White House discussing 'freeze for freeze' nuclear deal with Iran-media

WASHINGTON (Agencies): The Biden administration is discussing a potential deal that would see Iran halt progress on parts of its nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief. Axios reported on Monday. American officials have discussed the hypothetical agreement with their European and Israeli counterparts in recent weeks, the news site reported, citing unnamed Israeli officials, Western diplomats, and "US experts." Under the US proposal, Iran would reportedly halt uranium enrichment at 60% purity in exchange for the lifting of some Western sanctions on its economy. According to a report by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in February, Iran has enriched nearly 88 kilograms of uranium to 60% purity and trace amounts to 83.7%. Uranium must be enriched to 90% to be considered weapons-grade. Tehran denies that it is seeking a nuclear weapon, and the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran responded to the IAEA by insisting that it is not attempting to enrich beyond 60%. According to Axios' sourc-



agreement with worse terms than the 2015 nuclear deal. That deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), was signed by Iran and the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council plus Germany and the EU in 2015. Under its terms. Iran agreed to strict oversight of its nuclear program in exchange for relief from US and UN sanctions. Former US President Don-

es, the US proposal has been rejected

by Iran. Officials in Tehran reportedly

said that they don't want to sign an

ald Trump unilaterally withdrew from the deal in 2018, claiming that Iran was not in compliance, and economic sanctions were reimposed. The White House refused to confirm or deny the latest report, which a spokesperson dismissed as "second-hand rumors about diplomatic discussions." No Israeli officials commented on the story, although Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in February that Israel favors economic sanctions coupled with a "credible military threat" when dealing with the Islamic Republic.

Paris votes to ban rental e-scooters



PARIS (AFP/APP): Paris voted overwhelmingly Sunday to banish for-hire electric scooters from the streets of the French capital, delivering a blow to operators and a victory for road safety campaigners. The referendum means the City of Light, once a pioneer in embracing e-scooter services, is set to become the only major European capital to outlaw the widespread devices booked on apps such as Lime. The city's residents were asked to weigh in for or against them in a public consultation organised by mayor Anne Hidalgo, with nearly 90 percent of the votes cast against, official results showed. "We're happy. It's what we've been fighting for over four years," said Arnaud Kielbasa, co-founder of the Apacauvi charity, which represents victims of e-scooter accidents. "All Parisians say they are nervous on the pavements, nervous when they cross the roads. You need to look everywhere," Kielbasa, whose wife and infant daughter were hit by an e-scooter driver, told AFP. "That's why they've voted against them.

Deadly storms and tornadoessweep through US



WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): The death toll from a major storm system that lashed the south-central and eastern United States with devastating winds and destructive tornadoes rose to at least 29 by Sunday, officials said. Tennessee, one of the hardest-hit states since the storms began Friday, initially had seven weather-related fatalities. But this rose to 12 after police reported three new deaths Sunday, saying two children and an adult were killed Saturday when a tree fell on a house in Memphis. Scenes of devastation were left in the path of the Tennessee tornado, which twisted trees, flattened homes into piles of wooden boards and ripped walls from still-standing structures.

UN chief urges greater inclusion, marking World Autism Awareness Day

retary-General Antonio Guterres has called for greater support for people with autism, and celebrating their contributions. "Today and every day, let us fully recognize the active and diverse contributions of persons with autism to our societies," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in his message to mark World Autism Awareness Day on Sunday, April 02. "Let us work together with persons with autism to build an inclusive and accessible world for all." Approximately one in 100 children has autism, which constitutes a diverse group of conditions related to development of the brain, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Although characteristics may be detected in early childhood, autism is often not diagnosed until much later. The abilities and needs of autistic people vary and can evolve over time. WHO said. While some can live independently, others have severe disabilities and require life-long care and support. Despite – to society, and to the achievement of important progress, the UN chief said, Sustainable Development Goals.

UNITED NATIONS (APP): UN Sec- persons with autism continue to face social and environmental barriers to the full exercise of their rights and fundamental freedoms, in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. "We must do better, by promoting inclusive education, equal employment opportunities, self-determination, and an environment where every person is respected," he said. "As we do so, we also recognize the role of families, caregivers, and support networks in the lives of persons with autism." An UN-hosted global virtual event, Transformation: Toward a Neuro-Inclusive World for All, will feature autistic people from around the world discussing how the transformation in the narrative around neurodiversity can continue to be furthered in order to overcome barriers and improve the lives of autistic people. The event will also address the contributions that autistic people make - and can make

Israel greenlights new national guard demanded by far-right minister

Jerusalem (AFP/APP): The Israeli government approved Sunday the formation of a national guard, which opponents warn would function as a "private militia" of firebrand National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir who had pushed for the decision. A committee comprised of members of "Israel's security agencies" would propose within 90 days if the police "or another body" would be in charge of the new guard, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said in a statement, "The national guard will deal with national emergency situations such as the disturbances that occurred" in Israeli cities during a May 2021 conflict with Palestine in Gaza, the statement added, while noting the committee would also be asked to define the new agency's responsibilities. A statement from Ben-Gvir's office said the guard, which would operate under his ministry, would deal with "emergency scenarios, nationalistic crime, terror, and strengthening sovereignty". The move was a condition set by Ben-Gvir, leader of the far-right Jewish Power party, to agree to freeze the government's controversial judicial reforms following months of protest and a crippling general strike on Monday. Opposition leader Yair Lapid called Sunday's government



decision an "extremist fantasy of delusional people" and slammed a separate decision to cut budgets from other ministries "to fund Ben-Gvir's private militia". Former public security minister Omer Bar-Lev, who had advanced the formation of a national guard in 2022 as part of the border police, said it was already that force's responsibility to be dealing with the issues Ben-Gvir was tasking the national guard with. "The thought that a private militia would be formed by an embarrassing minister who lacks understanding and was convicted of support of a terror group and incitement to racism is shocking," Bar-Lev wrote of Ben-Gvir on Twitter.Earlier on Sunday. Ben-Gvir spoke of the need to use the guard to combat "illegal arms, organised crime, and agricultural terror", the latter referring to damage to fields, produce and farming tools the minister blames Arabs for.

Oil prices soar almost 6pc after OPEC+ output cut

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Oil prices soared almost six percent in Asian trade on Monday morning after major producers led by Saudi Arabia announced a surprise cut of more than one million barrels per day. The West Texas Intermediate contract jumped 5.74 percent to \$80.01 a barrel, while Brent jumped 5.67 percent to \$84.42. The move by Saudi Arabia, Iraq, UAE, Kuwait, Algeria and Oman will be in effect from next month until the end of the year and marks the biggest reduction in output since the OPEC+ cartel slashed two million barrels per day in October. The reduction came on top of a Russian decision to extend a cut of 500,000 barrels per day, and in spite of US calls to increase



production. The announcement will fan fresh fears about inflation and put more pressure on central banks to hike interest rates further. Market "sentiment is likely to take a knock... as higher levels of expected inflation assume higher (for longer) interest rates", said Matt Simpson at City Index."And stocks likely won't appreciate this development, so we could be in for a rocky start to the week."

Wagner claims 'legal' capture of Ukraine's Bakhmut as six killed nearby



MOSCOW (AFP/APP): Russia's Wagner paramilitary group on Monday claimed it had "in a legal sense" captured the eastern Ukraine town of Bakhmut -- the site of the longest battle of Moscow's operation in the country -- with its units now in control of city the town.

hall. The Wagner group has supported Russian troops throughout the offensive to surround Bakhmut, the fight for which both sides have invested heavily, despite analysts' assertions that the city carries little strategic value. "The commanders of the units that took city hall and the whole centre will go and put up this flag," Wagner head Yevgeny Prigozhin said on his Telegram channel, referencing a Russian flag he is seen holding in a video accompanying the post. "This is the Wagner private military company, these are the guys who took Bakhmut. In a legal sense, it's ours." On March 20, Prigozhin had claimed Wagner units controlled 70 percent of

Petteri Orpo, Finland's low-key conservative set to become PM

HELSINKI (AFP/APP): With his calm demeanor, sober suits and an insistence on budget austerity, conservative leader Petteri Orpo might not appear the most exciting prospect on Finland's political landscape. But the 53-year-old Orpo could well be the country's next prime minister after his centre-right National Coalition Party beat out charismatic incumbent Sanna Marin, of the Social Democrats, in Sunday's general election. Orpo, who was first elected to parliament in 2007 and has previously served as a finance, interior and agriculture minister, is a politician to his core. Raised in southwestern Finland, he became involved in student politics while studying economics at university. It ended up taking up so much of his time that it took him 12 years to graduate with a master's degree in polit-Throughout the election campaign. the country's finances -- something defeat the previous year.



he claimed Marin had neglected. "The most important thing the National Coalition wants to change in Finland is that we stop increasing debt," Orpo told AFP before the vote. His election -- and attention to budgetary rigour -- could spark some concern in Brussels, with Finland already one of the "frugal" EU countries that have called on southern European countries to rein in deficits. Considered a pragmatic leader who listens and aims to be inclusive, Orpo took over the party ical science, majoring in economics. leadership in 2016 when he unseated former prime minister Alexander he has kept his eye firmly focused on Stubb, who had suffered an election

Trump to fly to New York for court surrender amid tight security



NEW YORK: Former US President Donald Trump is set to fly from Florida to New York City on Monday, ahead of his scheduled arraignment related to hush money paid to a porn star before the 2016 election, as security tightens in Manhattan. Trump, the first former US president to face criminal charges, is due to be arraigned, fingerprinted and photographed at the downtown Manhattan his office said.

courthouse on Tuesday. His lawyers have said he will enter a plea of not guilty. The specific charges included in the grand jury indictment have not been disclosed; Tuesday's arraignment marks Trump's first appearance in court and in front of a judge in the case. The Republican businessman-turned-politician plans to travel from his Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach midday on Monday, arriving later in the day in New York and spending the night at Trump Tower in Manhattan before arriving at the courthouse on Tuesday morning, an adviser said. A court official said the arraignment is planned for 2:15 p.m. (1815 GMT) on Tuesday. Trump then will return to Florida and deliver remarks at Mar-a-Lago at 8:15 p.m. on Tuesday (0015 GMT on Wednesday),

About Khyber Mail The Khyber mail was first published in Peshawar, Pakistan in 1932. A newspaper in English by the eminent journalist Sheikh Sana Ullah. From 1932 to 1989 it has survived as leading English newspaper in the region by the sons of Sana Ullah i.e. Sheikh Zaka Ullah, Sheikh Inayat Ullah and Sheikh Saleem Ullah.

The publication was shut down in 1989 due to various reasons. The current owner Rizwan Inayat son of Sheikh Inayat Ullah and grandson of Sheikh Sana Ullah, has restarted the family heritage but meeting with the requirement of the century, by giving the readers current happenings around the world with one touch anywhere any time and updating the reader to pace up with the world.



www.thekhybermail.com







PPP vows to continue Shaheed Z.A.B vision on his 44th death anniversary

Shah Bacha, Acting President of the Pakistan People's Party Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, paid tribute to the founder of the PPP, Quaid-e-Awam Shaheed Zulfigar Ali Bhutto, on the occasion of his 44th death anniversary. He praised Bhutto's contributions to the country, including the establishment of Pakistan Steel Mill and Port Oasim, as well as his revolutionary initiatives in industry, health, education, and labour. He also highlighted Bhutto's role as an international leader and his significant impact

noted that Bhutto's services and sacrifices for democracy were unforgettable and lamented that the military dictator overthrew his government, and later Bhutto was martyred in a false case. He emphasized that Bhutto set new paths for the welfare and development of the people of the third world and gave the slogan of bread, cloth, and house to end poverty and bring politics out of the drawing rooms and into the fields. He said that former President Asif Ali Zardari and Chairman Bilawal Bhutto

PESHAWAR (APP): Muhammad Ali on the country's politics. The minister Zardari are following Shaheed Bhutto's vision and policies to make the country prosperous and solve the problems of the people. He pledged to work day and night to make the Pakistan People's Party organized, diligent, and strong, and make Pakistan a great country by following the thoughts, ideas, and manifesto of its martyred leader Z.A.Bhutto. On the anniversary of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Quran recitation and prayer ceremonies will be held in all districts, and tribute will be paid to his struggle and sacrifice.

