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5th anniversary of 'Operation Swift Retort': Pakistan resolved to safeguard its sovereignty, regional security: PM

Armed forces vow to respond to any aggression against the country

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday said that being a peace-loving country, Pakistan was resolved to safeguard its sovereignty and regional security.

The prime minister, in a message on the fifth anniversary of the Operation Swift Retort, paid tributes to the professional capability and resolve of the Pakistan's armed forces.

On February 27, 2019, the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) had shot down two Indian planes that had violated Pakistani airspace. One of the Indian pilots was captured by Pakistan, but was later handed over as a gesture of peace.

The prime minister said that the Pakistani

armed forces had proved their operational superiority, falsifying the Indian claims.

"No one should have doubt that Pakistan is a peace-loving country that was determined to protect its sovereignty as well as the regional security," he remarked.

The prime minister reiterated the resolve that Pakistan would forcefully respond to any aggression against it.

INP adds: On the fifth anniversary of 'Operation Swift Retort', Pakistan's armed forces have vowed to respond to any aggression against the people of Pakistan, the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity with "full might and without any

hesitation".

On February 27, 2019, the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) had shot down two Indian planes that had violated Pakistani airspace. One of the Indian pilots was captured by Pakistan, but was later handed over as a gesture of peace.

A press release issued by the army's media wing, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) today, said: "Feb 27, 2019, marked a significant event in our history, demonstrating the resolve of the people of Pakistan and the professionalism of the armed forces in response to unwarranted aggression from India, motivated by political considerations and electoral concerns."



KARACHI: Governor Sindh, Kamran Khan Tessori administering the oath to the Newly-elected Chief Minister Sindh, Syed Murad Ali Shah.

Murad Ali Shah sworn in as Sindh CM

KARACHI (APP): The newly elected Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah on Tuesday took oath of the office at the Governor House.

Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori administered the oath to him as the 38th Chief Minister in an impressive ceremony.

Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, outgoing Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar, Chief Secretary Fakhr-e-Alam, provincial secretaries, PPP leaders and dignitaries attended the ceremony.

Murad Ali Shah got 112 votes of the Sindh Assembly members in the election for chief minister on Monday. This is the third time he has become the chief minister. Earlier, he remained the Sindh chief executive from July 30, 2016 to May 28, 2016, and August 18, 2018 to August 17, 2023.

PPP to join Punjab cabinet in 2nd phase

LAHORE (INP): The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) is poised to join the Punjab provincial cabinet in its second phase, according to sources close to the development. This move comes after negotiations between the PPP and the ruling Pakistan Muslim League (N) (PML-N).

The sources indicate that the PPP is likely to receive three ministries in the provincial cabinet, which will be offered after the Punjab budget is finalized. Negotiations are currently underway between the two parties to finalize the specific ministries and potential candidates.

PTI announces countrywide protests on March 2

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Tuesday gave a call for a countrywide protest on March 2 against the alleged rigging in the general elections 2024, saying that other political parties will also join them.

In a press conference after meeting PTI founder Imran Khan, Secretary General Omar Ayub, who is also the party's candidate for the prime minister's slot, lamented "large scale" rigging in the polls.

He said PTI would stage countrywide protests against the "rigging" in polls alongside other political parties.

"Our seats were stolen with just a stroke of pen. The people gave the mandate to the former PTI chairman. Nation's mandate and our seats have been attacked," Ayub said.

Pakistan Army shoots down Indian spy quadcopter

RAWALPINDI (INP): Pakistan Army has shot down Indian spying quadcopter that intruded into country's airspace along the Line of Control.

Pakistani forces at 12:55 pm on Sunday last shot down an Indian Army quadcopter that was spying in the area near LoC, says in media reports. It is pertinent to mention that the remains of the quadcopter were found yesterday.



An insignia of the Indian Army can be seen in the pictures which confirms that the quadcopter belongs to the Indian Army.

