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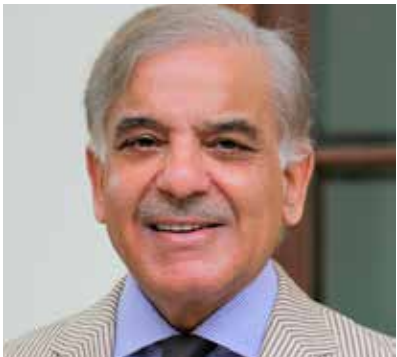
Vol 11, No 192 - Thursday 20 April 2023

Ramadan 29, 1444 A.H.

Editor: Omer Rizwan

PM chairs consultative meeting of ruling alliance on constitutional, legal matters

ISLAMABAD (APP): A high-level consultative meeting of the ruling alliance held here Wednesday evening with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in chair discussed the country's overall situation and the future strategy on constitutional and legal matters. The meeting, after consultation on their already stated stance of holding general elections in the country on the same day under the caretaker governments, unanimously decided to convene a meeting of the leaders of ruling alliance after Eidul Fitr so that the ongoing national process of consultation with all political parties within and outside the Parliament could be taken to the next stage and reach a consensus to finalise the procedure in that respect. The meeting clarified that with the constitution of a committee by the prime minister, the process of consultation within the ruling parties for holding elections was already



ready underway whereas the meeting between PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and PDM chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman was also part of that process. Moreover, the meeting of Amir Jamaat-e-Islami Siraj ul Haq with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was also part of the consultative process, a press statement issued after the meeting said. The meeting reiterated that the ruling

alliance of the parties which believed in the constitution, democracy and the people's constitutional right of vote, had full conviction on holding elections. "As politicians, we neither closed doors of dialogue for anyone, nor any democracy-lover can do it." Right from the offer of the charter of economy to every stage till now, the coalition government had expressed its willingness for a serious and meaningful dialogue within the constitutional parameters. Ensuring free, fair and impartial elections was a basic constitutional requirement. The meeting reiterated its commitment that all those requirements of elections should be ensured, due to which the election results were acceptable to all political parties and the country did not face the situation of any political instability, causing irreparable loss to the national and economic interests of the state.

China to build up supercomputing capacities



BEIJING (Xinhua/APP): China plans to build a supercomputing internet by the end of 2025 to connect powerful computers across the nation and effectively tap into their joint computing power to promote innovation and socioeconomic growth, China Daily reported Wednesday. It quoted a statement from the Ministry of Science and Technology at a work meeting and said that after decades of efforts, China's supercomputing sector is among the global front-runners, effectively supporting the nation's science and technology innovation, social development, and digital economy. However, with the rise of big data, artificial intelligence, and a new generation of information technology, society needs more computing power than ever, the statement said, adding that the purpose of the supercomputing internet is to organize local computing centers into a more coordinated system on a national scale.

Water rationed in Catalonia as drought bites deeper



L'Espluga de Francolí (AFP/APP): For months, residents of L'Espluga de Francolí have been saving water in bottles and foregoing showers to cope with long hours of daily water rationing as northeastern Spain suffers one of its worst droughts in decades. While this small Catalan town has suffered supply problems for years due to the depleted state of its water table, the current drought has made things worse. Every night between 10:00 pm and 7:00 am, domestic water supplies are switched off in this town of 3,600 residents, which lies 100 kilometres (60 miles) west of Barcelona. "We keep water in bottles so we can brush our teeth and wash our faces in the morning," said Maria Gonzalez, a 24-year-old nursing assistant. "At night, we either shower at work or at the gym or else we heat water in pans (to wash at home), like in the olden days," she said.

No 'magic wand' for Ukraine – UK

LONDON (Agencies): It is unlikely that the conflict with Russia will end this year, the British defense secretary has said. The conflict between Russia and Ukraine will likely continue into next year, UK Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said on Tuesday. "I'm optimistic that between this year and next year, I think Ukraine will continue to have the momentum with it and a position of strength," Wallace told reporters during a trip to Washington, DC, as quoted by the New York Times. Wallace warned, however, that "there is not going to be a single magic-wand moment when Russia collapses." The UK has been one of Kiev's main backers, supplying the country with heavy weapons, including Challenger 2 tanks. Britain has trained 10,000 Ukrainian soldiers, according to the Defence Ministry, and pledged to train 20,000 more this year. For the past several months, Kiev has been outspoken about its planned counteroffensive, but has not publicly revealed the time-



table. Ukrainian officials have said, however, that the schedule and success of the endeavor will heavily depend on the supply of Western tanks and other equipment. Aleksey Danilov, the secretary of Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council, told AP on Monday that the push will start at an appropriate time when the country is ready. Prime Minister Denis Shmigel recently said that the offensive will start "in the nearest future." Shmigel stated that the recent leaking of the Pentagon files, which included reports about how Western countries were training and equipping Ukrainian troops, will not change the plans for the counteroffensive.

BRICS to pass West in economic might



NEW YORK: The bloc of developing countries will have a larger share of global growth than the Group of Seven major economies The BRICS group – Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa – is expected to increase their share of the global economy to nearly 35% by 2028, Bloomberg reported on Monday. According to the outlet's calculations based on the latest IMF data, this year, the BRICS countries will contribute 32.1% of the world's growth, compared to the G7's 29.9%. The Group

of Seven nations (G7), consisting of the US, UK, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, and Japan, is considered the most advanced economic bloc of countries on the planet. The report indicated that in 2020, the contribution of the BRICS countries and the G7 to global economic growth was equal, and from that moment on, the performance of the Western countries has been declining. By 2028, the G7's contribution to the world economy is predicted to decrease to 27.8%. Bloomberg calculations show that China will be the top contributor to global growth over the next five years, with its share set to be double that of the US. China's share of global GDP expansion is expected to represent 22.6% of total world growth by 2028, the outlet wrote. India is projected to contribute 12.9% of global GDP.

North Korea touts new spy satellite

PYONGYANG (Agencies): Pyongyang says it will be ready for launch by the end of the month North Korea says it has completed work on its first reconnaissance satellite and is preparing for its maiden launch, stressing the need to bolster its military capabilities amid continued threats from the US and South Korea. After visiting the country's space development agency one day prior, North Korean leader Kim Jong-un unveiled the new military satellite on Tuesday, saying the tech would enhance Pyongyang's "war deterrence" given Washington and Seoul's "anti-DPRK military posture." "Under these cir-



cumstances, it is only natural for our state to develop military deterrence commensurate with the current... security environment, and acquiring and operating military reconnaissance means is essential in enhancing our military effectiveness," Kim said, as cited by the state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

German union calls for new rail strike Friday

BERLIN (AFP/APP): German transport union EVG on Wednesday called for a strike as workers demand higher wages to cope with high rates of inflation, the latest industrial action in Europe's largest economy. Rail workers across the country will walk out on Friday between 3:00 am (0100 GMT) and 11:00 am, the EVG said in a statement. Management "alone" were responsible for the new strike action for failing to engage in "constructive" wage negotiations, EVG's deputy chairwoman Cosima Ingenschay said in the statement. The union represents 230,000 workers across some 50 transport companies, including national rail operator



Deutsche Bahn. EVG is demanding a 12-percent pay rise for the workers it represents. The increase would help employees cope with "financial burdens that have increased sharply", EVG said. Inflation in Germany stood at 7.4 percent in March, remaining very elevated despite having fallen from a peak of 8.8 percent in October.

At UN, Pakistan to unveil its climate investment portfolio seeking funding for projects

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Pakistan is set to present its climate investment portfolio Wednesday evening at a session of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Investment Fair 2023, which brings together governments, the private sector, and financial intermediaries to boost financing for development. "Basically we are seeking foreign investments into projects that can help the Government of Pakistan tackle the climate crisis," an official told APP. The projects, according to the official, include adapting to climate change, low-cost housing construction and microfinance, the financial services provided to low-income individuals excluded from traditional banking. Pakistan's 2022 monsoon season produced significant rainfall, devastating floods and landslides, displacing

millions of people and killing over 1,700 people. The Fair provides a dynamic platform for the public and private sectors to discuss specific investment opportunities and critical policies and regulations that support closing the SDG investment gap. "Our objective is to apprise global investors that projects are available that are supported by the Government of Pakistan and can help achieve sustainable development and climate goals," the official added. Tariq Bajwa, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister of Pakistan on Finance, will deliver the keynote address via video link from Islamabad. The hybrid session will be facilitated by Marco Neto, Director of UNDP's Finance Sector Hub. Welcoming remarks will be delivered by Navid Hanif, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development.

'Profit from the coup': Myanmar ethnic rebels welcome pro-democracy fighters



NAMHSAN (AFP/APP): At dusk in northern Myanmar, fighters from the Ta'ang National Liberation Army patrol their frontlines and mark the positions of junta troops, their decades-long conflict with the military fraught with new risks since the coup. The TNLA is one of around a dozen ethnic rebel groups in Myanmar's borderlands that have long battled the military over autonomy and control of lucrative resources. For decades, their fight for autonomy -- and allegations of massive human rights abuses by the armed forces -- passed largely out of sight of Myanmar's Bamar ethnic

majority. Following the military's 2021 coup and brutal crackdown on dissent, however, groups like the TNLA have become vital to Myanmar's battle for democracy, providing shelter and training for new Bamar-dominated "People's Defence Forces" formed to fight the junta. "We got sympathy, understanding and support from other people in Myanmar after the coup," TNLA Brigadier General Tar Bhon Kyaw said from the group's territory in northern Shan state. "People now understand why we were fighting... This is the profit from the coup." Days after the coup the TNLA -- which says it is fighting for autonomy for the Ta'ang ethnic group -- suspended a truce with the military and has since clashed regularly with junta troops. It now claims to have more than 7,000 fighters under its command in its territory in northern Shan state, along the vital road to China.

Mexico condemns US 'interference' in drug war

MEXICO CITY (Agencies): The DEA's infiltration of the Sinaloa Cartel without state permission amounts to espionage, the Mexican president says. Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, commonly known as AMLO, has excoriated the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) for infiltrating the Sinaloa Cartel without his permission, accusing Washington of "abusive interference" at a press conference on Monday. "There can't be foreign agents in our country, no," AMLO insisted, explaining that while the US and Mexico could share information, Mexico alone will decide who can "intervene." Anything else, he said, is an unacceptable violation of Mexican sovereignty. Only after the safety of Mexicans -- from both the ultraviolent cartels and DEA operatives -- is guaranteed can the matter of assisting the US in its drug war be taken up, he said. "Cooperation yes, submission no." The DOJ



announced last week the indictment of 28 senior figures in the Sinaloa Cartel on charges that include drug and weapons trafficking, money laundering, murder, extortion, kidnapping, and torture. Prosecutors boasted that the DEA had "proactively infiltrated" the cartel and its offshoot, the Chapitos ('little Chapos', named after the offspring of Sinaloa drug lord El Chapo), and had been following its movements for a year and a half, all without informing the Mexican government, which it continued to accuse of not doing enough to stop the flow of illicit fentanyl into America.