CS reviews progress on e-procurement system

PESHAWAR (APP): The Chief Secretary of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhary on Monday chaired a meeting to review progress on the e-procurement system. The e-procurement system is an online platform that aims to increase transparency and accountability in public procurement and contract awards. The KP government is implementing the system to ensure that the procurement process is fair and open to all qualified bidders, re-

ducing the possibility of corruption and toward promoting transparency, acmalpractice. During the meeting, Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudharyon expressed satisfaction with the progress made by the e-procurement system and its potential to bring about significant improvements in the procurement process. He emphasized the need for all concerned departments to fully embrace the system and ensure its successful implementation. He said that the system is an important step

countability, and good governance in public procurement. The Chief Secretary urged all relevant departments to work together to ensure the successful implementation of the e-procurement system in the province. He emphasized that the system would bring significant benefits in terms of efficiency, transparency, and accountability, which would ultimately lead to better public services for the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Alkhidmat foundation distributes Rs50mn food packages in Lower Dir

PESHAWAR (APP): The Alkhidmat foundation has distributed Rs. 50 million food packages among deserving people in the Lower Dir

GOLD PRICE IN PAK

Gold Rate	24K Gold	22K Gold	21K Gold	18K Gold
Per Tola	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
Gold	209200	191765	183050	156900
Per 10	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
Gram	179300	164357	156888	134475
Per Gram	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
Gold	17930	16436	15689	13448
Per	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
Ounce	508300	465938	444763	381225

FOREX RATES

Currency	Buying	Selling
US Dollar	285.15	288
China Yuan	41.16	41.56
Japanese Yen	2.25	2.3
Saudi Riyal	75.95	76.70
U.A.E Dirham	77.5	78.2
UK Pound	349.53	352.5
Euro	307.5	310.5
Australian Dollar	187.5	189.9
Canadian Dollar	206.5	208.7

Emergency Numbers				
Organization	Phone No			
Rescue 1122 HQrs	091-2264224-25			
Rescue 1122 Mardan	0937-9230770			
Fire Brigade Cantt:	091-9212534			
Fire Brigade City	091-2566666			
Police Emergency	091-9212222			
Edhi Ambulance	091-2214575			
Red Crescent Ambulance	091-2210836			
Emergency Ambulance	091-2590846			
Civil Defence, Peshawar	091-9212176			
Lady Reading Hospital	091-9211430			
HMC Peshawar	091-9217140-46			
KTH Peshawar	091-9216340-8			
Irnam Hospital	091-9216115			
Mission Hospital	091-2212371			
Al-Khidmat Hospital	091-2215945			
Fauji Foundation Hospital	091-9212771-4			
Frontier Foundation Blood Services	091-5703463			
Hamza Foundation, Peshawar	091-5841632			
Sui Gas, Peshawar	091-9213016			
Wapda Complaint Peshawar	091-9212041			
PIA, Peshawar	091-9213351			
Airport Inquiry	114			
Railway Inquiry	117			

district during the holy month of ows. The spokesman said distribu-Ramzan. According to the Alkhidmat foundation spokesman, 1,000 food packages containing dates, pulses, rice and other items have been handed over to the poor so far. Moreover, clothes, shoes and other goods were also distributed among 200 orphans and 100 wid-

tion of food packages would continue till the last day of Ramzan ul Mubarak. He said such schemes were also launched in others districts of the Malakand division to provide relief to the downtrodden and marginalized community during Ramzan.

ANP announces candidates for four NA, three PK constituencies

tional Party (ANP) on Monday anfor four National Assembly (NA) Peshawar and three Provincial Assembly (PK) Swat constituencies. A provincial parliamentary board meeting of the party chaired by provincial president Khan for PK-54.

PESHAWAR (APP): The first-ever

PESHAWAR (APP): The Awami Na- Aimal Wali Khan approved the name of Haji Ghulam Ali Bilour for NA-31 Penounced the names of its candidates shawar, Syed Aqil Shah NA-30, Arbab Zain for NA-29 and Sagib Ullah Khan Chamkani for NA-28. Similarly, Asim Khan was named for PK-5 Swat, Sher Shah Khan for PK-6 and Sher Afghan

Digital population, housing census to conclude on April 04

digital and 7th population and housing census 2023, which was launched on March 01 by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), is currently in its final stages and would conclude on April 04. Chief Census Commissioner Dr Naeem uz Zafar has said that the people who could not get themselves registered due to some reason, can dial 0800-57574, or use the digital service of self-enumeration while logging on to "self.pbs.gov.pk" or contact the district administration in their respective areas for their inclusion in the census. The self-enumeration portal was the first-ever opportunity provided in any country in South Asia, enabling every resident of Pakistan the option to count himself/herself in the digital census, he added. The launch of the digital census in Pakistan was a significant milestone for the country, as past methods of counting people were contentious. with concerns raised by various groups in the digital census, he added. All the about inaccurate counts and the exclusion of marginalized communities, the duties to monitor the digital cenaccording to a PBS official on Monday. In order to address these issues, PBS respective commissioners on a regular introduced geo-tagging and real-time

data collection and transmission for the digital census 2023, he added. He said as many as 126,000 enumerators were deployed to collect data from across the country. The enumerators were equipped with tablets that contained more than 30 questions covering areas such as population count, religion, ethnicity, gender, disability, and businesses. According to the chief statistician, the estimated expenditure on the exercise was around Rs 34 billion. For the collection of data, the country was divided into blocks, with each unit having between 200 to 250 households and each enumerator being assigned two blocks in their respective areas to collect the required data in one month. Despite the security challenges and renorted attacks on census teams in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the census teams performed their duties with dedication and visited each and every area to ensure the inclusion of every individual deputy commissioners were assigned sus by themselves and report to their basis.

Intermittent rain continues in KP; two die in flash flood, 135 houses damaged

rain that started from March 16 and continued till Monday in most parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa claimed two lives and damaged 135 houses. According to the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), heavy rains caused flash floods in South Waziristan where two persons in a pickup van were swept away in Tehsil Birmal area on their way from Azam Warsak towards Zarmilan. The vehicle was completely damaged by flood water and both the persons, identified as Muhammad Suleman, a resident of Zarmilan and Karam. a resident of Kazha Punga, died on the spot. The bodies were recovered by the district administration and handed over to the bereaved families. Similarly, due to heavy rains and hailstorms from March 16 to April 02, flash floods were reported in Rodhs Pir Kach, Chowa and Soheili areas in district Tank. Consequently, the rural settlements of Pai, Muhammad Akbar, Gul Imam, Abizar, Qutab colony near station road, Yaqoob colony, Khan colony, Gara Budha, Kot Allah Dad, Bara Khel and Gara Baloch near Sheikh Market were affected and 135 houses were partially damaged, however, no loss of human life and

PESHAWAR (APP): The intermittent livestock was reported. The district administration took prompt action and diverted flood water from the mentioned location with the help of machinery and saved a huge population from devastation. The Met Office has forecast mainly cloudy weather for most districts of the province, however, scattered rain-thunderstorm with gusty winds and isolated heavy falls is likely to occur over Chitral, Lower and Upper Dir, Malakand, Buner, Swat, Shangla, Kohistan, Battagram, Torghar, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Swabi, Mardan, Nowshera, Peshawar, Charsadda, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Hangu, Kurram, Karak, Kohat, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Tank, North and South Waziristan and Dera Ismail Khan districts while isolated hailstorm is also expected at a few places in the province. The chief amount of rainfall recorded during the last 24 hours in major cities of the province was: Sadiu Sharif 07mm, Balakot 05, Chitral 06, Timergara 08, Drosh 05, Kakul 25, Kalam 01Mirkhani 02, Dir 06 and Malamjabba 15. The minimum temperature (in °C) during the period was: Peshawar 16, Parachinar 01, Bannu 13, DI Khan 17, Chitral 08, Kalam 01. Dir 07 and Malamiabba 06.

Traffic police issue over Rs18mln challan tickets

PESHAWAR (APP): The City Traffic hicles and motorbikes, while the oth-Police (CTP) issued challan tickets to 92,974 persons over different violations in the month of March and deposited Rs 18.046300 million in the provincial kitty. According to a report sons were fined over unregistered ve- rules to avoid any inconvenience.

er offences included the use of tinted glass, no parking, lane violation, illegal number plates, and violation of traffic signals. The CTP urged the masses to act as responsible citizens issued here by the CTP, 11,998 per- on roads and strictly follow traffic

Roof collapsed incident claims two lives

PESHAWAR (APP): A mother and hat Road where a room of the house of daughter died and two others were injured when the roof of a dilapidated house suddenly collapsed due to torrential rains in the wee hours of incident occurred at Ghaz stop on Ko-

Mesri Khan fell on his family. As a result, the wife (55) of Mesri Khan and 22 years daughter died on the spot while Khan and his other daughter sustained Monday, police said. The unfortunate serious injuries. The dead and injured were shifted to the hospital.





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Mobile Industry collapse

Industry collapse is imminent as banks have been refusing to open Letters of Credit for various products. From oil to telecom, red flags were raised regarding supply chain disruption and import difficulties. What was once a threat is now a reality, as almost all of the country's mobile phone assembly units have shut down. About 20,000 employees are now on furlough and if production does not continue soon, will be out of jobs at a time when unemployment makes life unlivable. Three of the mobile phone units were run by foreign entities and had been on the brink of being shut down. Raw materials, sourced from China, South Korea, and Vietnam, have almost run out and the industry requires \$170 million every month for regular operation. This is not sustainable for operations with a 35.37 percent inflation rate from last year and low foreign currency available. The telecom sector has also expressed these concerns as most technology equipment suppliers need imported items. Industries need maintenance and expansion to progress and it is unfortunate that Pakistan's reputation as a mobile phone manufacturer has been severely impacted by this news. PTA taxes and incentives were introduced by the Government to set up the industry and the LC issue can undo all this effort. Consumers were already being hurt by increased mobile phone prices, even for locally manufactured sets. Sales will plummet further and while a solution is difficult, opening LCs for selected industries must be considered. As mentioned, a similar pattern is being seen with the Oil industry and letters have been written by the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) indicating difficulties functioning. LCs must be established on a timely basis as a fuel shortage, in addition to this current crisis, will be even more disastrous than at present. The Government must use this situation to address the compromised supply chain across different industries and act proactively.

Carbon neutrality through carbon markets and carbon accounting — By Syed Asim Ali Bukhari

The famous proverb "When Life Gives you lemons, make lemonade!" sums up the idea of developing Carbon Markets in Pakistan, where Lemons are the rising amount of industrial, agricultural, construction, and vehicular Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, and Lemonade would be the carbon credits traded in the carbon markets. Carbon markets are trading systems in which carbon credits are sold and bought. A carbon credit represents one ton of carbon dioxide or equivalent greenhouse gases that have been reduced, avoided, or removed by a mitigation activity. The carbon market is a way to increase climate ambition and lower carbon dioxide (CO2) levels in the atmosphere by creating a financial incentive to curb emissions. Countries can trade carbon credits, which each represent one tonne of CO2, with each other in a global marketplace. Carbon credits can be used to finance the implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), UN-SDGs 2030 or encourage investments in climate-mitigation projects such as renewable energy generation, regenerating forests and anism, the government issues a set mangroves, biodiversity conservation, amount of permits to companies that and food security. More than twothirds of countries are planning to use carbon markets to meet their NDCs to the Paris Agreement. The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), adopted under the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, is an international compliance market. Under the CDM, emission-reduction projects in developing countries have generated carbon credits used by industrialized countries to meet part of their emission-reduction targets. Pakistan has abundant potential carbon mitigation and adaptation options and could benefit greatly from collaboration in carbon emission trading with other developing countries like China. The development of eco-friendly projects, like renewable energy, in the Green China Pakistan Economic Corridor (Green CPEC), will not only foster Pakistan's energy transition but also create carbon credits. Pakistan can sell or trade carbon credits from projects like the 'Billion Tree Tsunami', to GHG emitters who wish to offset the negative effects of their GHG emissions, through carbon markets. Pakistan can participate in the global carbon credit market by taking steps to reduce its carbon footprint and earn carbon credits in return. There are several ways Pakistan can earn

ment of renewable energy projects, forest conservation programmes, energy efficiency measures, and waste management projects. Pakistan is an agricultural country having the potential to earn carbon credits by adopting sustainable agricultural practices. This can create positive economic impacts for the farmers by creating opportunities for creating saleable carbon credits. The sustainable development of Pakistan's blue economy can also reduce the carbon footprint. Carbon markets can either be the Carbon Compliance Market (CCM) or the Voluntary Carbon Market (VCM). Pakistan needs the development of a Carbon Compliance Market to fully achieve the various benefits of carbon trading and operate effectively in the global carbon market. The Government of Pakistan may set up a regulatory authority to monitor and manage Pakistan's carbon market and put pressure on the polluting industries to limit GHG emissions. The regulatory authority can implement a 'Cap and Trade' mechanism to limit GHG emissions. Under this regulatory mechcomprise a cap on allowed CO2 emissions. Companies that surpass the cap have to pay carbon taxes, while companies that cut their emissions may sell or trade unused carbon credits. A carbon tax is a form of carbon pricing through which the emitters pay for their carbon emissions. An important step towards reducing GHG emissions through carbon markets is the development of a digital infrastructure that keeps verified data secure and ensures that GHG emission reductions are accurately accounted for and tracked. GHG Accounting or Carbon Accounting can play an instrumental role in this regard. Carbon accounting is the process of calculating the total greenhouse gas emissions associated with an organization's operations. These emissions include carbon dioxide, methane, and fluorinated gases that contribute to rising temperatures and climate change. By quantifying these emissions, public and private institutions can identify opportunities to reduce their carbon footprint and develop strategies for mitigating the environmental impact of their operations. The process of carbon accounting should be followed by carbon as-