It should be remembered that on this day in 2019, the Pakistan Air Force also shot down Indian warplanes that violated Pakistani airspace in Operation Swift Retort.

President Alvi to face dual constitution violation charges, says Bilawal

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Tuesday asserted President Arif Alvi will face dual constitution violation charges after his retirement.

Talking to media men outside the Supreme Court after hearing of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's presidential reference, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said President Arif Alvi is "violating" the constitution of Pakistan by denying summoning the NA session for the swearing-in of the new lawmakers.

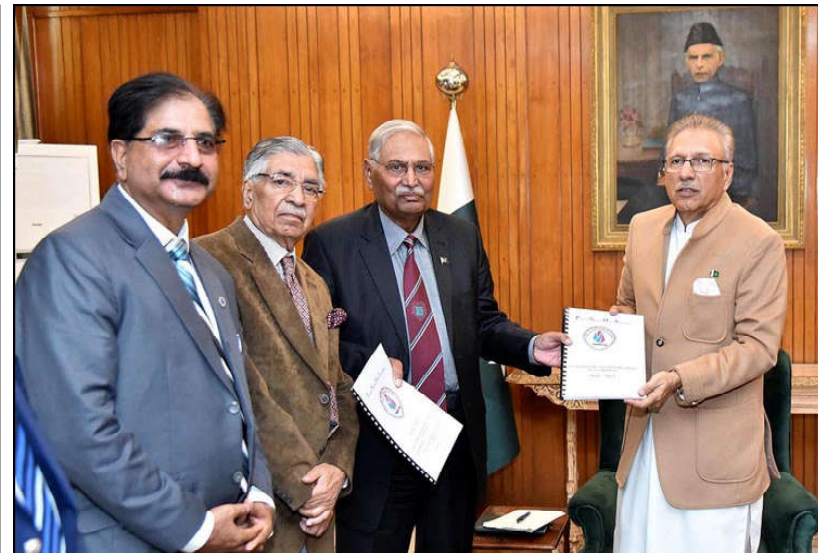
He urged everyone to exercise their power in their respective constitutional domain and underlined the need for respecting each other despite political differences, as this is the only way forward to steer the country out of crises.

Imran supports President decision of not summoning NA session

RAWALPINDI (INP): The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder on Tuesday said that President Arif Alvi did the right thing by not summoning the National Assembly (NA) session.

The former premier said this during an informal interaction with journalists at Adiala Jail on Tuesday. He claimed PTI won the election, but "rigging" was done to "snatch PTI's seats. Founder PTI said there could be no greater theft than the public mandate, the whole nation is saying that a 'rigged' 20-seater is being made prime minister".

He reiterated his demand for the resignation of the CEC Sikandar Sultan Raja.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Pakistan National Heart Association (PANA) presenting a report on the activities and accomplishments of PANA to President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Begins issuing nomination papers Presidential elections mandatory within 30 days after general polls: ECP

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Tuesday said that it is mandatory to hold the presidential elections within 30 days after the general elections, citing Article 41(4) of the Constitution.

Following the conduct of the general elections 2024 and its preliminary results, the electoral watchdog has started preparations for the presidential elections and the first session of all assemblies under constitutional bindings.

"The election commission will issue the schedule of the presidential election and public notice on March 1," the ECP said in a statement. "According to the Constitution, one day will be given to submit the nomination papers."

The election commission further said that the nomination papers can be submitted to any presiding officer by 12pm on March 2. "All the presidential candidates can get the nomination papers from the ECP secretariat in Islamabad or any provincial election commissioner," it noted.

The electoral watchdog also cited Articles 91 and 130 of the Constitution which stated that the National Assembly shall meet on the 21st day following the general elections.

The ECP said all the assemblies will be formed by February 29, paving the way for the presidential election. The statement came a day after National

Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf summoned the maiden sitting of lower house of Parliament on Feb 29 as President Arif Alvi refused to summon the session on account of an 'incomplete house'.