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.

Reformation of public sector processes key to ease of doing business: KP Minister

PESHAWAR (APP): KP Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce and Technical education, Adnan Jalil has termed restructuring capabilities and streamlining of the public sector processes as keys to ease of doing business in the province. He was speaking at the Meeting of the National Network of Economic Thinktanks-Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chapter organized by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) here the other day, said a press release issued on Wednesday. He informed that restricting human resources in TEVTA had so far resulted in a saving of Rs 2.6 million monthly. He said that financial and power constraints faced by the caretaker government would prevent the delivery of relief to the business community. Jalil said that the business community was struggling to survive in an unbalanced environment and stressed the need

to streamline the procedure and processes to avoid delays. Dr Vaqar Ahmed, Joint Executive Director, SDPI in his welcome remarks said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's southern cluster had immense untapped economic potential. He said that such deliberative sessions before the announcement of the budget would help in articulating policy advice for the government to reflect on for strengthening trade and economic development. Ahad Nazir, Head of the Center for Private Sector Engagement while sharing the preliminary findings of a survey conducted by SDPI in KP said that difficulty in graduation for firms was observed which is hindering increasing in firms to become exporters. Poor coordination between government departments results in duplication of policy burden and lack of inclusive industry data results in policies that are generalized and not tailored

based on different demographics, he added. Nazir informed that SDPI would serve as the Secretariat for the National Network of Economic Thinktanks. He reiterated SDPI's interest in bridging the policy gaps identified by government departments, updating private sector policy developments, reviewing policy documents and bridging gaps between academia and industry for strengthening research environments to meet the industry demand. Iqbal Sarwar, Director of Business Facilitation, KP-BoIT informed that a mapping activity resulted in identification of 170 regulations for businesses in KP that need to be simplified and thirty regulations so far had been simplified or removed. Muhammad Salman Khan, Secretary General, Swabi Chamber of Commerce, and Industry stressed educating exporters on international standards and accreditation to

tap into the export potential to regional markets. Qurat-ul-Ain, CEO, Ain Consulting stressed on designating focal persons for improving intra-department coordination to simplify the regulatory environment and suggested forming committees to connect industries, academia, and government bodies to improve their communication and collaboration. Kiran Fida, Project Manager, CGPA stressed briefing the business community on regulations and emphasized on addressing challenges faced by women entrepreneurs through policy initiatives. Dr Muhammad Yasir, Chairman, Department of Management Sciences, Hazara University reiterated bridging the academia-industry gap to promote indigenous production of chemicals and other products and reducing import reliance. Rasheed Paracha, Founder Kohat Chamber of Commerce, and Industry said

that the unfavorable regulatory environment had discouraged locals. He urged for commercial policy to create a level playing field and limit the number of businesses that refugees can run to enable small local businesses to flourish. Rashid Aman, Manager, SMEDA, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa stressed upgrading the scale of cottage industries to transform the export landscape in the province. Ishfaq Ahmed Afriadi, Manager Business Planning & Support, Commercial Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development & Management Company (KP-EZDMC) said that specified economic zones had been developed in many cities based on specialized products to add value to products. Taimur Khan of Institutional Development Expert, SEED urged for smart solutions and public-private partnerships to overcome the sector's challenges.

Relief operations continue at landslides site in Torkham, 3 injured shifted to hospital: DC

PESHAWAR (APP): Relief and rescue operations continued on second day at the landslides site in Torkham containers terminal in Khyber district on Wednesday. Deputy Commissioner Khyber, Abdul Nasir Khan told APP that three dead bodies

were so far recovered by the rescue workers of different departments. He said that all the victims belonged to Afghanistan. Abdul Nasir Khan said a major portion of Torkhum-Peshawar road was cleared from landslides, rocks and debris. He said that three critically injured recovered from debris were shifted to Landi Kotal hospital. He said a total of 12 people trapped in containers due to landslides were also recovered safely. The Deputy Commissioner said that heavy machinery of different de-

partments including the Engineering Wing of Pakistan Army, Peshawar Development Authority and Rescue 1122 was taking part in the relief and rescue activities. Besides district administration, he said that officers of the district police, Rescue 1122 and Pakistan Army were monitoring the relief operations. He said that relief operations would continue till retrieval of all containers and clearance of the route. Normally, the terminal has a parking facility for 20 to 30 containers per day, he added.

GOLD PRICE IN PAK

Gold Rate	24K Gold	22K Gold	21K Gold	18K Gold
Per Tola Gold	Rs 215,900	Rs 197,907	Rs 188,912	Rs 161,925
Per 10 Gram	Rs 185,099	Rs 169,674	Rs 161,962	Rs 138,825
Per Gram Gold	Rs 18,510	Rs 16,967	Rs 16,196	Rs 13,882
Per Ounce	Rs 524,750	Rs 481,018	Rs 459,156	Rs 393,562

FOREX RATES

Currency	Buying	Selling
US Dollar	287.5	290
China Yuan	41.37	41.77
Japanese Yen	2.15	2.2
Saudi Riyal	75.7	76.4
U.A.E Dirham	78	78.8
UK Pound	356	359
Euro	310	313.5
Australian Dollar	189	191
Canadian Dollar	210.5	212.5

Emergency Numbers

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

PESHAWAR (APP): The Peshawar Meteorological Department here on Wednesday predicted partly cloudy weather in most districts of the province. The official said that rain with thunderstorms is also expected in the districts of Mardan, Swabi, Charsadda, Peshawar, Nowshera, Kohat, Khyber and Karam and during the last 24 hours, the highest rainfall has been recorded in Kalam at 51 mm, Dir 36 mm, Chitral 27 mm and Patan

23 mm, Malam Jabba 18, Balakot 16, Tamergarh 15 and Peshawar 6 mm rain record. The lowest temperature in the province was 2 degrees Celsius in Kalam and 6 degrees Celsius in Malam Jabba, the met department said. The official said that Peshawar recorded a minimum temperature of 18 and a maximum of 27 degrees Celsius while Chitral 11, Saidu Sharif 15, Dir 10 and Dera Ismail Khan 22 centigrade recorded.

Suspect dies in firing incident, policeman injured

PESHAWAR (APP): A suspect in police custody died in a firing incident allegedly carried out by opponents in Kohat Shakardara on Wednesday. The incident also resulted in the injury of a police officer, Head Constable Abdul Hameed, said the police spokesman. According to reports, the suspect, Sabir Shah, who was involved in the case of the kidnap-

ping of a married woman, was being brought to court for his appearance when the alleged accused from the opposing party, Asif, a resident of Shakardara, shot him dead. Upon receiving information about the incident, a heavy contingent of local police immediately reached the spot and started a search operation in the area to arrest the accused.

Over 5.230 m families provided free flour bags in KP: Food Dept

PESHAWAR (APP): Over 5. 230 million families covering over 90 percent target were provided free flour under the Prime Minister's Ramazan package in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Spokesman of KP food Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa told APP on Wednesday that the people of all districts of KP were benefited from the Prime Minister's free flour pack-

age. He said that flour was available in large quantities in all districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Following the distribution of available stock, he said that more wheat would be released to flour mills. He said that 17.2 million flour bags weighing 10 kilogram each would be distributed among 5.750 million deserving families during Ramazan.

Directives issued to ensure use of mask on public places



PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Establishment Department has directed district administrations to ensure use of mask on public places and health facilities. The decision has been taken after recommendations of National

Command and Operational Centre issued as a preemptive measure to control spread of corona. Letter has been issued to administrative secretaries, divisional commissioners and deputy commissioners to ensure implementation of directives.

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Enr#1196/P

Hajj Package 1444 H / 2023

Approved Package # 9 by Ministry of Religious Affairs

Executive Package 20 Days/Post Hajj Madinah

22ND JUNE - 12TH JULY Insha'Allah 4TH ZILHAJJA - 24TH ZILHAJJA Insha'Allah

PACKAGE PLAN

4 Days Madinah

Pakistan-Jeddah	4TH ZIL HAJJA
Azizia	4TH- 8TH ZIL HAJJA
Hajj days	8TH- 12TH ZIL HAJJA
Azizia	12TH- 15TH ZIL HAJJA
Makkah Hotel	15TH ZIL HAJJA- 21TH ZIL HAJJA
Madinah Hotel	21TH- 24TH ZIL HAJJA
Madinah-Pakistan	24TH ZIL HAJJA

One Day Plus or Minus Possible Due To Moon Sighting or flight schedule

PACKAGE DETAILS

- Azizia building gender based sharing of 5 person (close to Mina)
- Special family room in Azizia (first come first serve basis)
- Buffet meals in Azizia on full board basis with 24 hours hot & cold drinks
- Makkah accommodation hotel standard (150+rooms) in Abraj Al Bait/Clock Tower half board meal
- Madina accommodation hotel standard(250+rooms) in Markaziah half board meal
- Maktab category B (close to Jamarat) all facilities of category B Maktab are inclusive as per the Taleemat of govt. of KSA
- Private new busses, full board in Mina & Arafat
- Hajj training and orientation programs
- Any airline with or without stopover
- Additional taxes or levies if occur are subject to be included later if any
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Service delivery sole criterion for competing public office: PM Shehbaz

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said politics in the country was reduced to mere rhetoric and termed service delivery the main criterion for running a public office. “To me, service delivery alone should govern competition for public office,” he wrote on



Twitter. The prime minister regretted that politics in the country suffered from a structural flaw. “It has, unfortunately, been reduced to a short-hand for grandstanding and meaningless rhetoric,” he said. He said politics was an arena where people competed to serve fellow citizens.

PR Professionalism: Police hands over cash, mobile phone to passenger

MULTAN (APP): Pakistan Railways Police set an example of professionalism and honesty by returning cash Rs 300,000, mobile phone and other precious documents to a passenger who had lost it during the journey. According to Railways official sources, a passenger namely Javed Iqbal was traveling by 11-Up Hazara Ex-

press and he lost his bag, containing cash Rs 300,000, mobile phone and some important documents. Railways Police traced the bag and handed Rs 300,000, mobile phone and other documents, over to Javed Iqbal. The passenger thanked ASI Farooq Ahmed (Shorkot Cantt) for extending matchless cooperation.

