

Pakistan condemns attack

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Pakistan strongly condemned the terrorist attack in Iran. The Foreign Office in a statement said the government and the people of Pakistan express their deepest condolences to the bereaved families of the martyrs as well as to the Iranian government over this tragic incident. As reaffirmed during the recent meeting between the PM and the President of Iran, we stress upon the need for mutual efforts to eliminate terrorism.

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Imran led ilk torches Quaid’s House in Lahore like terrorists set Ziarat Residency on fire: PM

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday said that May 9 was the darkest day in the history of Pakistan when Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman Imran Khan Niazi led miscreants torched Quaid’s (Corps Commander) House in Lahore like the terrorists had set Quaid’s Residency in Ziarat on fire during 2013.

Addressing a meeting to review the law and order situation, the prime minister said on May 9, Imran Niazi and his followers stoked terrorism and violence that amounted to anti-state acts. They caused damage to such a huge extent that even the enemies of Pakistan could not do in the last 75 years, he added.

The prime minister further equated attack on GHQ by the PTI leaders and supporters to the one mounted by the terrorist outfit TTP in the past.

He said the terrorists had attacked naval facility in Karachi in the past and the PTI leader and his supporters damaged the plane in Mianwali which had been used to defend the country. Unfortunately, he observed these Pakistanis turned into enemies of the country and carried out attacks. Radio Pakistan and several other buildings were attacked, he added.

“Such agonizing incidents will continue to haunt the nation,” the prime minister regretted.

Seeking progress on the legal proceedings against the culprits, the prime minister reiterated that during previous meetings, it was decided that anyone involved in the incidents of planning, instigating, sloganeering and vandalism would not escape the iron claws of law. About damages caused to the civilian buildings, it was decided that the cases would be tried under the Anti-Terrorism Act and those on military installations would be proceeded under the relevant laws, he maintained.

IK, former chief justice caused huge damage to PKLI: PM: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif

on Sunday said that it was his cherished desire to transform the Pakistan Kidney and Liver Institute (PKLI) into a splendid institute like Johns Hopkins, but PTI’s chief Imran Khan and a former chief justice had caused huge damage to it.

On his Twitter handle, the prime minister said that the PKLI had always been close to his heart and he wanted it to become an identity for Pakistan in the rest of the world for the treatment facilities in kidney and liver diseases.

“But alas! Imran Niazi and a former chief justice out of their politics and personal interests targeted this mission and inflicted huge damage,” he added in his tweet posted in Urdu language. The prime minister expressing his resolve said that these things would not deter them and it was his firm conviction that Allah Almighty supported those who worked with a passion to serve humanity. For transformation and restoration of PKLI into a world class health facility, they were striving and utilizing their energies, he said while referring to his yesterday’s visit to the facility where he reviewed different measures in this regard.

The prime minister also appreciated Dr Saeed Akhtar and his devoted team for leading the efforts to achieve these objectives and assured his complete support to them.

He further said that PKLI was a precedent in the health sector and they would turn it into ‘unprecedented’ (center in the health sector).

PM meets Shujaat, exchange views on country’s situation: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here on Sunday met with Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain and exchanged views with him on the current situation in the country. The son of Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain and federal minister Chaudhry Salik Hussain greeted the prime minister on his arrival at their residence. The prime minister inquired after

the health of chief of Pakistan Muslim League (Q) Chaudhry Shujaat.

The prime minister appreciated the statement of Chaudhry Shujaat for giving punishment to the rioters involved in the incidents of May 9.

Chaudhry Shujaat said that every patriotic person wanted punishment for the persons who caused embarrassment to the nation.

The prime minister said the government would recompense for the pain and anguish felt by the nation and families of martyrs.

Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain praised the prime minister for his passion and services to pull the country out of problems. The prime minister thanked the allied parties for their undiluted support, cooperation and guidance. Chaudhry Shafay Hussain was also present in the meeting.

PM calls Sirajul Haq, vows action against attackers on his convoy: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here on Sunday while conversing with chief of Jamaat e Islami Sirajul Haq said everybody would have to work together for eradicating all forms of terrorism.

During a telephone call, the prime minister expressed pleasure that the JI chief remained safe in the suicide attack that struck his convoy in Zhob.

He sympathized with the families of those who were injured in the bomb attack.

While expressing best wishes for the Amir Jamaat e Islami, he assured that the elements responsible for the incident would be brought to justice.

Sirajul Haq thanked the prime minister for his phone call and for his support and best wishes.

PM, Khawaja Salman discuss political situation: Former member of Punjab Assembly Khawaja Salman Rafique called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here on Sunday. During the meeting, they discussed the overall political situation in the country.



LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a review meeting on law and order.

Bilawal arrives in Kashmir to protest India’s violation of UN resolutions

F.P. Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party Foreign Minister, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has arrived in Muzaffarabad, the capital of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, to express solidarity with the Kashmiri brethren against India’s violation of international laws in holding the G20 meeting in occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari was received at the helipad by President PPP AJK Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin, Leader of Opposition Legislative Assembly Chaudhry Latif Akbar, Secretary General PPP AJK Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, Members of Assembly Mian Abdul Waheed, Syed Bazal Ali Naqvi, Sardar Javed Ayub, Nabila Ayub and Chief Secretary of the Independent Government of AJK, Dr. Muhammad Usman.

Speaking to the media at the helipad, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that India’s G20 meeting in Occupied Kashmir is a violation of international law. India cannot suppress the voice of Kashmiris through a conference. By violating the UN resolution, it is not possible for India to play an effective role in the world. Bilawal

Bhutto Zardari said that at a time when India is holding the G20 meeting in Occupied Kashmir, he has been invited to address the assembly of AJK.

Those who think that they can suppress the voice of Occupied Kashmir by holding a conference will be proved wrong. The Foreign Minister said that we are showing the true face of India to the world. I have come here to express solidarity with Kashmiri brothers and sisters. He said that solidarity will be expressed with Kashmiris on May 22.

Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has arrived in Muzaffarabad on a three-day visit. The Foreign Minister will address the special session of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly on Monday and will also give a media briefing. The Foreign Minister will also meet the refugees of Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and will address a protest rally at Bagh on Tuesday.

A delegation of refugees from Occupied Kashmir called on Chairman FM Bilawal: A delegation of refugees from Occupied Jammu and Kashmir called on Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party and

Foreign Minister, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari in Muzaffarabad AJK.

The delegation apprised of its reservations regarding G20 conference being held by India in Srinagar. The delegation also appreciated the role of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari with regard to the movement of independence of Kashmir. The delegation also informed the Foreign Minister of the brutalities by Indian forces against the refugees coming to Azad Kashmir from Indian occupied Kashmir in 1990. The delegation and the Foreign Minister also discussed the issues of resettlement of the refugees. Mushtaq Salam, Uzair Ahmed Ghazali, Chaudhry Muhammad Mushtaq, Iqbal Yasin Awan, Ali Muhammad Butt and Chaudhry Firoz Din were included in the delegation.

Chaudhry Yasin, Chaudhry Latif Akbar, Faisal Rathore, Sardar Yakub and Chaudhry Qasim Majeed, Mian Abdul Waheed, Aamir Yasin, Nabila Ayub, Aamir Ghaffar Lone, Chaudhry Pervez Ashraf, Afsar Shahid, Shaikat Javed Mir, Sardar Abid Hussain Abid, Khan Nasir Khan, Ashfaq Zafar and Mubashir Munir Awan were also present on the occasion.

Two soldiers embraced martyrdom while eliminating 3 active terrorists in Tank IBO

RAWALPINDI (APP):

Two soldiers of the Pakistan Army have embraced martyrdom in an intense exchange of fire while eliminating three active terrorists in an Intelligence-Based Operation (IBO) in the general area Tank of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release on early Sunday, the Security Forces conducted an Intelligence Based Operation in the general area Tank, on the reported presence of terrorists.



However, during the conduct of the operation, an intense fire exchange took place between security forces and terrorists, resulting in the killing of three terrorists.

The ISPR said that the killed terrorists have remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities against security forces as well as innocent citizens.

However, during a fierce fire exchange, Naik Muhammad Atiq (age 39 years, resident of District Chakwal) and Naik Rajab Ali (age 36 years, resident of District Attock) having fought gallantly, embraced Shahadat (martyrdom).

The sanitization of the area was being carried out to eliminate any terrorists found in the area. “The Security Forces of Pakistan are determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve,” the ISPR said.

First Hajj flight departs with 285 pilgrims

LAHORE (APP): The first Hajj 2023 flight from the provincial metropolis carrying 285 pilgrims departed from Allama Iqbal International Airport here on Sunday morning via Serene airlines flight number ER-2921. A ceremony to saw the Hajj pilgrims off was held at the Allama Iqbal International Airport attended by a large number of Hajj pilgrims (Hujjaj).

Advisor to the Prime Minister on Religious Affairs Shabbir Ahmed Usmani was the chief guest on the occasion. Director Hajj Iqbal Ahmed, Manager Lahore airport Chaudhry Nazir Ahmed and others were also present. Speaking on the occasion, Shabbir Usmani said that the government had been striving to provide the best possible facilities to the Hajj pilgrims and steps had been taken in this regard. He said the staff of the religious ministry and religious scholars would be in Saudi Arabia to guide and help the pilgrims from Pakistan.

Embarrassment for Modi’s govt as key members stay away from G-20 Group meeting in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD (APP): With just few days left for the G-20 Working Group meet on Tourism in Srinagar, Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), China along with other key members would not attend the event as it is being held in the internationally recognized disputed territory. The Indian government announced that Turkiye, Saudi Arabia and Egypt have not confirmed their attendance, indicating they too will skip the meeting, writes the Hindu, an Indian daily on Sunday.

Union Tourism Secretary Arvind Singh briefed the media in Delhi and said that out of G-20 member countries, China, Turkiye and Saudi Arabia had not confirmed their participation. Among other invited countries, Egypt had not registered so far,

Singh added.

China later said it won’t participate. “China is firmly opposed to holding any kind of G-20 meetings in disputed territory, and will not attend such meetings,” the daily quoted Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin. While China, Turkiye and Saudi Arabia are G-20 members, Egypt is a special invitee this year.

Several prominent Indian journalists including Rana Ayub had raised questions over Modi’s government play. The Modi government is trying to hoodwink the world by hosting an international event in IIOJK since the abolition of the special status of the former disputed area and amendment to Article 370 in August 2019, which drew international condemnation. The Hindu further says that

Turkiye, Saudi Arabia and Egypt are all members of the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (OIC), that had been very critical of India’s changes in IIOJK.

UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, Fernand de Varennes, few days back, had also criticised the event being held in Srinagar as an effort to “normalise” human rights violations. He noted that human rights violations had risen dramatically in IIOJK since 2019 after Indian government revoked the special status of the territory.

In a statement, he said, by holding a G20 meeting of the working group on tourism on 22nd of this month, the government of India was seeking to normalize what some have described as a military occupation by instrumen-

be peaceful,” he claimed.

Claiming the arrests of PTI leaders and workers were a crackdown against the PTI, Mr Khan added, “This is not happening for the enforcement of law in the country. All this is happening to crush the party”.

He claimed the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) was isolated, Mr Khan said, “A political party or a leader becomes isolated when he does not have the support of the people”.

Mr Khan was of the view that the government would be charged under Article 6 for delaying the polls in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Speaking about the Supreme Court (SC), Mr Khan claimed, “Despite all the differences in the apex court, all judges agree on the point that elections should be held within 90 days”. Believing that the government was “petrified” of elections, the deposed premier said, “The PDM is afraid of holding elections because it lost the by-elections despite the support of stakeholders. Now it [PDM] is running away from the elections”. “The government is looking for ways to plan to bring me and the PTI into conflict with the army,” Mr Khan maintained.

President Biden says US, China ties should see a ‘thaw very shortly’

HIROSHIMA (Agencies): US President Joe Biden said on Sunday that ties between Washington and Beijing should thaw “very shortly” after the United States shot down a suspected Chinese spy balloon this year. Biden said relations had deteriorated in the months following his talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping at the G20 summit on the Indonesian island of Bali in November.

Washington’s decision in February to shoot down an alleged Chinese spy balloon that overflew the United States sparked a diplomatic spat between the world’s two largest economies. A visit to Beijing by Secretary of State Antony Blinken that had been billed as a chance to improve relations was cancelled over the incident.

On Sunday, at a press conference following the G7 summit in Hiroshima, Japan, Biden was asked why a planned hotline between the United States and China was not in operation. “You’re right, we should have an open hotline. At the Bali conference, that’s what President Xi and I agreed we were going to do and

meet on,” he said. “And then, this silly balloon that was carrying two freight cars worth of spying equipment was flying over the United States,” Biden added.

“It got shot down and everything changed in terms of talking to one another. I think you’re going to see that begin to thaw very shortly.”

Biden’s administration has also infuriated China by targeting trade in advanced microchips, citing risks of military use. The president defended those actions on Sunday, a day after the Group of Seven leading economies warned China over its “militarisation activities” in the region. “It is building its military, and that’s why I’ve made it clear that I am not prepared to trade certain items with China,” he said. “We’ve now got a commitment from all of our allies that they’re not going to do that either, provide that kind of material.”

“But that’s not a hostile act, that’s an act that says, ‘We’re going to make sure that we do everything we can to maintain the status quo’.”

As the G7 leaders sent a strong message to Russia by inviting

Volodymyr Zelensky to Hiroshima, another rival was also on their minds - China. British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said China posed “the greatest challenge of our age” in regards to global security and prosperity, and that it was “increasingly authoritarian at home and abroad”.

And in not one but two statements, the leaders of the world’s richest democracies made clear to Beijing their stance on divisive issues such as the Indo-Pacific and Taiwan. But the most important part of their message centred on what they called “economic coercion”.

It’s a tricky balancing act for the G7. Through trade their economies have become inextricably dependent on China, but competition with Beijing has increased and they disagree on many issues including human rights. Now, they worry they are being held hostage. In recent years, Beijing has been unafraid to slap trade sanctions on countries that have displeased them. This includes South Korea, when Seoul installed a US missile defence system, and Australia during a recent period of chilly relations.



No compromise on the issue of Kashmir: Sharjeel

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sharjeel Inam Memon, the Minister of Information, Transport, and Mass Transit of Sindh, emphasized that there can be no compromise on the issue of Kashmir. He reaffirmed that founding chairman of PPP Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had firmly stated that no mistakes can be tolerated when it comes to the matter of Kashmir.

During a press conference held at the Sindh Archives Complex in Clifton, Karachi, Sharjeel Inam Memon highlighted that several significant countries have decided not to participate in the Kashmir conference. He attributed this outcome to the successful diplomacy of the Pakistani government and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

He asserted that Imran Khan made several mistakes and displayed incompetence regarding the issue of Kashmir, Imran Khan had previously stated that if Narendra Modi were to win in India, the Kashmir issue would be resolved, Imran Khan supported BJP, but due to Imran Khan's wrong policies, the cause of Kashmir was severely damaged, the worst treatment, that Modi has done to Kashmiris when he came to power, is unprecedented.