APP adds: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Tuesday began issuing nomination papers to candidates for the presidential election.

According to an ECP spokesperson, the candidates can submit their nomination papers at the Election Commission Secretariat in Islamabad, as well as the offices of provincial election commissioners in Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa till 12 noon pm on March 2.



On job training of Royal Saudi Land Forces with Pakistan Army concludes in Multan.

Political leaders' support for reconciliation has greater impact in fostering peace: Info Minister

Govt, international institutions, grassroots organizations contributing uniquely for peace promotion

ISLAMABAD (Online): Caretaker Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi has said

significance at a time when Pakistan is facing economic, political, environmental and other challenges.

Murtaza Solangi further said the media, being an agent of change, has a greater role in challenging extremist ideologies and championing inclusivity as well as amplifying voices of moderation and facilitating dialogue in the society.

He also appreciated the role of US Embassy in Islamabad for initiating measures for sustainable peace and conflict prevention in the Pakistani society.

APP adds: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said on Tuesday that the Government of Pakistan, international institutions and grassroots organizations had been contributing uniquely for promoting peace, tolerance, and harmony in the country.

Training of Royal Saudi Land Forces with Pak Army concludes

RAWALPINDI (Online): Closing Ceremony of "On Job Training of Royal Saudi Land Forces with Pakistan Army" was held at Multan.

The training was conducted from 15 January to 26 February 2024 with a view to foster joint employment and benefiting from each other's experiences, while further consolidating longstanding fraternal relations between Pakistan and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The training which encompassed conventional as well as sub-conventional operations, culminated with field manoeuvre & battle inoculation exercise, employing air and ground forces.

Commander Multan Corps witnessed the exercise as Chief Guest. The Chief Guest expressed satisfaction over mutual understanding and the training standards achieved.

Both of the accused, their lawyers Suleman Safdar, Zahir Abbas Chaudhry and Usman Gill and NAB Deputy Prosecutor General (DPG) were present in the court during the hearing of the case.

The court read out charge sheet to the accused.

The court inquired from the accused you are being indicted. You should tell if you are involved in this case or not.

The former chairman PTI replied what I have to do by reading charge sheet as I know what is written therein. Both the accused pleaded not guilty.

The counsels for the accused while requesting to provide copies of challan again sought 7 days more time.

The court remarked we

President emphasizes early prevention of diseases to avoid expensive treatment

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday said that adoption of preventive measures against various diseases was prerequisite to ward off treatment which was expensive in Pakistan and such habits would also help reduce burden on the health system.

He expressed these views during a meeting with a delegation of Pakistan National Heart Association (PANA) that called on him at Aiwan-e-Sadr to present a report on the activities and accomplishments of the organization, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release.

The president stressed upon creating awareness among the masses about the significance of preventive measures against non-communicable diseases and heart diseases. He also underscored the need about the role of media, local population, mosques and non government organizations to create such awareness, besides utilization of different latest platforms to spread awareness messages.

PANA's President Major General (retd) Masud Ur Rehman Kiani briefed the president about the role of the organization and public awareness campaigns including holding of walks, seminars, lectures and training sessions.

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia agree to further enhance defence ties



RAWALPINDI (APP): Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force called on General Fayyadh bin Hamed Al-Ruwaili, Chief of the General Staff, Saudi Armed Forces and His Royal Highness Lieutenant General Turki Bin Bandar bin Abdul Aziz, Commander of the Royal Saudi Air Forces, during his visit to Saudi Arabia.

Meetings were focused upon further promoting Pak-Saudi defence ties, particularly through the two Air Forces through joint military exercises and technological collaboration.

During the visit, the Air Chief was awarded King Abdul Aziz Badge of Honor of the Excellent Class by Chief of the General Staff, Saudi Armed Forces.