Iranian envoy calls on Riaz Pirzada

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan H.E. Mr.Seyyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini held a farewell meeting with Federal Minister for Human Rights Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada here Wednesday on the completion of the Ambassador’s term in Pakistan. The minister expressed his appreciation for the dedicated services of the Ambassador for strengthening the bilateral ties in multiple areas between Pakistan and Iran. He said that Pakistan and Iran were two brotherly countries having long political and economic ties ingrained in our century’s old common religious and cultural affinities. The minister said that Pakistan had suffered a lot in its relations with the neighboring countries, as this region has been the international political arena for

decades. We have much better human rights situation in Pakistan and other Muslim countries than the so-called champion countries of human rights. Currently, only Pakistan, Iran and Turkiye are extending their unwavering support for the people of Kashmir and Palestine, who are the victims of severe human rights violations in the world. The minister called it very welcoming and positive for Muslim world that Iran and Saudi Arabia have come closer. That rapprochement will be a giant step towards peace and stability in Persian Gulf and it will bring the whole Muslim fraternity on the same page. He also said that only with the enhanced cooperation of Iran, we can improve the quality of life of the people living in the border areas of Baluchistan.

Eid gifts distributed among 370 orphans

ATTOCK (APP): Deputy Commissioner Rao Atif Raza on Wednesday distributed Eid gifts, including clothes, shoes and henna on behalf of Qatar Charity to 370 orphans of Attock district. On the occasion, he said that supporting orphans and widows was the sunnah of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAWW). He said that the services of Qatar Charity

in Attock district were commendable and the district administration was fully cooperating in this regard. He said that sponsoring orphans would help them to stand on their feet and provide them a fair shot at building a prosperous and meaningful life. Talking to the media, the orphans and their mothers expressed their special gratitude to Qatar Charity.

AIOU extends admissions’ date till May 4 without late fee charges

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has extended the last date for admissions of postgraduate programs offered in the second phase of Spring semester 2023 without late fee charges until May 4th. Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mehmood has approved the extension on the requests of students and recommendations of Director Admissions. Programs offered in the second phase of Spring Semester 2023 include Associate Degree (BA/B. Com, BBA), BS (ODL), B.Ed, and postgraduate diploma programs, as

well as certificate courses. All admission forms and prospectuses for these programs are available on the University’s website. Meanwhile, the University has rescheduled the exams for Associate Degree/BA/BS and B.Ed programs which were scheduled to be held on April 25 and 26. According to the Examination Department, these papers will now be held on June 20 and 21 respectively. No changes have been made to the examination centers, and the roll number slips issued earlier will be acceptable for the rescheduled exams.

Over 500 rescuers to perform special duty on Eid

MULTAN (APP): Punjab Emergency Service Rescue 1122 Eid-ul-Fitr emergency plan has been released as over 500 rescuers to perform special duty and remain alert on Eid. Rescue mobile posts with ambulances, rescue vehicles and fire vehicles have been established at all important places of the city, mosques and worship places to provide timely and quality emergency services to the citizens. All 33 ambulances, 19 fire vehicles and rescue vehicles besides this 93 motorcycle ambulances will be deployed. The Rescue mobile posts would be deployed at different places including Eidgah Khanewal Road, Fort Qasim Bagh, Abdali Mas-

jid, Masjid Omer Bin Khattab Shah Rukn-e-Alam colony, Sadar Cantt, Askari Lake, Hussain Agahi, Vehari chowk and others. According to the emergency plan, Rescue 1122 will be operational round the clock and provide services. Emergency Officer Engineer Muhammad Bilal said that all the rescuers will perform their duties and remain alert in case of emergency. District Emergency Officer (DEO) Rescue 1122 Dr. Kaleemullah said that providing rescue service to the public was a top priority. He said asked the citizens to inform Rescue 1122 in case of any emergency and urged parents to stop their children from one-wheeling.

Rescue 1122 releases Eid emergency plan

FAISALABAD (APP): The Punjab Emergency Service (Rescue 1122) released an Eid Emergency plan to deal with any emergency situation during holidays of Eid. In this connection, leaves of the staff have also been cancelled and directed them to remain available round-the-clock for emergency call. District Emergency Officer Engineer Ehtisham Wahla, during the media briefing, said on Wednesday that rescue staff with ambulances would remain present around major Eid congregations and it would

provide quick response in case of any emergency. He said 42 temporary rescue posts had also been set up in the district to deal with an emergency situation during holidays of Eidul. He said call recording software, vehicle tracking system and cameras had been installed in a control room to monitor the entire rescue activities in the district during Eid holidays. An inspection team headed by Emergency Officer Operations Engineer Tariq Mehmood was constituted to check performance of rescue staff, he added.

IRSA releases 118,000 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 118,000 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 125,700 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1434.84 feet and was 36.84 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow in the dam was recorded as 41,800 cusecs while the outflow as 35,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1106.45 feet, 56.45 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 38,900 cusecs and 38,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 57,200, 33,300, 25,500 and 6,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 29,300 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 7,600 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

Six dacoits arrested,bikes, cash,weapons recovered

FAISALABAD (APP): The police on Wednesday claimed to have arrested six dacoits and recovered motorcycles, cash, weapons and other items. A police spokesman said Millat Town police conducted a raid in Bhaiwala area and arrested Muhammad Siddique, Saeed Ahmad and Mudassar Sher who were wanted to police in a number of dacoity, robbery and vehicle lifting cases. Police also recovered a motorcycle, pistols, mobile phones and cash. Meanwhile, CIA Jaranwala police arrested Arshad, Junaid and Sunny besides recoveringtwo motorcycles, cash and weapons.

Dolphin official dismissed from service

FAISALABAD (APP): An official of Dolphin Force was dismissed from service on charge of stealing fans from Dolphin Headquarters Faisalabad. A police spokesman said on Wednesday that Qamar Hayat was an accused of stealing five fans from the Dolphin Headquarters. The SSP Operations after an inquiry report of the in-charge Dolphin Force dismissedthe accused from service, he added.

4,000-litre unwholesome milk wasted

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) foiled an attempt to supply 4,000 litres of adulterated milk in the provincial metropolis from Kasur on Wednesday. On an information, a team led by Director General Raja Jahangir Anwar stopped a vehicle which was trying to enter the provincial capital and recovered 4,000-litre chemically contaminated milk from it. The team disposed of unwholesome milk, DG PFA Raja Jahangir said and added that the milk was to be supplied for preparing sweets to local food business operators at cheap rates. He said that a comprehensive policy was being launched to ensure provision safe and healthy milk,adding that people should also join hands with the PFA and inform about unhealthy food itemsthrough the PFA helpline 1223.

Three brick-kilns sealed

SARGODHA (APP): The environment protection department (EPD) sealed three brick-kilns for causing pollution here on Wednesday. According to the EPD spokesman, a team conducted raids at various areas of the district and found that three brick-kilns were being run without zigzag technology. To which, the team sealed the brick-kilns and registered cases against owners Azam, Asifand Iqbal.

Statements on social media regarding uplift projects “unfounded,baseless”:PBC

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation has categorically rejected and termed the statements being issued by some elements on their social media accounts regarding implementation of various development projects and utilization of funds as “unfounded and baseless.” According to a statement issued by the organization, these irresponsible statements and claims having no citation to any documentary proof were aimed at damaging the image of the organization and misguiding its employees. It is pertinent to mention here that being a state mouthpiece, national broadcaster has the primary responsibility to build the soft image of Pakistan among the comity of nations and in

this regard various interviews of foreign dignitaries including ambassadors have been conducted through proper channel, it added. As regards two 100 KW Short Wave Transmitters & HF Aerial System, Landhi Karachi, it said the PC-1 of this PSDP project was approved by CDWP in January 2006. The tendering process has been completed and the work order is going to be issued to the successful contractor to initiate the work. Similarly, PC-1 of PSDP project titled “Upgradation of Studios and Master Control Room” was duly approved and under the project, the renovation work of 45 studios and 20 master control rooms at different PBC stations was being carried out under the rules.

Ride-Sharing trend on rise among travellers ahead of Eid holidays

ISLAMABAD (APP): As people head to their native towns to celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr, a new trend of sharing-ride witnessed a sharp rise that is allowing commuters to travel between different cities and providing them with an affordable safe ride to reach their respective destinations. Transporters are charging fares at their own will and the people had no choice to reach their destinations except to share rides and avoid the increased fares, said a report aired by a private news channel. In the modern era of transportation, using a ride-sharing service can add extra value to the lifestyles of women, said a female commuter along with her family. The ride-sharing services are allowing passengers to use smartphones to submit a trip request and giving them a variety of segments in their registered vehicles, said a

commuter. Sharing rise on Eid is a rising trend which is now offering commuters a low-cost option to whiz through traffic jams and to save money, said another commuter. “Instead of transporting travellers one at a time, drivers could transport two to four people at once, resulting in fewer trips, in less time, to make the same amount of money,” commented a driver of a ride moving to Lahore city. Ride-hailing services and downloading apps have helped people in providing on-demand and flexible mobility choices to the riders, said a youngster. These sharing services are providing offering advantages such as affordable pick-up and drop, co-passenger information, economical rides fares and higher convenience as compared to the traditional transport service providers on Eid, said a female commuter.

Farmers advised to complete number of cotton plants for bumper yield

FAISALABAD (APP): Agriculture experts advised growers to complete number of cotton plants in fields for getting a bumper yield. A spokesman for the Agriculture (Extension) Department said on Wednesday that farmers would have to face colossal loss in the shape of low production if they did not care to number of plants. He said the number of plants per acre should be from 15,000 to 17,500 for the cotton crop cultivated from April

1-20 whereas this number should be 17,500 to 20,000 per acre if the crop was sown from April 21 to May 10. He said farmers should use 6 to 8 kilograms (kg) high-quality cotton seed per acre if it had 75 per cent germination capacity. The growers should also apply anti-fungus, anti-bacteria and pesticides to seeds beforeits cultivation because it would help save crop from pest attack, including whitefly, at leastfor one month, he added.