He said that even today Imran Khan is harming the cause of Pakistan by giving interviews to foreigners, No former Prime Minister of Pakistan has ever made such hateful remarks as Imran Khan does in his interviews.

The Information Minister of Sindh stated that a true leader is someone who guides their nation along the right path, whereas



Imran Khan, in contrast, seems to take pride in consistently changing his stance and making U-turns on various matters. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that for the sake of one's own interests, for one's lust for power, to the extent of defaming one's own country and institutions is absolutely intolerable.

He said that Imran Khan started a cipher drama and put the whole nation behind the truck light that America has a hand in bringing down his government, and today he is giving interviews to foreigners saying that his government was overthrown by someone else.

Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the nation should consider the repeated contradictions in Imran Khan's words and actions and think where this person is taking the country with such words. He said that this person has received funding from India and Israel and today this person is trying to spread chaos and division in the country with the help of Indian and Israeli lobbyists, this person is putting hatred in people's minds, speaks a lot of lies. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that Imran Khan is the only Prime Minister of Pakistan who was legally removed through a no-confidence motion.

He said that Imran Khan has damaged relations with Pakistan's friends, well-wishers of this country and led Pakistan into isolation. He said that Imran Khan is trying to force institutions into politics and spreading hatred against the politicians and institutions of his own country.

He said that the views of politicians may be different, but politicians do not have hatred, rather they resolve differences through dialogue, Imran Khan is spreading hatred and inciting people to destroy and damaging national monuments. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that Imran Khan was not elected but was brought to power artificially by selection, which Imran Khan himself admitted in his interviews that someone else used to complete the numbers of his government in the National Assembly and the Senate.

Sharjeel Inam Memon said that Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari improved the diplomatic relations that were damaged during Imran Khan's tenure. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that Imran Khan has forcibly dragging institutions in politics, we are not happy to arrest anyone, but when you are damaging vehicles, buses, properties and national monuments, then legal action will be

taken against you, there is no difference between Imran Khan and TTP.

He said that you were involved in setting fire to the residence of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, what can be more cruel than this?

Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that, despite having numerous facilitators, Imran Khan's only viable course of action is to publicly apologize for his actions on television.

Sharjeel Inam Memon said that Imran Khan is seeking to harm the country in his lust for power, which cannot be tolerated under any circumstances.

Sharjeel Inam Memon said that Imran Khan's pursuit of power, at the expense of the country's well-being, is unacceptable and intolerable in any situation. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the Al Qadir case is an open and shut case and in this case only the bank statement is enough to convict Imran Khan.

Sharjeel Inam Memon said that Imran Khan says here that his government was overthrown by America and to people outside Pakistan that my government was overthrown by institutions, his words are filled with contradiction and lie, Sharjeel Inam Memon pointed out the contradictory and dishonest nature of Imran Khan's statements. He mentioned that while Imran Khan claims within Pakistan that his government was toppled by America, he tells people outside of Pakistan that it was institutions that brought down his government. He emphasized that these contradictory remarks are riddled with falsehoods and lack credibility.



LAHORE: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Religious Harmony Maulana Tahir Ashrafi visited Jinnah House.

Ashrafi terms May 9 blackest day of national history

LAHORE (NNI): Prime Minister's Special Representative on Interfaith Harmony and Middle East and Pakistan Ulema Council Chairman Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi has said May 9 is the blackest day of the national history as defence installations and monuments of martyrs were burnt by the miscreants on this day.

Talking to the media after visiting the Jinnah House [Lahore corps commander's house] here on Sunday, he said that attack on military installations and buildings was an attack on the solidarity of the country. He said that the Jinnah House is a symbol of Pakistan's honour. He termed the destruction and burning of army buildings, statues of Shuhada, symbols of Shuhada, tanks, army vehicles and other installation more severe attack than any other incident against the country. He said the enemy of Pakistan used Pakistani citizens on May 9 and did what the enemy was unable to do directly.

He said that the attackers were well organised and they were being guided by someone as they did not even spare a mosque situated on the premises of the Jinnah House, adding that the terrorists who attacked the Jinnah House did not appear to be even Muslims.

Ashrafi said that the terrorists involved in attacking the GHQ, Jinnah House, symbols of Shuhada and other installations appeared to be well trained. He said that there should be no ifs and buts in condemnation of the terrorist activities carried out on May 9. He said that every person who was involved in the terrorism on that day should be brought to justice regardless of his or her relationship with any personality.

He demanded for establishment of a court for summary trials and on-the-spot punishment to terrorists. He said that if Pakistan Army was attacked, then surely army courts should hear the cases, adding that the situation of the civil courts was not hidden from people of Pakistan. Commenting on statements about violation of human rights, he questioned whether the policemen and soldiers, who were killed or beaten up by terrorists, did not have any rights. He said that the country and Pakistan Army is the red line of the nation, so terrorists, who attacked the country and the Pak Army could not be spared at any cost.

He saluted Chief of Army Staff Syed Asim Munir and the leadership of Pakistan Army for their patience as, he added, if the army had retaliated on the day, several precious lives

could be lost. He said that political workers did not burn mosques, boards of Kalma Tayyaba and homes.

He said the terrorists, in fact, helped India as it was an attempt to divert focus of the world from the Indian conspiracy under which India was holding a G20 meeting in the disputed territory of Illegally Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) which was illegal according to the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council.

The PM's representative said that Pakistan was a hurdle in the way of Indian attempt of holding of G20 meeting at the IOJK, and several countries including China and Saudi Arabia had decided not to participate in the G20 meeting to be held in Srinagar (IOJK).

"It is unfortunate that we are talking about the fire at our on homeland instead of discussing the G20 and success of the country," he added. He hoped that the country would be more strengthened after the incident and all conspiracies would be foiled. Discussing the statements of the US diplomat Zalmay Khalilzad about the internal affairs of Pakistan, he reacted that Zalmay was a traitor of his own nation, adding that how come he discuss about Pakistan and its army?

RBISE sets up 196 centers for HSSC annual exams 2023

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (RBISE) had set up 196 centers for Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSSC) annual exams started in the Rawalpindi division on Saturday (May 20), said a RBISE spokesman.

He informed that the board had completed fool-proof arrangements before the start of HSSC annual exams 2023.

According to Chairman RBISE, Muhammad Adnan Khan, the best possible arrangements were made for the HSSC annual exams. Controller Examinations RBISE Prof. Sajid Mehmood Farooqi informed that the roll number slips of regular students had already been sent to the concerned institutions and those of the private students were uploaded on the board's website (<http://www.biserawalpindi.edu.pk>) besides dispatched at the addresses mentioned in their admission forms. He said that the board on the directives of Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chatha, had made the best possible arrangements for the exams.

CDA all set to auction commercial plots in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) is all set to auction commercial plots in Blue Area and other developed sectors of the federal capital, beginning on May 29, aiming to generate more revenue for the city and attract investors to participate in the auction.

Talking to APP, an official in the authority urged interested investors to participate in the auction, which will take place at the Jinnah Convention Centre

in Islamabad. The development is expected to have a significant impact on the commercial estate market in the capital city.

He said the auction in various sectors of the Islamabad capital territory would continue till May 31, adding that the authority has already publicized the auction schedule of various plots in different newspapers. The official said that the real estate experts have announced it as a must-avail investment opportunity

for investors nationwide and overseas. The participants investing in the public sale can possess commercial plots with 'legal protection.'

The details about the commercial plots located in the developed sectors of the federal capital included various centres, agro farms, petrol pumps, E-11 northern strip, Class-III shopping centre, Park Enclave commercial and Blue Area E-11/F-11, Canopy side, he added.

32 candidates get appointment letters

LAHORE (APP): In compliance with the orders of Ombudsman Punjab Maj (ret'd) Azam Suleman Khan, the District Education Authority Bhakkar issued appointment letters to 32 eligible candidates under Rule 17-A of the Punjab Civil Servants (Appointment & Conditions of Service) Rules, 1974.

In a statement issued on Sunday, a spokesman said that an applicant, Muhammad Qaiser Zia, had moved the Ombudsman office for his appointment as a junior clerk, along with 31 other candidates. The District Education Authority Bhakkar had conducted test of 51 applicants, and cleared 32 for appointment on merit on the basis of their typing and other skills. However, issuance of letters was

delayed for certain reasons.

Now, on the orders of the Ombudsman's office, appointment letters have been issued to all 32 selected candidates.

In a separate development, the intervention of the Ombudsman's office has resulted in the release of Rs 1,219,355 pending salaries of six college teaching interns at the Government Associate College for Women Ratta Mata, Jhang.

Separately, the Punjab Housing and Town Planning Agency (PHATA) allocated five-marla alternative residential plots to nine beneficiaries, including plaintiff Babar Ramzan, in a housing scheme, specifically designed for low-income strata in Sheikhupura after the intervention of the Ombudsman's office.

JI demands transparent probe into suicide attack on convoy

ISLAMABAD (NNI): In connection with the attack on the convoy of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) on May 19, the party on Sunday demanded a transparent investigation into the suicide attack on the convoy of Sirajul Haq.

The JI workers protested and demanded a transparent investigation into the matter from the incumbent government. On the other hand, on reaching Karachi Airport from Quetta, the JI workers under the

supervision of Hafiz Naeem-ur-Rehman gave Mr Haq a warm welcome. On Friday, a man was killed and six others were injured in a tragic incident of a suicide attack near JI Emir Sirajul Haq's cavalcade in Zhob.

According to police, Mr Haq remained safe during the blast. The JI chief was scheduled to deliver a speech in Zhob. The sources divulged Mr Haq reached the police line safely, adding the JI's convoy was entering

Zhob from Quetta. Mr Haq arrived in Quetta on Sunday and had to go further to Zhob where his political gathering was scheduled. JI spokesperson Qaiser Sharif said in a video message that when he was entering Zhob and people were welcoming him, a person came and blew himself up. Sources privy to the development said the body of the attacker was taken to the civil hospital, while six injured people were shifted to a hospital.

With bumper crop this year; wheat procurement in final stages

LAHORE (APP): Where climate change impacts are hitting countries across the globe raising food security issues for many, its making extremely important for countries having rich agricultural potential to not only cater needs for their own population but exporting to other counties as well having less agricultural yields to avoid food crisis.

Pakistan's major and most important national food security policy goal is to grow ample wheat, not only to meet its consumption needs but also create a surplus for buffer stocks and export. To achieve this, the government annually sets national sowing, output and procurement targets. This policy yielded good results and the country more than doubled its wheat production in between 1990 to 2011. Statistics tell that since then the wheat production remained around 26m tonnes, peaking to above 27m tonnes in 2021. Punjab being the major province to grow wheat had its cultivation target for year 2022-23, at around 16.48 million acres, however wheat production this year topped 27.5 million metric tons, the highest in the last 10 years, despite the challenges posed by heavy rains and floods last year.

The record wheat production was possible by the grace of Allah Almighty, quality seeds, uninterrupted supply of fertiliser and timely decisions of the government. "Wheat crop production was recorded at over 27 million metric tons this year and hopefully the all-important commodity would not be imported this year," Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research, Chaudhary Tariq Bashir Cheema said while speaking in "Meet the Press" at Bahawalpur the other day. He said in the past, Pakistan used to export wheat to other countries, but later it imported wheat due to several reasons including climate changes.

The minister said due to flash floods in Sindh province last year, we

feared that we would have to import wheat to cater needs of the country, but this year, we achieved record production of wheat.

He said the government had been providing subsidy to farmers' community. "The government set the support price of wheat at Rs 3,900 per 40 kilograms in order to encourage peasants," he added.

There were 2.1m tonnes of grain carryover stocks, taking the overall availability of the commodity during the year 2023-24 to 29.6m tonnes, reducing the import requirement to around 1m tonnes.

After wheat harvesting, the next challenge was its procurement and in this connection, the Punjab Food Department was vigorously carrying out a wheat procurement campaign in response to an unexpectedly bountiful harvest and achieve its set procurement target of 3.5 MMT.

The government has so far procured 4.902 million metric tons (MMT) of wheat under the grain-procurement campaign for the year 2023-24 against the set target of 7.8 MMT to fulfill the local consumptions and maintain the strategic reserves in the country.

As per official procurement data from Punjab alone, so far 3534861 metric tonnes of wheat had been procured till May 18, from all districts of Punjab, while as many as 4334049 gunny bags had been issued in all districts across the province.

Punjab Food department officials told that the procurement campaign would continue till the completion of target as directed by the government. Many farmers were reporting yields of more than 50 maunds per acre, compared to the national average of 32 maunds. "Despite the climate change-related challenges, heavy rains and catastrophic floods in the country, the local wheat output during the current season was estimated at 27.5 MMT, which was the highest in the last 10 years," said Food Security

Commissioner in the Ministry of National Food Security and Research Imtiaz Ali Gopang.

Talking to APP, he said so far about 63 to 70 percent of the assigned procurement targets for the current season were accomplished and the grain procurement drive across the crop-producing areas was in full swing. When asked about wheat procurement in Sindh, Gopang said the province had completed about 46 percent of its procurement targets and procured about 640,629 metric tons of wheat as compared to the set targets of 1.400 MMT.

The food security commissioner further informed that the wheat procurement task was completed by 36 percent in Balochistan, whereas Pakistan Agriculture Storage and Services Corporation (PASSCO) completed 46 percent of its procurement. "Balochistan has so far procured about 29,632 metric tons of wheat against its set targets of 100,000 metric tons and PASSCO procured 826,033 MMT as compared to the targets of 1.800 million metric tons," he added.

It is worth mentioning here that wheat crop was sown over 21.942 million acres for producing about 28.37 MMT of wheat during crop season 2022-23 for fulfilling the local staple food requirements and maintaining strategic reserves.

Such a turnaround in wheat projections shows how wheat plants miraculously withstood wet-weather-related damages to the crop, thanks to consistently cool temperatures and bright sunny days. The wheat crop production can further be increased through changes in the production system, such as reduced tillage, increased use of certified seeds, and a better match between fertiliser applications and soils. There was also massive potential to reduce on-farm and off-farm crop losses through improved harvesting, bulk handling and storage in modern silos.



KARACHI: Health Polio workers mark the house during the polio vaccination Campaign in the city.



Dengue control: Provincial govt starts awareness activities

PESHAWAR (APP): The Caretaker government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has started various activities, including door-to-door campaigns, community-based initiatives, awareness walks, and social media campaigns to raise awareness about dengue prevention and control measures.

On the directions of Secretary Relief, Rehabilitation and Settlement Department Abdul Basit, a collaborative effort has been initiated by Rescue 1122, PDMA, District Administration and Civil Defence measures are underway, said the spokesman on Sunday.

The campaign to prevent the spread of the dengue virus is actively taking

place in multiple districts, including Kohat, Lower Dir, Chitral, Bajaur, Mansehra, Swat and others.

