

Internet to remain suspended

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The internet services across the country will remain suspended for an indefinite period, said PTA on Wednesday. The PTA confirmed that the decision to block mobile broadband services was taken on the directives of the Ministry of Interior. A day earlier, the services were shutdown as protests erupted after PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's arrest in Al-Qadir Trust case.

@thefrontierpost

First national English daily published from Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, Karachi and Washington D.C

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIX

No. 113

Regd. No. 241

SHAWWAL 20 1444 -- THURSDAY, MAY 11 2023

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

PRICE. 20

PTI protests continue; 4 dead in Peshawar

Ishaq Khan

PESHAWAR: As many as four people died and 27 others suffered injuries on Wednesday in the violent protests being held by workers of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf in Peshawar following the arrest of former prime minister Imran Khan on corruption charges.

Muhammad Asim, Spokesperson of Lady Reading Hospital (LHR) Peshawar, confirmed that four dead bodies have been brought to the Hospital in the ongoing violent protests in the provincial capital. He added that the condition of most of the injured is out of danger as most people have received bullets in the legs and hands, and one of them got a bullet injury on the face. The emergency department of LHR is currently on high alert to treat the injured people, Asim said.

Earlier, the workers of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Wednesday attacked the building of Radio Pakistan in Peshawar where they tortured the staff, destroyed equipment in different sections and set it on fire.

Radio Pakistan Director General Tahir Hassan told media persons that hundreds of PTI workers broke into the building of Radio Pakistan in Peshawar where they wreaked havoc on the newsroom and various sections. The miscreants had attacked the building of Radio Pakistan on Tuesday as well. They set fire to Chagai Monument and Radio Auditorium.

They also destroyed records and other materials in various sections of the building. Vehicles parked in the building of Radio Pakistan had also been set on fire. The miscreants also looted the equipment including cameras, microphones and other devices. They also tortured the staff including women that attempted to stop them. The security forces have succeeded to expel the violent protesters from the building of the Radio Pakistan Peshawar but the PTI's miscreants in Assembly Chowk have sprung up again and tear gas shilling started by police. Due to violent protests in different areas of Peshawar, traffic has been suspended on the Khyber Road and Grand Trunk (GT) Road on Wednesday.



Violent protests continued on the second day in different parts of the country including in the major cities such as Lahore, Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Quetta, with thousands of PTI workers taking part.

Angry mob set fire to cattle market, Edhi ambulances: The angry mob and PTI protesters during violent protests set on fire a cattle market at Chargano chowk and parked Edhi ambulances at Edhi centre near Suri Pull. The police managed to disperse the protesters from Chargano Chowk, Bacha Khan Chowk and Suri Pull but they set on fire a car parked outside traffic police office, Edhi ambulances and the whole cattle market. Several police personnel were also injured in stone pelting by the protesters.

Chakdara historical FC fort attacked and ransacked by protesters in Dir: Hundreds of the PTI charged workers late on Tuesday night stormed into the historical and ancient Chakdara Scouts' Fort, set it on fire, ransacked it and burnt several vehicles of the Frontier Corps. The

attack on the fort forced the personnel to leave their position in order to avert any bloodshed on the occasion. Earlier the security forces opened fire on the protesters when they tried to break the fort's gate and enter into it.

Several protesters were injured out of which one Zakir, a resident of Khadagzai Lower Dir was killed while 17 others were injured when law enforcers opened fire on the attackers. The injured included Osama of Darbar Chakdara, Bakht Zada of Asbanr, Suhail of Khar Bathkela, Numan of Juligram, Lateef of Alladand Malakand, Aminul Haq of Shamozo, Raidullah of Agra Malakand, Zeeshan of Chakdara, Waseem of Bathkela, Taj Badshah of Amandara, Wahidullah of Babagano Agra and others were shifted to the hospitals in Chakdara, Bathkela and Timergara where their condition is stated to be out of danger.

The protesters also burnt gates, windows, vehicles and power generators and ransacked the building. A spokesman of the Frontier Corps and

Chakdara Scouts' Fort on Wednesday informed local journalists that all elements involved in attacking the government installation and official building of the forces had been identified through safe city project and CCTV cameras and they would be dealt with according to the law. The spokesman said that leaders of a particular party instigated the party workers to attack the government installation and other sensitive places through their social media accounts the other day.

Following the instructions, the party workers stormed into sensitive buildings and damaged them badly. He said the law enforcers showed great tolerance, patience and humbleness to avoid any bloodshed on the occasion. The spokesman appreciated the FC jawan for showing patience and tolerance. He said the culprits had been identified and no one would be spared. He said the law would take its course and such sabotage acts would no longer be tolerated in the region.

Qureshi, Asad Umar, Omar Cheema and Akram Usman arrested

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Vice-Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi, was arrested after Asad Umar from Islamabad Red Zone area on Wednesday. The Police officials confirmed that Qureshi was arrested from the Red Zone in Islamabad, where the former Foreign Minister was located.

Umar was arrested from the Islamabad High Court where he had gone to request not to be prevented from meeting Imran Khan. After submitting the request, Umar went towards the Chief Justice's courtroom where he was arrested by the Islamabad Police's Counter Terrorism Department upon leaving. Meanwhile, the government's crackdown on PTI leaders continues, as the police arrested the wife and brother of PTI leader and former Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Qasim Khan Suri, this morning.

Former Punjab governor and PTI leader Omar Sarfraz Cheema was arrested in the early hours of Wednesday for misuse of power. Punjab's

Anti-Corruption Establishment arrested Omar Cheema from his residence in Lahore. The ACE said that Omar Sarfraz Cheema misused his authority when he was governor of the province. According to the family of the PTI leader, 'unidentified' men in plainclothes took Omar Sarfraz Cheema into custody.

A week earlier, a case had also been registered against Omar Cheema at the Ghakhar police station in Gujranwala where a woman, Mehwish, had claimed in the FIR that several accused tried to abduct her at the 'behest' of PTI leader Omar Sarfraz Cheema. The complainant

Meanwhile, the management of the Frontier Corps School and College Balamat in Lower Dir on Wednesday informed local journalists that the 37-rooms' school building had been completely destroyed in the

ACE summons Zartaj Gul

LAHORE (INP): The Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE), Punjab has again summoned PTI leader and former state minister Zartaj Gul over 'corruption' charges. As per details, Zartaj Gul was summoned on April 19, but the Punjab anti-corruption team has again summoned her on Thursday, May 11 at 10 in the morning. She is accused of giving contracts for various developmental projects to her 'front men' at a lower rate.

IHC grants bail to Babar Awan

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday restrained arrest order of PTI leader Babar Awan approving his petition for bail before arrest. President high court Bar Naveed Malik appeared in the court on behalf of Babar Awan. Naveed Malik pleaded to the court that Asad Umar has been arrested and there are apprehensions with regard to Babar Awan's arrest.

He claimed of a plan for arrest of Babar Awan on political grounds. Naveed Malik pleaded to the court for bail to Awan, a leading lawyer of the PTI, on human rights grounds. The bench approved the pre-arrest bail petition of Babar Awan. The court issued notices to Islamabad Police, NAB, interior secretary and I.G. Islamabad and restrained the police and other law enforcement agencies from Babar Awan's arrest till May 12. The bench adjourned further hearing of the case until May 12.

had also alleged that the accused individuals, including Farooq, Qudoos, Sadiq, Zeeshan, and others destroyed her crops.

Former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) MPA Mian Akram Usman has been arrested in Lahore on Wednesday. He was arrested along with his brother Haroon Akbar on the charge of violent protests in Lahore following the arrest of PTI Chairman Imran Khan. It is to be noted here that people in Lahore and other areas of the country had resorted to violent protests following the arrest of Imran Khan by Rangers from the Islamabad High Court (IHC).

ransacking and looting of the protesters last night. Hundreds of the Pakistan Tehreek Insaf charged activists entered the FC Public

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Miscreants to be dealt with iron hand, says PM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday reiterated that the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) had arrested Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan legally and on the basis of corruption and corrupt practice in the Al Qadir Trust case, involving a whopping amount of Rs 60 billion (£ 190 million).

The prime minister, in a televised address to the nation, referred to the violent spree unleashed by the PTI leadership and their supporters across the country inflicting severe damages, sternly warning the miscreants that they would be dealt with an iron hand. "These terrorist and anti-state elements are being warned to desist from taking laws into their hands, otherwise they will be dealt in with iron hands. Safeguarding the motherland and its ideology is more precious than their lives. We will not let their nefarious designs succeed," he maintained.

The prime minister said the rule of law meant facing all the cases legally. Inflicting damages to public and private properties amounted to terrorist acts. "All are equal before the laws; these are the Islamic teachings and the beauty of democracy," he said while advising the PTI chairman to face the

NAB cases legally. The prime minister said that Islamabad High Court had also termed Imran Niazi's arrest as legal and observed that the NAB acted in accordance with law.

The prime minister further said that the past political history of the country was very unpleasant based upon vendetta which never yielded good results. The political parties learned from those experiences and reached to 'Charter of Democracy' by vowing to work under the constitution. Under the same passion, on April 11 last year, they took over the responsibilities of the government and did not adopt the vengeance-based approach as manifested by PTI's government led by Imran Niazi against their political opponents.

"Cases were decided on the basis of faces," he said, adding the PTI's former ministers even days ahead used to announce that a specific political leader would be arrested on a particular day, while Imran Niazi also kept on announcing that a wicked from the opposition side would fall soon. The prime minister elaborated that almost all the leaders, now sitting in the first two rows of the National Assembly, were sent to jails on false charges and there was no one to take notice during the previous regime of PTI.

Rana Sanaullah was arrested on



concocted charges of carrying 15 kgs heroin which was a black day in the history of Pakistan, he added. The prime minister said their sisters, daughters, sons and even relatives were not spared 'in the pursuance of blind vengeance' which also badly hampered the national development.

Due to countrywide demands, concerns and the serious apprehensions of the bureaucracy and the business community, they brought amendments to the Nab laws, he added. In the past, the prime minister said, when they were in the opposition and referred to the necessary amendments in the NAB laws, their genuine demands were spurned by the PTI's leadership accusing them of seeking NROs.

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Money laundering reference: PM declared innocent

LAHORE (INP): The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) on Wednesday declared Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his family members innocent in a money laundering reference.

The NAB has submitted supplementary report of the money laundering reference against the PM and his family in the accountability court. Accountability Judge Qamar-uz-Zaman adjourned further hearing of the case until May 24.

An accountability court had acquitted Shehbaz Sharif and his son Hamza Shehbaz in money laundering case in October last year. The judge of the special court Central-I Ijaz Hassan Awan announced the verdict related to the acquittal of Shehbaz Sharif and Hamza Shehbaz in the case. In November 2020, the FIA had lodged FIR against Shehbaz Sharif and Hamza Shehbaz for alleged Rs25 billion money laundering.

In March 2022, the charge sheet of the money laundering case was submitted in which the amount of laundered money was reduced from Rs25 billion to Rs16 billion, whereas the names of 100 witnesses were presented to the concerned court. The agency also stated that the suspicious transactions worth Rs4 billion were related to secret sugar trading in which Suleman Shehbaz was nominated as the prime suspect and declared proclaimed offender.

It is pertinent to mention here that the three accused in the money laundering case Suleman Shehbaz, Tahir Naqvi and Malik Maqsood alias Maqsood Chappasi were declared absconders. Among the accused, Gulzar Ahmed of Hasilpur died in October 2020 and Malik Maqsood died in June 2022, whereas, former FIA Lahore director and the head of the Joint Investigation Team (JIT) Dr Rizwan also passed away.

May 9 a dark day of national history: ISPR

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) on Wednesday termed May 9 a dark day in national history in the wake of violent incidents that took place against the Pakistan Army after the arrest of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman who was taken into legal custody on Tuesday (from the Islamabad High Court by NAB officials).

According to an ISPR news release, immediately after the PTI chief's arrest, there were organized attacks on army installations and anti-army slogans were raised. On the one hand, it said, the evil elements (PTI workers mobs) vigorously stirred up public sentiments to fulfill their limited and selfish goals, and on the other, they did not get tired of highlighting

the importance of the army for the country while throwing dust in the eyes of the people which was an example of their dual standards.

"What the eternal enemy of the country could not do for 75 years, this group (PTI), wearing a political cloak, in the lust for power, has done," it added. The ISPR said the army showed extreme patience, tolerance and restraint and without caring about its own reputation acted with extreme patience and tolerance in the wider interest of the country.

"Army should have given its immediate response which could have been used for its (PTI) nefarious political purposes – Army's mature response thwarted this conspiracy – We are well aware that behind this are the orders, and directives of some evil

leadership of the party. There was and is complete pre-planning," it said.

The facilitators, planners and political activists involved in those operations had been identified and strict action would be taken against them as per the law and all these evil elements would now be responsible for the consequences, the military's media wing said.

The ISPR warned that any further attack on the army, including all law enforcement agencies, military and state installations and properties would be severely retaliated against by the very group that wanted to push Pakistan into a civil war and had repeatedly attacked them. "It has also been expressed," it said. "No one can be allowed to incite people and take the law into their hands."

Court grants NAB 8-day physical remand of Imran

RAWALPINDI (INP): An accountability court on Wednesday announced the physical remand of PTI chief Imran Khan to NAB for eight days. The accountability bureau requested for Imran Khan's physical remand for 14 days. The decision was announced by accountability court judge Muhammad Bashir in a case pertaining to Al-Qadir Trust.

Earlier, sources said, legal team was denied permission to meet Imran ahead of the hearing. However, he consulted his lawyers Khawaja Haris, Faisal Chaudhry, Ali Gohar, and Ali Bukhari during a break in hearing. The NAB was represented by Special Prosecutor Rafay Maqsood, Deputy Prosecutor Muzaffar Abbasi, Prosecutor Sardar Zulqarnain and investigation officer Mian Umar Nadeem.

The NAB prosecutor informed the additional sessions judge Mohammad Bashir that Imran was shown warrants at the time

of arrest; however, the PTI chief denied the claim, saying that he saw the arrest warrants after reaching the NAB office. Mr Abbasi assured the judge that all necessary documents would be provided to the PTI chief's lawyers.

The judge allowed a break when Imran complained that the authorities did not allow his lawyers to meet him before the hearing. When the hearing resumed, Haris argued about the legality of Imran's arrest. Sharing the details of the case, Mr Abbasi said the money was seized by the UK's National Crime Agency and sent it back to the Government of Pakistan.

After the completion of his lawyer Haris's argument, Imran Khan said he never refused to share record with the NAB. "The NAB is saying they want to compile the records," Mr Khan said, questioning when he denied access to any of the records. The former prime minister added that all transactions were

made after the approval of the cabinet. Recalling yesterday's events, Mr Khan urged the judges to summon his team of doctors, especially Dr Faisal.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief and former prime minister Imran Khan, who was arrested on Tuesday in a graft case, presented before the accountability court at the Police Lines Headquarters in H-11/1 Islamabad today (Wednesday).

Accountability Court Judge Muhammad Bashir hearing reference against the PTI chief while Imran's councils Khawaja Haris, Faisal Chaudhry, Ali Gohar, and Ali Bukhari appeared before the court. During the hearing, the country's top anti-corruption body sought 14-day physical remand of the former premier.

To which Imran's council contended that NAB has no jurisdiction in the case, adding the anti-graft watchdog also did not share

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Imran indicted in Toshakhana case

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: An Islamabad district and sessions court on Wednesday framed charges against former prime minister Imran Khan in the Toshakhana case — in which the deposed premier is accused of taking gifts in an illegal manner.

Additional Sessions Judge Humayun Dilawar indicted the incarcerated chairman of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in the case for "deliberately concealing" details of the gifts he retained from the Toshakhana — a repository where presents handed to government officials from foreign officials are kept — during his tenure as the prime minister. Khan, however, denied the charges and claimed innocence.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had sought proceedings under the criminal law against the former prime minister in the case. The indictment in the case was pending for a long period of time as the PTI chief had been avoiding appearing before the court. Last week, the Islamabad court summoned Khan for May 10 to frame charges against him in the case. In its reference, the electoral watchdog alleges that the former premier had "deliberately concealed" details of the

gifts he retained from the Toshakhana.

It should be noted that Khan was not brought to a regular court in the federal capital and his scheduled hearing took place at the location where he was under custody. The Islamabad chief commissioner earlier said that Khan, instead of being taken to F-8 Court Complex and Judicial Complex G 11/4, will be presented at New Police Guest House, Police Lines — which has been given the one-time status of the court for this particular hearing, a notification issued by the Government of Pakistan read.

Last year in October, the ECP, in a consensus verdict in Toshkhana reference, disqualified the former premier and ruled that he was no more a member of the National Assembly. Criminal proceedings will be initiated against the PTI chairman for misdeclaration, read the verdict. On October 22, Khan — who was deposed as the prime minister in April last year via a vote of no confidence — challenged the order of the ECP in the Islamabad High Court, praying to the court to set aside the judgment as ECP had no jurisdiction over the matter.

Under the rules governing "Toshakhana" — a Persian word meaning "treasure house" — government officials can keep gifts if they have a

low worth, while they must pay a dramatically reduced fee to the government for extravagant items. The Toshakhana is under a microscope ever since the emergence of the allegations that Imran Khan purchased the gifts he received as prime minister at throwaway rates and sold them off in the open market for staggering profits.

The 70-year-old cricketer-turned-politician was accused of misusing his 2018 to 2022 premiership to buy and sell gifts in state possession that were received during visits abroad and worth more than Rs140 million (\$635,000). The gifts included watches given by a royal family, according to government officials, who have alleged previously that Khan's aides sold them in Dubai.

The gifts included seven wristwatches, six made by watchmaker Rolex, and the most expensive a "Master Graff limited edition" valued at 85 million Pakistani rupees (\$385,000). The election commission's order had said Imran stood disqualified under Article 63(1)(p) of the Constitution. Following the order, the election watchdog moved the Islamabad sessions court and sought criminal proceedings against him — and the PTI chief has missed several hearings.

Court grants NAB 8-day remand of Imran

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inquiry report. He maintained that a fair trial is Imran Khan's fundamental right. "According to the law, Imran Khan's trial should be held in open court, Imran Khan's lawyer told the court.

NAB prosecutor Sardar Muzaffar reported to the court that Imran Khan was shown arrest warrants at the time of his detention. He told the court that Imran was shown the warrant at the time of his arrest. He also assured Imran's lawyer that the necessary documentation would be provided.

"This is a corruption case which the UK's National Crime Agency has probed," he said, adding that the money received was meant to be transferred to the government of Pakistan. "Instead of the government, the funds that were received were transferred to Bahria Town," he said. Imran Khan disputed the prosecutor's statement and informed the court that the warrants were not shown to him during his arrest, but rather shown when he was transferred to the NAB office.

It has been disclosed that the federal government, acting on the NAB's request, has designated the Police Lines Guest House as a sub-jail, and in the event that physical remand is granted in the NAB case, Imran Khan will be held there.

Lawyers allowed to meet Imran as trial in Al-Qadir Trust case begins: Authorities on Wednesday allowed Khawaja Harris, Barrister Gohar and Ali Bukhari to meet Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Imran Khan at the New Police Guest House, Police Lines.

Earlier, the legal team and PTI leaders were denied meeting Imran. Imran's legal team was stopped at NUST University Chowk while PTI leaders Babar Awan, Shah Mehmood Qureshi and Asad Umar were also not allowed to enter the Police Lines.

Awan told a private news channel that not only legal team, no one was allowed to meet Imran. Imran is being tried in Al-Qadir Trust case, a land deal case on the charges of which he was arrested from Islamabad High Court on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Additional Session's Judge Humayun Dilawar has reached the Police Lines who is also hearing Toshakhana case against Imran Khan. Sources said that the NAB officials would request the court for a 14-day physical remand of Imran Khan. Earlier, the guest house was declared as the court where Imran Khan's trial would be held.

Sources said cases relating to NAB and Toshakhana will be heard at the New Police Guest House, Police Lines Headquarters instead of F-8 Court Complex and Judicial Complex G-11/4 Islamabad. A notification in this regard has also been issued. As per the notification, the judges who will hear the NAB and Toshakhana cases will go to the Police Lines Headquarters H11/1 Islamabad.

Before hearing, the legal team has been denied permission to meet the party chief ahead of the hearing on Al-Qadir Trust case, a land deal case on the charges of which he was arrested a day earlier. "We were barred from meeting our client," Babar Awan, a part of Khan's legal team, told a news channel. He added nobody is being allowed to meet the PTI chief which is against the Constitution.

Sources claimed that the PTI chief had been shifted to the Police Lines Guest House. On the other hand, Police Lines Guest House has been given the status of a sub-jail by the federal government on the NAB request and Imran Khan will remain there if physical remand was granted in the NAB case. It is pertinent to mention here that a team of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), with the help of Rangers, on Tuesday took the former prime minister into custody in the Al-Qadir Trust case, prompting the IHC to take note.

Sindh CM visits Karachi areas after lawless incidents

KARACHI (INP): Sindh CM Murad Ali Shah visited various areas of the city late night and early morning after lawless incidents Tuesday.

"No one will be allowed to create law and order situation in the city," Sindh CM said while inspecting security arrangements in the city. "The administration has been issued necessary instructions," he said. "We will make accountable those who have set public transport vehicles on fire in the name of protest," Sindh CM Shah said.

"The city has been cleaned after vandalism. The miscreants will be tackled sternly," he said.

"Some PTI leaders are asking the workers to remain peaceful, while others instigating them to hit the roads," Sindh chief

minister said.

"Everyone should go to their work, no person will dare to stop them," he said. "The elements involved in damaging properties will be tackled with iron hands," he added.

Murtaza Wahab, Sindh government's spokesperson, has said that vehicles were set on fire during protest yesterday. "Sindh CM has visited various areas of the city and issued instructions to tackle the situation," he said.

"The administration has tackled things properly, miscreants will not be allowed to create lawlessness," Wahab said.

"Plan has been devised to tackle any protest today. Karachi runs the country, we will not allow any lawless situation in the city," spokesperson added.

Miscreants to be dealt with iron hand, says PM

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But the fact was that in the opposition, they adopted a national approach with responsibility.

The prime minister explained that in the previous NAB laws, an accused was arrested on 90 days remand but after the amendment, this period was reduced to 15 days only which was in accordance with the fairness of the contemporary laws and under courts' observations, adding the first beneficiary of this amendment was now Imran Niazi. The prime minister said that they were still facing NAB cases though none of them had been proved yet which was a great blessing of Allah Almighty.

In the UK, he said, the PTI government, prompted an investigation against him but the National Crime Agency of the UK gave them a clean chit which was not an honour for them, but for the 220 million population of Pakistan. "We faced all cases and never bugged from facing courts despite our strong apprehensions and objections. Thrice elected prime minister Nawaz Sharif, along with his daughter, had appeared more than a hundred times in Nab cases and even went to jail while holding the hands of his

daughter after the death of his spouse," the prime minister maintained.

Recollecting the death of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto on December 27, 2007, the prime minister said it was the most unfortunate and tragic incident, but the PPP leadership and workers faced the tragedy with patience and with utter display of exemplary patriotism which would be remembered for long. Particularly, former president Asif Ali Zardari who raised the slogan of 'Pakistan Khappay' which frustrated the enemies' designs and took the country on the path of democracy and progress, he added.

About Imran Khan's Al Qadir Trust corruption case, the prime minister said it was strange that how could a federal cabinet approved a huge amount related to the national kitty without opening an envelope. The cabinet members were kept in the dark, he opined. The prime minister further questioned whether such an attitude was permitted by the religious teachings, existing laws and the democratic system that an accused should refuse to face the court of law.

He said that such a situation was an unpleasant

moment in one's life but from such trials, the real character of the leadership emerged which should advise their followers not to cross the laws and protect public and private properties. The prime minister said that it was the most somber and sad moment in the country's history that PTI's supporters inflicted severe damages to the public and private properties.

Such a spectacle had never been witnessed in the last 75 years. The public were made hostages in their vehicles, patients were taken out of the ambulances and later, those vehicles were torched. Swat motorway was damaged and the government officials were tortured. Few elements were instigated against the armed forces and they showed disrespect for the shuhada of the armed forces, he added. "The vicious campaign is still continuing. The harm the enemy could not cause in the last 75 years, these terrorists and enemies of the land are inflicting now," he regretted. The prime minister also lauded the law enforcement agencies for their role in safeguarding the lives and properties of the public and the general public who refused to be beguiled with PTI's violent tactics.

PTI protests continue

(Continued from Page 1)

School Balambat on Tuesday night and set the furniture, windows and doors on fire. The administration said the school had 37 classrooms, a total of 1430 students and a well-equipped science and computer lab.

"There are only 250 students from the families of armed personnel while the rest of the students belong to common citizens," the management said. It said the protesters also set ablaze the newly constructed portion for the higher and secondary classes on which millions of rupees had been spent. They said the protesters also took away a cash of Rs 900,000, laptops and air conditioners from the building. The whole building was set on fire that inflicted millions of rupees loss to it, the management said, adding that it would take months for restoration of power supply as the entire system had been damaged. It said the students' learning would be badly affected for years. It said the protesters even did not spare to burn the copies of the Holy Quran.

Meanwhile, the Lower Dir police took the former PTI MPAs Malik Liaqat Ali, Malik Shafiullah Khan, Azam Khan and former tehsil councilor Imtiaz Khan into custody under the 16 MPO here on Wednesday while raids are being made to arrest rest of the party lawmakers, tehsil chairmen and senior workers. The police registered cases against 34 PTI activists including its former lawmakers, tehsil chairmen and senior workers for instigating other workers against the government and its installation and attacking police officials.

The PTI workers continued protest sit-ins at Timergara Shaheed Chowk, Zulam Bridge and Munda. The main roads were blocked and traffic on them was badly interrupted. The protesting workers carrying party banners and placards also chanted slogans against the government and state

institutions for arresting the party chief Imran Khan and other leaders.

A clash was also reported among the PTI and workers of another political party when the protesters tried to close shops forcibly in Munda bazaar. The police resorted to aerial firing after the clash to disperse the workers of both the parties.