Provision of standard education to children top priority:Khalid Iqbal

ABBOTTABAD (APP): Deputy Commissioner Abbottabad, Khalid Iqbal Wednesday said that providing standard education to children was the district administration’s top priority and every possible cooperation will be ensured for this purpose. He expressed these views while chairing a meeting of the District Steering Committee of the Education Department for the month of March 2023. The DC said that the Department of Education and Monitoring Authority will play its role in monitoring and ensuring the effective implementation of standard education in all schools throughout the district. It will also be ensured that children have access to better educational opportunities

and environments. Earlier, DM Education Monitoring Authority, Adeqa Qureshi, briefed the meeting on the performance of March 2023 and the performance of the previous Steering Committee meeting and monthly progress. DC emphasized improving education and providing essential facilities in schools and issued directions to the DEOs in this regard. Khalid Iqbal stressed the implementation of new teaching methods in line with the demands of students for distance learning. He issued instructions regarding the appointment of school administrative staff, availability of water and electricity in schools, maintenance of schools, and resolution of boundary wall issues.

Out of magic books straight to the screen, Umro Ayyar’s debut seems close

ISLAMABAD (APP): The most fascinating childhood tale is anticipated to enchant the audience very soon as the lead cast of the fantasy film recently left hints via their social media accounts. The intriguing novels of Umro Ayyar and his magic-filled journey were always go-to bed must-haves that 90s kids still remember and reminisce about. The character of ‘tumour ayyar’ is not just childhood folklore but also a part of the literary heritage which has travelled centuries as being part of “Dastan-e-Amir Hamza” filled with adventures & evil sorcerers. While ptv has a great contribution to putting these characters into real life through its majestic series ‘Ainak Wala Jin’ in which umro year appeared as part of a few episodes but to give this marvellous character its due recognition and bring back the nostalgic hero for its admirers a Pakistani film is set to make its ap-

pearance with a renewed look. Although the project named ‘UmroAyyar - A New Beginning’ had earlier announced its launch in November 2021 but was delayed. Now finally after a long wait fans are anticipating the release of this much-awaited film as its lead cast recently hinted at the final countdown to release. Famed as Altamash of Anaa, Uman Mukhtar shared motion graphics of the said film along with a caption, in which he is appearing as a lead star which made his fans eager to know the final date of the film’s release. “The Countdown to the ultimate battle has begun”, captioned Mukhtar under his Instagram post. Along with Mukhtar, another leader of the legendary project ‘Sanam Saeed’ also shared the same snippet via her official Instagram account which intrigued the fans about the grand release of this masterpiece magical tale.

APHC urges int’l community to play role for release of Kashmiri detainees

ISLAMABAD (APP): In Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), the All Parties Hurriyet Conference (APHC) has appealed to the UN and international human rights organizations to put pressure on India to release all Kashmiri political detainees. In a statement in Srinagar, the APHC spokesman urged the UN, the International Committee of Red Cross and all human rights or-

ganizations to play their role for the settlement of the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the UN resolutions. He said, “India cannot suppress the freedom sentiment of the Kashmiri people through illegal detentions, arrests and harassment”. Expressing deep concern over the plight of Kashmiri detainees, he said that most of these detainees had spent more than two decades in jails.

PM for ensuring minimum power load-shedding in summer

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed to ensure minimum load-shedding of electricity during the summer season. Chairing a meeting to review the situation of electricity load-shedding during summer, and the consumption and production of urea fertilizer, he said the pace of restoration of the Neelum Jhelum project should be increased. The meeting was informed about the production of electricity and the expected demand during this summer. Furthermore, with regard to the revival of Neelum Jhelum power project, it was told that the project would be fully restored and start generating the cheap and

clean electricity in July this year. The meeting was also informed in detail about the provision of gas to the urea industry, besides data of its production and consumption in the country. The prime minister directed the relevant authorities to ensure timely production of the urea fertilizer and its supply to the farmers. He said the government was taking all possible steps to minimize per acre cost of the farmers. He said during the last year, the government had given top priority to the agriculture development and prosperity of the farmers. “I will not let anybody to grasp the rights of the farmers through smuggling of urea fertilizer,” he added.

President directs State Life to pay death insurance claim to widow

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi has directed the State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan (SLICP) to pay the death insurance claim worth Rs 300,000 to the widow of a deceased policyholder who was denied payment on the ground that her husband’s death was not the direct consequence of road accident but he was a known patient of epilepsy. He also upheld the orders of the Wafaqi Mohtasib directing SLICP to adopt proper procedure/rules/regulations which were violated by it resulting in maladministration. The president gave this decision while rejecting a representation filed by SLICP against the decision of the Wafaqi Mohtasib (WM) Akram Masih, the late husband of Rehana Bibi (the complainant), had obtained a life insurance policy from SLICP for

the sum assured of Rs 300,000 for a period of 20 years. He died in a road accident and, after his death, his wife filed a death insurance claim which was rejected by SLICP claiming that he fell down due to an epilepsy attack and his death was not a direct consequence of the road accident as reflected in the FIR and was a known patient of epilepsy. Feeling aggrieved, she approached the Wafaqi Mohtasib which passed the order in her favour. The SLCIP, then, filed a representation with the president against the order of Mohtasib. In his decision, the president observed that the record showed that SLICP had not produced anything to establish that the death of the deceased was a direct consequence of epilepsy despite having all resources at its disposal.

Capital starts to wear a deserted look as working natives move to hometowns

ISLAMABAD (APP): The capital city has started to wear a deserted look as most of the natives, settled here due to jobs, are moving to their native hometowns to celebrate the religious festival of Eid-ul-Fitr with their families and relatives. The typical hustle and bustle of the city usually fades away during the Eid days as a large number of residents prefer to proceed to their hometowns after taking a couple of leaves or so from their offices and jobs, and this Eid is also not different. The government has although announced five Eid-ul-Fitr holidays from Friday to Tuesday, the natives have clubbed Wednesday and Thursday before Eid and were seen moving to their hometowns. “I’m leaving for my hometown in Bhakkar through public transport to celebrate Eid with my parents. I’ve taken a two-day more leaves from my office to stay with my parents for maximum

days”, Zubaida Abid, who works in an office in the Capital told APP. “I’ve purchased all the essentials, including clothes, shoes but could not manage to buy bangles and henna till the last minute due to rush in markets. Now I’ll buy these from my hometown,” she said while mentioning the huge rush in the markets. “The festival of Eid-ul-Fitr is very important for me as I get more time to spend with my parents after remaining busy in job here”, she said. Azhar Ali, another resident of the Capital said that Eid was the only occasion when he finds time with his friends but most of them have left for their native hometowns to celebrate the festival with their relatives. “I feel again I’ll not be able to enjoy the occasion fully.” “We’ve planned to arrange a barbecue party out door by inviting our relatives who live in the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

Punjab Ombudsman holds quarterly review meeting

LAHORE (APP): Complaints of expatriates approaching the office of the Ombudsman Punjab should be resolved on priority basis and in the case of irrelevance, plaintiffs be properly guided about the appropriate forum so that they may approach it for legal relief. This was stated by Ombudsman Punjab Maj (retd) Azam Suleman Khan while presiding over a quarterly review meeting at his office on Wednesday. He reviewed the performance of advisors and consultants of regional offices across Punjab during the first three months of the current year. The meeting reviewed the performance of advisors and consultants in resolving public issues, reclaiming government lands from illegal occupants, protecting children’s rights and providing financial relief to complainants. The meeting expressed satisfaction with the use of IT-based interventions that have helped make Ombudsman’s offices more accessible to the public inside

and outside the country. The Punjab Ombudsman directed that final orders related to public complaints should be issued within 24 hours, adding that a monthly performance report be submitted to the head office by the 5th of each month to assess the performance. The meeting expressed satisfaction with the 24/7 helpline 1050 facility, which guides and assists people in obtaining relief. The Punjab Ombudsman emphasised expediting resolution of the public complaints to ensure timely relief to the public. The office of the Chief Provincial Commissioner for Children is an important forum to ensure timely resolution of complaints relating to child abuse and this would help promote a child-friendly society, he noted and concluded that the Punjab Ombudsman’s office had been serving as a mediator to provide individuals with access to justice, promoting trust and confidence in the government institutions.

PM lauds Sherry Rehman for effectively highlighting Pakistan’s climate change woes at int’l level



remarkable,” he wrote on Twitter. PM Sharif expressed words of appreciation as the prestigious Times maga-

zine placed Sherry Rehman on its list of 100 influential people of the year 2023. “It is a well-deserved honour,” he said. Sherry Rehman in a tweet expressed gratitude to the prime minister for acknowledging her services in the field of climate change. “Thank you so much Prime Minister. Am truly humbled, and thank you for your support,” she said.

Bike lifter gang busted

SARGODHA (APP): Kot Momin police on Wednesday arrested a bike lifter gang. Police also recovered five motorcycles from the accused, Faisal Ali and Saqlain. Further investigation was under way.

Five held with contraband

SIALKOT (APP): Police on Wednesday claimed to have arrested five accused with narcotics and liquors. According to a police spokesperson, Muradpur police station arrested Mehmood with 2.220-kg hashish, Shoaib Azhar with 1.520-kg hashish, Asif Maseeh with 78 bottlesof liquor, Azmatullah with two bottles of liquor and proclaimed offender Sadaqat Ali. Police sent the accused behind bars after registering separate cases.

DPO holds open court

SIALKOT (APP): An open court was held by District Police Officer (DPO) Muhammad Hassan Iqbal and issued directions on Wednesday. The district police officer said complaints of people would be addressed on a top priority and relief would be provided to complainants. He said series of open courts would continue to provide justice to people at their doorsteps. The DPO directed DSP Sambrial to complete investigation of murder cases on merit.bars after registering separate cases.

PFA disposes off 740 liters adulterated milk

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): Punjab Food Authority (PFA) on Wednesday raided against adulteration mafia and disposed off 740 liters of adulterated milk after seizing it. According to PFA spokesperson, the dairy safety teams checked the thousands of liters milk in 19 vehicles by using modern lactosene machine during establishing pickets at Taunsa Mor in suburbs of Kot Addu and near Pathan hotel Sananwan area. The milk loaded on five vehicles was disposed off on the spot after its samples failed. The spokesman said that there was lack of fats in the milk and detergents while chemicals and other harmful ingredients were also found. The Food Safety team while giving warning to the vehicle owners over adulteration of milk, said that the milk was a basic food which was consumed by everyone including children, old and young.

