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Iran invites Saudi King to visit Tehran

TEHRAN (Agencies): Iran has officially invited Saudi Arabia's King to visit the country, an Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson said on Monday, after the two regional rivals agreed to end years of hostility following a China-brokered agreement in March, Reuters reports. After years of bad relations that fuelled proxy conflicts across the Middle East, where Tehran and Riyadh backed opposite sides from Yemen to Syria, the Shia revolutionary Iran and the Sunni-led Kingdom reached an agreement to end a seven-year diplomatic rift. "Iranian President (Ebrahim Raisi) has sent an invitation to the Saudi King in return for an invitation by Riyadh for him," Nasser Kanaani told a televised news conference. Technical delegations from both countries are preparing to officially re-open their



missions, and Tehran said these missions would restart their activ-



ities by 9 May, Iran's semi-official Tasnim News agency reported.

UN condemns killing of 3 World Food Programme staff in Sudan

NEW YORK (Agencies): The United Nations condemned the killing of three World Food Programme employees amid fighting in Sudan on Saturday, saying the three died while carrying out their duties, Reuters reports. Volker Perthes, the head of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission (UNITAMS) said on Sunday that the three WFP employees were killed in clashes in Kabkabiya in North Darfur a day earlier. "I also am extremely appalled by reports of projectiles hitting UN and other humanitarian premises, as well as reports of looting of UN and other humanitarian premises in several locations in Darfur," Perthes, who is also the special envoy for the UN secretary general for Sudan, added in his statement.

China urges WHO not to descend to political tool of COVID-19 origins-tracing

BEIJING (Agencies): China has urged World Health Organization (WHO) officials to return to science and fairness and not to be subject to or willing to descend to become a tool of politicization of certain countries, after some in the international organization smeared China for lacking transparency in sharing data about COVID-19 origins. Using twisted and incomplete pieces of evidence to slander China on the origins of COVID-19 will only undermine the international body's credibility and impair investigations on the virus said experts. An epidemiologist close to China's COVID-19 origins-tracing task group told the Global Times that next stage of origins-tracing should concentrate on animals who are more prone to carry coronaviruses, such as bats. China has done abundant work on investigating virus-carrying animals for years, and now the onus falls on other countries who could be linked to the virus to undertake similar investigations, to hopefully shed light on where the virus came from. At a press conference on Saturday, Chinese scientists discussed their latest findings in the origins-tracing of COVID-19, which showed that virus strains found in samples from the Huanan Seafood Market are more likely to have come from humans. Additionally, experts stated that no COVID-19 antibodies were detected in the blood of donors in Wuhan prior to the outbreak in December 2019. The release of these findings came amid a new round of accusations from some WHO officials, who claimed that China had failed to disclose data on COVID-19 origins-tracing.

Iraq bans the import of poultry products from Turkey

Baghdad (Agencies): The Iraqi government issued a decision on Friday banning the import of poultry products from Turkey because of the outbreak of bird flu. Iraqi epidemiologist Thaeer Sabri Hussein mentioned that a decision was issued to ban the import of poultry products in countries where bird flu has spread, including Turkey, according to the Iraqi News Agency (INA). "The decision was issued last January, and Turkish poultry products in the Iraqi market were imported either before the ban date or entered Iraq illegally after this date," Hussein explained. Last February, the World Health Organization (WHO) raised

concerns about the development of new strains of the bird flu virus, as a result of mutations in mammalian bodies. The WHO mentioned that it is cooperating with the Cambodian authorities, after the discovery of two confirmed cases of the (H5N1) strain known as bird flu among one family in Cambodia. Bird flu is a highly contagious viral disease that affects domestic and wild birds. This complex disease is caused by viruses that are divided into multiple subtypes (such as H5N1, H5N3, H5N8, etc.), and their genetic characteristics evolve rapidly, according to data from the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH).

Norway Braces for Mass Wage Strike Amid Near-Record Inflation

OSLO (Agencies): While the trade unions in Europe's largest energy exporter specifically pledged to spare ongoing oil and gas production, suppliers to the country's massive oil industry will be affected by the strike involving tens of thousands of workers. Workers representing numerous Norwegian industries will go on strike on April 17 after failing to reach a wage deal with employers to make up for the unrelenting inflation. Up to 25,000 union members will walk out this Monday as last-ditch talks led by a government-appointed mediator failed to produce an agreement on the salaries of about 185,000 workers, the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) said in a statement. The strike will affect suppliers to the country's key oil industry, with companies like Aker Solutions ASA joining the protest. By contrast, oil and gas production in western Europe's biggest ex-



porter of fossil fuels would be spared, as promised earlier by LO. However, construction and road maintenance, electricity, car sales, as well as confectioneries and breweries will also be affected. The trade unions demanded a wage increase of at least 5.0 percent for the earnings to be on par with consumer prices in 2023. While Norwegian Central Bank Governor Ida Wolden Bache stressed last month she failed to see any signs for a price-wage spiral for now, the bank nevertheless raised its forecast for 2023 nominal wage growth to 5.1 percent, which would be the fastest pace in 15 years.

Austria Court pays Muslim woman damages for headscarf discrimination

A Muslim woman, who was pressured to remove her headscarf during the application process to become a kindergarten teacher and ultimately did not get the training position, has been awarded €2,000 (\$2,196) in damages in Austria, Anadolu News Agency reports. This decision was confirmed by the Vienna Regional Court for Civil Matters in the second instance on Monday, the Litigation Association that legally represented the woman in court announced. The judgment is legally binding. The then 19-year-old woman, who had already gained experience as a kindergarten assistant, had wanted to gain further qualifications and complete training as a child group supervisor with a Viennese provider. During the application process, she was "re-

peatedly asked about her headscarf in a discriminatory manner" and urged to "take it off", according to the press release issued by the association. According to the Litigation Association, the Court found discrimination on the basis of gender and religion under the Austrian Equal Treatment Act (GIBG). "Repeated, intrusive questions about the headscarf have no place in a job application process. The Court makes it clear that this can constitute prohibited discrimination on the basis of gender and religion," said a statement from Theresa Hammer, head of legal enforcement for the Litigation Association. It was also made clear by the Court that access to training is also covered by discrimination protection, not just the provision of the training itself, she said.

President calls for comprehensive plan to address health, education issues

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Monday underscored the need for devising a comprehensive strategy to address the challenges being faced by the country in the health and education sectors. The president, during a presentation by UNICEF on its initiatives in Pakistan, expressed concern over the alarming number of out of school children. He said that over 23 million children were out of school and urged the need for thinking out of box solutions to enroll them. The Country Representative of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) Abdullah Abdulaziz Fadil briefed the meeting about the role and achievements made by UNICEF in the health and education sectors of Pakistan. The president stated that educating these children was really a major challenge that could not be addressed only with the present bricks and mortar system but it required the use of digital and online learning methods. The UNICEF country representative apprised the meeting of the impacts of floods on children and the support extended by UNICEF to the children of flood-affected areas. He said that 134,779 children with severe malnutrition had been enrolled for treatment, besides immunizing 1,194,940 children against measles. It was told that UNICEF established 1,232 temporary learning centers and helped 180,889 children to continue their learning in a safe and protected environment through various modalities. He high-



lighted that 1,195,088 people had been provided access to safe drinking water. He also shared UNICEF's Five Years Program (2023-27) to help strengthen the education and health sectors of Pakistan. The meeting was informed that UNICEF had included mental health and disability in its programs. Abdullah Abdulaziz Fadil said that 40% of children in Pakistan under the age of five years were suffering from stunting and, if this issue was addressed, it could help increase the country's GDP considerably. President Alvi said that mental health, malnutrition, and disability were the major health problems that needed urgent attention and prompt decisions on the part of the government to address these issues. He emphasized the need to focus on preventive aspects of the diseases which were not only cost-effective but would also help reduce the disease burden. The president highly appreciated the contribution made by UNICEF towards the health and education sectors of Pakistan. The meeting was attended by Hamish Young, Chief polio UNICEF, Ellen Van Kalmthout, Chief Education, Haile Gashaw, Chief WASH, and others.

US helicopter raid in Syria targets Daesh leader

BEIRUT: A helicopter raid by US forces in northern Syria early on Monday resulted in the "probable death" of a senior leader of the militant Daesh group, the US military said. The US Central Command said in a statement that the Daesh leader, who was not named, was "responsible for planning terror attacks in the Middle East and Europe." Two other "armed individuals" were killed along with the target of the raid, CENTCOM said. The statement said no civilians or US troops were hurt in the operation. Syria's White Helmets, a civil defense group operating in opposition-held areas of northern Syria, said it transported two people wounded during the raid to a local hospital, which later said they had died. A third person was killed when the US forces landed for the raid, the White Helmets said. The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, which partners with the US in anti-Daesh operations in northeast Syria, said

that the operation was launched from a base near the town of Kobani and targeted a military site belonging to a Turkish-backed armed opposition group, Suqour Al-Shamal, in the village of village of Suwayda in the region of Jarablus, near the Turkish border. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based war monitor, reported that the raid had resulted in the arrest of a senior Daesh leader and killed three people. The US military made no mention of any arrests. The Observatory said "violent clashes" took place after the helicopter landed, the first such landing this year. At least 900 US troops are deployed in Syria, along with an undisclosed number of contractors. The Daesh group, which swept through Iraq and Syria in 2014, taking control of large swaths of territory, was defeated in Syria in 2019, but sleeper cells maintain a presence and periodically stage attacks on military and civilian targets.

At least 11 die of heatstroke in India's Maharashtra after open-air awards event

NEW DELHI (Agencies): Nearly a dozen people have died of heatstroke and dehydration in India's western Maharashtra state after they attended an awards ceremony under scorching sun. About 50 people were undergoing hospital treatment after standing for hours in the searing temperatures. The deaths took place in Navi Mumbai, 24km from financial capital Mumbai, where nearly a million people gathered on Sunday, the district chief medical officer told The National. The temperature hovered at 38°C as people sat in the open for more than five hours at the outdoor event attended by senior officials, including Amit Shah, India's Home Minister. Heatstroke is a life-threatening condition caused when the body is exposed to high temperatures for a prolonged period, without cooling off. The event held on 140 hectares of open ground was organised to confer Appasaheb Dharmadhikari, a so-

cial activist, with the Maharashtra Bhushan — the state's highest civilian award. "It started at around 11am and by 2pm, people started complaining of dizziness, low blood pressure and were vomiting," Dr Rehana Muzavar said. "They were rushed to two hospitals but unfortunately, eight females and three males lost their lives. They were brain-dead. Others are recuperating." Media reports said dozens of people complained of dizziness and lost consciousness towards the end of the event and were given emergency treatment at a makeshift medical centre before being taken to hospital. Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis called the incident "unfortunate and painful" and announced a compensation of half a million rupees (\$6,100) to the families of the deceased. India is in the grip of a heatwave and the federal weather department has issued a warning in several parts of the country.