One Zakir, a resident of Khadagzai Lower Dir was killed while 12 others were injured when law enforcers opened fire on protesters who tried to enter the FC Fort Chakdara here late on Tuesday night. The injured include Osama of Darbar Chakdara, Bakht Zada of Asbnar, Suhail of Khar Batkhela, Numan of Juligram, Lateef of Alladand Malakand, Aminul Haq of Shamozo, Raidullah of Agra Malakand, Zeeshan of Chakdara, Waseem of Batkhela, Taj Badshah of Amandara and Wahidullah of Babagano Agra. The injured were shifted to the hospitals in Chakdara, Batkhela and Timergara where their condition is stated to be out of danger.

Supporters of Pakistan ex-PM plan march to capital to protest arrest: Supporters of Imran Khan were planning to march to Islamabad on Wednesday where the former Pakistan prime minister is in custody in a corruption case, raising fears of more clashes with security forces.

Mobile data services in the country were shut while Twitter, YouTube and Facebook were disrupted. Television carried watered-down coverage of violence that erupted on Tuesday. Authorities in three of Pakistan's four provinces have imposed an emergency order banning all gatherings after Khan's supporters clashed with police.

Khan was arrested from the Islamabad High Court on Tuesday by Pakistan's anti-corruption agency. Police said a court hearing would take place at the police guest house where he is being held. The arrest came a day

after the country's powerful military rebuked Khan for repeatedly accusing a senior military officer of trying to engineer his assassination and the former armed forces chief of being behind his removal from power last year.

In response, his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party called for a "shutdown" across the country, with Khan's supporters clashing with police in many cities and storming military buildings in Lahore and Rawalpindi, according to witnesses and videos shared by his party. Supporters in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province were asked to gather early on Wednesday in Swabi city to leave for Islamabad as part of a convoy, the party wrote on Twitter.

PTI Vice Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi said the party's senior leadership was in Islamabad to meet Khan and will approach the Supreme Court to challenge an Islamabad High Court order that deemed Khan's arrest legal. "We continue to call PTI family workers, supporters and the people of Pakistan onto the streets for peaceful protest against this unconstitutional behaviour," Qureshi wrote on Twitter.

A police spokesman told reporters that Khan will not be brought to court and his scheduled hearing will take place at the location where he is being held under custody in the Islamabad police lines area. At least one person was killed on Tuesday and 12 others injured, including six police officers, in clashes in the southern city of Quetta, provincial home minister Ziaullah Langove said. Khan, 70, a cricket hero-turned-politician, was ousted as prime minister in April 2022 in a parliamentary no-confidence vote. Khan has not slowed his campaign against the ouster even though he was wounded in a November attack on his convoy as he led a protest march to Islamabad calling for snap general elections.



LAHORE: Families enjoying a boat ride at Minar e Pakistan's Greater Park.

Several politicians held in past, but none staged PTI-like violent protest

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Minister of Information, Transport and Mass Transit Sindh, Sharjeel Inam Memon, addressing a press conference today at the Archives Complex Clifton, said that throughout various times in Pakistan, several political leaders have been arrested, but none have ever staged such a violent protest as the one carried out by the PTI, which was celebrated by anti-state foreign forces.

He said that Asif Ali Zardari spent 12 years in jail under NAB on false charges. All of you witnessed the patience and dignity Asif Ali Zardari demonstrated at the time of his arrest. Ms. Faryal Talpur was arrested from the hospital on Eid night. Agha Siraj Durrani was arrested at 5:00 am from his hotel room in Islamabad, where he is still facing trial. Agha Siraj Durrani had officially gone to Islamabad to participate in a two-day conference. He is the Speaker of the Sindh Assembly, and if he was to be arrested, it could have been done in Karachi as well, but this was not done. Khurshid Shah and Ejaz Jakhani were also arrested from their houses.

Memon said that I was arrested in the court premises; the media friends and cameras are witnesses to my arrest. To date, there isn't a warrant of arrest regarding my arrest, but NAB wrote in its arrest memo that I was arrested outside the court premises. The media is a witness that this was a complete lie, but no one termed it as contempt of court. Imran Khan has to satisfy the courts and NAB in the Al Qadir case. Imran Khan was arrested because of his corruption, and he is not being targeted for political revenge. Requesting the citizen's information minister said that citizens are requested to open shops and busi-

nesses; the government will protect the people. Those who take the law into their hands will be dealt with strictly according to the law. Instead of spreading violence and unrest, you should clean up your act and not play with people's lives. The accused involved in burning the buses worth crores of rupees yesterday will be arrested.

He said that yesterday everyone witnessed the opposition leader of PTI in the Sindh Assembly walking on the road, with a cloth covering his face and carrying a baton in his hand. Peaceful protest is everyone's right, and the government will provide fields and facilities for peaceful protest, but strict action will be taken against those who block roads and commit arson. He said that if someone takes the law into their hands, the government will take strict action according to the law. Yesterday, PTI burned water board vehicles, burnt the buses of the People's Bus Service, and destroyed the travel facility of thousands of citizens. Remember that these buses belong to the citizens of Karachi; they are not the property of Al-Qadir Trust. What harm did the citizens of Karachi do to you that you burnt their buses?

He said that the O-level and A-level exams have been postponed, to the detriment of our children, the students of Pakistan. The PTI chief is involved in harming not only the people but also the country. Yesterday, the Sindh Chief Minister gave instructions to clear the road but avoid any kind of collision. The Sindh Chief Minister showed his traditional wisdom. However, it should be noted that those involved in arson and damage to government property will be arrested. An FIR will be lodged against them, and no exceptions will be made for anyone. I was kept in jail for twenty-one months,

but despite this cruelty and oppression, we patiently faced the trials, and our leadership never called for violent protests. But the spectacle that PTI created yesterday is unacceptable. Yesterday, across the country, PTI did something that has never happened in the history of Pakistan. Anti-national forces are celebrating by showing clips of yesterday's events.

Provincial minister said that it is not a big thing to organize a protest; every party can protest, but no democratic party has ever staged such a violent protest. Our leadership has faced challenges, and tragically, our leader Ms. Benazir was assassinated. However, even in the face of these difficulties, we remained steadfast in our commitment to Pakistan. The People's Party has always stood against institutions that it perceived as adversarial. However, we categorically deny any involvement in conspiracies against the country. He said that presently, Imran Khan is being treated with leniency, as the remand period granted by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) is only up to 14 days, unlike the potential 90-day remand. On the contrary, Imran Khan has utilized the same NAB rules to target and arrest his political opponents.

Today, we witness the consequences of corrupt practices, which are considered a divine intervention. However, we do not celebrate anyone's arrest. Imran Khan has been detained based on allegations of corruption. He said that it is disheartening to see the persistence of double standards in our country, where some individuals are protected while others face walls of opposition. The events that took place in Punjab yesterday are unlikely to bring any joy to any country. These actions are being exploited by forces that are hostile to Pakistan and its interests.

PIC Karachi organized workshop

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Information Center (PIC) project of the Press Information Department (PID) of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting organized a two-day training workshop on News authenticity and tools to counter the fake news and anti-state propaganda on May 9 and 10 at a private hotel in Karachi.

The training workshop was attended by members of Karachi Press Club, journalists associated with various TV channels and newspapers and media studies students, besides, journalists and students from other cities of the province also took part in the online workshop.

Gibran ashraf served as Lead Trainer in the two-day training workshop. During the training, he provided training to journalists and students not only to recognize fake news and anti-state propaganda but also on journalistic values and ethics. For the two-day training workshop, trainer Gibran Ashraf taught the participants advanced tools to identify fake news and anti-state propaganda.

Karachi Press Club (KPC) Secretary Shoaib Ahmed and other prominent personalities as guest speakers informed the workshop participants about using tools to identify fake news and propaganda against the state. On the second day of the workshop, PID DGPR Madam Erum Tanweer gave certificates to the trainer, guest speakers and trained journalists and students.

MILITARY ENGINEER SERVICES NOTICE OF TENDER

6008/174/E6

dated: 09/06/2023

1.	The Office of CMES (PAF) Peshawar invites sealed tenders for the following work in light of PPRA Rule 13 (1) of 2004		
2.	Auctioneer Agreement - Appointment of Auctioneer for CMES (PAF) Peshawar Area		
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(M)	Rs.7.000 (M)
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(M)	Rs.7.500 (M)
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(M)	Rs.7.000 (M)
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(Q)	Rs.7.500 (M)
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(Q)	Rs.6.500 (M)
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(Q)	Rs.6.500 (M)
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(Q)	Rs.6.000 (M)
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(Q)	Rs.9.500 (M)
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(Q)	Rs.8.500 (M)
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(Q)	Rs.7.000 (M)
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(Q)	Rs.8.000 (M)
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(Q)	Rs.7.800 (M)
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(P)	Rs.5.500 (M)
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(P)	Rs.6.000 (M)
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(P)	Rs.6.500 (M)
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(P)	Rs.9.000 (M)
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(P)	Rs.8.500 (M)
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(P)	Rs.7.500 (M)
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(P)	Rs.8.000 (M)
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(P)	Rs.5.000 (M)
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(L)	Rs.5.500 (M)
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(L)	Rs.5.000 (M)
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(L)	Rs.6.500 (M)
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(R)	Rs.6.000 (M)
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(R)	Rs.6.500 (M)
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(R)	Rs.5.000 (M)
	Provision of certain facilities at PAF	(R)	Rs.5.500 (M)

- The contractor are required to submit their applications for issuance of tender documents alongwith their complete credentials as shown at (Serial 9). The applications shall be scrutinized and the tender documents will only be issued to the firms who have sufficient experience in the relevant field and satisfy other special conditions required for the job and area. Tenders will be issued to the scrutinized contractors. The tender must be received in the accepting office by 1130 Hrs on 26 May 2023 and will be opened at 1200 Hrs on the same date.
- Note: Contractors shall provide certificate that they are not involved in any type of litigation with Government Department in the Court of Law and that no special report of Directorate of Inspection and Evaluation (E-in-C's Branch GHQ) is outstanding against them.
- All contractors, irrespective of their enlistment or non - enlistment with MES will certify in writing that they are registered with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC), and will submit a copy of their registration. Contractors not registered with PEC are ineligible to apply.
- Contractors borne on approved List of MES in category 'A', 'B', 'C' & 'D' having experience of this type of work may only apply.
- Contractors who desire may be present at the time of opening of tenders.
- The accepting officer reserves the right to accept or reject the tender. Rejected tenders will be dealt with as per Para 33 (i) of PPRA Rules.
- The interested parties can contact CMES (PAF) Peshawar / authorized representative for further details from 0715 to 1335 hours on all working days.

S. No	Name of the work executed during the last 2 years and in hand	Agency	Amount of work	Time allowed (Months)	Date of Commencement	Date of completion	Percentage progress of work in hand	Departmental performance report on each work by the Engineer in Charge
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CS KP inaugurates 1st PPSC, 36th Domain Specific MCMC at NIM

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Nadeem Aslam Chaudhary visited Pakistan Academy for Rural Development and Pakistan Provincial Services Academy Campus in Peshawar to inaugurate the 1st Probationary Training course for Provincial Planning Service Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the 36th Domain Specific Mid-Career Management Course for officer of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Gilgit Baltistan and AJK.. Director General, NIM, PARD & PPSC Apt (Retd) Usman Gul, Secretary Administration Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Manzoor Ahmad, Chief Inspectors of NIM, PARD and PPSC; Tariq Bakhtiar, Muhammad Tayyab, Dr. Gohar Saeed and Abdul Sattar participated in the ceremony alongside faculty members of the three Training institutes at the campus.

In his address to the officers, the Chief Secretary emphasized the importance of training and capacity building for improving efficiency in governance and public service delivery in the

province and the country.

The Chief Secretary shared with the examples of China with the participants and stressed that key to Chinas rapid development was the strengthening of her human resource.

He highlighted the government's commitment to enhancing the skills and knowledge of both mid-career and newly recruited officers, so that they are equipped with latest planning & management tools to keep up with the modern day public policy requirements.

He especially urged the newly recruited planning officers to understand the significance of data and evidence and maximize their learning gains to become the change agents for evidence based planning & decision making.

The Chief Secretary was delighted to know that young educated women from all across the province are becoming part of civil services in a sizeable number.

He appreciated the young female officers of Planning & Tehsildars courses in this regard and urged them to become the

change agents in their respective services

Director General, NIM PARD and PPSC, Capt (Retd) Usman Gul, thanked the honourable Chief Secretary for his continuous support to the training process of public servants. He highlighted the significance of the NIM, PARD, PPSC Training Campus, which had been declared as a Centre of Excellence in Human Resource Development by the UNESCO.

He shared that the three premier federal training institutes at the campus work in harmony by sharing the training facilities as well as the vital human resource.

He apprised the honourable Chief Secretary that PARD has made tremendous contribution to strengthening of human resource related to rural development in the country by training over 40000 government functionaries, elected representatives and community members since its inception.

Similarly PPSC has been the mainstay of the training of Provincial services officers from all over the country since its establishment

in 1969. PPSC has conducted 92 long courses and trained about 2500 officers of all the provincial govts of Pakistan including GB and AJK.

The DG then highlighted the projects carried out for infrastructure development of the campus, especially thanking the Chief Secretary for supporting the Academy's developmental activities through a 50 bed hostel for PPSC and a solar system for the PARD Agriculture demonstration farm.

The Chief Secretary then visited the developmental projects of under construction PPSC hostel for trainee officers, PARD Agri-farm solar project and the new Cafeteria and IT Lab for SMC and MCMC participants and Employees Welfare Complex for campus residents and trainee participants for all courses. He promised to expedite the release of fund from the provincial government and instructed the concerned provincial departments to speed up the work on the projects. In the end, the honorable Chief Secretary also planted a Magnolia plant at the campus.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan chairing a special meeting of Provincial Cabinet.

PHC orders to recruit Peshawar domicile holder Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench comprising of Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Musart Hilali and Justice Shakeel Ahmad ordered to recruit Peshawar's domicile holder Wahid Ali as police constable, on Wednesday.

The counsel Malik Shahbaz Advocate informed that petitioner has obtained 56 marks in test arranged by Evaluation and Testing Authority (EATA) as well as passed both physical and interview but mistakenly Wahid Ali was declared as domicile holder of Charsadda which latterly corrected by the authority and recommended recruitment of applicant.

The counsel argued that DPO Charsadda has told petitioner that he resident of Peshawar after approaching for appointment, in the meantime Justice Shakeel Ahmad remarked that both offices had made football from the petitioner.

The divisional bench comprising of Chief Justice PHC Justice Musart Hilali and Justice Shakeel Ahmad accepted writ petition while ordered respondents to appointment Wahid Ali as constable in police after conclusion of arguments.

‘Violent protest unveils fascist face of PTI’

PESHAWAR (APP): Secretary Information PPP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Amjad Khan Afridi has said that violent demonstrations staged by the PTI workers have unveiled its fascist posture to the people.

He was talking to the media during a dinner organized in honour of the cabinets of the Khyber Union of Journalists (KhUJ) and Peshawar Press Club (PPC) here the other day, said a press release issued here on Wednesday.

Besides, Central Secretary Information PPP, Minister of State, Faisal

Karim Kundi, provincial president-Minister of State, Mohammad Ali Shah Bacha, Mohammad Hamayun Khan, Syed Zahir Ali Shah, Gohar Inqilabi, Liaquat Shabbab and other PPP leaders were also present on the occasion while a large number local journalists also attended.

The provincial secretary information PPP said that the PTI workers have lost senses over the arrest of their leader and have resorted to violence and damaging the public and private properties which are not acceptable in any circumstances.

He said that the arrest of Imran Khan is not the first arrest in the country and if the PTI wants to register a protest then it should stage it in front of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB). He said that it is very strange that on one hand the leadership of PTI is inciting people to protest and on the other hand calling them extremists.

He said that legal proceedings would be initiated against all those identified miscreants, which have inflicted losses to the public properties.

Wali says Ransacking of public properties during PTI protest no service to country

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-N spokesman Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and former member provincial assembly, Ikhtair Wali Khan here Wednesday said that ransacking of public and government properties during protest demonstrations of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf workers was no service to the country and law would take its own course in these ill legal acts.

Talking to APP, he said that gory incidents like putting on fire a motorway toll plaza at Swat Expressway, goals market at Pachagi Road and Chagi mountains Model at Peshawar was very unfortunate and miscreants involved in it could not escape from law.

He said NAB has arrested the PTI chairman in Al-Qadar Trust corruption case and there was no justification of protest demonstrations and ransacking of government and private properties after the Islamabad High Court declared his arrest legal and in accordance with law.

Wali said almost the entire PMLN leadership including a three times elected former Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Senior Vice President, Maryam Nawaz, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah and others have faced jails and courts with bravery and steadfastness during PTI government tenure and PMLN workers remained peaceful.

He questioned Is Imran Khan above the law?. He said the judiciary was independent and PTI should wait for the court's verdicts in Imran Khan's case.

Ikhtair Wali Khan said PTI's anti corruption claims

were exposed before masses after the PTI government in KP closed its own created Ehtasab Commission at Peshawar to protect its alleged loot and plunder while referring to Toshah Khana and PTI foreign funding cases.

He said that the PTI leadership was hiding behind stay orders in mega corruption cases including BRT, adding that PTI's flagship billion trees afforestation project was taken over by the NAB and demanded acceleration of its investigation.

Due to PTI violent protests, he said time of students of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was being wasted due to closure of schools, colleges and universities till May 13 while metric examinations were also postponed due to PTI's unjustified strike.



PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhary and DG NIM Peshawar Capt (Retd) Usman Gul addressing inaugural ceremony of 36th Domain Specific MCMC and 1st Pre-Service Course of Provincial Planning Service officers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

PIC organizes workshop on fact checking to counter fake news

PESHAWAR (APP): The Pakistan Information Center (PIC) on Wednesday organized a two-day training workshop titled 'News authenticity and tools to counter fake news, anti-state propaganda and blasphemy'.

More than 20 local journalists and students of mass communication participated in the session acquiring skills in conducting research to authenticate news stories before dissemination.

Deputy Director Press Information Department (PID), Mohammad Hanif,

in his opening remarks, said that a separate unit had already been established in the Cyber Wing at Islamabad to enhance various aspects of news reporting.

He shared that a total of four training workshops on the subject had been conducted across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, benefitting hundreds of journalists, freelancers and students. These workshops aimed at equipping participants with the necessary tools to generate content based on verified facts using fact-check-

ing mechanisms.

The resource person highlighted the essential tools of digital media technology utilized in fact-checking news stories. The participants were urged to refrain from producing news stories that are commonly disseminated on social media platforms without considering public interest.

He said that disinformation and misinformation were the basic elements in circulating fake news. He emphasized avoiding generating news stories that are

usually disseminated as content on social media keeping in view the public interest.

He said that any persuasive communication was propaganda and an attempt to change opinions by persuasively presenting new ones. He emphasized counterpropaganda which is a form of communication consisting of methods taken and messages aired to oppose propaganda that seeks to influence action or perspectives among a targeted audience.

BRT service suspends

PESHAWAR (APP): The authorities have suspended the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service on Wednesday after PTI workers came out on roads to protest the arrest of their leader, Imran Khan in a corruption case the other day.

In a notification, the BRT authorities said the service has been temporarily suspended to protect its buses from damage by the protestors.

The BRT authorities asked the passengers to leave the BRT stations and extend complete assistance to the BRT staff.

140 research projects displayed in IOH

PESHAWAR (APP): The final year students of GIKI of Engineering and Technology on Wednesday displayed a total of 140 research projects in the two Industrial Open House (IOH) and 60 organisations, including multinational and

national companies.

Chairman PEC Engr. Muhammad Najeab Haroon inaugurated the two-day event, while secretary PEC Engr Dr Nasir Mahmood Khan graced the occasion as guest of honour.

Officials of the compa-

nies, Pro-Rector, Academics, Prof Dr Mohammad Hasan Zaidi, Pro-Rector administration and finance, Sardar Aminullah Khan, academia of various universities and students participated in the gathering.

IOH is one of the major

events in which a group of students in every faculty work for the entire year on a project under the guidance of their professors, displaying it in the two days event, aiming to show that they have developed new indigenous technology to facili-

tate people and resolve their confronting problems.

The representatives of multinational and national companies from across the country observe and evaluate the projects of the students and conduct their interviews.



PESHAWAR: Federal Minister Faisal Kareem Kundi meeting with Director General BISP during his visit to central zonal office KP region.

Slaughter on the roads

Khawaja Wajihuddin

On a visit to China I saw two new cars colliding with each other. I expected that the road would be blocked and both the car drivers would start fighting. But to my astonishment road was cleared immediately by the drivers. In a few minutes the authorities came, took some photographs, noted down the necessary details and in a few minutes the matter was over. On inquiry I was told that with due use of technology they have determined the actual matter and financial aspect will be resolved through insurance.

According to the latest WHO data published in the year 2020 road traffic accidents deaths in Pakistan reached 28,170 or 1.93% of total deaths. Some reports on line say that they are much more. Anyhow WHO estimated Fatalities per 100,000 population was 14.3. Estimated Serious Injuries, for the year 2016: were 413,730. Most of the road accidents in Pakistan, the main cause is negligence of drivers who indulge in rash driving listening to songs.

Over speeding, overloading, wrong overtaking and breaking traffic rules is

a normal routine. The mechanical faults of the vehicles and deficiencies in road environments also contribute massively towards the accidents. Casual attitude of the masses is one of another reason of these tragedies. It can be stated without any fear of contradiction, that frequency of road accidents has assumed gigantic proportions. The statistics mentioned above are alarming.

It seems that no serious effort is being made to address the real causes. The fact of the matter is that in our society, which is now a hollow and decadent society by any stretch of imagination. Our values have crumbled like a house of cards. Respect for the law and order has vanished altogether. People have resorted to street justice. Some of us have amassed enormous wealth in utter disregard of ethics and morality. Nobody cares except for himself. In case of accidents people who are culprits go scot-free, for many reasons including many chinks in the law.

It's very rare that an accused guilty of an accident is convicted and sentenced under the law. Percentage of such convictions may not be more than 1%. In my career as

judicial officer I have seen a number of serious accident cases. None of the cases resulted in conviction of the accused, except one.

I remember one of the newly appointed judicial officers travelling in a public transport was killed in an accident. The young boy with a few days of judicial service met his tragic end because of the fault of the driver of the vehicle. It was very unfortunate. The matter ended on compromise.

I remember at one of the stations a Hiace collided with another vehicle and one of the children died on the spot. In fact he was cut to pieces and his brain was lying on the road. The helpless father could not do anything except to collect the remaining parts of the brain from the road and went away. Though the law came into motion but the matter was ultimately compromised. At another station a bus full of passengers met an accident killing majority of them. No one could depose against of the accused, the injured and the legal heirs compromised hence the accused was acquitted.

At yet another station chair lift (still used in Pakistan as a means for crossing the river) had an accident drowning more

than 30 people in the river underneath. No one depose against the accused and the matter was compromised. I vividly remember one of the witnesses in that case saying that he does not trust the system and he cannot afford to annoy the elders of the locality. Yet again the accused was acquitted.

In the last winters, I had a chance, because of the fog, to use link roads leading to the main GT Road. The roads were pathetic to say the least. With the introduction of the motorways some roads have become much improved but the precious loss of human life continues unabated. There may be many reasons for that. We will examine legal loopholes only.

Section 279 PPC deals with Rash and negligent driving on a public way. It says that, Whoever drives any vehicle, or rides, on any public way in a manner so rash or negligent as to endanger human life, or to be likely to cause hurt or injury to any other person, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to 2[two years] or with fine which may extend to 1[three] thousand rupees, or with both". The offence under this Section is a cognizable

offence, which means that the police authorities have the power to arrest the accused without a warrant. The offence is bailable, and non-compoundable.

According to section 318 Of the Pakistan Penal Code "Whoever, without any intention to cause the death of, or cause harm to, a person causes death of such person, either by mistake of act or by mistake of fact, is said to commit "Qatl-i-Khata" 320 of the Pakistan penal code deals with Punishment for Qatl-i-Khata by rash or negligent driving.

It says that "Whoever commits "Qatl-i-Khata "by rash and negligent driving shall, having regard to the facts and circumstances of the case, in addition to "Diyyat", be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years. It's is bailable and compoundable. For ordinary people these mean accident cases. Both These sections of law are bailable. That means a person arrested in the cases is granted bail as a matter of right. The law is like that. There is no way to keep the accused behind the bars except by not accepting his bail bonds for a few days.

Even at the stages of trial

what is seen is that unfortunately the matter is considered compromised in the non-compoundable offence of section 279 PPC and the offence is considered as compounded with the main offence of Section 320 PPC and hence many accused go Scott free. Sometimes it is lack of evidence or insufficiency of evidence produced by the prosecution or collected and preserved by the local police.

I recollect that at the time of enactment of the quoted sections of law the original proposal was to make them not bailable. However, due to public reaction the government scumbled to the pressure. The result of the same is for everybody to see. It's a known fact that accused by use of money, threat or coercion, end up settling with the other party during the trial and compromise the matter. As a student I remember one of the honourable judges at that time having said that after this enactment the powerful would kill the Underprivileged and the Helpless segment of society and then would force them to compromise. This is what is exactly happening in Pakistan. It's a known secret that majority of the public transport is con-

trolled by some very powerful people.

As a student of law would like to propose following suggestions to improve the situation:

Sections 279 and 320 of the Pakistan Penal Code be made non-bailable and non-compoundable. In addition to 279 and 320 PPC, section 322 PPC should be added in the FIR against the accused. As the issuing of licenses have been computerized, it would be proper to make an entry on the record of the accused (Driver of a public transport), which should be reflected on the license, through a red stripe, so that he should feel the pinch while applying for a job in future.

In case the accident involves a public transport like bus, truck, mini bus, Hiace, taxi, Suzuki or a wagon, it should be impounded immediately and only released when compensation is paid to the bereaved family by the driver or its owner. The rate of compensation should be fixed at least 5 million, and should be recovered as arrears of land revenue. The punishment under section 279 PPC should be enhanced to 10 years along with a fine off Rs.5 million which should be paid as

compensation to the legal heirs of the deceased.