On the occasion, Abdul Basit, Secretary Relief, emphasized that the Relief Department has provided comprehensive guidelines and standard operating procedures (SOPs) to all relevant authorities and district administrations to effectively control the potential outbreak of dengue. Clear responsibilities have been assigned to each stakeholder involved.

He further highlighted that the Additional Deputy Commissioner Relief is leading the campaign in the respective districts.

Abdul Basit further emphasized that the dengue

campaign is a comprehensive and coordinated effort aimed at raising awareness about dengue.

The campaign includes public awareness and education, community engagement through organizing meetings and workshops to disseminate information about dengue and engage the community in prevention activities. Moreover, educational materials such as brochures, pamphlets, and other informative materials are being distributed in public places to raise awareness and promote preventive actions.

He urged citizens to take necessary precautions to ensure the success of the dengue control campaign.

Flights between Banku, Sialkot within 2 months

PESHAWAR (APP): Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan, Khazar Farhadov has said that direct flights between Baku and Sialkot will be started during the next two months to increase both bilateral and trade relations between the two countries.

He was talking to KP Caretaker Minister for Industries, Trade and Technical Education, Mohammad Adnan Jalil, who called on him on Sunday. He said that direct flights between Baku and Sialkot, an industrial city of Pakistan will strengthen bilateral relations.

He said that earlier weekly flights have already been started between Lahore and Baku, which are operating successfully, saying such connectivity is extremely important for the strengthening of economic and trade relations.

The Ambassador said that he is in constant contact with the business community of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and had visit-

ed Peshawar Chamber of Commerce several times.

He said that Peshawar is an important city from an economic and historical point of view, which has historical relations with Azerbaijan and Central Asian states.

Khazar Farhadov said that Peshawar of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has a very crucial role in trade with Central Asian countries including Azerbaijan.

He said that Peshawar and Azerbaijan have similarities in culture and food, which can make the historical relationship between the two countries more sustainable in the present era.

He said that last year 53,000 Pakistanis visited Azerbaijan, which speaks of the volume of the people to people contact between the people of both countries. He was hopeful that the number of visitors from Pakistan to Azerbaijan will further increase during the current year.

He said that he will play his due role in increasing

economic and trade relations between Azerbaijan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said that tourism is another potential sector for promotion of bilateral relations between both countries.

He said that the private sector, including the chamber of commerce, will play an important role in the economic and trade relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan and the business community of Peshawar is preparing to play its role in this regard.

On this occasion, the provincial minister of commerce and industry Adnan Jalil invited the ambassador of Azerbaijan to come and discuss investment and trade relations with the business community. He said that he will soon lead a trade delegation to Azerbaijan.

Adnan Jalil said that Azerbaijan and Pakistan have extensive cooperation opportunities in various fields including textile and agriculture and industry and trade.

809 people held, 18 FIRs registered, no MPA, MNA in arrestees

PESHAWAR (APP): A total of 809 people have been arrested by the Police that were involved in violent protests on May 9 with a total of 18 FIRs of terrorism related to violent protests registered in KP, a report issued by Police said here Sunday.

According to the report, a total of 809 people were arrested including 5 in Peshawar region, 4 in Kohat region and 3 in Mardan region with FIRs having been registered in terrorism cases, the report said. Besides 267 in Peshawar, 216 in Mardan, 114 people have been arrested in Kohat, the Police report said.

All the provincial ministers and most of the assembly members named in the FIRs are absconding since May 9, a top Police official told media men. He also clarified that despite names in the FIRs, no MPs or MNAs were arrested so far.

Police recover hashish, arrest smuggler

PESHAWAR (APP): Capital City Police on Sunday foiled smuggling of narcotics and recovered 15 kilograms of hashish and arrested smuggler.

SHO Naseer Bagh Police Station, Mubarak Zeb Khan on a tip off thwarted an attempt to smuggle drugs in a car.

The arrested alleged drug smuggler has been identified as Usman Khan, son of Muhammad Sharif, resident of Okara district.

The suspect is affiliated with a well-organized drug smuggling network.

He was apprehended in the limits of Ghazi Abad, Naseer Bagh Police Station.

A case has been registered against the arrested suspect, and further investigation has been initiated.

Summer vacation notified

PESHAWAR (INP): The Elementary and Secondary Education Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has announced the schedule of summer vacation in schools of the province and issued a notification in this regard.

According to the notification, the schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have been divided into summer and winter zones.

In summer zone of the province, the schools will remain closed from 01 June to 14 August 2023. While in winter zone, the schools will close on 01 June and will reopen on 01 August 2023.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Department has directed all concerned departments/ District Education Officers of KP to make necessary arrangements in this regard.

Two youth shot dead

PESHAWAR (INP): Two youngsters were gunned down by unidentified armed men in Sufaid Dheri area of the provincial capital Peshawar on Sunday.

Police said that both youth were severely tortured before shooting them dead. The bodies were shifted to hospital for postmortem and police after registering a case into the incident started an investigation.

Vaccination drive started

PESHAWAR (APP): A five-day polio vaccination campaign will start on Monday in twelve districts.

The campaign aims to administer polio drops to over 3.5 million children.

Health officials on Sunday said that the campaign will be conducted in Peshawar, Nowshera, Swat, Bajaur, Hangu, Karak, Charsadda, Khyber, Kurram, Kohat, Mohmand and in Orakzai.

To ensure the success of the polio vaccination drive, over 13,000 teams have been formed. Additionally, 21,000 police personnel have been assigned to provide security for the vaccination teams.



PESHAWAR: A group photo of Mayor Haji Zubair Ali with a delegation of Gulbahar residents after their meeting.

PPP decides to begin mass contact drive

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Peshawar Division has decided to start a mass contact campaign and directed office bearers and workers to begin preparations for general elections.

The decision was taken in a meeting held with Divisional President Liaquat Shabab in the chair here on Sunday. Besides, City President, Zulfikar Afghani and general secretary Zulfikar Awan, general secretary district Peshawar, Khalid Khan Achar, Hazrat Wali, Shah Rehman Shinwari and Jangraiz Mohmand, other

party leaders and workers also attended.

The participants of the meeting decided to activate workers, particularly disgruntled one and bring ideological and sincere workers of the party to the forefront.

The meeting also decided to address the grievances of disgruntled workers while the task to bring ideological workers was given to district leadership.

The divisional president directed the completion of the organizational matters of all tiers from district, tehsil, constituency, union council and wards to neigh-

bourhood council levels as soon as possible.

Addressing the participants of the meeting, Liaquat Shabab and others commended the role of the ideological workers from Peshawar division.

He urged all ideological party workers to play their due role in organizing, activation and strengthening the party.

He said a mass contact campaign to organize party workers in all districts of the division would begin soon and no lethargy would be tolerated in this regard.

Sino-Pak diplomatic relations anniversary

Pak-China relations exemplary, says Minister

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Pakistan-China relations are exemplary and we should learn from the China's Leadership and Peoples dedication and devotion

for their loving home land and their vital role in China's stand on international stage with pride. The recent past China's global positive role for peace and economic development is a guideline for us. This was stated by Justice (Retd.) Irshad Qaiser Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Higher Education, Law, Parliamentary Affairs, Human Rights, Archives & Libraries at a Cake cutting and Friendship Awards distribution ceremony organized by Pakistan China Friendship Association (PCFA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa-Pakistan and China Study Centre (CSC) University of Peshawar jointly.

This is high time to learn from China's experience in our fields of life and this learning will be greatly helpful for our social economic development and to counter the challenges we are facing. She mentioned that today, while celebrating the 72 anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China, we should think about what we have learned from China, as we know that Pakistan and China are very close neighbors connecting mountains rivers, and islands. A large number of Pakistani students are learning at various reputed Chinese Universities.

They are bringing new knowledge in their respective fields and contributing to the social and economic prosperity of the countries. Today, we should understand the importance rather significance of these relations in the best interest of the homeland. Once again, I appreciate China Study

Center, UoP, and Pakistan China Friendship Association, KP for working with dedication and devotion and for the promotion of higher education between the two countries.

The event was graced by apart from Chief Guest, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Idress Vice Chancellor University of Peshawar, Mr. Ahmad Hassan Chairman Governor Inspection Team, Prof. Dr. Shah Jehan Vice Chancellor Iqra University, Mr. Furruck Saqlan Chairman KP Text Book Board, Dr. Zahid Anwar, Syed Ali Nawaz Gilani Secretary-General PCFA and Prof. Dr. Kausar Takreem Coordinator CSC apart from large number of Friends of China various walks of life and UoP. Madam Bao Zhong Counselor from the Embassy of People's Republic of China join the event as Key Note Speaker on video link from Embassy.

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Usman announces separation from PTI

PESHAWAR (APP): Former Member of National Assembly (MNA) Usman Khan Tarakai on Sunday announced his separation from Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

Tarakai made the announcement during a press conference in Peshawar Press Club.

He said that he and his family cannot continue their affiliation with the PTI anymore after the May 9 incidents.

He said that we will neither sit on PTI's seats nor move forward with them.

Tarakai highlighted his political journey, mentioning his initial affiliation was with the Pakistan Muslim League followed by his association with the Pakistan Peoples' Party and then joined PTI with the aim that it will work on justice but did not.

I had been engaged in meaningful conversations

and meetings with Imran Khan, promoting justice and fairness, Tarakai said.

Tarakai accused a conspiracy at the provincial level, stating, conspiracies were hatched against him as provincial president Pervez Khattak neglected him.

During his tenure, Tarakai claimed to have established three grid stations and provided gas facilities to 22 union councils, he added.

Gang of selling meat of chicken bones arrested

PESHAWAR (APP): The gang involved in selling meat of chicken bones was arrested by the officials of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Department during a raid on main Dalazak road near Jameel Chowk on Sunday.

According to detail given by the spokesman of the Food Authority, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, three more persons were preparing meat from chicken bones wherein a large quantity of meat was recovered from the warehouse while the owners were sent to jail.

The officials of the food department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during raids in various localities including Jameel Chowk, Pajagi Road and Hashnagri and arrested three more members of the six member gang involved in selling meat of the chicken bones.

It is worth mentioning here that two days ago, 20,000 kg of meat made from chicken bones was found on Dalazak Road. The chicken bone mince is being used for making Shami Kebab, Samosa Roll, Chapli Kebab, Kofta and Seekh Kebab.

The spokesman on this occasion disclosed that a day earlier, the officials of the food authority arrested a group making mince meat from unhealthy chicken bones. Meat was prepared by adding red color to chicken bones wherein a total of 20,000kg of meat seized.

Obituary F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: With deep sorrow it is to announce that Syed Yusuf Shah has departed to eternal world last. May Allah rest his soul in eternal peace. His Namaz-e-Janaza was held on Sunday.

The deceased was father of Mrs. Riffat Amir Nazir former Sessions Judge, Nusrat Naz Additional Sessions Judge, Charsada and Nighat Wasiq, father in law of Amir Nazir Judge Anti Terrorism Court and Wasiq of Swabi.

The deceased was brother in law of Khurshid Khan of Kunda, Swabi. He was also brother of Maj. Sulran Hussain Shah, Col. GB Shah Bukhari and Syed Zahir Shah Ex-DG PDA.

He was uncle of Syed Akhtar Ali Shah former IGP, Brig. Abid Ali Shah and Syed Zafar Ali Shah, federal Secretary Planning & Development and Dr. Syed Haider Ali Shah.

Place of Dua: House # 64, Street # 3, Sector P-1, Phase-4, Hayatabad, Peshawar.

Medico legal informative course arranged



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: On 17th of May, 2023, in a significant effort to enhance their expertise in handling cases involving medical evidence, a group of newly promoted honorable judges embarked on a highly informative and comprehensive refresher course at the Department of Forensic Medicine, Khyber Medical College in Peshawar. The visit, organized by the Judicial Academy, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, aimed to provide judges with an in-depth understanding of various aspects of medicolegal reporting, examination techniques, report interpretation, and other related topics.

The session was facilitated

by Prof. Dr. Hakim Khan Afridi sharing his knowledge, expertise and insights with all the participants. The judges were exposed to a wide range of topics, including forensic autopsy procedures, the collection and preservation of evidence, forensic toxicology, and the interpretation of medical reports in legal proceedings.

Prof. Dr. Mahmud Aurangzeb graced the closing session of the said course, wherein he appreciated the role of the Department of Forensic Medicine, KMC which proved itself to be a valuable platform for knowledge exchange and networking among the judges. Additionally, the Dean,

KMC emphasized that this course is not only aimed to enhance the judges' understanding of forensic medicine but also to foster a collaborative approach between the medical and legal professions, ultimately strengthening the judicial system. The Dean KMC assured his full support for such collaborative activities supporting the criminal justice system in the province.

To conclude, the visit to the Department of Forensic Medicine, KMC marked a significant step forward in ensuring the judiciary is well-equipped to handle complex medical-related legal matters, furthering the pursuit of justice in Pakistan.

Excise Police arrested four alleged accused

PESHAWAR (APP): The Excise Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in three different operation conducted in Swabi and Charsadda arrested four alleged suspects and recovered drugs and arms from their possession in the last 24 hours, spokesman of the Excise Department told media men here on Sunday.

He informed the media men that one Zubair son of Uzair, the wanted accused in a large quantity of drug

smuggling case, has been arrested. The accused was arrested during a raid from Lahore Tehsil of Swabi, who was absconding for a year, Excise Spokesman informed.

In another operation, Fayaz son of Taj Muhammad, the fugitive accused in the international smuggling case, was arrested during a raid from Tehsil Tangi, Excise spokesman said. The suspect had fled abroad and was arrested on information about his return, the Excise

Spokesman said.

In the third operation, heavy contraband was recovered in two different operations in Mardan with a total of 8 rifles, 6 pistols, 20 magazines and 3500 cartridges were recovered in the operations, the official of the Excise said.

He said cases have been registered at Police Station Mardan City against four alleged accused arrested in the operations, the Excise spokesman said.

Dept of Plant Breeding, Genetics of Agri Varsity hold awareness session

PESHAWAR (APP): The Department of Plant Breeding and Genetics of Agriculture University Peshawar held an awareness session for the students intended to study abroad, admissions guidance and scholarship opportunities.

The brain behind organizing awareness sessions regarding study abroad, admissions guidance and scholarship opportunities was Prof. Dr. Rozina Gul.

She got support from the Chairman of the Department of Plant Breeding and Genetics Prof. Dr. Iftikhar Hussain Khalil.

The awareness session provided essential information about the process of getting admission in the best universities of the world. Among the speakers were Director Global Education Foundation UK Sunil and Assistant Professor, Department of English and Applied

Linguistics University of Peshawar Arif Khan.

The speakers discussed various aspects of seeking admission abroad, such as GRE, TOEFL and IELTS exams, profile building, top institutions and their eligibility criteria, courses, etc. He also talked about financing loans, scholarships, and grants for studying abroad.

Sunil answered several questions. Moreover, they also imparted awareness

about the admission procedure in UK universities and the importance of advance planning.

