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LHC seeks reply from Punjab govt on plea challenging wheat procurement policy



LAHORE
Web Desk:
The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Tuesday sought a reply from the Punjab government and others on a petition challenging the minimum support price and procurement policy for wheat until May 14.

The division bench comprising Justice Ali Baqar Najafi and Justice Anwarul Haq Pannun heard the petition filed by petitioner-counsel Bilal Ahmad. The petitioner-counsel argued before the bench that the minimum support price of wheat for the year 2023-2024 was fixed at Rs 3,900 per 40kg.

He referred to a report of the Agriculture Policy Institute, stating that the estimated overall cultivation cost for wheat in 2024 stood at Rs 114,809, with a total yield of Rs 120,900, based on a projected yield of 31 maunds per acre.

Pakistan, Qatar agree to further solidify parliamentary relations



ISLAMABAD
National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq Tuesday emphasised the need to further solidify existing fraternal bond between Pakistan and Qatar through expanding parliamentary cooperation, besides deepening ties in other socio-economic sectors.

He expressed these views in his meeting with Ambassador of Qatar Ali Mubarak Ali Essa Al-Khater who called on him at Parliament House.

Talking to the Ambassador, the speaker remarked, "Pakistan cherishes its historic brotherly relations with Qatar and desires them to take up to new heights through bolstering parliamentary cooperation, expanding economic ties, and furthering people-to-people contacts between the legislatures of both the countries".

Referring to the parliamentary collaboration between the

parliaments of both countries, the speaker noted, "Parliamentary diplomacy is quintessential in bringing two nations closer which are already tied in eternal religious and historic bonds".

He said that the Pak-Qatar friendship group in the National Assembly of Pakistan would be fully activated to bring Parliaments and people of both the countries closer.

During the meeting, he also mentioned the invitation extended to the Speaker of the Shura Council of the State of Qatar.

Expressing his satisfaction over the economic cooperation between Pakistan and Qatar, the speaker said that investors from Qatar could benefit from investment opportunities in Pakistan by investing in various sectors especially the energy and manufacturing sectors.



Riyadh: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif departs of Pakistan after participating in a special meeting of the World Economic Forum.

Real success lies in getting rid of debt, says PM after IMF's approval of \$1.1bn tranche

ISLAMABAD
A day after the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved the last tranche of \$1.1 billion for Pakistan under the \$3 billion Stand-By Arrangement (SBA), Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Tuesday said that the "real success" lies in getting rid of the debt.

"Real success lies in getting rid of the debt and not securing [another] loan [tranche]", PM Shehbaz said while expressing satisfaction over the approval of the third tranche by the Washington-based lender which has already released \$1.9 billion to Pakistan under the agreement.

Lauding the financial team, including Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb for their efforts, the prime minister said that the \$1.1 billion tranche will "bring more economic stability".

The premier further noted that the government made bitter and tough decisions concerning the economy, adding that such decisions are now proving themselves beneficial in the form of improved and stabilised economic indicators.

His remarks come after IMF's

Executive Board completed the second and final review of Pakistan's economic reform programme supported by the SBA.

"The Board's decision allows for an immediate disbursement of SDR 828 million (around \$1.1 billion), bringing total disbursements under the arrangement to SDR 2,250 billion (around \$3 billion)," the IMF said in an official statement.

Underpinning positive development in the country's economic indicators, the IMF's Deputy Managing Director and Chair Antoinette Sayeh pointed out moderate growth, eased external pressures, a decline in inflation and called on Islamabad to capitalise on this hard-won stability, persevering — beyond the current arrangement — with sound macroeconomic policies and structural reforms to create stronger, inclusive and sustainable growth.

It is to be noted that Pakistan has made a formal request to the IMF for seeking the next bailout package ranging between \$6 to \$8 billion under the EFF with the possibility of augmentation through climate financing.

Fawad Chaudhry denies quitting PTI

RAWALPINDI
Former federal minister Fawad Chaudhry Tuesday denied parting ways with Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI), clarifying that those who leave something return to it.

The politician's comments came while responding to a query during a media talk within the premises of an anti-terrorism court in Rawalpindi.

Former PTI chief whip Shireen Mazari was also present at the premises, as a number of former and incumbent party leaders face charges over the incidents of May 9, 2023, during which military installations were attacked by the Imran Khan-led PTI's workers and supporters.