More use of scientific technology be used to check the over speeding of the vehicles plying on the road. The example of Motorway police should be followed by;

Crime scene preservation be improved through geo-fencing and videotaping instead of conventional site plans so as to reduce dependence on ocular evidence. Motor vehicle ordinance be strictly implemented by impounding all vehicles not registered in the name of the drivers.

Challans must include assessment of cost of injuries and compensation/"Takhmeena-e-Zarar". CCTV installation must be ensured on all roads at multiple points. Orientation of traffic laws must be part of curriculum. Vehicles and drivers involved in accident cases must not be allowed to come on roads and drive unless the case is decided.

I would conclude by saying that this being a human problem, entails misery for the unfortunate victims including their Kith and Kin and Merits spontaneous reaction by the concerned authorities.

(The writer is a former Registrar Peshawar High Court)



In brief

Containers placed outside Sana's house

FAISALABAD (PPI): Containers have been placed outside the residence of Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah as the situation has become tense in Faisalabad after the arrest of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan, according to a report on Wednesday. The roads leading to the residence of the interior minister have been closed by placing containers. Section 144 have been enforced for two days in Faisalabad, and every type of gatherings and rallies have been banned. The educational institutions in Faisalabad are closed, and the educational activities are also suspended today.

BAP leader flays damages

CHAMAN (PPI): Leader of Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) and Coordinator to Chief Minister Balochistan, Wali Khan Shakzai, has said that it was the right of every citizen of the country to protest, but causing damage to government property during protest was condemnable act. Addressing a press conference at Chaman Press Club here on Wednesday, he said that it was the conspiracy of third party to instigate people against Pak-Army, adding that former Prime Minister and Chairman, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf was arrested in accordance with law. Urging the people to remain peaceful, he said that the country was passing through a difficult period and any mishap would directly affect economy of the country.

Martyr's package sought F.P. Report

PARACHINAR: The Parachinar Teachers Union Association held a press conference to condemn murder of innocent teachers and demanded exemplary punishment for culprits involved in the mass killing. Teacher leaders, professors, lecturers and teachers from across the district participated in the conference. During the conference, Principal Wahid Hussain, Teachers Union Association President Abid Ali, Headmaster Murtaza Hussain, Senior Vice President Noor Nabi, General Secretary Muhammad Shah, and other teacher leaders expressed their concern about the authorities' silence regarding the gruesome killing of teachers in Teri Mangal. The conference demanded that the authorities immediately take actions to bring the perpetrators to justice. The conference demanded that all educational institutions be closed until the demands of the teachers are approved. The demands include the suspension and arrest of the culprits responsible for the killing of the teachers, the permanent closure of the school where the incident occurred, and the naming of schools after the martyred teachers. Additionally, the conference demanded that arms license and permit be given and a safe zone be established in sensitive areas similar to FC bakery. The conference also demanded that a martyr package be given to all martyred teachers and the children of the martyrs should be given free education in cadet colleges. Furthermore, the teachers demanded the withdrawal of the initial irresponsible statement by the district administration and a departmental inquiry into the false news. They also demanded the formation of a Joint Investigation Team (JIT) to investigate the tragedy, which includes experts from research institutes and officers from the education department.

Imran's arrest: Protests block roads in Swat

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA / MARDAN / CHILAS: Protests against the arrest of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan continued for the second day in the entire Swat division including Mingora city on Wednesday. PTI workers blocked the roads by burning tires in Nishat Chowk of Mingora City.

Addressing the protest in Nishat Chowk, speakers said that Imran Khan has been arrested in an illegal case and a plan has been prepared to kill him. The protest sit-in will continue until the release of Imran Khan, they added. On the other hand, Section 144 has been imposed across the district, and a ban on public gatherings has been executed. Educational institutions have also been closed till May 13 by the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, while matriculation exams have also been postponed till Saturday. Roads were also closed in Charbagh, Khawaza Khela, and other places, including Mingora city, while Swat Motorway and Malakand Tunnel are still closed.

On Tuesday, Swat Motorway Toll Plaza was set on fire and as a result of firing and clash, one PTI worker was killed and 13 were injured. According to the local journalists of Malakand district, protest demonstrations are being conducted by PTI at various places due to which the central and important highways have been blocked.

Former MPA of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Fazal Hakeem says that we will

hold a protest until the release of Imran Khan, we respect the constitution and the law, so the security agencies should also cooperate with us. He said that until Imran Khan is released, we will continue to protest in the same way. Kalam Highway has also been blocked by PTI workers in Bahrain. Sources say that a large number of workers were present throughout the division.

PTI protest becomes violent by demolishing statues in Mardan: Violent protests against the arrest of Imran Khan were carried out by protesters, blocking important squares and intersections, looting, storming the military cantonment, demolishing the statues of soldiers in front of the PRC Gate, setting fire to the boarding, putting down traffic signals and cameras, pelting stones at the police in reply police shilling and lathi charge to disperse the protest.

According to the details, thousands of angry stick-carrying workers blocked College Chowk, Malakand Chowk, Nehar Chowk, PRC Chowk and other important squares and intersections against the arrest of Imran Khan in Mardan. They attacked the Punjab Regiment Center, along with heavy stone pelting at the closed gate of PRC, they destroyed the decorative statues of the Pak Army in front of the gate, and destroyed the glass and shutters of some shops and the traffic signals and surveillance cameras in the squares and intersections.

The angry workers

blocked the traffic in the city and pelted stones at the police, while the police used tear gas and shelling to disperse the angry protesters. While shouting slogans, Deputy Commissioner Abdur Rehman imposed section 144 and imposed curfew on the gathering of more than five people in the city.

PTI blocks Karakoram Highway: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) workers on Wednesday blocked the Karakoram highway to register their protest against the arrest of party chairman Imran Khan by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) in Al Qadir Trust case.

Enraged PTI protestors reached Karakoram highway in Upper Kohistan, Chilas and observed a sit-in, suspending the traffic. The protestors chanted slogans against the federal government and vowed to continue their sit-in until the release of former prime minister Imran Khan.

Earlier, the Islamabad Home and Tribal Affairs Minister Zia Langove on Wednesday said that peaceful protest was a democratic right of every citizen, but no one would be allowed to damage national assets and public property. "All institutions are on alert for the safety of the country and the people as law and order situation is under control in Baluchistan," he said while talking to media persons. Zia Langove noted, "In view of the violent incidents in Baluchistan, Section 144 has been implemented, lamenting that damage to government property and attack on officials is deplorable."

Commenting on the prevailing political situation, the minister said the country could not afford anarchy, adding "we should wait for the court's decision." "Harming your country, institutions and property and attacking officials is not service but anti-nationalism," he added. The minister said that he ordered an investigation into the violent incident in front of Askari Park.

During the last day's protest, some suspicious people have also been seen and pointed out, creating law and order. However, Zia Langove said that things were moving in right direction as traffic was flowing on all the highways connecting Baluchistan with other provinces of the country. "No one will be allowed to challenge the writ of the state under any circumstances," the minister warned.



QUETTA: A deserted look of busy road due to protest against arrest of PTI chairman Imran Khan.

Law, order situation under control in Balochistan F.P. Report

QUETTA: Balochistan Home and Tribal Affairs Minister Zia Langove on Wednesday said that peaceful protest was a democratic right of every citizen, but no one would be allowed to damage national assets and public property.

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CTD arrests alleged terrorist F.P. Report

MINGORA: Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Malakand II superintendent of police Amjad Ali Khan told a presser at his office that during a joint operation conducted by the CTD and security forces a terrorist was arrested red handed while making a homemade bomb from the tribal Bajaur district.

He said the terrorist was tasked to prepare suicide bombers for sabotage acts in the region. The SP said the region was prevented from a major incident. He said the CTD and security forces carried out an intelligence-based search and strike operation at Damadola Narai Kandao area of Bajaur on Monday night and arrested a militant identified as Ikramullah who was making a homemade bomb at that time.

The official said that a hand grenade, a prima card, safety fuses, 550 grams of explosives and an empty tin 2.5 kg were also recovered from his possession. He said that two other accomplices of the accused identified as Adnan and Mushtaq of Khar Bajaur took advantage of the darkness and fled from the scene. The SP said that preliminary interrogation from the accused suggested that he had been tasked to prepare suicide bombers in the region.

PTI workers come to streets after Imran's arrest

Hafiz Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: Activists of PTI Hafizabad staged protest demonstration against arrest of Former Prime Minister and Chairman PTI Imran Khan in Fawara Chowk to block 'Kachehry road' to burn tyres in the middle of city.

District president PTI Ch. Imran Haider led the protesters and workers were chanting slogans against government. Heavy contingent of police was present on the occasion.

DC inspects cleanliness drive: Deputy Commissioner Umar Farooq Warriach visited different areas of city Hafizabad to review ongoing cleanliness campaign and arraignments made by Municipal Committee for drainage of water and standard of cleanliness.

ADCR/Administrator MC Hafizabad Imtiaz Ali Baig and CO Abid Qayyum Qazi were also accompanied by him. DC directed MC Officers to ensure cleanliness of drainage system and to lift heap of garbage from empty plots from all areas of the city. He urged the citizens to cooperate with MC staff for making cleanliness campaign successful and refrain from throw garbage at different places in streets and bazaars.

Meanwhile, in order to review performance and provision of relief to the people, Deputy Commissioner Umar Farooq Warriach inspected DHQ hospital, special education school and slaughter house.

DC checked children emergency, general emergency, laboratory, medical, surgery, health wards, ICU and other departments and reviewed availability medicines and different treatment facilities to patients in the hospital. MS Dr. Bushra Maitan and other officers were also accompanied by the DC. Umar Farooq Warriach warned the health officers, doctors and paramedical staff that any negligence would not be tolerated in provision of medical facilities to the patients.

He directed the MS to update patient ticket counter and sitting arrangements also be made for patients coming in the laboratory. He also took feedback from patients and their relations regarding provision of free of cost medicines and healthcare facilities in the hospital.

During the visit of government special education school and slow learners school, he inspected classrooms and review academic activities and availability of necessary facilities in the schools. He directed heads of the schools to improve cleanliness and educational standard. DC also visited slaughter house and directed the Deputy Director Livestock to get repair slaughter house and provide all necessary facilities. He directed to ensure slaughtering of animals in

the slaughter house for providing quality meat to people and to take strict action against those butchers who slaughter animals in streets and houses or other places of their own choice.

As many 9350 bags hoarded wheat recovered: Assistant Commissioner Hafizabad Munawar Hussain unearthed 9350 sacks illegally stocked wheat at different places in Tehsil Hafizabad and sealed warehouses. AC said that recovered wheat was shifted to Pasco procurement centres and further action against hoarders was being taken.

Meanwhile, during the crackdown on wheat hoarders and smugglers, Assistant Commissioner Pindi Bhattian Rashid Iqbal has recovered 9200 bags of wheat stored illegally from Pindi Bhattian, Jalapur Bhattian and other areas. Officers of Pasco were also accompanied by him. DC Umar Farooq Warriach warned that strict action would be continue indiscriminately till achieving target to procure of 22 lakh sacks of wheat in the district.

34 petrol pumps to be established: District Petrol Pumps Committee have accorded approval to install 34 new petrol pumps in the district. Deputy Commissioner Umar Farooq Warriach presided over the meeting. DC distributed NOC to applicants. DC said that NOCs were issued only on merit.

GKI students display research 140 projects

F.P. Report

SWABI: The final year students of Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute (GIKI) of Engineering and Technology who acquire education in 11 disciplines have displayed a total 140 research projects in the two Industrial Open House (IOH) and 60 organisations, including multinational and national companies here on Wednesday.

Engr. Muhammad Najeib Haroon, Chairman of Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) who was chief guest on the occasion, inaugurated the two-day event. Engr Dr Nasir Mahmood Khan, secretary of PEC was guest of honour. Officials of the companies, Pro-Rector, Academics, Prof Dr Mohammad Hasan Zaidi, Pro-Rector administration and finance, Sardar Aminullah Khan, academia of various universities and students participated in the gathering.

IOH is one of the major events in which a group of students in every faculty work for the entire year on a project under the guidance of their professors, displaying it in the two days event, aiming to show that they have developed new indigenous technology to facilitate people and resolve their confronting problems. The representatives of the multinational and national companies observe and evaluate the projects of the students and conduct their interview on the spot for jobs in their organizations before the convocation, which is expected to be held in June.

The PEC Chairman visited all the research projects and asked the students about their work importance and the benefits of how they can prove helpful in the economic development and prosperity of the country. Addressing on the occasion, Najeib Haroon said that he was impressed by the final year students' quality and diversity of work, demonstrating skills and knowledge in various fields such as electrical, mechanical, computer, chemical, materials, management, entrepreneurship, etc.

visit to Public Library, on Wednesday. Commissioner Mardan Division made a detailed inspection of Public Library Mardan and met the students present and inquired about the problems faced by them among others.

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Commissioner Mardan Yousaf Rahim along with Additional Commissioner Naeem Akhtar and Additional Deputy Commissioner General Engineer Syed Shahzeb paid a surprise

"You have also shown your creativity and innovation in solving real-world problems that are relevant to our country and society," he said, adding that our vision is that the engineering profession shall function as a key driving force for achieving rapid and sustainable growth in all national, technological, economic, and social fields. He further said, he would like to invite the industry representatives to interact with the graduating students and explore opportunities for collaboration, employment, and internship. Industry is an important stakeholder and partner of education and profession, as it provides demand, feedback, support and resources for various activities.

Prof Dr Fazal Ahmad Khalid, Rector of GIKI Institute said that gathering of the industry representatives, academia and students help them to interact with each other to identify the problems and hurdles in the industrial growth and find the way to move forward.

Commissioner visits public library

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Commissioner Mardan Yousaf Rahim along with Additional Commissioner Naeem Akhtar and Additional Deputy Commissioner General Engineer Syed Shahzeb paid a surprise

visit to Public Library, on Wednesday. Commissioner Mardan Division made a detailed inspection of Public Library Mardan and met the students present and inquired about the problems faced by them among others.

In view of the importance of education commissioner Mardan Division issued instructions to the library management to provide a better environment for readers. He further assured all possible support from the district administration.

Imran using workers to fulfill foreign agenda: Zehri

F.P. Report

QUETTA: National will not accept defamation and conspiracy against national institutions and officers. Betting on it is not a threat of any external conspiracy, but the existence of this person has become a threat to the country. Imran Khan is a self-interested person. Whoever favored this Fitna Khan, this person has harmed him. The arrest of Fitna Khan is welcome. No one is above the constitution. No one is allowed to make false allegations against institutions. This should have happened a long time ago.

These views were expressed by Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri in a condemnatory statement. She said that the so-called leader who misleads the people by raising the slogan of Madinah state has crossed all limits; he did not even care about what the enemies are happy with, Mir Sadiq Mir Jafar that happened. He who stabs Mohsin in the back, who is blind in revenge, makes false and baseless accusations against persons and institutions without evidence. Those who favored Imran Khan were harmed by Imran Khan. IK did not spare people like Jahangir Tareen and Aleem Khan who played an important role in the formation of Tehreek-e-Insaf and accused them

after the work was done.

She said that Imran Khan continues to make baseless and fabricated accusations against the institutions and keeps making baseless accusations to achieve his nefarious goals by targeting the top personalities of the institutions. She further said that it seems that either the person whose name is Imran is not mentally balanced or this person is working on the agenda of enemies whose sole aim is to gain power by any means to further their nefarious purposes. Pakistan is to be singled out in the world according to the wishes and wishes of the enemies, but this dream of this mad man and his followers will never be fulfilled.

Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri said that the accusations of Fitna Khan by naming national institutions like Pakistan Army, intelligence agencies and its superior officers are not acceptable to the nation and the whole nation strongly rejects these allegations. She warns the liar Khan and his followers that if the series of baseless, false and fabricated allegations are not stopped, then we have the right to legal action taken against him. Take cognizance of the charges and prosecute this madman on the charges of anti-state activities and

treason and destabilizing the country in a well thought-out plan and punish him severely so that no such scumbags in future. She said that in the history of Pakistan, there is no person like Imran Khan who is a liar and the most despicable person who cannot stick to what he has said and when pressure comes, he throws all the debris on others. This Fitnah Khan misled people with his disgusting thinking and illogical and violent incidents have started happening day by day. All this is because of the lust for power of this crazy person who has put the country's security at stake and brought the country to the brink of destruction with institutions.

She appealed to the nation to raise their voice against this crazy Fitna Khan and not listen to his accusations. This insidious and lying person wants to survive in politics by making false allegations against institutions for his own small gain, while the actual fact is that this person is not even remotely related to politics. This person is only working on the agenda of the enemies, which the entire nation has completely rejected and we all, like one nation, have stood with the Pakistan Army and other institutions before and will continue to stand.

Sham-e-Ghazal held on concluding day of festival

ATTOCK (INP): Sham-e-Ghazal was held on concluding day of the three-day cultural festival organized by Punjab Arts Council (PAC) in cooperation with Government Post Graduate College Attock during which Arshad Rahi and Rashid Rahi recited the famous ghazals of Mehdi Hasan and Ghulam Ali.

Director Arts Council Waqar Ahmed and Principal GPC Attock Prof Majid Bhatti were special guests on the closing ceremony. Addressing the participants, Waqar Ahmed said that objectivity and scope of culture are limitless. Those who stay connected with their culture in the world thrive

in the world. The purpose of culture is to connect the past with the present to gain an understanding of one's identity. Its aim there is also to create the best society. He said artists are considered to carry the message of peace around the world. There is no dearth of talent among Pakistani artists, he said adding that the artists trained by the Arts Council should make the name of Pakistan shine all over the world.

Prof. Majid Waheed Bhatti said that fairs are necessary for the promotion of regional culture and traditions. The promotion of regional culture is a guarantee of unity and solidarity. Art and culture

are prominent members of any country which contribute to the development and besides contributing to prosperity; it is also the most important heritage of the country. Culture is the prominent aspect of a country that makes it different from others, he added. Muhammad Suleman said that Bhangra playing and dancing together to the beat of the drum revives ancient Punjabi traditions. Punjab is culturally very fertile. Arts councils are playing an active role to develop the creative and cultural abilities of the youth. A large number of civil society and students participated in the last day of the fair.



Thursday, May 11, 2023

Press group calls for Israeli accountability in media deaths

JERUSALEM (AP): The Israeli military has systematically evaded accountability in the deaths of 20 journalists over the past two decades, launching slow and opaque investigations that have never resulted in prosecution or punishment, an international press-freedom group said in a report.

The Committee to Protect Journalists issued its report ahead of the one-year anniversary of the death of Shireen Abu Akleh - a Palestinian-American journalist with the Al Jazeera satellite channel who was killed while covering an Israeli military raid in the occupied West Bank.

The army has said Abu Akleh was likely killed by Israeli fire, but said the shooting was accidental and not announced any disciplinary action. "The killing of Shireen Abu Akleh and the failure of the army's investigative process to hold any one responsible is not a one-off event," said Robert Mahoney, CPJ's director of special projects and one of the report's editors. "It is part of a pattern of response that seems designed to evade responsibility." The New York-based CPJ documented the cases of 20 journalists killed by Israeli military fire over the last 22 years.

Eighteen of the dead were Palestinians, while the other two were European foreign correspondents. At least 13, including Abu Akleh, were clearly identified as journalists or traveling in vehicles marked with press insignia, it said. "No one has ever been charged or held responsible for these deaths," the report said. "The impunity in these

cases has severely undermined the freedom of the press, leaving the rights of journalists in precarity."

The report found a "routine sequence" in the deaths of journalists. Israeli officials typically discount evidence or witness claims while cases are still under investigation, and journalists are accused of terrorism without providing any evidence. Probes can drag on for months or years and clouded in secrecy before they are closed, and families of the dead have little legal recourse. "Israel's procedure for examining military killings of civilians such as journalists is a black box," it said. "There is no policy document describing the process in detail and the results of any probe are confidential."

It found that the army tends to launch more robust investigations in cases such as Abu Akleh's, when the journalist holds a foreign passport, but even those do not result in prosecution. It called for criminal investigations into three cases: Yasser Murtaja, a well-known Palestinian journalist killed while covering protests along the frontier with Israel in 2018; Ahmed Abu Hussein, another journalist killed covering Gaza protests in 2018; and Abu Akleh. Israeli officials claimed without giving evidence that Murtaja was a militant.

In the case of Abu Akleh, the army said there was a "very high probability" that she was shot by an Israeli soldier who had misidentified her as a militant. But it held out the possibility that she had been shot by a Palestinian militant, though

it gave no evidence to support that claim. In a statement, the Israeli military said it "regrets any harm to civilians during operational activity and considers the protection of the freedom of the press and the professional work of journalists to be of great importance."

It said it operates in a "complex security reality" and does not intentionally target noncombatants, using live fire only as a last resort. It said criminal investigations are typically opened in cases of civilian deaths, "unless the incident occurred in an active combat situation or if there is no suspicion of a crime having been committed by IDF soldiers." Abu Akleh, who was 51, was shot while covering an Israeli raid in the Jenin refugee camp in the northern West Bank on May 11, 2022. The area is known to be a stronghold of Palestinian militants. The Israeli military frequently operates in the camp and said its soldiers had been involved in intense gunbattles with militants that morning. But it has provided no evidence that Palestinian gunmen were in the vicinity of Abu Akleh. A number of independent investigations, including one by The Associated Press, concluded that Abu Akleh was almost certainly killed by Israeli fire and found no evidence of militant activity in the area. Witness accounts and amateur videos have also shown the area to be quiet before she was shot. The United States concluded that an Israeli soldier likely killed her by mistake, but it did not explain how it reached that conclusion.

US probing reports it killed civilian in strike

QORQANYA, Syria (AP): The US military is investigating reports that it killed a civilian in a recent strike in northwest Syria that meant to target a senior al-Qaida leader, a military official said in a statement. Relatives and neighbors of a 60-year-old man killed in the May 3 strike in the village of Qorqanya, a rural area in northern Idlib province, told The Associated Press that he was a farmer who raised sheep, chickens and cattle and had no involvement with armed groups.

In an initial statement released the day of the strike, US Central Command, or CENTCOM, said its forces had "conducted a unilateral strike ... targeting a senior Al Qaeda leader." It did not provide any further details. Maj. John Moore, a CENTCOM spokesperson, said that US forces "are in the process of confirming the identity of the individual killed in the strike." "We are aware of the allegations of a civilian casualty and the out-

come of the confirmation process will inform if further investigation is necessary and how it should proceed," he said. The local civil defense group in northwest Syria, known as the White Helmets, said in a statement that it had responded to the site after hearing sounds of an explosion and found that a drone strike had killed 60-year-old Lutfi Hassan Masto, a local resident who was tending his sheep at the time. Three of the animals were also killed, the statement said. Masto's brother, Mohamed Masto, told The Associated Press that reports that his brother was involved in al-Qaida were "absolute lies" and that his killing was "an injustice and an aggression."

"He had nothing to do with the revolution. ... He had nothing to do with the Al-Nusra Front or with the Islamic State" or any of the other armed groups involved in Syria's 12-year-old uprising-turned-civil-war, Masto said.

Fayad Jamil Raji, a neighbor, said he had known Lufti Masto - or "Abu Hassan," a nickname meaning "father of Hassan" - for many years. "The man was a civilian. He had a farm with poultry, cows and sheep," he said. Moore said that CENTCOM's missions are "meticulously planned and executed to maximize success and minimize the risk of collateral damage and harm to civilians." On any given day there are at least 900 US forces in Syria, along with an undisclosed number of contractors, who partner with the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces. They are tasked with preventing a comeback by the Islamic State group, which swept through Iraq and Syria in 2014, taking control of large swaths of territory, and sometimes also target other militant groups. In April, CENTCOM reported it had taken part in 35 missions in Iraq and Syria, killing 13 alleged IS operatives and detaining 28.

Saudi Arabia, Syria to reopen embassies restoring relations

BEIRUT (AP): Saudi Arabia and Syria will reopen diplomatic missions between the two countries now that relations have improved 11 years after the facilities were closed, the two nations foreign ministries said. The announcements came nearly a month after Syria and Saudi Arabia said they were moving toward reopening embassies and resuming airline flights. That had followed a visit by Syria's top diplomat to the kingdom, the first since Saudi Arabia cut off diplomatic relations with Syria in 2012 and a visit by Syria's foreign minister to Riyadh.

The 22-member Arab League agreed to reinstate Syria, ending a 12-year suspension and taking another step toward bringing Syrian President Bashar Assad, a long-time regional pariah, back into the fold. Syria was widely shunned by Arab governments over the Assad government's brutal crackdown on protesters in a 2011 uprising that descended into civil war. The breakdown in rela-

tions culminated with Syria being ousted from the Arab League. After the conflict started, Saudi Arabia backed the Syrian opposition.

The Saudi Foreign Ministry said in a statement that the reopening of its embassy in Damascus aims "to strengthen security and stability in the region." It did not say when the embassy will reopen, adding that the move follows the Arab League's decision to reinstate Syria's membership. Syria's Foreign Minister later said that Damascus will resume work at its mission in Saudi Arabia. In recent years, as Assad consolidated control over most of the country, Syria's neighbors have begun to take steps toward rapprochement. The overtures picked up pace since the massive Feb. 6 earthquake in Turkey and Syria, and the Chinese-brokered reestablishment of ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran, which had backed opposing sides in the Syrian conflict. Saudi Arabia is hosting the next Arab League summit on May 19

and Syria is expected to attend. Earlier, the United States and Britain voiced dissatisfaction with the weekend decision by the Arab League to re-instate Syria as a member.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said they opposed the move. But they also allowed it was up to the Arab League to determine its membership. Also, Syria's Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad arrived in Moscow where he will attend a meeting on Wednesday that will include his counterparts from Iran, Turkey and Russia. It will be the first time that Syria's foreign minister will meet his Turkish counterpart in more than a decade, as Turkey has been a main backer of opposition fighters trying to remove Assad from power. Meetings between the defense ministers of Russia, Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia were held in Moscow in late April. Syria's 12-year conflict has killed half a million people and displaced half the country's pre-war population of 23 million.

