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Pentagon leak exposes NATO special forces in Ukraine

WASHINGTON (Agencies): One of classified US military documents that has made its way online shows the presence of 97 NATO special forces operators in Ukraine as of March 1, 2023, of which 50 were British, multiple UK outlets reported on Tuesday. The Guardian said it had seen two files, dated late February and early March, that listed 50 British special operatives as being active in Ukraine. The US had 14 special operatives in the country, and France another 15. The documents were labeled "secret" and were prepared for senior US defense officials, according to the outlet. The daily updates contained information about NATO military operations, logistics, weapons deliveries and training of Ukrainian troops. Another UK outlet, Declassified, noted that the 14 US special operators were among the 29 Pentagon personnel present in Ukraine, which included the Marine security detachment at the US embassy in Kiev and military attaches. Another 71 State Department personnel were in



the country as well, amounting to a total of 100 Americans. Declassified also noted that the slide was marked "not releasable to foreign nationals." While US special operators come from two units, Navy SEALs and the Army's Delta Force, the British definition extends beyond the Special Air Service (SAS) to paratroopers, marines, and other units. The prime minister is not obligated to brief the Parliament on their deployment. Dozens of classified US military documents have been discovered

online over the past week, attracting considerable media attention. The US government has not officially confirmed their authenticity, but the Pentagon has launched a hunt for whoever leaked them, and the Department of Justice is conducting a criminal investigation as well. Russia and Ukraine have largely shrugged off the documents as irrelevant. While Washington and London have never officially confirmed the presence of their special forces in Ukraine, multiple media outlets



have reported on it over the past year. In April 2022, the French daily Le Figaro claimed that SAS and Delta Force operators had been present since the beginning of Russia's military operation, waging a "secret war" on behalf of Ukraine. The British Daily Mirror reported that dozens of "retired" SAS operators had gone to Ukraine to contribute their expertise to Kiev's cause, funded through a private military company in an unnamed European country. Shortly after those revelations, the

Times said a number of SAS operators had "returned" to Ukraine to teach Kiev's soldiers how to operate British-made anti-tank rockets. The outlet Grayzone reported in November that British special operators had been working through a private company called Prevail Partners to train Ukrainian saboteurs targeting Crimea. In December, a British military publication admitted that up to 300 Royal Marines had been deployed to Ukraine for "discrete operations."

UN chief Guterres on visit to Somalia



Mogadishu (AFP/APP): UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres arrived in Mogadishu on Tuesday at the start of a brief visit to Somalia, a country scarred by protracted armed conflict and climate disasters. Guterres was given a red carpet welcome at the capital city's airport by Somalia's Foreign Minister Abshir Omar Huruse who posted pictures of the event on Twitter. Somalia has imposed a security lockdown on Mogadishu for the visit, with most roads closed and public transport restricted. Guterres's trip comes as the country is in the grip of a calamitous drought that has driven many to the brink of famine, while the government is also engaged in a major offensive to put down a bloody Islamist insurgency. The United Nations has launched a \$2.6 billion appeal for humanitarian aid for the troubled Horn of Africa nation, but it is currently only 13 percent funded.

First group of Pakistani tourists enters China through Khunjerab Pass



BEIJING (APP): The first group of Pakistani tourists have entered China through Khunjerab Pass, a major land route at the China-Pakistan border. As many as five Pakistani tourists crossed into the Chinese territory after completing border and immigration checks a few days ago, China Radio International (CRI) reported. The pass connecting Gilgit Baltistan and China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region officially resumed the entry and exit of passengers this week after a closure of three years in wake of Covid-19 restrictions.

IMF issues growth warning as it lowers 2023 forecast

Washington (AFP/APP): The International Monetary Fund slightly lowered its outlook for the global economy on Tuesday, while predicting that most countries will avoid a recession this year despite economic worries and geopolitical strains. Concerns over high inflation, rising geopolitical tensions and financial stability hang over the updated forecasts, with the impact of the war in Ukraine continuing to dampen growth and drive up consumer prices in many countries. Persistent economic concerns could overshadow plans by the IMF and World Bank to promote an ambitious reform and fundraising agenda at this year's spring meetings. In its World Economic Outlook (WEO) report, the IMF

predicts the global economy will grow by 2.8 percent this year and three percent in 2024, a decline of 0.1 percentage point from its forecasts in January. The IMF's forecasts for the United States were slightly rosier: the world's largest economy was expected to grow by 1.6 percent in 2023, marginally higher than the previous forecast. "The global economy remains on track for a gradual recovery from the pandemic and Russia's war in Ukraine," IMF chief economist Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas told a press conference Tuesday, adding that "the massive and synchronized tightening of monetary policy by most central banks" had begun to bring inflation back toward its target.

North Korean leader calls for more 'practical, offensive' war deterrence



SEOUL (AFP/APP): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un called for expanding the country's war deterrence capabilities in a "more practical and offensive" way, state media said Tuesday, to counter what it called "frantic" aggression by the United States and South Korea. Pyongyang has opened the year with a flurry of weapons tests, including what state media has claimed are nuclear-capable under-

water drones and the launch of two intercontinental ballistic missiles. On Monday, Kim attended a meeting of the Central Military Commission to discuss ways to "cope with the escalating moves of the US imperialists and the south Korean puppet traitors to unleash a war of aggression," Pyongyang's Korean Central News Agency said. Kim ordered that the country's deterrence capabilities be strengthened with "increasing speed" and in a "more practical and offensive" manner. North Korea last year declared itself an "irreversible" nuclear power, effectively ending the possibility of denuclearisation talks. Earlier this year, Kim ordered the military to intensify drills to prepare for a "real war".

UN welcomes Saudi-Houthi talks in Sana'a to end Yemen conflict

UNITED NATIONS (APP): A UN Spokesperson has welcomed the talks between Saudi and Omani delegations with officials from the Houthi movement in Yemen's capital Sana'a over the weekend, saying the move was a "step towards the de-escalation in tensions." Spokesman Stephane Dujarric was responding to questions from correspondents at the regular noon briefing in New York, after news reports that progress had been made towards a permanent ceasefire, to end Saudi Arabia's military involvement in a military coalition that has backed the internationally recognized Government in its civil conflict with Houthi militia, since 2015. Neighbouring Oman has been in-

involved in peace talks with the warring parties in Yemen, running in parallel with UN efforts, led by Special Envoy Hans Grundberg, who the spokesperson said was continuing to "explore options to extend and expand" a UN-brokered six-month truce, which expired last October. Even after the expiration, Grundberg noted in a statement issued last week, that the truce was "broadly holding" while many elements continue in place. The Envoy said that greater humanitarian relief, a nationwide ceasefire and a sustainable political settlement "that meets the aspirations of Yemeni women and men" was essential, through a process that brings all stakeholders together.

Mass graves, unclaimed bodies haunt east DR Congo town



KISHISHE (AFP/APP): Michel hid in the outdoor lavatory of his church in Kishishe, a town in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, praying that M23 rebels wouldn't find him. That day, November 29, the rebels raided the town of thousands of people and committed their worst-recorded massacre since launching their campaign in late 2021. Over 170 civilians were killed, according to the United Nations. "They told them to sit on the edge of a hole, and they started shooting them," said Michel, who witnessed the killings from his hiding place. M23 rebels had captured Kishishe a week earlier, but they swept back into the town again that morning searching for Mai-Mai militiamen

who attacked them and then hid inside houses, according to several residents. The M23 -- which is allegedly backed by neighbouring Rwanda -- has captured swathes of territory in eastern Congo's North Kivu province and advanced within several dozen kilometres (miles) of its capital Goma. Over 900,000 people have fled its advance, the International Organization for Migration says.

Britain braces for 'unparalleled' disruption from doctors' strike

LONDON (Reuters) - Junior doctors in Britain began a four-day strike over pay on Tuesday that is likely to cause unprecedented disruption to the state-funded National Health Service (NHS), prompting the government to warn of a risk to patient safety. Tens of thousands of junior doctors, qualified physicians who make up nearly half of the medical workforce are striking for pay rises better aligned with inflation, in a walkout that follows a three-day doctors' strike last month. "This latest round of strikes will see unparalleled levels of disruption, and we are very concerned about the potential severity of impact on patients and services across the country," NHS England National Medical Director Stephen Powis said. "We've also asked (hospitals) to reschedule procedures and outpatients

as quickly as possible but this will take weeks to recover from," Powis told BBC Radio, adding that the NHS was working to ensure emergency services were kept intact. The chief of the NHS Confederation, which represents organisations across the healthcare sector, told Sky News he expected up to 350,000 appointments to be cancelled during the four-day strike. The strike is the latest to involve NHS staff, following walkouts by nurses, paramedics and others demanding rises that better reflect annual inflation running at more than 10%. It comes as the NHS experiences one of its most severe crises in its 75-year-history, overwhelmed with some 7 million patients waiting for hospital treatment, severely affecting areas such as cardiovascular care.

China's FM Qin Gang to attend meeting in Samarkand

BEIJING (APP): Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang will be attending the fourth foreign ministers' meeting of neighboring countries of Afghanistan in Samarkand, Uzbekistan from April 12 to 13. He has been invited by Uzbekistan's acting foreign minister Bakhtiyor Saidov, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin announced on Tuesday at a regular press briefing held here. Regarding China's expectations for this meeting, Wang said that China hopes to have an in-depth exchange of views on the current situation in Afghanistan with the parties attending the meeting, further consolidate the consensus of the neighboring countries on



the Afghan issue, and steadfastly implement the outcomes and consensus of the previous meetings, especially the Tunxi Initiative of neighboring countries of Afghanistan on supporting Afghanistan's economic reconstruction and practical cooperation issued by last year's meeting, which was held in Tunxi, a city of east China's Anhui Province.

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.

KP govt announces reforms in Revenue Deptt to facilitate people

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has announced different reforms in the Revenue department to improve service delivery and facilitate people. The government decided to simplify people's related affairs of the revenue and patwari department and imposed a ban on all kinds of transfers and postings, including of the patwaris, said Pir Haroon Shah, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister in a statement on Tuesday. However, prior permission would be taken for any transfer due to unavoidable cir-

cumstances, he added. He said that all affairs of patwaris would be performed in the government's fixed offices and patwar houses rather than in private patwari centres. Shah said strict disciplinary action would be taken against absent employees and those paying unnecessary visits to the government offices for transfer and choice postings. All the patwari issues would be performed by the appointed patwari and there would be a complete ban on keeping a private patwari. He said it was decided to constitute provincial and districts

level committees with members of highly reputable personalities and the government officials for speedy redressal of the peoples' complaints and provision of quick services to the masses. Similarly, special committees comprising officials of the administration and police officers would be constituted to prevent illegal occupation of all types of lands particularly properties/communal lands of the widows and orphans. These committees would work with consultation of religious scholars and local elders, he concluded.