Prof. Dr. Rozina Gul described the session as very helpful and said that the session provided details about studying abroad and also clarified the idea of study abroad.

Students will be able to clear their doubts and understand the process of applying to an international institution.



In brief

Two labourers die in Mosque

NANKANA SAHIB (INP): Two labourers died after they fell down from a wood stand during work in Nageena mosque War Britain area of Nankana Sahib on Sunday. According to details, two labourers were engaged in work when the decrepit wood stand came down leaving them critically injured. The injured labourers including Farhan 28, hailing from Aqsa Colony and Ramazan 37, belonging to Vehari were rushed to hospital where they succumbed to their wounds.

Two persons commit suicides

FAISALABAD (APP): Two persons including a young man committed suicides in Faisalabad during the past 12 hours. A spokesman said on Sunday that a young man Ghulam Murtaza of Chak No 66-JB Dhandra swallowed poisonous pills for unknown reasons. His condition dilapidated soon and he was rushed to a hospital where he breathed his last amid receiving intensive care treatment. Meanwhile, 26-year-old Umar Asif of Madina Abad reportedly committed suicide by hanging himself with ceiling fan in his room over unknown reasons. The police took both bodies into custody and dispatched them to mortuary for postmortem while further investigation was under progress, he added.

Labourer killed in Faisalabad

FAISALABAD (APP): A teenager labourer was buried under debris of an under-construction house in the area of Madina Town police station. A spokesman said here on Sunday that 17-year-old Farhan Arshad of Chak No 215-RB Dhuddiwala was busy in breaking old and redundant lintel of a house when it suddenly caved in and he was buried beneath the debris. Receiving information, Rescue 1122 staff reached the spot and pulled him out of debris. But he had already succumbed to his injuries. The police later on handed over the body to his relatives for burial after completing necessary formalities. Meanwhile, Bodies of two men including an addict were found in different parts of Faisalabad, here on Sunday.

Newlywed girl commits suicide

RAHIMYAR KHAN (INP): A newlywed girl allegedly committed suicide by hanging her in Wahid Bakhsish Sial, Allahabad area of Rahimyar Khan. Body of 20-year-old Tasleem Bibi was found hanging with ceiling fan of the room. Police shifted the body to Liaquatpur Headquarter Hospital for postmortem. In-laws of the deceased said that Tasleem has committed suicide. However, sources said that girl was killed by her in-laws and declaring murder as suicide. The police have registered a case into the incident and started an investigation.

Three shot injured

SHEIKHUPURA (INP): Armed men shot injured three including two minor children over financial dispute in Gaggio Mall Ghang town Sheikhupura on Sunday. Police said that armed men sprayed bullets members of rival group with whom they were in financial dispute injuring three including Abbas 45, six-year-old Hussain and six-year-old Qamar Fareed. The attackers fled the scene and the injured were shifted to hospital for treatment. The police after registering a case against the attackers started raids for their arrest.

Sanaullah sends off 1st Hajj flight from Faisalabad

FAISALABAD (APP): Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah Khan bade farewell to the intending pilgrims at the airport here on Sunday with a piece of advice that they must behave with extreme responsibility at the hold land to project the soft image of Pakistan, as Muslims from all over the world would gather there for pilgrimage.

The maiden PIA Hajj Flight No PK-1341 from Faisalabad carrying 155 intending pilgrims departed for Saudi Arabia via Karachi at 9:10 a.m. and it would land in Madina Munawarah.

The minister said the Saudi interior minister vis-

ited Pakistan recently and informed the authorities concerned that his government had made the best arrangements for the auspicious event. Similarly, the Pakistani government had also improved the Hajj arrangements, he added.

He said, "The Road to Makkah project has been launched this year from Peshawar and Islamabad to provide immigration facility in Pakistan instead of their immigration on their arrival in Jeddah and other Saudi Arab airports".

"Initially this facility was offered to 2,600 intending pilgrims, but on my request, the number was increased to 40,000. The next year, this project

would be initiated from Karachi and other important cities of Punjab including Lahore and Faisalabad," the minister added.

The Pakistan International Airlines would airlift approximately 3,500 passengers from Faisalabad Airport through 22 Hajj flights till June 16, 2023.

The interior minister also garlanded the intending pilgrims.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Faisalabad Ali Anan Qamar, Deputy Director Hajj Arif Zahoor Hussain, General Manager (GM) PIA Shafiq, Deputy Manager (DM) PIA Shahid Hussain, Airport Manager Anwar Zia Gujar and others were also present.

CS visits Ayub Stadium to review arrangements for 34th National games

QUETTA (APP): Chief Secretary Balochistan Abdul Aziz Uqaili on Sunday visited the Ayub Stadium Quetta to review the arrangements made for the 34th National Games.

The Inspector General Balochistan Police and Director General Sports also accompanied him on the occasion.

While talking to media, the chief secretary said that arrangements made for the 34th national sports are sat-

isfactory. The provincial government, army and police have done a tremendous job in this connection, he said. The chief secretary said that seven thousand athletes were participating in the National Games and tomorrow would be the formal opening of the National Games.

Earlier, the IGP while briefing the Chief Secretary Balochistan, said that organizing the National Games was no less than a

challenge for which fool-proof security arrangements had been made. A large number of Police officers and personnel are deployed in and around the sports complex, he added.

"These are the beginnings, there will be more sports events in Balochistan, he hoped. The IGP further recalled that in order to keep eye on anti-peace elements, many places are being monitored by CCTV and control room.

Police: Farrukh named in violent protest FIR

FAISALABAD (INP): PTI leader and former minister Farrukh Habib has been named in the supplementary FIR of police on vandalism and arson incident in front of the secret agency's office here on May 09.

Former MNA Chaudhry Nisar Jutt and PTI ticketholder of PP-118 Nadeem Aftab Sandhu have also

been named in the supplementary report.

Police said that 95 more accused have been included in the case of protest in front of the secret agency's office. "After recording statements of 70 arrested men under 161, 95 more accused have been added to the report," police said.

According to police,

Civil Lines police station has registered case against 300 unknown accused on the complaint of the SHO.

Police said that arrested accused Ali Raza Bilal has been under 14 days physical remand with police. "Police teams have been formed to arrest Farrukh Habib, Dr Nisar Jutt and other accused."

DG distributes cheques among cattle rearers

MULTAN (APP): Director General Livestock Department South Punjab, Dr. Mehmood Ejaz Gursi paid a visit to tehsil Jalalpur Pirwala here on Sunday.

Deputy Director Jalalpur Pirwala Dr. Jamshed Akhtar welcomed him and presented a bouquet.

DG Livestock attended a cheque distribution ceremony among the buffalo calves breeders under the project titled 'Save the Calves and Feedlot Fattening'.

He distributed cheques of subsidy for the amount of over Rs 1.7 million among the 189 buffalo

calves breeders.

He also reviewed the ongoing Lumpy Skin Disease vaccination campaign and said that the cold chain system of the lumpy Skin Disease vaccine should be maintained till inoculation to animals.

He reviewed the ongoing construction work of the veterinary dispensary under construction in Kurmoo Wali, a remote area of city Jalalpur Pirwala and said that the establishment of this new veterinary dispensary will further improve the quality of services provided to the cattle rearers.

Deputy Director Livestock Dr. Jamshed

Akhtar gave a detailed briefing to the DG about the performance of the Livestock department and the facilities provided to the cattle rearers.

Mehmood Ejaz held a meeting with all veterinary officers and issued instructions that providing the best veterinary services to livestock breeders was a top priority.

There will be no compromise on the uninterrupted provision of veterinary services to cattle rearers.

Veterinary officers go from village to village and inform the livestock keepers about various diseases of animals and birds, he concluded.

Approval given for 36 SIs promotion

FAISALABAD (APP): An approval has been given for promotion of 36 sub-inspectors (SIs) of the Police Department in Faisalabad.

According to a spokesman, City Police Officer (CPO) Usman Akram Gondal has approved promotion of 36 SIs as inspectors in list-F.

Among those being promoted are: Mushtaq

Ahmad, Wali Muhammad, Aslam, Sarfraz Khan, Ejaz Ahmad, Naseer-ud-Din, Shafiq, Sher Muhammad, Imtiaz Ahmad, Jahangir Khan, Maqsood Ahmad, Faqeer Hussain, Afzal, Habib-ur-Rehman, Afzal, Tariq Yaseen, Barkat Ali, Asim Rasheed, Aftab Iqbal, Gulnaz Khalid, Ishrat Rasheed, Ali Imran, Asif Nadeem, Asif, Asad Ali, A t e e q - u r - R e h m a n ,

Basharat Ali, Akmal Jamal, Sarfraz, Yousuf Shehzad, Iqbal Ibraheem, Imran Khan and Asghar Ali, etc., he added.

Two bodies found in Faisalabad

Bodies of two men including an addict were found in different parts of Faisalabad, here on Sunday. A spokesman said that some passersby spotted a body floating on surface of water in Rakh branch canal near Abdullah bridge, Samundri Road, and informed Rescue 1122.

The Rescue-1122 divers fished out the body which was later on identified as Naseer Ahmad (33), a resident of Nadir Shah Town Faisalabad.

Meanwhile, the body of an unidentified addict was recovered from a deserted place near Chak No 69-GB and it was handed over to Thikriwala police for identification and further investigation, he added.



FAISALABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Rana Sana Ullah Khan seeing off pilgrims departs for performing Hajj during first Hajj flight operations from Faisalabad International Airport.

PPP serving people's issues, says Chandio

LARKANA: The Pakistan Peoples' Party leader Nawab Sardar Khan Chandio Member of Provincial Assembly said that PPP is the name of people's service and its main cause success-hip frequently in all elections while he meeting with media at his residence on Sunday.

He said that we believe our party in interest development of poor as well as district Kamber Shahdadkot effected areas, as well as humanity as we faith on serving of peoples of our district.

He said also trying to solve their legal problems, newly/cracked roads as well as their residences etc. on top priority basis. He said he will be again elect in coming elections as per his hardship for public service.

JI Bahawalpur stages rally and demo

BAHAWALPUR (INP): Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan Bahawalpur chapter has taken out a rally and staged a demonstration in protest against the suicide attack on the convoy of Ameer-e-Jamaat Islami, Siraj-ul-Haque in Zhob area. The rally was taken out from the JI Bahawalpur office here.

Addressing the rally, JI South Punjab chief, Syed Zeeshan Akhtar strongly condemned the suicide attack on the convoy of JI Ameer, Siraj-ul-Haque in Zhob area. He said that Jamaat-e-Islami is a peaceful political party that always introduced honest political leadership in the country. He said that negative elements were involved in the attack on the JI convoy in Zhob.

Police arrest two thieves

TANK (APP): District police, tracing a theft case, arrested two alleged thieves and recovered stolen items from them in the limits of Malazai Police Station. A police team led by Malazai Police Station SHO Rehmdil Khan traced a theft case registered on May 19, 2023.

The police arrested two alleged thieves including Faheem Ullah son of Keesmya Gul resident of Malazai and Ajmal son of Alam Gul resident of Peing.

During the initial interrogation, the police, on the revelation of the arrested accused, also recovered stolen items including 13 T-irons, three hand-carts, two electric batteries, two doors and a submersible machine.

20 criminals arrested

SARGODHA (APP): The Sargodha police, in a crackdown on lawbreakers, arrested 20 alleged criminals, here on Sunday.

A spokesman said police raided different localities and arrested Akhtar, Aslam, Anwar, Sajid, Saeed, Rehman, Rab Nawaz, Tahir, Tayyab, Tiamoor, Tariq, Touseef, Tasawe and others. The police also recovered 145 litres of liquor, 2.3-kg hashish, 1.2-kg opium, nine pistols, four guns, three Kalashnikovs and valuables worth millions from the alleged criminals.

Police foils smuggling attempt

ABBOTTABAD (APP): Excise Police Abbottabad on Sunday foiled an attempt to smuggle foreign currency worth millions of rupees and confiscated the currency after arresting two accused.

According to the Excise Police sources, during a routine checking of vehicles at Hazara Motorway, Excise Inspector Naem Khan stopped a car No. ACZ-276 and searched the vehicle.

The police recovered 24500 pounds worth 7.5 million in Pakistani rupees

from the car.

The police arrested two accused red-handed including Haroon ur Rasheed son of Aishaq Khan resident of district Khyber and Faisal son of Akbar resident of Hripur.

The Excise police confiscated the currency worth 7.5 million rupees and the vehicle used in the smuggling of the foreign currency, registered a case under the foreign currency act and handed it over to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) for investigation.

Examiners directed to ensure exams' transparency

LARKANA (APP): The Controller of Examinations, Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Larkana Fakhruddin Ahmed Babar Abro on Sunday directed all the examiners to ensure the sanctity of examinations and conduct the same in a transparent manner without any influence, pressure and interference.

In a directive to examiners conducting the Annual

Examinations-2023 of Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) Part-I and II (Class XI & XII) would commence from May 22, 2023.

The Controller asked that only those persons be allowed into the examination centres who have been authorized by the Board through any notification, order or letter, duly stamped with the monogram of the Board.

Any other person, whoso-

Court acquits 2 brothers

F.P. Report

SWABI: Criminal Model Court Swabi acquitted two brothers over lack of evidence in double murder case. The counsel Syed Mubashir Shah advocate that petitioners along with their father were nominated in murder case in the premises of Parmulay police station Swabi occurred in July 2021 over old rivalry.

In the incident Asad Zaman and Fakhar Zaman were dead while Shabbir Muhammad injured while Ahmad Farooq and his brother sons of Farooq Zaman are charged for the offence over old rivalry.

Syed Mubashir Shah advocate argued that police has failed to establish the commencement of offense with the accused.

MEPCO completes upgradation of project

MULTAN (APP): Multan Electric Power Company (MEPCO) has completed the upgradation project of 132KV Sahiwal third grid station at a cost of over Rs six million to provide electricity with better voltage to the consumers.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Engineer Mahar Allah Yar Bharwana has congratulated the Project Director GSC MEPCO

Syed Jawad Mansoor Ahmad, GSO/GSC department teams for completing the project in a short time period and said that the existing grid stations were being upgraded along with

establishment of new grid stations in order to provide uninterrupted power supply to consumers during summer season.

The number of power transformer installed in 132KV Sahiwal 3 grid station has increased to 3 after the installation of new power transformer.

1039 power pilferers nabbed in recent month in South Punjab

Multan Electric Power Company (MEPCO) has caught 1039 power pilferers during separate operations launched throughout the South Punjab during current month of May,

MEPCO official said on Sunday.

MEPCO teams accompanying task forces raided different places in Multan, Vehari, Sahiwal, Rahimyar Khan, Muzaffargarh, Bahawalnagar, Khanewal, and DG Khan and detected theft of over 1.4 million electricity units.

A sum of over Rs 41.1 million fine was imposed while cases were got registered against 83 power pilferers over Involvement in body of meters, direct supply. Installing loop in meters, slowing down meters, meter dead stop and meter screen wash.