PTI founder, Bushra Bibi indicted in 190m pounds financial scandal reference

RAWALPINDI (Online): Judge Nasir Javed Rana of Accountability Court (AC) Islamabad has indicted PTI founder and his wife Bushra Bibi in 190 million pounds financial scandal reference.

The accused while pleading not guilty have rejected the charges.

Upon in court has summoned 5 witnesses of NAB on March 6 for regular trial of reference.

Both of the accused, their lawyers Suleman Safdar, Zahir Abbas Chaudhry and Usman Gill and NAB Deputy Prosecutor General (DPG) were present in the court during the hearing of the case.

The court read out charge sheet to the accused.

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have already given enough time to you. More time cannot be given.

The counsels for the accused took the plea copies of reference have to be provided 7 days before indictment. Near about 50 documents are such which are not readable despite the fact these documents are of paramount importance with regard to this reference.

The lawyers were of the view we don't want to raise obstructions in the process of indictment. Therefore, these documents be provided during court's time. We will come back after 7 days because former chairman PTI has said he wants to run the case speedily. Therefore, we have filed application for providing the documents again.

The lawyers said if the court wants to indict then this thing be also brought on record that about 50 documents are not readable and even then indictment is being made.

NAB DPG requested the court to indict the accused and took the plea all the record will be provided to the lawyers of accused while recording the statements of the witnesses.

The court remarked we



HYDERABAD: Workers of GDA, PTI, JUI(F), JI and Awami Tehreek hold a protest rally against alleged rigging in general election 2024 and observe Black Day against torture and arrest of the workers of Sindhyani Tehreek and JUI (F) during a rally in Karachi.

Independent

New funds

Pakistan plans to seek a new loan of \$6bn from the IMF under its Extended Fund Facility for a period of three years...

Flawed climate policy

Ajaz Ahmed

Notwithstanding Pakistan's marginal contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions and the country's greater vulnerability to climate change-driven natural disasters...

ity and builds community resilience, whereas investing in climate adaptation can protect key infrastructure...

Israel's partner

Touqir Hussain

No US policy shames its professed 'value-based foreign policy' as much as its Israel policy. Washington has been effectively sitting on the sidelines in contempt of world public opinion...

politicians. Policy and politics have aligned to enhance American support for Israel and diminish Washington's leverage. It is complete confidence in this support that has incited Israel's intransigence.

not going to oblige without an irrevocable process of establishing a Palestinian home. And Netanyahu is not interested in normalisation. He has added the tragic events of Oct 7 to Israel's long list of alibis to deny the Palestinians their rights and to resume his expansionist policies with a vengeance.

Commerce News

CPEC new phase focuses on industrial cooperation, agriculture: Ambassador

BEIJING (APP): Pakistan and China have decided to start a new phase of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) with a lot of focus on industrial cooperation, agriculture, mining and energy.



MULTAN: Vendor displaying tomato bags for bidding at Vegetable Market.

OGDCL earns Rs123.296 bln profit in first half of FY 2023-24

ISLAMABAD (APP): Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) on Tuesday announced the financial results for the first half of the current fiscal year ended on December 31, 2023 (July-December), posting a profit of Rs123.296 billion.

community with a shared future for mankind, underscore Beijing's goal of universal prosperity and sharing high-quality development with the rest of the world.

LESCO detects 57,806 power pilferers in 167 days

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) has detected a total of 57,806 connections from where the customers were pilfering electricity in all its circles of five districts (Lahore, Sheikhpura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara) in 167 days of grand anti-power theft campaign.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Turkmenistan H.E. Atadjan Movlamov called on Interim Federal Minister for Energy Muhammad Ali.

PCJCCI advocates for Karachi coastal project under CPEC to boost Pakistan's economy

LAHORE (APP): The inclusion of Karachi Coastal Comprehensive Development Zone (KCCDZ) project in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will boost Pakistan's economy and enhance industrial and development cooperation between Pakistan and China...