Street crimes increase in 2023; 74 killings, 126 attempted murder cases reported

PESHAWAR (APP): An increase in street crimes and killings was witnessed in the provincial capital during the first two months of the current year with reports of 218 various offences, 74 murders and 126 attempted murder cases. According to an official document issued here by the provincial police department, 32 cases of murder and 57 attempts at murder were reported in January, and 42 cases of murder and 69 attempts at murder in February. Similarly, 74 incidents of robbery, 10 of abduction, seven cases of kidnapping and child lifting, 13 of rape

and sodomy, eight of assault on police three dacoities, 74 robberies, 19 burglaries, 51 thefts, 15 car lifting, and snatching, and 59 motorcycle lifting and snatching cases were reported during the period. The police arrested 419 gangsters associated with 35 criminal gangs who were involved in different crimes while 111 AK-47 guns, nine Kalakovs, 91 rifles, 35 shotguns, 1478 pistols, 11 hand-grenade, six anti-mines, 584 grams hashish, 85-gram heroin, 28-gram opium, 342 bottles of alcohol, 30 liters of liquor and 71-gram ice were also recovered.

Police arrest arms smuggler, recover of 15 rifles

PESHAWAR (APP): The city police arrested a weapons smuggler and recovered arms and ammunition from his motorcar in the Faqirabad area on Tuesday. According to the police spokesperson, on a tip-off that arms and ammunition in large quantities would be smuggled down the country, Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Faqirabad, Syed Talal Ahmad Shah and his team inter-

cepted a car for search. The accused identified as Faizan alias Latif Khan instead accelerated the vehicle and was overpowered at Haji camp ada after a little chase. During the search of the car's hidden cavities, police recovered 15 rifles and a Kalashnikov besides others arms and ammunition. A case has been registered against the arrested accused while further investigation was underway.

DRC Abbottabad settles 295 cases during first quarter of 2023

ABBOTTABAD (APP): SP Abbottabad headquarters Jameel Akhtar and ASP Cant. Aitraz Arif on Tuesday chaired a meeting to review the performance of the DRCs Abbottabad. Members of the Dispute Resolve Committee (DRC) Abbottabad and five Sub DRCs shared the performance report for the first quarter of 2023 during the meeting. According to the report, during the first three months, DRCs received

485 applications of which 295 cases were settled with the mutual consent of both parties while the remaining 133 applications are under consideration. The cases included domestic issues, property, financial transactions and others. DRC Abbottabad and five other sub DRCs including Havelian, Lora, Sherwan, Bakot and Galyat are working to resolve the disputes of the people on a local basis.

Two carlifters killed in attack on check post

SWABI (APP): Police on Tuesday killed two members of the inter-provincial Najeeb car lifter gang when they attacked a police check post in the jurisdiction of Jehangira police station. The spokesman of district police said that the two car lifters came on two different cars and opened fire at police officials deployed at the Jehangira check post in an attempt to cross the check post, adding that due

to the firing of the car lifters, a passerby was killed on the spot. The police officials gave a befitting response and killed both the car lifters on the spot and recovered two cars, one pistol, various bullets, 22 different number plates, 10 remotes of cars, eight car keys and other devices and tools used in car theft. The police have taken the bodies and recovered items into custody and started an investigation.

ANP to convene APC on prevailing political, security situations

PESHAWAR (APP): President of Awami National Party (ANP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Amil Wali Khan on Tuesday said that the party was apprehensive about the prevailing political and security situation of the country and would convene All Parties Conference in Islamabad on May 3. Talking to media here at Peshawar Press Club, he said that among others the issues of elections and an all-out comprehensive operation to get rid of the menace of terrorism would be discussed. Referring to the decision of the National Security Committee regarding all-out operation to eliminate

the scourge of terrorism in all its forms and manifestation from Pakistan, Aimal Wali said that there was a comprehensive formula of "National Action Plan" to eradicate terrorism which was agreed by all the state institutions, political parties, and stakeholders. "If the state is serious about eliminating terrorism, then it should ensure compliance of NAP in letter and spirit," he remarked. He said it was imperative for all the state institutions and stakeholders to remain in their ambit for the political and economic prosperity and development of the country.

Financial constraints to hamper payment of advance salary, pension on Eid

PESHAWAR (APP): The Finance Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in a letter to the Chief Secretary has informed that advance salary and pension could not be paid to the government employees on Eid due to financial constraints. In the letter, the Finance Department presented the details of financial difficulties including expenditure and revenue to the chief secretary

and sought permission for payment of salaries and pensions on the first working day of May. It said that the provincial government has been facing financial difficulties for the past year and there was Rs 13 billion in the account while the total expenses for salaries were Rs 45 billion. The Finance department said that the province is likely to get Rs 20 to 25 billion from the Federal government

this month and in that case, the advance salaries and pensions could be disbursed on the first working day of the following month. The department explained that Rs 20 billion is to be paid for flour, more than Rs three billion to hospitals for essential services, Rs four billion for health-card, one billion rupees for law and order and Rs 1.30 billion for free textbooks.

KP cabinet demands simultaneous polls of NA & PAs

PESHAWAR (APP): The caretaker cabinet of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Monday demanded simultaneous

elections of the National and provincial assemblies in the country. The meeting chaired by caretaker Minister Masood Shah, reviewed overall political situation and called for holding the elections of all the assemblies on the same day. According to caretaker Minister for Information and Public Relations, Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel, the cabinet proposed that instead of holding the National Assembly's elections by an elected government, the same should be held the supervision of caretaker governments in provinces. The cabinet also expressed its reservations over the Supreme Court's order for holding the elections of the Punjab Assembly in the month of May as

the same would impact the National Assembly election in that province. It asked the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to hold the elections of both National and provincial assemblies under the Election Act on the same day. The cabinet noted that the elections of National and provincial assemblies were never held on separate dates in the country's history. The Constitution was a sacred document and adherence to it was the responsibility of every institution, it added. It said the law and order situation in the province was not suitable for holding general elections. The cabinet members also offered Fateha over demise of the nephew of caretaker Chief Minister Muhammad Azam Khan.

Hot and dry weather predicted for most KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Meteorological Center Peshawar on Tuesday predicted that mainly hot and dry weather is expected in most districts of the province. However, light rain-thunderstorm with gusty winds is likely to occur at isolated places in Mansehra and Abbottabad districts during the afternoon and evening. During the last 24 hours, mainly hot and dry weather occurred in most districts of the province. However isolated light rain-thunderstorm occurred over the Khyber dis-

tricts. The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in centigrade at different stations of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were Peshawar City 35/18, Chitral 24/09, Timergara 30/14, Dir 27/08, Mirkhani 24/06, Kalam 20/04, Drosh 23/10, Saidu Sharif 29/10, Pattan 32/16, Malam Jabba 17/07, Takht Bhai 32/16, Kakul 27/11, Balakot 31/10, Parachinar 17/05, Bannu 34/16, Cherat 25/11, D.I. Khan 37/20. The highest temperature recorded in the province was 37 C in Dera Ismail Khan.

Woman held for travelling on fake passport

PESHAWAR (APP): The immigration officials of the Federal Investigation Agency on Tuesday apprehended an Afghan woman from Bacha Khan International Airport for attempting to travel abroad on a fake passport. According to an official of Immigration, the Afghan woman, who was carrying a

14-month-old infant, used a fake Afghan passport to go to France but the FIA officials on suspicion of her travel documents offloaded her from the plane and on verification found her passport fake. She was arrested on the spot and handed over to FIA Anti-Human Trafficking Circle Peshawar for further legal action.

Skyrocketing fruit prices hit people hard in Ramazan

PESHAWAR (APP): By Fakhar Alam After performing Sehri and Fajar prayer, Zakir Khan, a poor fruit seller leaves his home on his tricycle rickshaw for Chamkani wholesale fruit market in Peshawar to purchase fruits baskets and returns to his hometown Pabbi bazaar with a hope to earn some living for his family. Supported by his elder son, Muhammad Arif in loading and unloading the heavy fruit baskets on his rickshaw, Zakir Khan, 47, starts selling fruits in his makeshift shop in the afternoon. "Last year in Ramadan, I used to sell around 30 kilogram of different fruits including watermelon, strawberry, Apple, banana and guava daily. But this year, my sale reduced to 20kg and sometimes five to six kg fruit remains unsold due to high rates," Zajir Khan said. "During this season I can hardly earn some profit due to high prices and a fruit boycott campaign by the locals because as the price of apples has jumped from Rs250 per kilogram to Rs400, guava from Rs150 to Rs250 and strawberries from Rs250 to Rs400 per kilogram. Similarly, he said the price of one dozen banana soared

from Rs200 to Rs300 per dozen, oranges from Rs300 to Rs500 per dozen and kinnow from Rs200 to Rs300 per dozen. Consumers are also in a real fix to buy fruits for their iftar due to soaring prices. "I searched two fruit markets in Pabbi and station bazaar to purchase two-kilogram apples and oranges for my family but returned empty-handed," said Riazul Haq, an Ex-PST teacher. "Even our locally produced strawberry was beyond the purchasing power of the poor and salaried class." "We are charged double and even triple of the actual price during Ramazan. It is not fair, especially during the holy month and when people are already struggling to survive in present economic crunch as a result of wrong policies of the PTI government," he said. When asked about any action by the district administration and price control magistrates, he said, "they had failed to control fruits, vegetables and other daily use items. We demand strict action against those overcharging and fleecing hard-earned money of the common people." When contacted, Muhammad Kaleem, Director

Crops and Fruits Production, Agriculture Department just shied away by putting onus on last year's flood that he claimed had badly affected the agriculture, horticulture and fruit crops. "Damaged to water channels the main source of irrigation for fruits' orchards in Swat, Charsadda, Nowshera, Swabi, Dir, Malakand and Peshawar by floods had negative effects on Kharif and Rabi fruits, vegetable and agriculture crops," he maintained. He said Kharif orchards on around 36,333 hectares land produce total annual 34,8863 tones fruit in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 74,960 tones fruits are produced from orchards on 5611 hectare in merged areas (ex Fata). Similarly, during Rabi season, around 8,457 hectares orchards produce 70,713 tones of fruit in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 8,235 tons fruits from 1,348 hectares orchards in merged areas. Although fruits are an essential item on every dining table during Ramadan yet high prices this year keep most of the people away from buying these items. "Using fruits during Ramadan was important to quickly restore energy

and build immunity besides regulating the digestive system of the fasting people," said Professor Dr Riaz Malik, Head of Medical and Children Department Govt hospital Nowshera. "But, present price hike tendency has made it difficult for people to even purchase mush required items." He said that watermelon is one of the best fruit sources available in abundance previously to keep fasting people hydrated for long hours. "But, this time even this commodity seems like beyond the reach of common people." Besides water-rich watermelon and banana, the use of dry fruits including dates and almonds would help replenish nutrients like minerals fibers besides builds the immunity of the body to sustain energy during fasting. Similarly, dates are also beneficial during Ramadan for being rich in vitamins and nutrients and an excellent source of fiber and carbohydrates. As nobody can deny the vitality of these edibles for human health but the question of affordability remains there as most of these commodities are beyond the buying power of common and poor people and salaried class.