US announces \$1.2b in addl mily aid for Ukraine

WASHINGTON (Agencies): The United States has announced a new \$1.2bn military aid package for Ukraine that will include air defence systems, conventional artillery and counter-drone ammunition, satellite imagery services, as well as funding for military training. In the package announced, Ukraine will also receive technology to allow the integration of Western air defence launchers, missiles and radars with Ukraine's native air defence systems.

"The Russians have launched waves of missiles into Ukraine, whose military has been adept at knocking them down. The package also contains ammunition to shoot down unmanned aerial systems," the US Department of Defense said in a statement. Ukrainian cities have come under renewed aerial attacks in the past week with scores of Russian missiles and drones targeting the capital Kyiv and other key cities. Ukraine is readying for a highly anticipated spring offensive against invading Russian troops, but the latest US assistance will not immediately arrive on the battlefield as it must still be procured from the defence industry or partners.

Procuring from industry is designed to avoid the US military depleting its own stocks, but also means the assistance will take longer to reach Kyiv than equipment drawn directly from existing United States military inventories. So far in fiscal 2023, the US Defense Department has provided \$5bn in security assistance to Kyiv under the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI) in four separate tranches. In fiscal 2022, the US spent \$6.3bn worth of USAI funds. The US has also rushed more than \$35bn worth of weapons to Ukraine using Presidential Drawdown Authority, which authorizes the president to transfer equipment and services from US stocks without congressional approval during an emergency. Military aid comes as Congress and the White House debate ways to avoid a default on the nation's debt, with many Republicans demanding sharp cuts in domestic spending in exchange for lifting the debt limit. Members of both the Democratic and Republican parties insist they support continued aid for Ukraine including top Republicans House Speaker Kevin McCarthy and Mitch McConnell, the top Republican in the Senate.

Canada 'will not be intimidated' by China: Trudeau

TORONTO (Agencies): Canada "will not be intimidated" by China, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has said, after the Chinese government said it is expelling a Canadian diplomat in a tit-for-tat move linked to allegations Beijing sought to intimidate a Canadian legislator and his family. Speaking to reporters, Trudeau said his government made the decision to expel Zhao Wei, a Chinese diplomat based in Toronto, from the country this week after "careful consideration".

Hours later, Beijing announced it would expel Jennifer Lynn Lalonde, the Canadian consul in Shanghai, in a "reciprocal countermeasure". "We understand there is retaliation, but we will not be intimidated. We will continue to do everything necessary to keep Canadians protected from foreign interference," Trudeau said, adding that his government had considered that Beijing could take retaliatory steps. "But we decided that we needed to move forward in a responsible way to send a very clear message that we will not accept foreign interference, and regardless of whatever next choices they make, we will not be intimidated," the Canadian prime minister said. "And more, we will ensure that China continues to see - along with other countries that are engaging in foreign interference - that we take this extraordinarily seriously."

Migrants flow north to US border ahead of policy changes

BAJO CHIQUITO, Panama (AP): The long wooden boats packed with migrants in orange life jackets arrived one after another, pushed down the Tuquesa river by outboard motors. By day's end, authorities had registered some 2,000 migrants at this remote riverside outpost on the edge of the Darien jungle that links Panama and Colombia.

Some had vague information - from relatives, social media, smugglers - about coming border policy changes by the United States government and were hustling to make it to that distant border. On May 11, the United States government will end pandemic-related restrictions on people requesting asylum at the border - also known as Title 42, under which migrants have been expelled from the US more than 2.8 million times since March 2020.

The uncertainty around what happens after the end of the restrictions, as well as the prospect of new limits on asylum, was fodder for migrant smugglers to create an unnecessary sense of urgency for people making decisions with imperfect information. Fearing a rush of arrivals, US officials have expanded legal pathways, urged would-be migrants to register before making the journey and proposed severely restricting asylum for people who travel through Mexico. They will deport those deemed not qualified with a five-year ban on reentry.

As migrants made the Darien crossing, there were no visible signs on either side that efforts the US, Panama and Colombia promised a month ago would stem migration at this bottleneck between regions. If anything, the flow seemed to have increased during a year already on a record pace. Maria Chirino Sánchez, 34, left Venezuela one month earlier in a group of 10 relatives, including her husband, four children and dog Toby. Despite her job with a transportation company and her husband's as a dental technician, they could not make ends meet. At the urging of relatives in the US, they sold their house for \$4,000 and set out, having heard that "they are not going to let us enter after (May) 11," she said. They ran out of food and had to beg for crackers to feed their children before exiting the jungle. Like others, she said if she were sent back, she would not try this route again.

Chirino's sentiment was nearly universal despite signs the well-trod route from Colombia has become more established than ever before. Venezuelans make up the largest group of those crossing Darien now, but AP journalists also saw Haitians, Chinese and Ecuadorians among others. In Necochi, Colombia, between 1,000 and 1,200 migrants a day board boats that ferry them across a gulf to Acandí on the Colombian side of the Darien, according to local human rights authorities. There, mototaxi drivers wait to zip them to the trailhead - a route that is now being paved.



Camps have cropped up early in the route where migrants can pitch their tents and buy provisions. For those with the means, porters can be hired. The journey is punishing. Migrants hike for several days over mountains in dense jungle contending with biting insects, venomous snakes, torrential rains and mud-slicked mountain passes. Swollen rivers sweep away those who slip. Bandits rob and sexually assault migrants. Still, nearly 250,000 people did it last year and the United Nations projects another 400,000 could attempt it this year. Some migrants said they could just no longer sustain their families in their countries. They fled political instability, unemployment or crime.

Many fled Venezuela's political and economic crisis - now or years earlier - but others come from more distant countries. Yu Tian traveled from Wuhan, China, to Hong Kong, and then to Ecuador where he boarded a bus to Colombia. "Hundreds of thousands are leaving China," said the tourism guide turned migrant. At the Ecuador-Colombia border, migrant trafficking groups recruit customers by telling them "right now you can go cross to the United States," said Pedro de Velasco, a member of the KINO initiative, a binational nongovernmental organization at the US-Mexico border, who traveled to the Ecuador-Colombia border to see why so many were arriving. The smugglers charge \$10,000, "but don't tell them they're going to be expelled," he said.

In Panama, as 34-year-old Oriana Serra neared the end of her Darien crossing with her two teen children, several men with pistols blocked their path, stealing the last of their money. So when the family arrived at the river bank where boat operators waited to carry migrants downriver, she had no way to pay. They started the long walk to Bajo Chiquito, but somehow became separated from her 14-year-old son. Hoping he arrived before her, she desperately searched for him among the arriving throngs. At dusk, the boy finally arrived on a boat sent back upstream to look for him. In Bajo Chiquito, migrants make their first registration with

Panamanian authorities. Under the blazing tropical sun they pitch tents in any open space along the dirt streets or beside the river. Smoke from their wood fires hangs in the heavy humidity. Children are everywhere, resting in tents, holding mothers' hands, riding fathers' shoulders. Migrants pause before setting out again the next day for camps farther downriver. From there, Panama buses them across the country to its border with Costa Rica where they will continue north through Central America and eventually to Mexico.

Mexican border cities are reporting increasing arrivals, many of whom are not waiting to see what happens after May 11. US Border Patrol Chief Raul Ortiz said that over the previous 72 hours, agents had made about 8,800 apprehensions per day - up from about 5,200 in March. The US government for months has encouraged migrants to register with their online application CBP One rather than make the dangerous and expensive journey to the border. If applicants appear eligible for asylum and can line up a financial sponsor in the US, they receive an appointment at the border for further screening. Back in Bajo Chiquito, with six more countries still to be traversed, migrants struggled to digest the ordeal they survived. As physically brutal as the crossing was - some migrants arrived on stretchers - many said they would carry more lasting memories. Angel Garcés, a 28-year-old from Maracaibo, Venezuela remained shaken. "If I had known it was like that, I wouldn't come," Garcés said. "Not just the physical exhaustion - what you see." Garcés said he averted his eyes when he smelled a body alongside the trail. The remains of 36 migrants were recovered from the Darien last year, but the real death toll is believed to be significantly higher. In March, the Red Cross donated 100 tombs in a local cemetery for the bodies of those who perish. Garcés said he would advise anyone considering the journey, "don't come, look for another route, try to do it the legal way, because the Darien isn't for just anyone."

France calls on EU to list Wagner as 'terrorists', UK considering

PARIS (Agencies): The French parliament has adopted a resolution calling on the European Union to formally label Russia's mercenary Wagner force a "terror group" as reports emerged that the United Kingdom also appears poised to designate the group a "terror organisation". The resolution, which is non-binding and largely symbolic, passed France's parliament with unanimous support across the political spectrum.

"Wherever they work, Wagner members spread instability and violence," French legislator Benjamin Haddad told parliament. "They kill and torture. They massacre and pillage. They intimidate and manipulate with almost total impunity," he said. Wagner fighters are not simple mercenaries driven by an "appetite for money" but they "follow a broad strategy, from Mali to Ukraine, of supporting the aggressive policies of the Putin regime towards our democracies," he added.

Authorities in France have also blamed the group for running anti-French propaganda operations in west Africa, particularly Mali. Haddad said he hoped the resolution would encourage the 27 members of the EU to put Wagner on its official list of "terrorist organisations", Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy praised the French parliament in a video message and urged other countries to follow France's example. "Special thanks to the French parliament for today's decision to recognize the Russian pseudo-private Wagner group as a terrorist organization," Zelenskyy said.

"This is something that should be adopted by the entire world - every manifestation of terrorism must be destroyed, and every terrorist must be convicted," he said. The UK Home Office has been building a case for two months and proscription of Wagner as a "terrorist organisation" was "imminent" within weeks, The Times newspaper reported, citing a government source. If adopted, it would be a criminal offence in the UK to belong to Wagner, attend its meetings, encourage support for it or carry its logo in public, The Times said. The designation would also impose financial sanctions on the group, and there would be implications for Wagner's ability to raise money if any funds went through UK financial institutions, the newspaper added. According to the newspaper, there have been "suspensions" the Wagner group helped move money out of the UK after financial sanctions were imposed on Russian oligarchs and allies of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The Home Office said it was looking into the Times report. While the French resolution calling on the EU to designate Wagner a "terrorist organisation" would allow EU members to freeze assets of the group and its members, and bar European companies and citizens from dealing with

the organisation, current sanctions do not appear to have hindered the group's operations. Wagner and its entrepreneur leader Yevgeny Prigozhin have been repeatedly sanctioned by the EU, including for human rights abuses in Africa and for participating in Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Prigozhin had his assets in the EU frozen in 2020 and was placed on a visa blacklist over the deployment of Wagner fighters to war-torn Libya, a decision he unsuccessfully appealed. French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna conceded that legally the EU "terrorist" label would not have any "direct supplemental effect" on the group. But "we should not underestimate the symbolic importance of such a designation, nor the dissuasive effect that it could have on states tempted to turn" to Wagner, she said. The parliaments of Lithuania and Estonia have already labelled Wagner a "terrorist organisation".

Four dead after attack near synagogue on Tunisia's Djerba island

TUNIS (Agencies): Two visitors, a security guard, and their attacker have been killed near a synagogue on Tunisia's Djerba island that draws hundreds of Jews from Europe and Israel during an annual pilgrimage each year. Djerba - a holiday destination off the coast of southern Tunisia, 500 km (300 miles) from the capital Tunis - is home to Africa's oldest synagogue and the annual pilgrim has had tight security since al-Qaeda attacked the religious site in 2002 with a truck bomb that killed 21 Western tourists.

The attack was staged by a guard affiliated with

Tunisia's National Guard naval centre in the town of Agghir on Djerba, who first used his weapon to shoot a colleague and seize his ammunition before moving towards Ghibria Synagogue, the Interior Ministry said in a statement. The attacker fired indiscriminately at security units located near the synagogue, killing two visitors and a security officer, as well as injuring five security guards and four visitors. Security forces then shot the attacker dead, the Interior Ministry said. The injured include six members of the security forces and four civilians, the ministry

said. The Tunisian foreign ministry said one of the visitors killed was French and one was Tunisian.

The sound of gunshots at the synagogue had sparked panic among the hundreds of pilgrims, according to local media. "The Ministry of the Interior confirms that the temple has been cordoned off and...all those inside and outside the temple have been secured, and research is continuing to find out the reasons for this treacherous and cowardly attack," the ministry said in a statement. According to organisers, more than 5,000 Jewish faithful, mostly from over-

seas, participated in this year's pilgrimage to Ghibria, which resumed in 2022 after two years of pandemic-related suspension. Tunisia has no diplomatic ties with Israel, but Israelis are allowed entry to the country as part of organised tours to the island for the pilgrimage. Mainly Muslim Tunisia is home to one of North Africa's largest Jewish communities. Though they now number fewer than 1,800 people, Jews have lived in Tunisia since Roman times. Gunmen killed scores of foreign tourists in two separate attacks at a beach resort and a Tunis museum in 2015.

The Frontier Post

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Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town, Peshawar.
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Violent politics and the future of democracy

IMRAN Khan’s arrest has sparked a countrywide outrage amongst his supporters, who believe that their leader has been unfairly targeted by the incumbent rulers from the opposing Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM). Following Imran Khan's arrest, the PTI senior leadership took to the tweeter handle with continuous calls to the party's workers to get to the streets and protest the arrest of their leader. Some called it an attack on the judiciary, others termed it an invasion of democracy, a few linked it to military Bureaucracy and others coined the theory of foreign conspiracy against the nation. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) workers across the country have taken to the streets to protest against the arrest of PTI Chairman Imran Khan on the premises of the Islamabad High Court. The protests have been held in major cities such as Lahore, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, and Quetta, with thousands of PTI workers taking part. The violent mobs attacked military installations and targeted public and private properties in various cities while multiple deaths and injuries had been reported by the media. The Ministry of Interior imposed Section 144 in major cities and prohibited public gatherings and political activities to maintain the law and order situation in the country. Authorities have warned that legal action will be taken against those who violate Section 144. This includes the use of force if necessary, to disperse protesters who refuse to comply.

After the arrest of the PTI Chief Imran Khan, a deplorable response had been observed from the leaders of both warring groups as the government ministers issued derogatory remarks about the PTI Chief and the party while the PTI senior leadership took to the tweeter handle and made continuous calls to PTI workers come to the street and protest against the state institutions whom they believe to be the real architect of the arrest of the PTI founder. Resultantly, a large number of PTI supporters come out to the streets, took the law into their hands, blocked roads, damaged private properties, attacked government installations, and particularly targeted LEA personnel in the major cities. Public life came to a halt, businesses were closed and traffic was jammed due to violence and insecurity. The government moved and imposed section 144 to restore citizenry life and maintain law and order while security forces were allowed to use force against those who try to disrupt the routine life of the people. The LEAs have produced Imran Khan in the NAB court and urged for 14-day physical remand of the PTI Chief to conclude their investigation into alleged corruption scandal worth \$ 190 million. The court awarded 8 days to the police accomplishes its task. In fact, Both political factions must give a chance to the law to take its course and evaluate the innocence or involvement of popular revolutionary leader who always advocated for the rule of law and transparency in the judicial system.

Realistically, Pakistani politicians had always upheld party politics and never bother to national unity, state interests, and the well-being of the public, thus the inter-party struggle for power badly hurt political and social values and promoted hate, and racism among the party lines across the political spectrum. Currently, hate and hypernationalism have become a real threat to democracy and society in Pakistan. A large faction of our youth had been radicalized due to extreme sentiment of nationalism, which perceives its opponents corrupt and even does not ready to negotiate with the. On national issues that created a real challenge for political forces and democracy in the country.

The state of Pakistan is a country of over 225 million people from multiple ethnic and religious groups with different creeds and clans. All citizens have equal civil, political, and legal rights. No religious or political group has a right to forcefully implement its manifesto and ideology on other fellow citizens of the country but only through political process, dialogue and negotiations. Hopefully, the political leadership of the country will demonstrate wisdom and tact to safely sail through this turmoil otherwise politics and democracy would be the loser.

This Victory Day, Putin has no victory to celebrate

Maximilian Hess

VICTORY Day was one of the most important celebrations across the Soviet Union. Moscow chose to celebrate the defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945 on May 9, a day later than the West, because it was already past midnight in the Soviet capital when the instrument of surrender was signed in defeated Berlin. For Russian President Vladimir Putin, Victory Day also stands at the core of the secular religion that he has spent his 23 years in power building - the belief that Russia is both invincible and righteous.

But Victory Day celebrations this year highlight how Putin's cult has laid the groundwork for its own defeat. There are two reasons for this: First, the Russian president cast his war on Ukraine as a continuation of the just fight honoured on Victory Day, but failed to maintain this fallacy; and second, the failure of his unjust and bloody war is allowing Ukraine and other Eastern European countries to reclaim the narrative of victory in World War II. It cannot be

underestimated just how important the cult of Victory Day has been to Putin's propaganda and the legitimacy of his regime. Over the last 20 years, the Victory Day parade has grown in pomp and scale.

Putin has re-introduced a number of Soviet traditions, including the display of large military hardware at the main Victory Day parades; he has also embraced the so-called "immortal regiment" marches, in which citizens join mass processions with portraits of their ancestors who fought in World War II. Since 2014, the Kremlin has blended this public memorialisation with propaganda casting Ukraine as the inheritors of the Nazi regime. Even Moscow's Victory Museum combines the story of the Great Patriotic War - the way World War II is known in Russia - with that of the conflict in Ukraine. But while there are undoubtedly those in Russia who have been suckered into this narrative, the events of the past year have severely undermined it.

One just has to look at the number of Russians

who fled the country over the last year. Estimates show that they are between 500,000 and one million - more than have complied with the mandatory draft that Putin had to institute last September due to the lack of volunteers to fight against "the Nazis" in Ukraine. The clear lack of enthusiasm among the Russian population for the "special military operation" - as the Kremlin initially called it - has also forced Putin to rely on mercenaries. The most important battle in the past six months - the one over the besieged city of Bakhmut in Ukraine's Donetsk region - has been fought by recruits for the private military company Wagner, owned by Yevgeny Prigozhin, also known as "Putin's cook".

In recent days, Prigozhin made public his disputes with the defence ministry, threatening to withdraw from that fight if his forces were not provided with adequate military supplies. The public squabble was likely little more than an attempt to cover up the fact that both Prigozhin and the

army leadership have no grand victory in Bakhmut or elsewhere to present to Putin for Victory Day. Worse still, in advance of this year's celebrations, Russia appears unable to secure its own territory. At least six Russian regions cancelled their parades, warning that they could be targets for Ukrainian attacks. Even Moscow's immortal regiment march - in which Putin himself participated last year - has been called off. At the start of the full-scale invasion, the Kremlin had claimed that Kyiv would be taken in three days. But 440 days later, Russia's army and its mercenaries do not appear any closer to victory - even in Bakhmut.

Putin shows no signs of revisiting his strategy, however. He has gone too far and has hinged the legitimacy of his rule on the conflict in Ukraine. He continues to believe that he can wait out Western support for Kyiv. But this waiting game bears its own risks for Putin, as the war in Ukraine erodes his legitimacy. Elsewhere in the post-

Soviet space, a new narrative about Victory Day, one that is truly welded to its original spirit of resisting fascist aggression, is arising. On its eve, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy proposed that Ukraine join other European countries in celebrating victory over Nazism on May 8 and mark Europe Day on May 9. A larger percentage of the Ukrainian population perished in World War II than Russia's. Kyiv today has every right to claim the legacy of the fight against fascism in resisting Putin's invasion, and it has a coalition of international support to rival that of the Allies in the 1940s. Other Eastern European countries, like Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Bulgaria, have also abandoned communist-era Victory Day celebrations on May 9 and instead mark it on May 8, along with fellow EU states. They, too, are challenging the Kremlin's attempt to resurrect Soviet-era narratives about the war and downplay their own contributions to defeating Nazism. This is an important

process that is directly challenging not just Putin's propaganda but also his claim to legitimacy. In the lead-up to his full-scale invasion, Putin complained that the West had turned the country into an "anti-Russia" and alleged that Ukrainian forces with Western assistance were seeking to eradicate the Russian language, culture and history. His claims of ethnic cleansing have, of course, turned out to be a lie. The hostile reception R u s s i a n - s p e a k i n g Ukrainians gave to Russian soldiers dismantled this myth. But Putin was right about one thing - that Ukraine is turning into an "anti" Russia, specifically anti-Putinist Russia. By launching his war in Ukraine and continuing the deadly fight with little regard for Russian lives, Putin laid the groundwork for his own downfall. He is not only losing any claim to the mantle of Victory Day, but handing it to those opposed to his regime. Future Victory Days will celebrate the defeat of both Nazi Germany and Putin's Russia.

Aljazeera

US politics is being played out on Israeli turf

Yossi Mekelberg

US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy last month led a delegation of American lawmakers to Israel to celebrate the latter's 75 years of independence. On the face of it, this was a bipartisan delegation of members of Congress, including both Republicans and Democrats. What emerged rather quickly was that, when politicians from two highly polarized political systems meet, both badly tainted by populism, bipartisanship is thrown out of the window and the temptation to play party politics while on foreign and fertile turf becomes too great to resist.

This phenomenon is likely to become ever more common, as the next US presidential election is less than a year and a half away. Few would question America's cross-party commitment to Israel. However, given the current circumstances in both countries, we can expect that relations between them will play out in both the US elections and Israel's constitutional crisis.

It is commonplace for high-ranking American officials and presidential candidates to visit Israel - and more frequently when

elections loom. It gives them the opportunity to express their devotion to Israel and to have the all-important photo op with Israeli leaders that is supposed to please their constituents back home. However, these are not ordinary times in either country and, should the next US presidential election turn out to be a second bout between Joe Biden and Donald Trump, it will be ugly, nasty, toxic and aimed at the lowest common denominator among the voting public, as will be the contests for the Senate and the House of Representatives. But the last thing Israel needs right now, at one of the most fragile points in its history, is to become a pawn on America's political chessboard, where Republicans support the Israeli government and its far-right anti-democratic drive, while Democrats oppose the government only to collect some cheap points in their battle to win over American voters.

Similarly, it is never clever for any Israeli politician to intervene in American elections, not only because it is wrong to meddle with another country's political processes, but because it might come back to haunt Israel if it should gamble on the

wrong candidate. The close alliance between both countries on all levels, which is crucial for Israel's survival and well-being, dictates staying out of domestic American politics. Regrettably, McCarthy cynically took advantage of his high-profile visit to Israel to undermine the Biden administration's efforts to curb the Israeli government's current antidemocratic tendencies. It is exceptionally rare for any US president, or any other official for that matter, to openly criticize Israel, even more so when such criticism relates to its domestic politics. But Israel is suffering from its most severe period of political turmoil - one that threatens to harm US interests - which is why Biden, along with Secretary of State Antony Blinken, among others, have not held back from criticizing a Benjamin Netanyahu-led coalition government that, under the influence of its far-right and ultra-Orthodox members, is forging ahead in its assault on the judiciary and hence on the system of checks and balances to the power of the legislature.

Netanyahu desperately needs many of these laws currently before the

Knesset in order to obtain immunity from prosecution and derail his corruption trial. For months, Biden has been holding back on inviting Netanyahu to Washington, thereby expressing his administration's extreme displeasure at the direction taken by the Israeli government. By doing so, he is deliberately depriving Netanyahu of the most coveted foreign trip for any Israeli prime minister, let alone Netanyahu, who has always seen himself as being influential in America's corridors of power, whether in the White House or on Capitol Hill. The Israeli prime minister's desperation for such an invite is becoming even more obvious as his troubles at home continue to mount, with no solution in the offing, for he believes that such a visit would provide him with both the statesman-like respectability he believes he deserves, but also a breather from the chaotic scenes at home.

However, Biden is rightly sticking to his guns and making it clear that support for Israel does not necessarily mean supporting every action of its government. And, significantly, he is signaling that one

of the pillars of the bond between the US and Israel is the commonality of democratic values, without which the other political, strategic and economic pillars are in danger. For McCarthy to undermine his country's president by promising to invite Netanyahu to Washington himself, should such an invitation not be forthcoming from the White House, was cynical and irresponsible in equal measure, especially as hundreds of thousands of Israelis are taking to the streets every week in their struggle to save the democratic character of their country. McCarthy's intervention has more to do with his strained relations with the president than his being a true friend of Israeli democracy.

The response from the White House was swift and US National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby clarified that, to the best of his knowledge, Netanyahu will be invited to the White House at some point, but more importantly he reiterated that no such visit is currently planned. In other words, Netanyahu must first climb down from his antidemocratic tree before he can expect an invitation. But McCarthy's was not the only recent high-profile visit to Israel by an

American politician. Florida governor and presidential hopeful Ron DeSantis stopped over on an international tour aimed at enhancing his foreign policy credentials and, in this case, he put Netanyahu in an awkward position. Any sign of the slightest positive expression toward any Republican candidate might ignite the short-fused and thin-skinned Trump, who has already announced his candidacy.

In the next few months, first during the US primaries and then with the presidential election itself, the issue of Israel will play a part in this most extravagant political show on planet Earth. Biden will have to walk a tightrope of differentiating between his unwavering friendship and commitment to Israel and his justified criticism of an Israel that is sliding down the slippery slope toward dictatorship and being an apartheid state, because the Republican candidates will be constantly seeking opportunities to attack him on his position. They will do this regardless of the damage it might cause to those who are fighting to try to save Israel's democratic system, its relations with the Palestinians and its standing in the world, including its long-standing relations with the US.

Republicans are pushing American democracy to its breaking point

Christopher Rhodes

THE recent move by Tennessee Republicans to expel two young, Black Democratic state legislators for engaging in a peaceful protest for gun control following a horrible mass shooting at a Nashville Christian school has been described in many different ways.