Fawad also told journalists he appeared before the court in



the case pertaining to May 9's violent incidents, highlighting about going through a "difficult time" and the need for the "bitterness" to fade away.

Pointing towards the perils of his statement on the trying experience that he went through following the riots, the politician said he is yet to tell his side of the story with regards to what happened in the wake of the May 9 violence. He added that the stories of only those who appeared on television have surfaced following last year's event.

Bushra Bibi wasn't given poison, rules IHC



ISLAMABAD
The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday observed that former first lady Bushra Bibi wasn't given poison as no evidence was found in this regard.

Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb of IHC conducted the hearing on the petition of Bushra Bibi, wife of PTI founder.

"What is the status of Bushra Bibi's medical test? Is she fine," the judge asked.

Public prosecutor Abdul Rehman told the court that Bushra Bibi underwent with medical tests from a hospital under the supervision of Dr Asim Yousaf.

Opposition leader raps govt for arrest of wheat farmers

LAHORE
Leader of opposition in the Punjab Assembly Malik Ahmed Khan Bhachar says the "TikTok government has failed to address the issue of wheat procurement".

The Sunni Ittehad Council leader said the farmers were facing economic hardships.

Speaking to reporters in the Punjab Assembly, he said the government had yet to formulate policy on wheat.

"Police have been arresting farmers for the last two days, apart from the PTI workers. The farmers' wheat is being rained on roads and police are raiding their houses," he said.

He said the prime minister had pledged to buy 1.8 million tons of wheat from which 1.8 million tons had not been issued any direction.

Unless parliament is strong, others will become powerful: CJP Isa



ISLAMABAD
Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa on Tuesday said that "others" will become powerful till parliament becomes strong, as the Supreme Court resumed the suo

suo motu hearing pertaining to allegations of spy agencies' interference in judicial affairs.

A six-member bench, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa, resumed the hearing of the suo motu case on the Islamabad High

Court (IHC) judges' letter accusing agencies meddling in judicial matters.

The bench comprising Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhel, Justice Athar Minallah, Justice Musarrat Hali and Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghani.

SBP receives \$1.1 billion IMF tranche amid high hopes of



ISLAMABAD
The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has received SDR 828 million (around \$1.1 billion) from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) a day after the global lender approved the last tranche of Pakistan under the \$3 billion Stand-By Arrangement (SBA).

In a statement on Tuesday, the central bank said the amount would be reflected in the SBP's foreign exchange reserves for the week ending on May 3, 2024.

Last week, the SBP said its foreign exchange reserves dropped by \$74 million to \$7.981 billion in the week ending on April 19 because of external debt repayments.

The country's foreign reserves fell by \$93 million to \$13.281 billion. The

reserves of commercial banks also decreased by \$20 million to \$5,299 billion, as per the SBP.

An official statement issued by the IMF late Monday said that the executive board completed the second and final review of Pakistan's economic reform programme supported by the SBA.

The board's decision allows for an immediate disbursement of SDR 828 million (around \$1.1 billion), bringing total disbursements under the arrangement to SDR 2,250 billion (about \$3 billion).

This was the third and last tranche of a \$3 billion SBA with the IMF, which Pakistan secured last summer to avert a sovereign default. The IMF — Washington-based lender — said the 9-month SBA, approved by the executive,

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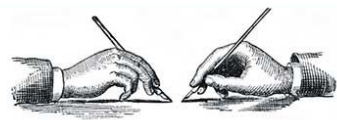
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KoFHA viable authority

Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh on Tuesday directed the Korangi Fisheries Harbour Authority for taking steps to increase its revenue and make it a viable authority. The federal minister issued this directive during his visit to Korangi Fisheries Harbour Authority. Secretary Maritime Affairs Iram Anjum Khan and other officers were also present on this occasion. The federal minister was warmly received by the Managing Director Korangi Fisheries Harbour Authority Rear Admiral Shahid Ahmed SI (M) on arrival at the

KoFHA. MD Korangi Fisheries Harbour Authority Rear Admiral Shahid Ahmed briefed the minister regarding ongoing, proposed as well as future projects of the authority. Rear Admiral Shahid Ahmed informed the minister that a proposal for the formation of Korangi Fisheries Harbour Authority Board has already been forwarded to the Prime Minister so that the authority could be made more functional. He said that floating piers would be imported to expand the jetty, which will increase the income of the authority. In order to facilitate small boats to reach

easily at the jetty, Floating Pier is needed while the auction hall will be made as per international standards, the minister was told in the briefing. The federal minister was informed that KoFHA has also planned to lease out its 24 acres land for 30 years for establishing "Sea Food Factories" which will increase revenue of the authority. Rear admiral Shahid Ahmed informed that a boundary wall will also be constructed outside of the authority to make it more secure while provincial government will be approached for set up of the