Courtesy: Pakistan Today

Why Pakistan faces a persistent economic crisis?—By Golam Rasul, Dhaka

PAKISTAN is facing one of its worst larly the civil-military relations and has been marked full of contradiceconomic crises currently. The country's foreign exchange reserves have fallen to about USD 3 billion, which can cover only less than a month's worth of imports. The fiscal deficit is growing, public debt service is rising and the balance of payments situation is deteriorating day by day. The current public debt is approximately 74% of GDP, with external debt exceeding USD 113 billion or approximately 45% of GDP. In 2022, the country had to pay around USD 12 billion to service its external debt and it may rise further in 2023. The Pakistani Rupee has fallen more than 35% in the last year. The price of essential goods has increased rapidly. The general masses are struggling to survive due to the high cost of living. The economic crisis also intensified the political crisis. In order to bail out from the economic crisis, the Pakistan government has been in negotiation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for over a month, but no agreement has been reached. If the IMF loan is not approved quickly, the country's economy may face serious consequences including default on foreign loans. This is, however, not the first time that the country has experienced an economic crisis. Since its independence in 1947, the country has gone through various economic crises and sought continued assistance from the IMF and other bilateral and multilateral donors. It has already received its 13th bailout from the IMF. Pakistan is a big country with good natural resources, well-developed agricultural and irrigation infrastructure, and a hard-working population. Despite having good resources and a large hard-working population, why does the country suffer from frequent economic crises even after 75 years of independence? To understand the underlying causes of the recurring economic crises, we must first under-

stand the country's politics, particu-

its' democratic institutions as politics and economics are linked closely and influence each other. After the demise of Mohammed Ali Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan, the civil and military bureaucratic forces consolidated their power. The military has ruled the country over 30 years in its 75-year history. Due to political instability, the country was unable to develop a robust and vibrant political process and democratic institutions. The political instability and resultant unrest and disruptions affected economic performance badly. The dominance of the military in the decision-making process due to perceived internal and external threats have marginalized the political institutions and civil bureaucrats in the decision-making process. Unhealthy and unbalanced civil-military relationships and power-sharing mechanisms between them have produced several contractions and conflicts in Pakistan's politics and economics. Influential families and their allies have always dominated political parties. The elite group holds strategic positions in the bureaucratic, civil, political, military and economic decision-making structures as well as controls over the country's economic, military and political institutions. They have collaborated, competed and collided in various ways to gain and maintain power and authority. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, in his Presidential Address to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on August 11, 1947, stated that "If we want to make this great state of Pakistan happy and prosperous, we should wholly and solely concentrate on the well-being of the people, especially the masses and the poor." However, the irony is that shortly after independence, the elites - including civil, military, political, business, and the landed elite, captured the state of Pakistan and they forgot masses and the poor. With the elite capture, the country's economy tions; it produces sophisticated nuclear weapons and missiles while failing to provide adequate food and nutrition to the people. Such contradictions are reflected in different parts of the economy and society. For instance, while over a quarter of Pakistanis are struggling to survive and standing in a long queue for cheap food, another class awaits in long lines for an expensive cup of coffee from a Canadian multinational coffee shop. The elite capture has led to a fundamental political contradiction in the country. In politics, the richest represent the poorest; the industrialists represent the labour class; and the feudal class represents the peasants. Economic policymaking is largely shaped by these contradictory political and economic realities. When developing and implementing policy, the state has to prioritize the interests of the powerful political groups, the military establishment, the industrialists, and the landed elite who have close connections with the corridors of power. As a result, issues like land reform, poverty, inequality, health, education, or nutrition have not been a serious priority in the country's policy. To avoid and overcome future economic crises, major economic reforms based on basic economic principles rather than the priorities of the elite class - would be needed. Again, to improve economic management, it is necessary to improve governance and resource allocation, reduce corruption, and bring transparency and accountability. Along with major economic reforms, major political reforms will also be required in line with Jinnah's advice - focusing on the well-being of the general masses rather than the interests of the elite groups. Finally, the civil and military establishments should have a balanced and healthy relationship following the democratic principles as expected by Jinnah. Courtesy: Pakistan Observer

EXPLAINER - What is the Iraq-Turkiye oil pipeline dispute and who is on the hook? — By Rowena Edwards and Ahmed Rasheed

An international arbitration ruling develop? After the final hearing in on 23 March prompted the shutdown of Iraq's northern crude oil exports through Turkiye and sent oil prices back towards \$80 a barrel, Reuters reports. Iraq, OPEC's second-largest oil producer, exports about 85 per cent of its crude via ports in the south. But the northern route via Turkiye still accounts for about 0.5 per cent of global oil supply. - What is the origin of the dispute? Iraq's Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) began exporting crude from the semi-autonomous northern region independently from the federal government in 2013, a move Baghdad deemed illegal. KRG exports flow through a KRG pipeline to Fish-Khabur on the northern Iraqi border, where the oil enters Turkive case said. According to a Turkish and is pumped to the Turkish port of source, Iraq's initial demand was for Cevhan on the Mediterranean coast. Iraq's federal government says its case covers the period 2014-2018. A state-owned marketed SOMO is the only party authorised to manage crude exports through Ceyhan. Iraq filed for arbitration in 2014 with the Paris-based International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) over Turkiye's role in facilitating oil exports from Kurdistan without the consent of the federal government in Baghdad. Iraq said that, by transporting and storing oil from Kurdistan and loading it on tankers in Ceyhan without Baghdad's approval, Ankara and Turkish state energy company, BOTAS, violated provisions of

Paris in July, the ICC ruled on 23 March in Iraq's favour for the right to control loading at Ceyhan and to have access to see what was being loaded, a source familiar with the case has told Reuters. Turkiye was also asked to pay 50 per cent of the discount at which KRG oil was sold, three sources said. However, Turkiye claimed the ICC overruled four out of Iraq's five demands and had ordered Iraq to pay compensation to Turkiye, without stating the amount. Turkiye also won a counter claim for Iraq to pay a pipeline throughput fee, one source said. Based on all the rulings, the net amount Turkiye owes Iraq was about \$1.5 billion before interest, the source familiar with the about \$33 billion. = The arbitration second arbitration case, which could take about two years, would cover the period from 2018 onwards. The Turkish government and the governments in Baghdad and Kurdistan have released statements since the court ruling, but none of them included full details about the decision. The KRG declined to comment when asked for further details. The Turkish Energy Ministry did not immediately respond to requests for further comment. The Iraqi Oil Ministry could not immediately be reached on Friday, the Iraqi weekan Iraq-Turkiye pipeline agreement end. - Why did Turkiye halt oil exports? On 25 March, Turkiye stopped

day (bpd) of Iraqi oil via the pipeline to Ceyhan. This comprised 370,000 bpd of KRG crude and 75,000 bpd of federal crude, a source familiar with pipeline operations said. Turkiye shut down the pipeline because Iraq's federal government won the right to control loading at Ceyhan. Iraq's SOMO would have to instruct Turkiye on ship-loading or the crude would have built up in storage with nowhere to go. Turkiye, Iraq's federal government and the KRG are in talks on how to reach a mutual agreement over northern Iraqi exports. A KRG source said Turkiye had no choice but to halt flows through the pipeline until an agreement could be found. - How have KRG oil sales developed since 2014? Sales of KRG crude through the pipeline have grown rapidly over the past decade, with the total value reaching \$12.3 billion in 2022, according to a Deloitte report, up 62 per cent from 2017, when Deloitte first published data. The KRG's Ministry of Natural Resources said its oil revenues reached \$5.9 billion in 2015. From June 2015, the KRG restarted independent oil sales and signed several pre-payment deals with oil trading houses. With its oil exports at a standstill, Kurdistan has halted repayments to energy traders, including Vitol and Petraco on crude cargo deals worth \$6 billion, trading sources said. Vitol and Petraco have declined to comment on the issue.

pumping around 450,000 barrels per

Illiteracy

One of the major problems in Pakistan is illiteracy, with reports indicating that the current literacy rate is 62.3 percent, meaning that approximately 90 million people in the country are unable to read and write (MOFEPT, 2022). Many children are forced to work in factories instead of receiving an education, while people in rural areas often prioritize earn-

signed in 1973. - How did the case

Letters to the Editor

ing a living over pursuing education. Conversely, educated individuals often face limited job opportunities, which contributes to a high crime rate in society. Education is the only effective solution to combat illiteracy, and it is recommended that the government launch a campaign against illiteracy on various media platforms, including print, electronic, and digital media. The media can be an effective

tool for raising awareness about the importance of education. The government should also establish numerous literacy centers and awareness campaigns to inform people about the benefits of education, particularly in rural areas where people are often unaware of how education can improve their lives.

Syeda Ramsha Abbas Rizvi

Karachi

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sessment.







APHC urges UN, HR to take notice of India's settler colonialism drive in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD (APP): Illegally detained senior All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) leader, Nayeem Ahmed Khan, has urged the United Nations and world human rights organizations to take effective notice of India's ongoing settler colonialism campaign, fully at work, in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, which is under military siege since August 2019 when Indian abrogated Kashmir's special

Service, Nayeem Ahmed Khan in a indigenous people," he added. He said message from New Delhi's infamous Tihar Jail said that the authoritarian move was part of India's settler colonialism policy to strangulate Kashmiris economically. "Economic strangulation of Kashmiris has since long been a part of India's systematic settler colonialism campaign in the territory that includes illegal confiscations, dispossession, forced evictions, demolition of the cistatus. According to Kashmir Media vilian properties and disempowering

vicious agenda aimed at marginalizing the majority community in Kashmir is in force since the Modi government revoked Articles 370 and 35-A on 5th August 2019. Since then, Khan said, dozens of Kashmiris have been dismissed from their jobs on bogus charges and properties including houses and lands were seized while the apartheid regime has opened floodgates of employment for non-locals under a wicked plan.

Ahsan Iqbal holds important meetings with Chinese authorities

BEIJING (APP): Minister for Planning, to executing important transport and Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal reached here, after attending the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) Annual Conference-2023, to hold important meetings with Chinese authorities. During a meeting with President of 'Power China' Chan Guanfu, the minister appreciated the contribution of Chinese enterprises in the success of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Ahsan Iqbal said the people of Pakistan would never forget that China helped them at a time when the whole country was plunged into darkness due to power shortag-Through CPEC energy projects Pakistan was able to overcome its energy shortage, he said recalling Power China's longstanding friendship with Pakistan and many important projects undertaken for enhancing Pakistan's energy & infrastructure including coal-fired power plants in Port Qasim, RLNG power plant in Haveli Bahadur Shah and Dawood Wind Power Project. He invited the power China' to invest in solar energy for which the government has announced a special initiative to launch 10,000 MW. He assured 'Power China' of the government's full facilitation for the implementation of the projects and resolution of all issues. Later Chairman of 'China Road and Bridge Corporation Du Fei called upon the Planning minister. Ahsan Iqbal underscored the importance of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in strengthening and modernizing infrastructure in Pakistan in the last few years. He highlighted the role of connectivity projects in the socio-economic development of Pakistan,

infrastructure development in Pakistan from the construction of KKH in 1966 to the construction of the Havelian-Thakot motorway in 2017-18. The minister welcomed the proposed Karachi coastal comprehensive development zone (KCCDZ) project, which envisaged an investment of over \$ 3 billion in Karachi, Babusar Tunnel Project, feasibility study for the new Karachi-Hyderabad Motorway alignment (M9) and other important projects. Ahsan Iqbal expressed confidence that these projects would act as an emerging hub for tourism, IT, ports, shipping and services as it would also create thousands of new jobs for talented youth. He assured the government's full support for the successful implementation of the proposed projects. The Planning Minister also highlighted the special friendship and iron brotherhood between China and Pakistan, which is time-tested and timeless. He hoped to promote cultural exchanges and enhance people-to-people contacts between the two countries to further strengthen the existing friendship and foster better understanding to explore each other countries' rich history, natural beauty and cultural heritage. Chinese company representatives appreciated the contribution of the minister in making the CPEC a success, assuring full support in taking CPEC into the next phase of cooperation. They thanked the minister for the assurance to address the concerns of the companies. Ahsan Iqbal assured that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif was personally supervising the progress of CPEC projects and that the new government was committed to reviving the same speed with which acknowledging CRBC's contributions CPEC was moving during 2013-18.