Some called the expulsions "anti-democratic" while others went further to characterise them as "fascistic". The removal of these two young Black men, coupled with the failure to punish their older white female colleague for the same action, has also been labelled "racist" and an echo of the state's sordid past. Moreover, many recognised the political stunt as a blunder and an own goal. After all, both expelled legislators were promptly reappointed to their seats by their districts and have now become rising national figures, speaking with President Joe Biden and meeting Vice President Kamala Harris, who made a surprise and impassioned appearance in Nashville.

Meanwhile, the Tennessee GOP has been widely condemned by Democrats, and some prominent Republicans, including the state's congressional delegation. Tennessee's Republican Governor Bill Lee, however, opted to remain silent on the move. It is hard not to question the wisdom of the Tennessee legislators enacting such an extreme, divisive and ultimately futile punishment. But viewed nationally, the drama in Tennessee is nothing but

another step in the same direction for the GOP. Recently, the party has not only shed whatever commitment it may have once held for democracy but appears intent on promoting a distinctly anti-democratic, if not qualitatively fascist, political agenda. In this context, what the Tennessee Republicans did was not a blunder or an overreach - it was a test case. In this state and elsewhere around the country, Republicans have been pressure-testing the strength and limits of democracy, seeing where they can violate and erode the rules and norms of democracy in order to gain and hold office and push through conservative laws and policies.

The ACLU says since 2021, 10 states have enacted anti-critical race theory laws that attack "our First Amendment rights to read, learn, and discuss vital topics in schools", with over two dozen additional anti-CRT laws proposed in 2022 alone. The International Center for Not-for-Profit Law which tracks legislation that "restricts the right to peaceful assembly" reports that seven states have enacted anti-protest laws since 2017. These laws, among other provisions, enact harsh penalties for blocking traffic and some states' laws provide immunities for drivers who hit pedestrian protesters. These laws have also been employed to crack down against journalists covering protests. In addition to suppressing vital civil rights, Republican governors and state legislators are also actively engaged in efforts

to undermine the power of voters, efforts that Brennan Center fellow Zachary Roth calls "legislative anti-democracy". These moves have included heightened efforts at gerrymandering; reconfiguring the way Electoral College votes are allocated to favour Republican candidates; making direct democracy, such as ballot initiatives, more difficult to achieve; and using state laws to negate or undermine more liberal local municipalities.

The Republican-appointed majority of the Supreme Court, in tossing aside the principle of stare decisis to overturn Roe vs Wade despite it being "settled law", has now emboldened conservative judges to engage in the type of judicial activism that liberals have often been accused of conducting. Recently, a federal judge in Texas attempted to implement a nationwide ban on the abortion drug Mifepristone on the basis that the FDA had improperly approved it in 2000. The dubious and flimsy argument behind the ruling made clear that it was a political, rather than legal or scientific, decision. Given the Supreme Court's conservative and highly politicised supermajority, such challenges from conservative judges hoping to create cases for the conservative justices to enact more aspects of their agenda are likely to become more frequent in the immediate future. It is not just that conservative Republican officials are pursuing their agenda

through various branches and levels of government. It is that they are doing so in ways that disregard or even actively violate fundamental principles upon which American democracy was founded - they appear willing if not eager to damage that democratic bedrock in order to enact their agenda.

And they are actively learning from one another. In 2016, Christian nationalist activists launched "Project Blitz" - later rebranded as "Freedom for All" - to offer effective blueprints to Republicans looking to pass local and state-level laws to achieve their political goals, such as carving out religious exceptions in anti-LGBTQ discrimination laws or scaling back abortion services. Later, a number of states copied one another in enacting legislation banning examinations of racial injustice such as the 1619 Project and the so-called Critical Race Theory (CRT). Meanwhile, a few Republican-dominated states, like Florida under Ron DeSantis and Texas under Greg Abbott, have become productive laboratories for repressive conservative legislation. Sometimes, a few conservative extremists devise a strategy that others emulate. Texas, alongside Oklahoma and Tennessee, for example, passed the first anti-CRT "divisive concepts" laws in May 2021 which later spread to Red states across the country. Similarly, Florida's so-called "Don't Say Gay" law quickly found imitators in states like Alabama and Texas. At

other times, strategies fail to gain traction, and the party switches course. Donald Trump's refusal to admit defeat in 2020 spawned copycat election deniers from Arizona to Michigan. Such claims did not stick, however, and most deniers eventually failed to win state-level elected office. However, several leading supporters of Trump's "stolen election" narrative managed to gain power within their state GOP machinery anyway, with several becoming GOP party chairs and continuing to pull the party further to the right with new strategies and tactics.

Although Republican supermajorities in other states could abuse their power the way that the Tennessee legislators did, the specific tactic of expelling political opponents from office on exaggerated charges may end up being another failed experiment given the enormous backlash. But it will almost certainly be followed by more moves by Republican politicians and operatives to test the boundaries of what they can get away with, either in that state or somewhere else where the GOP currently holds power. And although this portion of the story is not widely noticed, the Tennessee debacle has given a useful peak into the mindset of Republicans who seek to consolidate power by any means necessary. In the leaked audio from Tennessee Republicans discussing the fallout of the expulsion vote, state Rep Scott Cepicky spoke of the move not as a political stunt but as a salvo in an existen-

tial war for the country. "If you don't believe we're at war for our Republic - with all love and respect for you, you need a different job," he said. "The left want Tennessee so bad. Because, if they get us, the Southeast falls and it's game over for the Republic ... I've gotten phone calls from other reps, going 'We sure hope you guys stand up. Because maybe it will give us the courage to stand up and push back against what's going to destroy our republic.'" With this apocalyptic thinking, Republicans have convinced themselves that their grabs for power are necessary tactics furthering a righteous cause. Framing themselves as the last defenders of the country, the GOP has justified any and all tactics to achieve victory, even a Pyrrhic victory that destroys the democracy it claims to defend. Under this mindset, we can expect a lot more political manoeuvres as outrageous and diabolically creative as that from Tennessee.

Fortunately, this war footing appears to be the perspective of only a minority of Americans, although it seems to be growing within the GOP. Having seen the dangers of this thinking play out more dramatically through illegal acts like the January 6 insurrection, it is important for any true defenders of American democracy to recognise that it is equally pernicious when the Republican "save our country at any cost" mindset operates within the current boundaries of American democracy in order to tear those boundaries down.

Civil wars are getting longer and more difficult to resolve

THE recent outbreak of fighting in Sudan has highlighted the terrible human and economic toll of civil wars. Sudan is hardly alone. Depending on how one defines civil war, there are between 10 and 100 ongoing today. According to the Geneva Academy, the Middle East and North Africa region has the highest number of civil wars, followed by Africa.

Defining the term civil war is tricky, but generally it refers to a conflict that occurs mostly within the borders of a state and in which most of the belligerents are residents of that state. There are different types of civil war and each conflict has its own unique characteristics. A state may have more than one civil conflict at a time. Despite these variations, multiple research projects over the last 30 years have found commonalities among civil wars. Civil wars typically last much longer than wars between states and recent research suggests that the average duration of civil wars has been lengthening in recent years. The Economist recently reported that the average length of a civil war was nearly 20 years in 2021, compared to an average of 13 years in 1985. Other research by scholars and aid organizations has also found that civil wars are lasting longer.

What factors are driving civil wars to last for so many years? The Economist identified several reasons, including complexity, criminality, climate change, deteriorating global norms and the spread of violent religious extremism. Research from other sources supports those findings and adds other useful points. For example, civil wars are more likely to end through clear military victory than negotiation so, when belligerent groups are unable to defeat and disarm each other, conflicts are more likely to last longer. An extensive body of research has demonstrated that

Kerry Beyd Anderson

civil wars are more likely to endure when there are multiple groups involved. Researchers have found that civil wars that end through negotiation tend to be shorter, but negotiating a durable settlement with multiple belligerents is very difficult. Even ending a war through clear military victory is more difficult when many armed groups are fighting.

the involvement of global or regional powers plays a similar role. Long-running civil wars often devolve into war economies, in which armed groups have financial incentives to continue fighting. These actors can make money through extortion and other means. They often benefit from controlling natural resources such as mines or crops that are used for

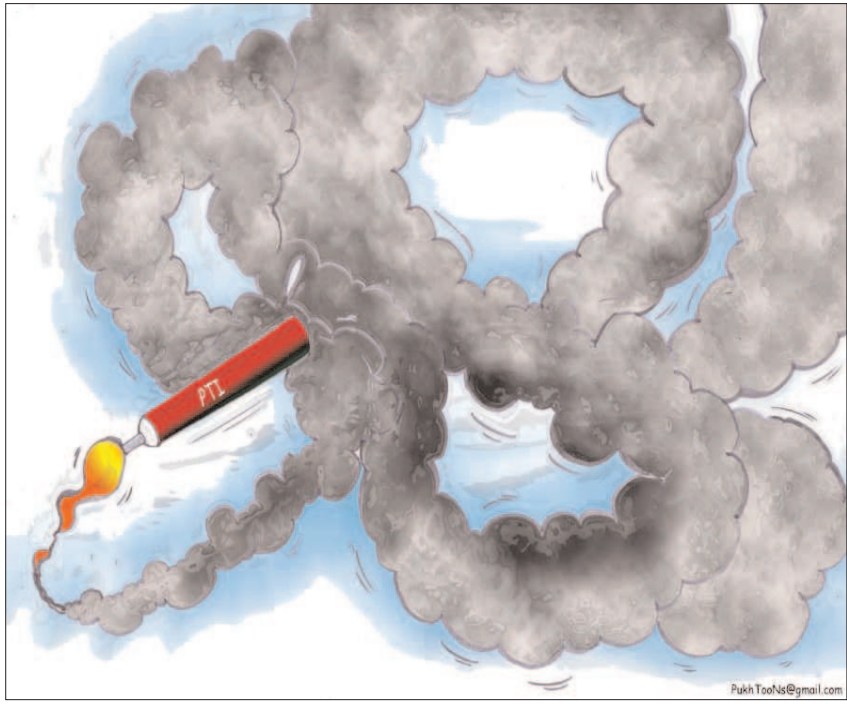
For example, civil wars are more likely to end through clear military victory than negotiation so, when belligerent groups are unable to defeat and disarm each other, conflicts are more likely to last longer. An extensive body of research has demonstrated that civil wars are more likely to endure when there are multiple groups involved. Researchers have found that civil wars that end through negotiation tend to be shorter, but negotiating a durable settlement with multiple belligerents is very difficult. Even ending a war through clear military victory is more difficult when many armed groups are fighting.

A related problem is foreign involvement. Academic research has found that interventions by foreign countries in support of one or more parties in a civil war likely extends the length of the war and increases the death toll. One reason is that foreign powers, who do not bear the true costs of the war, can continue providing resources to belligerents who might otherwise have been unable to continue fighting. Foreign countries' interests can also complicate negotiation efforts. During the Cold War, Soviet and US involvement in proxy wars contributed to their length; today,

groups often become increasingly brutal and unwilling to negotiate. Climate change is a major risk multiplier that contributes to the likelihood of a civil war occurring, as well as complicating efforts to resolve conflict. At times, the UN has played a significant role in helping to end some internal wars, but when there is paralysis in the UN Security Council its ability to take significant action is hampered. In general, when there is a lack of a willing, capable and trusted third party who can help lead negotiations and monitor agreements, resolving wars is much harder. It also can be difficult to determine when a civil war truly ends and another one begins. Is the current fighting in Sudan the start of a new potential civil war or is it the continuation of a series of internal conflicts? Did the current war in Yemen start in 2014 or is it the latest stage in a series of wars going back decades or longer? Similar questions could be asked of countries such as Myanmar, Lebanon and Ethiopia, among others. When is it a lasting peace and when is it a pause between wars?

Just as experts have significant information about factors that make civil wars likely and make them longer or more brutal, they also have knowledge of ways to help end wars. Civil wars that end through negotiation are likely to be shorter, while there are historical lessons to help negotiators, such as including women and civil society voices and involving a third-party mediator that can provide some security during combatant demobilization. However, in situations where belligerents have the incentives and resources to keep fighting - especially if they receive foreign assistance - ending wars is extremely challenging. As always, civilians are caught in the crossfire, often left with little choice except to try to flee, as many Sudanese are attempting today.

Arab News



It's psychological warfare season on US border

Belén Fernández

ON April 8, three young Venezuelans were detained in El Paso, Texas, where they had just crossed the border from Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. They were among the 183,000 undocumented people reportedly apprehended by the United States Border Patrol that month, which, according to the Reuters news agency, constituted a 13 percent increase from March.

I had met these three men in February in Panama when they had emerged with their three Colombian travel companions from the traumatic stretch of corpse-ridden jungle known as the Darién Gap. Over the next

WhatsApp that he could no longer furnish me with his usual daily assurance that he would be OK because it had become unavoidably clear that personal safety was no longer even a remote possibility. I then convinced him to abandon the "American dream" and travel instead to Europe, which, for all of its own egregious xenophobic defects, is at least straightforwardly reachable by Venezuelans with passports. The matter of Johan's own lack of a passport was resolved when I spontaneously became best friends with the Venezuelan embassy in Mexico City.

They have not been heard from since May 1. As for the three Colombians who also undertook that same initial US border crossing on April 8, two were briefly detained in Texas and then released with an unintelligible paper from the US Department of Homeland Security informing them that they had "been arrested and placed in removal proceedings". They were ordered to appear at a later date at a hearing in New York City, 3,500km (2,175 miles) to the northeast. The third Colombian, a 17-year-old named Julián, remains in indefinite detention in Tampa, Florida, where he was transferred from El Paso, a mere 2,800km (1,740 miles) away. Back in Panama, Julián had told me that he wasn't even sure he was doing the right thing by going north but he felt obligated to try to help his mother financially. Furthermore, he told me, he was always there to listen if I ever needed to talk. And while Julián may not be available to listen at the moment, we do need to be talking about the psychological warfare that is presently raging on the US border.

month and a half, we seven had remained in continuous contact on WhatsApp, and I had undertaken an informal fundraising campaign that consisted of harassing wealthy acquaintances to send me money that I could transfer to my friends to help offset the costs of undocumented movement. Chief among these costs is the official extortion that currently reigns in Central America and Mexico. Police, immigration personnel and other state agents have wholeheartedly embraced the same sinister logic as criminal outfits that prey on asylum seekers - a logic that is based on extracting cash from people who have none to spare and who are often migrating for that very reason.

Of course, the blame for the whole twisted arrangement lies fundamentally with my own country, the United States, the unilateral sanctity of whose border has spawned a flourishing international anti-migrant industry and rendered the business of seeking refuge a very deadly one. My Venezuelan friends were held for six days in a Texas detention centre, during which time they were permitted a single shower. They were then flown, cuffed at the hands and legs, to Arizona and dumped across the border into the city of Nogales in the Mexican state of Sonora.

One of the three, a 21-year-old from Caracas named Johan, would subsequently describe the disorienting experience as psychologically manipulative "torture" - an eye-opening introduction, he said, into the "real nature" of the country he had risked his life to reach. In Nogales Johan notified me via

An official told me that, although the embassy was regrettably lacking in passport-making materials, they could provide Johan with a permit to travel without a passport back to Caracas, so his travel document could be processed there - and they wouldn't even judge him for the life choices he had made. And off he went. Meanwhile, Johan's two Venezuelan companions returned to Ciudad Juárez to once again attempt the crossing into El Paso. They have not been heard from since May 1.

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And while Julián may not be available to listen at the moment, we do need to be talking about the psychological warfare that is presently raging on the US border. The willful arbitrariness, ambiguity and chaos that emanates from

make their trajectories a lot more lethal. To be sure, the effects of psychological warfare are amplified by the unique reality of the US "border", which is not confined to a single geographical line but is rather fairly omnipresent - extending from the Darién Gap to Tapachula, Chiapas, Ciudad Juárez and everywhere in between and beyond where refuge seekers are reminded that their lives are, for all intents and purposes, meaningless.

Now, with the expiration on May 11 of the Donald Trump-era Title 42 policy, which enables the US to summarily expel asylum seekers, using the coronavirus pandemic as a pretext, President Joe Biden's administration has come up with a noble substitute, which kind of amounts to banning the whole concept of asylum altogether. In support of his new plan, Biden has pledged to deploy 1,500 additional US soldiers to the US border with Mexico, boosting the number of active duty soldiers there to 4,000 - as if there was any doubt that the psychological border war entails a very physical side, too.

And yet sometimes humanity prevails in the face of an utterly dehumanising system. The other day in Caracas, Johan was able to hug his mother for the first time in five years because, before embarking on the hazardous 1.5-month trek to the US, he had worked as a labourer in Colombia and had been unable to scrape together the money for a visit home. Here's hoping Julián can one day hug his mother again. But for the time being, he's just another casualty of the US war on asylum.

Arab League's approach to Syria the only one that makes sense

Osama Al-Sharif

AFTER more than a year of behind-the-scenes diplomacy, emboldened by recent unilateral initiatives, Syria's membership of the Arab League was finally restored on Sunday, when Arab foreign ministers reached consensus on what has been a bitterly divisive issue ever since the eruption of the Syrian crisis 12 years ago. And there is no doubt this was a huge diplomatic victory for the regime of President Bashar Assad, which at one point, before the Russian military intervention of 2015, was on the brink of collapse.

The new Arab approach to resolving the complex Syrian crisis is based on a number of factors. More than a decade of failed attempts to find a political settlement to end this brutal civil war has led to a deadly stalemate, with parts of the country under the regime's control and others under direct or indirect foreign occupation or influence. This ceased to be a domestic crisis almost as soon as it erupted, with regional and outside parties getting involved and backing various opposition groups, either politically or militarily.

One must not forget the bleak episodes involving foreign extremists slipping into Syria to join the fundamentalist outlaws who filled the vacuum left by the regime to set up an abhorrent, dystopian society. Likewise, documented atrocities committed by the regime - including the use of chemical weapons - will continue to warrant investigation, accountability and a final reckoning.

Syria's stalemate exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in all parts

of the country, as underlined by the aftermath of February's devastating earthquake. Furthermore, regional and global geopolitical shifts altered the views of how best to approach the Syrian crisis. What most Arab leaders agreed upon was that the current "status quo politics" was unsustainable against a backdrop of shifting priorities, needs and challenges.

What is important to note here is that the process of rehabilitating the Syrian regime is only the beginning. The step-by-step approach is open-ended and it will take years before a true closure to the Syrian tragedy is reached. Meanwhile, the core of the new approach is based on finding a working Arab formula that fulfills UN resolutions on Syria and previous understandings and frameworks under other tracks such as Geneva and Astana, while achieving national reconciliation. It is a tall order and the Arab League's track record in conflict resolution is disputed at best.

One thing to note here is that any genuine approach to resolving the crisis in Syria, which includes committing to political reforms, the return of refugees and displaced people, dismantling the drug-smuggling network and ending the foreign presence on Syrian soil, all while preserving Syria's territorial integrity and sovereignty, among others, must rest on a reciprocal formula. This means that the regime must end its cryptic response to the Arab initiative and should, at some point soon, reveal where it stands on such issues.

This is where a number of Arab

countries made their reservations. And this is the public position of other key players, such as the EU and the US, with some variations.

For Damascus, outlining its position on the above issues is pivotal if the new Arab approach is to be given a lifeline. Assad is unlikely to abandon his Iranian allies, although he may commit to symbolic gestures regarding the presence of nonstate players. But it is likely to be a long time until he signals any concessions on critical issues such as writing a new constitution for Syria or even talking to the opposition. The latter even appears to have disappeared from the scene. There is also the Syrian Kurdish matter, including their demands for self-rule and the presence of US troops on their territory.

Washington's response to this latest diplomatic breakthrough has been pragmatic and reserved. While the US says that Syria has not earned the right to rejoin the Arab League, it adds that it understands what its Arab allies are trying to do, which is to jump-start a political solution in Syria. The fact that key Arab partners of the US, such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq and the UAE, are supporting Syria's political rehabilitation sends a strong message to Washington that its policy in Syria has failed and is currently inert.

The new Arab momentum has to be taken in light of the historic rapprochement between Riyadh and Tehran and its implications for the wider region, including Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. A wider perspective must include Russia's mounting pressure to end the

Syria-Turkiye rift, which could be decided by the outcome of the Turkish presidential election next week.

For Syria's Arab neighbors, namely Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq, Sunday's embrace of Damascus will be taken much more personally. Amman, for example, sees the Captagon smuggling across its 360 km border with Syria as a national security threat. There are indications that Jordan's air force launched a deadly strike against a drug factory in Deraa on Monday morning, killing the most-wanted Syrian drug kingpin in the process. This signals a new strategy by Amman in handling such a threat, which, according to various reports, involves members of the Assad clan. Jordan and Lebanon are eager to find solutions that will allow the voluntary return of hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees.

Iraq and Jordan, meanwhile, want to secure their borders with Syria in order to control smuggling, as well as to terminate the pockets of Daesh fighters that continue to pose a threat to both. Talking to the Syrian regime to resolve a long list of issues, either on a bilateral basis or through an Arab League committee, will not be easy. The regime's survival has come at a hefty cost and there are new realities on the ground that will make it difficult for Assad to cough up concessions. But in the absence of alternatives, the current path seems to be the only one that makes sense. Hopefully the regime will see the sense in preserving the benefits of its return to the Arab fold and will do its bit to end the endemic political deadlock.

some setbacks, has served the country's economic and geopolitical interests. When it comes to nationalism, secularism and the Kurdish question, some change might take place, but there still will be continuity. Therefore, do not expect Turkey to make a U-turn and go back to its pre-2002 state of affairs, let alone give up its enhanced geopolitical standing as a regional power to reckon with. Indeed, Western hopes for a reset with Ankara may fall flat, but that may not be such a problem in Washington and Brussels.

Both sides have been realists when it comes to foreign policy despite much rhetoric about principles and human rights. And judging by their appeasement of autocratic Middle Eastern regimes, their interests generally trump values. The West, therefore, will come to accept that Turkey also has regional aspirations, whatever the outcome of the elections. After two decades in power, Erdogan has radically transformed Turkey's domestic politics and foreign policy, and it would be hard to roll this back, especially as his AKP has emerged as a potent political force with penetrating social and bureaucratic influence. Love him or hate him, one must admit that Erdogan has been a consequential president who will leave his mark on Turkey regardless of whether he wins or loses in the upcoming elections.

Marwan Bishara

predicting a close race with Erdogan trailing behind Kilicdaroglu by a few percentage points. But the pollsters are generally political and unreliable, and many of the voters seem to be driven more by their distaste for Erdogan than love for Kilicdaroglu. In reality, winning is about getting people to show up at the voting station, and the incumbent president has proven quite resourceful in rallying his base. As a seasoned politician and charismatic campaigner, Erdogan has energised his base among rural and working-class conservatives. His supporters seem more committed and more invested in his re-election than the six-party opposition coalition is committed to its candidature and, therefore, are more likely to go vote, come rain or sunshine.

Erdogan clearly understands that elections are won and lost mostly over domestic not foreign affairs. He has, therefore, used the levers of the state to his advantage, making big announcements on the eve of the elections about Turkey's forthcoming fortunes. If Erdogan wins, he is sure to double down on his domestic and foreign agendas, especially towards Russia, Europe and the United States. He will continue to pursue a hybrid approach towards major powers by balancing Turkish interests with the West and Russia.

He will maintain Turkey's membership in NATO while strengthening trade and geopolitical relations with Russia. Kilicdaroglu, on the other hand, may be inclined to reverse some of his predecessor's domestic political and economic policies and undo some of the illiberal measures enacted since Turkey's 2016 failed coup in favour of greater institutionalism. But judging by the historic record, leaders in Turkey and elsewhere tend to keep executive powers and privileges they inherit from their predecessors. The litmus test for Kilicdaroglu may be his willingness and ability to reverse Erdogan's constitutional reforms and bring back the parliamentary system.

Kilicdaroglu, who lacks foreign policy experience, has been razor-focused on domestic issues and the flailing economy. If elected, he is likely to soften Turkey's tone towards its Western and NATO partners and remove its veto on Sweden's membership in the military alliance. But it is doubtful that he would sacrifice Ankara's lucrative economic and energy relationship with Moscow - especially as bilateral trade reached \$70bn last year - to satisfy the West. With former Erdogan ally and strategist Ahmet Davutoglu now on his side, Kilicdaroglu is likely to maintain Turkey's active regional and international posture, which, despite

Turkish elections, Western illusions

TURKEY'S elections on May 14 are attracting significant international attention, with major media outlets dubbing them "the most important elections of 2023". Many in the West seem to hope the Turks will finally replace President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP) with a more accommodating liberal leadership that will bring about a profound change in the country's domestic and international policies.

That may prove to be wishful thinking. Even if Erdogan is voted out, and that is a big if, his legacy is bound to endure. In the West, the Turkish president has been described as "the other Putin", a populist, divisive autocrat determined to pursue his dream of empire. He has been criticised for presiding over a pervasive system of nepotism, a weak economy, high inflation and currency devaluation.

By contrast, his main rival, the opposition candidate Kemal Kilicdaroglu, is portrayed as a sensual, humble and responsible leader who will restore democracy and mend relations with the West if he wins. Predictably, such characterisations have been condemned by Turkey's pro-Erdogan media and ridiculed as arrogant and fanciful. As the elections approach, it is still not clear who will be the next president. Most national polls are

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100-index of PSX loses 298.86 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) declined by 298.86 points on Wednesday, showing a negative change of 0.72 per cent, closing at 41,074.95 points against 41,373.81 points the previous day.

A total of 99,182,930 shares were traded during the day as compared to 203,054,036 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 3.330 billion against Rs 5.847 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 324 companies transacted their shares

in the stock market; 101 of them recorded gains and 203 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 20 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 14,290,890 shares at Rs 1.14 per share, TPL Properties with 6,184,982 shares at Rs 12.57 per share, and Bank Al-Falah with 4,05,757 shares at Rs 30.01 per share.

Nestle Pakistan witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 23.28 per share price, closing at Rs 5800.00, whereas the runner-up was

Thal Ind Crop, with a Rs 14.63 rise in its per share price to Rs 298.99.

Sapphire Fiber witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 75.70 per share closing at Rs 934.30, followed by Bhanero Tex, with a Rs 69.23 decline to close at Rs 1130.77.