Awareness session on "Benefits of Edible Oil Fortification" held

FAISALABAD (APP): An awareness session titled "Benefits of Edible Oil Fortification, Vitamin A and D deficiency in Pakistan, use of Open and Unrefined Oil and its adverse effects on health" was organized in collaboration with Nutrition International and Punjab Food Authority, here on Tuesday.

Sunova Solar to revolutionize Pak's energy landscape via cutting-edge solar products

LAHORE: Sunova Solar, a global leader in renewable energy solutions, set the stage for a paradigm shift in the country's energy sector with the introduction of cutting-edge Tier-1 Solar products in a momentous event held in Lahore, Pakistan.



sustainable future for Pakistan's energy needs. Over 260 esteemed guests, including industry luminaries like Mr. Tauseef, former chairman of NEPRA, and the visionary Usama Khalid Malik, Director of Strategic Projects, gathered to witness the unveiling of Sunova Solar's groundbreaking innovations.

LCCI demands withdrawal of power tariff hike

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) on Tuesday urged the government to withdraw the recent hike in electricity tariff as the industry especially export-oriented unit are unable to afford hike in the price of their basic input for production.

Rupee sheds 07 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Rupee on Tuesday weakened by 07 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 279.27 against the previous day's closing of Rs 279.20.

Nawab of Bahawalpur benefactor of Pakistan, rendered invaluable services for the country: Baligh

Independent Report LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rahman attended the unveiling ceremony of the portrait of Nawab Sir Sadiq Muhammad Abbasi, Nawab of Bahawalpur, in recognition of his services at King Edward Medical University today as a special guest. The guest of honour Commissioner Bahawalpur Dr. Ehtesham, Vice Chancellor King Edward Medical University Prof. Mahmood Ayaz, Pro Vice Chancellor KEMU, Prof. Ijaz Hussain, Chief Executive Officer Mayo Hospital Prof. Ahsan Nauman, Prof. Saira Afzal, Prof. Muhammad Moeen and a large number of faculty members were present in the ceremony. After unveiling the portrait of the Nawab of Bahawalpur, the Punjab Governor while addressing a ceremony said that the Nawab of Bahawalpur was the benefactor of Pakistan and he rendered invaluable services for the country especially in the fields of health and education. Governor Punjab said that Nawab of Bahawalpur also played a very important role in the establishment of Pakistan. He added that Nawab of Bahawalpur established Bahawalpur House and Mosque in Aitchison College. He further stated that after the Maharaja of Patiala, Nawab of Bahawalpur contributed the most in the construction of King Edward's Patiala Block. He said that Nawab of Bahawalpur's inclusion of Bahawalpur in Pakistan was a great decision. He said that there are many examples of Nawab of Bahawalpur in subcontinent and Punjab in the fields of education, health and public welfare. He said that it has always been a matter of pride for him to come to King Edward Medical University. He further said he made very first visit to King Edward Medical University as Chancellor. He stated that this institution has the oldest and most prominent position in medical education and research. Governor Punjab said that his grandfather was also a graduate of this institution. He further said that Dr. Maqbool Ahmed is an example for the alumni of King Edward Medical University.



HARIPUR: People rescue victims of a passenger bus accident at a road, as a passenger bus fell into a ravine in Sarbrot area of Haripur, more than 12 people died and 15 people were injured.

37 dams constructed, designs of seven projects completed in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): To avert floods and waste of rainy water, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government constructed 37 small and medium dams while 24 are being built in different rivers and water channels while designs of seven dams completed in the province. The Directorate of Small Dams of the Irrigation Department's spokesman told APP on Tuesday that 37 small and medium dams were constructed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including 15 operated by the provincial government and 11 supervised by WAPDA. Similarly, 19 dams were constructed in merged districts having 0.1377 million-acre cultivated (CCA) and 0.3414 Acres Feet (AF) water storage.