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Coalition govt's one year marks success story of overcoming tough challenges: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday said the completion of the one year of coalition government marked a successful tenure that resulted in Pakistan's restored credibility, and overcoming of the country's financial and energy challenges. "I can inform people that over the last one year, we have largely succeeded in establishing Pakistan's credibility as a partner and friend," he wrote in a Twitter thread. PM Sharif said, "Today marks the completion of one year since I took oath as PM of a coalition govern-



ment. This has been a time of massive challenges and difficulties. "It was a long journey, but sustained efforts made it possible," he said. Sharif recalled that the passage of No-Confidence Vote against former

prime minister Imran Khan Niazi's government was unprecedented. "[It was unprecedented] not because the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) came into power, but because almost all of Pakistan's political forces came together to use the forum of parliament to vote out an unpopular govt through constitutional means," he said. The prime minister said the coming together of political parties with different manifestos for a common national cause represented a "major step forward in the country's political evolution".

Foolproof traffic arrangements for Pak-NZ cricket matches

LAHORE (APP): City Traffic Police Lahore on Monday started implementing foolproof traffic arrangements for the three T20 matches between Pakistan and New Zealand. Tonight, the New Zealand cricket team landed at Airport here, which was led to the hotel by CTO Lahore Captain (Retd) Mustansar Feroze. The first one-day match between the two teams would be played on April 14 (Friday), second match on April 15 and last T20 match on April 17 at the Gaddafi Stadium. In this regard, SP Traffic Saddar division Asif Siddique and SP City Shahzad Khan visited various points, parking stands, routes and diversions. The CTO Lahore said that in total, 10 DSPs, 1536 traffic personnel under the supervision of SP Asif Sid-

dique and SP City Shehzad Khan would perform duty at hotels, airports, Gaddafi Stadium and parking points. About 20 forklifts would also be deployed to eliminate wrong parking. The CTO said that spectators would be able to park their vehicles at Government College Gulberg, Liberty Parking and LDA Plaza. Foolproof traffic arrangements would be made from the hotel to the Gaddafi Stadium and from the stadium to the hotel, be added. He said that the roads would be closed for a minimum period of time at the arrival and departure of the teams. Mustansar Feroze said that all the diversions would be opened for traffic as soon as the movement passed, adding that no road would be permanently closed.

Second phase of Polio vaccination drive concludes

ISLAMABAD (APP): The second phase of the Polio vaccination drive concluded in 12 districts of Balochistan and 26 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. During the five-day campaign, more than 4.12 million children were vaccinated in both provinces. Federal Minister for Health Abdul Qadir Patel said that the focus was to ensure the vaccination of every child so that they remain protected from poliovirus, which has been found circulating in environmental samples. "The presence of wild polio in the environment shows that the virus is circulating in our communities and posing a serious risk to our chil-

dren," said Abdul Qadir Patel, the minister. "With Ramazan around the corner, population movements can increase the risk of further spread, therefore, it is critical that parents and caregivers vaccinate their children in every campaign," said the minister. "We have specifically designed this March campaign to reach areas where population movement is not just frequent but also expected during Ramazan and Eid festival," said Dr Shahzad Baig, National Emergency Operations Center. "It is essential that we reach as many children as possible with the vaccine now to curb polio transmission," he added.

Secretary Finance on US visit to attend IMF, WB spring meetings: Ministry clarifies

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Finance on Monday clarified that the Secretary Finance Hamed Yaqoob has gone to the USA to attend spring meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank and to represent the Finance Minister. In a statement, the Minis-

try rejected a news item circulating on media that Secretary Finance has gone the USA on leave. It further clarified that the Secretary Finance has gone to the USA to attend spring meetings of the IMF and the World Bank and to represent the Finance Minister.

AJK HC disqualifies PM Sardar Tanveer Ilyas on contempt of judiciary

MIRPUR (AJK): (APP): The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) High Court disqualified Prime Minister Sardar Tanveer Ilyas on Tuesday from his position as a member of the legislative assembly and as premier on contempt charges. A day earlier, the superior courts of AJK served notices to Ilyas seeking an explanation about his position on derogatory remarks about the judiciary in speeches at public gatherings. The prime minister was asked to appear before the AJK High Court and Supreme Court on Tuesday - April 11, 2023. Ilyas had accused the judiciary of affecting the

workings of his government and intervening in the domain of the executive through stay orders. The AJK premier had claimed that a multi-million Saudi-funded education project was incomplete due to a court order. He also spoke against the court orders to reopen tobacco factories that were involved in tax evasion worth billions. Today, the full bench of the high court pronounced the verdict, convicted him for statements against the court and sentenced him. It maintained that the court took notice of Ilyas' anti-judiciary statements and does not accept his apology.

Notices issued to 400 vacant plot owners to control dengue; Commissioner

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Laiqat Ali Chatha on Monday said that around 400 vacant plots had been identified in the Rawalpindi district, whose owners have been given notices and instructed to build boundary walls of the plots and construct gates. He expressed these views while addressing the participants of the anti-dengue meeting at the Commissioner's office. He said that accumulated rainwater collected in the plot's garbage was a leading cause of dengue breeding. He said that plot owners who will not clean and fence their plots would be marked Red. The commissioner

directed the Rawalpindi Municipal Corporation to finalize the SOPs regarding building materials at the earliest. He added that public involvement in anti-dengue activities was most important because lack of cleanliness was the leading cause of dengue breeding. Laiqat Ali Chatha said that two confirmed dengue cases had been reported in the district so far and directed the anti-dengue teams to accelerate the surveillance activities to control the growth of dengue larvae by checking the graveyard and other places on daily basis. He directed the officials to monitor the dengue teams regularly.

PFA fines shopkeeper for poor quality chicken meat

MULTAN (APP): Punjab food Authority foiled a bid to supply poor-quality chicken meat and imposed a fine on the supplier, during a raid, here on Tuesday. According to official sources, about 150 kilograms of diseased poultry birds were recovered from a shop near Dehli gate. The PFA team imposed a fine of Rs 25,000 on the shopkeeper and also disposed of the meat. Similarly, the shop was without the medical certificates of workers and had poor cleanliness arrangements. According to officials, such meat could cause the spread of disease among citizens. The persons who were playing havoc with public lives would not be tolerated, they remarked.

Motorway police ban crop burning around M5

KHANEWAL (APP): The National Highways and Motorway Police have banned the burning of crop residues around the M5 to protect drivers' visibility. Following this, notices have been served on the crops' cultivators to implement the order to safeguard the drivers' move on the motorway. The notice said that crop crushing near the carriageway could not only disrupt the flow of traffic but also obscure the vision of drivers, leading to accidents on the road. The notices further said that strict action has to be taken in case of overlooking the order. Spokesman Motorway M5, Inspector Gulzar Ahmed in a release assured that all facilities will be provided on the route as per the motto of the Motorway Police. Moreover, he appealed to the travellers to dial 130 or visit the smartphone application 'Hamsafar', in case of confronting any problem on the way or seeking help from the Motorway Police.

IGP meets personnel on frontline in Katcha Area

KARACHI (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sindh Ghulam Nabi Memon on Monday announced an allowance of one month basic salary for the police personnel participating in operation against criminals in Katcha Area in district Kashmore. The IGP made the announcement during his visit to the frontline posts in operational area of Durrani Mahar Katcha, Kashmore, according to spokesman for Sindh Police. Sindh Police chief met the Jawans and appreciated their efforts and bravery in fight against dacoits in Kashmore. He also distributed appreciation certificates amongst police officials operating against the dacoits in Kashmore. IGP had an Iftar with the Jawans in Kashmore. Ghulam Nabi Memon also met the families of Police martyrs and distributed gifts amongst them.

28 new Corona cases reported in last 24 hours: NIH

ISLAMABAD (APP): Health officials on Monday said that 28 new Coronavirus cases were reported during the last 24 hours across the country. As per the data shared by the National Institute of Health (NIH), the case positivity ratio was 0.90 percent while 10 patients were in critical condition. No death was reported from the Coronavirus in the last 24 hours while 3,105 Covid-19 tests were conducted. Meanwhile, Minister for National Health Services, Regulations, and Coordination, Abdul Qadir Patel said the government has strengthened the role of Border and Health Services in Pakistan to deal with any sub-variant of Covid-19.

JKLF remembers Maulana Showkat on his martyrdom anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) has paid glowing tributes to noted religious scholar and former Chief of Jamiat Ahle Hadees Jammu and Kashmir, Maulana Showkat Ahmed Shah on his martyrdom anniversary. Maulana Showkat Ahmed Shah was martyred in a blast on April 8, 2011, outside a mosque at Maisuma in Srinagar, said a press release. The JKLF senior leader, Rafiq Ahmed Dar, in a

statement while remembering Maulana Showkat said that the charismatic and multi-dimensional personality of the martyr was unforgettable and no Kashmiri can ever overlook his sacrifices and struggle for the Kashmir cause. He said that the freedom struggle of Kashmir was indebted to great martyrs like Maulana Showkat and reiterated the Kashmiris' resolve to take the mission of these martyrs to its logical conclusion against all odds.