Gold prices up by Rs 9,900 to 240,000 per tola

The per tola price of 24-karat gold increased by Rs 9900 and was sold at Rs 240,000 on Wednesday against its sale at Rs 230,100 the previous day, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association

reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold also increased by Rs 8,487 to Rs 205,761 from Rs 197,274, whereas the price of 10 grams of 22-karat gold went up to Rs 188,615 from Rs180,834.

The price of per tola silver increased by Rs 100 to close at Rs 3,100 and that of ten-gram silver also rose by Rs 85.75 to close at Rs 2657.75.

The price of gold in the international market remained unchanged to close at \$2031, the Association reported.

SAARC Chamber hails decision for extending CPEC to Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): The President SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry Iftikhar Ali Malik on Wednesday said wisdom based decision to extend China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to Afghanistan is set to deepen trilateral cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiatives(BRI).

In a press statement, he said that it was a good omen that the foreign ministers of Pakistan, China, and Afghanistan in recent trilateral talks expressed their determination to leverage Afghanistan's potential as a hub for regional connectivity.

He said three foreign

ministers also emphasized the significance of ongoing projects such as CASA-1000, TAPI, and Trans-Afghan Railway, highlighting their potential to boost regional connectivity and promote economic development and prosperity in the region.

He said the ministers further agreed in principle to explore measures to facilitate the movement of people and trade activities besides boasting transit trade through the Gwadar port.

Iftikhar Ali Malik said, "A peaceful, stable, and prosperous Afghanistan is in the best interest of the region."

He said, "It's high time to further deepen and expand trilateral cooperation in the domains of security, development, and politics guided by the principles of mutual respect, equal-footed consultation, and mutual benefits."

He said the security challenges must be addressed that pose a significant threat to regional and global security and directly impact the stability and economic prosperity of the entire region.

He called upon the international community to strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation and provide the necessary supplies, equipment, and

technical assistance to relevant countries.

He further urged the international community to engage constructively with Afghanistan acknowledging the efforts made under various mechanisms and formats including the neighboring countries of Afghanistan to promote dialogue and meaningful engagement with the Afghan interim government.

He urged the global community to support the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan to effectively protect the basic rights and interests of all segments of society including women and children.

MediaTek pushes flagship smartphone performance

E.P. Report

KARACHI: MediaTek has expanded its Dimensity portfolio with its new Dimensity 9200+ chipset for flagship 5G smartphones. This new offering builds on the success of its predecessor with a performance upgrade while maintaining power efficiency for longer battery life and better gaming experiences.

Supporting higher clock speeds than its predecessor, the Dimensity 9200 chipset, the Dimensity 9200+ combines one ultra-core Arm Cortex-X3 operating at up to 3.55GHz, three Arm Cortex-A715 super-cores running up to 3.0GHz, and four Arm Cortex-A510 efficiency cores at 2.0GHz. To give the Dimensity 9200+ an additional boost for gaming and other compute-intensive applications, MediaTek boosted the chipset's Arm Immortalis-G715 GPU by 17%.

"We continue to raise the bar for flagship performance and power efficiency

with the Dimensity 9200+, ensuring device makers have access to the most powerful mobile gaming features available today," said Dr. Yench Lee, Deputy General Manager of MediaTek's Wireless Communications Business Unit. "With faster raytracing and fluid gameplay at high frame rates, combined with MediaTek's power saving technologies, you can enjoy incredible visuals, epic effects and extended battery life."

The Dimensity 9200+ has a 4CC-CA 5G Release-16 modem that fluidly switches between long-reach sub-6GHz and super-fast mmWave connections. The chipset also supports Wi-Fi 7 2x2 + 2x2 with up to 6.5Gbps data rate, along with Bluetooth 5.3. MediaTek's Bluetooth and Wi-Fi coexistence technology allows Wi-Fi, Bluetooth low energy (LE) audio, and wireless peripherals to connect at the same time with extremely low latency and without inference.

Key features of the

MediaTek Dimensity 9200+ include: HyperEngine 6.0: Further improving the gaming experience with adaptive performance technology capable of sustaining high framerates and minimizing latency.

Second generation TSMC 4nm-class process: Ideal for ultra-slim designs in a variety of form factors.

Sixth generation AI Processing Unit (APU 690): Efficiently powers AI-noise reduction and AI-super resolution tasks, and creates truly cinematic video through real-time focus and Bokeh adjustments.

MediaTek Imagiq 890: Powerful flagship image signal processor that supports captivating capture, providing bright, sharp images and videos even in low-light scenarios.

MediaTek MiraVision 890: Display technology with adaptive refresh rate technology and motion blur reduction for a fluid user experience.

MediaTek 5G UltraSave 3.0: Power efficiency tech-

nologies to optimize battery life for all 5G connection conditions.

Smartphones powered by the MediaTek Dimensity 9200+ are expected to be released in May 2023.



MULTAN: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar chairing meeting of Economic Coordination Committee of Cabinet.

Shipping activity at PQ

KARACHI (APP): Four ships namely, Olympia, Mega-I, Maersk Kensington and Sea Ambition carrying Containers and 26,000 tonnes of Palm oil, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal and Multi-Purpose Terminal respectively on Tuesday.

Three more Container ships 'CMA CGM Ivanhoe, Maersk Brooklyn and MSC Heidi' also arrived at outer anchorage of the port during last 24 hours.

A total of 05 ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them a containers vessel 'Olympia' left the Port on Wednesday morning and three more ships, Maersk Kensington, Al-Deebel and Sea Ambition are expected to sail on Wednesday.

A cargo volume of 74,957 tones, comprising 60,626 tones imports Cargo and 14,348 tones export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 2,558 Containers was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

4 ships at Outer Anchorage of PQ, out of them three ships, Clipper Eos, Maersk Brooklyn and MSC Heidi & two more ships, Cussler and Ardmore Endurance carrying Chemicals, Containers and Mogas are expected to take berths at EVTL, QICT and FOTCO respectively on Wednesday.

President for gearing up Pak-Korea FTA

— to enhance bilateral trade, investment

KARACHI (APP): President Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Mohammed Tariq Yousuf, on Wednesday, underscored the need to gear up Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Pakistan and Korea for enhancing bilateral trade relations and opening up new dimensions and investment channels.

KCCI president while speaking at Korea Pakistan Business Forum 2023 stated that the year 2023 marks 40th anniversary of Korea-Pakistan business cooperation and diplomatic relationship those were built upon trust, brotherhood and generosity.

He stressed on revival of Pak-Korea Joint Trade Committee to exploit existing opportunities and enhance bilateral trade and economic integration in the manufacturing, hydro-power sector, SME, finance, transport and education sectors and said "We look forward to enhanced future business cooperation between Korea-Pakistan businesses which would boost the economic activities and contribute to

sustainable economic development."

Ambassador of the Republic of Korea Suh Sangpyo, Director General of Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency Kim Sung Jae, Consul General Korea Yi Sunghu, Senior Vice President Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry Touseef Ahmed, Vice President Haris Agar, President Automotive KIA Pakistan Muhammad Faisal, KCCI Managing Committee Members and prominent Korean businessmen in Pakistan were also present on the occasion.

Tariq Yousuf noted that despite strong bilateral economic relationships and probability of export of various Pakistani products including marble and granite, pharmaceuticals, cement, leather, rice and sports goods to Korean markets, Pakistan's exports to Korea stood at only \$206 million in FY22 as compared to \$170 million in FY21.

He mentioned that various corporate results in the stock market remained phenomenal in 2022 despite

Pakistan's ongoing economic challenges and top multinational companies operating in Pakistan have also posted massive growth which clearly indicates Pakistan's economic resilience.

He appreciated Korean companies doing business here and urged them to enhance their production activities for improvement of Pakistan's overall industrial output.

Commenting on South Korea's "New Village Movement" which has emerged as a global model for poverty eradication, he said that Korean companies could help Pakistan in capacity building of farmers, improving the yield and uplift agriculture sector through technology transfer.

He pointed out IT, Textile, forest conservation, recycling, coastal belts, technology parks in various potential rural markets in Sindh, Punjab and Baluchistan and joint ventures and investment in Special Economic Zones under CPEC as potential avenues for Korean corporate sector.

Stock markets drift lower before US inflation data

LONDON (AFP/APP): Stock markets retreated and the dollar traded mixed Wednesday before the release of key US inflation data.

Following last week's Fed hike to interest rates and a forecast-beating jobs report for the world's biggest economy, focus is lasered on the US consumer price index reading later in the day. The outcome should play a key decision-making role in the US central bank's June policy meeting, according to market watchers.

"Investors are eager to see proof that inflation is easing as that is another reason for the Federal Reserve to stop raising interest rates," said Russ Mould, investment director at AJ Bell.

"The sharp rise in the cost of borrowing has had a brutal impact on consumers and businesses and any relief on this front would be welcomed by the market -- even if it is just a rate pause rather than reduction in the near-term."

The Fed hinted at a possible pause in its long-running tightening cycle but observers warned that any sign of inflation creeping up would put pressure on officials to turn the screws further. And while the US economy shows resilience, several indicators suggest it is easing, feeding concerns that it could be heading for a recession.

Adding to the headache for the Fed is the need to avoid causing more ruc-

tions in the finance sector after the recent upheaval that has seen three US regional lenders go under, one taken over by JPMorgan, and UBS buying Credit Suisse in the space of two months.

The lenders' troubles have been partly blamed on the rapid rate hikes since last year, meaning monetary policymakers have been forced to rethink their approach to bringing down inflation.

Dealers are also keeping tabs on developments in the talks to raise the US debt ceiling, with congressional leaders unable to reach an agreement on how to lift borrowing before a deadline to avoid a catastrophic default.

Crunch talks between President Joe Biden and key lawmakers from both parties Tuesday yielded no breakthrough, though they did decide to meet again Friday to hammer out a deal.

Biden said he made one thing clear during the talks: "Default is not an option."

However, the way forward will be tough because the Republicans, who control the House of Representatives, said they will only raise the limit from its current \$31.4 trillion maximum if spending curbs are enacted.

The heads of some of Wall Street's biggest names urged lawmakers to get a deal done quickly.

"The short-term impacts of a protracted negotiation

are costly; the long-term implications of a default are unthinkable," warned current and former leaders of the Treasury Borrowing Advisory Committee, which includes top executives of Goldman Sachs and JPMorgan among others.

"The magnitude of adverse consequences from a prolonged negotiation, or a default, is unquantifiable," Still, Jason Wong, at the Bank of New Zealand, said traders were biding their time for now.

"I don't think there is likely to be any market reaction until we get closer to the X-date," he said. "That is still a moving target, likely into June and quite possibly later into July."

The tale of Islamic Fintech — II

Mufti Asad Gul

The Islamic Development Bank started operations in 1975, headquartered in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Clause one of its charter states that it is "to foster economic development and social progress of member countries and Muslim communities individually as well as jointly in accordance with the principles of Sharia."

The first Islamic insurance (or takaful) company - the Islamic Insurance Company of Sudan - was established in 1979. The Amana Income Fund, the world's first Islamic mutual fund (which invests only in Sharia-compliant equities), was created in 1986 in Indiana. The transition from an analogue to a digital economy began in the 1960s. By the 1980s, a digital economy had taken shape.

The Clearing House Interbank Payments System, or CHIPS, was established in 1970 to transmit and settle payment orders in American dollars for some of the largest and most active banks in the world. The NASDAQ-National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotations-was created in 1971 in the United States.

The Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications, or SWIFT, was established in

1973 to solve the problem of communicating cross-border payments. These payment systems allow large value payments to take place today on a real-time basis, which underpins massive volumes of transactions around the world. SWIFT enables communications between domestic digital payment systems.

The first online brokerage, E-Trade, was founded in 1982, by executing the first electronic trade by an individual investor. Britain saw the first online banking experience by the Bank of Scotland for the Nottingham Building Society (NBS) customers in 1983. All these developments are jigsaw pieces in the Fintech puzzle. During this era of digitisation, companies doubled and tripled their IT spend, as well as developed innovative risk management technology to address the varying risks. In the 1980s, stock exchanges from New York to Tokyo were going electronic, whilst the famous Bloomberg terminals were in ever-increasing use among financial services providers.

The Bloomberg Terminal now services hundreds of thousands of customers with everything from the latest information on financial matters to the ability to actually execute trades. It processes approximately more than 60 billion pieces of information from the

market per day.

The late 1980s are significant in the history of both Fintech and Islamic Finance. The world experienced a major market crash in 1987 presumably by programme trading, which involved pre-set computerised buy and sell orders being triggered by price drops and causing further drops - and thereby triggering more sales.

This manifested the risks involved in digitised cross-border financial connections and transactions, showing that the entire connected market is faced with the same risks.

In 1990, an accounting organization for Islamic financial institutions (Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions, AAOIFI), was established in Algiers by a group of Islamic financial institutions. The same year witnessed the Islamic bond market emerge when the first tradable sukuk - the Islamic alternative to conventional bonds - was issued by Shell MDS in Malaysia. The nucleus of Fintech appeared in 1995 when Wells Fargo used the World Wide Web (WWW) to provide online account checking.

The Internet merged with finance like never before. By 2001, eight banks in the United States had one million customers

online, with other main jurisdictions around the world rapidly developing the same systems and related regulatory frameworks to address risk.

In 1996, Citibank began to offer Islamic banking services when it established the Citi Islamic Investment Bank in Bahrain. In 1999 the Dow Jones Islamic Market Index (DJIMI) was established, becoming the first successful benchmark for the performance of Islamic investment funds. In 2002, the Malaysia-based Islamic Financial Services Board (IFSB) was established as an international standard-setting body for Islamic financial institutions.

Islamic Finance was equally growing with the technological developments. By 2005, the first direct digital banks without any physical branches emerged (e.g. ING Direct, HSBC Direct) in the UK. With the dawn of the 21st century, advancements in Internet technology opened the doors to several Fintech companies with consumer-facing solutions.

PayPal was launched in 1998 and was among the early Fintech companies that started transforming the way people managed their money through payments. eBay was also one of the first e-commerce websites that permitted consumers to create the

market and establish prices for auction items. The digital revolution had truly begun. Most Fintech entrants and start-ups were providing transfer, payments, investment management, and lending.

Envestnet and Yodlee were founded in 1999, Mint in 2006, and Credit Karma in 2007, all providing services for personal finance and investment management. Xoom was founded in 2001 and Payoneer in 2005, both providing services for money transfer and currency.

Prosper was founded in 2005, Lending Club in 2006, and OnDeck in 2007, providing lending services. Klarna was founded in 2005, Adyen in 2006, and Braintree in 2007, providing services for payments. Trading and data analysis provider Fintech companies are MarketAxess, which was founded in 2000, Market in 2003, and BATS Global in 2005. Then the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) took place.

The world changed. Finance changed. The markets changed. Another evolution of Fintech took centre stage. From the point of view of Fintech, the Crisis played a huge role.

Firstly, there was a huge pool of talent that was made redundant and lost their jobs in financial services. This would lead them to either try entrepreneur-

ship or explore different opportunities altogether.

Secondly, the GFC resulted in sweeping regulatory changes to prevent the systemic risk that shook the entire system. The regulatory changes impacted the profitability of the financial institutions and increased the compliance costs.

Thirdly, the GFC impacted consumer confidence in the traditional financial system. The lack of trust opened up the floor for tech companies to start offering financial services. 2007 also saw something revolutionary: the iPhone.

The smartphone is the device at the heart of the Fintech revolution. The previous decade has been all about Fintech. Fintech has transformed exponentially, from being merely a digital facilitator for B2B and B2C such as services for banks, financial companies, and digital wealth management, to becoming an industry collaborator, hybrid, and integrated operators.

Fintech is now much more about sharing core banking services and banking-as-a-service (BaaS), sharing APIs, Open Banking, co-creation and innovation, leveraging technology and data to create value for its cross-border services, applying machine learning algorithms, and for providing integrated, re-bundled

financial services.

Based on a report by Accenture, the amount invested in Fintech has risen from US\$930 million to US\$57 billion between 2008 and the first half of 2018. As for Islamic Finance, the Global Islamic Economy Report 2019 estimates that the industry is expecting strong growth and will reach USD 3.5 trillion in assets by 2024.

The top five growth sectors for Islamic Fintech in 2020 are expected to be Crowdfunding, Challenger Banking, Blockchain and Crypto, Robo-Advisory, and PFM (Personal Financial Management).

Before 2016, the only real manifestation of Fintech in Islamic finance was through crowdfunding platforms. 2016 saw Islamic robo-advisory firms launched as well as an Islamic Account Platform (IAP). The same year witnessed the birth of the Islamic Fintech Alliance (IFT Alliance), Islamic Fintech Hub, and Islamic Peer-to-Peer (P2P) financing. It was in Malaysia that eight Islamic crowdfunding platform operators came together in April 2016 to announce their alliance and cooperation to develop Islamic Fintech.

They called this initiative the Islamic Fintech Alliance (IFT Alliance). The founding members were Blossom Finance, Easi

Up, Ethis Crowd, Narwi, Funding Lab, Kapital Boost, Launchgood, and SkolaFund.

Whilst Malaysia was booming with Islamic Fintech, the UK and US began to see the rise of Islamic Fintech. In 2016, Yielders was launched. Yielders is the UK's first Islamic Fintech real-estate crowdfunding platform which is FCA licenced. Across the pond, New York-based Wahed Invest Inc launched one of the world's first Sharia-compliant robo-advisory platforms. In the same year, Ethis Kapital was given the licence to operate a Sharia-compliant P2P license by the Securities Commission Malaysia; Ethis Kapital concentrates on funding small businesses and real estate development projects.

Since 2016 to date, there have been over one hundred Islamic Fintech start-ups established across the spectrum of Islamic Finance.

The Global Islamic Fintech Report 2019 found that 70% of Islamic Fintechs expect to raise an equity funding round in 2020 with an average round size of USD 7M. More mature companies expect to also pursue other forms of funding, namely debt, bridge/mezzanine finance, and SAFE (simple agreement for future equity).

(Concluded)



In brief

Training camps begin

LAHORE (APP): The training camps for different games got underway on the directions of Director General (DG) sports board Punjab (SBP) Dr Asif Tufail at various venues for preparations for the 34th National Games, scheduled to be held at Quetta. Dr Asif Tufail said on Wednesday that around 300 players and team officials have reached Nishtar Park Sports Complex for training purposes. "In the first phase, the training camps of Gymnastic, Baseball, Taekwondo, Cycling, Rugby, Rowing, Tennis, Basketball, Bodybuilding, Judo, Karate and Squash will be organized at different venues". He said that Sports Board Punjab will provide best facilities including top class food during the training camps. "We want to decorate our teams with the best training so that they can carve out remarkable results in the National Games," he maintained. He said that all the participating players will be given best training under the supervision of professional coaches. "We are quite upbeat that Punjab athletes will offer satisfactory performance and win more medals than other participating contingents". Director General Sports Punjab Dr Asif Tufail urged the participating players to prepare themselves fully for the mega event. "For winning a greater number of medals, our players must be in excellent physical shape. The coaches and trainers must focus on gaining top level fitness during camp training," he asserted.

Cummins wants to play until he's 35

SYDNEY (Reuters): Australia captain Pat Cummins wants to play international cricket for another five years but has already experienced one period of burnout which forced him to reassess the balance in his life. The 30-year-old paceman played his first test as a teenager in South Africa in 2011 but did not play his second until six years later as he was nursed through a series of injuries. Once he did return to Australia's colours, however, he quickly discovered the almost unrelenting demands on the top modern players. "Cricket's basically 12 months of the year," he told former England footballer Rio Ferdinand on the Get Real with Rio podcast. "There's always a cricket game going on somewhere, and I played non-stop for a year or two. This is about four or five years ago, I kind of just came back from injuries. "And I was just spent, like burnt out, and I just remember thinking, 'Jeez, I'm 25 here but I want to do this until I'm 35. I've got to find a way to balance all these different things'." Cummins's last action came on Australia's tour of India earlier this year, which he left early to return home to be with his terminally ill mother. He said her death from breast cancer in March was still "pretty raw" but he was glad he had been able to spend time with her and his family at the end. "I think it hits home the kind of person you want to be, the kind of father you want to be. So from that side, it's been quite good. Lots of memories," he said. "But in terms of the grief I guess we'll keep working through that." Next up for Cummins and Australia is the World Test Championship final against India in London next month followed quickly by the five-test Ashes series against England.

PCB to receive largest share after Big Three in new ICC revenue model

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): In a new proposed financial model by the International Cricket Council (ICC), the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is set to receive the largest share of revenue after the Big Three - the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) and Cricket Australia (CA), reported ESPNcricinfo.

According to the proposed model, the BCCI will receive the largest share of revenue, accounting for approximately 40% of the ICC's net surplus earnings for the next four-year commercial cycle.

Between 2024-27, the BCCI is expected to make around US\$ 230 million annually, which accounts for 38.5% of the ICC's total yearly revenue of US\$ 600 million.

ECB and the CA are projected to receive around 6.89 % (US\$ 41.33 million) and 6.25% (US\$ 37.53 million) respectively. The remaining will be divided among the rest of the cricket boards, with the PCB receiving the largest share among them.

The PCB is the sole Full Member among the remaining nine to have a projected earnings of more than US\$ 30 million, with an expected amount of US\$ 34.51 million (5.75%).

The eight remaining Full Members are expected to earn less than 5%. Out of the projected earnings of US\$ 600 million, the 12 Full Members will receive US\$ 532.84 million (88.81%), while the remaining US\$ 67.16 million (11.19%) will be distributed among the Associate Members.

Afghanistan	16.82	2.80
Australia	37.53	6.25
Bangladesh	26.74	4.46
England	41.33	6.89
India	231.00	38.50
Ireland	18.04	3.01
New Zealand	28.38	4.73
Pakistan	34.51	5.75
South Africa	26.24	4.37
Sri Lanka	27.12	4.52
West Indies	27.50	4.58
Zimbabwe	17.64	2.94
Full Members	532.84	88.81
Associate Members	67.16	11.19

Pakistan team hopes to secure top position in Four-Nation C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan team hopes to secure a top position in the Four-Nation Basketball Championship scheduled to be held in Maldives this year.

In a statement on Wednesday, Pakistan Basketball Federation Secretary General, Khalid Bashir said, "Our main target is to secure a position in the said event as the Pakistan team will be participating in any international championship after a long time."

In this regard, Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF) has called a total of 25 players for the national training camp here at the Pakistan Sports Complex.

The three-day trials were held to select the probable for the Pakistan basketball team under the supervision

of the Pakistan Basketball Federation. Around 80 players were nominated by the affiliated units of PBBF to feature in these trials.

The selection committee was headed by Col. (R) Shujaat Ali Rana, while members including Muhammad Riaz Malik and Maudood Jafri, short-listed the players for the training camp. Bashir said the selected players would go through extensive training to enhance their skills and fitness standard during the national camp.

He said the players include both experienced and young players. The players selected for the camp includes Hamza Bin Javed (Army), Muhammad Shahbaz Ali (Army), Atif Shah (Army), Muhammad

Shahid (Army), Imad Ahmed (Army), Rana Haris Ahmed (Faisalabad), Sameer Khan (Hayderabad), Sammar Abbas (Islamabad), Ali Hamza Kazmi (Islamabad), Zain Ali (Karachi), Safi Ullah Khan (Lahore), Ibtisam Murtaza (Lahore), Muhammad Hamza (Multan), Zia Ur Rehman (Navy), Muhammad Umair Jan (PAF), Saqib Ullah Khan Mahsood (PAF), Mehtab Akram (PAF), Naeem Ullah (Peshawar), Abdul Wahab (Peshawar), Izhar Ullah (POF), Rana M Usman (Police), Muhammad Usman (Police), Muhammad Hamad (Rawalpindi), Muhammad Sajawal (Sargodha) and Zain ul Hasan Khan (Wapda).

Barcelona captain to leave club at end of season after 18 years

BARCELONA (Agencies): Captain Sergio Busquets has confirmed he will leave Barcelona at the end of the season after 18 years at the club.

The former Spain midfielder, 34, has played 718 matches for Barcelona - the third-most in the club's history.

His list of honours won with the club includes eight La Liga titles, seven Copa del Reys, seven Spanish Super Cups and three Champions Leagues. "Although it has not been an easy decision, I think the time has come," Busquets said.

"It has been an unforgettable journey," he added. "I always dreamed of playing with this shirt and at this stadium. Reality has exceeded all my dreams."

"It has been an honour, a dream, a source of pride, and it meant everything to defend and represent this badge for so many years."

"But everything has a beginning and an end. I want to thank all the people who made this possible, from the first day to the last."

Busquets joined the club in 2005 as a youth player, progressing to Barca's B side before making his first-team debut under manager Pep Guardiola in a 2008 league game against Racing Santander.

The defensive midfielder, who has also won three European Super Cups and three Club World Cups with the Spanish giants, is on course to end his Barcelona career with a ninth league title.

Xavi's side are 13 points clear at the top of La Liga with five games remaining.

Over his 15 years with the senior team he has scored 18 goals and provided 40 assists.

In announcing Busquets' decision to leave the Nou Camp, Barcelona described him as "one of the best players ever to represent the club".

The former Spain captain retired from international football in December, having won the 2010 World Cup and 2012 European Championship with his national side.



ROME: Elina Svitolina of Ukraine plays a backhand during their round of 128 match against Lesia Tsurenko of Ukraine at Foro Italico.

Imam-ul-Haq advance in ICC Rankings

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani opener Imam-ul-Haq has progressed in the MRF Tyres ICC Men's ODI Player Rankings after notable performances in the five-match series won by Green-shirts by 4-1.

Imam-ul-Haq has advanced one slot to fourth position after playing a match-winning knock of 90 in the third ODI, but he is still some way away from a career-best second position, which he achieved in June last year, said a press release issued here on Wednesday.

The left-hander's rise is good news for Pakistan as

they now have three batters in the top four, with Babar Azam number one on the list and Fakhar Zaman third.

New Zealand fast bowler Matt Henry too has inched up one slot after grabbing seven wickets in the last three matches of the series, which counted towards the weekly update.