DHA accident; ATC extends judicial remand of teenage driver LAHORE (APP): An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Tuesday extended judicial remand of Afnan, an underage driver involved in a car accident that resulted in the tragic death of six family members in Defence, for another 13 days. Earlier, the police produced the accused before ATC Judge Arshad Javed and requested to extend his judicial remand. The police submitted that the challan (Charge-Sheet) was in final stage of the preparations and it would be filed soon after removing prosecution's objections. At this, the court extended the judicial remand of the teenage driver for another 13 days and ordered for producing him on March 11. Defence C police had registered a case against Afnan which revolves around charges of recklessly crashing his high-speed car into another vehicle.

Money laundering case: LHC issues bailable arrest warrants of Moonis Elahi's wife LAHORE (APP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Tuesday issued bailable arrest warrants of Tehreem Elahi, the wife of former federal minister Moonis Elahi, and co-accused, Saira Anwar, over non-appearance in a petition for their bail cancellation in money laundering case. The division bench, headed by Justice Shehram Sarwar Chaudhry, heard the petition filed by prosecution for bail cancellation of Rasikh Elahi, Tehreem Elahi and other accused in money laundering case. The bench adjourned further hearing till March 18. The prosecution had approached for bail cancellation of the accused, stating that the trial court awarded bail in violation of law. It pleaded with the court to cancel the bail granted to the accused.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (Retd) Syed Arshad Hussain during a farewell meeting with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali.

Public confidence increasing on Wafaqi Mohtasib: Qureshi

Independent Report FAISALABAD: Number of complaints filed with the office of Federal Ombudsman has recorded a phenomenal increase due to the confidence of people enjoyed by this institution, said Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi, Federal Ombudsman. Addressing a meeting in Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) here on Tuesday, he said that during last year the federal ombudsman office resolved 194,000 complaints in addition to submitting 27 recommendations to provide free justice at doorsteps of the masses. He said that 150,000 complaints are also included in the total complaints resolved by this office. Appeals against the decisions of the federal ombudsman could be lodged with the President of Pakistan but its percentage is hardly 0.4%, he added. He said that article 34 is being exploited to resolve the complaints which could not fall within the purview of the federal ombudsman. "In this connection Alternate Dispute Resolution mechanism has been evolved", he said and added that the consent of both parties is imperative for this system.

ANF seizes over one ton drugs in seven operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting seven operations across the country managed to recover over one ton drugs and arrested nine accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Tuesday. He informed that 1 kg Ice drug and 766 grams heroin were recovered from the possession of a passenger going to Bahrain at Faisalabad Airport. 969 grams Ice was recovered from a passenger going to Doha at Peshawar Airport.

Speakers seek state, society role in keeping youngsters from drug addiction

DIR LOWER (APP): Vice Chancellor University of Malakand (UoM), Prof Dr Rashid Ahmad has said that our young generation is exposed to a variety of dangerous drugs and it is the collective responsibility of the state and society to play their role to get rid of the menace of the drug addiction. He was addressing a seminar on 'The Changing Landscape of Drug Abuse in Pakistan: Exploring Recent Trends & Challenges Faced in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa' here at UoM on Tuesday. He said that the younger generation, which makes up more than 60% of the population, has the potential to actually turn Pakistan into a wealthy country provided they are equipped with contemporary information. Guest speaker Prof Dr Johar Ali, Dean of Social Sciences University of Peshawar informed participants of the seminar that there are seven million drug addicts in the country. Every year, about 250,000 people die in Pakistan because of drug-related issues. Prof Dr Johar Ali added that the increasing number of addicts is a huge burden on the fragile healthcare system of the country.



PESHAWAR: Traffic warden making driving licenses through DL-Van for journalists in front of Press Club.

