I can't even wrap my head around it," said Korda. "Such a whirlwind of the last three weeks. I just feel like I was just in go-mode constantly." Korda was five up after 12 holes before Maguire showed resilience in taking 13 and 14, but ended the match with a par win on the 15th. "It's always nice to get a lead, kind of like a cushion," said Korda.

"But it's Leona. She's such a fiery competitor. I knew

when I lost those two holes in a row, 13 and 14, that I really needed to put my foot down to finish the match off."

The tournament's format changed this year to three days of strokeplay, with the top eight advancing to matchplay on the weekend.

Korda beat US compatriot Angel Yin 3&2 in the last eight before overcoming South Korea's Na-Rin An 4&3, while Maguire defeated Thailand's Moriya Jutanugarn 4&3 and Korean Sei-young Kim 3&2.

Korda's victory follows successes at the Drive On Championship.

Los Angeles Open and Arizona Championship. She will attempt to tie the record of five - set by American Nancy Lopez in 1978 and matched by Sweden's Annika Sorenstam in 2004-05 - in two weeks at the season's first major, the Chevron Championship outside Houston.

Brook century helps Yorks earn draw with Leics

LONDON (Agencies): England's Harry Brook hit a stunning final-day 100 not out as Yorkshire and Leicestershire had to settle for an opening-round County Championship draw at Headingley. Brook arrived at the crease four balls into day four of this weather-ravaged Division Two fixture, overnight rain and a wet outfield once again delaying the start of play.

Yorkshire started on 72-2 in their first-innings reply to

Leicestershire's 354. George Hill fell caught off a misuse in the day's opening over, paving the way for Brook to come in and entertain the hardy 178 spectators who had waited patiently for play.

Brook, 25, had not batted in a competitive fixture since playing for England in December. The death of his grandmother led to him pulling out of the Test series in India at the start of the year and opting not to play in the ongoing IPL.

However, in the first of five Championship matches he has made himself available for, he smashed 14 fours and two sixes in 69 balls, with Yorkshire declaring immediately on 264-6 just before tea in order to improve a slow-over rate from the first innings. They did this successfully as spinners Dan Moriarty and Adam Lyth raced through 7.2 overs before the rain arrived at 4pm with Leicestershire on 26-0 in their second innings.



In brief

IRSA releases 81,400 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 81,400 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 80,600 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1418.26 feet and was 20.26 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 19,700 cusecs and 30,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1102.70 feet, which was 52.70 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 29,500 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 36,000, 34,100, 29,000 and 7,600 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 19,100 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 7,100 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Police arrest 7 drug dealers

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi district police have arrested seven drug dealers and recovered over four kg charras, said a police spokesman here on Monday. He informed that Wah Cantt police recovered 1300 grams hashish from the possession of an accused namely Asad while Airport police recovered 1320 grams hashish from another accused Muhammad Farooq. Sadiqabad police recovered 1200 grams hashish from a drug dealer namely Azhar Saleem and 760 grams hashish from the possession of a drug peddler, Atif arrested in Pirwadhai Police Station area. Separate cases were registered against all the arrested drug dealers, the spokesman said. Senior Superintendent of Police, Operations said that arrested accused would be challaned with concrete evidence. The SSP said that the drug dealers could not escape the grip of the law.

Asad Amanat Ali Khan remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 17th death anniversary of renowned classical semi-classical, and playback singer Asad Amanat Ali Khan was observed on Monday. Born in 1955, Asad Amanat Ali Khan hailed from famous Patiala Gharana. He was son of famous singer Ustad Amanat Ali Khan. His famous songs include: Kal Chowdhwein Ki Raat thi, Ankhnain ghazal hain ap ki, awaz woh jaadu sa jagati hui aawaz, ghar wapis jabao gy tum and umraan langiyaan pabhaan phaar. Government of Pakistan awarded him Pride of Performance in 2007. Asad Amanat Ali Khan died on this day in 2007 in London.

Police conducted search operation

RAWALPINDI (APP): On the special directives of City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani, police have launched a search operation in Cantonment and adjoining areas, said a police spokesman. He informed that heavy police contingent, Elite Force, Special Branch personnel and ladies police along with officials of Cantt police conducted search operation in Mithukhan and its surroundings. During the search operation, a total 25 shops were searched and 65 suspects were questioned. The spokesman said search operations to net criminals and proclaimed offenders were regularly being conducted under National Action Plan in different areas of the district particularly to ensure law and order.