Rangers/Police picket for the purpose. He said that according to the current laws, fishermen can go up to 12 nautical miles in the sea, and now, a license will be issued which will allow fishermen to go in the sea up to 200 nautical miles and for this, discussion with the Sindh government was underway. The federal minister assured that government will soon constitute a Board for the Korangi Fisheries Harbour Authority. He asked the authority management for taking stringent measures to generate more revenue and make the authority viable.

Thrilling tradition of kite flying in Pakistan

Basant Festival or Kite Flying Festival is better when it is limited to the festival and the festival sanctions many things. Pakistan celebrates Basant Festival in January. It's time for spring to come and winter to go. It would have been better if the festival had been limited to celebrations and celebrations with various meanings, but it has lost the problem of the day where it reveals all the negative aspects of the above mentioned. It is accepted that this post-Eid celebration is a place of happiness, but this happiness should not be so expensive that it costs lives. The first reason why kites are completely banned is the use of twine and rope made of sharp glass and metal. The sharp glass-infused twine is also a deadly weapon and can easily cut the throat if it touches any part of the neck. Many accidents result in serious injury or death. During this period, we should think about what we have experienced and how much

damage we have done to our holiday, which spreads joy and renews the spirit of friendship. It would have been better if the festival had been limited to celebrations and celebrations with various meanings, but it has lost the problem of the day where it reveals all the negative aspects of the above mentioned. After the deaths due to chemical poisoning in Sargodha and Faisalabad on March 23, the Pakistani government started taking strict measures against kite flying across the country. The Punjab and Sindh government have issued strict orders banning the sale and purchase of twine rope. Punjab Chief Minister spoke about the law and order situation in the state and called for crackdown on buying and selling of problematic ropes. Following recent disturbing events, authorities took swift action. The most horrific incident took place in Faisalabad; 22-year-old Asif Ashfaq died from heavy blood

loss after his throat was cut with a kite string while riding a motorcycle on March 22. Security camera footage of the incident shows the injured person falling off the motorcycle. The CM asked the police and municipal authorities to take strict action against companies producing glass-covered music. Last month, two people, including a child, died as a result of kite flying in Punjab, and two people died as a result of electric shock. The government has decided to conduct a door-to-door awareness campaign to stop kite flying. Despite the complete ban on kite flying during Basant celebrations this year, business owner's preparations to defy this ban are in full swing in Rawalpindi. It is important that by promoting safety measures in Pakistan and following the rules regarding the risks associated with glass-covered ropes, we can reduce the negative impact and control it so that everyone can enjoy a safe environment.

5th Death Anniversary of Ali Muhammad Rahu a Multifaceted Author and Translator



Mushtaqe Ahmed Rahu

On April 28, 2024, the death anniversary of Ali Muhammad Rahu, a distinguished scholar, a well-known writer and translator of Sindh, was commemorated by Dawn Study Circle Daulatpur, District Shaheed Benazirabad/Nawab Shah. It was presided over by Dr. Ghulam Sarwar Khaskheli. While Prof. Dr. Bashir Ahmed Memon (QUEST Nawab Shah), Prof. Irshad Ali Otho (Principal GIBCE Daulat Pur), Prof. Shah Nawaz Unar (Principal GIBCE Kazi Ahmed), Mushtaqe Ahmed Rahu, Rasool Bux Soomro, Muhammad Hanif Soomro, Muhammad Ramzan Burio, Sikandar Ali Langah, Abid Ali Rahu, Madad Ali Pali, Ghulam Muhammad Langah, Ali Akbar Kako, Khalid Hussain Rahu, Dr. Saleem Unar, Mithal Jiskani and members of Dawn Study Circle Daulatpur Mr. Gulab Unar Secretary Dawn study circle and Abdul Haleem Dahri participated as guests of honor. The program started with the recitation of the Holy Quran, which was said by Kamal Otho, after which the President of Dawn Study Circle prof. Irshad Ali Otho, welcomed all the guests and said that Ali Muhammad Rahu was a great writer, the youth needed to be enlightened about his knowledge and wisdom. Ali Muhammad Rahu wrote and translated many books and published almost all books in his handwriting. Currently, we are trying to collect and publish his unpublished material and to reach the common readers. After that, the General