Marriyum terms April 10, 2023 a moment of landmark achievement

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Tuesday that April 10, 2023 will go down in her life as a moment of a landmark achievement. In a tweet, she said on this day she spearheaded the process of developing the curriculum and presented a resolution, giving

a definite road-map to teach and integrate the Constitution and its core values of democracy, diversity and dialogue. It is worth mentioning that Marriyum Aurangzeb on Monday had tabled a resolution in the house calling for the inclusion of the Constitution in the curriculum which was adopted.

Iftar get together gaining momentum in last Ashra of Ramadan

ISLAMABAD (APP): With the start of the last Ashra of holy Ramadan, iftar parties have become so popular elsewhere in the country including the capital city where people from all walks of life are witnessed busy organizing larger and more impressive events. Indoor and outdoor Iftar parties are becoming a known phenomenon, especially among youngsters and Iftar gatherings are a way to stay in touch with our loved ones, said a citizen while talking to a Private news channel. These Iftar get together serve as a recreational activity and give people a break from their daily routine, said another female citizen. Students, office colleagues

and politicians are also equally arranging lavish style Iftar parties for their fellow beings, said a teacher. Nowadays, iftar parties have become so popular that political parties feel a sense of competition with each other to organize larger and more impressive events than their rivals, said a student. "The iftar party has now become a social occasion, and anyone can host one like a get-together; said a critic, adding, using the event for political gain does not align with the true purpose of Ramadan". A university student while standing outside a food outlet said Iftar with close friends is fun and the time to share lighter moments.

1500 cops to be deployed for security during "Youm-e-Ali"

HYDERABAD (Agencies): The Hyderabad police have prepared the security plan for "Youn-e-Ali" which will be observed on 21st Ramazan on Wednesday (April 12). The police spokesman informed here Monday that under the plan 1,500 policemen and volunteers would be deployed for security of the main procession under supervision of SP Headquarters Anil Haider Minhas. He told that all the roads and streets intersecting route of the main procession would be sealed while the procession would

also be monitored through CCTV cameras and drone cameras. According to him, a team of the Bomb Disposal Squad would move ahead of procession clearing every step of the way on the route. He apprised that a control room would be set up in DIB office of the SSP office to monitor the procession. The SSP has also directed the police officers to carry out snap checking and search all the places like hotels, transport hubs and Railway Station on daily basis to maintain peace and harmony in the district.

Major General (R) Azhar Ali Syed of 1st PMA Long Course passes away 94

RAWALPINDI (APP): Major General (R) Azhar Ali Syed of First Pakistan Military academy (PMA) Long Course of Pakistan Army passed away at the age of 94 who was laid to rest with full military honour at Army Graveyard, Rawalpindi. A large number of serving and retired military officials and civil personalities as well as relatives of the deceased participated in the funeral prayer. The first PMA Long Course was the first ever course for commissioned officers of Pakistan Army.

The first PMA Long Course officers commenced training at PMA in January 1948 and were commissioned on 4th February 1950. Major Aziz Bhatti Shaheed, Nishan-i-Haider also got a commission in the first PMA Long Course. The first PMA Long Course consisted of 80 cadets. Major General (R) Azhar Ali Syed has done outstanding work in the Electrical and Mechanical Engineering Corps. He was one of the oldest retired army officers. His bereaved included his widow and relatives.

NA spokesperson clarifies Golden Jubilee event as commemoration, not parliamentary meeting

ISLAMABAD (APP): The spokesperson of the National Assembly has clarified that Monday's convention, held in the Hall of National Assembly to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the Constitution, was not a parliamentary meeting. The event was solely organized to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the country's Constitution. Despite this, some media outlets have erroneously reported it as a parliamentary gathering. The convention also

invited representatives of various sectors, including vice-chancellors of 120 universities, lawyers, doctors, women, senior parliamentarians and minorities. In order to ensure the participation of representatives from the three organs of state, namely the Legislature, Executive, and Judiciary, Chief Ministers and Governors from the four provinces, including Gilgit-Baltistan and AJ&K, were invited to represent the Executive organ of the state.

PHP officials rewarded

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar on Monday said that the teams of Punjab Highway Patrol should perform their duties diligently in the spirit of Jihad and service to humanity to prevent highway crime by effective patrolling in their beat areas. Dr. Usman Anwar directed that along with prevention of crimes, measures should be continued on a priority

basis to help and guide citizens and reduce rate of accidents by strict compliance of the traffic rules. The IG Punjab said that PHP was the representative force of Punjab Police on the central and inter-district roads of the province, which kept itself active to protect the life and property of citizens, prevent accidents and ensure smooth flow of traffic.

LHC seeks record of Toshakhana from 1947 to 2001

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Monday ordered the federal government to submit a complete record of Toshakhana from 1947 to 2001. The division bench comprising Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan and Justice Raza Qureshi passed the orders while hearing an appeal of the federal government challenging the single bench verdict of making public the record of Toshakhana from 1990 to 2001 and details of the friendly countries that gave the gifts. An additional attorney general argued before the court that the federal government had made public the record of Toshakhana. However, the single bench had ordered to make public the names of the individuals who gave gifts, he added. He submitted that If the sources of the gifts

were revealed then foreign relations would likely be affected. He submitted that the government had put all details on the website and relief was being sought to the extent of sources of the gifts only. He further submitted that the government was not trying to hide the records but the records before 2002 were not computerised and verified. Subsequently, the court adjourned further hearing till the next Monday and sought a complete record of Toshakhana from 1947 to 2001. The court also issued notices to the parties for the next date of hearing. On March 22, Justice Asim Hafeez had ordered the federal government to make public the record of Toshakhana from 1990 to 2001 and details of the friendly countries that gave the gifts.

Balochistan Assembly passes resolution to hold elections on same day

QUETTA (APP): The Balochistan Assembly (BA) on Monday passed a resolution regarding holding the elections of the National and Provincial Assemblies on the same day. The session was held under the chairmanship of Speaker Mir Jan Muhammad Jamali. Provincial Minister of Home and Tribal Affairs, Mir Ziaullah Langu presented a resolution to hold the elections of National and Provincial Assemblies simultaneously in the whole country. He said, currently, the country was going through an economic crisis under these conditions, holding of elec-

tions more than once would further weaken the country's economy. The resolution further said that the Constitution of Pakistan was a supreme document, and every institution has a duty to uphold it under Article 184 of the Constitution. According to the 18th constitutional amendment, the Election Commission of Pakistan is empowered to conduct free and fair elections, he said. He further said that the census was going on in the country and its results were yet to come, while holding elections without the results of the census was not in the interest of the country.

Cases against PTI leadership: LHC declines plea to stop JIT from work

LAHORE (APP):The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Monday once again declined a plea to stop the joint investigation team (JIT), constituted by the Punjab government to probe 10 cases against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leadership and workers, from work. The bench also issued notices to the Punjab government and sought a reply by Wednesday. The division bench comprising Justice Tariq Saleem Sheikh and Justice Farooq Haider heard the petition filed by PTI leaders Mussarat Jamshed Cheema and others challenging the formation of the JIT. During the proceedings, provincial law officer Ghulam Sarwar Nihang submitted that the powers of approving notification had been delegated to the

additional chief secretary (Home). However, PTI leader Advocate Fawad Chaudhry submitted that it appeared that no approval had been taken from the provincial cabinet for formation of the JIT. At this stage, the bench questioned whether the cabinet could delegate powers to additional chief secretary (Home). To which, Fawad Chaudhry pleaded with the bench to issue a stay order as the additional chief secretary did not appear himself. However, the bench observed that why should it not decide once the law points about the appointment of federal officers, working in the province. How another institution could probe if the police officers were not part of JIT, it questioned.

PBS collects 97% census data; extends fieldwork in 19 major cities till April 15

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) on Monday said around 97 percent of data-collection of listed households had been completed across the country, announcing a five-day extension in the 7th Population and Housing Census till April 15 aimed at ensuring smooth completion of three percent remaining fieldwork in 19 major cities. The cities where the census timeline has been extended include Quetta, Pishin, Khuzdar, Panjgur, Kech, Kohlu, Washuk, Gwadar, Zhob, Lasbella, Chagi, Nushki Mastung, Hernai, Lahore, Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Karachi and Gilgit, said a press release issued here. Currently, the PBS which has been executing the 7th Population and Housing Census digitally for the first time in the coun-

try's history successfully collected the data of over 97 percent of listed households through tablets across the country and only less than 3 percent of census fieldwork had left particularly in metropolitan cities of various provinces and other few cities of Balochistan. "The census fieldwork has been completed over 99% in Punjab, 98% in Sindh, 90% in Islamabad and 82% in Balochistan while the census work has almost been completed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Azad Jammu and Kashmir." The PBS said the census work had been completed 100 percent in 131 districts out of 156 districts across the country while 70 to 80 percent of census work was accomplished in the remaining 25 districts where the field operations were in full swing.

Faisalabad will be free from drugs and fake medicines. Alhaji Sheikh Naseer Yousaf Vohra



FAISALABAD: (Bureau Report) Drug use is a cause of destruction and ruin for any civilized nation. This is said by President of Anjuman Tajran Cloth Board Etihad Group Pakistan Alhaji Sheikh Naseer Yousaf Vohra, Senior Photojournalist Abdul Majid, Special Judge Drug Court. Faisalabad and Sargodha said on the occasion of the appointment of Syed Khalid Bukhari. Syed Khalid Bukhari is a senior lawyer from Multan who has recently been appointed to the Drug Court Faisalabad. On the request of his childhood friend

Asim Tanveer, a senior photojournalist of the Associated Press of America from Multan, Abdul Majid, a senior photojournalist from Faisalabad, Mr. He welcomed Khalid Bukhari with a bouquet of flowers. On this occasion, Abdul Majid assured Mr. Syed Khalid Bukhari of his cooperation in Faisalabad. And said that Asim Tanveer is my best friend, we are with you. Alhaji Sheikh Naseer Yousaf Vohra highlighted the drug related problems of Faisalabad city, on which Syed Khalid Bukhari assured to solve their problems.