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.

Residents of Peshawar Cantonment file writ petition against Cantonment Board’s decision to tax immovable properties

PESHAWAR (APP): A Writ Petition has been filed by dozens of residents of the Peshawar Cantonment challenging the mandate of the Cantonment Board to levy and collect tax on their immovable properties. The case titled Zahidullah & others versus the Federation of Pakistan & others was filed earlier this week by their counsel Mr. Atif Ali Khan, Advocate Supreme Court. Interestingly, Mr. Khan has also served as an elected member of the Cantonment Board Peshawar from 2015- 2019 when he resigned to take on the responsibility of Additional Advocate General Khyber Pukhtonkhwa, where he served till his resignation early this year. The Cantonment Board is the local government for the residents of a cantonment and

its functions include providing amenities to residents within the Cantonment area and performing such other functions as are laid down in law. Like other local bodies, it is also mandated by law to collect taxes to fulfill its functions. In this regard, the Cantonment Board also levies and collects taxes on the houses of its residents which is now under challenge by the Petitioners on the grounds that it is illegal and unconstitutional for the cantonment board to levy and collect such tax. The reasons enumerated in the writ petition include that taxes on immovable property stand specifically excluded from the Federal Legislative List as per item No. 50 therefore the same is in the exclusive domain of the provinces, being a provincial sub-

ject. It is averred that the governing law on the subject is the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Urban Immovable Property Tax Act, 1958 which mandates the provincial government to levy, charge and collect taxes on immovable property in the cantonment and then pay the lions share to the cantonment board after retaining a percentage as collection charges. It is argued that the law under which the cantonment board relies for levy and collection of taxes i.e. the Cantonments (Urban Immovable Property Tax and Entertainment Duty) Order, 1979 [President’s Order 13 of 1979] is an obsolete law, passed by the military dictator General Zia ul Haq as Chief Martial Law Administrator and is against the letter and spirit of the Constitution.

Politicians welcome JIP efforts for political reconciliation

PESHAWAR (APP): The politicians, academicians, and civil society here Monday welcomed the efforts of Chief Jamaat-e-Islami, Sirajul Haq for evolving a broad-based reconciliation among political parties for general elections. They also welcomed the formation of a three-member committee of the PTI comprising Pervez Khattak, Ejaz Chaudhry and Mian Mehmoodur Rasheed to hold

dialogue with JIP on the current political and elections related issues. Dr. A.H Hilali, former Chairman Political Science Department, University of Peshawar while welcoming the JI efforts regarding evolving of a grand political reconciliation said that dialogue was a viable option to unite all the political and religious parties including PDM and PTI for election in the country. He said the democratic system cannot strengthen its roots in the country unless all the stakeholders including religious and political parties sit together for result-oriented grand political dialogue to seek solutions to the prevailing socio-economic and political challenges. In democracies, he said political dialogue was an effective tool to resolve all political and election issues and removed misunderstanding among political players. He said political dialogue between the government and opposition would help develop the much-needed con-

sensus for general elections on the same day inevitable for political and economic stability in the country. JI leader and former provincial minister Inayatullah Khan also welcomed the reconciliation efforts of Sirajul Haq and the formation of a three members committee of PTI to hold talks with his party on political and election issues. He said JI strongly believed in political dialogue and its doors are always open for all parties. Inayatullah said the separate elections in KP and Punjab and other provinces would further aggravate the political and economic situation in the country. Ikhtair Wali said that PTI had never positively reciprocated to the dialogue offer of the government and made a big political blunder by dissolving the KP and Punjab assemblies. He said PTI’s demand for early elections in these provinces in the wake of the poor economic situation of the country was irrational and beyond logic.

Cloudy weather,thunderstorm,gusty winds likely to persist in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Meteorological Center on Monday predicted mainly partly cloudy to cloudy weather in most districts of the province. However, scattered rain-wind and thunderstorms with isolated hailstorms are likely to prevail over Chitral, Lower & Upper Dir, Malakand, Buner, Swat, Shangla, Kohistan, Battagram, Torghar, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Swabi, Mardan, Nowshera, Peshawar, Charsadda, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Hangu, Kurram, Karak and Kohat districts. Dust and wind storm with isolated rain-thunderstorm and hailstorm is likely to prevail over Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Tank, North & South Waziristan, and Dera Ismail Khan districts. During the

last 24 hours, mainly partly cloudy and cloudy weather prevailed over most districts of the province. However, rain-thunderstorms with gusty winds occurred at isolated places in Peshawar, Malakand, Hazara, Kohat and D.I. Khan divisions. Rain recorded (in mm): Bajaur (Pashat 11, Khaar Trace), Dir 10, Parachinar 06, Kalam 05, Timergara & Mirkhani (each) 04, Kakul, Pattan & Drosh (each) 02, Peshawar, Chitral, D.I. Khan, Tirah & Landi Kotal Trace. The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in C at different stations of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP): Peshawar City 31/19, Chitral 24/12, Timergara 30/15, Dir 26/11, Mirkhani 24/08, Kalam 14/03, Drosh 24/12.

Food packs distributed in Landikotal,Bara

PESHAWAR (APP): Three days of food Pack distribution, under “Food Voucher Programme”, was organized in Landikotal and Upper Bara areas of Khyber District by Islamic Relief Pakistan. According to a press release issued here on Monday, the food

voucher programme is implemented globally to address the needs of food insecurity and nutrition for the marginalised and most vulnerable communities More than 400 deserving people mostly widows were selected to be served with food vouchers in

PESHAWAR (APP): Eid shopping fever has reached its peak in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where the centuries-old traditional Peshawari and Charsadda Chappals (shoes) attracted a large number of Eid shoppers on Monday. With only a few days left in Eidul Fitr’s celebrations, the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and nearby districts of Punjab provinces thronged to Charsadda and Peshawari Chappal outlets at historic Namak Mandai, Qissa Khwani and Jahangi Mohalla bazaars in Peshawar to select an appropriate colour matching with suits in order to look different on Eid. The outlets of these leather-made shoes were making roaring business in Peshawar where many shopkeepers hired extra labour to fulfill the placed orders. “I came from Nowshera to buy my favorite leather-made Charsadda chappal due to its durability, excellent shine and affordable price,” said Professor Ehtisham Qaiser, a resident of Wapda Town Nowshera while talking to APP at Qissa Khwani, a hub of Charsadda and Peshawari chappals. “Personally, I prefer shiny black chappal as it can be used with Shalwar-Qa-

meez and paint-shirts during Eid and normal days,” he said. These days, Qissa Khawani’s Jahangirpura bazaar, a hub of skilled cobblers and shoemakers were working against the clock to meet the pressing demands of the Eid shoppers of KP, Punjab and Karachi. In the local market, Charsadda chappal is available from Rs3,000 to Rs3,500 depending on its quality and durability, which is more cost-efficient than foreign brands’ footwear and within the reach of common people,” said famous shoemaker Muhammad Israr Khan while talking to APP. “On this Eid, people’s response to Charsadda and Peshawari chappals is overwhelming due to the significant reduction of coronavirus cases and its affordable prices. We are working till Sehri to complete the pressing orders of our customers for this Eid,” said Ustad Israrullah Khan, a shoe-maker of Charsadda and Peshawari Chappals at Qissa Khwani while talking to APP. “We have stopped new booking keeping in view of the heavy load of the placed orders, load shedding, and fasting,” Israrullah said, adding he has received orders from

The Senate,UET Peshawar approves the award of Meritorious Professor to Prof.Dr.Siraj-ul- Islam

PESHAWAR (Staff Report): The Senate, UET Peshawar based on the recommendation of the Higher Education Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has been approved the award of Meritorious Professor to Prof. Dr. Siraj-ul- Islam, Department of Basic Science & Islmait, UET Peshawar with effect from 28 th October, 2020 vide Notification No. 08/Special SB/120 th Synd/12 th Senate dated: 06-04-2023. Dr. Siraj has served as the Chairman of the Department of Basic Sciences and Islamic Studies while currently he has also been serving as a Dean, Faculty of Architecture, Allied Sciences and Humanities since 2018. Dr. Siraj’s services in the field of research and higher education especially in the field of mathematics are recognized globally. He obtained his Ph.D



degree in Mathematics from Ghulam Ishaq Khan (GIK) Institute of Engineering Sciences and Technology in 2006 while his Post-doctorate degree was completed in 2010 from the University of Nova Gorica, Slovenia, Europe. Dr. Siraj was also awarded the Best Teacher award by the Higher Education Commission, Islamabad in 2011. To date, more than 150 of his research and conference papers have been published in national and international journals.

ANP to convene All Party Conference on May 3

PESHAWAR (APP): Awami National Party Saturday announced to convene an All-Party Conference (APC) on the ongoing situation in the country on May 3, Member National Assembly Amir Haider Khan Hoti said here. It has been decided to call the APC on the direction and guidance of Central President Asfandiyar Wali Khan, said Amir Haider Khan added. He disclosed that All Parties Confer-

ence (APC) will be held on May 3, 2023 in Islamabad wherein before the APC, ANP Central Council meeting will be held in Islamabad on May 2, 2023. He said, a committee has been established under the Chairmanship of Secretary General Mian Iftikhar Hussain for APC, adding, “All political parties and people of different schools of thought will be invited to participate in the APC.”

Five arrested,drugs recovered

PESHAWAR (APP): City police here on Monday arrested five suspects involved in serious street crimes and recovered two kilograms of hashish and four pistols from their possession. On the directives of Capital City Police Officer (CCPO), Station House Officer (SHO) Mathra accompanied by a police team conducted raids in

different areas of Pir Bala, Darmangi, Yousaf Karkhanay Stop and arrested five suspects allegedly involved in aerial firing, robbery, and drug trafficking. Police also seized two kilograms of hashish, four pistols, and dozens of cartridges from their possession. Cases have been registered while further investigation is in process.

PR police arrest three accused for damaging, stealing railways track in Mardan

PESHAWAR (APP): The railways police arrested three accused for allegedly damaging the railway line’s track at Mardan bypass in Mardan district and recovered 84 feet of track worth Rs150,000 from their possession. According to the spokesman of Railways Department, accused Asif

Nawaz, Luqman Khan and Falak Niaz were apprehended from Rashakai town in Nowshera district after recovery of gas cutting kit, cylinder and stolen railways track’s parts. A case has been registered against the accused at Railways Police Station Mardan and investigation started.