Sargodha achieves 70% of wheat procurement target

SARGODHA (APP): Deputy Director Food Allah Ditta Saqib said on Sunday that 199,992 metric tons of wheat had been procured in four districts of Sargodha division so far, which was about 70 per cent of the set target.

Talking to the media here, he said that this year, the wheat procurement target had been increased to 302,860 metric tons. In Sargodha district, 100pc

target had been achieved by procuring 107,867 metric tons of wheat, he added.

A target of 21,068 metric tons of wheat had been set for Khushab district and so far 16,934 metric tonnes had been purchased, which was 80 per cent of the set target.

In Mianwali district, 23,522 metric tons of wheat had been purchased so far against the set target of 63,203 metric tons, while 50,530 metric tons of wheat

had been procured in Bhakkar district, which was 44 per cent of the set target of 110,722 metric tons.

He highlighted that this year, 31.17 maunds of per acre wheat production had been recorded, which was 5 maunds per acre more than the last year's, adding that so far 3.8 million metric tons of gunny bags (bardana) had been given to growers, which was more than the set target.

Basti Malook PS staff suspended

MULTAN (APP): City Police Officer Mansoor-Ul-Haq Rana suspended all staff of Basti Malook police station over violations of Inspector General of Police Punjab Dr Usman Anwar regarding disbanding of police pickets across the province here on Sunday.

Taking action on the viral video of police picket

at Qasba Laar in premises of Basti Malook police station, the CPO Mansoor-Ul-Haq Rana suspended all staff of the police station including the Station House Officer (SHO) Abadullah Shah, Incharge police picket Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Haider Ali. The suspended officials have been directed to report police

line with immediate effect.

The CPO said that staff of the police station has been suspended over violations of IGP's order adding that strict disciplinary action would be taken against the violators. He said that misuse of power and violation of orders of the senior officers would not be tolerated at any cost.



The three men vying to lead Greece

ATHENS (AFP/APP): Greece votes on Sunday in a general election that promises to be the closest in more than a decade, with three main parties competing for seats in the 300-member parliament.

Outgoing prime minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis of conservative New Democracy, former premier Alexis Tsipras of leftist Syriza and ex-European lawmaker Nikos Androulakis of the Socialists are aiming to lead their parties to victory.

During the last election in 2019, New Democracy unseated Syriza.

While Mitsotakis is heading into the election with opinion polls giving him a clear lead, the surveys also suggest that he is unlikely to garner a lead wide enough for an outright majority in parliament. This means that at least two of the parties will need to cooperate to form a government to avoid a fresh election by July.

Here is a look at the leaders of the main three parties.

Mitsotakis, 55, is seeking a second four-year term as prime minister on the strength of his record of economic growth, fiscal management and a robust foreign policy that includes a pair of key alliance deals with the US and France.

"We have much more experience now... to boldly move forward in order to carry out the changes that will make Greece a modern European country," he said in a televised interview earlier in May.

A Harvard graduate and former McKinsey consultant, Mitsotakis has warned that the country needs a "strong hand at the helm" amid the war in Ukraine and other challenges, and that failure to re-elect his conservative New Democracy party will undermine Greece's economic rebound after a near-decade debt crisis. A scion of a Greek political dynasty dating to the late 19th century, Mitsotakis has long struggled to shake off his elitist image. His father Constantine Mitsotakis was also prime minister three decades ago. His sister is former minister Dora Bakoyannis, the first woman mayor of Athens. The current Athens mayor, Costas

Bakoyannis, is her son and Mitsotakis' nephew.

Leader of the conservative New Democracy party since 2016, Mitsotakis is married to entrepreneur Mareva Grabowski, co-founder of the Zeus+Dione luxury clothing brand. They have three children.

Tsipras, who was prime minister from 2015 to 2019 during some of Greece's rockiest crisis years, is asking voters for a second chance to show what his labour-friendly leftist Syriza party can truly do without the austerity shackles of EU-IMF supervision. "Enough is enough," the 48-year-old told a rally in Larissa, central Greece during the campaign hustings. "Enough with profiteering, inequality, nepotism, indifference, arrogance, injustice," he said, accusing Mitsotakis of showering billions of euros on political and family allies.

A sovereign debt crisis that began in 2009 plunged Greece into financial turmoil, with the country requiring three bail-outs from the EU and the International Monetary Fund, in return for severe austerity measures that upended the economy and impoverished many.

The first avowed atheist prime minister in deeply religious Greece and the youngest in over a century, Tsipras is broadly remembered as the anti-austerity radical who took on the country's creditors and nearly crashed Greece out of the euro, before reversing course and accepting a third bail-out. Greece ultimately exited its austerity constraints on Tsipras's watch in 2018, and he has since pulled his party towards the centre to broaden its appeal. The former Communist is also credited with untangling a 28-year diplomatic dispute with Greece's northern neighbour, which was renamed North Macedonia in a landmark deal opposed by nationalists in both countries, including Mitsotakis.

Tsipras first appeared on the Greek political scene in the early 1990s at the tender age of 16 as an organiser of school sit-ins, sporting an Elvis-style ducktail.

Ironically, the prime minister whose education policies he was challenging was Mitsotakis's father.

Tsipras rapidly rose through the ranks of his party, then called Synaspismos, after being hand-picked as a fresh face to run for Athens mayor in 2006. Two years later, he was elected party leader.

He has two children with his high-school sweetheart Betty Baziana, an electronics engineer.

The head of Greek Socialist party Pasok-Kinal, 44-year-old Nikos Androulakis, had been seen by analysts as a potential coalition partner for Mitsotakis after his election as party chairman in 2021.

But chances of cooperation took a nosedive after Androulakis last year discovered that he had been under state surveillance shortly before becoming party leader.

A trained civil engineer and former party youth organiser, Androulakis was previously a two-term European Parliament lawmaker. He sat on the committee investigating the Volkswagen emissions scandal. He was elected chairman in December 2021 after the sudden death of previous party leader Fofi Gennimata.

The novice leader raised eyebrows in March after declaring that he would only lend support to a coalition government if neither Mitsotakis nor Tsipras became prime minister.

Because he was not an elected member of Greece's parliament, Androulakis was the first party leader who could not participate in debates in the chamber.

The Socialist party was instead represented by another senior cadre. In past weeks, Androulakis has accused Tsipras of copying the slogans of the Socialist party's founder Andreas Papandreu.

Three-time premier Papandreu famously stormed to power in 1981 under the campaign motto of "Change".

Androulakis's slogan for May 21 is "make change possible".

Like Mitsotakis, Androulakis hails from the island of Crete and is a single father.

Air strikes shake Khartoum as Sudan rivals agree 1-week ceasefire

KHARTOUM (AFP/APP): Air strikes and artillery exchanges shook the Sudanese capital Saturday and armed men ransacked the Qatari embassy as the country's warring generals kept up their struggle for control even as they agreed to a brief humanitarian pause. With heavy fighting raging in Khartoum, the rival sides struck a deal on a seven-day ceasefire beginning the evening of May 22, the United States and Saudi Arabia said Saturday in a joint statement after talks in Jeddah.

The ceasefire "shall remain in effect for seven days and may be extended with the agreement of both parties," it said.

Multiple announced truces have been violated since fighting broke out five weeks ago, which the Saudi foreign ministry acknowledged in a statement published by the official Saudi Press Agency early Sunday.

"Unlike previous ceasefires, the Agreement reached in Jeddah was signed by the parties and will be supported by a US-Saudi and international-supported ceasefire monitoring mechanism," it said.

It said subsequent talks "will focus on additional steps necessary to improve security and humanitarian conditions for civilians such as vacating forces from urban centers, including civilian homes, accelerating removal of impediments to the free movement of civilians and humanitarian actors, and enabling public servants to resume their regular duties."

The power struggle between regular army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy turned rival Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who heads the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), erupted into fighting on April 15.

The conflict has killed hundreds of people, most of them civilians, and displaced more than one million. The United Nations has warned of a fast-deteriorating humanitarian situation in Africa's third-largest country, where one in three people already relied on aid before the war.

Saturday's ceasefire announcement comes two weeks after representatives of the warring generals first gathered in Jeddah for talks.

By May 11 they had signed a commitment to respect humanitarian principles and allow in badly needed aid.

But UN aid chief Martin Griffiths told AFP on Thursday that there had been "important and egregious" violations of that agreement, which fell short of a ceasefire.

On Friday, Burhan sacked Daglo, giving his title of vice president of the ruling Sovereign Council to former rebel leader Malik Agar, and appointed three allies to top jobs in the military. A former rebel leader who signed a peace deal with Khartoum authorities in 2020, Agar said in a statement Saturday he was determined to try to "end the war" and press for negotiations.

He also addressed Daglo directly saying "Sudan's stability can only be re-established by a professional and unified army".

Integration of the RSF into the regular armed forces has been the main bone of contention between Daglo and Burhan.

The force, which traces its origins to the notorious Janjaweed militia recruited in the early 2000s to crush a rebellion by ethnic minority groups in Darfur, is highly mobile but has a reputation for being ill-disciplined.

Its fighters have been accused of

widespread break-ins and looting, including at diplomatic missions and aid group offices.

On Saturday, Qatar's embassy was the latest diplomatic mission to be attacked, drawing condemnation from Doha.

"The embassy staff had previously been evacuated and... none of the diplomats or embassy staff were subjected to any harm," the ministry said. It renewed calls for "an immediate halt to the fighting". Qatar did not specifically identify Daglo's RSF as responsible but a statement from the pro-Burhan authorities put the blame squarely on the paramilitaries.

The embassies of Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey have also come under assault in recent weeks.

Saturday's attack came a day after Arab leaders meeting at a summit in Saudi Arabia urged Sudan's feuding generals to halt the fighting.

Although the main fighting is being played out in Khartoum, the violence has also spread to the war-ravaged western region of Darfur, where the RSF has its roots.

In South Darfur capital Nyala, fighting since Thursday has killed 22 people forcing civilians to flee for safer areas as shells crash on their homes, the bar association in Darfur has said.

On Friday, the UN aid boss Griffith said he was allocating \$22 million in emergency funds to help Sudanese fleeing the violence.

The funds will help relief efforts in Chad, the Central African Republic, Egypt and South Sudan where Sudanese have sought refuge, he said.

The United States promised \$103 million for Sudan and neighbouring countries to support displaced people.

Private mission carrying first Saudi astronauts to visit ISS set for launch

CAPE CANAVERAL (AFP/APP): A private mission to the International Space Station (ISS) organized by Axiom Space is due to blast off from Florida on Sunday, carrying the first two Saudi astronauts to go to the orbiting laboratory.

Raayannah Barnawi, a breast cancer researcher, will become the first Saudi woman to voyage into space and will be joined on the mission by fellow Saudi Ali Al-Qarni, a fighter pilot.

The Axiom Mission 2 (Ax-2) crew will take off aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from the Kennedy Space Center at Cape Canaveral in the southern state of Florida at 5:37 pm (2137 GMT).

The team also includes Peggy Whitson, a former NASA astronaut who will be making her fourth flight to the ISS, and John Shoffner, a businessman from Tennessee who will serve as pilot.

They are due to spend around 10 days on board the ISS, where they should arrive around 1:30 pm on Monday.

"Being the first Saudi woman astronaut, representing the region, it's a great pleasure and honor that I'm very happy to carry," said Barnawi at a

recent press conference.

She added that, aside from excitement for the research she will carry out on board, she is looking forward to sharing her experience with kids while on the ISS.

"Being able to see their faces when they see astronauts from their own region for the first time is very thrilling," she said.

A career fighter pilot, Al-Qarni said he has "always had the passion of exploring the unknown and just admiring the sky and the stars."

"It is a great opportunity for me to pursue this kind of passion that I have, and now maybe just fly among the stars."

The mission is not Saudi Arabia's first foray into space.

In 1985, Prince Sultan bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, an air force pilot, took part in a US-organized space voyage.

But the space mission involving a Saudi woman is the latest move by the oil-rich Gulf kingdom, where women only gained the right to drive a few years ago, to revamp its ultraconservative image.

The kingdom established the Saudi Space Commission in 2018 and has launched a program last year to send astronauts

to space.

The four-member team is set to carry out some 20 experiments while on the ISS.

One of them involves studying the behavior of stem cells in zero gravity.

They will join seven others already on board the ISS: three Russians, three Americans and Emirati astronaut Sultan al-Neyadi, who was the first Arab national to go on a spacewalk last month.

The mission to the ISS will be the second in partnership with ISS-key holder NASA by Axiom Space, a private space company, which offers the rare voyages for sums that run into the millions of dollars.

The company oversees training the astronauts, chartering their means of transport and ensuring the smooth management of their stay.

Axiom Space carried out its first private astronaut mission to the ISS in April 2022, sending three businessmen and former astronaut Michael Lopez-Alegria to spend 17 days in orbit as part of Ax-1.

Some astronauts on the ISS at the time said they had to take time out of their day -- precious in zero gravity -- to take care

of the space tourists.

"My time is actually a lot less constrained than Mike Lopez-Alegria's time was on the first mission," said Whitson. "I'll be available to help the crew members a lot more as they need assistance."

For Axiom Space, these missions are a first step toward an ambitious goal: the construction of its own space station, with the first module expected to launch in 2025.

The station would at first be attached to the ISS before separating and orbiting independently.

NASA plans to retire the ISS around 2030 and to instead send astronauts to private stations, which will also host their own clients, leading the US space agency to encourage the development of programs by several companies.

Russia recently agreed to extend its use of the ISS until 2028, having threatened an earlier pullout last year as ties unraveled between the Kremlin and the West over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

The other international partners -- Japan, Canada and the European Space Agency -- have committed themselves, like the United States, to continue operations until 2030.

Lahore Literary Festival returns to New York, with Masood Khan hoping for boost in people-to-people contacts

NEW YORK (APP): Lahore Literary Festival (LLF) returned to New York after a four-year break resulting from the Covid pandemic, with Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States, Masood Khan, saying that this premier cultural event will give stimulus to the people-to-people US-Pak relations.

"This is like a breath of fresh air and we must pay tribute to the founders of the Lahore Literary Festival," he said in his opening remarks at the event showcasing Pakistan's intellectual, cultural, historical and creative aspects of life.

The Asia Society, New York, is holding the day-long festival in conjunction with the Lahore Literary Festival, one of South Asia's premier cultural events. Speakers include

Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, Kamila Shamsie, Shahbaz Taseer, Marina Fareed, Tahira Naqvi, Sadia Shepard. They will discuss various topics at three separate sessions during the day. LLF founder and CEO Razi Ahmed welcomed the Ambassador for his presence, as did Rachael Cooper on behalf of Asia Society. Noting that there were literary festivals taking place in Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad and Muzaffarabad, Ambassador Masood Khan proposed that the organizers should consider holding this event at the United Nations too.