NAB distributes cheques of Rs 1.67 bln among Pak Arab Housing victims

LAHORE (APP): National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Lahore, in a ceremony held on Tuesday, distributed cheques worth Rs 1.67 billion to the affectees of the Pak Arab Housing scandal. NAB Deputy Chairman Sohail Nasir and Director General Lahore Amjad Majeed Olakh were the chief guests of the ceremony. Lahore Commissioner Muhammad Ali Randhawa, Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE) Director General Sohail Zafar Chattha, Secretary Mines and Minerals and senior officers of NAB and hundreds of affectees attended the ceremony. Addressing the ceremony, Sohail Nasir, Deputy Chairman NAB, highlighted that the bureau's primary objective is to serve the nation and the country. He emphasized that common people are beneficiaries of NAB policies, enabling them to recover their plundered money. He mentioned that NAB Lahore is actively recovering looted funds from 2,226 affectees of the Pak Arab Housing scandal.

International News

Declare Israel's occupation illegal, Arab states urge ICJ

Monitoring Desk THE HAGUE: Arab states urged international judges on Monday to rule the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories illegal and Turkiye described the occupation as "the real obstacle to peace" on the final day of hearings in a case examining its legal status. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has been hearing arguments from more than 50 states following a request by the UN General Assembly in 2022 to issue a non-binding opinion on the legal consequences of the Israeli occupation. On the sixth and last day of hearings, Turkiye's Deputy Foreign Minister Ahmet Yildiz told judges the occupation was the root cause of conflict in the region. "The unfolding situation after October 7 proves once again that, without addressing the root cause of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there can be no peace in the region," he said, describing the occupation of Palestinian territories as "the real obstacle to peace" and urging the judges to declare it illegal. Israel, which is not taking part in the hearings,

has said the court's involvement could be harmful to achieving a negotiated settlement, calling the questions posed to the court prejudiced. Palestinian factions have also come under international pressure to end their own divisions over their response to Israel's occupation, the war in Gaza and what political system might follow it. Earlier on Monday, the Arab League's secretary general Ahmed Aboul Gheit described the occupation as "an affront to international justice" in a statement read out by a representative.



A police officer puts handcuffs on Oleg Orlov, the 70-year-old human rights campaigner and co-chair of the Nobel Prize winning Memorial group, after Orlov was sentenced to two and a half years in jail on charges of repeatedly "discrediting" the Russian army, in Moscow.

France's Macron does not rule out Europeans sending troops to Ukraine

PARIS (Internews): French President Emmanuel Macron opened the door on Monday to European nations sending troops to Ukraine, although he cautioned that there was no consensus at this stage as allies agreed to ramp up efforts to deliver more munitions to Kyiv. Some 20 European leaders gathered in Paris on Monday to send Russian President Vladimir Putin a message of European resolve on Ukraine and counter the Kremlin's narrative that Russia is bound to win a war now in its third year. There is no consensus at this stage to send troops on the ground," Macron told reporters. "Nothing should be excluded. We will do everything that we must do so that Russia does not win." A White House official said that the United States had no plans to send troops to fight in Ukraine and that there were also no plans to send NATO troops to fight in Ukraine.

Indian runaway train takes 70-km journey

Monitoring Desk NEW DELHI: Indian Railways said on Monday it had ordered an investigation after a runaway freight train loaded with gravel travelled 70 kilometres (43 miles) without a driver. Around 50 carriages set off solo, careering from the northern state of Jammu and Kashmir to Punjab, before being brought to a halt by wooden blocks placed on the tracks on Sunday. "We have ordered an inquiry," Northern Railways spokesman Deepak Kumar said, adding that no one was hurt in the incident. The train, running at 100 kilometres per hour, was captured in a video that went viral on social media. The incident happened after the train stopped at a railway station in Jammu for a crew change, local media reports said. But it began moving down a slope after the driver and his assistant got off. All road crossings on the route were closed to prevent accidents.



AID is being dropped by a Jordanian military aircraft over Rafah, southern Gaza Strip.