Khyber Distt admin recovers illegally stored sugar at Torkham border

PESHAWAR (APP): In a recent operation at the Bacha Mina Torkham border, a special team led by Assistant Commissioner (AC) Lindikotal Irshad Ali on Monday recovered 441 bags of illegally stored sugar. The sugar, weighing a total of 22050 kg was reportedly shifted from Peshawar Open Market to Bacha Mina Torkham by traders. As a result, four godowns had been sealed and

the recovered sugar was being taken into government custody. Legal action was also taken against those involved in the illegal storage and transportation of sugar. The Deputy Commissioner (DC) had urged the public to remain vigilant against such illegal activities and to cooperate with law enforcement agencies in their efforts to maintain law and order.

Charsadda,Peshawari chappals attract people as Eid shopping reaches to peak in KP

Punjab, Karachi and Islamabad from customers to buy these leather-made decent, shiny and cost-efficient chappals for themselves, friends and their family members as special Eid gifts. Inheriting the hard-earned business from his forefathers, Israr said a single pair of Charsadda and Peshawari chappal passes through six stages of skilled hands to become a finished product. “In the first step, its sole is flattened with a rubber piece whereas in the second stage, a piece of leather is sewn and then the fitting of the piece with the sole is done in the third and fourth stage respectively.” In fifth stage, the pair was stuffed with a wooden piece to stretch and fix all the nails, leather, and thread placed together to get the shoe adjusted and make it durable. Finishing touches are given to a piece including polishing and varnishing to improve its look while artisans also paint its border with a selected chemical for a better shine in the sixth stage. Later on, finishing touches were given to a piece in the sixth stage, which includes polishing and varnishing to improve its look while artisans also paint

its border with a selected chemical for a better shine. Israrullah said black and gray colour designs with different prints embellished with stones were being proffered by a large number of customers on the occasion of Eid. “The unique footwear is also being exported to Gulf, Saudia Arabia, UAE, South Africa, United Kingdom, Europe, and Afghanistan for Eid.” Israr said these chappals’ business was affected by the coronavirus lockdowns during the past and shoemakers suffered great economic and financial losses. He urged the government to announce a special financial package for shoemakers and grant soft loans to them. Tasawwar Khan, a businessman while busy in Eid shopping at Qissa Khwani told APP that he purchased 15 pairs of Charsadda and Peshawari chappals for his family, brothers and relatives as an Eid gift. “Two of my brothers and nephew are settled in UAE, who requested for Charsadda and Peshawari Chappals on Eid and a dispatch was sent to them today,” he said. The shoemakers are expected to earn maximum profits this Eid on Chand Raat.



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Pakistan welcomes efforts for peace in Yemen: FO

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Pakistan Monday welcomed the recent dialogue and diplomatic engagement towards the attainment of peace in Yemen with particular reference to the Saudi role and endeavors in rein-

forcing the efforts of the Sultanate of Oman and the United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen. In a statement, Foreign Office Spokesperson said, “The Saudi efforts towards an amicable resolution of the Yemeni crisis, we be-

lieve, are timely and would promote peace, stability and development in the region.” “Pakistan reiterates its principled support for a political solution to the Yemeni crisis through dialogue and consultation,” she added.

MDA to introduce low-cost housing scheme for poor people: Nasir Shah

KARACHI, Apr 17 (APP):Sindh Local Government Minister, Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, on Monday, said that Malir Development Authority (MDA) will introduce a low-cost housing scheme to cater for the needs of low-income people. The minister while presiding over the governing body meeting of

MDA here directed that before introducing new housing schemes in MDA, all the legal requirements related to the Revenue Board should be fulfilled and the transfer of land of all the authorities to ‘Form-II’ must be ensured. Nasir Shah said that Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari’s vision was to

provide all possible relief and facilities to the people of Sindh and all the local bodies were being transformed as relief-providing institutions for the people to materialise Bilawal’s vision. The minister instructed concerned officers to take steps for increasing the salaries of MDA’s daily wage employees.

PM directs mission to facilitate families of 3 Pakistanis died in Dubai fire

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday instructed the country’s mission in the United Arab Emirates to facilitate the families of Pakistanis who died in a fire incident in Dubai. Sixteen people including three Pakistanis lost their lives after a fire broke out in their apartment in Dubai. The prime minister expressed grief over the deaths



and extended his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families over the tragedy.

DPO announced departmental punishments to 136 employees

SIALKOT (Agencies): District Police Officer (DPO) Sialkot Muhammad Hassan Iqbal on Monday announced various departmental punishments to 136 officers and employees over corruption, misuse of powers, negligence in performing duties and violation of other departmental rules. While issuing orders in Police Lines Sialkot, Six constables were dismissed from the department over negligence in duty and absent from

duty, two Assistant Sub-Inspectors were forced to retire over corruption and misuse of powers, 85 traffic and police employees were given major penalties and 43 were given other departmental punishments. DPO said that there was an excellent system of punishment and reward in the police department, adding that police officers would face strict departmental accountability in case of corruption and misuse of powers.

ANF recovers over 72 kg drugs; arrests three

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in seven operations managed to recover over 72 kg drugs, 176 heroin-filled and 124 Ice-filled capsules, 8200 intoxicated tablets, 120 liters liquid Ice drug and arrested three accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday. He said in an operation at Islamabad International Airport, 73 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from the possession of a Jeddah-bound passenger, residents of Bahawalpur. In two operations at International Mail Office, 8200 intoxicated tablets were recovered from a parcel being sent to America and 190 grams Ice drug from a parcel being sent to London. In two operations at Lahore International Airport, 103

heroin-filled capsules were recovered from the possession of a Bahrain-bound passenger and 124 Ice filled capsules from the possession of another Bahrain-bound female passenger, resident of Nowshera. In sixth operation conducted in Gwadar, 120 liters liquid and five kg Ice drug was recovered. The Ice drug was buried underground to smuggle abroad. In another operation near Chaman Friendship Gate, 44 kg heroin was recovered from a suspicious parcel. ANF and FC in an operation conducted in Khyber, 23 kg charras, concealed in plastic bags was seized. He said that separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process.

About 5.5 million flour bags distributed in Multan

MULTAN (APP): About 5.5 million free flour bags were distributed among underprivileged people here on Monday. Commissioner Amir Khatak was briefed in the meeting regarding the distribution of free ‘Atta’ under the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) and Punjab Social Protection Authority (PSPA). Amir Khatak further ordered to set up points in markets for offering sugar at the prescribed official rate. The administration continued providing relief to citizens through the same will and spirit, he said while hailing measures of the administra-

tion to help out people in the holy month of Ramzan. He informed the food department was creating a mobile application to hold a smooth supply of sugar here. Sugar mills would furnish complete data with regard to the demand and supply of the commodity across the division in the days ahead. Commissioner ordered expediting the wheat purchase drive already in place here. He said efforts would be made to buy more wheat than the fixed target. District Commissioners of Police (DCs) and other relevant staff were also present on the occasion.

Preparations for Eid-ul-Fitr gains momentum

ISLAMABAD (APP): With only a few days left in the Eid-ul-Fitr celebrations, the masses are finalizing their preparations to mark the grand festival with great enthusiasm by visiting the main markets and shopping malls in bulk. So many buyers are thronging to the main markets of the Federal capital to complete their shopping as authorities expect more rush during the last days of Ramadan before the festival. Different famous brands as well as local markets have displayed the latest Eid editions of dresses, shoes and other essential accessories to attract buyers and gain maximum profits while some are offering discounts. Although several buyers altered their mode of shopping from physical to digital one, however, majority of the buyers still prefer visiting the shopping malls themselves to shop for different items for their ultimate satisfaction. “I have com-

pleted Eid shopping for myself and my family so that we can move to our native town a few days earlier. Since the tailors have stopped taking orders for stitching dresses so I bought ready-to-wear dresses for all my family members”, Sherish Batool, a housewife said. “Shopping during the month of Ramzan and prevailing heat wave conditions is itself a difficult task so I am trying to complete it so that I can focus on prayers to seek blessings of Allah during the last Ashra of the holy month,” she added. Muhammad Taj, a father of three kids said, “I have completed shopping for my family from the famous brands offering Ramzan sale as buying things at full price is not affordable for salaried class during the prevailing inflation.” Dr Faryal Kausar said “Chand Raat is the most exciting time when we all family members visit the nearest market to buy bangles and henna.

One killed in road accident

KARACHI (APP): One person was killed while another got critical injuries in a road accident when a car, rickshaw, and motorcycle collided in Karachi on Monday. As per details, Rescue sources said that the accident occurred near Nursery area at Shahra-e-Faisal in Karachi where a car collided with a rickshaw and motorcycle, resultantly, one person was killed while another got serious injuries, a private news channel reported. Police and Rescue-1122 teams reached the site immediately and shifted the body and injured to a nearby hospital.

Criminal arrested from Japan through interpol

SIALKOT (APP): A fugitive accused wanted by Sialkot police arrested from Japan through Interpol here on Monday. According to police spokesperson, the accused Shahid Javed was wanted by Satrah police station and City Daska police station in eight cases of murder, attempt to murder and fraud. He said that the Sialkot police arrested the accused after Japan deported him with the help of Interpol Red Warrant. Further investigation was underway.

FBR seizes non-duty paid cigarettes

SARGODHA (APP): Federal board of Revenue (FBR) on Monday seized an ample quantity of non-duty paid 8.1 million cigarettes sticks worth of millions of rupees in Sargodha district. According to a press release issued by FBR office here, acting on a tip-off, a special squad consisting of Inspector Sadam Shah and Inspector Waseem Jasra under the supervision of FBR Sargodha Deputy Commissioner Ali Sallih Hayat Kalyar seized 8,125,000 non-duty paid cigarettes sticks loaded in three trucks while snap checking at Sial morr and Kot-momin interchange.

IRSA releases 99,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 99,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 86,600 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1434.62 feet and was 36.62 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 26,500 cusecs while outflow as 30,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1106.95 feet, which was 56.95 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 28,300 cusecs and 38,000 cusecs respectively.

Two killed in different incidents

FAISALABAD (APP): Two persons including a woman were killed while two others sustained injuries in separate incidents near here on Monday. Police said that Majid, 28, resident of block No 30, Samanabad was passing through Rasheed Chowk when unidentified persons opened fire on him. He suffered critical bullet injuries and died at Govt General Hospital, Samanabad during treatment. Separately, a 55-year-old woman Rasheeda Bibi w/o Muhammad Younas was killed while two others Balqees, 45 and Ayesha, 22, suffered injuries during Ration distribution ceremony held by a citizen near Chak No 6-JB, Burewala road.