Secretary of Dawn Study Circle, Mr. Gulab Khan Unar shared his thoughts and said that Ali Muhammad Rahu's work is our intellectual Asset; He served the Sindhi language by writing and translating various books on religion and history. Madad Ali Pali said that Ali Muhammad Rahu got his basic education from Daulatpur. After this, he received training from famous teachers of Sindh. I was very close to him and seeing his handwriting, I could not believe that such beautiful letters could be written by hand. Writer Ramzan Burio said that there is a dire need to digitize Ali Muhammad Rahu's academic work so that the next generation can get acquainted with his work. Abid Ali Rahu said that I am ready for all possible help in digitizing the work done by Ali Muhammad Rahu free of cost. Any book being digitized will be preserved forever and easily accessible to many hands. Mithal Jiskani said that Ali Muhammad Rahu gave us Sindhi language with important translations, he also enlightened us with real religious thought and did important work on Islamic history and Sufism. Writer Muhammad Hanif Soomro said that Ali Muhammad Rahu had a large circle of friends. Researching him will give you a lot of information. He was very active in Karachi. His circle of friends was also wide. Rasool Bux Soomro says that he was a scholar who had an eye on his future time, so he offered a broad perspective on the education and training of his time. We must remember such types of characters. Professor Dr. Bashir Ahmed Memon said that people associated with Education and literature are our assets. Preserving Ali Muhammad Rahu's accomplishments is the most important need of the time. After that, Ali Muhammad Rahu's nephew Mushtaqe Ahmed Rahu said that he rarely met his uncle. Because he used to live in Karachi and

after that, he settled in America. After seeing his scholarly work, I wanted to collect his work and publish it in book form. My work in this regard is ongoing. It is a matter of great happiness for me that Dawn Study Circle organized this anniversary program to introduce the youth about Ali Muhammad Rahu. Sikandar Ali Langah expressed his thoughts and said that Ali Muhammad Rahu was very close to me. He used to write different copies of books with his handwriting and give them as gifts to his friends. He has kept his various unpublished books and diaries. On that occasion, He said that I would give the book to my friends for printing on the condition that they would photocopy the book and return the original manuscript in a few days. Sikandar Langah also said that in the future there will be a big program about Ali Muhammad Rahu at the Sindh level. Different scholars will be called to talk about Ali Muhammad Rahu's life and the work He has done. In the program, he handed over Ali Muhammad Rahu's diary to Mushtaqe Ahmad Rahu for publication. In the last, while delivering the presidential speech of the program Dr. Ghulam Sarwar Khaskheli said that Ali Muhammad Rahu was a great scholar. He was proficient in 5 different languages including English, Sindhi, Urdu, Arabic, and Persian at the same time. The first translation of Nahjul-Balaghah in Sindhi language was done by Ali Muhammad Rahu. He also translated "Sarmad Shaheed, Humanity at the Door of Death, Seerat Nabi" and many other books. We have a dire need to expose such diamonds to the youth. At the end of the program, Dr. Saleem Ahmed thanked the guests. Ghulam Mustafa Lako performed media duties in the program. Larab Burio and Saqi Mazhar Khaskheli presented songs. The program was moderated by Akash Saleem Unar. In this Program, Published and unpublished books of Ali Muhammad Rahu were also shown to the Audiences.



A delegation from the Implementation Minority Rights Forum (IMRF) and the Christian Lawyers Association Pakistan (CLA) had a meeting with Federal Minister for Law and Justice senator Azam Nazeer Tarar today on 30th April 2024.



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Chief Minister Sindh with chairman TMC Sohrab Goth Town inaugurated Anti Polio campaign in Sohrab Goth Town

The aim of the Anti-Polio campaign is to protect children from this deadly disease: Lala Abdul Rahim



Soon Times Correspondent Karachi:

Chairman Sohrab Goth Town Lala Abdul Rahim inaugurated the anti-polio campaign. On this occasion, Health Minister Dr. Azra Pechhuo, Director Health Services, DG People's Public

Health Initiative, Anti-Polio Campaign and other relevant officers were also present with him. Talking about the inaugural program of the Anti-Polio campaign, Chairman Town said, we welcome the government's initiatives for the health of the children of the town. The

aim of the anti-polio campaign is to protect children from this deadly disease which causes disability in children. In this regard, vigorous measures are being taken to administer polio drops to every student up to the age of 05 years in all the schools of the town. Instructing administration, he said that full cooperation should be given to the representatives of the health department. On the other hand, he encouraged the UC Medical Officer regarding polio and said that the polio workers represent the government and are rendering their services for a better cause. He appealed to the parents to get their children vaccinated against polio to protect them from life-long disability.