Int’l Earth Day to be marked on April 22

ISLAMABAD (APP): Earth Day will be marked on April 22 (Saturday) across the globe including Pakistan which aims to inspire awareness and appreciation for Earth’s environment. The United Nations calls the event International Mother Earth Day. The April 22 Earth Day is usually celebrated with outdoor performances, where individuals or groups perform acts of service to Earth. Typical ways of observing Earth Day include planting trees, picking up roadside trash, conducting various programs for recycling and conservation, and using recyclable containers for snacks and lunches. Some people are encouraged to sign petitions to governments, calling for stronger or immediate action to stop global warming and reverse environmental destruction. Television stations frequently air programs dealing with environmental issues. The April 22 Earth Day, founded by Senator Gaylord Nelson, was first organized in 1970 to promote ecology and respect for life on the planet as well as to encourage awareness of the growing problems of air, water, and soil pollution.

PM presented Rs 8 mln donation cheque from Sialkot Chamber of Commerce

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here on Wednesday and presented him with a donation cheque of Rs 8 million for the PM’s Relief Fund

for Earthquake Victims of Turkiye and Syria. The minister presented the cheque on behalf of the donation by the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industries. Defence Minister Khwaja Asif was also present.

Locals torture alleged robbers, one found carrying police card

MULTAN (APP): Locals during an alleged robbery attempt on Wednesday overpowered robbers and tortured them near Chungi No.9. According to eyewitnesses, one of the robbers identified as Constable Mohsin Iqbal had a police service card in his possession. They further

claimed that both of the accused were police officials. The locals later staged a protest and demanded of the police to take action against the suspects and confirm the arrested robbers’ identity. Police reached the spot and took the accused into custody.

SC contradicts news reports regarding its audit

ISLAMABAD (APP): Supreme Court on Wednesday clarified a news item published in a section of press regarding its audit wherein it has been alleged that the said audit has not been conducted for the last ten years and that the Public Accounts Committee has summoned the Registrar Supreme Court accordingly. In a clarification issued here, it has been said that to set the record straight, the au-

dit of Supreme Court of Pakistan has been conducted and completed upto June 30, 2021. Audit for financial year 2021-22 is under process and can be confirmed from the office of Auditor General of Pakistan. “It is, hereby, clarified in concrete terms that such reports are contrary to the facts, incorrect, misleading and are based on erroneous information placed before Public Accounts Committee.”

Woman’s body found hanging in house

MULTAN (APP): Police station on Wednesday recovered a woman’s body hanging from the roof of her home in the limits of Daera Din Panah police. Police took the husband into custody for investigation and shifted the body to the hospital for autopsy. They how-

ever didn’t reveal the identity of the couple to the media. However, the neighbours claimed that the couple frequently had scuffles with each other and noises came out of their house often. A case has been registered while further investigation was underway.

Heavy rain, snowfall continues in upper parts Hazara division

ABBOTTABAD (APP): On the third consecutive day, the hilly areas of the upper Hazara division received light snowfall and intermittent rainfall. The Karakoram Highway (KKH) was blocked for traffic due to landslides at several places in Kohistan while many connecting roads all over the Hazara division were also blocked. The mountainous areas of Manshera and the upper regions are experiencing intermittent snowfall which has once again dropped the temperatures up to zero Celsius. Tourist spots Naran, Bata Kundi, Lake Lulusar and adjacent areas are also

experiencing snowfall. In Naran, the snowfall has exceeded two inches. Rain is also continuously pouring in Haripur, Abbottabad, Mansehra, Torgarh, Batgram, Upper Kohistan, and Lower Kohistan. Due to heavy landslides at three locations on the Karakoram Highway, traffic from Gilgit-Baltistan was stopped for the last 12 hours, and NHA and other departments have partially opened the highway. According to the meteorology department, intermittent rain and light snowfall would continue for the next three days and conclude on Saturday.

DC takes notice of contaminated water supply to Nawabshah

HYDERABAD (APP): Deputy Commissioner Shehryar Gul Memon took notice of news items appearing on social media regarding the supply of contaminated water for drinking purposes through the water supply system. DC visited the main water supply system at Rohri Canal, checked the samples of water and directed concerned officials to adopt all possible steps for the supply of clean drinking water to citizens. He also directed to carry out water testing and found any issue in supply lines these shall be replaced immediately. He also instructed to carry out a test of water at the Ultra Filtration Plant and Gajrah Wah Water Supply Scheme adding that

no slackness would be tolerated in this regard. During the visit, DC expressed anger at concerned officials for not using chemicals meant for cleaning the water supply from canals. DC said that like other basic amenities, clean drinking water is also on priority and for that purpose, officials should discharge their duty honestly to provide relief to the public. DC appealed to the general public to lodge a complaint regarding the supply of contaminated and smelly water in their area, with Municipal Corporation at Ph No 244350680. Officials of the Department of Public Health and Municipal Corporation were also present on the occasion.

PIA’s flights to Chitral to be scheduled with increase in traffic load: NA told

ISLAMABAD (APP): Parliamentary Secretary for Railways Kiran Imran Dar on Wednesday informed the National Assembly that Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) flights would be scheduled to Chitral with an increase in passengers’ traffic load. In response to a calling attention notice about the non-inclusion of tourist spots in the flight schedule of PIA issued in March, raised

by Maulana Abdul Akbar Chitrali, she said that PIA’s flight schedule was linked with passengers’ traffic load. Flights were scheduled in the months of May to August last year owing to the increase in the traffic load of tourists, she added. Earlier, raising the calling attention notice, Maulana Abdul Chitrali said that tourists also visited Chitral in winter but no flight was scheduled.

Meta prepares another round of companywide layoffs

CALIFORNIA (Agencies): Meta Platforms Inc is set to commence companywide layoffs on Wednesday as it restructures teams and works toward founder Mark Zuckerberg's goal of greater efficiency. The Facebook parent company notified managers to prepare to announce job cuts on Wednesday, via a memo seen by Bloomberg News. It indicates Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and Reality Labs — which houses the firm's virtual reality efforts



and Quest hardware — will all be impacted. The move is part of a cost-cutting push that will eventually whittle away 10,000 positions at the company, as announced by Zuckerberg in March.

A further round of cuts is set to follow in May. Meta already cut about 13% of its workforce, or about 11,000 jobs, in November. It also extended a hiring freeze through the first quarter, which has been punctuated by job and cost cuts by other Silicon Valley businesses. Zuckerberg's comments have suggested that the company would aim to become leaner and rebalance its ratio of technologists and engineers to business and administrative staff.

China drafts plan to boost recovery, consumption growth

BEIJING (Agencies): China is formulating plans to boost the recovery and expansion of consumption, the state planner's spokesperson Meng Wei said on Wednesday, signalling officials are worried about weak demand despite a sharp rebound in retail sales. China's economy grew at a faster-than-expected pace in the first quarter, as businesses and consumers came out of crippling pandemic disruptions, although headwinds from



a global slowdown point to a bumpy ride ahead. The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) pledged to promote a sustained recovery in consumption. "Currently, we are

working on drafting documents on the recovery and expansion of consumption, mainly focusing on key areas such as stabilising big-ticket consumption, enhancing service consumption and expanding rural consumption," said Meng. Meng, at a news conference, also mentioned stabilising automobile consumption, which was a "big part" of supporting consumption, by promoting new energy vehicles to rural areas.

Disney poised to cut thousands of jobs next week

CALIFORNIA (Agencies): Walt Disney Co plans to start cutting thousands of jobs next week, including about 15% of the staff in its entertainment division, people familiar with the matter said. The cuts will span TV, film, theme parks and corporate positions, and affect every region where Disney operates, said the people, who asked not to be identified because the details aren't public. Some affected workers will be notified as early as April 24. The company declined to



comment. Disney said in February it planned to eliminate 7,000 positions from its workforce of more than 220,000, part of an overall strategy to shave US\$5.5 billion in annual costs.

The cuts are coming across the company, the people said, including at Disney Entertainment, which was created in a restructuring this year as home to the company's movie and TV production and distribution businesses, including streaming. As part of that restructuring, chief executive officer Bob Iger moved to restore authority to creative executives. He elevated key lieutenants including Alan Bergman and Dana Walden, the co-chairmen of Disney Entertainment.

Australia sets new pollution rules to boost EV uptake

SYDNEY (Agencies): Australia said on Wednesday it would introduce new standards targeting vehicle emissions to boost the uptake of electric cars, as it looks to catch up with other developed economies. Just 3.8% of its cars sold in Australia last year were electric, well behind other developed economies such as Britain and Europe where electric cars made up 15% and 17% of sales, respectively. The new national electric vehicle strategy will introduce a fuel efficiency standard



that will outline how much pollution — or specifically, carbon dioxide — a car will produce when running, energy minister Chris Bowen said in a news conference. "Fuel-efficient and electric vehicles are cleaner and cheaper

to run — today's announcement is a win-win for motorists," Bowen said in a statement. Details would be finalised in the coming months, he added. "Fuel efficiency standards would require more affordable electric vehicles to be sent to Australia," he said. Apart from Russia, Australia was the only developed country to either not have or be developing fuel efficiency standards, which encourage manufacturers to supply more electric and no-emission vehicles.

Musk touts new moderation policy to reassure advertisers

MIAMI (Agencies): Twitter head Elon Musk on Tuesday attempted to reassure wary advertisers by hyping up the site's newly introduced content moderation policy against hateful material. Speaking at a meeting in Florida, the controversial billionaire outlined new rules, first announced Monday, to limit the reach of tweets that do not conform to the platform's guidelines. "If somebody has something hateful to say, it doesn't mean he should have a microphone," the self-described free-speech absolutist told gathered jour-



nalists. "He still should be able to say it, but it needs to be not them pushing it on people," he added. Under the new policy, unveiled in a blog post titled "Freedom of Speech, Not Reach," Twitter will soon begin tagging posts whose visibility has been limited. The

labels will "bring a new level of transparency to enforcement actions", the blog post said. "Tweets with these labels will be made less discoverable on the platform. Additionally, we will not place ads adjacent to content that we label." Since purchasing the so-called bird app in a rollercoaster US\$44 billion deal last year, Musk has sharply reined in content moderation on the platform, allowing the return of many users who had been banned for posting tweets that incite hate or spread misinformation.