Rupee sheds 30 paises against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan rupee witnessed 30 paises devaluation against the Dollar in the interbank trading on Monday and closed at Rs 284.70 against the previous day’s closing of Rs 284.40. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of Dollars in the open market were recorded at Rs 287.5 and Rs 290, respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by Rs 1.67 to close at Rs 313.09 against

the last day’s closing of Rs314.76, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen declined by 02 paises and stood at Rs 2.12; whereas a drop of Rs 2.78 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs353.72 as compared to its last day’s closing of Rs356.50. The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal dipped by 08 paises each to close at Rs 77.52 and Rs 75.90, respectively.

Muhammad Iqbal appointed ‘Member FBR

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has appointed Muhammad Iqbal, a BS-21 officer of Inland Revenue Services (IRS), as a Member of FBR Head Quarter (HQ), Islamabad. According to the FBR notification issued here on Monday, “He has resigned from the post of Chief Commissioner-IR, Large Tax Office, Islamabad, and

has taken over the post.” FBR also informed, “Faisal Rauf Memon, BS-20 Officer, has taken over the charge of Post Commissioner-IR (Zone-I), Medium Taxpayers Office, Karachi.” “Hayat Muhammad, a BS-19 officer of International Relations (IR) services has taken over the charge of the Post SA to Member (Admin/HR), FBR (HQ), Islamabad,” It added.

HEC announces undergraduate scholarships for students of Coastal Region of Balochistan

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has announced undergraduate scholarships for the students of the Coastal Region of Balochistan. “HEC, in that regard, has invited applications from outstanding students of Gwadar, Lasbela/Hub, Kech (Turbat) and Awaran, districts of Balochistan who intend to pursue undergraduate studies in HEC recognised public/private sector universities/degree awarding institutions (DAIs) of Pakistan,” said official sources from the Commission on Monday. The scholarships are being offered in all areas of study/disciplines under the project titled, “Coastal Region Higher Education Scholarship Programme for Balochistan”. The sources said that applicant must possess a domicile/local certificate of Gwadar, Lasbela/Hub, Kech (Turbat) or Awaran District of Balochistan. Applicant must have 12 years of education with at least 50% marks in both Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSSC) or equivalent from college/institute located in any of the defined districts of Balochistan i.e., Gwadar, Lasbela/Hub, Kech (Turbat) and Awaran, they added. Students already enrolled in any BS programme prior to the advertisement with a maximum of one academic year/session may also apply. The maximum age limit for aspirants is 22 years as on the closing date, and they will have to meet HEC and university criteria for admission to the BS programme. Applicants who are already availing any oth-

er HEC/Government scholarship and result-awaiting students are not eligible to apply. Scholarships will be awarded on Merit and District Quota basis as per PC-I. The merit list of scholarship will be prepared on the basis of online information/data provided by the applicants, and in case of any misrepresentation/error/omission, the scholarship shall be cancelled at any stage. Applicants will be short-listed on the basis of Aptitude Test scores (conducted by HEC) and academic credentials. The applicants must secure at least 50% marks in the test conducted by HEC. The students are asked to contact HEC Regional Centre Quetta, Secretariat (Islamabad) or HEC Regional Centre House No. 61-A, Chaman Housing Scheme, Airport Road, Quetta for any further assistance. Candidates are required to submit applications online through the HEC website <https://scholarships.hec.gov.pk>. The applicants must deposit Rs. 500/- (non-refundable) as application processing fee in Habib Bank Limited, Account Number: 1742 7900 1334 01, Title of Account: Higher Education Commission, Branch Code: 1742. The original bank payment record/slip must be uploaded with the online application, and it should be kept safe by the applicant to present it at the test center (No one will be allowed to sit in the test without producing the original bank deposit slip). The applicant must submit the online application after completing the application form. For more details, please visit: www.hec.gov.pk/site/CRHES.

Sun eclipse to not be visible in Pakistan on April 20

KARACHI (APP): The total Sun Eclipse will not be visible in Pakistan on April 20. The path of totality passes over North West Cape, a remote peninsula of western Australia. According to Pakistan Meteorological Department here on Saturday, the Sun eclipse would be partially visible in south or east Asia, Australia, Pacific,



ic, Indian Ocean and Antarctica.

Security beefed up across AJK for Eid ul Fitr

MIRPUR (APP): Security has been beefed up across Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) to maintain peace for Eid ul Fitr. On the directions for foolproof security to maintain peace, an additional police force would be deputed at all the busy places including bazaars and shopping malls in order to maintain law and order situation. They said that the police force

has been put on high alert and vigilance to ensure foolproof security arrangements at the busiest shopping centers and shopping malls. Round-the-clock police patrol has also been intensified for maintaining full security across the district as the tehsil headquarters besides all other small and major towns and villages across the area.

Railways instruct to tighten security in trains, at stations during Eid

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways Police has issued instructions to all Superintendent of Police (SP) Railways to tighten security in trains as well as at stations to avoid any untoward incident during Eid-ul-Fitr days. The Minister for Railways Khawaja Saad Rafique had directed all SPs Railways to depute sufficient force at exit and entry points of all railway stations and strict watch to be carried out of suspicious persons, an official in the Ministry told APP. Pakistan Railways Police Commando Force would be deputed at vulnerable installations and in trains, while bomb disposal staff would also be kept on

alert for the search of luggage and passengers at railway stations. “The SPs Railways directed to conduct complete check and search of empty rakes before trains reach the platforms for departure for their destinations,” the official added. All the SPs Railways would also be directed to remain present on Eid holidays and randomly check trains, stations and escorting staff. The official said the number of passengers was increasing day by day at railway stations and trains ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr and the Railway administration had arranged special trains across the country to facilitate the extra passengers.

HESCO's performance ensuring uninterrupted power supply hailed by business community

HYDERABAD (APP): The management of Hyderabad Electric Supply Company (HESCO) was hailed by Hyderabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HCCI) in respect of its performance during the month of Ramazan-ul-Mubarak. President HCCI Adeel Siddiqui, in a statement issued here on Monday, has appreciated the overall performance of HESCO management for ensuring uninterrupted power supply to consumers and hoped that HESCO would keep performing with the same spirit in peak summer season and during the upcoming monsoon season. As a business community leader, Adeel Siddiqui said, "I had often criticized the performance of HESCO but I feel that HESCO team has performed better during the holy month of Ramazan and

deserved a pat on its back. " The HCCI President said that due to the power shutdown, burning of power transformers and faults, the business activities were badly hit in last summer, adding that even detection bills were issued to consumers. This year, he said, that HESCO management had shown improvement in its recovery and control in power theft. He said consumers got uninterrupted power supply as HESCO was said to have repaired transformers and transmission lines with the result that commercial, residential and industrial consumers did not come up with complaints of unnecessary load management. The business community got a better power supply on average which was a positive sign for business activities, he said.

Timely elections solution to all problems: Siraj ul Haq

DIR LOWER (APP): Central Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan (JIP) Siraj ul Haq said that holding the general election on time was the only solution to all the problems being faced by the country. He expressed these views as the chief guest at the grand iftar dinner organized under the auspices of Jamaat-e-Islami youth at Maidan Dir Lower. The other day, District Ameer JI Aizazul Malik Afkari, District President JIP Youth Ateeq Rehman and other officials also addressed the event. In his address, Siraj ul Haq said wrangling among political forces often led to the derailment of democracy

as evident in the country's history. He said unity among political forces was imperative for strengthening of democracy and transparent elections. In order to ensure transparency and a free election on the same day, he said. he had decided to meet with the leadership of PDM and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). He claimed many people were living below the poverty line and forced to drink contaminated water, He said despite being an agricultural country, prices of food commodities were almost out of reach of the common man due to high inflation and price hike.

Food deptt purchases 45k gunny bags during wheat procurement drive

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): Food department of Chowk Sarwar Shaheed purchased about 45,000 gunny bags as part of the wheat procurement drive that started here on Monday. Food inspector Israr Magassi on the occasion said that a purchase target of 120,000 had been fixed for the center. He said they were providing all-out facilities to growers at the

purchase centers. He pinned hope that soon the purchase target would be met with all manifestations. He further maintained that the official rate for wheat purchase was fixed at Rs.3900/maund. There would be no let-up in the prescribed rate of the food item, he said. "Farmers get hurry to sell wheat at the food center," he appealed.

Rescue 1122 Tank tackles 21 emergencies

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): The district's emergency service- Rescue 1122, Tank timely responded to a total of 21 emergencies during the last week under the supervision of District Emergency Officer Engr Waqas Alam. Sharing the weekly performance report, the spokesman said on Monday that response time was recorded at an average of seven minutes while tackling different kinds of emergencies over the week which included 12 medical, five road accidents, one bullet injury incident and

three recovery-related emergencies. He said the control room received a total of 354 emergency calls including 142 for information. He said that Rescue 1122 service also provided services in 16 referral-related emergencies including four within the district, whereas in 12 emergencies patients were shifted to other districts. He said the rescue 1122 teams were fully equipped with all necessary equipment and they had been efficiently rendering their services during emergencies.

2,956,487 free flour bags distributed in Rawalpindi division

RAWALPINDI (APP): The administration has distributed 2,956,487 free flour bags among poor and deserving families in Rawalpindi division. According to a district administration spokesman, the administration on the directives of caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi continued free flour distribution here late Sunday night and achieved the target successfully. He informed that 11 mega centers were set up in Rawalpindi district to provide free flour to the citizens. All-out efforts were made to ensure smooth distribution of free flour bags among

the poor and deserving citizens and no untoward incident was reported in Rawalpindi, he added. The distribution of free flour continued till 25th Ramadan, he said and informed that the administration was also taking strict action in accordance with the law against profiteers and hoarders. The administration had imposed fines amounting to over Rs 4 million on 1325 profiteers while 318 shopkeepers were sent behind the bars for profiteering and not displaying the rate lists. The DC said, 23 FIRs were also lodged against profiteers and hoarders.

Tank admin striving to provide quality subsidized flour to citizens

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): District administration Tank is striving to provide quality subsidized flour to citizens in a transparent manner. In this regard, Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Tanvir Khan along with Additional Assistant Commissioner Jamshed Alam on Monday visited a flour mill to inspect the quality and the supply process of subsidized flour to people. He checked details of flour supplies through designated points and directed to ensure that the masses get the commodity at subsidized rate. ADC Tanvir also warned that stern action would be taken against those found violating

relevant laws. The team said that district administration was committed to extending relief to the people. Later, they also visited Basic Health Unit (BHU) Dabara on the directives of Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Shoib and inspected healthcare facilities for patients. During the visit, the ADC checked the attendance of staff and the availability of medicines. He visited different sections in the BHU where he was briefed about relevant matters by the staff on duty. He directed the staff concerned to ensure their presence on a daily basis to provide the best healthcare facilities to people.