RAWALPINDI: People purchasing tickets and waiting for transport to travel their hometowns to celebrate Eid ul Fitr with their loved ones at Faizabad Bus Stand.

‘Punjab govt to roll out network of rehab centers to treat, cure ailing wildlife’

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senior Minister Punjab, Marriyum Aurangzeb on Monday said that government of the Punjab would roll out a province wide network of rehabilitation centers to treat and cure ailing wildlife being poached and mutilated for entertainment purposes and enhance public education and awareness on bio-diversity with the technical assistance of Four Paws.

The senior Punjab Minister visited the Margallah Wildlife Rescue Centre erstwhile Islamabad Marghazar Zoo to view the newly rehabilitated black bears being rescued by the Punjab Wildlife Department on the special directives of the Chief Minister Punjab and held a press talk, where she was flanked by Prime Minister's Coordinator for Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam, Chairperson Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB), Rina Saeed Khan and team of Four Paws' experts busy in treating the rescued bears.

Marriyum Aurangzeb said the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister Punjab have initiated combing operations against poached wild animals, whereas the

Punjab Wildlife Department rescued six dancing black bears who were in a pathetic condition. There were three raids conducted in a row which resulted into a series of actions being underway to curb the menace of illegal wildlife trafficking and poaching, she added. The IWMB has been working on wildlife preservation, whereas the Four Paws team had reached on their own expenses from Bulgaria, Austria and Germany to treat the maltreated animals, she said. "It is against CITES (international convention on illegal wildlife trade) and our wildlife laws. But it is unfortunate to know that there has been no wildlife rescue center across Punjab to rehabilitate the bears. The Bears have a natural habitat of their own that is unique," she said.

Marriyum Aurangzeb mentioned that the Punjab Wildlife Department revealed that the bears were made dancing on hot plates, whereas the nose pins drilled in their nostrils were pulled to hurt them that made the animal shake showing people like the bear was dancing.

Senior Punjab

Minister termed it an insensitive attitude and a punishable offence as per the law.

She noted that Punjab wildlife rescue centers' establishment was underway, whereas the first has been started from Lahore Safari and the other at the Lahore Zoo area.

"A microchip has been installed for a separate identity of each bear. However, a five-hour surgery by Dr Frank was done here with his mobile equipment of Four Paws to do a critical dental surgery of the bear. We will collaborate with them to establish a network of rehab centers and education of local masses for awareness across the province," she added. The Minister regretted that wildlife had never been at the political agenda whereas the current regime had endorsed special focus on the matter. "We have started GIS survey of wildlife population and a mobile app will be launched after eid to keep public aware of wild animals," she said.

Marriyum Aurangzeb said the federal capital showcased the country's wildlife and therefore a most modern wildlife education facility would be established here to apprise the masses on protection and benefits of wildlife.

RDA demolishes illegal billboards

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) on the directives of the Director General, Kinza Murtaza here on Monday demolished the billboards, temporary structures, marina IT Tower hoardings and sewer holes of Bahria Town Pvt Ltd for illegal conversion of the green belts and roads into commercial plots, said RDA spokesman.

He informed that the Enforcement Squad of RDA took action in accordance with the law as the green belts and roads were converted into commercial plots in violation of approved layout plan (LOP) of Bahria Town Phase VIII in Mouza Gali and Mouza Shahpur Rawalpindi. He said RDA's operation against illegal development and illegal housing schemes was in full swing. He said that the management of the housing scheme was doing illegal development without approval and No Objection Certificates (NOCs) in violation of Punjab Development of Cities Act 1976 and Punjab Private Housing schemes and Land Subdivision Rules 2021. He said that the Bahria Town housing scheme was illegally displaying advertisements along Soan River by Capital Estate Icon marketing company.

PTI founder's tone reflects deep frustration, says Siddiqui

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) Senator Irfan Siddiqui said on Monday that the PTI founder's angry tone in a recent media talk revealed his deep frustration, possibly due to feeling sidelined.