Federal govt files plea seeking reconstitution of bench hearing elections case

ISLAMABAD (APP): The federal government on Monday filed a petition in the Supreme Court seeking the reconstitution of the bench hearing the election case. A three-member SC bench comprising Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial, Justice Munib Akhtar and Justice Ijaz ul Ahsan resumed the hearing of the case. During the course of proceedings, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Fawad Chaudhry appeared before the bench and complained to the chief justice about the strict arrangements for the red zone entry. He pleaded with the court to take notice of the matter. The Chief Justice rejected try routes to the Red Zone. He said that the administration was taking necessary steps to maintain law and order. It was not necessary for lawyers to come in large numbers for the case, he added. Earlier, Attorney General for Pakistan tions raised herein," it added.

(AGP) Mansoor Usman Awan filed a miscellaneous plea in the court ahead of the scheduled hearing of the suo motu as well as the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) petition challenging the order of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for postponing the Punjab election to October 8. The AGP requested the court to dismiss the election delay case in view of the majority (4-3) order and judgment of March 01. He stated that the proceedings in the instant petition should be postponed in light of the order passed by Justice Qazi Faez Isa. "This Hon'ble Bench, in view of submissions made in paragraphs 11 and 12 Fawad Chaudhry's request to open en- may graciously recuse from hearing the instant petition and a bench comprising of all remaining Hon'ble Judges of this court, who did not hear SMC No. 1/2023, CPs No 1 and 2 of 2023, may kindly be constituted to decide the ques-

Pakistan, China ought to join hands to face climate change

BELJING (APP): Despite contributing ing to the official post-disaster needs less than 1 percent of global emissions. Pakistan was among the 10 countries most affected by the climatic impacts in the past two decades, noted Dr Ahmad Ali Gul, an expert of China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation (CBCGDF) Climate Change Working Group. "Our agriculture-based economy is sensitive to climate-related shocks, and disasters can exacerbate the water security challenges," he said in an interview. Half a month ago, Dr Gul, also Assistant Professor and Director of Center for Disaster Management, University of Management and Technology, participated in the disaster risk management symposium organised by the East Asian Biosphere Reserve Network (EABRN), making a speech on Pakistan's lessons and opportunities in the context of global climate change, China Economic Net reported. "Accord-

assessment (PDNA) 2022, the damages and losses were USD 14.9 billion and USD 15.3 billion respectively, with roughly 33 million people affected, of which 8 million were displaced. Preliminary estimates suggest that, as a direct consequence of these floods, the national poverty rate could jump to 4.0 percent, pushing up to 9 million people into poverty," Dr Gul emphasised. Even worse, Pakistan is one of the most water-stressed countries in the world. Only 36 percent of Pakistanis have access to safely managed drinking water, down from 38 percent in 2004. "Fundamentally, Pakistan's vulnerability to climate change is deeply linked with its socio-economic challenges and governance," he said. As per Dr Gul, besides the climate itself, other factors perpetuate a state of vulnerability and turn a hazard into a disaster.

IRSA releases 89,900 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 89,900 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 65,500 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1428.75 feet and was 30.75 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 21.900 cusecs while outflow was 7,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1102.90 feet, which was 52.90 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded at 19,500 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur has recorded 31,200, 45,000, 40,900 and 9,300 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 26,800 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 14,300 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

Funeral prayers of martyrs in Kech terrorist attack offered

RAWALPINDI (APP): The funeral prayers of the four martyred soldiers of the Pakistan Army were offered in their native towns and were laid to rest with full military honours on Sunday. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release, the Namaz-e-Janaza of Naik Shair Ahmed, Lance Naik Muhammad Asghar, Sepoy Nursing Abdur Rasheed and Sepoy Muhammad Irfan was offered in Kehrar Buzdar (Taunsa), Kot Addu (Muzaffargarh), Manjhipur (Sohbat pur) and Dab Gorweel (Dera Ghazi Khan) respectively. All four martyrs embraced martyrdom in an attack by a group of terrorists operating from the Iranian side of the border during a routine border patrol along the Pakistan-Iran Border in Jalgai Sector, District Kech, Balochistan. Meanwhile, senior serving and retired officers and soldiers, relatives and a large number of people attended the funerals. "Armed Forces of Pakistan stand resolute to eliminate the menace of terrorism at all costs. These sacrifices reaffirm our resolve and strengthen our faith in the fight against terrorism to provide a peaceful Pakistan to our future generations," the

Fertilizer dealers fined

SARGODHA (APP): The district administration imposed fines on various fertilizers shops accused of overcharging during the last month. According to a spokesperson here on Monday, in the line with special directives of Deputy Commissioner Capt (retd) Shoaib Ali,the price control magistrate and Assistant Director Agriculture department Sargodha Aslam Khan inspected various fertilizer shops and imposed fines amounting to Rs 40,000 to various fertilizer dealers for overcharging.

ANF recovers over 447 kg drugs; arrests eight

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in eight operations managed to recover over 447 kg drugs and arrested eight accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday. He informed that ANF managed to recover five charras-filled capsules from the possession of an Abu Dhabi-bound passenger, a resident of Bannu, netted at Islamabad International Airport. In another operation, 1.2 kg heroin was recovered from a private courier company office near Chandni Chowk Rawalpindi. The parcel was booked for Bermingham. In third operation near Motorway Toll Plaza, 3.6 kg charras was recovered from the possession of an Afghan national.

Expert stresses for more autism awareness, acceptance in society

ISLAMABAD (APP): Expert on Monday stressed for increasin parents' awareness and tolerance in society to address autism as early-age behavioral therapy programs could help children with this condition to live a normal life. Renowned neurologist/psychiatrist, Jawahar Shahid Anwar while talking t the PTV news channel explained that many autistic individuals remain undiagnosed, especially in rural areas, where surveillance was rarel done for any neuro-developmental disorder. "Families often have limited access to evaluations and other resources to assess and respond to autism or other neuro-developmental conditions," she added. Dr Anwar said many families were not seeking out assessment or treatment due to limited awareness about autism, social and cultural stig-

ma related to neuro-developmental conditions, and financial barriers. Behavioural therapies and support for autistic children could help children learn new behaviours and skills, she said, adding, parents should skip sugary food items in the diet of the child with autism. Replying to a question, she said the diagnosis and therapy of autism in Pakistan occur in various settings and were provided by various health professionals. She regretted that unfortunately, awareness concerning autism was still low among Pakistani healthcare professionals, adding, society needs to know everything about autism first. To another question, she said autism was a complex group of neuro-developmental disorders, also referred to as autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

PML-N, coalition partners to support elections in October: Khurram Dastgir

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for En-sion of Pakistan (ECP) could conduct ergy Khurram Dastgir Khan on Sun- the national polls in a proper manner. day said that Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) and coalition partners would support holding elections in October. polling stations. To a question about Organizing elections in two provinces (KP, Punjab) would raise issues because work on collecting data through census was still underway, he said while talking to a private news channel. After the completion of the Census exercise, he held, the Election Commis-

The government, he said, would provide funds to the ECP and security at early elections, he said elections in two provinces were not feasible in the current political and economic situation. The minister also asked the Supreme Court to constitute a full-court bench at the request of the coalition government to hear the Punjab polls case.

As per directions of PM, Rs 40 mln fund for University of Gwadar released

QUETTA (APP): The federal govern- for the release of funds for educational for the University of Gwadar, a handout issued by the DGPR said. The funds were released following the meeting of Member of National Assembly Mohammad Aslam Bhootani with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Earlier, the PM was requested to release the funds required for the construction of the new building of the University of Gwadar. The people of Gwadar and Lasbella expressed their gratitude to PM Shehbaz Sharif, Federal Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal and MNA Aslam Bhutani

ment on Saturday released Rs 40 million development projects. MNA Mohammad Aslam Bhootani said that the provision of funds would start a new era of educational development in the coastal belt of the province. "With the release of Rs 40 million funds, the establishment and construction of the new building of the University of Gwadar will begin soon," he added. Lauding the unflinching support of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Federal Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal, he said that the release of funds was made possible due to their personal interest.

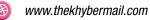
Azerbaijan wants to further improve bilateral trade relations with Pakistan

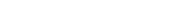


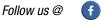
ISLAMABAD (Press Release): Azerbaijan considers Pakistan and Turkiye as its special friends and wants to further strengthen bilateral trade and economic relations with them. Azerbaijan-Turkiye bilateral trade is approximately USD 6 billion and Azerbaijan wants a similar trade volume with Pakistan that would be very beneficial for both ing at the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtcountries. This was said by H.E. Kha- awari, President, Islamabad Chamber zar Farhadov, Ambassador of Azerbai- of Commerce & Industry said that ian while exchanging views with the business community during his visit up to the real potential of both counto Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI). Khazar Farhadov said that direct flights between Azerbaijan and Pakistan operated by Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) had improved bilateral trade three times between the two countries in 2022 and Azerbaijan Airlines will also start direct flights with Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad very soon and is also considering to start direct flights to industrial and export centres of Pakistan, which would further contribute to increase bilateral trade between the two brotherly countries. He said that Azerbaijan under the instructions of President of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev has given exemption from customs duty on import of rice from Pakistan, and the Pakistani business community should take benefit of this facility. He said that Azerbaijan and Pakistan have formed Working Groups under Joint Ministerial Commission to increase bilateral cooperation in various sectors including agriculture, trade, banking, IT, tourism, transport, energy, health and said that ICCI should cooperate in identifying companies for these workings groups so that private sectors could lead the promotion of bilateral cooperation in these sectors between the two countries. Ambassador informed that 2023

marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of Heydar Aliyev, the founder of the independent state of Azerbaijan. He said that the Embassy of Azerbaijan in collaboration with ICCI is planning to organize a joint event on the founding role of Heydar Aliyev in development of Azerbaijan-Pakistan relations. Speak-Pak-Azerbaijan bilateral trade is not tries and stressed for exploring new ways of increasing trade between both countries. He emphasized creating better awareness in the private sectors of both countries about each other's markets to increase business ties. He said that both countries are doing trade in limited items and there is a need of finding new product lines and avenues of cooperation for enhancing trade volume between the two countries. Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President, ICCI said that both countries should encourage regular exchange of trade delegations to explore all untapped areas of mutual cooperation. He assured that ICCI would provide a list of companies for Working Groups to make them more effective and result-oriented. Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI welcomed the establishment of direct airlinks between Pakistan and Azerbaijan, which are very important to promote people-to-people and trade relations. He said that ICCI would cooperate in promoting "Made in Azerbaijan" in Pakistan and hoped that the Ambassador would also cooperate in promoting "Made in Pakistan" in Azerbaijan to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. Raja Imtiaz, Rizwan Chheena and others were also present at the occasion.

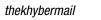
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AJK PM orders withdrawal of resolution on Kartarpur style corridor opening, pledges probe

ISLAMABAD (APP): Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan ordered an inquiry into the submission as well as approval of a resolution by the AJK Legislative Assembly regarding the opening of the Kartarpur-style corridor. He made the announcement while addressing an Iftar dinner hosted for APHC-AJK leadership at Kashmir Houses, said a press release. Responding to the AJK PM's announcement, APHC-AJK Conveyor Mehmood Ahmad Saghar said that the AJK PM gave a positive message to the people of India illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir by taking the Hurriyat leadership into confidence and the controversial resolution would be withdrawn. Sardar Tanveer Ilyas paid tribute to all Kashmiri detainees in-people and assured the Hurriyat lead-

cluding All Parties Hurriyat Conference Chairman Maasrrat Aalam Butt, Muhammad Yasin Malik, Shabbir Ahmad Shah, Nayeem Ahmad Khan, Ameer Hamza, Syeda Aasiya Andrabi and Dr. Hameed Fayyaz languishing in jails of India and the occupied territory. He said that Kashmiri delegations would be sent abroad to make the international community aware of false cases registered by India against Kashmiri Hurriyat leadership. The AJK Prime Minister expressed concern over the resolution presented in the AJK Assembly seeking the opening of the Kartarpur-style corridor and announced the investigation of the matter. Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan said that the right to self-determination is the fundamental right of the Kashmiri

ership of extending all-out support to the Kashmir freedom movement. AJK Ministers Sardar Mir Akbar Khan, Dewan Ali Chaghatai, Abdul Majid Khan, Chaudhry Muhammad Akbar Ibrahim, Parliamentary Secretary Asim Sharif, Political Advisor Sardar Iftikhar Rashid Chughtai, Spokesman Dr. Irfan Ashraf, Hurriyat Leaders Ghulam Muhammad Safi, Syed Yusuf Naseem, Syed Faiz Naqshbandi, Sheikh Abdul Mateen, Mushtaqul Islam, Muhammad Sultan Butt, Imtiaz Wani, Muhammad Rafiq Dar, Sanaullah Dar, Muhammad Ashraf Dar, Gulshan Iqbal, Abdul Majeed Lone, Manzoor Ahmad Dar, Zahid Ashraf, Sheikh Majid, Mushtaq Ahmad Butt, Shaheen Igbal, Zahid Safi, Syed Manzoor Shah, and Uzair Ahmed Ghazali were also present on the occasion.