"Take this literary festival inside the United Nations," Khan, who has served at the world body as Pakistan's top diplomat, said. If literary festivals are held at the U.N., where the functioning is a little

bureaucratic, "they would be closer to the people because the U.N. Charter proclaims, "We the People". In his remarks, Ambassador Masood Khan said that Lahore -- in addition to its many other identities -- one was that of being literary and cultural. Before the partition of India, he said, Lahore contributed to South Asian literature, producing some of the best writers and then contributing to filmmaking, with top directors, musicians, scriptwriters, poets. "They all belonged to Lahore, they had stature -- influencing not only their own generation, but the future generations."

He said people tend to look at Pakistan through the prism of politics and strategic paradigms, but beyond that, the country has a strong literary tradition that

was being projected by LLF in New York. Asia Society, the Pakistani envoy said, has connected many countries with the United States. "So you made seminal contribution to bringing people together. Your efforts, and the efforts of these festivals, are people-driven. They are not influenced by governments directly or indirectly."

Masood Khan said, "Pakistan has a great future, as 64% of its population is below the age of 30, which would be about 130 million to 140 million. With people graduating from the universities, they have been integrated into the international mainstream. " Pakistan's strong ties and partnership with the United States, he said, was going to turn into a common good not only for the two countries, but for the entire international community.

Spain says containing wildfire as conditions improve

MADRID (AFP/APP): Spanish authorities said Saturday that firefighters and soldiers were managing to contain a blaze in the country's west that has forced hundreds of people to evacuate from nearby villages. "Today, we're hoping to strike a blow against this fire... It's a very intense task," said civil protection coordinator Nieves Villar, adding that conditions had improved as the high windspeeds of recent days dropped back.

That prompted regional forest fire prevention and extinction services to declare the situation "stabilised" by late evening.

"The situation with the forest fire in Pinofranqueado is better than yesterday and the change in the weather conditions can help as the hours go by," regional government leader Guillermo Fernandez Vara said in a post to social media.

Winds are only expected to finally calm on Sunday, when there is the possibility of light rain.

Local authorities have blamed arson for the wildfire that broke out



Wednesday near the village of Pinofranqueado in the sparsely populated region of Extremadura bordering Portugal. The flames have ravaged some 3,500 hectares (8,500 acres) of forest and scrubland and forced the evacuation of around 700 people from several villages, the regional government said.

Data from Europe's Copernicus satellite system showed as much as 12,000 hectares had been affected by the blaze across the affected province of Caceras.

Villar said 600 firefighters had been deployed overall, including Portuguese colleagues. Backing them are 14 water-

bombing aircraft, the regional agriculture ministry said. Fernandez Vara lashed out Friday against the "bastards" who had set the fires that caused "irreversible damages that take decades to recover, if they ever recover".

The strong winds of up to 60 kilometres (35 miles) an hour had made controlling the flames "extremely difficult", he added.

But he expressed hope Saturday evening that more clement weather conditions in the hours ahead would make it easier to douse the fire. Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez cancelled his participation on Friday at a rally in Extremadura ahead of regional elections on

May 28 because of the blaze. Spain, which is experiencing long-term drought after three years of below-average rainfall, has already experienced multiple wildfires this year.

The drought was made worse by an unusually early heatwave at the end of April that brought exceptionally high temperatures normally seen only in summer. Temperatures hit 38.8 degrees Celsius (101.8 degrees Fahrenheit) in the southern city of Granada on April 27, the highest ever recorded in mainland Spain during that month.

In 2022, a particularly bad year for wildfires in Europe, Spain was the continent's worst-hit country.

Nearly 500 blazes destroyed more than 300,000 hectares, according to the European Forest Fire Information System.

Scientists say human-induced climate change is making extreme weather events including heatwaves and droughts more frequent and more intense. They increase the risk of fires, which emit climate heating greenhouse gases.

V I L L A M A R Í A (AFP/APP): Screams, dismembered bodies among the thousands dead, and his town buried in mud. Survivor William Suarez remembers the horror of Colombia's Nevado del Ruiz volcanic eruption of 1985, but he dismisses authorities' latest warnings of a repeat.

"I just don't believe that" threat alert, the 73-year-old with a gray mustache scoffed recently when asked about the underlying risk of another eruption.

Like him, many of the 57,000 residents who live in the danger zone surrounding the Andes volcano refuse to evacuate despite the government's request and an orange alert that has been in force since March.

That's when the recorded seismic tremors inside the crater soared, from 50 per day to 12,000.

Still, Suarez stubbornly believes the more than 5,300-meter (17,400-foot) colossus that elders call "sleeping lion" -- and which lies within the Pacific Ring of Fire that

contains many of the world's most active volcanoes -- will not erupt again for "about 50 years" or so.

Authorities fear a major Nevado del Ruiz eruption could cause the kind of devastation that shattered the area back in 1985.

In a matter of hours, an expulsion of lava melted the snowcap, creating raging torrents of mud, ash and rocks that streamed down the mountainside and buried the town of Armero. Some 25,000 people were killed in the worst natural disaster in the country's modern history.

Still, practical matters weigh on the choices facing farmers, who must decide whether to stay put and tend to their crops and pack animals, or heed the evacuation call and abandon their livelihoods.

Suarez is a farmer from Viejo Rio Claro, a riverside village nestled between mountains and belonging to the town of Villamaria, one of the areas declared to be at high risk.

Almost four decades on, he recalls when the volcano roared to life with catastrophic consequences.

"High up there you could see it belching fire, like the color of bricks, and the earth was shaking," Suarez told AFP of that November 13 night. "People started screaming and running on the road."

The next day "there were pieces of hands, arms, half bodies, decapitated heads," he said, standing next to the church that remains intact. Over the past several days, in Villamaria and the neighboring city of Manizales, an unusual stench has been noticed by many.

According to the Geological Service (SGC) it could be due to the dispersion of a high concentration of sulfur dioxide, combined with "ash components" and moisture.

From Manizales, thick clouds can be seen around the snow-capped mountain, which according to Castano concentrate gases, water vapor and ash from the crater.

The SGC has warned that settlements on the banks of the rivers near the volcano suffer a high risk from potential flows of sediments, mud and volcanic debris.

Yet locals in Viejo Rio Claro feel prepared in the event of an emergency.

Jose Jaramillo, 71, said he is relying on training he received as a first responder and firefighter in the event of an eruption.

"(We are) eager for the event to happen so we can end this anxiety... and put into practice everything we've learned," says Jaramillo, who arrived in the town after the 1985 eruption.

Felix Giraldo, head of risk management for the area, estimates that in the rural confines of Villamaria there are some 1,200 families at risk from a new eruption.

While tensions may have eased in the weeks since the government issued its orange alert, Giraldo insists the threat remains real.

"We cannot let our guard down," he said.

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JALIL AFRIDI
Managing Editor

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Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001
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E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

“USA and Canada Toll Free Number 415-3704551

Judicial commission and urge for a liable justice

The Federal Government on Saturday formed a three-member judicial commission to probe the veracity of audio leaks and their impact on the independence of the judiciary. The commission will be headed by Supreme Court senior Judge Justice Qazi Faez Isa. It would be comprised of Balochistan High Court (BHC) Chief Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan and Islamabad High Court (IHC) Chief Justice Aamer Farooq. As said the commission will work under the provisions of the Inquiry Commission Act 2017 and will probe the genuineness of the audio leaks and its worst effect on the judiciary.

A series of audio clips of Tele conversations between various individuals including close relatives and family members of serving adjudicators and retired judges of the senior judiciary had surfaced in recent months while those audio clips were prominently aired and published by the mainstream print and electronic media, while those controversial audio clips got viral over the social media in the country and abroad. The contentious audio clips created doubts and suspicions regarding the senior judiciary's independence, impartiality, and uprightness and the conduct of the Chief Justices/judges of superior courts in the delivery of justice. Although, there had been rumors in public regarding the trading of justice, the availability of paid witnesses and frontmen of the adjudicators who help facilitate the criminals in bartering bail/pardon and immunity in reward of money/ plots or luxuries vehicles for the adjudicators and their family members. Meanwhile, the former Army Chief General Retired Qamar Javed Bajwa categorically accused the senior judges in his recent interview of shedding off merit and transparency in their under-trial cases in the fulfillment of mere desires of their family members, spouses, and children through the announcement of biased verdicts and serving of dented justice. However, the recent widely circulated controversial audios have been witnessed by the public across the world on electronic, print, and social media, alleging the judiciary and former Chief Justices/judges of untransparent conduct in respect of their official duty that undoubtedly owes high importance, sensitivity along with the religious and national obligation.

The ongoing political and constitutional crises are worsening rapidly with every passing day, as the combatant political groups, top bureaucrats as well as the people wearing black robes are not ready to give in to their personal ego and abide by the code of conduct in a larger interest of the nation. Unfortunately, the warring parties had brought political issues to the court to manipulate the law and get verdicts of their own choice. Inter alia, the courts fell prey to the Politicians' scheme attracted controversies and criticism in an effort to evaluate political strategy and dispel justice to the self-inflicted victim. Meanwhile, political groups unashamedly gave a selected appreciation of the court decisions and otherwise, they harassed the judges, politicize the jury, and undermined the judicial process. Unfortunately, the battle for control and institutional politics badly hurt the functioning of the institutions, and departmental issues of the judiciary were brought to the streets for public discussion that damaged the institution. The recent audio leaks further eroded public trust and raised serious concerns in the public regarding the conduct of judges along with the independence, impartiality, and integrity of the superior courts. The government has constituted an independent judicial commission to ascertain the veracity of the audio clips and differentiate facts from fiction.

Accountability and reformation is an ongoing process that is a need of all public institutions because several government departments including the judiciary, the military, the Federal Ombudsmen Department, the ECP, NAB, Anti-Corruption, Custom Department, FBR, and Parliament had been struck by multiple institutional ailments including corruption, institutional politics and bias as well as abuse of power, waste of resources and nepotism. Although, accountability of adjudicators is essential, yet it should not be a part of any political agenda of the incumbent rulers. Earlier, the sitting government moved the Supreme Court Practice and Procedure Bill-2023 aimed at slashing certain powers from the office of the Chief Justice and now it has formed an independent judicial commission to ascertain the origin of the audio leaks pertaining to the senior judiciary. Under the Constitution, the independence, integrity, and character of Chief Justices/judges are of utmost importance for maintaining public confidence in the justice system, while the current government has vested this responsibility in three senior judges to evaluate the charges against their colleagues and if evidence proved, suggest actions/reforms for their institution. So, this important pillar of the state could be pure from politics, internal biases, and judges' rivalry, which would surely lead to the provision of a fair, and fearless justice to the public but also ensure the same in the lower courts across the country.

Saudi Arabia can turn Arab League Summit promises into reality

Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg

The Arab League Summit in Jeddah has brought hope and enthusiasm in comparison with the usually unremarkable gatherings staged by the organization. The unity on display created an unmistakable momentum that could have a positive effect on some of the region's intractable crises. All 22 states showed up on Friday, most represented by their heads of state, and almost all spoke with one voice. Some speakers still adhered to the old style of stirring oratory, but most spoke with measured and practical tones.

In a remarkable gesture, President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine was there. He gave a rousing speech in which he thanked Saudi Arabia for its peace and humanitarian efforts, and then strongly criticized Russia, appealing to the Arab states to help his country reverse the occupation of Ukrainian land.

In an interesting twist, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin both sent messages to the summit.

The fact that the summit was held in Saudi Arabia, in the shadow of Islam's holiest places, was cited as a reason for hope that the decisions reached in Jeddah will be faithfully implemented.

On Friday, the rotating presidency of the Arab League was transferred from Algeria to the Kingdom, meaning that the new presidency will be responsible for following up the implementation of those decisions, together with the Arab League bureaucracy. The Jeddah Declaration issued at the end of the summit listed the new presidency's priorities.

There were about 40 items on the summit's agenda, but chief among these were the Palestine-Israel conflict, Sudan, Syria and Ukraine. In addition to

the mainstay of political issues, there was plenty of discussion on climate change, renewable energy and food security, for example.

The intransigence of the current Israeli government made it easy to reach consensus on opposition to its policies. There was revulsion at the one-sided violence exacted almost daily against Palestinians, the desecration of Muslim holy sites, the uprooting of Palestinian families from their homes, the destruction of towns and communities,

parties as talks continued between them in Jeddah while the summit was taking place. Egypt and the Kingdom are the two countries closest to and most affected by the conflict in Sudan, and in its new capacity as the Arab League's rotating president, Saudi Arabia has an enhanced role there.

On Ukraine, the summit was somewhat divided. Inviting Zelensky was a masterstroke of diplomacy, but also an expression of

conflict.

Inviting Bashar Assad was the most controversial of all decisions regarding the summit. The invitation was preceded by many high-level meetings in Saudi Arabia, Cairo, Amman and Damascus. A "step-by-step" formula was reached, whereby Syria will move positively on the issues of concern to the Arab League, which led to the freezing of its membership in the organization 10 years ago. In exchange, the

past, in substance much remains to be done to normalize relations with Tehran. That point was made most clearly by Rashad Al-Alimi, head of the Yemen Presidential Leadership Council, who bitterly criticized Iran's support for the Houthis, who have rejected all peace overtures.

During the days before the summit, back-to-back meetings of ministers and other senior officials hammered out agreements and compromises on those issues. After those documents have been endorsed by the summit, it is up to the Arab League's follow-up mechanisms to ensure their implementation. As the Arab League's rotating presidency, Saudi Arabia can play an important role in that process by putting pressure on both the league's bureaucracy and member states to live up to the promises made in Jeddah.

The Arab League is one of the oldest intergovernmental organizations, but has been frequently criticized for not matching its lofty promises with actual deeds. Some of that criticism is fair and has a lot to do with its corporate culture and the circumstances under which it was born eight decades ago. Established in March 1945, it predates the UN, EU, and most other regional and international organizations operating today. Its longevity is remarkable, notwithstanding the many criticisms directed at its performance over the years. It was born just months before the end of the Second World War. As the war was drawing to a close, its founding states, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen, wanted to speak with one voice in the post-war period.

The league's preoccupation at the start was decolonization. In 1945, most of its current members were still under foreign rule. The organization was united and quite effective in ending colonial rule in the Arab world, with the notable exception of Palestine. It has also been useful in promoting Arabic language and culture.

However, the Arab League has suffered daunting setbacks over the years. The original rule of unanimity in its charter limited its movement. Before the charter was amended in 1990 to allow for majority-based decisions, any state or a small group of states could exercise a virtual veto over the group's decisions. The organization's effectiveness is still influenced by the degree of consensus it can achieve among members on key issues.

Judging by many comments by both delegates to the summit and outside observers, most are counting on Saudi Arabia's presidency over the next months to achieve the consensus needed to translate the promises made in Jeddah into action.