Commenting on the PTI founder's media talk, he explained that the founder's distress doesn't stem from any mission but rather from the fact that he hasn't been

contacted yet.

Flatly denying any possibility of a deal with PTI, he stated that, to his knowledge, there haven't been any discussions about extending a deal to the PTI founder.

Regarding PTI's attempt to form a grand alliance, he stated that the government is not concerned about it because all the parties joining hands with PTI have democratic principles, unlike PTI itself.

PRCS and IFRC distribute buffaloes among flood-affected families of Sindh, Baluchistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): To support the livelihoods of the communities affected by the 2022 monsoon floods, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS), in collaboration with the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), has completed the distribution of buffaloes in Sindh and Baluchistan.

According to PRCS spokesman, 360 buffaloes were distributed among the flood survivors, under the livelihood assistance initiative, with 60 buffaloes in each of the five districts in Sindh, including Larkana, Qambar Shahdadt, Dadu, Khairpur and Shikarpur. Additionally, 60 buffaloes were distributed in the Jaffarabad district of Baluchistan. He further informed that 120 buffaloes would be distributed in Dera Ismaili Khan district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Dera Ghazi Khan district in Punjab in the coming days.

He added that the distribution of buffaloes were carried out in separate ceremonies held in the aforementioned districts while the events were graced by Muhammad Abaidullah Khan, Secretary General, PRCS; Piwi Ophoff, Head of Country Delegation, IFRC Pakistan; the leadership of PRCS's respective district branches, staff and volunteers from PRCS and IFRC, and community representatives and notables. Speaking on the occasion, Chairman PRCS, Sardar Shahid Ahmad

Laghari expressed gratitude for the tremendous efforts of PRCS staff and volunteers who have been tirelessly working day and night to provide much-needed assistance to flood-affected people.

He highlighted PRCS's commitment to continuing its support to communities through various interventions, including cash assistance, shelter, livelihood assistance, healthcare, and hygiene promotion.

Sardar also called upon Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) to play an active role in assisting the affected communities. "We remain dedicated to our mission of serving humanity and stand ready to support communities in their journey towards recovery and resilience", he added. Piwi Ophoff, Head of Country Delegation, IFRC Pakistan, commended the teams involved in assisting those in need. According to him, "The distribution of buffaloes among the flood survivors is one of the key initiatives taken by the national society to empower the livelihoods of the affected communities while IFRC remains committed to supporting the national society in providing livelihood opportunities to the flood survivors, to improve their well-being and building their resilience to climatic shocks." The beneficiaries and community elders have appreciated the PRCS and IFRC's initiative, as it will empower the livelihoods of the communities ravaged by the 2022 floods.

Five illegal arm holders arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested five illegal arm holders and recovered arms, ammunition from their possession during their possession during crackdown here on Monday, informed police spokesman.

Waris Khan police held Abdul Wahab and recovered one pistol 30 bore

from his possession.

Similarly, Saddar Wah police nabbed Ali Abbas and recovered one pistol 30 bore from his custody and one pistol 30 bore was recovered from Ghulam Yaha while one pistol 30

bore was recovered from Abdul Wahab. Following the operation, Jatali police recovered one pistol 30 bore from Ameer Anwar. Police have registered separate cases against the accused and further investigation was in progress.

Eid preparations reach its climax

ISLAMABAD (APP): As Eid-ul-Fitr is just around the corner, majority of the people are giving last minute touch to their preparations through visiting the shopping malls and local markets of the federal capital to celebrate this auspicious occasion in a befitting manner.

In various commercial hubs such as Super Market, Jinnah Super, Karachi Company, F-10 Markaz and popular shopping malls, shoppers have been flocking since noon to finalize their shopping amidst prayers and fasting.

Several women can be witnessed in the main markets and shopping malls of the capital looking for dresses, shoes, and other essential accessories to celebrate the Eid festivities in a befitting manner, taking advantage of the Eid sales.

Saira Qasim, a mother of three children, said, "I have completed shopping for my family earlier thinking that there will be more people during the last days before Eid and the required sizes of dresses and shoes may not be available."

Talking to APP, she said, "Although the online shopping platforms have made it easier for many to shop while sitting at their homes dur-

ing fasting but still visiting the market physically for Eid shopping has its own charm."