CDA decides no building map would be approved without construction of water recharging well, tank

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) Board, in its meeting held on Monday, decided that no building map would be approved without the construction of a water recharging well and tank. The board's sixth meeting of the year was chaired by Chairman Captain (Retd) Noor ul Amin Mengal at the CDA headquarters. In the meeting, the CDA board approved the Establishment of the Building and Housing Control Wing. The board decided that rainwater harvesting has been

made mandatory in residential and commercial buildings in Islamabad. It was decided that no building map shall be approved without the construction of a water recharging well and tank. It should be noted that the Building Housing Control Wing has been made fully empowered. Establishment of Building control wing will help prevent illegal constructions and enforce building by-laws. Similarly, 50 teams of field staff will perform their duties in the building control wing. The building control team will consist

of one assistant director and two surveyors. Moreover, the CDA board also approved the rules and regulations for strengthening Sanitation Directorate and Environment Wing and gave it the authority to impose fines and punishments. The Board delegated the authority to determine the fee to the CDA Chairman. Apart from this, the board also approved the amendments in the ICT Building Control By-Laws Regulation 2002. While building bylaws have also been approved for construction on IJP and Murree Road.

Iranian Consul General meets SM Tanveer

LAHORE (APP): Iranian Consul General Mehran Mowahid Far here on Monday called on Caretaker Provincial Minister for Industries and Commerce SM Tanveer to discuss bilateral trade cooperation and issues of mutual interest. On this occasion, the Provincial Minister said that co-operation with Iran in the agricultural sector could be increased and Pakistan could import cheap tractors and other agricultural equipment from Iran. He said that the export of rice worth US \$ 700 million from Pakistan to Iran was welcoming, however "we should take practical steps to increase the trade volume between the two countries". He said that the trade volume between Pakistan and Iran should be increased from US \$ 2 billion to US \$ 5 billion. A delegation of meat and rice traders from Punjab would be sent to Iran. SM Tanveer said that trade barriers between the two countries had to be removed together.

IRSA releases 58,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 58,700 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 67,500 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1435.79 feet and was 37.79 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 18,700 cusecs while outflow as 15,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1113.00 feet, which was 63.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 20,100 cusecs and 15,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded 24,500, 26,400, 32,300 and 6,600 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 15,300 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 5,900 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

WHO Representative calls on the CS GB

GILGIT (APP): WHO Representative Dr Palitha Gunarathna Mahipala called on the Chief Secretary (CS) Gilgit Baltistan (GB). The CS GB welcomed Dr Palitha Gunarathna Mahipala and discussed different initiatives, the government has taken to improve the socio-economic indicators of the region. He also discussed different activities in the health and education sector for improving both sectors of the area. The WHO Representative praised the efforts of CS GB in transforming the social sector of GB and appreciated the initiatives taken in that regard. Moreover, he assured his full assistance and partnership with the Government of GB to expand the initiatives in the social sector.

COAS expresses full confidence in capabilities of HIT

RAWALPINDI (Agencies): Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir on Tuesday visited Heavy Industries Taxila (HIT) and expressed his full confidence in the capabilities of its personnel. He also appreciated the commitment of officers and workforce to transform HIT into a modern defence production establishment for meeting requirements of Armed Forces and Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) at par with international standards, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said.

The Army Chief was briefed about the technical capabilities of HIT, progress of on-going projects, indigenization efforts and recently undertaken modernisation measures. The COAS visited various factories of HIT and witnessed the manufacturing, rebuild and upgradation of tanks, APCs, enhanced protection solutions, remote weapon systems and indigenous 155 mm Artillery gun barrels for the Pak Army. The COAS remarked that HIT is a hub of knowledge, economy and, research and development (R&D) which is key



to achieving self-reliance in defence production and contributes towards national exports and economy. Earlier on arrival, COAS was received by Chairman HIT.

Fifth round of Pak-Bulgaria bilateral political consultations held in Sofia



SOFIA (Agencies): The fifth Round of Bilateral Political Consultations between Pakistan and Bulgaria was held in Sofia on Tuesday. The Pakistani side was led by Additional Foreign Secretary (Europe) Muhammad Saleem while the Bulgarian delegation was headed by Director General (Bilateral Relations), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria Petar Kraytchev. The two sides reviewed the entire spectrum of bilateral relations and discussed ways and means to further enhance them in diverse fields. They reiterated mutual resolve to cement relations in the fields of political, economic, trade, investment, higher education, agriculture, Information and Communications Technology and people-to-people contacts. The two sides agreed on

the importance of early convening of next session of the Pakistan-Bulgaria Intergovernmental Commission, and active linkages between the private sectors of the two countries. Possibilities to enhance Pakistani workforce to address the existing labor shortage in Bulgaria were also discussed. Pakistani delegation thanked Bulgaria for playing a supportive role in Pakistan's active engagement with the EU, especially in context of GSP+ status. Regional and global issues of mutual interest were also discussed including peace and security, counter-terrorism and climate change. The two sides also underscored their keen interest in maintaining close cooperation at the multilateral platforms, especially the UN.

Photographic Exhibition on Pakistan-EU relations held in European Parliament Brussels



Brussels (Agencies): In commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and the European Union, a week long photographic exhibition was inaugurated on Tuesday at EU Parliament Brussels. The event was organized by the Pakistan Mission to the European Union, Belgium and Luxembourg in collaboration with European Parliament. The Photographic exhibition showcased Pakistan's rich history, heritage, architecture, tourism, sports, as well as religious, cultural and culinary diversity. The exhibition was inaugurated by the Member of the European Parliament Herve' Juvin. The inauguration ceremony was attended by the Members of the European Parliament, officials of the European institutions, diplomats, and media persons. In his remarks on the occasion, MEP Herve' Juvin said Pakistan is one of the youngest

country on the planet with the 2nd largest Muslim population. He added that Pakistan is a nuclear power state, located at an extremely significant geographic location at the confluence of the middle east, south and central Asia as well as China. Referring to the devastating floods which affected more than 30 million people in Pakistan, the MEP underscored that Pakistan is one of the most vulnerable countries due to the climate induced disasters, despite contributing less than 1 percent of the carbon emissions. The Charge d' Affairs of the Pakistani Mission, Syed Fraz Hussain Zaidi thanked the MEPs and other dignitaries for their keen interest in the Pakistani Arts and Culture. He underlined the enormous potential for further expanding Pakistan-EU ties in diverse fields and expressed Pakistan's readiness to advance this productive and constructive partnership.

Dubai's non-oil business conditions rebound in March: S&P Global

RIYADH (Agencies): Dubai's non-oil private sector grew at its fastest rate since September 2022, as the Emirate's Purchasing Managers' Index hit 55.5 in March, according to S&P Global. In its latest PMI report for Dubai, the global rating agency noted that this sharp improvement in non-oil business conditions was



supported by stronger growth in

output, employment and stocks of purchases. According to the index, PMI readings above the 50-mark show non-oil private sector growth, while those below 50 signal contraction. In February, the PMI of Dubai stood at 54.1, while it was 54.5 and 55.2 in January and December 2022 respectively.

S. Korea fines Google US\$32mil for blocking local rival

SEOUL (Agencies): South Korea's antitrust regulator has fined Alphabet Inc's Google 42.1 billion won (US\$31.88 million) for blocking the release of mobile video games on a competitor's platform. The Korea Fair Trade Commission (KFTC) said on Tuesday that Google bolstered its market dominance, and hurt local app market One Store's revenue and value as a platform, by requiring video game makers to exclusively release their titles on Google Play



in exchange for providing in-app exposure between June 2016 and April 2018. Google said it will review the final decision by the KFTC to evalu-

ate the next course of action. "Google makes substantial investments in the success of developers, and we respectfully disagree with the KFTC's conclusions", a spokesperson said. The KFTC said the move against the US technology giant is part of efforts by the government to ensure fair markets. Game makers affected by Google's action include Netmarble, Nexon and NCSoft, as well as other smaller companies, the antitrust regulator added.

Swiss president to defend Credit Suisse takeover in parliament

BERN (Agencies): Swiss President Alain Berset on Tuesday will defend the orchestrated takeover of Credit Suisse by UBS at an extraordinary session of parliament to debate the bank's collapse. Berset's government played a leading role in arranging the merger of Switzerland's biggest banks – a deal done in double-quick time behind closed doors on March 19. The three-day session at the Federal Assembly in Bern was called after lawmakers found themselves



before a fait accompli. The takeover dramatically changes the financial landscape in the wealthy Alpine country, which stakes much of its

national prestige on sound banking. The merger triggered unease among the public and lawmakers alike, with the country's second-largest bank rapidly imploding after 167 years in which it helped finance Switzerland's industrial growth. The extraordinary session opens at 11.15am Tuesday with a statement from the government to the 46-member Council of States upper house. The debate then shifts to the 200-seat National Council lower chamber from 5.15pm.

Chinese airlines swamped with cabin crew applicants

BEIJING (Agencies): Chinese airlines undertaking the biggest hiring drives in more than three years as travel rebounds are facing a deluge of applicants for cabin crew roles as fresh university graduates turn to the relatively high-paying career in a bleak job market. In contrast to Western countries, where cabin crew roles are relatively low-paid and mostly do not require a university degree, becoming a flight attendant in China typically requires a bachelor's



degree and preferably passing a challenging government-administrated English test. During the pandemic, the total number of flight attendants

in China fell by around 11,000, or an 11% drop from the pre-pandemic level of 108,955 in 2019, according to data from the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC), due to attrition rather than the widespread layoffs seen in the West. Carriers including Xiamen Airlines, China Southern Airlines and Spring Airlines are now on a hiring spree as domestic travel recovers and they plan to resume flights to popular international destinations.

Bitcoin tops US\$30,000 for first time since June

HONG KONG (Agencies): Bitcoin climbed above US\$30,000 for the first time since June 2022, rallying more than 80% since the start of the year. The rebound is even more intense than a nearly 20% gain on the Nasdaq 100 — with which Bitcoin has tended to move in tandem — and retraces some of the digital token's losses from 2022 following a series of crypto-related blowups. Still, Bitcoin is down more than 50% from its all-time high in November 2021. "30k is very significant for both tech-



nical and fundamental reasons," said Mati Greenspan, Quantum Economics chief executive officer. "The resistance has been building up for three weeks straight and has now

finally broken. This is the first time we've crossed that level since the collapse of Terra/Luna and Three Arrows Capital. It basically means that the price has fully recovered from Celsius, FTX and the US regulatory crackdown." To be sure, the crypto industry is still facing immense scrutiny. Crypto exchange Coinbase Global Inc. said it has received a notice from the Securities and Exchange Commission declaring its intention to bring an enforcement action.