Sweden clears last hurdle as Hungary okays Nato accession

Monitoring Desk BUDAPEST / STOCKHOLM: Hungary's parliament approved Sweden's Nato accession on Monday, clearing the last hurdle before the historic step by the Nordic country whose neutrality lasted through two world wars and the simmering conflict of the Cold War. Hungary's vote ended months of delays to complete Sweden's security policy shift and followed a visit by Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson on Friday during which the two countries signed an arms deal. "Today is a historic day," Kristersson said on X. "Sweden stands ready to shoulder its responsibility for Euro-Atlantic security." Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban's government has faced pressure from Nato allies to fall in line and seal Sweden's accession to the alliance. Nato Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg immediately welcomed Hungary's move. "Sweden's membership will make us all stronger and safer," he said on X. Stockholm abandoned its non-alignment policy for greater safety within the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Russian court jails veteran activist Oleg Orlov for 2.5 years

Monitoring Desk MOSCOW: A Russian court on Tuesday sentenced top human rights campaigner Oleg Orlov to two and a half years in jail for denouncing Russia's assault on Ukraine. The 70-year-old, a key figure of the Nobel Prize-winning Memorial group, is the latest target of Kremlin repression, which has intensified since the offensive in Ukraine. "The court has determined Orlov's guilt and orders a sentence of two years and six months [...] in a general regime penal colony," the judge said. Orlov was accused of discrediting the Russian army in a column written for the French online publication Mediapart, and fined in October after a first trial.

WTO braces for battles on fisheries, agriculture in UAE talks

Monitoring Desk ABU DHABI: The world's trade ministers are set for tough negotiations on Tuesday at a World Trade Organisation (WTO) meeting in Abu Dhabi, with fisheries and agriculture taking centre stage. The closed talks will take place on the second day of the WTO's 13th ministerial conference which is scheduled to run until Thursday but could go into over-time amid divisions. There is little hope for major breakthroughs with WTO rules requiring full consensus among all 164 member states. But progress could be made on a new global agreement on fisheries subsidies. After a 2022 deal which banned subsidies contributing to illegal, unregulated and unregulated fishing, the WTO hopes to conclude a second package focusing on subsidies which fuel overcapacity and over-fishing. "We're close. It's doable for sure," said a diplomatic source. "The final push needs a little bit of compromise, a little bit of political will," the source told AFP on condition of anonymity, calling a potential agreement a "very good outcome". The 2022 agreement has yet to take effect as not enough countries have ratified it. But it was seen as a major achievement, marking just the second accord concluded by the WTO's full membership since the global trade body was created in 1995, and the first focused on environmental protection.

Biden says Israel is ready to pause Gaza fighting; Hamas says deal not done yet

DUBAI (Internews): Israel is ready to halt its Gaza attacks for the Muslim holy month of Ramadan in a ceasefire that could be signed as soon as next week, Joe Biden said, though Hamas officials said the U.S. president's remarks were premature as it studies a truce offer. Biden's comments, recorded on Monday and broadcast after midnight on Tuesday, come as negotiators try to hammer out the first extended truce deal in a war that has obliterated the Gaza Strip since October last year. Ramadan is coming up, and there's been an agreement by the Israelis that they would not engage in activities during Ramadan, as well, in order to give us time to get all the hostages out," Biden said. Earlier on Monday, Biden said he hoped a ceasefire agreement would be hammered out by Monday, March 4. Ramadan is expected to begin on March 10. "My national security adviser tells me that they're close. They're close. They're not done yet. My hope is by next Monday we'll have a ceasefire," Biden said. Hamas is reviewing a proposal agreed at a meeting in Paris last week between Israel, the United States and mediators from Egypt and Qatar, the most serious push for a ceasefire since the last truce collapsed after a week in November. Two senior Hamas officials said Biden's remarks suggested the agreement had already been reached in principle were premature. There were "still big gaps to be bridged", one Hamas official said. "The primary and main issues of the ceasefire and the withdrawal of Israeli forces are not clearly stated, which delays reaching an agreement."