Ansha Mehmood, a young girl, said, "I bought my Eid dress and shoes from the nearest shopping mall, availing of the sale offers. Now I have to buy just bangles, jewelry, and henna on the 'Chaand Raat' with my friends". She said, "I always try to buy dresses and shoes by the middle of Ramadan as all the good stuff is sold out during the last few days before Eid, while the tailors also stop taking orders during the last week of Ramadan as they also leave for native towns." Hira Iftikhar, who is a government employee, said, "Shopping during the month of Ramadan is a difficult task, so I am trying to complete it so that I can focus on prayers to seek blessings from Allah during the last Ashra of the holy month."

The prevailing inflation has limited the purchasing capacity of the salaried class, so I completed all shopping for my family at a local market, she said while talking to APP. Eid-ul-Fitr is the biggest festival for all Muslims across the world, and Muslims celebrate this festival with great religious zeal and enthusiasm.

The capital city comprises over half of the population, of which a major chunk belongs to the different provinces. A large number of people settled here for job purposes have moved to their hometown to celebrate the festival with their near ones combining the weekends back and forth with Eid holidays by taking leave of Monday and Tuesday.

While some others are planning to leave for their towns on Tuesday, leaving the city deserted.

Keeping in view this, most of the natives have finalized their preparations so that they can move to their hometowns before the commencement of Eid celebrations.

Amir Masood, who is a government employee and belongs to Sindh said, "I took leave on Monday and Tuesday to combine weekends back and forth along with the Eid holidays (Wednesday to Friday) so that I can spend maximum time with my parents and other family members."

"Eid is the only occasion when all the family members come together and spend good time with each other as frequent traveling is not possible due to the rising fuel prices and busy office schedule", he said.



ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to PM on Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam calls on by Ethiopian Ambassador, Jemal Beker Abdula at her office.

Awais sets April 23 deadline to curb power pilferage

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Power Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari has given April 23 as deadline to all Chairmen, Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of Power Distribution Companies (DISCOs) to curb power pilferage completely.

Terming the current efforts to curb menace of power pilferage insufficient, the minister directed strict action against power thieves, said a statement issued by the Power Division here Monday. The data did not match to the

actual damages of power theft, he said.

He said the incumbent government has zero tolerance about power pilferage and committed to rooting out the power theft menace.

He said all the concerned officers should trace all the sources of electricity pilferage and addressed them. SEs, XENs

SDOs and concerned field staff have to give certificate of no theft in their respective areas, the minister said.

He said all CEOs would verify these certificates and

submit them to the ministry. These performance would be reviewed on weekly basis and no leniency would not be tolerated, he said.

Awais said legal, disciplinary action would also be taken against the officials for inconsistency or conflicting evidence. Amendments would also be brought in the laws severely punish the officials involved in electricity theft, he said.

He said there would be amendments to the laws preventing dismissal of the officials found involved in such crimes.

Majority of natives move to inbred towns leaving capital deserted

ISLAMABAD (APP): With only a single day left in the religious festival of Eid-ul-Fitr, the majority of the natives have left for their hometowns to celebrate the festival with their families and relatives leaving the capital city deserted, like every year. A number of people residing in the capital for job purposes belong to the far-flung areas of the country and rush to their native towns to celebrate the auspicious occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr with their relatives.

Taking advantage of the official holidays announced from April 10 (Wednesday) to April 12 (Friday), majority of the natives took two-day leave on April 08 (Monday) and April 09 (Tuesday) to combine weekends back and forth, to spend maximum time with their families.

"I left for my hometown in Multan after performing my official duty on Friday to spend quality time with my parents who were anxiously waiting for me for a long", Saad Rafique, a government employee said. "It is difficult to travel to my hometown frequently due to increased petrol prices so visiting there only for five days including traveling time does not seem logical, therefore I took leave of Monday and Tuesday to combine weekend holidays too", he said while talking to APP.

Farhat Jabeen, who is a doctor by pro-

fession, said: "I left for my hometown in Kashmir on Friday to celebrate the festival with my family and relatives, taking two additional days' leave after the official holiday's announcement".

She said that Eid is the only occasion when I visit my family living in my native town as it is not convenient to afford travel expenses frequently when the fuel prices and public transport fares have been increased. Shaista Hameed, a working woman said, "My children were very enthusiastic to spend at least 10-day vacation with their grandparents in our native town so me and my husband took official leave of two days to combine it with the Eid holidays".