On Ukraine, the summit was somewhat divided. Inviting Zelensky was a masterstroke of diplomacy, but also an expression of sympathy and political support. Most Arab League members have voted at the UN consistently against Russia's aggression, and in support of Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and inviolability of its borders. But there remain some who were sympathetic to Russia's position. Overall, however, the summit, led by Saudi Arabia, wanted to play a positive role in trying to end the conflict, provide humanitarian assistance to Ukraine, and help countries affected by food shortages caused by the conflict. Inviting Bashar Assad was the most controversial of all decisions regarding the summit. The invitation was preceded by many high-level meetings in Saudi Arabia, Cairo, Amman and Damascus. A "step-by-step" formula was reached, whereby Syria will move positively on the issues of concern to the Arab League, which led to the freezing of its membership in the organization 10 years ago. In exchange, the Arab League and its members will normalize their relationship with the country and provide assistance where needed. A committee of member states was set up to ensure the implementation of this formula.

and the anti-Arab racist speech and actions committed by senior Israeli officials. While there was praise for Egypt's role in arranging a ceasefire in Gaza, there was little hope expressed on the rest of that exceedingly bloody conflict.

On Sudan, there was praise for the Saudi and American efforts to reach an agreement on a truce. The summit established a new group, made up of Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the Arab League itself, to engage with the warring

sympathy and political support. Most Arab League members have voted at the UN consistently against Russia's aggression, and in support of Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and inviolability of its borders. But there remain some who were sympathetic to Russia's position. Overall, however, the summit, led by Saudi Arabia, wanted to play a positive role in trying to end the conflict, provide humanitarian assistance to Ukraine, and help countries affected by food shortages caused by the

Arab League and its members will normalize their relationship with the country and provide assistance where needed. A committee of member states was set up to ensure the implementation of this formula.

The Saudi Arabia-Iran diplomatic breakthrough, brokered by China in March, provided the right acoustics and an opening to reach a compromise on Syria, but it was clear that the Arab states expect more from Iran. While the language used was less confrontational than in the

The next global scramble for resources will hit close to home for many of us

Hafed Al-Ghwel

In the 18th century, some of the first nation-states raced to industrialize, spawning a scramble during the 19th century for the territory and resources required to fuel the nascent industries of what are now the world's advanced economies.

Likewise, during the 20th century we saw the energy rush, be it oil or nuclear, as wartime economies shifted toward mass consumerism, culminating in the information age that is now propelling us toward new frontiers such as automation, artificial intelligence, and the decentralized ledger technologies used in blockchains, to name but a few.

These innovations will undoubtedly be critical in global efforts to deal with myriad convergent crises, including climate change. However, as more countries achieve parity in terms of technological advances, we can expect a new scramble to monopolize the planet's last uncontested resource — its human capital.

At present, such a scenario might appear far from likely. After all, economic migrants continue to comprise about two-thirds of international migration, while refugees and other displaced persons fleeing violence or conflict account for just over 10 percent.

International migration remains high overall, and projections suggest it will continue to increase over the next two decades as a result of the usual drivers that affect origin and destination countries.

Currently, average per capita incomes are more than 50 times higher in wealthier countries than in low-income nations, and the World Bank estimates it will take more than a century to close the income gaps if current growth rates persist.

In short, socioeconomic differences have historically driven migration and this trend might intensify, but only up to a certain point; as with all resources, aside from renewables, even human capital is finite.

Over the next two decades, developed countries, with their aging populations and shrinking workforces, will need growing numbers of foreign workers. According to the UN,

the number of people over the age of 65 is expected to double to about 1.3 billion by 2040, at which point they will make up a quarter of the population of the developed world.

European and East Asian countries will be most affected by this, due to low birth rates. It will result in a reduction in working-age populations but any attempt by governments to delay retirement would be a political own goal, as evidenced by the mass protests against such moves that have already taken place in Greece, France and Russia.

A number of governments are increasingly keen to address these issues, not

maintaining overall competitiveness. Machines and clever programming alone will not be able to do that.

Nor will they be able to reduce the shares of national budgets needed for elder care, which creates new constraints. Keeping up with rising pension costs could, for example, limit expenditure on national defense, as is already happening in NATO countries.

Moreover, many developed countries will need additional migrant workers to care for those increasingly elderly populations. It is predicted that by the next decade, developed coun-

Similarly, Canada's Express Entry, the EU's Blue Card, and Australia's points-based immigration system are a few other examples of the ways in which archaic, bureaucratic and intentionally complicated systems are slowly changing, by prioritizing skilled immigrants and rewarding them with a fast-tracked residency process or even citizenship. Europe, in particular, will need millions of new, young workers as soon as 2025 if it plans to sustain adequate employment levels and close gaps in the labor market. Yet many Europeans do not want to do the types of jobs that migrants are willing to take on, which necessitates that authorities look elsewhere and make the case that countries such as Spain, Italy, Germany, France or the UK are desirable destinations for permanent settlement. Of course, this entails the implementation of policies that prioritize growth and stability over fringe concerns about reduced cultural homogeneity. Unfortunately, this is easier said than done and prevailing trends do not instill much confidence that things will change for the better any time soon.

least because Japan remains a veritable case study of the potential cost of inaction. The Japanese economy at one time enjoyed a sustained period of growth, averaging about 4 percent a year in the 1980s. Now, what was once the world's second largest economy can barely eke out a growth rate of 1 percent, in part because of its shrinking pool of labor.

On the workforce side of things, automation could address some of the emerging gaps, especially in manufacturing and other low-skill jobs. However, it will struggle to replace service professionals and highly skilled occupations.

Besides, even if countries did manage to solve their labor shortages through automation, their economies would still need to sustain consumption levels that can propel growth and attract foreign investment, which is critical to

tries will face a shortage of 2.5 million nurses and 400,000 doctors. Some governments hope to solve this shortfall by tapping into projected surpluses of healthcare workers from poorer countries.

We are already seeing the first signs of this future scramble for what will be increasingly scarce human capital. Some countries have begun to offer incentives to attract foreign labor. Japan, for example, which has a median age of just under 50, has started to ease visa restrictions. South Korea plans to offer extended stays and other perks with the aim of attracting and retaining highly sought-after migrant workers.

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Europe, in particular, will need millions of new, young workers as soon as 2025 if it plans to sustain adequate employment levels and close gaps in the labor market. Yet many Europeans do not want to do the types of jobs that migrants are willing to take on, which necessitates that authorities look elsewhere and make the case that countries such as Spain,

the 21st century will present opportunities and risks for countries worldwide. Nations will need to carefully navigate this new race, and ensure that they can attract and retain the skilled workforces they need while addressing potential challenges to social cohesion and global stability, since these decisions will shape the global landscape for generations to come.

The persistence of a strong cultural preference to maintain ethnic homogeneity and national identity will likely provoke public opposition and inflame societal tensions, even in countries that require not

nation countries — such as strained social services, increased competition for jobs, and depressed wages — tend to be minimal, short-lived, and outweighed by the long-term economic benefits.

Local governments typically bear the primary healthcare, education and infrastructure burdens of increased immigration. Nevertheless, these effects are often offset over time, as is evident in New Zealand, where most migrants begin to make net contributions to the economy within five years of arrival, according to the UN.

A study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development found that immigrants contribute more in taxes and social contributions than they receive in benefits. This demonstrates that, despite the many difficulties associated with managing cultural identity and public opinion, the long-term economic benefits of migration should not be overlooked.

Countries must adopt policies that balance the need to attract skilled workers against the potential risks to social cohesion and global stability, to help mitigate the fallout from the inevitable scramble for human capital. Such strategies might include the implementation of targeted immigration policies that prioritize in-demand skills, while also investing in education and training for the native population.

In addition, countries must collaborate to reduce the potential drawbacks of importing skilled labor. The potential for a brain-drain and widening skills gaps as a result of the unchecked emigration of educated and skilled individuals from their home countries could lead to a vicious circle of underdevelopment, with the loss of skilled workers hampering economic growth and discouraging investment.

Ultimately, if the world's economies are to thrive in the latter half of the 21st century, they must recognize that human capital is both a competitive advantage and an imperative. The next scramble for resources is already upon us and will only accelerate in the coming decades.

Another round of bloodshed between Israelis and Palestinians

One might be forgiven for feeling a strong sense of déjà vu as, once again, we are forced to question the rationale for the latest round of hostilities between Israelis and Palestinians in Gaza, with Islamic Jihad this time Israel's specific opponent.

As might be expected, both sides declared victory but neither has any solid evidence to back up that claim. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, with his typical pomposity, announced that Israel "rewrote the equation" in its relations with Gaza, telling his Cabinet that the Israel Defense Forces and security agency the Shin Bet "took out the entire leadership of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and, by doing so, fulfilled the goals of the mission in perfect form."

Islamic Jihad, for its part, sent its supporters onto the streets of Gaza after a ceasefire was declared, waving Palestinian flags and flaunting victory signs from speeding vehicles.

The term pyrrhic victory — a win in name only that is achieved at too great a cost — was coined to describe this kind of situation.

Israel did not win this round of hostilities, in the same way that it has won none of its previous clashes in Gaza. Had it been victorious in any of these military "operations," all of which claimed many Palestinian lives (most of them noncombatants) and inflicted terrible devastation, it would not find itself back in the very same position of needing to initiate yet another round of air raids and shelling, as it did last week.

Israel has targeted an enormous number of leaders and operatives of Islamic Jihad, and of Hamas since it came to power in Gaza in 2007, but this has not stopped either organization from building and rebuilding their military capabilities.

The deaths of leading militants from Islamic Jihad are certainly a setback for the organization but it does not change the nature of relations between Israel and the Gaza Strip, which for all intents and purposes is functioning as a de facto independent political entity, with which Israel is unwilling to politically engage and is incapable of defeating militarily.

These two premises dictate Israel's punitive approach to Gaza and its people, with a corresponding lack of any viable long-term strategy.

At the end of another

five days of bloodshed, it is just a matter of time until Islamic Jihad fills the positions of those who were killed. Meanwhile, it is mainly ordinary Gazans, as usual, who have been left to pick up the pieces.

The available figures paint a bleak picture: 35 Palestinians killed, includ-

Yossi Mekelberg

The bravado-based claims from Israeli leaders of having defeated the enemy amount to no more than kicking the can further down the road, because no Israeli government thus far has had the courage to admit to itself, let alone to the Israeli public, that there is no military solution to

capable of firing rockets, the more Israel is seen as falling short in its deterrence efforts despite overwhelmingly superior military capabilities.

Israel also runs the risk of provoking Hamas into joining the fray, thereby increasing the possibility of the hostilities spreading to

to statehood, especially not by targeting civilians. They merely gave the Israeli government an excuse to sow death and devastation throughout the Gaza Strip and impose even harsher restrictions on entry and exit.

What this latest, futile five days of death and destruction markedly failed to do was lure Hamas into joining the battle, and there is something to be learned from the decision of the leadership of that organization to steer clear of the confrontation.

Cynics might suggest that Hamas did not shed any tears as it watched its smaller rival suffer losses. As much as there might be some truth in that, Hamas was nevertheless also under pressure to respond because, as the governing body of this territory, it has a responsibility to protect its people especially as civilians, too, have fallen victim to the Israeli attacks.

However, and not for the first time, its leadership showed a notable degree of pragmatism in recognizing that it would gain nothing from escalating and prolonging the hostilities, and had much to lose.

Currently, Israeli authorities grant work permits to 18,000 Gazans, which makes a considerable difference to the local economy and the taxes that Hamas is able to collect. In addition, it allows about 350 trucks a day to enter Gaza, thereby easing some shortages of goods. Against the backdrop of the stalemate over finding a long-term solution, this at least provides an opportunity for engagement between Israelis and Palestinians, even if it has to take place through a third party, with the aim of expanding the arrangement and, by doing so, improving the lives of Gaza's 2.2 million Palestinians.

Moreover, in the absence of any direct lines of communication between Israelis and the leadership in Gaza, the role of a third-party mediator has proved to be crucial, and in this case it was Egypt that took it on.

However, attempts to prevent another, seemingly inevitable, round of bloodshed and destruction demand that such efforts continue.

As long as the blockade of Gaza continues, the area will remain a hotbed of radicalism and conflict. Reducing the likelihood of armed confrontation demands the alleviation of the extreme humanitarian crisis created by the Israeli blockade — namely by ending it.



ilmi is a model for innovative, informal STEM education

Gillian Thomas

Science and technology are critical drivers of society's progress. That is why, after initially studying chemistry, I focused on encouraging young people into STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) subjects. Adults and children alike need to increase their knowledge and skills to find jobs and a secure future.

The informal learning approach, of encouraging investigation through hands-on activity outside the classroom, has developed over centuries and expanded rapidly in recent times due to its success. It is, above all, an entry point into STEM that offers a memorable moment of delight for the whole family to share. Demonstrations, science shows and opportunities to

Universcience in Paris. I became aware that the US model of parents carrying out an experience in public with their children was unfamiliar. More frequently, parents would wish to hand their children to a professional for a session, rather than share an investigative hands-on activity.

This was just one experience. Working in the rich cultural mix that is Miami, it became apparent to me that different groups had varied preferences, from hands-on exhibits to preferring shows and demonstrations, to how much text was thought essential as descriptions of exhibits.

It is this experience that makes me so excited about ilmi — how it is designed for the Saudi population and the substantive impact

that has something for everyone. Care is also being taken to focus on accessibility to ensure there are no physical barriers to participation. This was a key consideration of ilmi's founder, Princess Sara bint Mashhour bin Abdulaziz. With quiet corners, assistive reading devices, group-tailored sessions and staff able to communicate in sign language, ilmi welcomes everyone.

But ilmi is more than a building and its contents. It aims to provide outreach throughout the country and to an even broader audience through its online and pop-up programs. In particular, ilmi aims to break down socioeconomic barriers to learning through a digital hub that will extend its reach across the Kingdom, making its educational resources and interactive

The building itself is the first attraction. ilmi Science, Discovery and Innovation Center in Riyadh is a technologically advanced, smart building. It is the perfect venue for a journey of scientific discovery. Each of the three themed zones invites action. In “Our World,” you are an explorer, discovering different environments and the science that lies hidden. In “Our Selves,” you can discover that you are unique, yet share many characteristics with others. And “Our Inventions” invites you to innovate to address some of the challenges we face globally. An auditorium, temporary exhibition spaces, classrooms, labs and gardens provide a panoply of adaptable resources and updateable spaces. However people like to learn, ilmi aims to provide an easy entry point. For this reason, ilmi’s approach is to expand STEM to “STREAM” — science, technology, reading, engineering, arts and math — an all-encompassing offer that has something for everyone. Care is also being taken to focus on accessibility to ensure there are no physical barriers to participation. This was a key consideration of ilmi’s founder, Princess Sara bint Mashhour bin Abdulaziz. With quiet corners, assistive reading devices, group-tailored sessions and staff able to communicate in sign language, ilmi welcomes everyone. But ilmi is more than a building and its contents. It aims to provide outreach throughout the country and to an even broader audience through its online and pop-up programs. In particular, ilmi aims to break down socioeconomic barriers to learning through a digital hub that will extend its reach across the Kingdom, making its educational resources and interactive experiences available for all.

meet experts all help children and young people to form a connection with STEM subjects.