Census teams collects data of 1.888m houses in Lahore

data of 1,888,849 houses under 7th Digital Housing and Population Census. This was disclosed in a meeting chaired by Lahore Deputy Commissioner Rafia Haider to evaluate the working process of the census, the DC office spokesman told media here Sunday. During the meeting, the DC directed the relevant teams to complete the census process till 4th April, the last day of the census. She confirmed that data of 1,888,849 houses had so far been collected in Lahore district, asserting that as compared to 2017, a total of 131,158 houses had been in-

LAHORE (APP): Lahore completes creased in Lahore particularly in its Tehsil Raiwind. The DC directed the census teams to pay special attention towards university hostels, Madaris and residential areas of labourers to achieve 100 percent target ans accuracy in 7th Digital Housing and Population Census. She also directed all ACs (Assistant Commissioners) to review the performance of census teams on a daily basis in their respective areas. "The Public is requested to call 57574-0800 if the team doesn't reach any home, and the team can also be called by texting the full address of their residence to 9727," she added.

Government promotes Urdu as medium of instruction in Govt departments, Senate told

for Law and Justice, Shahadat Awan, on Monday announced that the Pakistani government was taking concrete steps to promote Urdu as the medium of instruction in various government departments. The move aims to reinforce the country's national language and cultural identity. During Senate proceedings, responding to a motion by Senator Mushtaq Ahmed, Awan reiterated the statement made by Quaide-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Pakistan's founding father, that Urdu would be the official language of the country. Awan emphasized that without a single tied together and function effectively. To conducted in Urdu language.

ISLAMABAD (APP): State Minister this end, the National Language Promotion Department (National Language Authority) has already been established to promote Urdu language. It has published translations of over 800 books and trained 45,000 officers to play their role in the promotion of Urdu. Moreover, instructions given in signboards in important government departments have already been in Urdu language. Earlier, the mover of the motion, Senator Mushtag Ahmed emphasized the importance of promoting Urdu language in offices and other areas, suggesting that product ingredients should also be published in Urdu and that the Central Superior state language, no nation could remain Services (CSS) examinations should be

Urs celebrations of Sachal Sarmast to start from 14th Ramzan

SUKKUR (APP): The 202nd Urs celevarious events such as Mehfil-e-Sama, Sachal Sarmast will start from the 14th Ramzan-ul-Mubarak in Daraza Sharif, Khairpur. PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari is likely to inaugurate the urs celebrations by laying floral wreaths Fateha. The celebrations will comprise tees will attend the urs.

brations of poet and Sufi saint Hazrat Mehfil-e-Naat, the national literacy conference at Daraza Sharif auditorium, mushaira and others. Besides, the Sachal Awards will also be presented to the eminent personalities of the country as renowned scholars, ulemas, on the Sufi saint's grave and offering mashaikh, and a large number of devo-

Pakistani students role in Australia bringing two countries closed. Neil Hawkin

Neil Hawkins, High Commissioner of Australia, called on Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar at Finance Division. Finance Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar welcomed H.E Mr. Neil Hawkins, High Commissioner of Australia, and highlighted the friendly relations between the two countries. The two sides discussed the existing level of bilateral cooperation between the two countries and exchanged views on enhancing bilateral ties and cooperation in trade, economic and investment fields. The Finance Minister briefed the envoy about the current economic outlook of the country and apprised of pragmatic policy reforms initiated by the government for the socio-economic uplift of the masses as well as economic progress and development of the country. The Finance Minister commended Australian support for relief and rehabilitation of flood affectees in Pakistan. The

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): H.E Mr. High Commissioner informed that the entire amount pledged by the Australian Government had been disbursed. The Finance Minister apprised the High commissioner of the progress in talks held with the IMF Mission. H.E Mr. Neil Hawkins, High Commissioner of Australia, extending greetings on the Holy month of Ramdan, shared his views about the deep rooted friendly relations between Pakistan and Australia. He further shared the willingness to boost the ties further in terms of trade and investment. The Envoy also apprised the Minister that 100,000 strong Pakistan Diaspora and 15,000 Pakistani students in Australia are playing an important role in bringing the two countries closed. The High Commissioner also appreciated the policies and programs of the government for socio-economic development and economic growth. He stated that Australia wanted to see Pakistan as a strong, peaceful and prosperous country.

Senate Chairman refers three Bills to relevant standing committees

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senate Chairman to provide for the maintenance, admin-Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani, has referred three bills to relevant Standing Committees of the Upper House of Parliament. One bill, the Toshakhana (Maintenance, Administration and Regulation) Bill, 2023, moved by Senator Mushtaq Ahmed, aims

istration, and regulation of Toshakhana. Another bill, The National Commission on the Rights of Child (Amendment) Bill, 2023, moved by Prof Dr Mehr Taj Roghani, seeks to amend the National Commission on the Rights of Child Act, 2017. The third

bill referred by the Chairman, The Export Processing Zones Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2023, was moved by Senators Faisal Saleem Rehman, Bilawar Khan, Manzoor Ahmed, and Hidayatyllah. The bill aims to introduce amendments to the Export Processing Zones Authority Ordinance, 1980.

Senator Moula Bux Chandio's brother passes away

HYDERABAD (APP): Rindan Chandio, the younger brother of PPP leader Senator Moula Bux Chandio, passed away here on Sunday. The funeral prayer of late Rindan was held in Tando Wali Muhammad, area of Hyderabad, and was attended by a large number of relatives, friends and PPP leaders and workers. Former provincial minister Zahid Ali Bhurgari, Ex MNA Qazi Asad Abid, Senator Aajiz Dhamrah and other party leaders expressed condolences to Senator Chandio over the death of his younger brother and prayed for the departed soul.

DPO reviews security of worship, sensitive places

KOHAT (APP): The District Police Officer (DPO) Shahzada Umar Abbas Babar on Monday paid a detailed visit to various mosques and sensitive places in the city and reviewed security arrangements of mosques, Imambarghas and other worship and sensitive places. The DPO met the police personnel deployed at various mosques and sensitive places and directed them to remain on high alert during duty and keep a close watch on suspicious persons. He also inspected the security arrangements of mosques, Imambarghas and worship places of minorities community and issued necessary directives. He reiterated that the police would ensure the safety of the people by all means and said that all the security measures have been taken in this regard.

Balochistan-KP roads opened for traffic

ISLAMABAD (APP): The roads of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa which were affected due to landslides, were opened for traffic within 12 hours after National Highway Authority's (NHA) stern measures on emergency basis. According to the details, due to landslides caused by recent heavy rains in Danasar, an area adjacent to Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the main highway was severely affected and all traffic was suspended. Federal Minister for Communications and Postal Services Maulana Asa Mahmood had issued immediate instructions to the concerned authorities of NHA that the affected road should be restored for traffic on an emergency basis. The field staff of NHA was immediately mobilized, supervised by NHA Member West Zone Shahid Ehsanullah and were in communication with the Minister and the Federal Secretary to inform them about the latest situation. General Manager Balochistan North Agha Inayat, Director Raheel Ahmed and Deputy Director Maintenance also contributed in the restoration works. Through all these efforts, the affected national highway in remote area like Dhana Sar was restored to minor traffic within 12 hours and for all traffic within 24 hours. It could have taken several days, but NHA engineers and other related staff completed the work while fasting during Ramazan. The efforts of the officers and staff were highly appreciated.

Ahsan Iqbal briefs Chinese Think Tank on Pak-China relations, CPEC

ning, Development and Special Initiatives, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary held an exclusive session with the heads and representatives of leading Chinese Think Tanks and emphasized the importance of Pakistan China relationship and reaffirmed Pakistan All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership with China, which is time-tested and timeless. The Minister reiterated that as the flagship of BRI, CPEC had strategic significance for both Pakistan and China and has delivered tangible benefits to the people of the two countries. He noted that CPEC early-harvest projects have transformed Pakistan's economic landscape thus laying a solid foundation for sustainable economic growth. The Minister emphasized that both China and Pakistan should continue to expedite efforts to achieve Gwadar's potential as a hub of regional commerce and industry, while also prioritizing work on ML-1 and other key energy projects. He appreciated China's positive and key role in helping to normalise relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran. This will give great impetus to regional peace and trade. Ukraine war has proven that conflicts bring shocks for the entire world. Pakistan has seen conflicts too closely therefore it appreciates China's role in promoting global peace and stability. Ahsan Iqbal said that China has become Pakistan's New Era.

BEIJING (APP): Minister for Plan- largest investment and trade partner in the last ten years due to CPEC, and both sides are keen to maintain the momentum of overall economic and trade ties in future as well. The next phase of CPEC envisages industrial cooperation and Business to Business links. The Minister appreciated the interest of the Chinese companies to invest in Pakistan, highlighting deepening economic and trade ties between the two countries, he sought ideas and suggestions from Chinese think tanks about steps to create conducive environment for Chinese investment in the export-oriented industries in Pakistan and development of Pakistani SEZs and industries on the Chinese model. He underscored the need to learn from the Chinese experience of export sector development as a permanent solution to Pakistan's economic crisis lies in fast and speedy growth of exports. He highlighted the need for joint research projects for Pakistani and Chinese businessmen by think tanks of the both countries for identifying opportunities of mutual cooperation and removing knowledge gaps. He said 2023 is year of CPEC's decade and a delegation of Chinese scholars will be invited to Pakistan to observe the progress of CPEC. The think tanks appreciated Minister's views and shared their ideas for building Pakistan-China Community with shared future in the

Dr. Niamatullah represents Turbat University in International Congress of Zoology

QUETTA (APP): Dr. Niamatullah Ka-search work at the conference. Dr. Kaof Natural and Basic Sciences, University of Turbat (UoT) presented his research work and posters in the "41st Pakistan Congress of Zoology (International)" at the University of Punjab, Lahore. The event was organized by the Institute of Zoology, University of Punjab, and Zoology Society of Pakistan (ZSP). Professors, researchers,

kar, Assistant Professor, Department kar, while representing the University of Turbat, presented his research work on the Characterization of Heavy Metal Contamination in Water and Fish. Dr. Kakar further presented a poster presentation titled "Deciphering the effect of locally circulating SARS_CoV-2 variants on the hematological profile of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) infected patients". The research work of Dr. and scientists from Europe, the USA, Kakar was highly appreciated by the China, and Pakistan presented their re- organizers and participants.

Trains punctuality ratio improves from 76 to 87 percent in two months

ISLAMABAD (APP): The overall The official said the present governpunctuality ratio of train services has improved from 76 to 87 per cent in two months owing to close monitoring by Pakistan Railways at the divisional and ministry levels. "With the punctuality of trains and concrete measures taken by the present government in last two months, the number of passengers has increased by over 20 million, which is ample proof of the department's achievement," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP on Monday. He said the punctuality of passenger trains, which was around 60 percent during the tenure of the previous government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, was now improving day by day on the directives of Minister for Railways Khawaja Saad Rafique. procured.

ment had taken several steps to end the deficit of the department including the introduction of RAABTA, an initiative towards enhanced customer facilitation. "RAABTA platform lets customers plan the trip, check train status, choose and purchase seats, order car rental, meals and refreshments, and book hotels," he added. To facilitate passengers, he said a mobile application 'Pakrail live' had been launched for real-time tracking of trains. The official said the high-capacity/high-speed hopper trucks had been inducted in the current fleet for swift movement/unloading of coal and new high-capacity high-speed rolling stock coaches and wagons were being

Planning Minister lauds contribution of Chinese enterprises in success of CPEC

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Federal Road and Bridge Corporation" Mr. Du Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal reiterated that the people of Pakistan will never forget that China helped them at a time when the whole country was plunged into darkness due to power shortages. The Minister made these remarks while meeting with President of Power China Mr. Chan Guanfu in Beijing after attending Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2023. Power China's long standing friendship with Pakistan and many important projects undertaken for enhancing Pakistan's energy and infrastructure including coal-fired power plants in Port Qasim, RLNG power plant in Haveli Bahadur Shah and Dawood Wind Power Project. The Minister appreciated the contribution of Chinese enterprises in the success of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) while inviting Power China to invest in solar energy for which the government has announced a special initiative to launch 10,000 MW. The Minister assured Power China of the government's full facilitation for implementation of the projects and resolution of all issues. Meanwhile, Chairman of "China implementation of proposed projects.