"Summer vacation of our children is the best time to spend more time in our native towns otherwise it is not possible to get such a long break from their study routine", she said.

The increased fares and petrol prices are another reason for spending more time in the native town on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr as it is not possible to bear travel expenses frequently.

The hustle and bustle of the capital city fade away during the festival of Eid-ul-Fitr every year as most of the natives prefer to celebrate the festivity with their families.



CHARSADDA: PPP's Chairman, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari condoles with leader of ANP, Aimal Wali Khan on the death of his mother, during his visit to Wali Bagh.

Iran FM opens new Syria consulate

DAMASCUS (AFP): Iran's foreign minister inaugurated the country's new consulate in Damascus on Monday, a week after a deadly strike blamed on Israel destroyed the former premises, sending regional tensions skyrocketing.

Tehran, a key Damascus ally, has vowed to avenge last Monday's air strike on the Iranian embassy's consular section that killed seven

Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) members, including two generals. The strike came against the backdrop of Israel and Hamas's ongoing fighting, which began with the group's October 7 attack on Israel.

Damascus and Tehran blame Israel for last Monday's raid, but it has not commented. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian inaugurated the new consular section in a Damascus building in the presence of his Syrian counterpart Faisal Mekdad, whom he also met earlier on Monday, state

news agency SANA said. An AFP correspondent at the inauguration said the new consulate was not far from the premises destroyed by the strike in the upscale Mazzeah area, which also houses other foreign embassies and UN offices.

Amir-Abdollahian was also set to meet President Bashar al-Assad, and Syria's pro-government newspaper Al-Watan said his talks in Damascus would be "mainly focused" on repercussions of last week's strike. Iran's foreign minister began a regional tour Sunday in Oman, long a mediator between Tehran and the West, where Muscat's foreign minister called for de-escalation.

An adviser to Iran's supreme leader warned on Sunday that Israeli embassies were "no longer safe" after the Damascus attack. Analysts saw the raid as an escalation of Israel's campaign against Iran and its regional proxies that runs the risk of trigger-

ing a wider war beyond the Israel-Hamas fighting in the Gaza Strip.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor said 16 people were killed in the consulate strike: eight Iranians, five Syrians, one member of Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group and two civilians. Among the dead were generals Mohammad Reza Zahedi and Mohammad Hadi Haji Rahimi, both senior commanders in the Quds Force, the IRGC's foreign operations arm.

Israel has launched hundreds of air strikes in Syria since civil war broke out 13 years ago, targeting Iran-backed forces, including Hezbollah as well as Syrian army positions and weapons depots. It rarely comments on individual strikes, but Israel's raids have increased since the Gaza fighting began. Tehran backs Hamas but has denied any direct involvement in the group's October 7 attack, which sparked massive Israeli retaliation in Gaza.

WB approves \$149.7m for two projects in Pakistan

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank has approved 149.7 million dollars in financing for two projected in Pakistan, says in media reports. As per details, the funds were okayed to support the projects related to digital economy and improved flood resilience. This has been stated in a statement issued by the international financial institution.

The allocated funding of 78 million dollars for the Digital Economy Enhancement Project is expected to enhance financial management through technology-driven solutions and data-driven decision-making. The investment in digital economy is also likely to streamline public services, increase transparency and foster economic growth. Simultaneously, the 71.7 million dollars allocation for Sindh Barrages Improvement Project is likely to ensure greater flood resilience.

Last year in July, the World Bank's Board of Executive Directors Thursday approved US\$100 million for the Punjab Family Planning Program to increase the utilization of family planning services in Pakistan's Punjab province.

"This important program aims to achieve universal access to reproductive healthcare and to raise the usage of family planning methods in Punjab to 60 percent by 2030," said Najy Benhassine, World Bank Country Director for Pakistan, "This is critical for Pakistan's development, as excessive population growth rates hampers development, slows the accumulation of human capital, and contributes to keeping families in poverty."

Abbasi to launch new party

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Disgruntled Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior leader Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on Monday approached the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for the registration of a new political party. The seasoned politician, who parted ways with the Nawaz-led party after having differences over the last year, submitted relevant documents to the poll organising authority's office for the registration of a new political party.