Netflix subscribers at record high, password crackdown looms

SAN FRANCISCO (Agencies): Netflix on Tuesday said that its number of subscribers hit a record high 232.5 million in the first quarter of the year and that its nascent ad-supported tier was faring well. The streaming television giant reported a quarterly profit of US\$1.3 billion, in line with expectations, but said it had delayed a broad crackdown on sharing of account passwords "to improve the experience for members". Netflix said it expects to begin rolling out its options



for paid password sharing this quarter instead. "It's clear that the company wants to manage any fallout from the new strategy," said Third Bridge analyst Jamie Lumley. That means some membership and revenue ben-

efits resulting from the move were postponed, Netflix said in a letter to shareholders. Netflix has dabbled with "borrower" or "shared" accounts in a few markets but plans to roll them out in the US and elsewhere this month, co-chief executive Greg Peters said in a streamed earnings interview. Netflix said it is taking time to make sure subscribers have seamless access to the service away from home or on various devices such as tablets, TVs or smartphones.

J&J talc unit again seeks to halt 38,000 cancer lawsuits

NEW BRUNSWICK (Agencies): A Johnson & Johnson subsidiary is again asking a US judge to pause tens of thousands of lawsuits alleging that the company's baby powder and other talc products cause cancer, as it takes another shot at resolving the litigation in bankruptcy after a federal appeals court found its first attempt improper.



At a Tuesday hearing in Trenton, New Jersey, a lawyer for LTL Management argued that the lawsuits, which are al-

ready stayed against LTL, should also be stopped against J&J, which has a market value of over US\$430 billion and has not filed for bankruptcy itself. LTL has said litigation against J&J would imperil its effort to negotiate a comprehensive settlement of all current and future talc claims in its bankruptcy.

UK inflation eases but holds above 10%

LONDON (Agencies): UK inflation slowed slightly last month but held stubbornly above 10%, official data showed Wednesday, further fueling a cost of living crisis despite an aggressive series of interest rate hikes. The Consumer Prices Index (CPI) rose by a stronger-than-ex-

pected 10.1% in March, down from 10.4% in February, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement. Inflation nevertheless held in double figures on soaring food and housing costs including electricity and gas bills. Market expectations had been for a drop be-

low 10%. "Inflation eased slightly in March, but remains at a high level," said ONS chief economist Grant Fitzner. "The main drivers of the decline were motor fuel prices and heating oil costs, both of which fell after sharp rises at the same time last year.

Ping An calls for strategic review in HSBC battle

HONG KONG (Agencies): HSBC Holdings Plc's largest shareholder has kept up the pressure on the bank to revamp its business as it called for a "strategic restructuring" of the lender, just weeks before its annual shareholder meeting. Ping An Insurance Group Co publicly called for the creation of "a separately listed Asia business headquartered in Hong Kong", in a statement Tuesday. "It is necessary for HSBC to push for structural reform to fundamentally address HSBC's underlying market competitiveness issues, improve performance, enhance value and accel-



erate growth opportunities in Asia." The more than 2,000-word statement offers the most detailed insight yet into Ping An's stance on HSBC and underlines the increasingly fractious relationship between Europe's largest bank and one of its most important investors.

Tesla cuts EV prices again to under US\$40,000

AUSTIN (Agencies): Tesla Inc has cut the price of several of its models yet again in a further sign chief executive officer Elon Musk is willing to sacrifice the electric carmaker's profitability in the face of rising interest rates that may dent consumer demand. The Austin, Texas-based automaker said on its website that the price of its Model Y long-range all-wheel drive model will decrease by 9.1% to \$49,990 while the price of the Model Y performance will drop by 8.5% to \$53,990. The cost of a Model 3 rear-wheel drive will be cut by 7% to \$39,990. It's the second price cut this month as the automaker seeks to



stoke demand after several quarters of disappointing deliveries. The company is in the rare position among EV makers of having big profit margins to work with, as incumbents including Ford Motor Co and newer entrants like Rivian Automotive Inc and Lucid Group Inc struggle to make money at lower volumes.

Google says services back up for US users

NEW YORK (Agencies): Alphabet Inc's Google said services were back up for users in the US after a brief outage late on Tuesday, according to a company spokesperson. "There was a very brief issue affecting the availability of results for some searches, limited to the Americas region, and it was quickly addressed," the spokesperson said in an email, without disclosing further details on the outage. At the peak of the outage more than 22,000 users were impacted, according to outage tracking website Downtdetector.com. Downtdetector tracks



outages by collating status reports from a number of sources including user-submitted errors on its platform. About 87% of impacted users had reported issues with Google Search, Downtdetector data showed. As of 10.21pm ET (02.21 GMT), the number of outage reports dropped to 324.

Dollar regains footing as Fed's outlook weighed

TOKYO (Agencies): The dollar steadied on Wednesday after it seesawed with bond market volatility as investors scrutinised US economic indicators, Federal Reserve commentary and corporate earnings for clues about the path for interest rates. The dollar index — which gauges the greenback against six major peers — ticked up 0.11% to 101.83 in Asian trading, following a 0.36% slide on Tuesday that reversed the 0.54% rally of the session before. On Friday, the index had dipped to a one-year low at 100.78. US two-year Treasury yields, which are extremely sensitive to Fed expectations, reached an



almost one-month high of 4.231% overnight and remained elevated in Tokyo trading on Wednesday. St Louis Fed chief James Bullard told Reuters in an interview that he leans toward 75 bps of additional tightening, versus market consensus for one more 25 bp hike next month and then the potential for cuts later this year.

BRICS to pass West in economic might — Bloomberg

BRASÍLIA (Agencies): The BRICS group — Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa — is expected to increase their share of the global economy to nearly 35% by 2028, Bloomberg reported on Monday. According to the outlet's calculations based on the latest IMF data, this year, the BRICS countries will contribute 32.1% of the world's growth, compared to the G7's 29.9%. The Group of Seven nations (G7), consisting of the US, UK, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, and Japan, is considered the most advanced economic bloc of countries on the plan-



et. The report indicated that in 2020, the contribution of the BRICS countries and the G7 to global economic growth was equal, and from that moment on, the performance of the Western countries has been declining. By 2028, the G7's contribution to the world economy is predicted to decrease to 27.8%.

Samsung may dump Google Search for rival — NYT

SEOUL (Agencies): Shares of Google's parent company, Alphabet, fell by as much as 4% on Monday in the biggest single-day decline in more than two months. The slide followed a Sunday report by the New York Times that South Korean tech giant Samsung was considering switching to Microsoft's Bing as the default search engine on its devices. Bing is a minor player that has risen in prominence recently after the integration of artificial intelligence technology. Microsoft, a primary investor and partner of research lab OpenAI, the developer of ChatGPT, added a similar chatbot that is capable of having open-ended text conversations. There was "panic" at



Google as the potential switch by the world's leading smartphone maker would put at risk around \$3 billion of its \$162 billion annual revenue, the outlet said, citing internal messages. The contract between Alphabet and the South Korean company is being negotiated, and Samsung could end up sticking with Google, according to the NYT. Another \$20 billion is tied to a similar contract with Apple, which will be up for renewal this year, the report added.

Ighalo double dents Ronaldo’s title dreams as Al-Hilal defeat Al-Nasser in Riyadh derby

RIYADH (Agencies): The cheers rang around King Fahd International Stadium in Riyadh on Tuesday night and surely there must have been similar celebrations over in Jeddah. Al-Hilal had just defeated Al-Nasser 2-0 in a contentious Riyadh Derby, thanks to two penalties from Odion Ighalo, but perhaps the real victors were Al-Ittihad, who remain three points clear of second-place Al-Nasser at the top of the Roshn Saudi League and now have a game in hand. Al-Nasser have only six matches remaining and



so the loss was a huge blow to their hopes of winning title number 10 — and even Cristiano Ronaldo might not be able to do anything about it. He

gave everything on the night but cut a forlorn figure as he walked down the tunnel after the final whistle, waved gleefully on his way by thousands of delighted Al-Hilal fans. The victory was well deserved as Al-Hilal were the better team for much of the game, though the visitors will point to the intervention of the video assistant referee in denying them twice in the second half: First by ruling a Ronaldo goal offside on what looked like a very tight call indeed, and then with a penalty decision.

Kipchoge says leg injury foiled his Boston Marathon attempt

BOSTON (Agencies): The rain might be gone if Eliud Kipchoge returns for another try at the Boston Marathon, as he said Tuesday he intends to do. The field might be thinner. The wind might be at his back. But Heartbreak Hill will still be there. The historic route from Hopkinton to Boston’s Back Bay isn’t going to change, and that was the biggest problem for the two-time Olympic gold medalist who set a world record on the flattest of the major marathon courses and broke 2 hours in a completely controlled environment. “I can’t



win every time,” he told reporters a day after his slowest marathon ever and just his third loss in a major race to go with 12 victories. “I was feeling good.

And I think it’s just it’s a challenge. So let us discuss it as a challenge and move on,” he said. “You know, there is three things: Yesterday is a canceled check. Today is cash. And tomorrow is a promissory note. Let us forget about the canceled checks, let us talk of the cash and the promissory notes.” A day after finishing sixth in his Boston debut, Kipchoge said he had a problem with his left leg that prevented him from pushing the pace. He would not elaborate — “I’m not a doctor” — but allowed that it was his upper leg.

AC Milan put away Napoli, rejoin Europe’s elite in Champions League semifinals

NAPLES (Agencies): Serie A champions last season. A Champions League semifinalist this season. AC Milan are regaining their pedigree as a European power after a turbulent stretch marked by the end of Silvio Berlusconi’s ownership and financial issues. The seven-time continental champion reached the last four of the Champions League with a 1-1 draw at Napoli on Tuesday with a first-half goal from Olivier Giroud proving decisive. Also, Milan goalkeeper Mike Maignan blocked a late penalty from Khvicha Kvaratskhelia,



oud proving decisive. Also, Milan goalkeeper Mike Maignan blocked a late penalty from Khvicha Kvaratskhelia,

Napoli’s standout winger, with Giroud also having a penalty kick saved before his goal. Victor Osimhen equalized for Napoli with a header in stoppage time. Milan advanced on 2-1 aggregate in the all-Italian matchup after beating the runaway Serie A leader 1-0 in the first leg. “Everyone thought we were the underdogs, but we have a lot of heart, we put everything into this,” Milan coach Stefano Pioli said.

Russian men’s basketball team banned from Olympic pre-qualification

MIES (Agencies): Russia will remain banned from international basketball with its men’s national team not being allowed to participate in this year’s Pre-Olympic Qualification Tournaments, Fiba’s executive committee announced on Tuesday. Russia who were 12th at the previous Fiba Men’s World Cup in 2019, last qualified for the Olympics in 2012, winning a bronze medal with a line-up that included former NBA player Andrei Kirilenko.