Syed Kausar Abbas met with hostility, Family members demand justice from authorities



Soon Times Correspondent Islamabad:

Syed Kausar Abbas, a 27-year-old youth from Meetha Khan, a suburb of Kohat, who left home for work, but instead of being supported by his parents, the dead body of the young man returned wrapped in a shroud. Rawalpindi Police arrested the accused. After big revelations, father Amir Jan and brother Hasan Jan along with a few facilitators were found

involved in the murder. The accused tried to pressurize and bribe the police through political influence. Syed Mohammad Naseer, a resident of Kohat, has demanded from the Federal Home Minister, IG Punjab, DPO, CPO Rawalpindi to arrest the named accused and their facilitators in FIR 22/1181 murder of his son Syed Kausar Abbas. Talking to the media, the father of the deceased said that his son was killed by the accused Mossadeq son of Amir Jan on the orders of his father Amir

Jan and brother Hasan Jan due to personal enmity on 12 September 2022. He used to work in his taxi in Rawalpindi. The police have arrested one of the main accused of the murder, Mossadeq son of Amir Jan, while fleeing abroad from Peshawar Airport. While the two named accused in the FIR are still missing.

Some political figures of the area are supporting and facilitating the accused. Mossadeq has confessed his crime and admitted that he had killed Syed Kausar Abbas. He killed his father Amir Jan and his brother Hasan Jan residing in the UAE because earlier the deceased Syed Kausar Abbas and the accused Hasan Jan used to do joint business in the UAE but later due to mutual differences and disputes Syed Kausar Abbas had ended the business with the accused.



Two dead, eight injured in Karachi's gas cylinder blast

Soon Times Correspondent Karachi

At least two people were killed and eight others were injured after a gas cylinder exploded in Karachi's New Challi area on Tuesday.

As per the details, the blast occurred when a cylinder exploded in a shop located in the generator market which then resulted in a blaze.

The sheer force of the blast caused the goods inside the shop to scatter out on the street. Rescue teams have reached the incident site and have confirmed one fatality and six injuries in the incident.

Commenting on the incident, SSP City said that the roof of the affected shop collapsed due to the blast and that a search is underway after witnesses said that a person was still buried under the debris.

Furthermore, the police official revealed that the bomb disposal squad has been called for further investigation.

The incident comes as gas cylinders, whether used for commercial purposes or for domestic use, are quite prone to explosions for various reasons such as low quality cylinders, failure to adhere to necessary standard operating procedures (SOPs) while refilling etc.

In December 2023, at least three people were killed and 17 others were wounded after a two-storey building collapsed due to a gas cylinder blast in Karachi's Maclur Colony.

The blast took place in a gas cylinder shop during transfer of gas in the shop as a vehicle loaded with gas cylinders came to supply gas.

PTI infighting comes to end as Sher Afzal Marwat nominated for PAC chairman slot



Soon Times Correspondent Islamabad:

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan on Tuesday announced that his party has finalized Sher Afzal Marwat's name for the slot of all-powerful Public Accounts Committee (PAC) chairman, ending the infighting in the ranks of the former ruling party.

During his interaction with journalists in Rawalpindi, the PTI chairman said: "All disputes are over [now] as the party has picked the name of Marwat for the slot."

party's founder. Earlier names of Hamid Khan and Hamid Raza of the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) made headlines in the media for the PAC top slot.

Earlier, in what was seen as a dramatic move, senior party leader Latif Khosa declared that PTI had decided to appoint senior leader Hamid Khan as the chairman of the PAC.

Categorically rejecting the media reports claiming PTI formed a committee to hold talks with the military establishment, Gohar said: "Neither we have backdoor contacts nor in talks with anyone."

According to media reports, the PTI formed a three-member committee comprising KP Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, Omar Ayub and Shibli Faraz to hold dialogue with the military establishment.