Abbasi, the former prime minister, served the top office from August 2017 to May 2018. Speaking to reporters, Abbasi said he provided relevant documents to the election commission for his new political party which would be registered under the Election Act 2017. He announced that he would take part in next elections under the banner of his new party.

Prior to Abbasi's big move, two bigwigs from Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) — Jahangir Tareen and Perviz Khattak — formed their own political parties along with a large number of politicians who had been part of the Imran Khan-founded party. Tareen had officially launched his party, Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP), in June last year. Just a month after Tareen, Khattak also launched his party by the name of PTI Parliamentarians in KP which was joined by a large number of defectors from the former ruling party. Abbasi had hinted at forming a new party on several occasions since he had differences with the PML-N's top leadership and also signalled that there would be a new party forming after the February 8 nationwide polls.

Facilitating Israel's Gaza conflict

ICJ opens hearings in a case accusing Germany

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP): Nicaragua on Monday called on the United Nations' top court to halt German military and other aid to Israel, arguing that Berlin's support was enabling acts of genocide and breaches of international humanitarian law in the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

Opening Nicaragua's case at the International Court of Justice, the country's ambassador to the Netherlands, Carlos José Argüello Gómez, told the 16-judge panel that "Germany is failing to honor its own obligation to prevent genocide or to ensure respect of international humanitarian law." While the case brought by Nicaragua centers on Germany, it indirectly takes aim at Israel's military campaign in Gaza following the deadly Oct. 7 attacks when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people. More than 33,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, according to the territory's Health Ministry. Its toll doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants, but it has said women and children make up the majority of the dead.

Israel strongly denies that its assault amounts to genocidal acts, saying it is acting in self defense. Israeli legal adviser Tal Becker told judges at the court earlier this year that the country is fighting a "war it did not start and did not want." But Nicaragua rejected that defense, in a reference to Germany's support for Israel. "Surprisingly, Germany seems not to be able to differentiate between self-defense and genocide," Argüello Gómez said. Germany, whose lawyers will address the court Tuesday morning, rejects the case

brought by Nicaragua. "Germany has breached neither the Genocide Convention nor international humanitarian law, and we will set this out in detail before the International Court of Justice," German Foreign Ministry spokesperson Sebastian Fischer told reporters in Berlin on Friday.

Nicaragua has asked the court to hand down preliminary orders known as provisional measures, including that Germany "immediately suspend its aid to Israel, in particular its military assistance including military equipment in so far as this aid may be used in the violation of the Genocide Convention" and international law. It also wants the court to order Germany to resume funding to the United Nations aid agency in Gaza in addition to the aid Berlin is already providing.

"It is indeed a pathetic excuse to the Palestinian children, women and men in Gaza to provide humanitarian aid, including through airdrops, on the one hand, and to furnish the weapons and military equipment that are used to kill and annihilate them" and humanitarian workers, Nicaragua lawyer Daniel Müller told judges. The court will likely take weeks to deliver its preliminary decision, and Nicaragua's case will probably drag on for years.

Monday's hearing at the world court came amid growing calls for allies to stop supplying arms to Israel as its six-month campaign continues to lay waste to Gaza. On Friday, the UN's top human rights body called on countries to stop selling or shipping weapons to Israel. The United States and Germany opposed the resolution. Also, hundreds of British jurists, including three retired Supreme Court judges, have called on

their government to suspend arms sales to Israel after three UK citizens were among seven aid workers from the charity World Central Kitchen killed in Israeli strikes. Israel said the attack on the aid workers was a mistake caused by "misidentification." Germany has for decades been a staunch supporter of Israel. Days after the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas, Chancellor Olaf Scholz explained why: "Our own history, our responsibility arising from the Holocaust, makes it a perpetual task for us to stand up for the security of the state of Israel," he told lawmakers.

Berlin, however, has gradually shifted its tone as civilian casualties in Gaza have soared, becoming increasingly critical of the humanitarian situation in Gaza and speaking out against a ground offensive in Rafah. Nicaragua's government, which has historical links with Palestinian organizations dating back to their support for the 1979 Sandinista revolution, was itself accused earlier this year by UN-backed human rights experts of systematic human rights abuses "tantamount to crimes against humanity." The government of President Daniel Ortega fiercely rejected the allegations.