Fei called upon the Minister. During the meeting, the Minister underscored the importance of CPEC, the flagship project of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in strengthening and modernizing infrastructure in Pakistan in the last few years. He highlighted the role of connectivity projects in sociology-economic development of Pakistan. In this regard, he acknowledged CRBC contributions for executing important transport and infrastructure development in Pakistan from construction of KKH in 1966 to construction of Havelian-Thakot motorway in 2017-18. The Minister welcomed the proposed Karachi coastal comprehensive development zone (KCCDZ) project, which envisages an investment of over \$3billions in Karachi, Babusar Tunnel Project, feasibility study for new Karachi-Hyderabad Motorway alignment (M-9) and other important projects. Prof Iqbal expressed his confidence that these projects will act as an emerging hub for tourism, IT, ports, shipping and services as it will also create thousands of new jobs for talented youth. He assured the government's full support for successful







McDonald's closes US offices ahead of corporate job cuts

NEW YORK (Agencies): Fast food chain McDonald's is temporarily closing its US offices this week ahead of an expected announcement on corporate job cuts. The Wall Street Journal, which first reported the move, said McDonald's had told US and some international staff to work from home so it can deliver decisions on jobs virtually. The burger chain has declined to comment on how many posts are affected. The cuts are part of a wider company reorganisation it announced in January. At the time, McDonald's boss Chris Kempczinski said the com-



pany was being hurt by an "outdated and self-limiting" structure. The Wall Street Journal said it had seen a message from the company stating that: "During the week of April 3, we will communicate key decisions related

to roles and staffing levels across the organization." McDonald's has also asked employees to cancel all in-person meetings at its headquarters, the paper said. In a memo sent to staff in January, McDonald's warned there would be "difficult discussions and decisions ahead", adding it would review corporate staffing levels by April. The memo said the proposals - which also aim to speed up plans for new restaurants - would help it to "move faster as an organization, while reducing our global costs and freeing up resources to invest in our growth".

L'Oreal buys Australian brand Aesop in \$2.5bn deal

CLICHY (Agencies): L'Oreal has agreed to buy Australian skincare brand Aesop in a deal worth \$2.53bn (£2bn), the French beauty giant's largest takeover in decades. The brand is a "superb combination of urbanity, hedonism and undeniable luxury," L'Oreal chief executive Nicolas Hieronimus said. Since its founding 36 years ago, Aesop has developed a cult following around the world for its products including soaps, lotions and creams. Aesop has almost 400 stores globally. The deal, which is subject to regulatory approvals, is cending currents and L'Oreal will con- his salon in Melbourne, Australia.



expected to close in the third quarter of this year. Mr Hieronimus said that L'Oreal will help Aesop expand in China, where it opened its first store in 2022. "Aesop taps into all of today's astribute to unleash its massive potential, notably in China and travel retail," he added. Brazilian cosmetics company Natura & Co bought a majority stake in Aesop in 2012, before taking full ownership of the brand four years later. It became Natura's highest revenue earner over the decade between 2012 and 2022. Aesop, gross sales jumped from \$28m to \$537m during the period. Aesop was founded in 1987 by hairdresser Dennis Paphitis, who had started blending essential oils into products at

Tesla: Carmaker told to pay ex-worker \$3.2m over racism case

CALIFORNIA (Agencies): Electric carmaker Tesla has been ordered to pay almost \$3.2m (£2.6m) to a black former worker after he won a racial harassment lawsuit. Owen Diaz, a lift operator from 2015 to 2016 at its Fremont factory, was subjected to a racially hostile work environment, a federal jury found. However, the payment has been slashed by 98% from the \$137m that he was originally awarded in 2021. A judge ruled last year that the initial amount was excessive. On Monday,



Mr Diaz was awarded \$3m in punitive damages and \$175,000 in damages for emotional distress. "If we had been allowed to introduce new evidence, the verdict would've been zero imo," Tesla chief executive Elon Musk said on

Twitter. "Jury did the best they could with the information they had. I respect the decision," he added. Mr Musk did not provide details of what new evidence Tesla would have presented. Tesla's lawyer Alex Spiro declined to comment. The company did not immediately respond to a BBC request for comment. In the original lawsuit, Mr Diaz alleged that African-American workers "encountered a scene straight from the Jim Crow era" at the firm's plant in Fremont, California.

Riyadh records lowest unemployment rate in Saudi Arabia

RIYADH (Agencies): Riyadh has recorded the lowest unemployment rate across Saudi Arabia of 6.7 percent, as the Kingdom steadily progresses in achieving the goals outlined in its Vision 2030. According to the latest data released by the General Authority for Statistics, the unemployment rate in Madinah was recorded at 12.2 percent, followed by Jazan at 11 percent and Makkah at 7 percent at the end of the fourth quarter of 2022. The Kingdom has stands at 6.9 percent by the end of



set a target unemployment rate of 7 percent by 2030. The report further noted that the unemployment rate in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province

2022. The unemployment rate among Saudis also decreased significantly in the fourth quarter of 2022, reaching 8 percent, compared to 9.9 percent in the third quarter. The unemployment rate of the overall population in Saudi Arabia in the fourth quarter reached 4.8 percent. "The impressive decrease in the unemployment rate resulted from a double effect of the decrease in labor force participation and at the same time the employment growth," GASTAT said in its report.

Michael Jordan's 'Last Dance' shoes may break auction records

NEW YORK (Agencies): Michael Jordan's "Last Dance" game shoes are set to break the record for most expensive sneakers ever auctioned, Sotheby's says. Bidding on the Air Jordan XIIIs hit \$1.8m (£1.4m) just a few hours after the auction opened. That is well past the current record of \$1.47m for a pair of Jordan's Nike Air Ships auctioned in 2021. Some eson 11 April. The basketball star wore



the Air Jordan XIIIs during his last championship season with the Chitimates say the sneakers may go for cago Bulls in 1997-1998. Jordan was the shoes to a ball boy in the locker as much as \$4m by the end of bidding wearing the shoes when he scored room as thanks for finding a lost jack-37 points in Game 2 of the 1998 NBA

Finals series, carrying the Bulls to a 93-88 victory over the Utah Jazz. The Bulls went on to win the championship, a story told by the 2020 documentary series "Last Dance" about the megastar's last season with the team. It was Jordan's sixth NBA championships and the fifth time he'd be named the NBA's Most Valuable Player. Right after the Game 2 victory, Jordan gave et. Sotheby's auction house sa

Bahrain launches 'golden license' for companies to attract investment

RIYADH (Agencies): Bahrain on Monday said it was introducing a "golden license" offering benefits to companies bringing large-scale investment projects to the Gulf state. The move is part of an economic recovery plan launched by the oil-producing state in October 2021 to boost growth and job creation. "Companies with major investment and strategic projects that will create more than 500 jobs in Bahrain, or those with investment value exceeding \$50



million, will be eligible for the license," the government's media office said. The golden license will be offered to local and foreign businesses and benefits include prioritized allocation of land, infrastructure and services, easier access to government services and support from government development funds, the statement said. It said other advantages include integrated cooperation with various government departments, a designated account manager from Bahrain's Economic Development Board, as well as potential review of existing laws or regulations where necessary and applicable.

Swiss sight deposits fall, suggesting Credit Suisse, UBS took less emergency help

ZURICH (Agencies): Sight deposits held by the Swiss National Bank declined last week, data showed on Monday, suggesting that Credit Suisse and UBS may have cut back on use of emergency funds offered them to facilitate their planned merger, according to Reuters. Total sight deposits — meaning commercial bank cash held by the central bank overnight fell to 563.566 billion Swiss francs (\$614.71 billion) from 567.003 billion francs in the previous week, the SNB data showed. Sight deposits had risen 51.8 billion francs the week before, the second biggest increase on record and



probably linked to UBS and Credit Suisse tapping the liquidity lines offered by the SNB and Swiss government after the takeover was announced. Both banks have been offered 200 billion francs in emergency liquidity after Credit Suisse suffered massive outflows from worried investors. Swiss finance minister Karin Keller-Sutter

said last week it had tapped a "large multi-billion" sum Credit Suisse had already tapped 50 billion francs under ordinary liquidity help before the takeover was announced. The SNB and Credit Suisse both declined to comment on the changes in sight deposits on Monday. UBS did not respond to a request for comment. The data indicated that the two commercial banks were probably accessing less liquidity than the week before, said Karsten Junius, an economist at J.Safra Sarasin. "This is a good sign as it indicates that stress in the Swiss banking system is falling a bit," Junius said.

Swiss bankers face mass layoffs – media



BERN (Agencies): UBS Group AG will slash its workforce by between 20% and 30% after completing its takeover of rival Credit Suisse, letting go as many as 36,000 employees globally, the newspaper Sonntagszeitung has reported, citing a senior manager at UBS. The newspaper highlighted that some 11,000 employees would be dismissed in Switzerland, although it did not provide any details about which positions would be targeted. The two lenders together employed almost 125,000 people worldwide at the end of 2022, about 30% of which were in Switzerland, according to the report. Last month, the two Swiss banks announced a historic ing to profitability in 2024.

merger, with UBS agreeing to pay 3 billion Swiss francs (\$3.24 billion) in stock to acquire its embattled rival in a deal underpinned by government guarantees and 100 billion francs (just over \$1 billion) in liquidity assistance from Switzerland's central bank. The government-brokered deal was aimed at shoring up public confidence in the Western financial system and averting a global crisis after the collapses of two regional banks in the US. The banking crisis exacerbated the troubles of Credit Suisse, which had been already battling a string of scandals, legal issues, and customer outflows. On top of that, its biggest investor, Saudi National Bank, announced in March it would not be able to provide financial assistance due to regulatory and statutory limits. Credit Suisse reported a 2022 net loss of 7.3 billion francs (nearly \$8 billion) and warned that it would incur another "substantial" loss in 2023 before return-

London no longer clear leader as world's top financial center – data

LONDON (Agencies): The UK capital has surrendered its lead as the world's top financial center, partly due to the country's exit from the EU, research published by the City of London on Thursday has revealed. New figures show that London and New York now share first place as leading financial centers globally. According to benchmarking data by the City of London's governing body, this is the first year that the UK capital has not been the clear leader as other financial centers are growing faster. Financial services executives have raised concerns about London's competitiveness, saying the city risks losing its top spot in the wake of Brexit, which prompted a number of companies to move their headquarters to the EU. "The UK remains one of the most open and global financial centers with better access to international markets than the US,



France, or Japan. But our competitive advantage is at risk," said Chris Hayward, policy chairman at the City of London Corporation. Data shows that "the number of international companies listed in London is falling" and fewer international companies are choosing the UK capital for listing, opting instead for New York. In recent months, Arm, a major chip designer owned by Japan's SoftBank and Dublin-based building materials giant CRH, announced its decision to move from the UK and seek a listing in the US.

Gold drops as inflation risks after OPEC+ oil target cut raise Fed hike odds



BENGALURU (Agencies): Gold prices slid on Monday after a surprise announcement from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies, known as OPEC+, about a cut to oil output sparked inflation concerns and raised bets of an interest rate hike at the US Federal Reserve's upcoming May meeting, according to Reuters. Spot gold was down 0.6 percent at \$1,956.89 per ounce, as of 0709 GMT, its lowest in nearly a week. US gold futures shed 0.7 percent to \$1,971.30.The opportunity cost of holding non-yield-

ing bullion rises when interest rates are increased to lower inflation. Gold has fallen "as investors weigh up the lure of gold as a safe-haven asset, versus the potential for higher-for-longer interest rates. Clearly, fears of inflation and higher interest rates has won the argument," said Matt Simpson, senior market analyst at City Index. Oil prices surged after Saudi Arabia and other OPEC+ oil producers announced a round of output cuts, a potentially ominous sign for global inflation just days after a slowdown in US price data had boosted market optimism. US consumer spending rose moderately in February and showed signs of cooling, even though it remained elevated. "Gold is now vulnerable to a move down to \$1,900, given the potential for a higher terminal Fed rate that markets are currently pricing in," Simpson added.