Speaking to the Media programme Naya Pakistan, PTI senior leader Shehryar Afridi last week claimed that his party would hold "dialogues with the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) and the Director General of the Inter-Services Intelligence (DG ISI) soon" instead of talking to "rejected people" who reached parliament via "Form 47".

Responding to another question, the PTI chairman said that they were in contact with Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman, once Imran's political foe, in connection with the anti-government protests.

Relations between the PTI and the JUI-F significantly improved after both parties found "ideological coordination" following the February 8 "rigged" general elections.

"We will talk to everyone except the MQM-P, PPP and PML-N."

Maryam-led Punjab govt renews order for 'one-dish' policy in wedding events

Soon Times Correspondent LAHORE:

The Punjab government has ordered strict implementation of the 'one-dish rule' in wedding events — which promotes austerity and discourages exhibitive trends among citizens.

A set of decisions was taken in the provincial cabinet session chaired by Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz on Tuesday. The provincial chief executive approved restoring free-of-cost medicines for cancer patients. Other decisions include approval to the issuance of Kisan Cards, recommendations for wheat procurement, cash subsidy to small farmers, a digital system for monitoring the prosecutor department's performance and increasing standards of the first information report (FIR).

CM Maryam also ordered to strict implementation of the one-dish rule at wedding parties.

The law was taken into effect for years in the province to discourage the exhibition of



money among citizens, specifically reducing the burden of expensive wedding feasts on deserving families who were forced to follow the trend despite facing financial challenges.

On multiple occasions, the provincial authorities took punitive actions against those citizens who violated the law by showering local and foreign currencies, as well as serving lavish and expensive meals to the guests.

In a bid to conserve energy amid the worsening power crisis, the federal cabinet also decided in 2022 to impose a ban on wedding functions after 10pm in Islamabad.

At least 143 killed in unusually heavy April rains

Soon Times Correspondent Islamabad

At least 143 people died in Pakistan from lightning strikes and other storm-related incidents in April, with the country receiving more than twice as much rain as usual for the month, officials said on Tuesday.

April brought flash floods, landslides and inclement weather that caused houses to collapse in some areas and destroyed crops in others.

Pakistan saw a rainfall "increase of 164 per cent above the normal levels in April, which is very unusual", said Zaheer Ahmad Babar, spokesperson for the Pakistan Meteorological Department.

"We've observed these erratic weather patterns as a direct result of climate change," he told AFP.

Pakistan is increasingly vulnerable to unpredictable weather, as well as often-destructive monsoon rains that usually arrive in July.

The largest death toll for April was in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, where 83 people died, including 38 children, and where more than 3,500 homes have been damaged.

"The fatalities resulted from roof collapse and landside incidents," Anwar Shahzad, spokesman for the province's disaster management authority.



Ms. Jo Moir, Development Director, British High Commission, Pakistan calls on the Federal Minister for Economic Affairs, Mr. Ahmad Khan Cheema on 30th April, 2024.



India announce Rohit Sharma-led squad for T20 World Cup 2024



The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced the squad for the T20 World Cup 2024, which is set to take place in the United States and West Indies from June 2.

The squad will be led by Rohit Sharma with Hardik Pandya as his deputy.

Yuzvendra Chahal has been picked after impressing in the IPL, along with fellow spinners Kuldeep Yadav, Ravindra Jadeja and Axar Patel.

Meanwhile, the pace attack includes Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj and Arshdeep Singh with Pandya and Dube also available as seam-bowling options.

Santia Samson and Rishabh Pant are the two wicketkeepers in the Indian squad.

India's T20 World Cup 2024 squad: Rohit Sharma (captain), Hardik Pandya (vice-captain), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Rishabh Pant (wk), Sanju Samson (wk), Shivam Dube, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Arshdeep Singh, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammad Siraj.



NFL's Travis Kelce signs \$34m extension with Kansas City

Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce has signed a two-year contract extension, according to an agency source who spoke to USA Today.

According to the report, the deal is worth \$34.25 million and makes Kelce, 34, the highest-paid tight end in the National Football League (NFL). The extension also means that the Chiefs star will remain in Kansas City until the end of the 2027 season.

Kelce has been the top pass catcher for Kansas City since he was drafted by the club in 2013 and is widely regarded as one of the best tight ends in the NFL.

The nine-time Pro Bowler has caught a pass in 158 consecutive games, the longest streak in franchise history. Last season, he led the Chiefs in targets (121), catches (93) and receiving yards (984).