In January, the ICJ imposed provisional measures ordering Israel to do all it can to prevent death, destruction and acts of genocide in Gaza. The orders came in a case filed by South Africa accusing Israel of breaching the Genocide Convention. On March 28, the court ordered Israel to take measures to improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza, including opening more land crossings to allow food, water, fuel and other supplies into the war-ravaged enclave.

6 killed in mugging incidents in Karachi

E.P. Report

KARACHI: At least 16 citizens have been killed due to robbers' firing during Ramadan in Karachi, media reported on Monday. As per the report, 6,780 street crime incidents took place in Karachi in one month, while 20 vehicles were snatched and more than 130 others stolen.

The report revealed that 830 motorcycles were snatched and 4,200 others stolen during Ramadan. Whereas, the number of mobile phones snatched was 1,600, it said. Considering the deteriorating law and order situation, Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah directed the police to boost security

and monitoring in Karachi, as a large number of people throng to markets two days ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr.

Presiding the meeting regarding the law and order situation in Karachi, CM Murad directed the police to ensure that people's lives and properties are protected. The chief minister also lauded the police force for recovering two hostages, Abdullah and Kashif, during a raid in Baldia Town. DIG Muqaddas Haider, SSP Zafar Siddiqui, DSP Qaiser Shah, Inspector Abid Hussain, Sub Inspector Ghulam Rasool, Head Constable Tariq Samad, Khawar Yusuf and Lady Constable Areesha Naz were included in the police party that carried out

the raid.

The Karachi additional IG apprised the forum that the suspects Sabir Inayat Rehman, Hayat Ali And Wahidullah were injured when arrested. As per the details, the suspects had called the victims on the pretext of sending them to Italy and abducted them. After the abduction, Naveed Akhtar called their family to seek ransom. Police said the group mainly operated from abroad. The Sindh CM said he would personally meet the police officials for their encouragement. Murad said on an average daily 166 cases were lodged in Karachi, which was lower than other cities of the country.

94 dead in Mozambique after ferry boat capsizes

M O Z A M B I Q U E (Reuters): At least 94 people died, including children, and 26 are missing after a ferry boat capsized off the northern coast of Mozambique, an official from the country's Maritime Transport Institute (INTRASMAR) said.

The vessel was an overloaded fishing boat and was not licensed to transport people, Lourenco Machado, an administrator of INTRASMAR, said on state television on Monday. "On Sunday we registered a maritime incident where at least 94 people died when a barge carrying 130 people capsized. We have recovered 94 bodies and 26 are missing," he said.

The boat was ferrying people from Lunga in Nampula province to Mozambique Island, he said, adding that initial reports indicated that it was hit by a tidal wave. The passengers were fleeing a cholera outbreak, said state broadcaster TVM, citing another local maritime administrator. Jaime Neto, secretary of state for Nampula province, also said that the passengers were fleeing cholera, according to the British Broadcasting Corp (BBC).

"Because the boat was overcrowded and unsuited to carry passengers, it ended up sinking," he told the BBC, adding that many children were among the dead. Videos posted on social media X showed many bodies lying on a beach and some people carrying the bodies of children. Reuters could not immediately verify these videos. Mozambique and other countries in Southern Africa have been battling cholera outbreaks since last year.

Deputation of FIA officers to DISCOs

ISLAMABAD (INP): The federal government has 'okayed' deputation of Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) officers to electricity distribution companies (DISCOs) to end power theft, sources on Monday.

The move has been taken to end power theft and enhance recoveries on the demand of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the sources said. In this regard, a letter has been penned to the Power Division regarding the deputation of FIA officers in five DISCOs including Islamabad Electric Supply Company, Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Tribal Areas and Quetta Electric Supply Companies. It is to be noted that FIA officers are already deputed in Peshawar, Sukkur and Hyderabad Electric Supply Companies.

US 'will not accept' flood of below-cost Chinese goods

WASHINGTON (AFP): The United States "will not accept" a situation where underpriced Chinese goods flood the global market, battering industries elsewhere, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said on Monday as she wrapped up high-level talks in China.