Makkah's hotel occupancy rises to 80%,



RIYADH (Agencies): Saudi Arabia's hotel sector is witnessing a significant resurgence, with room occupancy in covery after the COVID-19 pandemic. Makkah reaching 80 percent during the holy month of Ramadan this year, the highest level in the last three years. This resulted in room rates also climbing to record levels due to high demand, especially during the last 10 days of the season, according to the chairman of the Hajj and Umrah Committee of the Makkah Chamber, Abdullah Al-Qadi. Al-Qadi noted that hotel rates, particularly in Makkah, are determined by certain factors, including supply and demand, proximity to the Grand Mosque, room views and amenities. He also added that the hotel rates are similar to the prices of the airline tickets, especially those in the central region, where prices increase gradually as the season approaches. Al-Qadi revealed that the Ministry of Tourism worked with investors in prosperous tourism future" in a tweet.

Makkah with total transparency and clarity to restore the hotel sector's re-He added that several remote meetings were held to address various issues faced by the investors - something that helped the sector achieve a speedy recovery. According to a survey conducted by the Saudi newspaper Al-Eqtisadiah on hotel room prices in Makkah's central district during the last ten years, the rates soared between SR3.000 (\$800) and SR9.000 per room per day. This year's Ramadan season also saw a large turnout, particularly with the opening of visas and the facilities offered by the Kingdom to pilgrims from abroad. According to the Minister of Tourism Ahmed Al-Khateeb, Saudi Arabia initiated 10 new policies in December to expand the tourism sector and protect tourists, describing the new laws as "a promising step toward a

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Benzema nets 7-minute hattrick as Real Madrid thrash Valladolid

MADRID (Agencies): Karim Benzema scored three goals in seven first-half minutes as Real Madrid thrashed Real Valladolid 6-0 on Sunday to cut Barcelona's lead in LaLiga to 12 points. The hattrick moved Benzema up to 14 league goals this season and second on the list of top scorers - three behind Barca's Robert Lewandowski. Rodrygo's opener from a smooth counter-attack after 22 minutes opened the



at the Santiago Bernabeu, netting a first half hattrick for Real Madrid for floodgates as Benzema took charge the first time in his career. Benzema

scored his first with a diving header from a Vinicius Jr cross while narrowly avoiding a collision with the far post and the Brazilian also created the second with a simple pass for the French striker to score from the edge of the box. The 35-year-old completed his hattrick when he adjusted his run into the six-yard box to turn on the spot and scoop a Rodrygo cross that was behind him to score while his back was towards goal.

Medvedev beats Sinner in straight sets to clinch Miami Open title

MIAMI GARDENS (Agencies): Daniil Medvedev won his fourth ATP title of the year Sunday, beating Jannik Sinner 7-5, 6-3 in the Miami Open to move to 6-0 in their career matchup. Medvedev is now the most sizzling player on the men's tour, winning 24 of his last 25 matches after the 1-hour, 34-minute triumph. His only loss has come against top-ranked Carlos Alcaraz in the Indian Wells final. He's made five straight finals and he compared this



run to 2019 when he advanced to the championship round in six straight events. "It's kind of the same," Medvedev said. "It's the best start to a sea-

son I've ever had. It's been amazing amount of (ATP points) won. I'm super happy." Sinner ran out of magic, with his three-hour win late Friday night over Alcaraz in the semifinals — when he had mild cramping in the second set — taking a toll on the 21-year-old Italian. Sinner was visited by an ATP trainer midway through the first set Sunday. During the changeover at 4-3, Sinner received a packet of salt that he dumped into a water bottle to drink.

AC Milan routs Napoli 4-0 in Champions League warning

ROME (Agencies): If this was just the antipasto, Napoli should be concerned about what AC Milan will serve up for the main course. In the first of three matchups between Milan and Napoli this month, the defending Serie A champion routed this season's runaway leader 4-0 on Sunday ahead of two more clashes in the Champions League quarterfinals. Rafael Leao scored twice and Brahim Diaz set up one goal and scored another to hand Napoli their



heaviest defeat of what otherwise has been an extraordinary season. "We're happy with the performance but it's just one game," Milan coach Stefano Pioli said. "Tonight's result has nothing to do with the Champions League games, because that's a different competition. That will be a very balanced contest." Napoli's only other losses in the Italian league this season both came by scores of 1-0, to Inter Milan in January and to Lazio a month ago. Napoli were also beaten 2-0 by Liverpool in the final match of the Champions League group phase but that loss came after the Partenopei had already clinched a spot in the round of 16.

Million dollar pay packets for women after new Australia deal

SYDNEY (Agencies): Top Australian women cricketers could earn more than A\$1 million (\$666 600) a year with increases from a new pay deal topped up by cash earned in India's Women's Premier League and The Hundred in England, Cricket Australia (CA) said on Monday. The fiveyear deal includes a headline funding increase of 66 per cent for the women with a player who holds a top-tier contract and also plays in the Women's Big Bash League now able to earn Nick Hockley said in a news release.



A\$800 000 a year. "I am particularly pleased this (deal) represents another major step forward in the rise of women's cricket," CA chief executive

"Cricket now clearly offers the best earning opportunities of any team sport for elite female sportspeople." The Memorandum of Understanding, agreed between CA and the Australian Cricketers' Association (ACA), also included an increase of 25 per cent in the minimum and average CA contracts for women. The contracts and retainers will be guaranteed while players are on parental leave and further payments will be offered to help make up for lost match fees.

Damok secures five valuable points at Argentina GP

KUALA LUMPUR (Agencies): Starting the race in 20th position on the grid, national Moto3 rider Syarifuddin Azman displayed a stunning ride to finish the Argentina Grand Prix (GP) on Sunday in the points group. Syarifuddin, nicknamed Damok, finished the race in 11th place with a time of 35 minutes and 32.132 seconds (s) despite having to face wet and slippery conditions at the Termas de Rio Hondo Circuit. The MT Helmets-MSI rider secured his first five points after two races, having struggling to find his form in the first race at end. The race was won by Japanese



the Portuguese GP the previous week-

rider Tatsuki Suzuki (35:18.099s) while second place went to Diogo Moreira from Brazil (35:22.670s). Andrea Migno from Italy (35:22.798s) came in third. "Thank God I managed to finish the race in 11th position. With the circuit being quite wet I admit it was quite difficult with the conditions being quite slippery and some riders in front of me fell, making it even more difficult. "I am very happy because I was able to finish the race and take 11th place. This is my first time racing on this track," Damok said in a statement.

Enaam Ahmed: most successful Asian driver in Formula history

ISLAMABAD (APP): Proudly waving in the Formula racing circuit, Enaam Ahmed has become the first ever and the only Pakistani to be a World Champion in Karting, beating the records of Formula One drivers Lewis Hamilton and Max Verstappen. Not only that, Enaam Ahmed is also the British Formula 3 Champion, the first ever high-level Formula Championship winner in the history of Pakistan and beating the record of Ayrton Senna by winning 13 races in one season. The 23-year-old is going places around the world with his winning streaks on the dangerous tracks, driving cars at an average 200 miles per hour - making sure that his car carries both British and Pakistani flags. Enaam is one of the brightest and most exciting young racing talents in motorsport. He has been winning Championships and breaking records from the age of 14. Enaam Ahmed is also the most successful Pakistani heritage racing driver ever in the history of motorsport because he is also known as the most successful British Formula 3 driver in history. Enaam Ahmed was born to Pakistani parents in London 23 years ago. It was at the age of eight that he started taking interest in racing. His parents started funding their son's passion by sending him to local Go-karting tracks for children but they had no idea that their son would



become a European and world champion at the age of 14 - winning it one year younger than Lewis Hamilton who was 15 when he became the world champion. When Enaam announced his decision for car racing to his parents, they told him they will not be funding him anymore and he would need to learn to stand on his own feet to explore his opportunities or return to normal life and finish a university degree and then do whatever he wants to. Enaam Ahmed left the comfort of his home immediately to live in Japan, Spain, Italy, New Zealand and the United States to focus on professional driving. He has not looked back ever since. In an interview, the star racer explained his achievements. He said: "I was 14 years old when I won five championships in one year, the two most important ones being the European Championship in Go-Karting. I won that when I was 14 years old while Lewis Hamilton had won when he was 15 years old. At the

age of 17, I became the British Formula stani won a major Motorsport championship beating the record of Ayrton Senna." Naturally, Enaam Ahmed felt very proud when he beat Lewis Hamilton's record at the age of 14 in Go Karting which is the most competitive racing one can do at that age and beating Lewis Hamilton's record was a huge achievement. There was a lot of pressure on him to win those competitions for himself so he could make his name but also to impress his parents and to show them he made the right decision of leaving home at a very young age when most of his childhood friends played around the nearby Hyde Park. The most important factor for Enaam Ahmed has been to win these accomplishments as a Pakistani-origin racer. He says with pride: "For me it matters the most that I won these races at the world stage as a Pakistani and races at the world championship level and at the European Championship level as a Pakistani. Not just to do it but to win it, this makes me very proud and there is a long way to go." Enaam Ahmed has a driving simulator set up at his home in London when he's with his parents. He's in the United States where he spends most time as that's where he drives cars as a professional. He said: "The training is usually twice a day. That's not the hardest part though.

Leao strikes twice as Milan humiliate Napoli 4-0



NAPLES (Agencies): AC Milan striker Rafael Leao netted twice to give his side a superb 4-0 away victory over leaders Napoli in Serie A on Sunday, moving Stefano Pioli's side up to third place in the standings. Milan have 51 points, one ahead of fourth-placed Inter Milan, and are four behind second-placed Lazio. Napoli are 20 points clear at the top. "This is only the first step. There are another nine Serie A games where we must have the same attitude, because we threw away opportunities in they rarely threatened to reduce the the past and cannot do it again. This is a deficit.

fine win, but it is only one match," Pioli told DAZN. The match was the first of three clashes between the clubs. Later this month, they will also play against each other in the Champions League quarterfinals. "Whatever the result was going to be this evening, it would not affect the Champions League, as that will be a different experience, atmosphere and everything. It will allow us to study this match and see where we did well or could've done better," Pioli added. The visitors went ahead after 17 minutes when Brahim Diaz sent a through ball to Leao who took a touch and chipped it elegantly over Napoli goalkeeper Alex Meret. Napoli, who are seeking their first Serie A title since 1989-90, after being runners-up four times since 2013, were without injured Serie A top scorer Victor Osimhen and

Koepka becomes LIV's 1st multi-winner as Conners seizes 2nd PGA Tour title

ORLANDO (Agencies): Brooks Koepka became the first multiple winner in LIV Golf on Sunday, while Corey Conners won the Valero Texas Open for the second time in five years for his second PGA Tour title. Koepka closed with a 3-under 68, making a 4-foot par putt on the final hole for a one-shot victory over Sebastian Munoz. Munoz was trying to stay with Koepka along the back nine and didn't go away easily. He fell two shots behind when he sent a bunker shot flying over the green at the par-5 14th. And while he did well to scramble for par, Koepka made a short birdie. Munoz bounced back by holing a chip for birdie on the 16th to cut the deficit to one. But on the par-5 17th, the easiest hole at Orange County, the Colom-



bian again hit a bunker shot over the green. He made another par, and Koepka gave him hope by missing a 5-foot birdie. The final hole shed some insight into the team component of LIV Golf. Koepka and Munoz both were about 40 feet away for birdie. Koepka went first and left the putt just over 4 feet away. Munoz needed to make birdie to force a playoff. However, his Torque team had a one-shot lead over the Smash team led by Koepka.

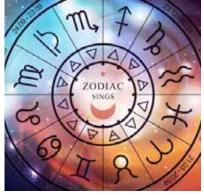
Antetokounmpo sparks Bucks in Sixers rout, Dallas on brink



LOS ANGELES (Agencies): Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 33 points as the Milwaukee Bucks returned to form with a statement 117-104 victory over the Philadelphia 76ers on Sunday. Eastern Conference top seed favorites Milwaukee - routed 140-99 by Boston in their last outing on

Thursday - bounced back in style to score an emphatic win over the third-placed Sixers. Antetokounmpo led a balanced Milwaukee offensive display that saw five players finish in double figures in a wire-to-wire victory at Fiserv Forum. Antetokounmpo finished with 14 rebounds and six assists in addition to his 33-point haul, while Brook Lopez (21 points), Khris Middleton (19) and Jrue Holiday (18) all contributed. Tyrese Maxey led the Sixers scoring with 29 points while Joel Embiid added 28. The win edged Milwaukee closer to sealing top spot in the Eastern Conference.

DAILY HOROSCOPE: APRIL 4, 2023



– It's a general reading which may differ from person to person because of time date and year.

ARIES: If you've been waiting for the right time to get started on that big project, go for it now! You're feeling pretty restless in some ways, so a new distraction might actually be perfect for you.