He is back to a career best-equaling fourth position, which he first achieved in October 2016 and most recently held in November 2022.

Agha Salman's two half-centuries have lifted him 80 places to 92nd position among batters while fast

bowlers Harif Rauf (up nine places to joint-42nd) and Mohammad Wasim (up 41 places to 69th) have moved up the list of bowlers after some fine performances.

New Zealand batter and captain in the series, Tom Latham, has advanced eight places to 21st after scores of 45, 60, and 59 in the three matches.

Will Young has moved from the 99th to the 75th position and Henry Shipley is in joint-93rd position.

The annual update to the MRF Tyres ICC Men's ODI Team Rankings would be carried out on Thursday.

DG Sports KP assumes charge, vows to facilitate young talent

PESHAWAR (APP): Newly posted Director General (DG) Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Captain (Retd) Khalid Mehmood on Wednesday said that his top priority was to facilitate the young talented players with proper playing kits, shoes, proper equipment and level playing fields.

Talking exclusively to APP, newly appointed Captain (Retd) Khalid Mehmood, who assured his charge as DG Sports KP before performing his duties at DG Galiyat Development Authority (GDA), Deputy Commissioner (DC) and Political Agent Peshawar.

Being a player himself and going to participate as a player in the 34th National Games's Pistol and Rifles Skeet Competitions in Jhelum, Captain (Retd) Khalid Mehmood said that no one would be allowed to eat up funds allocated for the talented players. Such funds, would be utilized properly for nurturing upcoming talent.

He said, "It is astonishing to see that our young

talented players do not have proper kits, shoes, equipment level playing field which should be ensured. He said, "There are dozens of coaches in the DG Sports so these coaches would be in proper track-suits."

He said it should be ensured that all respective players should have their coach for daily practice so that the talent could be brought to the national and international level.

He said, "We have talent in games like squash, hockey, volleyball, football, table tennis, tennis, martial arts games in the province including merged tribal areas but lack of proper planning and proper facilities they cannot pursue their career."

"He was presented with a souvenir by Deputy Chief de Mission of KP contingent Ilyas Afridi congratulated by the Director of Development and Focal Person for the National Games Salim Raza was also present in his office."

Newly appointed DG Sports said that the best facilities including food, kits,

sports equipment would also be provided to the youth of merged areas. In response to a question, he replied that the players would be provided maximum opportunities to go ahead and all resources would be utilized in that regard.

He also called a meeting on Thursday with the office-bearers of the KP Olympic Association to discuss the safety of the players going to represent the province in the 34th National Games.

He said, "So far the teams including Football, Handball, Hockey, and Boxing have been stopped because of the blocked roads because safety is our top most priority."

DG Sports said a total of 81 players including 15 members boxing, 18 members male football team, 29 members male and female teams of Handball and 19 members team of hockey with officials were scheduled to leave for Quetta in the evening but due to ongoing situation it was decided to stop them till finalizing ways and means related to their safety.



SALERNO: Kaden Groves of Australia and Team Alpecin-Deceuninck celebrates at finish line.

Mourinho dismisses PSG talk ahead of Europa League semifinal

LONDON (Agencies): AS Roma coach Jose Mourinho lightheartedly brushed off persistent speculation around taking a managerial role at Paris St Germain, as his team prepares for the first leg of the Europa League semifinal against Bayer Leverkusen at home on Thursday.

Despite talk of potentially taking over the Ligue 1 club from Christophe Galtier in the 2023-24 season, Mourinho reaffirmed his loyalty to Roma, where he is currently under contract until 2024.

"If they called, they didn't find me," Mourinho told Sky Sport Italia on Wednesday before the pre-match news conference.

Roma are set to confront a formidable challenge as they go head-to-head against Xabi Alonso's squad on Thursday. Notably, Alonso played a pivotal role in Mourinho's success during their tenure at Real Madrid from 2010 to 2013.

Together, they clinched prestigious titles such as



LaLiga, Copa del Rey, and the Spanish Super Cup.

During the news conference, Mourinho expressed admiration for the former Spain international, showering him with praise.

"I haven't seen him for a long time. We've always had a fantastic rapport, more than between a coach and a player."

Mourinho said that the German team ranks among Europe's finest in terms of executing counter-attacks.

"They are very dangerous in this moment of the game, they defend, wait for the opponent to lose the ball and then it's difficult to stop them," he said, emphasizing

the number of swift attacking players in Alonso's squad.

"He uses the style that suits his players more, five or six ... of them could run the 100m with Marcel Jacobs at the Olympics."

Despite Roma reaching the semifinals of a prominent European competition for the third consecutive season, Mourinho dismisses the notion that it puts pressure on the team.

"We have enough experience not to be too excited for being in the semifinals, and not to be too fixated on the fact that it is the first game and that it is played at home," he said.

Mourinho said it was likely key striker Paulo Dybala and midfielder Georginio Wijnaldum will not be in the starting lineup due to their injuries.

"We'll do everything we can to fully recover them but we must prepare the match regardless of their availability."

The return leg will take place on 18 May.

South Africa qualify for ODI WC

CHELMSFORD (Agencies): South Africa are "obviously chuffed" to have qualified directly for the men's ODI World Cup, to be played in India later this year, after spending the bulk of the World Cup Super League outside of the top eight. And they have the weather in Chelmsford to thank for it.

With the no-result in the first of three ODIs between Ireland and Bangladesh on Tuesday, even if Ireland go on to claim the series, they cannot surpass South Africa in eighth place on the Super League points table. Ireland are guaranteed a ninth-place finish, though, and will compete in the ten-team qualifying tournament in Zimbabwe, which runs from June 18 to July 9, and also includes former world champions West Indies and Sri Lanka.

"We're obviously chuffed to qualify directly because it makes life a lot simpler not having to go through the qualifying tournament," Rob Walter, South Africa's white-ball coach, told ESPNcricinfo. "But there would have been an upside to competing in the qualifier given the very quiet winter we have."

The men's team last played ODI cricket against Netherlands on April 2 and have no matches scheduled until August 30, which amounts to almost five months of inaction after a redemptive summer, which ended with good results over England, West Indies and Netherlands, after chastening visits to Australia for the T20 World Cup and a Test series.

South Africa returned empty-handed from both,

but neither format mattered as much as ODIs. They started the year in 11th place on the Super League standings - well outside the automatic qualification zone - after series losses to Pakistan (2021 - home), Sri Lanka (2021 - away) and Bangladesh (2022 - home) and forfeiting a series in Australia (scheduled for January 2023) to allow their top cricketers to be available for the inaugural SA20 league.

South Africa gave themselves the best chance of progressing to the World Cup with series wins over England and Netherlands, which lifted them into No. 8, but the final outcome was not in their hands, as they waited for the Ireland vs Bangladesh matches to take place.

Planning for World Cup already on, Rob Walter

confirms

Walter confirmed that Cricket South Africa had put in place "two plans based on either eventuality" to execute: one if a trip to Zimbabwe was necessary, and another if South Africa held on to eighth place. The first of those would have necessitated Walter's return from his home in New Zealand earlier than planned and seen a return to action for top players shortly after the end of the IPL on May 28. Now, they will only be called on later in the winter. The second plan has already begun, with a camp at the high-performance centre in Pretoria from Tuesday.

"What we have now is the chance to spend some quality time outside of competition getting ourselves ready for a marquee event," Walter said.



In brief

IRSA releases 132,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 132,700 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 127,900 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1437.69 feet and was 39.69 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 33,500 cusecs and 37,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1121.90 feet, which was 71.90 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 38,700 cusecs and 40,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 62,100, 56,800, 40,600 and 10,100 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 30,500 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 16,200 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Satrang to hold art exhibition

ISLAMABAD (APP): Satrang Gallery is gearing up to host an art exhibition titled "A Mirror on My Heart" at a local hotel here tomorrow (Thursday). The aim of holding an exhibition is to illuminate the intricate interplay between memory, desires, and landscapes through the masterful use of color schemes. The captivating exhibition would showcase the works of five brilliant young miniaturists Brishna Amin Khan, Hamza bin Faisal, Ramsha Haider, Uma Laraib, Zafar Ali. "The event will be an exceptional showcase of contemporary artistry, offering visitors a chance to delve into the complex and interconnected world of human emotions and experiences," it added.

Power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Wednesday issued a power suspension programme for Thursday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM, Islamabad Circle, Highway, Iqbal Town, Zia Masjid, Service Road East, Tufail Shaheed, Charah, Farash Town, Karpa, Suhdaran Road Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, EME Complex, P&T Wini, Jhangi, Azharabad, Dhok Hasu, Major M a s o o d, G u l s h a n a b a d, Industrial, Dhok Mangatal, Kayani Road, Tench Bhatta, Mohanpura Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Kahota City-II, Hanif Shaheed, Army Flats, RA Bazar, IST, New Rawat, Fazal Ahmad Shaheed, Choah Khalsa, Feeders, Jhelum Circle, Mandi Bhalwal, F-3 Gul Afshan, Smoot Feeders, Chakwal Circle, Basharat Feeder, Attock Circle, from 08:00 AM to 01:00 PM Shadi Khan, Sirk, S h a m s a b a d, Ghorghashti, Barazee, Maskinabad, Shah Deer, Radio Pak. 1 & 2, Lawrencepur, Qaziabad, GBHP Colony, Shafi Chauhan Feeder and surrounding areas.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal speaking at the inauguration ceremony of the Research and Strategic Block of the National University of Modern Languages.

Ahsan advises students to exploit mental capabilities to achieve success

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal Wednesday advised the university students to sharpen their mental strength which he termed as key to success.

The minister was addressing a ceremony held at HEC Secretariat in connection with distribution of electric wheelchairs among students under the last phase of the Prime Minister's Electric Wheelchair for University Students. As many as 50 students received electric wheelchairs during the ceremony. In the first phase of the scheme, launched in 2017, 206 electric wheelchairs were provided to physically challenged university students, while 159 wheelchairs were handed over to students in the second phase. Giving example of the famous scientist, Stephen Hawking, Ahsan Iqbal said that an otherwise healthy person with no use of mental capabilities was worthless, while a physical-

ly challenged person who utilized their mind could mark great achievements.

"The future of Pakistan depends on making right decisions on time, as any wrong decision can put the country's future at stake. A country's development gets haunted if there is lack of patience, perseverance as well as consistency of policies," he added.

In his remarks, Chairman HEC Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed appreciated the minister for conceiving the idea of facilitating the physically challenged university students through provision of electric wheelchairs in 2016-17 and taking practical measures for its execution.

He said that HEC had collected the data of physically challenged university students particularly those with mobility issues, visual impairment, and hearing problems and as the next stage of the scheme, these students would be provided with gadgets and tools required. "HEC is committed to delivering in light of

the Vision 2025 of the Government," he asserted.

Some wheelchair recipients appreciated the Government and HEC for effectively implementing the Prime Minister's Electric Wheelchair Scheme. The ceremony was also attended by Executive Director HEC Dr. Shaista Sohail, Director General (Scholarships) HEC Aayesha Ikram and other senior officers of the commission.

Later, the minister launched HEC's Research for Innovation (RFI) portal.

The Executive Director HEC briefed the minister on the salient features of the RFI portal and how it would strengthen the linkage among academia, industry and government to accelerate the process of commercialising the academic research.

The minister appreciated the objectives of the portal and hoped that it would strengthen the linkages among academia, industry and the government.

Metro bus service suspended in Rawalpindi

RAWALPINDI (APP): Metro Bus service has been suspended in Rawalpindi following violent protests.

The public is facing difficulty commuting due to the suspension of the metro bus service in Rawalpindi.

The service was suspended after Shamsabad, 6th Road, and Faizabad metro stations were vandalized by violent protesters.

Police are conducting raids against protesters in

different parts of the city.

According to a police spokesman, 190 people have been arrested by the Rawalpindi police as a result of a crackdown against the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)'s leaders, workers, and supporters to maintain law and order. He said, "190 people have been arrested so far in four FIRs registered in Civil Lines, Waris Khan, City and Sadiqabad Police Stations."

The protesters blocked different city roads including Murree Road, Liaquat Bagh, Committee Chowk, Shamsabad, Faizabad, Rawat T-Chowk, Waris Khan, Kutchery Chowk, and other areas of Rawalpindi on Tuesday night. The vehicular traffic on Murree Road was completely blocked on Tuesday night because of the protests and the protesters also pelted stones at the police.

AIOU, federal board, Cambridge suspend papers

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), federal educational boards, and Cambridge have suspended their papers scheduled on May 10 (Wednesday) due to ongoing law and order situation in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

In view of the current situation, the Allama Iqbal Open University's (AIOU) exams scheduled for today (May 10) across the country have been postponed.

According to the AIOU Spokesman, the new date of deferred papers will be announced later.

The spokesman further said that the papers are to be held on May 11 and thereafter will be held as per the schedule.

Similarly, the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE) Islamabad has canceled the paper

on Pakistan Studies in all its examination centers working at home and abroad.

According to Controller Exams Federal Board, "The new date for the canceled paper of Pakistan Studies will be announced later."

The British Council has also canceled all exams scheduled on Wednesday, May 10, for both AM and PM sessions.

According to a notification, "The decision has been taken to ensure the safety of the candidates, their parents, and staff members. The further decision will be shared with the candidates later."

"The public sector educational institutions working Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) are open on Wednesday, while few private schools are closed due to current circumstances in the federal capital," it added.

NUST, HEC ink DoU

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National University of Sciences & Technology (NUST) and the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan have signed a Document of Understanding (DoU) to undertake the Prime Minister's National Innovation Award, an initiative under the Prime Minister's Youth Program.

Executive Director of HEC Dr Shaista Sohail and NUST Pro-Rector Research, Innovation & Commercialisation, Dr Rizwan Riaz signed the partnership agreement at

the main campus of NUST, a press release on Wednesday said. Chairman HEC Dr Mukhtar Ahmed and Rector NUST Lt Gen (Retd) Engr Javed Mahmood Bukhari attended the event.

The Prime Minister's National Innovation Award is a pioneering initiative launched by PM Youth Affairs to support early-stage startups in emerging fields in Pakistan. It is the country's first public-funded, equity-free seed grant programme, aimed at fostering innovation and entrepreneurship among

the youth. The project aims to identify and nurture 100 brilliant ideas through financial support, mentorship, and a focused, hands-on startup boot camp.

Experienced professionals will help refine the ideas, and promising startups will have access to various incubation centres across Pakistan for further development. This flagship project is a significant step towards promoting socio-economic development in the country by creating new business ventures and job opportunities for young people.

Pak-Saudi Arabia discuss Muslim Ummah's challenges; regional issues

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Chairman of Saudi Arabia Shura Council Dr Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh, met with Pakistan's National Assembly (NA) Speaker, Raja Pervez Ashraf, to discuss bilateral relations, challenges facing the Muslim ummah, and important regional and global issues.

Talking to the Chairman, Raja Pervez Ashraf said, "Pakistan and Saudi Arabia share strong bonds of brotherhood based on mutual trust, respect, culture, religion, and history. To further reinforce these ties, it is essential to engage in parliamentary exchanges." The speaker hailed the Saudi parliamentary delegation's involvement in the two-day international parliamentary conference. He said, "Both brotherly countries are ready to tackle challenges with mutual collaboration."

He also lauded generous Saudi help to Pakistan on every difficult occasion.

NA speaker highlighted the importance of brotherly relations between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan for regional prosperity and expressed optimism towards the improvement of Saudi Arabia-Iran relations. Cooperation between the parliaments of both countries was also emphasized. The digitization initiatives introduced by the Pakistani Parliament were acknowledged by the speaker. He also

noted significant successes achieved through these initiatives. The speaker suggested exchanging successful digitization practices with the Saudi Shura Council. Chairman of the Saudi Shura Council, Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh, had extended an invitation to Raja Pervez Ashraf to visit Saudi Arabia.

"The successful organization of events commemorating the Constitution of Pakistan for a month is commendable," said Dr Abdullah Al-Sheikh.

"The people and government of Saudi Arabia desire stable development and prosperity for Pakistan. The exchange of parliamentary delegations between the two brotherly countries will further strengthen bilateral relations."

Dr Abdullah Al-Sheikh congratulated the speaker on the 50th anniversary of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and praised the successful organization of month-long events in that regard. He said, "The people and government of Saudi Arabia want to see Pakistan as a stable and prosperous country."

"The exchange of parliamentary delegations between the two brotherly countries will bolster bilateral ties." The speaker said, "Pakistan highly values its brotherly relationship with Saudi Arabia. Both Islamic nations face challenging issues."

PTI's violent protests after IK's arrest by NAB alarming, condemnable: Sherry Rehman

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman on Wednesday termed the violent reaction of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) after the arrest of Imran Khan by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) as very alarming and condemnable.

In a series of tweets, the minister said after a lawful arrest, such a burning siege has never been seen in the country.

Senator Sherry Rehman said the attack on the residences of military officials

and sensitive institutions was not a protest but an attack. "PTI has made a sad history. Imran Khan arrested all the opponents during his regime, but we never set fire to the country and attacked the institutions," she added.

She added that Faryal Talpur was picked up from the hospital on Chand Raat, Maryam Nawaz was arrested from the hospital, and the opponents were kept in prison for two years.

Sherry Rehman said after the martyrdom of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto,

Asif Ali Zardari raised the slogan of 'Pakistan Khape' (We want Pakistan) to reduce the anger and agitation of the people.

"Yesterday Tehreek-e-Insaf ran provocative 'Stop Pakistan' slogans and trends on social media. Imran Khan has been arrested in a corruption case," Sherry Rehman said, adding, "If you are innocent, search and prove your innocence, as our leaders have proved in the past. Anarchy and arson will not prove Khan's innocence."

IIUI holds conference on transition of traditional universities to online mode

ISLAMABAD (APP): International conference on "transition of traditional universities to online mode" organized by Faculty of Education of the International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) commenced here at the Faisal Masjid Campus on Wednesday.

The conference is being organized by Faculty of Education in collaboration with Iqbal International Institute of Research & Dialogue, Higher Education Commission & Pakistan Science Foundation.

In the conference, the participants addressed the emerging issues and challenges in the distance education and e-learning. Renowned national and international academicians and researchers expressed views on the ultimate possibilities and guidelines for the maximum role of distance education and e-learning in the national development.

In this two day conference more than 300 researchers, keynote speakers, educationists, experts are participating and it will witness around 70 papers from the presenters hailing from Austria, USA, Lebanon and Pakistan who will participate in conference physically and through online mode.

The participants discussed adaptation to new technologies, best practices in online learning, blended learning, communication challenges in e-learning during covid-19, e-learning strategies, evaluation in online learning, future of online learning for universities, learning management systems, needs and challenges of online learning and research models & paradigms in online learning.

Addressing the conference, Dr. N.B.

Jumani said the distance and open learning is one of the leading modes of education across the world and recent episode of pandemic has identified the need and utilization of online educational and learning globally. He shared IIUI's response to the Covid wave telling that university through its distance learning platform continued uninterrupted education.

He said the upcoming national ODL policy shall pave way for flourishing of ODL system and most of the universities shall start work on it after notification of ODL policy. He hailed the organizers of the conference for arranging a valuable conference on an important topic.

He said that this is the age of online and distance mode of education and shrinking resources demand adoption of online distance learning.

Dean Faculty of education, Dr. Muhammad sarwar said that transition of the traditional universities to online mode is helpful in addressing the issues of education being faced by developing countries. He added it takes education to the door step addressing the issues of teachers with a better quality.

Dr Sarwar maintained that the online education has bridged the distances between the students and the educational institutions. He elaborated that the conference aims to explore challenges and recommendations to solve the issues in the transition towards online mode. Director General Quality Assurance Directorate, Nasir Shah said that HEC is working on ODL policy that has been prepared in consultation with the academia of Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary delegation from Kenyan Parliament led by H.E. Farah Maalim Mohamed Ahmed MP, Forth Chairperson of Committees called on Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf at Parliament House.

Automatic PK machine gun

KHOST (Agencies): A student of Engineering Faculty developed a PK machine gun that could be controlled from a distance with a mobile smart phone and a computer. This is not, Mohammad Sediq Seddiqi first innovative, Sediqi has also developed a bicycle into an electric one, which can cover a distance of ten kilometers with a single charge of the battery. He expermit his innovations in public, where he welcomed by public and universities professors in Khost.

The Frontier Post

Shawwal 20, 1444 — Thursday, May 11, 2023

Over 90 weapons seized

NANGARHAR (Agencies): As many as 94 various weapons and ammunitions have been discovered and seized by the 201th Khahlid Bin Walid Army Corps, Army Corps said on Wednesday. The seized weapons include AK-47, machine guns, M-16, and Pistols and were kept by irresponsible individuals. Islamic Emirate have seized thousands of light and heavy weapons, ammunition from irresponsible people in various clearance operations across the country.

Foreign tourists visited Kandahar



KANDAHAR (Agencies): A group of 15 foreign tourists has recently visited historical sites of the country's southern province of Kandahar, the provincial Information and Culture Department said in a statement Wednesday.

"After the resumption of

power by IEA the number of foreign and domestic tourists visiting the province has eye-catchingly increased," the statement quoted Director of Information and Culture Inamullah Samangani as saying.

The main purpose of officials of the provincial Infor-

mation and Culture are the provision of the tourists with necessary touristic facilities and safe environment.

Countrywide sure security has caused thousands of foreign tourists to visit from historical sites and monuments across the country in the past weeks.

Extraction of chromite in Khost started

KHOST (Agencies): The Department of Mines and Petroleum of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has announced the start of chromite mining in Khost province, in the Tani district.

Mohammad Sadiq Hamza, head of mines and petroleum in Khost, told the media on Sunday that work to extract chromite has started after a local company was given a five-year contract.

Hamzah said over this five-year period, 21,000 tons of chromite ore will be extracted.

He said government will get 215 million afghanis from the proceeds.

"One ton of it (chromite) has been set at 10,000 afghanis, and in total, 21,500 tons of chromite will be extracted from this mine in the course of five years, and the revenue of 215 million afghanis will be gained," said Hamza.

The ministry of mines said recently that an assessment of 650 mines had been carried out and that contracts would be awarded to local and foreign companies to start mining operations.

Mining companies have meanwhile said that the emerging process around mining in the country is an improvement as in the past, minerals were extracted illegally and money went into the pockets of individuals. Now however, the sector is being standardized and regulated and contracts are awarded to companies in a transparent and fair way.

Abdul Latif Wahedi, the operations manager of Nefrait Sharq, the company that won the contract for the chromite mine, said: "These contracts are now given to the companies in a transparent manner, and you can see that now every mine in different provinces is extracted in a standardized way, and with this, the government's income will increase on the one hand, and on the other hand, job opportunities will be provided."

Khost provincial officials meanwhile said that another two mines will also start up in the near future.

Mawlawi Mohammad Anwar Din Parwar, deputy governor of Khost, said that "in the coming days, you will witness the opening of two more mines in Khost province."

Ban on Afghan women in NGOs affecting aid delivery: Niklasson

KABUL (TOLOnes): The European Union's Delegation in Afghanistan released a press statement by Tomas Niklasson, EU Special Envoy for Afghanistan.

Referring to the UN meeting in Doha, Niklasson said that the meeting was a welcome initiative by the UN to once more put Afghanistan in focus.

"In the discussions, there was a consistent view that the conditions were not in place to allow for recognition by the international community of the de facto authorities as a legitimate government, but that engagement with the de facto authorities and other Afghans must continue to address shared concerns — including security and counter-terrorism, the need for inclusive governance, upholding human rights, preventing irregular migration and human trafficking, countering narcotics production and smuggling, and stabilising the Afghan

economy," he said.

Niklasson also referred to the ban on Afghan women working for NGOs, saying that this "challenges fundamental principles" and is having "immediate consequences," as "critical assistance delivered by such organizations cannot reach women and children in need."

"Afghan girls and women are still prevented from attending secondary school or university due to decisions taken by the de facto authorities, while a very large number of Afghan boys can also not access primary or other forms of education due to lack of availability or opportunity," he said.

The EU special envoy voiced concerns about the humanitarian situation, saying that more than 28 million vulnerable Afghans are in need of humanitarian assistance.

"The UN humanitarian appeal for USD 4.6 billion,



the largest in the world, has only received pledges to cover 7.2%, whereas to compare the four largest humanitarian appeals after Afghanistan have by now received pledges covering more than 20%," he said.

Niklasson said he reiterates the "EU's clear position not to provide support — political, material or otherwise — for Afghan armed resistance, while I also encourage the de facto authorities to offer an alternative, by engaging in dia-

logue with all parts of the population — men and women." Niklasson said that the Afghan caretaker officials have reiterated their commitment that Afghan soil would not be used to threaten the security of other countries.

"They also confirmed, once more, their firm commitment to fight Da'esh, and many other Afghans recalled that in terms of security Ramadan had been much less challenging than in many years," he said.

Qatar provides life-saving medicines to Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) has signed an agreement with the World Health Organization (WHO) to support the provision of essential health services in underserved areas in the 11 provinces of Afghanistan.

According to the statement, with the funds from QFFD, WHO will procure pre-qualified medicine for primary health care and facilitate delivery and distribution to the health facilities in the provinces of Helmand, Daikundi, Ghor, Farah, Samangan, Zabul, Takhar, Baghlan, Maidan Wardak, Paktika, and Nuristan.

The statement also said that medicines would prevent and treat diseases related to sexual and reproductive health and maternal, newborn, and child mortality.

In addition, WHO will support the capacity development of health workers on medical supply chain management and rational use of medicine as per national standard treatment guidelines.

Mr Khalifa bin Jassim Al-Kuwari, Director General of QFFD, said, "The State of Qatar stands at the fore-



front of the global support of the Afghan people. Complementing ongoing efforts, QFFD works with different partners to improve the livelihood of developing, disaster-stricken, and conflict-driven areas worldwide. We look forward to achieving tangible achievements and improving the livelihood of the Afghan people by supporting the health sector."

The fund will contribute to more than one million patients and will

have better access to quality primary health care," said Dr Alaa AbouZeid, Health Emergencies Team Leader at WHO Afghanistan.