Yellen repeatedly warned about the risks of China's excess industrial capacity during four-day talks with officials and business leaders in the southern city of Guangzhou and capital Beijing. Washington's concern is that as Chinese government support creates more production capacity than global markets can absorb, a surge of cheap exports in sectors such as solar and electric vehicles could stifle the growth of these industries elsewhere. Yellen said on Monday that massive Chinese government support had led to a flood of below-cost steel into the global market over a decade ago, which "decimated industries across the world and in the United States".

"I've made clear that President Biden and I will not accept that reality again," she told a news conference, adding that US allies and partners share similar concerns. Besides tackling the issue with her counterpart Vice Premier He Lifeng over around 11 hours of talks, she raised it

with Premier Li Qiang as well — moves that Washington hopes will bring these concerns to the highest levels of Chinese policymaking.

Yellen said she was especially worried about "imbalances" such as China's weak household consumption and business overinvestment, "aggravated by large-scale government support in specific industrial sectors". But Beijing has pushed back, with China's Commerce Minister Wang Wentao calling overcapacity fears "groundless", according to state media. This comes even as bilateral ties have stabilised with both sides willing to cooperate on issues including climate change, debt restructuring, and anti-money laundering.

The two countries have also agreed to open channels for further talks on excess capacity. But Li earlier told Yellen that Washington should view the matter of production capacity "objectively" and from a "market-oriented" perspective, the state-run Xinhua news agency said. Yellen noted that excess capacity concerns will not be addressed in a week or month, but stressed that doing so would be positive for China's long-term productivity and growth.

Yellen said she also had "difficult conversations about national security", warning Chinese officials

of the consequences of supporting Russia's military procurement and using economic tools over national security concerns. In particular, she said Washington was committed to having "no surprises" in the use of such tools. She said the United States has laid out its principles and policymaking process.

But she added: "We would welcome transparency from [China] on its national security actions and greater clarity on where it sees the line between national security and economic issues." Yun Sun, senior fellow at think tank the Stimson Center, said that overall, Yellen's ability to meet with senior Chinese officials to convey US concerns and "probe" China's reactions is a positive development. But she cautioned that China is unlikely to give up or change its current growth model and areas of focus because of the United States, unless there are significant consequences, given its economy is "not in the best shape".

But both sides' agreement to cooperate in technical areas such as tackling money laundering would be helpful to boost confidence in their relations, Sun said. Among areas of cooperation, Yellen said she has seen progress in recent months over specific debt cases such as Zambia's.

S Korea puts second mily spy satellite successfully

SEOUL: South Korea has successfully launched its second military reconnaissance satellite, days after North Korea reiterated its intention to launch multiple spy satellites this year. The satellite entered orbit after its launch on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from the John F Kennedy Space Center in Florida in the United States on Sunday, South Korea's National Ministry of Defense said.

Seoul's military said in a statement that its "independent intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities have been further strengthened" by the successful launch. "We will proceed with future satellite launches without a hitch," it added.

The Falcon 9 rocket was launched at 23:17 GMT and the satellite successfully separated from the launch vehicle 45 minutes later and entered its

targeted orbit, according to the statement. It made successful communications with a ground station about two hours and 40 minutes after the launch, the ministry added.

South Korea, which plans to launch a total of five military spy satellites by 2025, is in a race with North Korea to expand its surveillance capabilities amid rising tension on the Korean Peninsula. Pyongyang launched its first spy satellite — Malligyong-1 — in November last year in its third attempt, while South Korea put its satellite into orbit the following month. North Korea has since said its satellite had transmitted imagery of key sites in the US, including the White House and the Pentagon, but has not released any of the photos.

On March 31, Pak Kyong Su, the vice general director of North Korea's National

Aerospace Technology Administration, said the country expected to launch several more reconnaissance satellites this year. Leader Kim Jong Un has previously said he aimed to put three more military spy satellites into space in 2024.

South Korean Defence Minister Shin Wonsik said on Monday that the first of those launches could take place as soon as next week — to mark the April 15 birthday of state founder Kim Il Sung.

The holiday, known as the Day of the Sun, is typically marked with mass ceremonies and military parades. North Korean satellite launches are seen as a violation of United Nations sanctions imposed on Pyongyang over its nuclear weapons programme because they make use of banned ballistic missile technology. — Aljazeera