US-Pakistan health partnership brings new laboratory to respond to disease outbreaks

ISLAMABAD (APP): US Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission Andrew inaugurated a U.S.-funded entomology laboratory that will strengthen Pakistan's ability to track and respond to vector-borne disease outbreaks. Federal Secretary at the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation, and Coordination Dr. Muhammad Fakhre Alam Irfan and Pakistani National Institute of Health Chief Executive Officer Ghazal Parveen Schofer were also present, said a press release here on Monday. "The devastating 2022 floods across Pakistan reminded us all of the health risks posed by



waterborne diseases," Schofer said. "The United States stands with Pakistan as it continues to recover from the floods." The laboratory, funded by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is the latest milestone in the longstanding U.S.-Pakistan health partnership. For decades,

the United States and Pakistan have collaborated closely to support the health of the Pakistani people. After both the 2010 and the 2022 floods, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention experts travelled to Pakistan to consult with Pakistani and UN partners about how to effectively respond to the health crises stemming from the flooding. In recent years, the United States and Pakistan also have partnered to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, with the United States supplying over 80 million doses of safe and effective COVID vaccines to Pakistan thus far.

Man held with narcotics

SARGODHA (APP): Police on Monday claimed to have arrested a drug peddler and recovered hashish from his possession. On a tip-off, Factory Area police conducted a raid and arrested drug peddler Sheraz and recovered 1.2 kg hashish from him. A case has been registered against the accused.

World famous Qawwal Aziz Mian remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): World-renowned Qawwal Aziz Mian was remembered on the occasion of his birth anniversary here on Monday. Aziz Mian was born in Delhi on April 17, 1942, and migrated to Pakistan after the partition of the subcontinent. He obtained his master's degrees in Arabic, Persian language, Persian literature, Urdu literature, and history from the University of Punjab. Aziz Mian was one of the non-traditional Pakistani Qawwals. His voice was raspy and powerful. He was also famous for singing Ghazals in Qawwali style. In addition, Aziz Mian sang poetry by Allama Iqbal, and a number of contemporary Urdu poets, including Qamar Jalalvi, Jigar Moradabadi, Tabish Kanpuri S M Sadiq, Saifuddin Saif and Qateel Shifai. For his contributions to music, the government of Pakistan awarded him the Pride of Performance award in 1989. With his outstanding talent in music and singing he introduced a new style of Qawwali which earned him fame across the globe.

60 traffic assistants qualify for test

FAISALABAD (APP): At least 60 traffic assistants qualified for the B-list test, which will be held on April 20. The A-list test was held at Tariq Mujaheed police lines, under the supervision of Chief Traffic Officer Maqsood Ahmed Loon in a free, fair and transparent manner here. As many as 85 traffic assistants took part and 60 were declared successful and eligible for B-list test. They included 55 traffic assistants and five lady traffic assistants.

3-day Pakistan Shopping Festival concludes

LAHORE (APP): The concluding ceremony of 3-day Pakistan Shopping Festival was held at the Lahore Expo Centre here on Monday. Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Kashif Anwar, Advisor to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports and Youth Affairs Wahab Riaz, Chief Executive Officer Zeshan Hashmi, Khawaja Shahzeb Akram and hundreds of people attended the ceremony. A large number of stalls of various products were set up at Pakistan Shopping Festival. The LCCI president said the festival was designed to promote trade and economic activities. He said that at the festival, over 100 stalls of renowned business groups displayed their products. He said that trade fairs and exhibitions should be used as a tool for the growth of Pakistan's exports. The government should support private sector for organising trade fairs and exhibitions in the country. He said that trade fairs and exhibitions mean introduction of vendors to buyers which pave way for collaborations, jack up exports and bring much-needed foreign exchange to the country.

Ulema Council condoles death of Mufti Abdul Shakoor

FAISALABAD (APP): Central Ulema Council Pakistan on Monday expressed deep sense of grief and sorrow over the death of Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Mufti Abdul Shakoor in a road accident. In a condolence message, Chairman Central Ulema Council Pakistan Sahibzada Zahid Mahmood Qasmi, Vice Chairman Pir Je Khalid Mahmood Qasmi, Central General Secretary Allama Shah Nawaz Farooqi and others, said that Mufti Abdul

Shakoor was a seasoned politician and his services could not be forgotten. They paid tribute to the late Federal Minister for his best services religiously, socially and politically. They prayed that may Allah Almighty rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved family to bear this irreparable loss with fortitude. Meanwhile, the Central Ulema Council held 'Dua' for the departed souls in all its associated mosques.

Shehbaz Sharif's govt leads the way for affordable, accessible healthcare

ISLAMABAD (APP): The federal government has taken a lead in transforming country's healthcare and support through its trail-blazing initiatives from focusing on affordability and accessibility to establishing specialized medical and counseling facilities to cope with the increasing demand. The measures taken by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif-led government including the establishment of an autism center in the federal capital, launch of mental health helpline and life-saving CPR training programme, and allowing the prisoners to get medical education speak to a larger commitment

to creating a more equitable and modern healthcare system. In a bid to encourage the philanthropists' contribution to the health sector, the prime minister recently inaugurated a 600-bed Indus hospital in Lahore and urged the philanthropists to come forward and donate generously for alleviation of the sufferings of the poor and deserving people in the field of health and education. He also inaugurated six-storey and 350-bed Saleem Memorial Trust Hospital in Lahore and expressed the hope that facility would serve the ailing humanity with world class treatment facilities.

Eid gifts distributed among 90 prisoners in Dist. Jail

ATTOCK (APP): On the instructions of IG Prisons Punjab and DIG Rawalpindi Rawalpindi, clothes were distributed as Eid gifts among 90 poor prisoners on Monday in District Jail Attock, with the support of philanthropists. Jail Superintendent Arshad Ali Warraich and Deputy Superintendent Afzaal Waraich distributed the Eid gifts among the prisoners. Ali Warraich on the oc-

casian said that with the support of philanthropists, the prisoners would be able to celebrate Eid by wearing new clothes. Jail officials said that the IG and DIG Rawalpindi were ensuring the provision of all facilities to the prisoners in view of human rights. The jail inmates appreciated the efforts of the jail administration and expressed special gratitude to the benefactors.

HEC advise students to beware of TNE policy violation by HEIs

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Higher Education Commission (HEC) on Monday advised the students to beware of Transnational Education (TNE) Policy Violations by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). According to the HEC Officials, "It has been observed with grave concern that several Pakistani institutions offering qualifications in collaboration with foreign universities under Transnational Education (TNE) Policy are violating HEC policies while granting admission to students." "As a result, students are facing problems getting recognition/equivalence of their degrees from the Higher Education Commission (HEC)," said the officials. Therefore, all the recognized institutions imparting foreign qualification in Pakistan (list) available at: <https://www.hec.gov.pk/english/universities/Pages/Foreign-Collaboration-Institutions>.

spx) are hereby advised to ensure that all the legal/codal formalities are met, as devised by this Commission, at the time of granting admission, while fulfilling all other requirements of the host university/institution as described under TNE Policy. In addition, to get the degree recognized/equated by HEC, the students must have twelve (12) years of education as per the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and equivalence issued by Inter Board Committee of Chairmen (IBCC) at the time of admission in a degree program. "In case, any violation is found at any stage, HEC shall not recognize these degrees and withdraw the No Objection Certificate (NOC) immediately," the official warned. "This information is being disseminated for the awareness of parents and students," they added.

3300 intending pilgrims from Faisalabad to proceed for Hajj

FAISALABAD (Agencies): Hajj training for the intending pilgrims would start from second week of May here at Punjab Cooperative College Sargodha Road where fool-proof security and other necessary arrangements would be ensured. This was stated by Incharge Hajji Camp Lahore Muhammad Arif Zahoor while addressing the meeting at Conference Room of DC office here on Monday. He said, this year 3,300 intending pilgrims would proceed to the Holy Land for Hajj from Faisalabad. Reviewing hajj arrangements, he said

that Hajj operation would commence from May 2023 and training as well as vaccination of the intending pilgrims would start from second week of May. Hajj flights would start their operation from third week of May and the intending pilgrims would immediately be informed when final schedule for hajj flights would be released so that they could be able to make their necessary arrangements well before time. Assistant Director Hajj Ministry of Religious Affairs Lahore Mujeeb Akbar Shah and others were also present in the meeting.

German engineering production rises at start of 2023

BERLIN (Agencies): Production in Germany's engineering sector rose by 3.2% in the first two months of 2023 compared with the same months last year as supply chain bottlenecks eased considerably, the VDMA engineering association said on Monday. Despite a solid start to the year, VDMA stuck to its full-year forecast for a 2% drop in production compared with last year. "The currently slightly improved economic environment will



only be reflected in incoming orders and sales in the industry with a time lag," VDMA head Karl Haeusgen said in a statement. German engineering

companies' order books shrank by 17% in January and February, VDMA said, citing a global economic slowdown clouding investors' sentiment. The shortage of skilled workers is currently the biggest challenge for the industry, which employed 1.018 million people at the end of 2022. "Many companies would have liked to hire more staff but are being held back by the bottlenecks in the labour market," Haeusgen said.

Shanghai stocks hit 9-month high on recovery optimism

SHANGHAI (Agencies): Shanghai stocks rose to a nine-month high on Monday, as China's March home price data and signs of corporate earnings recovery fuel optimism ahead of the release of first-quarter economy data. Hong Kong shares also gained. The Shanghai Composite Index, which had posted five consecutive weekly gains on Friday, climbed nearly 1% by the lunch break, touching its highest level since July 8. The bluechip



CSI300 Index was up 0.9%. In Hong Kong, both the benchmark Hang Seng Index and the Hang Seng Tech Index rose 0.5%. China's new home prices

rose in March at the fastest pace in 21 months, official data showed on Saturday. More than 300 China-listed companies have published, or forecast first-quarter results, 70% of which have reported year-on-year profit increases, official Securities News reported. Underscoring consumption recovery, restaurant operator China Qianjude Group reported a 49% jump in sales during the January-March period, and turned to a profit.

Google CEO warns against rush to deploy AI without oversight

CALIFORNIA (Agencies): Alphabet Inc and Google chief executive officer Sundar Pichai said in an interview broadcast Sunday that the push to adopt artificial intelligence technology must be well regulated to avoid potential harmful effects. Asked in a 60 Minutes interview about what keeps him up at night with regard to AI, Pichai said "the urgency to work and deploy it in a beneficial way, but at the same time it can be very harm-



ful if deployed wrongly". Mountain View, California-based Google has been among the leaders in develop-

ing and implementing AI across its services. Software like Google Lens and Google Photos rely on the company's image-recognition systems, while its Google Assistant benefits from natural language processing research that Google has been doing for years. Still, its pace of deploying the technology has been deliberately measured and circumspect, whereas OpenAI's ChatGPT has opened up a race to move forward with AI tools at a much faster clip.