Additionally, his performance was instrumental during Kansas City's Super Bowl 58 victory over the San Francisco 49ers in February, with a team-high 32 catches, 355 receiving yards and three touchdown catches.



Elon Musk becomes Swiftie after Taylor Swift's new album

Taylor Swift has a massive fanbase known as Swifties and Elon Musk might be the new member of the stan group after the global icon's album *The Tortured Poets Department* swept the music scene.

Taking to his platform X, the multi-billionaire made sure not to sound like a fangirl. "I'm not quite the target audience," but nonetheless very impressive indeed," he wrote.

His comments come on the Grammy winner's earlier post that saw her paying tributes to her fans for making the album top hit.

"You've outdone yourselves, this is unbelievable," the 34-year-old penned by sharing a Billboard post that celebrated her album's groundbreaking success.

The outlet states, that Taylor is "the first artist in history to occupy the entire top 14 spots of the Hot 100 simultaneously." Following her eleventh album release. Nonetheless, Elon has a history of admiring the chart-topper artist's successes. Last September, the Tesla chief requested the Carolina linkbreaker to share part of her re-recorded version of 1989's music or concert videos directly.



French charity boycotts Olympic torch relay over Coca-Cola

The Olympics are set to start on July 26 and run until August 11, followed by the Paralympics from August 28-September 8.

Marseille Web Desk.

A French environmental charity said it had turned down the chance to take part in the torch relay ahead of the Paris Olympics over the role of Coca-Cola as a major sponsor.

"Clean My Calanques," an NGO in Marseille which specialises in beach cleaning, received funding from the 2024 Paris Olympics organising committee for its work educating school children. But it announced on Monday that it would not take part in the torch relay which will begin in Marseille on May 8, thanks in part to financing from premium Olympics sponsor Coca-Cola.

"We are not going to carry a flame which is paid for by the same people who make us bend over," the founder of Clean My Calanques, Eric Akopian, told AFP.

Set up in 2017, the organisation's volunteers clean beaches around Marseille and in the nearby national Calanques Park, whose narrow coves and azure waters make it a popular spot for tourists and locals. Akopian said Coca-Cola was one of the "most polluting (companies) in the world", with its bottles and cans some of the products found most frequently during the charity's beach-combing operations.

In a video message posted on Instagram, he said the organisation had decided it was "not at ease" with the commercial aspects of the Olympics, although he stressed they had "nothing against sports or the athletes".

Akopian noted the mass production of so-called "goodies" linked to the Games such as stickers, key rings, pens or mugs.

"They can seem cute, but we know that we're going to find them on the coastline," he told AFP. French authorities say up to 150,000 people are set to gather in Marseille for the start of the torch relay, which will see the Olympic flame carried through mainland France and the country's overseas territories in the Caribbean and Indian Ocean.

Pro-Palestinian protesters occupy building at Columbia University

Web Desk.

Pro-Palestinian protesters at Columbia University were occupying a building on the New York City campus on Tuesday as officials limited access to students who live there and essential employees.

The protesters who were occupying Hamilton Hall displayed banners from a window reading "Intilada," the Arabic word for an uprising. CNN reported, citing a video. The school said in an early morning notice that effective immediately access to the Morningside campus has been limited to students residing in residential buildings on campus and employees providing essential services.

"This access restriction will remain in place until circumstances allow otherwise," it said. "The safety of every single member of this community is paramount. We thank you for your patience, cooperation and understanding."

The university began suspending pro-Palestinian student activists on Monday who refused to dismantle a protest camp on the New York City campus after the Ivy League school declared a stalemate in talks seeking to end the demonstration.



What is the International Criminal Court and why it has Israeli officials worried



THE HAGUE, Netherlands

Israeli officials sound increasingly concerned that the International Criminal Court could issue arrest warrants for the country's leaders more than six months into the Israel-Hamas war.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has written in general terms about ICC action against Israeli troops and officials, and Israel's foreign ministry has said it is also tracking reports of pending action.

The ICC was established in 2002 as

the permanent court of last resort to prosecute individuals responsible for the world's most heinous atrocities — war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and the crime of aggression.

The Rome Statute creating the ICC was adopted in 1998 and entered into force when it got 60 ratifications on July 1, 2002. The U.N. General Assembly endorsed the ICC, but the court is independent.