J&J's 2nd bankruptcy must be dismissed, say cancer victims' lawyers

NEW BURNSWICK (Agencies): Johnson & Johnson's second attempt to resolve talc lawsuits in bankruptcy should be dismissed as an unprecedented fraud designed to deny plaintiffs just compensation, lawyers representing cancer victims argued in a Monday court filing. The attorneys contend J&J defied a January appeals court rejection of its first attempt to settle the litigation, noting that a J&J subsidiary refiled for Chapter 11 just two hours after a court dismissed its first bankruptcy.



The lawyers blasted the move as the "largest intentional fraudulent transfer in US history." Johnson & Johnson is offering to settle all claims for US\$8.9 billion, up from its orig-

inal offer of US\$2 billion. The legal broadside challenged the company's latest gambit as an unlawful abuse of the Chapter 11 system, echoing earlier objections to its first effort to resolve the lawsuits. In October 2021, J&J executed a controversial legal manoeuvre known as a Texas two-step. The tactic involved dividing its consumer business in two and then offloading tens of thousands of talc lawsuits onto a newly created subsidiary, which almost immediately declared bankruptcy.

China's central bank continues to add liquidity via reverse repos

BEIJING (Agencies): China's central bank injected funds into the financial system through open market operations Tuesday. The People's Bank of China said on its website that it has conducted

5 billion yuan (726 million U.S. dollars) of seven-day reverse repos at an interest rate of 2 percent. The move is aimed at keeping liquidity reasonable and ample in the banking system, according to the

central bank. A reverse repo is a process in which the central bank purchases securities from commercial banks through bidding, with an agreement to sell them back in the future.

Wall Street stocks end mostly higher after latest US jobs data

NEW YORK (Agencies): Wall Street stocks mostly rose on Monday following a mixed session on Asian bourses as markets digested solid US jobs data ahead of key inflation updates later in the week. Monday's session was the first since the US Labor Department released March employment figures, which showed the economy added 236,000 jobs last month. This was slightly less than expected, and came as the unemployment rate inched down

to 3.5 percent. Analysts considered the jobs report solid, meaning it could translate into further Federal Reserve interest rate hikes, depending on additional upcoming data. After sustaining early losses, US equities climbed back as the session progressed. Wall Street had been closed for a holiday on Friday when the data was first released. Both the Dow and S&P 500 finished positive, while the Nasdaq ended just slightly down. European bourses

and Hong Kong remained on vacation Monday, dampening the trading volume in the United States. "It's a bit of a wait-and-see trade here," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare, who described the market as broadly cautious ahead of this week's heavy calendar. This schedule includes crucial consumer price and producer price reports -- which will provide the latest snapshots of inflation -- as well as data on March retail sales.

China outlines measures to manage ChatGPT-like services

HONG KONG (Agencies): China's cyberspace regulator unveiled draft measures on Tuesday for managing generative artificial intelligence services, saying it wants firms to submit security assessments to authorities before they launch their offerings to the public. The rules drafted by the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) come as several governments are considering how to mitigate the dangers of the emerging technology, which has experienced a boom in investment and consumer popularity in recent months after the release of OpenAI's ChatGPT. They also come after a slew of Chinese tech giants, including Baidu, SenseTime and Al-



ibaba, showed off in recent weeks their new artificial intelligence models which can power applications ranging from chatbots to image generators. The CAC said that China supports AI innovation and application and encourages use of safe and reliable software, tools and data resources, but content generated by generative AI had to be in line with the country's core socialist values.

US to cut EV mileage ratings to meet fuel economy rules

WASHINGTON (Agencies): The US Energy Department (DOE) on Monday proposed reducing electric vehicles (EV) mileage ratings to meet government fuel economy requirements, a move that could force automakers to sell more low-emissions cars or improve conventional models. DOE wants to significantly revise how it calculates the petroleum-equivalent fuel economy rating for electric and plug-in electric hybrids for use in the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) program. The current system has not been



updated in more than two decades. "Encouraging the adoption of EVs can reduce petroleum consumption but giving too much credit for that adoption can lead to increased net petroleum use because it enables lower fuel economy among conventional vehicles, which represent by far the majority of vehicles sold," DOE said in its proposed regulation.

Dollar pauses after strong gains on hawkish Fed bets

TOKYO (Agencies): The US dollar paused for breath on Tuesday following its best rally this month against major peers as a resilient US labour market bolstered the case for a Federal Reserve rate hike next month. The yen, which is highly sensitive to long-term US bond yields, managed to claw back some of Monday's more than 1% slide, as the 10-year Treasury yield also slowed down in Tokyo trading after a sharp two-day climb. The Japanese currency came under additional pressure overnight as the new Bank of Japan governor, Kazuo Ueda, vowed to stick with ultra-easy stimulus setting for the time be-



ing. Leading cryptocurrency bitcoin briefly touched US\$30,000 for the first time since June. The US dollar index – which measures the greenback against six major counterparts, including the yen – slipped 0.06% in early Asian trading, following a 0.39% advance at the start of the week. The dollar eased 0.16% to ¥133.39, after jumping 1.1% overnight.

Australia, China reach deal to resolve barley dispute

SYDNEY (Agencies): Australia has reached an agreement with China to resolve their dispute over barley imports, Australian foreign minister Penny Wong said on Tuesday, the latest sign of improving ties between the countries. Australia will suspend its case at the World Trade Organization (WTO) while China conducts a review into duties imposed on the grain, Wong told a news conference. "China has agreed to undertake an expedited review of the duties imposed on Australian barley over a three-month period, that may extend to a fourth if required," she said. "In return, we have agreed to temporarily suspend the



WTO dispute for the agreed review period." The government expects a similar result in a second dispute on wine tariffs, she added. Australia lodged a formal complaint with the WTO in 2020 over anti-dumping and countervailing duties imposed by China on Australian barley, one of several sources of friction between the two countries in recent years.

Tokyo shares close higher on yen's fall

TOKYO (Agencies): Tokyo shares closed higher on Tuesday as a weaker yen boosted exporters, with investors breathing a sigh of relief after the new central bank chief backed existing loose monetary policy. The benchmark Nikkei 225 index rose 1.05 percent, or 289.71 points, to end at 27,923.37, while the broader Topix index climbed 0.78 percent, or 15.32 points, to 1,991.85. The dollar stood at 133.38 yen, down from 133.59 yen in New York but above the 132.29 yen seen Monday in Tokyo. A lower yen

usually supports Japanese exporters by making their products relatively more competitive overseas. "Following the Bank of Japan governor's inaugural press conference last night, speculation about BoJ policy revisions receded and the yen weakened against major currencies, inviting buying of export-related shares," Iwai Cosmo Securities said in a note. Governor Kazuo Ueda said Monday no major rate hikes were on the horizon, and that a long-standing loose monetary policy remained "appropriate".

Saudi EDA organizes Saudi-Iraqi Trade Commission Works in Jeddah

JEDDAH (Agencies): Saudi Export Development Authority (EDA) organized on Tuesday the works of the Saudi-Iraqi trade mission in Jeddah, under the theme "Made in Saudi Arabia", within the framework of Saudi Arabia's strategy to develop Saudi non-oil exports and provide export opportunities. This aims also to increase chances for the availability of local products in the regional and international market, and consequently strengthen the status of the national products as one of the

most important streams of the national economy and verifying its income. The "Saudi Exports" will target, in the trade mission, many sectors most notably; the "Construction Sector", "food Sector", and "Medical Sector", and will witness the participation of 40 Saudi companies and over 40 Iraqi importing companies. This participation will help in spreading Saudi products and strengthen their regional presence; under the positive indicators of increased business activity between Saudi Arabia and Iraq.

Al-Hilal's fading Roshn Saudi League title hopes dim further

RIYADH (Agencies): Al-Hilal's hopes of retaining their Roshn Saudi League title took another massive hit on Monday night when they drew 2-2 with Al-Tai at Faisal bin Fahd Stadium in Riyadh. Congolese forward Guy Mbenza opened the scoring for Al-Tai in the 25th minute, and the lead was doubled 10 minutes later through the Algerian Amir Sayoud. The reigning champions came back strongly in the second half with Saudi international Saleh Al-Shehri halving the deficit on 57 minutes and



Brazilian forward Michael Delgado equalizing in the 72nd minute. Al-Hilal, however, could not find the winner that

would reignite their fading title hopes. With only seven matches left, the Riyadh giants now sit in fourth place with 46 points, 10 behind leaders Al-Ittihad and seven behind Cristiano Ronaldo's Al-Nasser. Al-Hilal had been dealt a major blow on Friday when they were beaten 3-0 by third-place Al-Shabab in the Riyadh derby, and following their dropped points against Al-Tai, will find it hard to replicate the late-season recovery that resulted in the championship win last time round.

Gamers Without Borders kicks off with a prize pool of \$10m

RIYADH (Agencies): Gamers Without Borders, the world's largest charitable esports event, is set to kick off today with a total charity prize pool of \$10 million. The GWB's 2023 edition will benefit six aid partners — Direct Relief, IMC, UNICEF, King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center, World Food Programme and the UN-HCR. Organized by the Saudi Esports Federation and sponsored by strategic partner Aramco and presenting partner Savvy Games Group, the event's fourth edition features five elite competitions across four of the world's most popular esports titles. The GWB six-week mega-series will serve as a



qualifier to Gamers8: The Land of Heroes. It begins with a StarCraft II tournament, a new addition to the GWB, running from April 14 to 23 and featuring 24 players. The next competition, a first for the GWB, will be an all-women (CS:GO) tournament, with six teams

battling it out in a single elimination bracket from April 27 to 29 for a \$2.5 million prize. Rocket League makes yet another appearance at GWB with 16 teams competing from May 1 to 4 for a \$2.5 million prize, followed by a Rainbow Six Siege tournament from May 11 to 14 with 16 teams showcasing their gaming talents to win a \$2.5 million prize. The GWB concludes with the fifth and final tournament, the men's (CS:GO) qualifiers from May 16 to 18, where some of the best teams from around the globe will be competing for \$2.5 million, and the golden opportunity to qualify and advance to the finals at Gamers8: The Land of Heroes.