Softening diesel fuel market raises recession fears

NEW YORK (Agencies): Signs of an economic slowdown are flashing in the global diesel market. In China, the number of trucks running on highways is noticeably down in recent weeks. In Europe, diesel's premium to crude futures recently plunged to the lowest level in more than a year. In the US, demand is on track to contract 2% in 2023, S&P Global Inc says. Excluding 2020, when much of the economy briefly came to a standstill, that 2% slump



would be the biggest drop in America's diesel use since 2016. We are "assuming one of the worst economic climates in recent memory outside of the 2008-2009 financial crisis and

the pandemic", said Debnil Chowdhury, S&P's head of Americas fuels and refining. No matter how you crunch it, demand for the heavy-machinery fuel that powers everything from commercial trucking fleets to construction equipment is weakening in many of the world's largest economies. Viewed as an early signal of weaker industrial activity and reduced consumer spending, the pullback has recession watchers on high alert.

China pumps more liquidity into system while keeping rate on hold

BEIJING (Agencies): China's central bank is pouring more liquidity into the financial system while keeping rates unchanged, moving to prevent funding squeezes as demand for credit rebounds. The People's Bank of China offered 170 billion yuan (US\$25 billion) of funds to banks through the medium-term lending facility. That resulted in a 20 billion yuan net injection in April, the smallest since November. It also left the interest rate on the one-year MLF unchanged at 2.75%, the eighth month



for it to stand pat, as expected by a majority of economists and analysts in a Bloomberg survey. The smaller liquidity provision indicates the PBOC is evaluating the impact of its March easing

when it had both cut a banking reserve ratio and provided more cash to support growth. Data last month indicated that an economic recovery is taking off, with credit expansion surging and exports beating estimates. "The outcome is in line with expectations for a small upsize. While we have long pencilled in a potential small rate cut this year, a cut does not seem to be imminent," said Frances Cheung, rates strategist at Oversea-Chinese Banking Corp. in Singapore.

Dollar rebounds on higher Fed hike expectations in May

SINGAPORE (Agencies): The dollar bounced from a one-year low on Monday as resilience in core US retail sales, a rise in short-term inflation expectations and impressive Wall Street bank earnings raised market expectations for an interest rate hike in May. While US retail sales fell more than expected in March, so-called core retail sales, which exclude automobiles, gasoline, building materials and food

services, slipped just 0.3% last month, data released on Friday showed. Adding to the mix of resilient US economic data was a strong run of first-quarter 2023 earnings from JPMorgan Chase & Co, Citigroup Inc and Wells Fargo & Co, brushing off concerns about a banking crisis that unfolded in March. Against a basket of currencies, the US dollar index rose 0.15% to 101.82, standing some distance away from

Friday's one-year low of 100.78. Adding to the mix of resilient US economic data was a strong run of first-quarter 2023 earnings from JPMorgan Chase & Co, Citigroup Inc and Wells Fargo & Co, brushing off concerns about a banking crisis that unfolded in March. Against a basket of currencies, the US dollar index rose 0.15% to 101.82, standing some distance away from

Gold gains on dollar pullback; investors weigh Fed rate hike prospects

RIYADH (Agencies): Gold rose on Monday as the dollar eased slightly, but prices were off one-year highs hit last week, as mixed economic data prompted investors to reassess the US Federal Reserve's interest rate hike trajectory, according to Reuters. Spot gold was up 0.5 percent at \$2,012.62 per ounce as of 0646 GMT. US gold



futures rose 0.4 percent to \$2,024.70. The dollar index was 0.1 percent low-

er, making bullion cheaper for overseas buyers. Gold is likely to trade with "positive bias but can see some initial correction...a major downfall" in prices is not expected as uncertain global economic and geopolitical tensions support its safe-haven status, said Hareesh V, commodity research head, Geojit Financial Services.

India, Russia in talks on free trade deal

NEW DELHI (Agencies): India and Russia are discussing a free trade agreement, ministers said on Monday, a move that would further deepen bilateral commercial ties that have flourished since war broke out in Ukraine. India's foreign minister S Jaishankar told an event in New Delhi his government was in "advance agreement" on a trade treaty that Russia's trade and industry minister Denis Manturov said would bring a



guarantee of bilateral investment. India has not explicitly criticised Russia's invasion of Ukraine - which Moscow describes as a "special military operation" - and has called for

a peaceful resolution of the conflict through dialogue. Russia, a traditional defence equipment supplier, also displaced Iraq last month to become India's top supplier of crude oil. Overall Indian imports from Russia increased almost fourfold to US\$46.33 billion in the year to March 31. Moscow was looking to increase machinery imports from India to improve the trade balance, Manturov said.

Sega offers US\$776mil for Angry Birds maker Rovio

LONDON (Agencies): Video game maker Sega Sammy Holdings Inc offered to buy Rovio Entertainment Oyj in a deal that values the Finland-based Angry Birds creator at about €706 million (US\$776 million). Sega offered €9.25 per share in cash to the shareholders and €1.48 per option to the option holders of Rovio, according to a statement on Monday. The Finnish company's board unanimously recommended shareholders accept the offer that is backed by 49% of shareholders, including Rovio's founding Hed family. The deal brings to a close talks the Finnish mobile-game maker



had engaged in with multiple parties since a US\$810 million offer from Israel-based Playtika Holding Corp had become public in January. Rovio said on March 22 that it had ended talks with Israel-based Playtika, but continued discussions with other parties it didn't identify.

MAS rate pause sets stage for SGD as funding currency

SINGAPORE (Agencies): The Monetary Authority of Singapore's policy pause last week paves the way for the local dollar to become a funding currency, according to HSBC Holdings Plc. The Singapore dollar's out-performance is set to fade following the decision and the currency may start to track the greenback's moves, Joey Chew, head of Asia FX research, wrote in an April 14 note. Against this backdrop, there may be growing market chatter about when the MAS will begin easing, she added. "The SGD's nominal effective exchange rate tends to fall below the midpoint when policy easing looks imminent within the next one to two months," Chew wrote in the note. "The SGD



could be becoming interesting as a funding currency for relative value trades in Asia." The Singapore dollar posted its biggest one-day decline in over a month following Friday's policy decision, and may extend its drop if the central bank refrains from tightening further. Authorities expect core inflation to ease and non-oil domestic exports have been buffeted by global headwinds.

New Zealand public radio threatens to quit Twitter

WELLINGTON (Agencies): Radio New Zealand became the latest broadcaster to threaten to leave Twitter on Monday after the social media platform labelled the public broadcaster "government-funded". RNZ's head of content said it could join US counterparts National Public Radio and Public Broadcasting Service, who both quit Twitter last week in protest at the tag. "Not only is our editorial independence protected by the law, we guard it vigorously," head of content Megan Whelan wrote on Twitter. Public broadcasters have been infuriated by the forced tag, which they be-



lieve puts them on par with outlets that are controlled by authoritarian governments. "Twitter's own policy defines 'government-funded media' as cases where the government 'may have varying degrees of government involvement over editorial content' - which does not apply to RNZ," Whelan said.

Samsung may replace Google search with Bing

NEW YORK (Agencies): Microsoft Corp's Bing may replace Alphabet Inc's Google as the default search service on Samsung Electronics Co devices, according to a New York Times report Sunday. Suwon-based Samsung, the world's leading smartphone maker, is considering making the switch, putting at risk roughly US\$3 billion in annual revenue for Google, the report said. Bing's threat to Google's search dominance has grown more credible in recent months with the addition of OpenAI's technology to provide ChatGPT-like responses to user queries. Samsung shipped 261 million smartphones in 2022, according to IDC data, all running Google's



Android software. The Korean company has long-established partnerships with both Microsoft and Google, and its devices come preloaded with a library of apps and services from both, such as OneDrive and Google Maps. Negotiations are still ongoing and Samsung may yet decide to keep Google as its default provider, according to the report.

Drugmaker Merck acquires Prometheus for nearly US\$11bil

NEWYORK (Agencies): Pharmaceutical giant Merck announced Sunday the purchase of California-based biotech company Prometheus Biosciences for nearly US\$11 billion. The two companies "have entered into a definitive agreement under which Merck, through a subsidiary, has agreed to acquire Prometheus for US\$200.00 per share in cash for a total equity value of approximately US\$10.8 billion," Merck said in a statement. Prometheus's share price was at US\$114.01 when the New York Stock Exchange closed on Friday. The company is developing a treatment for autoimmune



diseases, including ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease, dubbed PRA023. "The agreement with Prometheus will accelerate our growing presence in immunology where there remains substantial unmet patient need," said Merck chairman and CEO Robert Davis, according to the statement.

Saudi Arabia transfers more Aramco oil shares to wealth fund

RIYADH (Agencies): Saudi Arabia has put a second 4% chunk of shares of the Aramco oil giant, worth tens of billions of dollars, under the control of the country's sovereign wealth fund, state media said today. The move, part of a campaign to open up the oil-rich kingdom's economy, follows a transfer last year of 4% of Aramco shares, estimated at the time to be worth US\$80 billion. Authorities did not give a value for the

latest shares, which have been moved from the world's biggest oil exporter to Sanabil Investments, a firm controlled by the Public Investment Fund (PIF) that is led by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi Press Agency said. The prince, Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler, billed the move as part of a push "to boost and diversify the national economy and expand investment opportunities", according to the report.

Arsenal can handle title stress as Man City close in, vows Arteta

LONDON (Agencies): Arsenal's bid to win the Premier League for the first time since 2004 is in danger of imploding, but Mikel Arteta remains adamant the leaders can cope with the pressure of the title race. Arteta's side blew a two-goal lead for a second successive game as West Ham hit back to snatch a 2-2 draw at the London Stadium on Sunday. After squandering the same advantage in last weekend's 2-2 draw at Liverpool, the Gunners once again paid the price for taking their



foot off the gas. Although Arsenal are four points clear of second placed Manchester City, it is the champions

who have all the momentum heading into the final weeks of a gripping title battle. With a home game against Arsenal looming on April 26, City know they will be crowned champions if they win their last eight games. Ominously for Arsenal, Pep Guardiola's men have already beaten them twice this season, winning 3-1 at the Emirates Stadium in the league in February, just weeks after knocking the Gunners out of the FA Cup with a 1-0 victory in Manchester.

Kirkwood lands 1st IndyCar win at Long Beach

LONG BEACH (Agencies): Kyle Kirkwood led 53 of 85 laps and cruised to his first IndyCar Series victory, taking the checkered flag at the Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach on Sunday in Long Beach, Calif. Kirkwood, 24, started from the pole and won by .9907 seconds over Andretti Autosport teammate Romain Grosjean of France. It's Kirkwood's second season on the circuit and his first driving the No 27 AutoNation Honda for Andretti. "I just had a moment of relaxation (after crossing the finish line), to be honest," Kirkwood said. "I felt like I needed this win, and



we got it today. A moment of relief, no doubt." Marcus Ericsson of Sweden, Colton Herta and Spain's Alex Palou rounded out the top five. Kirkwood pitted on Lap 54 and moved ahead of Grosjean and defending champion Josef Newgarden when he exited.