- TAURUS: You're feeling pretty good about something, but you need to make sure that you balance it with other aspects of life. It's too easy to overdo it on a day like today, and if so, you'll have to make up for it later.

- GEMINI: You're filled with good energy, but it may be difficult to focus on any one topic or person. You're good at multitasking, but this can get kind of ridiculous. Try to narrow things down a bit!

- CANCER: You're feeling a little stressed out, but the best answer to that is to keep active. Your energy is best used by distributing it far and wide, so keep going until you can't go any further!

- LEO: Your romantic side is out in

if you're single. It's the best time to be clear about your feelings. You should get a good response!

- VIRGO: You're prone to acting on impulse today, but you need to try hard to rein in your wallet! It's not that you'll break the bank, but you might start something in motion that could be hard to stop.

 LIBRA: You've got plenty of social energy, so much that you might decide to throw an informal party even if it's a workday. Most people are glad for the chance to loosen up a little, so go for it.

SCORPIO: It's a great day for brainstorming. You need to develop more ideas and see what comes of them, and your family or coworkers are in the right frame of mind to get creative. Lead the way!

SAGITTARIUS: You could have people lined up at your desk or wherever you are today. You seem to know the answer to any question, or you can at least spin something that sounds plausible on demand.

- CAPRICORN: Work or school is consuming you right now, however you define it, and that may cause some friction with friends or family. Reassure them that it's temporary and then get on with it.

- ACQUARIUS: Your big brain gets a boost today, so if any problems have been bothering you lately, now is a great time to lay them to rest. Great, creative solutions are easy to come by if you think they're worth it.

 PISCES: You're feeling pretty unsettled about an old debt, probably one you're owed rather than the other way around. It may be a good the open now, so show your sweetie time to forgive it or to find some othhow you feel or ask someone out, er way to set it right.

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Nasa names first woman and black man on Moon mission

NEW YORK (Agencies): The US space agency Nasa has named the four astronauts who will take humanity back to the Moon, after a 50-year gap. Christina Koch will become the first woman astronaut ever assigned to a lunar mission, while Victor Glover will be the first black astronaut on one. They will join Reid Wiseman and Jeremy Hansen to fly a capsule around the Moon late next year or early in 2025. The astronauts won't land on the Moon, but their mission will pave the way for a touchdown by a subsequent crew. The three

Super Mario: Nintendo's decades of star power



PARIS (AFP/APP): Hollywood is having its second bash at sprinkling some movie magic on the "Super Mario Bros" video game franchise, three decades after the last attempt. The pintsized plumber from Japanese game maker Nintendo has enjoyed 40 years of extraordinary popularity that has transformed the character into a truly global icon. Nintendo owes a lot to its moustachioed hero, created by a young game designer called Shigeru Miyamoto initially as the protagonist in the "Donkey Kong" arcade game 1981. The firm had been struggling to crack the North American market and, according to some accounts, was on the verge of financial ruin. With Kong, the Japanese studio finally succeeded in the United States -- and invented the platform video game along the way. The hero was known as "Jumpman" until 1983 when he was given the name "Mario". Miyamoto then let him loose in his own "Super Mario Bros" game in 1985, where he was finally renamed "Super Mario". The main Super Mario games have since shifted more than 400 million units. And that does not account for wildly popular spinoffs like "Mario Kart" and "Mario Odyssey" or "Mario Golf" and "Mario Tennis".

Montenegro's veteran leader Djukanovic loses presidential run-off



(AFP/APP): Monte-PODGORICA negro's political establishment was rocked Sunday after long-time leader Milo Djukanovic suffered a crushing defeat in a presidential run-off to the upstart Jakov Milatovic, ending decades of rule by the incumbent. Diukanovic has been a political mainstay in Montenegro for decades, rotating through various positions -- including multiple stints as both president and prime minister. "Together with all the citizens of Montenegro, we said a decisive goodbye to crime and corruption," Milatovic said during a victory speech at the headquarters of his Europe Now party. "Tonight is the night we've been waiting for for more than 30 years," he

7.0-magnitude quake hits western Papua New Guinea: USGS



SYDNEY (AFP/APP): A powerful 7.0-magnitude earthquake shook northwestern Papua New Guinea before dawn Monday, according to the US Geological Survey. The temblor struck 97 kilometers (60 miles) from the coastal town of Wewak at a depth of 62 kilometers, and occurred shortly after 4:00 am local time, the USGS reported.



US citizens and one Canadian were presented to the public in a ceremony in Houston, Texas. They will now begin a period of intense training to get themselves ready. In selecting a woman and a person of colour, Nasa is keeping ed period of six months.

its promise to bring greater diversity to its exploration efforts. All the previous crewed missions to the Moon were made by white men. Reid Wiseman (47): A US Navy pilot who served for a time as the head of Nasa's astronaut office. He's flown one previous space mission, to the International Space station in 2015. Victor Glover (46): A US Navy test pilot. He joined Nasa in 2013 and made his first spaceflight in 2020. He was the first African American to stay on the space station for an extend-

Kenyan opposition leader calls off anti-government protests

NAIROBI (AFP/APP): Kenyan opposition leader Raila Odinga on Sunday called off demonstrations planned for Monday and said his party would sit down for dialogue with the government after two weeks of protests. "We stand down our demonstrations for Monday, that is tomorrow, April 3, 2023. But in doing so, we want to emphasise that the right to assemble, to demonstrate, petition, and speak are iron-clad as provided for in our constitution," the veteran opposition leader told reporters. The announcement came after President William Ruto urged the opposition to cancel their protest and participate in a bipartisan parliamentary committee to work through their concerns related to last year's elections. Odinga has accused Ruto of stealing the presidency and considers his government illegiti-



mate, although the Supreme Court of Kenya upheld the results. The opposition leader welcomed Ruto's "olive branch" but warned they could resume protests if progress was not made. "We reserve our right to call for demonstrations should this process not bear fruit," he added. "Should there be no meaningful engagement or response from Hon(Honourable) Ruto to our counter-offer, we resolve to resume our demonstrations after one week."

2 dead in U.S. medical helicopter crash



WASHINGTON (Xinhua/APP): A medical helicopter on Sunday crashed in northeast Shelby County, the southern U.S. state of Alabama, killing two crew members. The helicopter was reportedly requested to assist in the extraction of a patient who went hiking in the

area and suffered breathing problems and chest pains. A Shelby County deputy called 911 to report the crash of the aircraft on Sunday evening. "Deputies and other first responders are currently on the scene of an aircraft accident in the area of Bear Creek Road (Co Rd 43) and Mountain Oaks Drive," the Shelby County Sheriff's Office wrote in a Facebook post. The road is closed in both directions, and will likely be closed for an extended period of time, the post read. There were three crew members onboard, according to Shelby County Sheriff's Office Chief Deputy Clay Hammac.

UK passport workers launch five-week walkout over pay



LONDON (AFP/APP): UK passport office workers launched a five-week stoppage Monday, the latest walkout in strike-hit Britain as the country reels from the worst cost of living crisis in a generation. The Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) accused the government of failing to deal even-handedly with public sector workers. The UK has been hit by a wave of industrial action across the economy in recent months ranging Unions say their members have been administer themselves?" he added.

hit by a combination of decades-high inflation and stagnating wages that has left them struggling to pay their bills. Ministers had failed to "hold any meaningful talks" with civil servants despite negotiations having been opened with unions representing health workers and teachers, PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka said. "They're treating their own workforce worse than anyone else. They've had six months to resolve this dispute but for six months have refused to improve their two percent imposed pay rise, and failed to address our members' other issues of concern," he said. "They seem to think if they ignore our members, they'll go away. But how can our members ignore the cost-ofliving crisis when 40.000 civil servants from ambulance staff and rail staff to are using foodbanks and 45,000 of doctors, teachers and dock workers. them are claiming the benefits they

Pakistan dismisses reports of trade ties with Israel

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Pakistan has today denied reports of trade relations with Israel and has vowed to investigate any goods allegedly "exported" to the occupation state, with which Islamabad has no diplomatic relations. On 30 March, the American Jewish Congress (AJC) issued a statement on "Trade Between the State of Israel and Pakistan," claiming that the first shipment from the country had been received in Israel. 'This week, the first shipment of Pakistan-origin food products was offloaded in Israel, in a transaction that involved Pakistani-Jewish businessman Fishel Benkhald, based in Pakistan's business hub of Karachi, and three Israeli businessmen from Jerusalem and Haifa," the statement read. However, spokesperson for Pakistan's Foreign Office, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch dismissed the claims, saying "There is no change in the policy," referring to Islamabad's position on having no diplomatic or trade ties with Israel. A spokesperson for the Ministry of Commerce also said "Rumours about beginning of Pakistan-Israel trade are pure propaganda. We



neither have nor do we intend to start trade relations with Israel," while Commerce and Trade Secretary Sualeh Ahmad Faruqui denied sending any export consignment to Israel, stating that "any claims suggesting otherwise are mere disinformation and politically motivated." Earlier in the week, Karachi-based Pakistani-Jewish businessman Fishel BenKhalid announced on Twitter that he had successfully exported the first batch of Pakistani produce to Israel, including dates, dry fruit and spices and shared a video purportedly of his food items on display at a Jerusalem market. According to the Ministry of Commerce, BenKhalid's shipment was made through the UAE in a "personal capacity" and "was not supported by the Pakistani government and no banking or official channel was involved."

Swiss prosecutors say investigating UBS-Credit Suisse merger

GENEVA (AFP/APP): Swiss federal prosecutors said Sunday that they had opened an inquiry into the UBS takeover of its embattled banking rival Credit Suisse, following pressure from federal authorities and media leaks. In an email to AFP, prosecutors said they issued orders to investigate after "taking stock of the situation with all the relevant internal services" and contacting national and local authorities. The probe will aim to ensure Switzerland's financial centre remains "clean" and identify any criminal offences within their remit, they said. A "surveillance system" has also been put in place that will allow prosecutors to intervene if necessary. The prosecutors added that they wanted to "have an overall view of the many aspects" of the events relating to the near-collapse of Credit Suisse, including those reported in the media,



and to "secure and assess the available information". "Different internal and external bodies have been mandated or contacted with the aim of clarifying and gathering information," they added. -'Any criminal offence' - Switzerland's GDP relies heavily on the financial sector that employes tens of thousands of people in the alpine country. On the weekend of March 18-19, the marriage of Switzerland's two biggest banks was hastily arranged by the government to prevent a global financial meltdown, following fears of contagion from the collapse of three US regional banks.

Pioneering composer and eco-warrior Ryuichi Sakamoto dies age 71



TOKYO (AFP/APP): Pioneering composer and green activist Ryuichi Sakamoto, whose score for "The Last Emperor" scooped an Oscar and a Grammy, has died aged 71 after his second cancer diagnosis. Having shot to fame in the 1970s with the influential Japanese group Yellow Magic Orchestra, Sakamoto's electronic innovations helped lay the foundations for synthpop, house music and hip-hop. But he was perhaps best known for his film soundtracks, including for the World War II drama "Merry Christmas, Mr Lawrence", in which he also acted opposite his friend David Bowie as a prisoner-of-war camp commandant. The hauntingly catchy track "Forbidden Colours" from the 1983 film, with vocals by David Sylvian, became a global hit for Sakamoto, who also collaborated with Thomas Dolby and punk legend Iggy Pop in the 80s. Sakamoto went on to win an Academy Award with his score for the 1987 period epic "The Last Emperor", directed by Bernardo Bertolucci, which tells the story of China's last emperor Puyi.

Leading military blogger killed in St Peters-



MOSCOW (AFP/APP): A leading Russian military blogger was killed Sunday in an explosion at a cafe in Russia's second-largest city of Saint Petersburg, the interior ministry said. "One person was killed in the incident. He was military correspondent Vladlen Tatarsky," the ministry said on Telegram. Investigators later said they had confirmed "an unidentified explosive device exploded in a cafe in central St Petersburg." "19 people were also injured to varying degrees," they said in a statement. The TASS news agency quoted a law enforcement source as saying the blast was "caused by an improvised explosive device hidden inside a statue given to Tatarsky as a gift". Tatarsky, whose real name is Maxim Fomin, has more than 500,000 followers on Telegram and is in favour of Russia's campaign in Ukraine. The explosion occurred at "Street Food Bar No. 1" in the city centre, with the interior ministry saying police had been called to the scene at 6:13 pm (1513 GMT). A group called Cyber Front Z, which refers to itself on social media as "Russia's information troops", said it had hired out the cafe for the evening. "There was a terrorist attack. We took certain security measures but unfortunately, they were not enough," the group said on Telegram. "Condolences to everyone who knew the excellent war correspondent and our friend Vladlen Tatarsky," it said.

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