Lampard urges Chelsea to emulate 2012 shock run to Euro glory

LONDON (Agencies): Frank Lampard has urged Chelsea to ignore the turmoil enveloping his struggling side as he invoked the memory of the Blues' incredible run to Champions League glory in 2012. Lampard is back in charge of Chelsea until the end of the season after replacing the sacked Graham Potter last week. After watching Chelsea crash to a lacklustre 1-0 defeat at Wolves in his first game in charge on Saturday, Lampard takes them to Real Madrid for a daunting Champi-



ons League quarter-final first leg on Wednesday. Chelsea are languishing in 11th place in the Premier League

after a dismal campaign that included Thomas Tuchel being sacked in September and Potter lasting only seven months before his dismissal. The west Londoners have managed to progress to the last eight in Europe despite their wretched domestic form. Knocking out holders Real would be a major upset, but Lampard knows all about defying the odds in the Champions League. Lampard captained Chelsea in their unexpected run to Champions League triumph 11 years ago.

Tame Barca draw with Girona, fail to capitalize on Madrid stumble

BARCELONA (Agencies): Title-chasing Barcelona were held to a 0-0 draw by Girona at Camp Nou on Monday, extending their lead on Real Madrid at the top of La Liga by one point, now sitting 13 clear with 10 games remaining. Still smarting from their Clasico humiliation by Madrid last week in the Copa del Rey, Barcelona were far from their best in a Catalan derby clash, despite the motivation of seeing the champions lose on Saturday against Villarreal. Girona, mid-table, were solid and forced



Xavi Hernandez's side to drop points at home in La Liga for only the third time this season. Barcelona secured their

21st clean sheet in the top flight but were not able to fully capitalize on Real Madrid's stumble, as they bid to win La Liga for the first time since 2019. "As the minutes passed, they started to gain confidence in defense, and we were struggling to make the final pass or take our chances," Barca captain Sergio Busquets told DAZN. "Our objective remains the same, to win La Liga, and to try to win it as soon as possible. We're 13 points clear, but our objective remains the same."

Why FIFA will struggle to compete with EA Sports FC after acrimonious split

In 2022, after 30 years of making FIFA games together, the world football governing body and video game developer and publisher EA Sports, announced they were splitting up. It was acrimonious. The specific details about what caused the split will likely be kept under a non-disclosure agreement forever. However, according to a 2021 New York Times report citing insider knowledge, EA Sports allegedly wanted more rights as part of any new deal, and FIFA allegedly wanted to double the fee for



using its name for the next decade to an eye-watering \$2.5 billion. Despite these reported claims, one thing is sure, there

is no going back for either party. Since the breakup, both camps have had contrasting lines of communication. EA Sports immediately announced EA Sports FC, which will arrive in 2023. The likes of Liverpool FC and Real Madrid supported the reveal with posts featuring the hashtag #EASportsFC and an announcement that they would be in the new game. On the other side, FIFA released a bombastic statement that suggests it will make the best football game around.

NBA star Simmons donates basketball court to Chinese village

Brooklyn Nets point guard Ben Simmons has donated a basketball court to Machang town of Gui'an New Area in Southwest China's Guizhou province. It comes after a local basketball tournament received nationwide attention. Simmons announced in January that he would donate money to build a basketball court in China. "I first visited China to play basketball when I was 16 and then again as an NBA player. I always enjoy visiting as the people and the fans are always so welcoming, and love basketball," he said. "My wish is to bring the joy of basketball to more people, so I wanted to donate a court to help places where people love the game and can benefit from new facilities," he added. A local basketball tournament in Guizhou, widely known as Cun BA - "cun" means village in Chinese - has attracted widespread attention across China. The finals, held in March, drew more than 30,000 spectators on site, along with millions watching online. "I hope this court will benefit the local people. I hear people in Guizhou have amazing local basketball tournaments, and they just had this year's final. I wish the people of Guizhou all the



best, and hopefully will get to see them soon in the future," said Simmons. Huang Ping, Consul General of the Chinese Consulate in New York, said the American NBA and the "Village BA" in Guizhou have drawn his attention recently, as the two events, although being thousands of miles apart, are motivating basketball fans. "They both demonstrate the common love of the people of the two countries for basketball, the common pursuit of sports spirit, and the common yearning for a better life," Huang said. Huang thanked Simmons for his donation, a move that has linked the two countries

through basketball. "It builds a friendship bridge to promote people-to-people exchanges and cooperation between China and the US," Huang said. Li Pengcheng, a senior official of Machang, also noted that although the sports venue conditions in Machang are relatively undeveloped, the local people's enthusiasm for basketball has always been strong. "Rural basketball games are held here with great enthusiasm. Simmons' donation will create better field conditions for local basketball enthusiasts, create a stronger basketball atmosphere, and promote civil sports exchanges," Li said.

Bayern are the underdogs against City in Champions League, says Tuchel

MUNICH (Agencies): Bayern Munich will be considered as underdogs when they face Manchester City in the first leg of their Champions League quarterfinal at Etihad Stadium on Tuesday, manager Thomas Tuchel said. In his most challenging match since taking charge of the Bundesliga club last month, the German manager will be hoping to pull off another win over City having guided his former club Chelsea to the Champions League title with victory over Pep Guardiola's side in the 2021 Champions League final. Bundesliga leaders Bayern have won the Europe's premier club competition six times whereas City are still hunting for their first, but despite that record



Tuchel feels all the pressure will be on the Manchester side. "Tomorrow, we will have the role of the underdog and that is okay. We have to stay confident and stay on top of our game," Tuchel told reporters on Monday. When asked how Bayern would deal with City, Tuchel said: "Pep's teams always have his own unique style. We will try to find ways of competing both with and without the ball."

Relegation-threatened Leicester appoint Smith as manager



LEICESTER (Agencies): Leicester City have named ex-Aston Villa and Norwich City boss Dean Smith as caretaker manager until the end of the season after parting ways with Brendan Rodgers, the Premier League club said on Monday. Smith takes over from Rodgers, who left the club by mutual consent earlier this month with the team second-bottom in the table and facing potential relegation. "Smith brings a wealth of managerial

experience and expertise to the role and, along with his coaching team, will be tasked with helping the football club retain its Premier League status as we head into the final eight games of the current season," Leicester said in a statement. Leicester won the Premier League title in 2015-16 against all odds but are now in danger of the drop after nine seasons in the top flight. Smith's appointment comes in the wake of Leicester's 1-0 home defeat to Bournemouth, their 19th league defeat of the season. The East Midlands club have 25 points after 30 games, two points adrift of the safety zone. "I'm really happy to have the opportunity to lead the team during these final weeks of the season," Dean Smith said.

Wawrinka seals comeback victory in Monte Carlo

MONTE CARLO (Agencies): Former champion Stan Wawrinka rolled back the years to outlast Tallon Griekspoor 5-7, 6-3, 6-4 and reach the Monte Carlo Masters second round today while Andy Murray's first appearance in the tournament since 2017 ended in a loss to Alex de Minaur. Wawrinka looked in danger of falling in his opener for a second straight year after losing a tight opening set, but the 38-year-old found a way back into the match by dominating the second and grabbed an early break in the decider. Griekspoor beat Wawrinka in their only previous meeting in 2018 and showed plenty of fight to level at 3-3 but surrendered his serve again to allow the Swiss veteran to surge ahead and close out the contest on his sixth match point. "It was really important to stay calm with myself,"



said 2014 champion Wawrinka, the oldest man in this year's field. "In the first round you need to find your game. The first match on clay is never easy against a good player. I'm happy to get through. It was important to fight until the end." Up next for the three-times Grand Slam champion is world No 10 Taylor Fritz. "He's an amazing player," Wawrinka said of the American. "He's top 10, been winning a lot of matches. Winning a lot of tournaments. He's very dangerous on many surfaces."

DAILY HOROSCOPE: APRIL 12, 2023



– It's a general reading which may differ from person to person because of time date and year.
– **ARIES:** Jump on every opportunity today, even if you're not sure it works for you. It could be that you just need to close off your competition, but in any case there's no need to be shy about action.
– **TAURUS:** You get clobbered early today with inspiration that leads to a much better understanding of some person or problem you've been struggling with lately. Try not to overthink it, though!
– **GEMINI:** Social business is usually incredibly easy for you, but today brings a weird bump that throws you off balance for a little while. Things are easier tomorrow, but you still have to deal today!
– **CANCER:** You're not exactly antisocial, but you're certainly not feeling gregarious today. If people come your way, you're friendly enough, but you'd just as soon not go looking for company.
– **LEO:** You're so sure of yourself that you might just decide to take on a huge new challenge, but you might bite off more than you can chew! It's a good

time for you to ask for help from almost anyone.
– **VIRGO:** Your social energy is picking up steam, so make sure that you're talking to the right people. You might meet someone new today who ends up changing your life for the better.
– **LIBRA:** You may be hung up on something that happened a long time ago. Today is perfect for dwelling on it and then finding some way to let it go. It won't be easy, but it will certainly be worthwhile!
– **SCORPIO:** You need a bit more structure than usual today, so find a good way to order your life such that it makes more sense to you. Things are going to keep getting better once you know what to expect.
– **SAGITTARIUS:** Food is appealing today, especially when you cook it yourself! If you're a whiz in the kitchen, you might want to hit the market and pick out some good-looking veggies or otherwise connect to the earth.
– **CAPRICORN:** You're a planner by nature and today shows you just how great that is for you and your family. Everything comes together flawlessly, or as near to that as can be, and you're ready for anything.
– **ACQUARIUS:** Something unexpected is limiting your behavior today, but you can see that it's not going to last forever. Your best bet may be to just wait it out. Things should loosen up in a few days.
– **PISCES:** You may want to show your friends and coworkers just how valuable you can be to them today. It's easier than ever to have a big impact on their lives, so go ahead and weigh in early!