"The new funding from the Qatar Fund for Development will even boost our capacity to reach more people, especially women, children, the elderly and the most vulnerable in the most underserved areas of the country," says Dr Luo Dapeng, WHO Representative in Afghanistan.

Contract signed for extraction of lead and zinc mines



KABUL (Khaama Press): A contract for the extraction of lead and zinc mines in the province of Bamyan has been signed between the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum and the Afghan Durrani Mine Extraction Company, said a statement.

The Lead and Zinc Mines are in the Gandeh Kotal area of the Yakawlang district of Bamyan province of Afghanistan.

Shahab Uddin Delawar, the acting minister of mines and petroleum and the

director of the Mine Extraction and Processing Company, participated in a signing ceremony to formally establish the contract.

For the company mentioned above, a five-year contract for lead and zinc extraction has been granted, Ministry said.

Due to their importance in numerous industries and high market demand, lead and zinc mineral extraction offers Afghanistan enormous economic potential.

In addition, to the out-

standing corrosion resistance, lead is frequently used in paints. Another significant metal with numerous uses is zinc. Since it offers better corrosion protection than iron or steel alone, it is generally utilized as a galvanizing material for steel constructions like bridges and buildings.

It is expected that the agreement will benefit the country's mining sector, fostering economic growth and, in addition, opening up job opportunities for the people.

Meeting on power transmission between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan started



KABUL (Agencies): Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS) the country's main power supply company official and the Turkmenistan officials held joint meeting on Power Transmission Project, DABS said in a statement.

The meeting was started to discuss the imported electricity from Turkmenistan, Herat's Noor ul Jihad substation, Kham Aab Qarqin and the 500-kilowatt Sar Khan-Pul-e-Khumri project, according to the statement.

The meeting was attended by Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat Executive Officer Mullah Mohammad Hanif Hamza, Hoja Ovezov the ambassador of Turkmenistan, the technical board of Breshna Company and the board of

Turkmenistan electricity transmission project.

In the meeting, DABS officials discussed the important aspects of the Turkmenistan Power Transmission Project to Herat's Noor ul-Jihad substation as well as review and evaluation of the equipment for quality detection and evaluation of the lane transmission path and its protocol will be specified in the future.

The Turkmenistan Power Transmission Project will be implemented by the neighboring country of Turkmenistan and it will cost 3.2 million US dollars which will be paid by the Breshna Sherkat, according to the statement.

With the completion of the power transmission power shortage would be addressed in the province.

GHAZNI CITY (Pajhwok): The number of madrassas — religious schools — has increased recently by two fold comparing to the past in southern Ghazni province as more girls students switched to madrassas.

Some female madrassa students said that schools and universities had been shut while religious schools are closed and they could utilise this opportunity to go to madrassas and study.

Zahra Nizami, founder and a teacher of the Zulfikar Madrassa said, this madrassa was established recently in Ghazni city and had 500 students enrolled.

Zahra said: "The number of madrassas has increased recently several times compared to the past and the reason for this increase was the closure of the doors of schools and universities on female students."

The students in madrassas are only taught religious subjects while the number of the new enrolling students is still on the rise, she said.

Husna, 16 and a student of Sarwar Kainat Madrassa told Pajhwok Afghan News: "I was in class 10th at school, our school got closed for studies and now I want to learn the Holy Quran and some other religious subjects in madrassa".

"I wanted to become a journalist but it did not happened, as there are

no restrictions on religious studies, so I decided to learn religious studies" Husna said.

Adila, 17 is another student of a religious madrassa of the same province, she told Pajhwok: "I got enrolled in madrassa two months ago, I want to finish religious studies, however I wanted to be a doctor but I think that is not possible for me anymore, so I switched to religious madrassa."

On the other hand, the activists of the rights of women said that religious studies are necessary, but the opportunities for other scientific education should also be provided.

Women rights activist Arezo Nikzad while referring to the ban on education of female student at schools and at the universities said, access to education was an acceptable human right globally, education was a vital factor for the growth of economy for countries like Afghanistan.

We do not oppose religious studies, because there have been religious madrassas since centuries in Afghanistan, but she asked for attention should be paid to modern scientific educations such as medicine, law, journalism and others.

She, at mean time called on girls to continue studying the religious studies, because such madrassas are allocated for religious studies while such

subjects also help the girls to reach their goals.

In the meantime some of the madrassas students urged the government to open the doors of the schools for all the students including girls.

Education Department Director Sebghatullah Ahmadi acknowledged surge in the number female students of madrassas and added the provincial administration was fully cooperative in this regard.

The number of madrassas where girls study reached to 400 in Ghazni where about 40,000 female students are studying, Ahmadi said.

He added, only two of these madrassas were registered and the remaining operated informally.

According to the figures of the officials of previous government, about 200 female madrassas operated in Ghazni province.

It is worth mentioning, that the figures including included small, medium and big madrassas that operated in houses, mosques or any other places.

In Ghazni 762 schools, including 71 girls schools, are registered with the Ministry of Educations.

As many as 132,000 girls studied in 71 schools but after the ban of girls' education above class sixth, currently 10,000 girls attend their classes below grade sixth.

GAAC to uplift Afghanistan's airports to modern era

KABUL (Khaama Press): UAE-based Holding signed the third and final contract with the Taliban administration to operate the three major airports in Afghanistan and made significant investments in their infrastructure. GAAC is now looking to modernize and upgrade Afghanistan's airports.

Afghanistan's aviation sector has faced many challenges in recent years. The country's airports were severely damaged and many international airlines suspended their flights to and from Afghanistan. GAAC Holding stepped in to restore the airport's functionality and safety. The

company made an urgent investment of USD 641,000 in equipment, facility management, food for airport staff, ground support equipment and technology.

The investment included repairing the runway lights, installing generators, providing x-ray machines, metal detectors and explosive trace detectors, setting up a temporary terminal building, supplying food and water for airport workers, and procuring trolleys, tow tractors, loaders and buses. GAAC Holding also trained and employed more than 500 local staff to operate the airport.

GAAC Holding provides

a range of aviation services, including ground handling, premium services, aviation security, and air navigation services. The company has been operating in Afghanistan since November 2020, when it was awarded a contract to provide ground handling and premium services at three international airports: Kabul, Kandahar, and Herat. The contract also included aviation security services at these airports, as well as Mazar-e-Sharif.

In May 2022, GAAC Holding signed another contract with the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation (MoTCA) to

develop, operate, and manage air navigation services in Afghanistan. The contract granted GAAC Holding the exclusive right to provide air traffic control, communication, navigation, surveillance, and meteorological services for the entire Afghan airspace. The contract also involved investing in modernizing the air navigation systems and equipment.

In September 2022, GAAC Holding announced that it would sign the third and final major contract for running Afghanistan's airports with the Taliban administration. The contract would run for 10 years

and would cover all aspects of airport management and operations. GAAC Holding's General Manager and Regional Director Ibrahim Moarafi, in a statement, said that the contract would encourage major international airlines to return to Afghanistan and would bring economic benefits and job creation to the country.

GAAC Holding's achievements in Afghanistan are impressive by any standards. The company has served 1.5 million passengers and handled more than 40,000 tons of cargo since it started its operations in the country. It has also employed more than 1,000

local staff and trained them to international standards. GAAC Holding has demonstrated its commitment and capability to support the development and transformation of the aviation sector in Afghanistan, despite the challenges and uncertainties.

Ghulam Jelani Popal, the deputy head of Afghanistan transport and civil aviation ministry has said the contract is valid for ten years to reporters in Kabul. GAAC already secured contracts from the group to manage ground services and security of the airports in Afghanistan.

After almost two years,

GAAC has announced that Afghanistan's airports are ready for international flights in terms of performance and safety — adding the company has invested \$641,000 in facility management, ground support equipment, and technologies to improve airport performance. The contracts are anticipated to help the Taliban emerge out of isolation as it struggles to gain recognition from the international community.

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Cabinet approves army's deployment in two provinces, Capital

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In view of the prevailing law and order situation, the Federal Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday approved the deployment of the Pakistan Army under Article 245 of the Constitution in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces on the recommendation of the Ministry of Interior.

The cabinet also approved the deployment of the army in the Islamabad Capital Territory. The cabinet, in its meeting, took stock of the overall situation of the

country and strongly condemned violent incidents leading to damages to properties in different cities, the PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The meeting berated the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and its chairman Imran Khan for their continuous diatribe against national institutions and their leadership, and observed that efforts at levelling of despicable allegations of murder attacks to dragging the national institutions into politics had been made for quite some time with continuity. The meeting pointed out that the PTI leadership with a thought-out plan had been targeting the intelli-

gence agencies and their officers which had now turned into terrorist attacks on sensitive installations and buildings.

"The more this attitude is condemned, the less it will be," the press release in the Urdu language quoted the meeting, adding that such an attitude was in conformity with the PTI's past mechanism and mode of working which had been now exacerbated. Such an attitude was neither constitutional and legal nor democratic, but based upon terrorism and enmity towards the country which would not be tolerated in any manner, it was stressed.

IHC rejects plea seeking Imran Khan's disqualification

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) Wednesday rejected a petition seeking former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's disqualification in the Tyrian White case.

The three-judge bench, headed by IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and comprising Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani and Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir, announced the verdict which was reserved on March 30. The petitioner had alleged that the former premier had not disclosed his alleged daughter — Tyrian — in his nomination papers.

In his petition, Mohammad Sajid — a citizen — said that Khan provided incorrect information while submitting his nomination papers for the general elections held in 2018. The petitioner also said that even though the former prime minister has three children, he had mentioned only two in the papers and concealed the existence of his third child. The petitioner's lawyers argued that the PTI chief did not declare Tyrian as his daughter in the affidavit submitted to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) due to which he cannot hold the position of party chairman.

The petitioner had alleged that the former premier did not marry his alleged girlfriend Sita White, mother of Tyrian, because her father told Khan that he would not get a "penny" from his wealth if he married Sita. The petition, titled "Imran versus Imran — the untold story", also claimed that the custody of Tyrian was given to Jemima, the former wife of Khan.

It added that Sita in her will of Feb 27, 2004, had nominated Jemima as guardian of her daughter Tyrian. Sita died that year on May 13. "Jemima Goldsmith had been the spouse of Imran Khan (1995-2004)," "The concealed facts stood confirmed by a judgement of paternity rendered by a superior court in California in favour of Sita White where it was held that the respondent (Imran Khan) was the father of Tyrian Jade." The PTI chief initially joined the proceedings but later backtracked after he was asked to undergo a blood test, it added.

US, UK, Canada, EU issue travel advisory

ISLAMABAD (INP): Following the shock arrest of PTI Chairman Imran Khan, the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and the European Union have issued a travel advisory for their respective citizens in Pakistan.

The travel advisory stated that citizens should avoid unnecessary travelling in Azad Kashmir, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In this regard, the US, UK, EU and Canada said that there is a threat of terrorism, unrest and kidnapping, so foreign nationals should be careful while in western-style restaurants and shopping centres.

A travel advisory issued by the Canadian High Commission has advised the Canadian citizens in Pakistan to exercise extreme caution in view of the unpredictable security situation in the country. "There is a threat of terrorism, civil unrest, sectarian violence and kidnapping. Avoid all types of travel at the regional level. Do not travel within 10 kilometers of the borders of China, India and Iran," it said. "Avoid unnecessary travel to the areas within 10 kilometers of the Line of Control except through official border crossings (Wahga and Grand Trunk Road). Do not travel from the Khunjer Pass to the Karakoram Highway and the section of the Karakoram Highway from Mansehra to Chilas," it added.

"Avoid unnecessary travel to Pakistan-administered Kashmir, Balochistan, KP. Also avoid non-essential travel to Karachi due to the threat of violence and terrorism. The Canadian government may not be in a position to provide consular assistance to the Canadian citizens in the areas of serious security concern," the high commission informed the Canadian citizens in Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing a meeting of the Federal Cabinet.

Faced imprisonment for sake of country like ancestors: CJ PHC

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Musart Hilali remarked that she had imprisonment and made sacrifices for the sake of country as footsteps of ancestors had made because our existence lay in the existence of Pakistan but unfortunately current situation is miserable, on Wednesday.

However, Justice Shakeel Ahmad observed that May Allah Almighty grant power to overcome problems faced by Pakistan that nation can achieve development and prosperity in the country.

The divisional bench of PHC observed the remarks during hearing of writ petition seeking schedule for election to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly filed by Speaker Mushtaq Ghani and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) general secretary Asad Umar

following Supreme Court directions to approached competent forum in suo moto notice decision while announced date for Punjab's assembly polls.

The counsel Shumail Ahmad Butt Advocate argued that writ petition is filed in light Supreme Court's judgement directing petitioners to approach competent forum for scheduling elections to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly announced 14th May for Punjab Assembly's polls. The counsel further argued that different schedules are announced but changed several times but the petition didn't heard which perceives that residents of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are depriving from their fundamental right of voting to elect representative to govern federating unit (province) while informed that senior counsel Barrister Gohar Khan didn't available before court due to current political

scenario.

However, Justice Shakeel Ahmad remarked that proceedings held as per constitution and judgements should also be granted as constitutional domain while counsel argued that caretaker cabinet possessing their positions despite completion of their timeframe while didn't submitting reply in the petition before court.

Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Amir Javeed informed that provincial government has submitted comments before court while representative Tariq Afridi Advocate informed that Governor's counsel didn't available due to busy schedule but has submitted reply in this regard. The divisional bench comprising of Chief Justice PHC Justice Musart Hilali and Justice Shakeel Ahmad adjourned hearing and declared that an appropriate date should be fix for further hearing.

ECC okays settlement pact of Roosevelt Hotel

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet on Wednesday after a detailed discussion approved the execution of the settlement agreement of the Roosevelt Hotel, New York with the Hotel Union and the New York City Government.

The ECC met here with Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar in chair discussed a summary submitted by the Ministry of Aviation on Challenges and re-opening of Roosevelt Hotel, New York, and briefed the meeting on the outcome of negotiations held by the Committee with the New York City Government and the Hotel Union on reaching a suitable agreement for utilization of the Roosevelt Hotel (1,025 rooms) over a period of three years for

Immigrant Housing Business by the New York City Government. The ECC further gave node for withdrawal of pending lawsuits by the Roosevelt Hotel with the Hotel Union and the City of New York pursuant to the terms of the settlement agreement with the Union.

The ECC further directed the PIAL to engage and share its business plan with the National Bank Pakistan regarding the rollover of loans, said a press release. The ECC also approved Technical Supplementary Grants/Supplementary Grants of Rs153 million in favour of the Ministry of Water Resources for payment of court cases fee for the settlement of the dispute with India under the Indus Waters Treaty.

The Technical Supplementary Grant of Rs 4 billion (Equivalent to US\$

20 million) as Rupee cover in favour of the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training for the World Bank Program "Actions to Strengthen Performance for inclusive and responsive education was also approved. The meeting was attended by Minister for Power Khurram Dastgir Khan, Minister for Industries and Production Syed Murtaza Mahmud, Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman, Minister for Aviation/Railways Khawaja Saad Rafiq, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Minister of State for Finance and Revenue Dr Aisha Ghous Pasha. Special Assistant to Prime Minister Finance Tariq Bajwa, SAPM on Revenue Tariq Mehmood Pasha, federal secretaries and other senior officers also attended the meeting.

Imran held in Al-Qadir Trust graft case: Marriyum

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Wednesday that former prime minister Imran Khan was arrested in a corruption case.

In a statement, the minister said that at least 15 notices were sent to Imran Khan in Al-Qadir Trust case which was being investigated by National Accountability Bureau and he was wanted by the NAB. "Imran Khan was supposed to file a reply in the Al-Qadir Trust case, but he did not appear in this case," she remarked.

She said when Imran Khan was arrested yesterday the PTI leaders instigated party workers on arson and sabotage. She maintained that whatever the PTI activists did yesterday was not a public reac-

tion, rather it was done in a pre-planned manner. She said that the PTI leadership today claimed that yesterday's violent protests were not done by their party workers.

When the PTI workers were damaging public and state property yesterday, she questioned why didn't its leadership stop them from doing so. The minister said that no political party reacted like this on the arrest of its leaders in the past. She said PML-N leaders including Nawaz Sharif, Maryam Nawaz, Shehbaz Sharif, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Rana Sanaullah, Saad Rafiq and other leaders were also arrested but the PML-N did not react in this manner.

Shehbaz Sharif was summoned in the Saaf Pani case and arrested in the Ashiana case by the NAB, she recalled. The PML-N

had never given the kind of response to its leaders' arrests, that the PTI has given yesterday, she said. Marriyum Aurangzeb said that the country had been witnessing yesterday-like activities by PTI for the past many years.

The minister said that after the arrest of Imran Khan, his medical check-up was done, and other SOPs were completed which negated PTI claims. She said when the police went to arrest Imran Khan in Zaman Park, Lahore PTI workers attacked police officials with petrol bombs. The minister said that no patriotic Pakistani citizen could take the law into his hand and damage government buildings as state properties were attacked yesterday. She made it clear that strict action will be taken against those who damaged state properties.

Behaviour of PTI, Imran Khan unethical: Ahsan

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal has said that the behaviour of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and its Chairman Imran Khan is unethical, undemocratic and fascist and the government will not allow Pakistan to become hostage to politics of demagoguery.

Briefing the foreign media about prevailing political situation of the country here in Islamabad on Wednesday, he said Pakistan is a democratic country and if Imran Khan feels that he has been unfairly arrested, he can prove his innocence before the court of law.

The Minister said it is

not a democratic way to resort the people to violence, cause destruction in the country and its economy besides trying to bring bad image to the country internationally. Ahsan Iqbal categorically said that Imran Khan will not face any political vendetta or political victimization. He said Imran Khan is spreading chaos in the society.

He said Imran Khan was ousted not through any conspiracy, but for the first time in the history of the country, a Prime Minister was removed through a constitutional method of no-confidence. The Minister said National Accountability Bureau (NAB), which is an independent investigating agency, had arrested Imran Khan under a lawful legal

warrant, which has also been declared to be legal by the High Court.

He said Imran Khan was arrested for a case of graft, embezzlement and corruption of 160 million pounds which is equal to 60 billion rupees in Al-Qadir Trust case. Ahsan Iqbal said Imran Khan and PTI ransacked judicial complex and even Pakistan Television and the Parliament. He said yesterday (Tuesday), Imran Khan's followers attacked state properties, security institutions' properties and even attacked public transport and burnt schools. He warned that those indulged in ransacking, burning and damaging the state properties will be taken to law.

Court acquits three cops in Model Town massacre case

LAHORE (PPI): An anti-terrorism court in Lahore on Wednesday acquitted three police officers in the Model Town massacre case.

Former IGP Punjab Mushtaq Sukhera, former DIG Operations Rana Abdul Jabbar and for SP Tariq Aziz were acquitted in the case. The court also let go TMO Ali Abbas while adjourned the hearing to May 10 to take up the acquittal pleas of other police officers. ATC Judge Ijaz Butt pronounced the verdict in the Model Town tragedy case. It may be mentioned here that in April 2022 the ATC had also acquitted former Lahore Division district coordination officer Capt (retd) Muhammad Usman in the Model Town massacre case.

Fourteen people, including men and women, were killed and more than 100 injured during the anti-encroachment operation outside the Model Town residence of Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT) chief Dr Tahirul Qadri on June 17, 2014. During the proceedings, the court observed that the plaintiff, PAT, could not establish allegation against Capt (retd) Muhammad Usman.

HRCP calls for immediate dialogue

LAHORE (INP): The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) said in a statement on Wednesday that it is greatly troubled by the unfolding political crisis in the country, following the arrest of former prime minister Imran Khan, and its implications for the rights of ordinary citizens.

The HRCP said: We deplore the use of disproportionate force in arresting Mr Khan from the premises of the Islamabad High Court. It was clearly unwarranted and has only aggravated the political climate." HRCP strongly condemned the violence perpetrated both by security and law enforcement personnel—in which at least one person was reportedly killed—as well as by enraged protesters. At this time, the need for restraint and political dialogue has never been greater. Respect for the rule of law must apply equally to all citizens and in all situations—it cannot be applied selectively.

HRCP was also alarmed to see that the state's knee-jerk reaction to the crisis was to restrict Internet connectivity. As before, such steps achieve little apart from allowing dangerous rumours to circulate and compromising people's access to information and their safety in public spaces. HRCP urged all political stakeholders to use peaceful, democratic means such as the forum of the Parliament to settle their differences rather than resorting to violence, intimidation and thuggery.

SC rejects PTI petition against IHC verdict

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The Supreme Court on Wednesday rejected a petition of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) challenging the Islamabad High Court's (IHC) decision declaring Imran Khan's arrest by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) 'legal'.

The petition was submitted by the PTI legal team headed by the party's senior vice president Fawad Chaudhry. The Supreme Court's Registrar office stated that the PTI chief did not approach the relevant forum, adding that he could file an intra-court appeal.

The Registrar office further stated that the petition did not have the signatures of the PTI chief Imran

Khan. Earlier, in an expected move, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) moved the Supreme Court of Pakistan against deposed premier Imran Khan's arrest in Al Qadir Trust Case by NAB through Rangers.

PTI stalwart Fawad Chaudhry submitted a plea challenging Islamabad High Court's verdict in the apex court. The plea pleaded to the top court to declare the arrest of Imran Khan illegal and sought his immediate release. A day earlier, the IHC CJP announced the reserved verdict termed the arrested of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan legal in the Al-Qadir Trust case.

IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq — who had raised questions over the Rangers' move to arrest Khan from the court's premises earlier in the day — announced the reserved verdict. The IHC also issued notices to the Islamabad inspector general of police and the interior secretary over contempt of court. The chief justice ordered the high court registrar to get a first information report (FIR) registered over the circumstances of the arrest, which included manhandling the lawyers present nearby as well as damage to the court building. He also instructed the registrar to conduct an inquiry and submit a report by May 16.

CM reviews law and order situation in KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A special meeting of the caretaker provincial cabinet was held here on Wednesday with the caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan in the chair. The forum discussed and reviewed the various matters regarding law and order in the wake of prevailing situation in the province. Cabinet members, Chief Secretary, IGP and administrative secretaries attended the meeting. The cabinet was briefed in details about law and order situation and measures taken by the government in order to maintain law and order in the province.

In his address to the participants of the meeting, the chief minister expressed grave concerns over the

loss and damages to public and private properties due to violent protests at different spots of the province since yesterday. He regretted that protest and freedom of expression is a democratic, political and constitutional right of everyone but it should be done in a peaceful and democratic manner.

He made it clear that no one would be allowed to damage the public and private properties under the guise of protest under any circumstances adding that it is not in anyone's interest to damage it. Azam Khan maintained that it was the first responsibility of the government to maintain law and order as well as to protect the life and property of its people and the government cannot neglect its this responsibility under any circumstances.

The Chief Minister further clarified that the protesters must use their democratic right to protest but avoid disrupting peace and damaging properties; if the protesters try to take the law into their own hands, the law will come into action, he warned.

The Chief Minister directed the concerned authorities to pay special attention to the security of government properties and sensitive installations across the province. Lauding the role police and administration in maintaining law and order in prevailing situation, the chief minister said that the government will provide all necessary resources to the police for this purpose and order and use all available options to establish the writ of the Government.

Violent protests by PTI condemnable: Zardari

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Co-chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Asif Ali Zardari has strongly condemned the violent protests, anarchy and destroying government property during violent protests of activists and supporters of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) after arrest of party chief in Al-Qadir Trust case.

In a statement issued here on Wednesday, Asif Zardari said that he remained in jail for 14 years but has never allowed any PPP activist to take law in hand. He clarified that destroying government property and spread anarchy in country will not be tolerated at all and those involved found involved would have to face the consequences.

The former president said that Imran Khan has been detained in corruption case and he should face the courts instead of making lame excuses and fleeing. Asif Zardari said that the PPP leaders spent a major portion of their lives in jails but never took law in hands.

Non state actors posed greatest threat to constitutional democracy: "No other constitutional democracy in the world is threatened by militant non-state actors as Pakistan. If we lose the war it is the end of constitutional democracy. If while fighting we continue to yield to the temptation to give more and more powers to law enforcing agencies it means erosion

of constitutionalism and rule of law."

This was stated today by PPP Senator Farhatullah Babar in his address to the international constitutional convention in the Parliament house today. Not long ago this parliament agreed to the setting up of military courts, albeit with a sunset clause, he said. He said the situation becomes far more complex and difficult for a parliament amid perceptions that some elements in the state may actually be supporting some non-state actors.

Populism, he said, posed a new threat to constitutionalism in Pakistan. Populist leaders use democratic and constitutional means to come into power and become popular. Then they use the power to undermine the constitution and democratic institutions as has happened in the country. He said that deep rooted polarization was yet another threat to constitutional democracy in Pakistan. When the sacred state institutions, media houses, political parties, trade unions and civil society are deeply divided, alarm bells must ring for constitutional democracy. Never before state institutions in Islamabad or Rawalpindi seem so polarized and divided as today, he said.

Farhatullah Babar said that concentration of wealth and economic power in the hands of few individuals and one institution is bound to create social and political and threaten constitutional order. Today the largest

industrial/commercial conglomerate, the largest real estate enterprise and the largest contractor are in the hands of organizations that belong to one state institution. A massive transfer of economic resources, reportedly of 17 billion dollars, a year is taking place from the under privileged to the elite creating islands of riches in a sea of poverty which is unsustainable in a constitutional democracy, he said.

Unrest hits Rupee

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani rupee suffered a Rs 5.38 devaluation against the Dollar in the interbank trading on Wednesday due to unrest created by the PTI riots and closed at Rs 290.22 against the previous day's closing of Rs284.84.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of Dollars in the open market were recorded at Rs 292 and Rs 296, respectively. The price of the Euro increased by Rs5.28 to close at Rs317.96 against the last day's closing of Rs 312.68, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen gained 03 paisas to close at Rs 2.14, whereas a surge of Rs7.28 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs 366.26 as compared to its last day's closing of Rs 358.98.