“Following the IOC recommendations on the participation of athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport in international competitions published

on 28 March, the Fiba executive committee has decided to not allow the registration of the Russian men’s national team,” the governing body said in a statement. The Pre-Qualification Tournaments, which were introduced this year, will be played by 40 countries in total, with 28 that participated in the Second Round of the Fiba Basketball World Cup 2023 Qualifiers plus the top-ranked 12 that did not participate in the second round.

Ronaldo upstaged by ex-Man Utd forward in Al-Nasser loss

RIYADH (Agencies): Cristiano Ronaldo was upstaged by another former Manchester United forward in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday as Al-Hilal’s Odion Ighalo scored twice from the penalty spot in a 2-0 win over Al-Nasser. Portugal striker Ronaldo moved to Al-Nasser on a lucrative deal last January and scored eight goals in his first five games but he has been unable to sustain that pace. In Al-Nasser’s first game since the depar-



ture of coach Rudi Garcia, Ronaldo drew a blank while Ighalo, who had a loan spell at Manchester United in 2020, scored twice to hand Asian

champions Al-Hilal the win. Ronaldo was yellow carded in the 57th minute after he tangled with Gustavo Cuelar and things only got worse from there. The 38-year-old had a goal disallowed for offside in the 77th minute and after he was awarded a penalty six minutes later the Video Assistant Referee reversed the decision. Ronaldo was later taunted as he left the field with Al-Hilal fans waving Lionel Messi shirts.

UAE jiu-jitsu national team gear up for Grand Prix Paris Open

ABU DHABI (Agencies): The UAE national jiu-jitsu team, consisting of 12 men and nine women, is set to take part in the Grand Prix Paris Open 2023 kicking off on Saturday. Organized by the Jiu-Jitsu International Federation, the event will feature over 250 male and female athletes from 22 countries, and is scheduled to take place from April 22 to 24 in Paris. The UAE team will depart for the French capital on Wednesday. The team members recently deliv-



ered outstanding performances for their respective clubs during the Jiu-Jitsu President’s Cup in Abu

Dhabi, which should provide them with a boost in France. Mubarak Al-Menhali, director of the technical department at the UAE Jiu-Jitsu Federation, said: “The national jiu-jitsu team is keen to participate in tournaments like Paris Grand Prix as part of its efforts to retain its continental and international achievements, and to intensify its preparations for future championships, especially the Jiu-Jitsu World Championship and the Asian Games in China.”

Stoinis, Avesh help Lucknow edge Rajasthan in IPL

Jaipur, India (AFP/APP): Marcus Stoinis and Avesh Khan shared five wickets between them as Lucknow Super Kings defended 154 to defeat Rajasthan Royals by 10 runs in the Indian Premier League on Wednesday. West Indies big-hitter Kyle Mayers top-scored with 51 and Stoinis contributed 21 in Lucknow’s total on a tough batting pitch in Jaipur. Stoinis then took the two key wickets of Yashasvi Jaiswal (44) and Jos Buttler (40). Fellow quick Avesh returned figures of 3-25. “It was nice to get involved with the ball,” said man of the match Stoinis. “There were not exact plans to get them (Jaiswal and Buttler) out, it was about using the conditions and using my smarts as a bowler.” With 19 needed off

the last over, Avesh kept his calm to strike twice and restrict Rajasthan to 144-6. Rajasthan keep their top spot in the table with eight points, ahead of second-placed Lucknow, who also have four wins from six matches but stay behind on an inferior run-rate. Stoinis broke a promising opening stand of 87 between the left-handed Jaiswal and Buttler and denied both batsmen their fifties. Last year’s runners-up Rajasthan looked like coasting along before they lost Jaiswal, skipper Sanju Samson, run out on two, and Buttler in the space of three overs. “That Samson run out and two wickets falling back-to-back lets you back into the game,” said Lucknow skipper KL Rahul. “Their top three-four are really strong and our

plan was to get them out early, and it came via a run-out today.” Avesh dismissed the big-hitting Shimron Hetmyer but impact player Devdutt Padikkal took charge and attempted to revive the chase with his quick-fire 26 but it was in vain. Avesh got Padikkal caught behind in the final over and sent back Dhruv Jurel for nought to be on a hat-trick denied by Ravichandran Ashwin. Rajasthan, inaugural IPL winners in 2008, began the match with a maiden over from New Zealand left-arm quick Trent Boult, who returned figures of 1-16. Ashwin took two wickets, including the dangerous Mayers after the left-handed opener struck his third fifty of the season following a sluggish start.

Booker brilliance as Suns sink Clippers, Celtics dominant

LOS ANGELES (Agencies): Devin Booker led a second-half rally as the Phoenix Suns came from behind to defeat the Los Angeles Clippers 123-109 and level their Western Conference playoff series 1-1 on Tuesday. Booker scored 18 points in the third quarter before finishing with a 38-point haul to complete a battling comeback by Phoenix, who had trailed by 13 in the second quarter against the Kawhi Leonard-inspired Clippers. The Clippers stunned Phoenix at home in Game 1 on Sunday and appeared to be well on their way to taking a commanding 2-0 series lead after surging into a 49-36 lead with just over five minutes remaining in the second quarter. But Kevin Durant, veteran Chris Paul and Booker sparked into life for Phoenix in the closing minutes



of the first half to erase the Clippers lead, and Booker drained a 27-foot three-pointer on the stroke of halftime to make it a tie game at 59-59 at the break. Booker then took over with a flurry of scoring in the third quarter to fire Phoenix into a 92-87 lead heading into the final quarter. Durant finished with 25 points while Paul chipped in with 16 to help see Phoenix home as the series heads to Los Angeles for Game 3 on Thursday.

Alcaraz cruises to opening victory at Barcelona Open



BARCELONA (Agencies): Defending champion Carlos Alcaraz opened his title defense at the Barcelona Open with a comfortable 6-3, 6-1 win over Nuno Borges on Tuesday. The top-seeded Spaniard, No. 2 in the world, converted five of his seven break opportunities to secure the win at the Rafa Nadal center court. “It’s always different to play here, it’s not just any other tournament for me,” the 19-year-old Alcaraz said.

“I’m at home, with the fans behind me. It’s always nice and special.” A two-time winner this year, Alcaraz is making his 2023 debut on the European clay-court tour. He had not competed since Miami in March, skipping Monte Carlo because of inflammation in his left hand and back pain. “I feel great,” Alcaraz said. “Moving well, hitting the ball really well so I feel a lot of confidence playing here in Barcelona.” Alcaraz’s next opponent will be fellow Spaniard Roberto Bautista Agut, the 13th-seed who defeated Bernabe Zapata Miralles 6-2, 6-2. Fifth-seeded American Frances Tiafoe lost 6-4, 6-7 (3), 6-4 to Emil Ruusuvuori of Finland. The 40th-ranked Ruusuvuori rallied from 3-0 down in the final set.

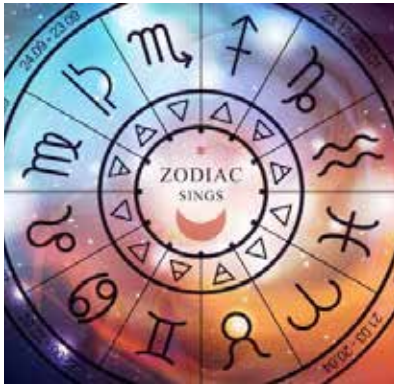
Ostapenko downs Raducanu in 1st round at Stuttgart



STUTTGART (Agencies): Jelena Ostapenko swept past Emma Raducanu 6-2, 6-1 at the indoor clay Porsche Grand Prix on Tuesday for the British player’s second consecutive first-round loss. In a meeting of two former Grand Slam champions, the 2017 French Open winner from Latvia broke Raducanu twice in the first set and ran away with the match in the second as she broke Raducanu to love in consecutive service games. Raducanu, the 2021 US Open champion,

was in action for the first time since her first-round loss to Bianca Andreescu in Miami. The British player’s last win was in the tournament before, when she reached the fourth round at Indian Wells before losing to Iga Swiatek. Seventh-seeded Daria Kasatkina was resoundingly beaten 6-1, 6-1 by Paula Badosa to become the first seeded player to be eliminated. Badosa moves on to play qualifier Cristina Bucsa in the next round. Beatriz Haddad Maia progressed after Martina Trevisan retired with the Brazilian leading 7-5, 1-1 in their first-round match for a potential meeting with Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina in the next round. Anastasia Potapova won 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (4) against Petra Martic and could play Coco Gauff next. Tatjana Maria beat Ylena In-Albon 6-2, 4-6, 7-6 (4).

DAILY HOROSCOPE: APRIL 20, 2023



opinions rule. It’s not that they don’t believe you; it’s more related to ambiguity.

– **VIRGO**: Your good energy makes it much easier than ever for you to come by the information you need. You shouldn’t be at a loss for very long, so think really big!

– **LIBRA**: Watch the situation develop today. It’s a good time for you to see how things are going. You need to get to the bottom of it before things get out of hand. Wait before acting.

– **SCORPIO**: Your desires may exceed your ability to fulfill them today, and that can lead to frustration. It’s a good time to relax and try to meditate or do other techniques to achieve calm.

– **SAGITTARIUS**: Keep it low-key today. You need to try something different if you want to have fun. It’s the small stuff that gets you interested right now. You can save the world some other day.

– **CAPRICORN**: You might be pretty busy and in the flow today, but try to remember to take time out to relax when possible. Though you’ll get quite a lot done, it would be nice to be able to enjoy it all later!

– **ACQUARIUS**: You are starting to notice little peculiarities in something that should be perfectly normal. It’s a good time to investigate further, though you might need to keep things quiet.

– **PISCES**: You’re itching for a change, but nothing too radical! It’s a good time to try something new in the kitchen or rearrange the furniture in a way that feels more in line with your needs.

Saudi foreign minister in Syria for talks with President Assad

RIYADH (Agencies): Saudi Arabia's foreign minister arrived in Damascus on Tuesday for talks with President Bashar Assad amid growing moves toward the readmission of Syria to the Arab community. The visit by Prince Faisal bin Farhan was the first by a senior Saudi diplomat since relations were severed at the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011. The foreign minister and the pres-



ident discussed steps to "achieve a comprehensive political settlement that ... contributes to Syria's return

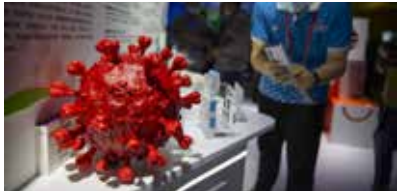
to the Arab fold," the Saudi Foreign Ministry said. Prince Faisal told the Syrian president it was important to provide a suitable environment for aid to reach all regions in Syria, and create the conditions for the return of Syrian refugees and displaced persons. Ending their suffering and enabling them to return safely to their homeland would contribute to stability, the minister said.