Without a police force, the ICC relies on member states to arrest

suspects, which has proven to be a major obstacle to prosecutions. Netanyahu said Friday on the social platform X that Israel "will never accept any attempt by the ICC to undermine its inherent right of self-defense."

"While the ICC will not affect Israel's actions, it would set a dangerous precedent," he wrote.

Israel's Foreign Ministry said late Sunday that it had informed missions abroad of "rumors" that the court could order the arrest of senior Israeli political and military officials. The ministry did not give a source for the rumors.

In a statement emailed to The Associated Press, the court's prosecution office declined to comment on the ICC?

WHA? IS THE ICC?

The ICC's 124 member states have signed on to the Rome Statute. Dozens of countries did not sign and do not accept the court's jurisdiction over war crimes, genocide and other crimes. They include Israel, the United States, Russia and China.



Netanyahu vows to invade Rafah 'with or without a deal' as cease-fire talks with Hamas continue

TEL AVIV, Israel — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pledged Tuesday to launch an incursion into the southern Gaza city of Rafah, where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians are sheltering from the almost 7-month-long war, as cease-fire negotiations between Israel and Hamas appear to be gaining steam.

Netanyahu's comments came hours before U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrives in Israel to advance the peace talks — which appear to be one of the most serious rounds of negotiations between Israel and Hamas since the war began. The deal is meant to free hostages, bring some relief to the population and avert an Israeli offensive into Rafah and the potential harm to civilians there.

Netanyahu said Israel would enter Rafah to destroy Hamas' battalions there regardless of whether a truce-for-hostages deal was struck or not. Netanyahu's comments appeared to be meant to appease his nationalist governing partners but it was not clear whether they would have any bearing on any emerging deal with Hamas.

"The idea that we will stop the war before achieving all of its goals is out of the question," Netanyahu said, according to a statement from his office. "We will enter Rafah and we will eliminate Hamas' battalions there — with or without a deal, to achieve the total victory."

With more than half of Gaza's 2.3 million people sheltering in Rafah, the international community,

including Israel, top ally the U.S., has warned Israel against any offensive that puts civilians at risk. Netanyahu on Tuesday was addressing the Tikva Forum, a small group of families of hostages that's distinct from the main group representing the families of captive Israelis that has indicated it prefers to see Hamas crushed over the freedom of their loved ones. Families and their supporters have demonstrated in the thousands every week for a deal that would bring the hostages home, saying it should take precedence over military action.

Netanyahu's coalition is made up of ultranationalist and conservative religious parties, and critics of the Israeli leader say his decision-making during the war has been driven by political considerations rather than national interests, a charge Netanyahu denies. His government could collapse if one of the parties opposed to a deal pulls out, a scenario Netanyahu would try to avoid considering his support has plummeted in opinion polls since the war began, although it has seen a slight gradual uptick.

The current deal being discussed, brokered by the U.S., Egypt and Qatar, would see the release of dozens of hostages in exchange for a six-week halt in fighting as part of an initial phase, according to an Egyptian official and Israeli media. Hundreds of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel would also be released.

Duchess Sophie visits Ukraine in first trip by British royal since start of war

LONDON

Sophie, Britain's Duchess of Edinburgh, has visited Ukraine, meeting with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and his wife in the first trip to the country by a British royal since the conflict with Russia began, Buckingham Palace said.

Sophie, 59, the wife of King Charles' youngest brother Prince Edward, made the surprise visit on behalf of Britain's Foreign Office to show solidarity with those impacted by the war and as part of her work to champion survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, the palace said in a statement.

"It's true that women and girls pay the highest price in terms of human cost when it comes to the way that they are affected, the way that they can be used as weapons of war," she said in a speech during the visit.

"Rape is used to demean, to degrade and to destroy, and we have to get better at trying to prevent that from happening," she added.

The foreign office said Sophie paid



her respects to those who lost their lives in Bucha, a town near Kyiv where Russian forces are accused of committing war crimes including executions and rapes before it was recaptured two years ago.

She met with survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and survivors of torture, the ministry said, and children who had been returned to Ukraine after being separated from their families and taken to Russia. She also met female volunteers

who have helped their communities cope with the aftermath of attacks with mental healthcare activities for children. Britain has been one of the most vocal and active backers of Ukraine since Russia invaded, and has pledged more than 4.7 billion pounds (\$5.91 billion) in non-military support.

Sophie's trip to Ukraine follows previous visits she has made to countries including Kosovo, Sierra Leone, South Sudan.