After Palou took a pit stop, Kirkwood moved ahead on Lap 56 and wouldn't relinquish the lead for the rest of the afternoon. "We knew he was something special," team owner Michael Andretti said of Kirkwood, who won the Indy NXT series title for the team in 2021. "He's really doing us proud. I'm just proud of the whole team, really." Ericsson maintained his spot atop the IndyCar series standings, 15 points ahead of Mexico's Pato O'Ward in second. Palou is third, Newgarden is fourth and Kirkwood leapt from 20th place to fifth thanks to his victory.

Bagnaia upset after losing another 25 points at Americas GP

AUSTIN (Agencies): MotoGP world champion Francesco Bagnaia was baffled and angry after throwing away 25 points by crashing out of Sunday's Grand Prix of the Americas while leading from pole position. The Ducati rider, who took a Saturday sprint/Sunday double in last month's Portuguese opener, has now crashed out of his last two full distance races when he might have banked 45 points. Sunday's points blank at Austin's Circuit of the Americas came just as the Italian was poised



to retake the championship lead from compatriot Marco Bezzecchi, the Argentina GP winner who finished sixth

for VR46 Ducati. "For the second weekend in a row I don't know (how it happened)," Bagnaia, who won the Saturday sprint but is now 11 points behind Bezzecchi after three rounds, told BT Sport. "I am quite angry, disappointed. Not with myself, because I'm 100% sure it wasn't my fault," he continued. "So we need to understand it, we have to know why it is happening. I did many, many laps this weekend without having any issues, and then in the race just controlling, I crashed."

Roma cruise to 3-0 victory over Udinese

ROME (Agencies): Third-placed AS Roma secured a comfortable 3-0 home win against Udinese thanks to goals from Edoardo Bove, Lorenzo Pellegrini and Tammy Abraham in Serie A on Sunday. Roma now have 56 points from 30 games, five adrift of second-placed Lazio and three above AC Milan in fourth. They took the lead in the 37th minute through Bove who tucked the ball away after Bryan Cristante's penalty for handball



by Roberto Pereyra came back off the post. Captain Pellegrini doubled

Roma's lead with a precise strike into the top left corner after being nicely teed up inside the box by striker Andrea Belotti 10 minutes into the second half. Udinese could have pulled one back through a penalty awarded for Gianluca Mancini's handball but goalkeeper Rui Patricio dived full-length to save Pereyra's spotkick in the 69th. Roma substitute Abraham wrapped up the win in stoppage time with a header.

Saudi Arabia wins bid to host 2024 World Fencing Championship for Juniors and Youth

DUBAI (Agencies): The International Fencing Federation has announced that Saudi Arabia has won the bid to host the 2024 World Fencing Championship for Juniors and Youth, one of the sporting code's biggest contests. The announcement was made at this year's event in Bulgaria, that took place from 1 to 9 April. The decision itself was taken at last November's IFF general assembly. Next year's event will feature over 1,500 male and female athletes representing more than 100 countries, and more



than 400 administrative and technical staff, including referees and coaches. Ahmed Al-Sabban, chairman of the

Saudi Fencing Federation's board of directors, thanked King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for supporting the bid and sports in general in the Kingdom. Al-Sabban also thanked Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki Al-Faisal, the Kingdom's sports minister and chairman of the Saudi Olympic and Paralympic Committee, for backing other contests including the 2016 Asian Fencing Championship for Juniors and Youth in Dammam and the 2019 Asian Fencing Tour for Juniors in Riyadh.

Boston Marathon poses new challenge for Kipchoge: slow down

BOSTON (Agencies): World record-holder Eliud Kipchoge has the speed to outclass the rest of the field when he makes his Boston Marathon debut on Monday. To win, he may have to slow things down. The two-time Olympic gold medalist and 12-time major marathon champion knows that the 26.2-mile route from Hopkinton to Boston's Back Bay isn't like those flat and friendly courses where he established himself as perhaps the greatest distance runner of all time. No matter, he said: Breaking the tape is what's



important. Regardless of how long it takes. "I don't mind about time," said Kipchoge, who set the world record of

2 hours, 1 minute, 9 seconds in Berlin in 2019 and also broke 2 hours in an exhibition in a Vienna park that year. "I trust it will be a fruitful race, a very fruitful race. But I will try to win." The hilly Boston course, which begins with a descent, hits Heartbreak Hill around 20 miles in and then drops down to sea level again on the way to the finish, has always rewarded smart tactics more than pure speed. Kipchoge, who had never seen the course before this week, won his majors in Berlin, London, Chicago and Tokyo — all flatter and faster.

Clippers go as Russell Westbrook goes, for better or worse, in Game 1 win over Suns

PHOENIX (Agencies): The best coaches can "take yours and beat theirs and take theirs and beat yours," that strategy often exemplified in the opening games of the NBA playoffs. Ty Lue, sporting a glimmer in his eye in the pregame media session, said he loved the chess game, the back and forth with strategies between games. He clearly played the longest chess game known to man in repeatedly instilling confidence in Russell Westbrook, resisting the urge to sit the struggling guard. Westbrook's shots missed short,



wide and long — but he often recovered shots short, wide and long, in addition to playing the best defensive game perhaps in his career to help the Los Angeles Clippers steal home-court

advantage from the Phoenix Suns with a 115-110 win at Footprint Center on Sunday night. Former New York Knick John Starks shot 3 for 18 in Game 7 of the 1994 NBA Finals, a clunker for the ages as the Houston Rockets won their first title. If that number haunts Starks, it feels like Westbrook's lucky one as he did Starks one better with an extra miss for good measure. But he was literally everywhere, with 10 rebounds, five on each end. Defending his former teammate Kevin Durant. Missing layups. Crashing the offensive glass.

Vitinha finally on target as Marseille move up to 2nd

PARIS (Agencies): Vitinha scored his first goals for Olympique de Marseille as they thrashed struggling Troyes 3-1 to move into second place in the Ligue 1 standings on Sunday. The Portuguese striker, who joined in January, netted either side of the interval with Cengiz Under also on the score-sheet to put Igor Tudor's side on 64 points with seven games left. They trail leaders Paris St Germain by eight points after the capital side beat RC Lens, now third on 63, 3-1 on Saturday. Monaco are fourth on 61 points after beating Lorient 3-1 at home, as the race for second place and direct qualification for the Champions League group stage heats up. Vitinha, who had not scored in his first six



matches since joining from Braga on Jan 31, grabbed an early goal to give OM a dream start. They took charge in the second minute when Vitinha smashed a beautiful shot under the bar after powering into the area. The hosts doubled the advantage four minutes before the break with Under finding the back of the net from inside the box after being set up by Valentin Rongier.

Injury fears for Giannis, Morant as Lakers, Heat win NBA playoff series openers



LOS ANGELES (Agencies): Milwaukee superstar Giannis Antetokounmpo and Memphis star guard Ja Morant suffered serious injuries that threatened to disrupt two title contenders on Sunday in NBA playoff series-opening defeats. The Los Angeles Lakers took advantage of Morant's absence late in the fourth quarter for a late surge that produced a 128-112 victory at Memphis while the top-seeded host Bucks, who lost their Greek star in the first quarter,

fell 130-117 to the eighth-seeded Miami Heat. But injury fears for Antetokounmpo and Morant, two of the NBA's most electrifying stars, were amplified by upset home losses for their clubs in best-of-seven first round openers. Antetokounmpo averaged 31.1 points and 11.8 rebounds a game this season for an NBA-best 58-24 Bucks squad while Morant averaged 26.2 points for a Grizzlies team that was 51-31. Morant hurt his already-sore right hand midway into the fourth quarter trying to brace a hard landing to a high fall after contact while driving to the basket. Morant's taped right hand took the impact. Morant rose and ran off to the locker room, grabbing his sore hand and screaming as he exited after scoring 18 points.

Fitzpatrick wins RBC Heritage over Spieth on 3rd extra hole

HILTON HEAD ISLAND (Agencies): Matt Fitzpatrick defeated defending champion Jordan Spieth on the third playoff hole at the RBC Heritage on Sunday, stuffing his approach in close on the par-4 18th at Harbor Town to secure his first victory since the US Open last June. Fitzpatrick hit 9-iron to within 1 foot on the famed, closing lighthouse hole to set up the winning birdie on the famed Pete Dye layout he played as a child on vacation. Fitzpatrick had to sweat out a couple of prime chances by Spieth on the first two extra holes. Spieth raised his putter in triumph before watching his 12-foot birdie putt catch the right edge and spin out the first time the pair played the 18th. Then Spieth's 9-foot birdie attempt ran out of steam on the right edge at the 17th hole. There was no doubt about



the final hole as Fitzpatrick, from 187 yards out, hit the front of the green and watched the ball settle next to the hole. Spieth's attempt from 26 feet away rolled past and Fitzpatrick tapped in for the victory. "It's hard to describe," Fitzpatrick said. "It doesn't get better than this." Fitzpatrick won \$3.6 million from the elevated purse of \$20 million in the sixth designated event of the year on the PGA Tour, topping a field that included seven of the world's top 10 players.

DAILY HOROSCOPE: APRIL 18, 2023



– It's a general reading which may differ from person to person because of time date and year.
– **ARIES**: Your romantic side is engaged or some idea has captured your heart! One way or another, you're giving your all to a person, place, or thing and it feels fantastic!
– **TAURUS**: Someone is pushing you to make a decision or move forward before you're ready, but you're well within your rights to dig in your heels and stop the process. You need to do things right this time.
– **GEMINI**: Your dreams and ambitions are on the table now, and you're excited to see what happens next. Someone close is about to add their voice to your chorus, so things should get even better!
– **CANCER**: You may find a particular rule objectionable, even if it never bothered you before. See if you can bend it just a bit, but be careful not to step on the toes of any authority figures!
– **LEO**: You can have a good time doing almost anything and today's amazing energy should help you find the fun in even the most mundane activities. Your friends are amazed, just as they always

are.
– **VIRGO**: You're in a feisty mood and may elevate people's spirits even while you're telling them what to do today. It's a good time to start arguments, but it may not be the best time for you to finish them!
– **LIBRA**: You can find a good compromise with almost anyone today, so see if you can get your people together and hash out something that everyone can be happy with. You should find it much easier!
– **SCORPIO**: Now is the best time for you to start doing something new and positive, especially if it's health or fitness related! Even if you hate the gym, you can find a way to make it work for you.
– **SAGITTARIUS**: See if you can make your amazing energy work for you today. You ought to be able to move mountains, if you really must. Things are getting better for you, and today is the turning point.
– **CAPRICORN**: You feel more secure in your position than you have lately and it may be a good time to build out or up to see if you can exploit it for all it's worth. You can make a big difference if you want to!
– **ACQUARIUS**: You're feeling more and more excited, and that current of enthusiasm is easy to pass on to others! It's a good time for you to energize your people and get them all to join forces for something big!
– **PISCES**: You're clinging to a belief that isn't working out so well for you right now, but you might have to keep clinging for a while longer. Things change quickly after a few more days have passed!