US urges Russia to free 'wrongfully detained' American journalist

WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): The United States on Monday officially determined that Russia had wrongfully detained Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich and urged his immediate release, stepping up pressure on his behalf. The formal decision by the State Department on Gershkovich, who was taken into custody on March 29, was unusually swift and indicated the seriousness attached by Washington to the case, the first time Moscow has accused a US journalist of espionage since the Soviet era. Secretary of State Antony Blinken "made a determination that Evan Gershkovich is wrongfully



detained by Russia," State Department spokesman Vedant Patel said. "We call for the Russian Federation to immediately release Mr. Gershkovich," Patel said in a statement. "Journalism is not a crime. We condemn the Kremlin's continued repression of independent voices in Russia, and its ongoing war

against the truth," Patel added. There had been little doubt that the United States would reach the determination on Gershkovich, with Blinken telling reporters last week that he felt the detention was unjust. President Joe Biden had earlier called for Gershkovich's release when asked by reporters. But US officials said they were required to work through a legal process and show due diligence on the case. In practical terms, the determination means that Gershkovich's detention will be handled by the US special envoy on hostage affairs, Roger Carstens, giving more resources to the case.

US says document leak poses 'serious' security risk



WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): The leak of highly sensitive US documents -- many of them related to the Ukraine conflict -- presents a "very serious" risk to US national security, the Pentagon said Monday. The breach is being investigated by the Justice Department and appears to include secret information on the war in Ukraine as well as sensitive analyses of US allies, whom American officials are now seeking to reassure. A steady drip of dozens of photographs of documents have been found on Twitter, Telegram, Discord and other sites in recent days, though some may have circulated online for weeks, if not months, before they began to receive media attention last week. The documents circulating online pose "a very serious risk to national security and have the potential to spread disinformation," said Chris Meagher, assistant to the secretary of defense for public affairs, without confirming their authenticity. "We're still investigating how this happened, as well as the scope of the issue. There have been steps to take a closer look at how this type of information is distributed and to whom," Meagher told journalists. Many of the documents are no longer available on the sites where they first appeared, and the United States is reportedly continuing to work to have them removed.

World Bank, IMF spring meetings get underway in complex economic environment



WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): The World Bank and International Monetary Fund's spring meetings kick off this week with an ambitious reform and fundraising agenda likely to be overshadowed by concerns over high inflation, rising geopolitical tension and financial stability. "Despite the remarkable resilience of consumer spending in the United States, in Europe, despite the uplift from China's reopening, global growth would remain below three percent" in 2023, IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva told a press conference on Monday. The fund now expects global growth to remain at close to three percent for the next half decade -- its lowest medium-term prediction since the 1990s. Close to 90 percent of the world's advanced economies will experience slowing growth this year, while Asia's emerging markets are expected to see a substantial rise in economic output -- with India and China predicted to account for half of all growth, Georgieva said last week. Low-income countries are expected to suffer a double shock from higher borrowing costs and a decline in demand for their exports, which Georgieva said could fuel poverty and hunger.

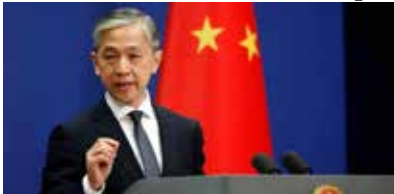
Presidency of Two Holy Mosques Affairs announces readiness plan for last ten days of Ramadan

MAKKAH (SPA/APP): The General Presidency for the Affairs of the Grand Holy Mosque and the Prophet's Holy Mosque geared up its readiness to offer worshippers the spiritual rituals to be witnessed in the last ten days of Ramadan through a plan that will mobilize all human resources and operational equipment, to facilitate the mission for Umrah performers and ensure tranquility and reassurance mood. The Presidency indicated that the number of worshippers and Umrah performers reached more than 950,000 on a daily basis since the beginning of Ramadan. The Presidency stated that it will intensify the cleansing and sterilization operations, as the Grand Mosque will be washed ten times daily, a process to be carried out by more than 4000 male and female workers. Each disinfection process consumes more than 80,000 liters of disinfectants, and 1,600 liters of fresheners, while sterilization operations are carried out around the clock using approximately 15,000 liters. More than 70 field teams



have been equipped to work 24 hours a day to sterilize all sides and corners of the Grand Mosque and all its outdoor yards, using environment-friendly materials, and more than 500 automatic hand sanitizers. The plan is to double the distribution of Zamzam water bottles to the musallas, the Mataf courtyard and the surrounding yards, with about 200,000 packages distributed at the Mataf courtyard by special vehicles, in addition to the distribution of about 200 bags in Al-Masaa (the connecting path between the hills of Safa and Marwa), the funeral musalla, the musalla of people with disabilities in the first floor and, the King Fahd expansion, as well as the expansion of King Abdullah.

Indian minister's visit to Arunachal Pradesh not conducive to peace, tranquility: China



BEIJING (APP): China on Monday firmly opposed a visit by India's interior minister to Arunachal Pradesh and views his activities in the area as violating Beijing's territorial sovereignty and it is not conducive to peace and tranquility in the border area. "Southern Tibet is China's territory. The activities of senior Indian officials in southern Tibet infringe in China's territorial sovereignty", Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said during his regular briefing. China has renamed some

places in what India regards as its eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, which China views as part of its territory. In response to a question on the visit by Indian interior Amit Shah in Arunachal Pradesh, Wang said that the Indian official's visit is not conducive to the peace and tranquility of the border area. China and India have border disputes in the region as both countries claim ownership of the poorly demarcated 3,440 kilometres (2,100 miles) long Line of Actual Control (LAC). The LAC runs along a disputed region and is often affected by the changing landscape, including rivers, lakes, and snowcaps. China has consistently asserted its claim over the entirety of Arunachal Pradesh, referring to the region as South Tibet.

S. Korea's fire destroys forest, houses amid strong winds

SEOUL (Xinhua/APP): A forest fire in South Korea's northeast coastal city destroyed forest and houses, forcing hundreds of people to evacuate, Yonhap news agency reported on Tuesday citing relevant authorities. The blaze broke out from a hill in Gangneung, about 170 km east of Seoul, at around 8:30 a.m. local time (2330 GMT on Monday). The forest fire rapidly spread to private houses due to strong wind and dry weather. The wind with an instantaneous maximum speed of 30 me-



ters per second blew over the eastern coastal areas. No casualties have been reported yet, but the fire was estimated to have burned around 103 hectares of forest, or the size of about 144 soccer fields, as well as dozens of houses.

Volcano erupts in Russia's Far East, posing threat to aviation

VLADIVOSTOK (Xinhua/APP): The Shiveluch volcano in Russia's far eastern Kamchatka Peninsula erupted early Tuesday and spewed ash plume up to 15 km into the sky, posing threat to air traffic. The Institute of Volcanology and Seismology of the Far Eastern Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences has declared "red," the highest danger level, for aviation, according to TASS news agency. There was a threat that streams of hot lava could block the road, the institute warned. The institute also noted the volcano ash could travel

up to 20 km and block the Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky-Ust-Kamchatsk highway. The sky was covered with a black cloud within a radius of several tens of kilometers from the volcano, with thunder rumbling due to static electricity in the ash cloud. Ashes began to fall in the village of Klyuchi in the Ust-Kamchatsky District of the Kamchatka Territory, where about 4,000 people live. The thickness of volcanic ash in Klyuchi village has reached 8.5 cm. Due to the eruption, some schools are closed on Tuesday.

Blinken to visit Vietnam, Japan as Asia tensions flare

WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): Secretary of State Antony Blinken will visit Vietnam this week in the latest bid to build relations with a growing US partner as tensions flare with China over Taiwan, the State Department said Monday. Blinken will travel to Hanoi on his way

to a Group of Seven foreign ministers meeting this weekend in the Japanese mountain resort of Karuizawa. Blinken will "discuss our shared vision of a connected, prosperous, peaceful and resilient Indo-Pacific region," a State Department statement said.

Swiss president to defend Credit Suisse takeover in parliament

BERN (AFP/APP): Swiss President Alain Berset on Tuesday will defend the orchestrated takeover of Credit Suisse by UBS at an extraordinary session of parliament to debate the bank's collapse. Berset's government played a leading role in arranging the merger of Switzerland's biggest banks -- a deal done in double-quick time behind closed doors on March 19. The three-day session at the Federal Assembly in Bern was called after lawmakers found themselves before a fait accompli. The takeover dramatically changes the financial landscape in the wealthy Alpine country, which stakes much of its national prestige on sound banking. The merger triggered unease among the public and lawmakers alike, with the country's second-largest bank rapidly im-



ploding after 167 years in which it helped finance Switzerland's industrial growth. The extraordinary session opens at 11:15 am (0915 GMT) Tuesday with a statement from the government to the 46-member Council of States upper house. The debate then shifts to the 200-seat National Council lower chamber from 5:15 pm (1515 GMT). Berset will take the floor on Tuesday, a parliament spokeswoman told AFP.

Top UN official warns 263 mln children still out of school worldwide, as UN commission meets



UNITED NATIONS (APP): Despite global promises and progress, some 263 million children and young people are out of school, indicating that achieving quality education for all by 2030 is "seriously off track", UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed warned Monday. The issue is under discussion this week at the latest session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD), taking place at UN Headquarters in New York. Delivering opening remarks, Ms. Mohammed began by highlighting the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, who have been banned from high school and university, calling this "one of the gravest educational challenges of our time." She underlined how education is a crucial long-term investment for a sustainable future, for people and the planet. However, she said countries are facing "a triple crisis in education -- one of equity and inclusion, quality and relevance, to equip current and future generations with the skills they need to thrive in a fast-changing world." The millions of children worldwide who are not attending school, represent just one challenge for the international community. Equally concerning is the fact that many students simply are not learning, she said, as nearly 70 per cent of children in poorer countries cannot understand a basic text by age 10, mainly due to chronic factors such as poverty and malnutrition. "Ultimately, we need to reimagine and transform our educational systems if they are to be fit for purpose," Ms. Mohamed said. "We need to learn how to learn throughout our lives, and learn to live in peace with one another and with nature."

Sultan of Brunei Darussalam visits Islamic Arts Biennale 2023 exhibition



JEDDAH (APP): Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkhiah of Brunei Darussalam visited the Islamic Arts Biennale 2023 exhibition on Monday, which is being organized by the Diriyah Biennale Foundation of the Ministry of Culture at King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah. During his visit, the Sultan toured the exhibition halls showcasing valuable and rare collections of Islamic artifacts and treasures from the Two Holy Mosques in Makkah and Madinah. The accompanying minister, Minister of Commerce Dr. Majid bin Abdullah Al-Qasabi, accompanied the Sultan of Brunei Darussalam during his visit.

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