Fox settles Dominion lawsuit for \$787.5 million over US election lies



WILMINGTON (Agencies): Fox Corp. and Fox News on Tuesday settled a defamation lawsuit by Dominion Voting Systems for \$787.5 million, averting a trial putting one of the world's top media companies in the crosshairs over its coverage of false vote-rigging claims in the 2020 US election. The settlement, which legal experts said was the largest struck by an American media company, was announced by the two sides and the judge in the case at the 11th hour. The jury had been selected earlier in the day and the trial poised for opening statements in Wilmington, Delaware. Dominion had sought \$1.6 billion in damages in the lawsuit filed in 2021. Dominion CEO John Poulos called the settlement "historic." "Fox has admitted to telling lies about Dominion that caused enormous damage to my company, our employees and our customers," Poulos said in a statement. "Truthful reporting in the media is essential to our democracy," Poulos said.

What is 'Arcturus' COVID-19 Variant Detected in 22 Countries So Far?



NEW YORK (Agencies): The Covid subvariant, one of hundreds to spawn from the Omicron variant of the SARS-COV-2 virus, doesn't seem to be more lethal than the others, but health officials are watching as it slowly spreads around the world. More infectious virus variants tend to displace less infectious competitors and become the dominant cause of infection. The World Health Organization (WHO) has designated the new coronavirus subvariant XBB.1.16 as a "variant under monitoring, but so far isn't sounding the alarms. Because of its mouthful of a name, the subvariant is better known as "Arcturus," following a semi-official subvariant naming scheme derived from mythological characters that the WHO has not yet adopted. Outside of COVID-19 virology, Arcturus is a red giant star found in the constellation Boötes, and the fourth-brightest star in the night sky as seen from Earth. Its name in Ancient Greek means "Guardian of the Bear." The subvariant was first detected in January.

– More Infectious, No More Deadly Although it has emerged as a distinct subvariant of Omicron, a WHO-named COVID-19 variant that was first detected in late 2021 and has been the dominant variant globally for nearly 16 months, Arcturus doesn't seem to be too different from its parent virus. "We haven't seen a change in severity in individuals or in populations, but that's why we have these systems in place. It has one additional mutation in the spike protein, which, in lab studies, shows increased infectivity as well as potential increased pathogenicity," she added. In other words, it's a bit more infectious than Omicron, but not by much, and the symptoms don't seem to be any worse than Omicron. Work by Japanese doctors suggests it might be 1.2 times more infectious than Omicron. There hasn't been a detected increase in deaths related to Arcturus, either.

Qatar and UAE in process of restoring diplomatic ties

DOHA/DUBAI (Agencies): Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are restoring diplomatic ties and reopening embassies, officials said on Tuesday. The step comes more than two years after Arab states ended a boycott of Doha. "At present, the activation of diplomatic ties, which will include the reopening of embassies, is under process between both countries," a UAE official said in a statement in response to a question from Reuters. Qatar's international media office, in a statement, confirmed that "work is underway to reopen the respective embassies as soon as possible." "Regarding the opening of embassies between the two countries, I think it will be in the coming weeks," Qatari foreign ministry spokesperson Majid Al-Ansari told a briefing. A Gulf official said embassies were expected to reopen with new ambassadors in their posts by mid-



June. A fourth source said diplomatic relations would be fully restored within weeks. The restoration of ties comes amid a broader regional push for reconciliation with Iran and Saudi Arabia agreeing last month to re-establish relations after years of hostility, which threatened instability in the Gulf and stoked the war in Yemen. Several Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia and Egypt, have moved to end a decade-long isolation of Syria, which had been boycotted over its crackdown on protests in 2011 — violence that led to a protracted civil war.

US Air Force Temporarily Halts Intel Mission for Unit Suspected Pentagon Leaker Served



WASHINGTON (Agencies): The US Air Force temporarily reassigned the intelligence mission of the unit the accused Pentagon leaker Airman Jack Teixeira belonged to amid an inspector general probe, Air Force spokesperson Ann Stefanek said in a statement to Sputnik. "The 102nd Intelligence Wing is not currently performing its assigned intelligence mission. The mission has been temporarily reassigned to other

organizations within the Air Force," Stefanek said on Tuesday. Stefanek added that Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall directed the Air Force Inspector General to investigate overall compliance with policy, procedures, and standards, including the unit environment and compliance at the 102nd Intelligence Wing related to the release of national security information. According to a memo obtained by Sputnik, senior leaders in the Air Force department are directing a security-focused stand down be conducted in the next 30 days at each unit across the military branch in order to reassess its security posture and procedures, and validate the need to know basis for each individual's access.

Ten-time Everest climber from Northern Ireland dies after scaling Annapurna peak in Nepal

ANNAPURNA (Agencies): A mountaineer from Northern Ireland died while descending from the summit of the world's tenth highest peak and an Indian climber is missing on the same mountain, climbing officials said on Tuesday. Noel Hanna, who had climbed Mount Everest 10 times, scaled the 8,091 meters (26,545 feet) Annapurna peak in west Nepal on Monday and died overnight in Camp IV after descending from the peak. Yubaraj Khatiwada, an official of the Department of Tourism, said the circumstances of Hanna's death were unclear. He said an Indian climber, who fell into a crevasse on the lower reaches of



Annapurna, has been missing since Monday. Two other Indian mountaineers, who were caught up in bad weather while climbing Annapurna, were being rescued, hiking company officials said. Annapurna peak in west Nepal, first climbed by Maurice Herzog of France in the early 1950s, is considered dangerous because of the risk of frequent avalanches.

Canada public servants stage massive strike



Ottawa (AFP/APP): A third of Canada's public servants set up pickets at hundreds of sites across the country Wednesday demanding cost-of-living raises and telework flexibility in one of the largest strikes in the nation's history. After months of negotiating with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government, the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) said it had failed to reach a deal by the deadline it had set for late Tuesday. More than 155,000 public servants went on strike, hitting picket lines at more than 250 locations across the country, according to PSAC. Canada last saw a strike of this size in 1991. In Ottawa, New Democratic Party leader

Jagmeet Singh, whose small leftist faction usually backs Trudeau's Liberals but not in this case, marched with picketers outside parliament and Trudeau's office. Crystal Warner, picketing in Montreal, called the government's wage offers "offensive." "They're not keeping in line with even inflation," she lamented. All around her, picketers blew whistles and waved flags, as one of their leaders, Francis Snyder, told AFP that they're "ready to stay as long as it takes." Mona Fortier, president of the Treasury Board that oversees government workers, told reporters in Ottawa the two sides "are still at the table negotiating and hopefully we'll make some progress today."

US-made kamikaze drone hits Russia – media

MOSCOW (Agencies): A Switchblade UAV has reportedly been used in an attack on Belgorod Region. Ukrainian forces have allegedly used a US-made unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) in an attack on Russian territory for the first time, the Mash and SHOT outlets reported on Tuesday. A Switchblade drone, produced by the American AeroVironment company, reportedly flew into Russian airspace from Ukraine before downing in Russia's Belgorod Region, bordering Ukrainian territory. The UAV fell just around 500 meters away from the border without inflicting any damage or casualties, local news outlets said. Neither Mash, nor SHOT provided any photos or video from the alleged drone crash site and the Russian military has not yet commented on the incident. The Switchblade is a miniature kamikaze drone capable of dive-bombing targets. It can weigh up to 15 kilograms and has

a length of between 49 and 130 centimeters depending on the modification. The US has supplied Kiev with some 700 Switchblade drones, as well as 1,800 Phoenix Ghost kamikaze drones. Russia has repeatedly witnessed Ukrainian drone attacks, particularly in its regions bordering Ukraine, amid the ongoing conflict between Moscow and Kiev. Some Ukrainian attacks also targeted regions deeper inside Russia. In March, one of three people as an explosives-laden UAV hit a town in Tula Region located south of Moscow, some 250km away from the nearest border with Ukraine. In December 2022, Ukrainian UAVs attacked Dyagilevo and Engels military airfields located 500km (310.6 miles) and 700km (435 miles) from Ukrainian-held territory, respectively. Three servicemen were killed and two aircraft received minor damage, the Russian Ministry of Defense said at the time.

India population to surpass China mid-year



New Delhi (AFP/APP): India is set to overtake China as the world's most populous country by mid-year with almost three million more people, UN estimates showed on Wednesday. India's population will be 1.4286 billion compared to China's 1.4257 billion at mid-year, the United Nations Population Fund's State of World Population report showed. The number of people in China shrank last year for the first time since 1960, when millions starved to death under the disastrous agricultural policies of former leader Mao Zedong. Many have blamed the slowdown on the soaring cost of living as well as the growing number of women going into the workforce and seeking higher education. Beijing ended its strict "one-child policy", imposed in the 1980s amid overpopulation fears, in 2016 and started letting couples have three children in 2021. China faces a looming demographic decline as birth rates plunge and its workforce ages.

Beijing: Twelve held after Beijing hospital fire kills 29



Twelve people have been detained by police for questioning after a hospital fire in Beijing killed at least 29, most of them patients. The fire, among the deadliest in recent years, broke out in Changfeng Hospital at about 13:00 local time on Tuesday. Angry and concerned relatives rushed to the hospital hours later, only learning of the fire from local news reports. "Seven or eight hours have passed and I didn't even receive a call," one relative told China Youth Daily. Many said they spent the night trying to locate loved ones. Those who were rescued have now been shifted to other hospitals for treatment. Speaking at a press conference on Wednesday, officials said a preliminary investigation showed that sparks generated during renovation works had ignited paint stored on site. Among those detained are the director and deputy director of the hospital, as well as the head of the firm overseeing the renovation works. Footage on social media showed patients jumping out of windows to flee as dense smoke billowed out of the building. A talking drone urged trapped patients to "stay calm and wait [to be] rescued". Some were seen balancing on external air conditioning units as they waited to be rescued. Local media reported that firefighters evacuated about 70 people and put out the flames within an hour of arriving. But relatives of those who were being treated at Changfeng were furious with the hospital management. They said even eight hours later, hospital officials were unable to provide the names of those who had been injured or had died.

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