A ‘ChatGPT’ For Satellite Photos Already Exists

- Using advanced generative AI and a massive dataset of Earth images, it's possible to discover objects almost anywhere.



NEW YORK (Agencies): Scene: A U.S. adversary is at work on a new type of drone, ship, or aircraft and it's your job to find it, wherever it is.

Not long ago, that task would take a massive effort of human, signals, and open-source intelligence collection. But a researcher from AI company Synthetia has created a tool that will allow users to find virtually any large object that exists in any satellite photo of the Earth within just one day. It's also the sort of capability the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency is also looking to develop, and it could radically shift strategic advantage on the battlefield.

Corey Jaskolski, founder and CEO of Synthetia, dubbed his satellite image scanning tool Rapid Automatic Image Categorization, or RAIC. After the Chinese weather balloon incident caught the nation's attention in January, Jaskolski applied RAIC to satellite photos of the Earth's surface, as collected by geospatial satellite imaging company Planet. He was able to trace the balloon's origins to China in just a matter of days. Now, Jaskolski says, the company is using those lessons to further reduce the time. "Our goal is to be able to ingest the entire Planet daily take [of Earth images] and be able to process that all in less than 24 hours. So if you wanted to literally look for balloon launches around the entire world, we could give you a daily update of that every day. Let you know if there was a balloon launched anywhere." Interest around new publicly available AI tools has been spiking, thanks to new generative pretrained transformer—or GPT—tools that allow users to write essays, build business plans, and perform complex tasks with a simple prompt. The national security community has a similar need, but for AI applications for the vast expanse of

satellite, surveillance, and other data that could help uncover adversary activities and new capabilities. But it's not necessarily a straightforward task, as Jaskolski learned when he attempted to find the origin of that Chinese balloon—a thing that had never been photographed in the open, much less labeled and inserted into a dataset readable by a machine-learning algorithm. "Normally with an AI, you have to have a bunch of labeled examples for the AI to learn, so, and it's not a small amount of data. Like when Facebook and Google train an AI, they commonly train on a billion labeled images, not even, you know, thousands or millions, but literally a billion labeled images," Jaskolski said. "The thing that would normally stop an AI from finding this balloon is we don't have any data. We don't have any labels. We don't know what it looks like from space." The RAIC is part of a new class of AI tools that don't require a massive, labeled dataset to generate what Jaskolski describes as an understanding of what to look for. He was able to teach it to look for the balloon based only on a single hand-made drawing. "We started out with technologies that are used for generative AI transformers and GANs. [But] instead of using that technology to generate images, we use that technology in order to basically understand the data domain," he said. In essence, by continuously looking at satellite images, the RAIC tool develops a familiarity that comes close to expertise. So when it scans satellite imagery, it has a rudimentary understanding of what's unusual, and can look for specific unusual objects. And the input doesn't have to be precise. Jaskolski says his drawing depicted what a balloon might look like in satellite data, and RAIC was able to find it. Then, once

they found the actual balloon in one of the satellite datasets, RAIC was able to look for that in other images.

"After a couple days really searching for it in Alaska in Canada, we decided to just bite the bullet and ingest that massive amount of Earth across China, Japan, South Korea, North Korea, and the ocean, open ocean and Aleutian islands," he said. They also used wind modeling to narrow down where the balloon may have started its flight. That brought them to islands 300 miles off the coast of China. "At that point we got really excited... And so from there, we find it five or six more times, all the way back to the hidden island." At last week's Planet conference in Washington, Microsoft President Brad Smith described a future in which people could ask image-based search tools to find objects, just as we ask search engines for recommendations today. Microsoft is a major investor in OpenAI, the best-known GPT platform. "I do believe that this next era of AI, you know, with GPT based-technology, is a query-able Earth," Smith said. NGA has already taken control of Project Maven, the Pentagon's flagship AI program for image analysis. At the Planet conference, NGA head Vice Adm. Frank Whitworth said the agency is trying to turn Maven from an experimental effort into a program of record, "which means we will need to be very clear on the efficacy of every dollar." The agency is "experimenting with [geographical intelligence] AI programs that integrate large language models to allow analysts to ask and answer specific intelligence questions," an NGA spokesperson told Defense One. "We see a future where these models can be trained with big spatial data to answer questions in space and time."

US citizens detained for Christianization in Libya have been deported

TRIPOLI (Agencies): Sources from inside the Government of National Unity said the US citizens who were accused of carrying out Christianization mission (the missionaries) had left Mitiga Airport in Tripoli on a private plane on their way back to the United States via Malta. The sources confirmed to Al-Sharq Al-Awsat newspaper what was published by local media about the departure of four Americans after their release earlier on Friday evening, and said that the operation was carried out at the request of the government in coordination with US authorities. No official statement has yet been issued by the Internal Security Agency on the departure news. However, an official source in the agency confirmed that the Americans were being held on charges related to Libyan national security, indicating that the arrested were referred to the Public Prosecution, adding that they then received no

information as the role of any security agency would end upon referral of the cases to the Public Prosecution. The Libyan Attorney General, Al-Siddiq Al-Sour, did not announce any decision regarding this case, while the US embassy in Libya did not comment on these developments. The Libyan Interior Security Agency published a confession video for what it described as a US citizen, who said he worked as an assistant teacher of English for the head of a language institute in Tripoli. The agency said the man and his wife were a part of a team for a US Christianization Organization. It also detained several others in the same group, including foreigners and Libyans. Earlier last week, the US State Department spokesman Ned Price said they were aware of the news about the detention of a citizen in Tripoli and the safety of their citizens abroad was their priority.

Pakistan welcomes bridging of differences by Saudi Arabia, Iran: PM

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said bridging of differences between Saudi Arabia and Iran was a remarkable achievement and the positive development was seen by Pakistan with happiness and hope. Speaking at an Iftar dinner hosted by him in honour of ambassadors of Islamic countries here, he said, "Because of the blessings of Ramadan, Saudi Arabia and Iran have bridged their differences and this is a remarkable achievement. "We are all happy about this positive development and the follow up has been extremely speedy. It is a great pleasure to witness meetings of foreign ministers, and delegations visiting Riyadh and Tehran. "This development is seen by Pakistan

as a message of great happiness and hope. I am sure this progress will multiply in many ways in the future," he added. Talking about the Palestine issue, he said hundreds of people were killed in Palestine in the last many months in naked aggression. The Prime Minister of Palestine and some of his cabinet members had made statements saying the violence against the Palestinians was increasing, he continued. PM Shehbaz Sharif said the world had witnessed a rough period and one could see what happened in global markets. Prices of oil and other items had gone beyond the reach of developing countries including Pakistan and other countries, he noted.

Sweden orders 20 armored vehicles under joint European program

STUTTGART (Agencies): Sweden has become the third nation to order new armored personnel carriers under a joint European research-and-development effort, following Finland and Latvia, and soon to be followed by Germany. The nation's Defense Materiel Administration (FMV) ordered 20 6x6 vehicles on April 17, after joining the multinational Common Armored Vehicle Systems (CAVS) program last year, according to Finnish manufacturer Patria. Deliveries of the "Pansarterrängbil 300 – as the vehicles will be called in Sweden – will begin within 2023. Designed for troop transportation of up to 12 personnel, the vehicle will be modular and can also be configured for other purposes, such as command and control, or ambu-

lance duties. Stockholm plans to ultimately buy several hundred 6x6 vehicles under the CAVS program at a unit price of 11 million kronor (U.S. \$1.06 million), according to reporting by Swedish publication SVT. The order was hailed by Patria and Swedish officials as a demonstration of Finnish-Swedish cooperation, as the engine and armor are developed by Swedish suppliers including Scania AB. Meanwhile, Germany also took a new step into the effort by officially signing the technical arrangement for CAVS on April 17, making it a formal member of the project that currently includes Finland, Latvia, and Sweden, said Patria. The company is majority owned by the state of Finland, with Norwegian arms company Kongsberg also an owner.

Austal eyes 1,000 new hires for nuclear submarine work

SYDNEY (Agencies): Blue and yellow machines whirled, autonomously welding the steel that Austal's Alabama shipyard will need to build nuclear submarine components as the company moves away from aluminum vessels. Two massive yellow cranes moved horizontally across the ceiling above, illuminated by LED lights that grew dimmer farther down the 117,00-square-foot facility, delineating the point where a wall was knocked down one year ago to expand the building for the steel line Aluminum modules for the very last littoral combat ship under production stand among the steel sheets, which the Australia-based company will need for its new contracts: off-shore patrol cutters for the U.S. Coast Guard, towing and salvage chips for the U.S. Navy, and key components for Columbia- and Virginia-class submarines. Austal is banking on nuclear-powered submarine work as a major driver of growth in the coming years, to the point where the company will need to increase its workforce by a third. That would involve 1,000 additional hires to staff a new facility at the shipyard by the end of next year. The planned facility, which is currently under design, is a physical manifestation of recent U.S. government investments aimed at expanding submarine production capacity. "We're putting a new building in that's going to be dedicated fully to submarine work," Larry Ryder, Austal's vice president for business development and external affairs, told Defense News in an interview on Thursday. "It's going to be about 1,000 jobs of output, supporting the submarine-industrial base." Broken down further, the company expects to hire an additional 200 employees at its Alabama shipyard for submarine work this year, with another 800 to join them once the facility is up and running next year. The shipyard received a \$50 million Defense Production Act grant to construct the new submarine module facility, which Austal matched with another \$50 million from its own coffers. The facility will take about a year to construct.

NA body recommends placing Punjab election funds matter before House

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The National Assembly's Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue on Monday unanimously recommended to the Finance Division to place the matter regarding the release of funds for purpose of the Punjab Assembly's general election before the NA in the form of a bill through the Federal Cabinet in order to comply with the orders of the Supreme Court. The committee, which met with Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh in the chair, was apprised by Minister of Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar that the SC had ordered the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to release the funds to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for the purposes of Punjab elections, a press release said. He said the court in its order dated 14th April, 2023 had also directed the Finance Division to adopt the constitutional procedure by way of ex-post facto approvals.

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