Science centers around the world have programs linked to school curricula to reinforce and make real the science the young are learning about during their lessons. Teachers often tell me that they had never seen a particular child so interested as when they experienced the joy of discovery when exploring an exhibit.

Parents are enablers of their children's learning. But many parents feel they do not know how to guide their children, especially in STEM subjects. Research reveals that many Saudi parents feel unsure about STEM and its opportunities. Many societal pressures come to bear when children develop their interests. This ranges from what careers may be deemed possible to whether a child has ever met, for example, a scientist or an IT engineer. Many factors can lead to a child feeling that STEM is not for them.

Cultural factors also play a role. My first experience was working at

it will have in the Kingdom.

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experiences available for all. Its live pop-up activations are also designed to bring ilmi to communities across Saudi Arabia that may not be able to travel to Riyadh.

Across all its programs, ilmi aims to encourage the spirit of exploration and discovery, encourage the innovators and creators of tomorrow wherever they may be and introduce them to the innovators of today so that they can be inspired to tackle the challenges ahead.

Moreover, ilmi is being developed in partnership with its audience, a process of co-creation that invites participation and integrates public feedback, adapting and changing over time.

This will help us understand exactly what its visitors need and how they learn. Ilmi will also be tracking the impact of its work and developing research to explore how it can improve the opportunities it offers.

I encourage you all to join in Princess Sara's exciting, unique and innovative initiative — get involved in shaping ilmi.

Arab League Jeddah summit can be the platform to resolve many Arab crises

The agenda of Friday's Arab League Summit is brimming with topics that will differentiate it from past summits, especially in view of the ongoing shifts on the Arab, Middle Eastern and even global stages. The most important sign of difference is perhaps its location in Jeddah, which is a real embodiment of a different situation on the political, economic and social levels in Saudi Arabia, particularly the Jeddah area.

The first major topic to be covered is Syria's return to the Arab League. Leaks from behind the scenes of the summit indicate the serious desire of everyone for Arab reunification. The term “resolving crises” has circulated widely, as well as the formulation of a collective Arab vision taking into account the mistakes of past years and the desire to find a way to redevelop the mechanisms of joint Arab action in light of the regional and global challenges that have emerged.

The Syrian crisis is, without doubt, one of the crises that the Arabs want to resolve. After a 12-year hiatus, Syria is returning to the Arab fold, as it will be participating in the Jeddah summit with a high-level delegation. Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad stated on his arrival at Jeddah International Airport that Syria would “not look to the past, but rather to the future.” Mekdad enumerated the challenges that, according to him, Arab leaders should address and mobilize their forces to confront, including the Arab-Israeli conflict and climate change.

Syria's return represents

a real test for the issue of the compatibility of the Arab parties in the future, coming after the Arab reconciliation with Qatar and the current political openness to all global and regional powers. Syria is important to this harmony because it is a force to be reckoned with on the political and civilizational levels.

Some talk about a conditional return of Damascus to the Arab fold, with it being contingent on Bashar Assad's regime meeting some of the demands hinted at in the recent Arab League statement. These include the formation of a national consensus government, the creation of a harmonious political climate that reduces the opportunities for clashes with opposition forces, and a readiness to cooperate in order to meet the demands of the Syrian people, which is the concern of all Arabs.

The reconstruction of Syria may be one of the files that makes the Jeddah summit completely different. It will be necessary to communicate with the international parties to the conflict and apply pressure to start the reconstruction process, as some Arab and international countries have many investment projects in this framework. Similarly, we have to keep in mind the return of the Syrian refugees, who are scattered around the world, to their country, which is in need of them in this delicate period of their lives.

The Jeddah summit also comes at a time when the whole world is suffering from severe economic crises due to the years of

Dr. Abdellatif El-Menawy

COVID-19 and the Russian-Ukrainian war. This file requires work on several levels, including in the leaders' summit, but it also deserves to be an ongoing topic in all Arab League meetings.

Economic topics rank high on the priority list, notably Lebanon's unprecedented economic and financial collapse. The summit will seek to address and assist Lebanon's recovery in all areas, especially after the agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran on the one hand and the return of Syria on the other.

The Arab leaders will also capitalize on the summit to reconsider the economic systems implemented in the Arab world. They will aim to achieve sustainability and economic balance between their own resources and their production and service capabilities in terms of raw materials, markets and investments, using advanced and diverse technological methods.

One of the outcomes of the summit that the Arab peoples aspire to and wait for is the activation of the Arab Common Market, the Greater Arab Free Trade Area, to unify customs tariffs, in addition to the digital economy and green economy. Other coveted outcomes include the implementation of sustainable development plans and the continuation of the process of economic and social development at various levels, as well as Arab space cooperation, sustainable Arab agricultural development, improving the production and preservation of natural resources,

sustaining Arab pastures and raising the rates and percentages of intra-Arab trade.

The current events in Sudan undoubtedly occupy the minds of Arab leaders, just as they worry everybody with Arab blood running through their veins. The Sudanese people themselves are the only losers in the conflict between the army led by Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan and the Rapid Support Forces led by Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo.

The summit will definitely discuss this conflict and I pray that the solution will be in Jeddah, in the land of the Kingdom that has hosted talks between the representatives of the conflicting parties. I imagine that the decision of the summit will be to urge all of the conflicting parties on the Sudanese scene to remain calm and sit at the negotiating table in order to defuse the crisis.

One of the most urgent issues that concerns Arabs in general — and which they hope will be a key focus of the summit — is water resource management in the region, as several countries suffer from water scarcity, particularly Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Jordan and the occupied Palestinian territories. In the face of this reality, the Arab countries are being called on to take a broader and stronger stand, putting forward principles for Middle Eastern regional cooperation that supports and does not detract from international rules.

Hence, the significant issue of the Grand

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Mand-Pishin new border market to enhance Pakistan trade with Iran: PIAF

ISLAMABAD (INP): As Pakistan and Iran inaugurated the first border market and electricity transmission lines the Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) has said the Mand-Pishin border marketplace and the Gabd-Polan electricity project would serve as a stepping stone for greater economic cooperation between the two countries, expressing the hope that it would unleash development, trade, business and employment opportunities contributing to the prosperity of the people of Gwadar and Balochistan.

Stressing the need for enhancing regional trade to ease the current economic crisis, Chairman PIAF Faheemur Rehman Saigol said that the project had been pending since 2009 and was now completed in a record time of four months.

The Mand-Pishin border sustenance market is expected to increase trade with Iran, helping local businesses find new opportunities. This is one of the six border markets which will be constructed along the Iranian border.

He said that located in the remote village of Balochistan, the market-

place is the first of six to be constructed along the Pakistan-Iran border under a 2012 agreement signed by the two sides.

The PIAF Chairman also called for early implementation of barter trade mechanism signed between Pakistan and Iran during the Joint Trade Committee meeting held in Tehran to jack up bilateral trade to \$5 billion annually.

The all concerned departments, particularly the central bank, instead of creating obstacles, should start working on implementation of the barter trade through approved crossing points without any further delay, removing all bottlenecks for the smooth trade.

Faheem Saigol appreciated Islamabad as well as Tehran to take serious initiatives to remove hurdles to bilateral trade, asking Iran to also take benefits of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor projects. In order to meet the objective of barter trade mechanism both parties must finalize international mechanism to remove difficulties in barter trade. He said that barter trade was in fact a right decision, which could boost Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves through escalation in exports.

He said due to lack of banking channels with Iran, some issues were existing in trading with Tehran. The barter trade issue with Iran has now been resolved, which is a welcome step for both Muslim neighboring nations.

The PIAF chairman said that the government of Pakistan and government of Iran had decided that a barter trade mechanism will be established, identifying over 50 items for bilateral trade with rice and petroleum products at the top of the list.

He said the barter trade could be done via land route through legal customs notified border crossing points without any monetary transaction under the barter trade arrangement.

He said that Pakistan can import liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) from Iran in exchange for rice under a barter arrangement endorsed by the two countries. We will export rice to Iran and import LPG from there, as it is purely a barter deal. It is pertinent to mention that Iran faces sanctions imposed by the United States, making it difficult for global and regional countries to broaden and deepen their trade ties with the administration

in Tehran. He also noted the country's exports had increased, adding that more growth could still be achieved by adopting product and geographical diversification.

He said that efforts should also be initiated to sign a free trade agreement between Iran and Pakistan, as both countries wanted to boost bilateral trade and economic relations to strengthen regional economy.

Faheem Saigol lauded the efforts of PM, saying he played vital role in increasing trade volume between the two countries. He asked the businessmen to cement trade relations to take benefits from each other's experience and boost trade activities between the countries.

He stressed the importance of enhanced cooperation with Tehran, saying the energy projects and border markets showed how vital friendship was between the two countries.

The PIAF Chairman expressed concerns over the worsening economic situation, citing various factors including the imbalance of payments caused by floods, increasing inflation, and the repayment of loans as key issues that need to be addressed urgently.



GILGIT: Managing Director Hashwani Group Arman Shah and officials of Chinese Company signing MOU for export Cherry organized by Trade Development Authority Pakistan.

Use RMB to pay dividends, promote investment

ISLAMABAD (APP): The President SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry Iftikhar Ali Malik Sunday said that proposal of using Chinese currency Yuan (RMB) for regional trade among 18 countries will ultimately pay dividends to all stakeholders besides strengthening the cohesion and mutual understanding.

He said that the currency swap agreement of China was visionary, concrete, and practically viable and helped in strengthening economic relations among these countries, said a press release.

He said China has been actively promoting the international use of Yuan in the recent years aiming to increase its role as a global currency.

He said China has signed bilateral currency swap agreements with various countries, allowing for direct trade and investment in yuan instead of relying solely on other currencies like the US dollar.

Additionally, China has established offshore yuan clearing centers in several cities around the world, enabling international businesses to settle transactions in yuan, he added.

He said In terms of regional trade, China has been fostering economic cooperation and trade agreements with neighboring countries and regions.

For example, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) aims to enhance connectivity and economic ties between China and countries in Asia, Europe, Africa, and beyond.

He said as a part of this initiative, trade settlements in yuan have been encouraged to facilitate trade and investment along the BRI routes.

Iftikhar Ali Malik said however, the acceptance of the yuan for regional trade among 18 specific countries would depend on various factors, including the economic relationships, trade volumes, and policy decisions of those countries.

It would be necessary for these countries to have bilateral agreements, currency swap arrangements, or a willingness to accept and use the yuan in their trade transactions, he added.

It's worth noting that the internationalization of a currency like the yuan is a gradual process and may require further infrastructure development, policy adjustments, and market confidence in the currency.

Funds approved for establishing state of the art NFPI

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Planning Development and Special Initiatives has approved Rs 400 million in order to establish a state of the art National Film Production Institute (NFPI).

The project aims to provide professional training in various fields of filmmaking, acting, production, camera and cinematography for local film production.

The project is being executed under the Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) with a budget of Rs 400 million, said a press release issued by the Ministry here Sunday.

Meanwhile, Minister for Planning Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal has also reiterated that the government was committed to promote the soft image of the country by providing a platform for young people to excel in their respective fields.

He said that the primary objective of the NFPI was to save film production time and cost, increase the number of films produced in the country, promote quality content creation and establish linkages with international sister organizations.

Syed Jamal Shah, an artist, writer and filmmaker, has expressed his support for the establishment

of National Film Production Institute, stating that it will provide much-needed training and expertise to local talent and improve the production value of Pakistan's film industry.

Shah, who served as Director General Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA) for three years, emphasized the necessity of such an initiative in the field of film production.

He also suggested that a National Film Finance Fund and the construction of cinemas throughout the country would have further supported the project.

The decision has been well received by artists and members of the film industry who see it as a landmark development that will provide significant opportunities to local talent and change the landscape of Pakistani cinema.

Business community expects growth-oriented, industry-friendly budget

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) on Sunday expressed the hope that the upcoming budget 2023-24 would be growth-oriented and industry-friendly.

Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) President Saqib Rafiq while addressing the 8th executive committee meeting at the Chamber House, said the business community expects that a comprehensive industrial package would be announced which would help bring the ailing economy on the right track.

"Time has come to take firm decisions and adopt an export promotion strategy, set the right direction and we strongly demand that the basis of Pakistan's economy shall be on exports instead of imports," he said.

The President Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) hoped that the Finance Minister would introduce measures for promoting exports including incentives for export-oriented industries, facilitation of trade agreements, provision

of export financing and the development of export-related infrastructure.

He said that the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) had always been vocal and demanded that the tax net must be broadened to meet the budget targets. There is a need to bring non-tax paying sectors into the tax net, he added.

Saqib called for taking all stakeholders on board for devising any policy framework and added that Finance Minister Ishaq Dar would engage all the chambers of commerce before finalizing the budget document.

"We want to present and discuss budget proposals, key measures and recommendations on various sectors ranging from trade, taxation, tourism, SME, agriculture, livestock, IT, non-conventional sectors, gems stone, smuggling and others", he expressed.

He desired to implement policies that promote macroeconomic stability, control inflation and ensure a stable exchange rate. This stability provides a conducive environment for

businesses to plan their investments and operations effectively, he added.

He urged the government to control the ratio of high-interest rates, steep devaluation of the Pak rupee, and skyrocketing inflation which had increased the cost of doing business manifold.

Due to restrictions of the opening of LCs, industries were running out of raw materials and many have already shut down their operations as they were dependent on commercial importers for the supply of raw materials, he further added.

Saqib said that streamlining bureaucratic procedures, reducing red tape, implementing online systems for registration and approvals, and enhancing investor protection mechanisms would help in doing business.

The government must introduce investment incentives including tax breaks or exemptions for specific industries, subsidies for research and development, access to credit facilities, and measures to promote entrepreneurship and innovation, he added.

Pak-Russia trade deal to put positive impact

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman Meher Kashif Younis Sunday said recently inked Pakistan-Russia deal on trade and investment agreements will have positive impact on Pak economy.

He said it will help in promoting bilateral trade, attracting foreign direct investment, and fostering economic cooperation.

Talking to a delegation of industrialists led by Faran Shahid he said Increased trade between Pakistan and Russia could lead to expanded market opportunities for Pakistani businesses, especially in sectors of textiles, agricultural products, and pharmaceuticals, said a press release. The agreement could also facilitate the exchange of technology, knowledge, and expertise between the two countries, which could have long-term benefits for Pakistan's economy, he observed.

He said it could help boost economic growth and create employment opportunities as such investments can enhance the country's industrial capabilities and contribute to the development of key sectors.

He said historically, Pakistan and Russia have had economic and diplomatic relations that have evolved over time. He said this protocol will serve as a vital legal framework for the development of commercial relations between the two nations.

Meher Kashif Younis who is also Vice President Gold Ring Economic Forum, a strategic think tank said in addition to facilitating the smooth movement of goods between Pakistan and Russia, the protocol will also offer a substantial customs duty discount for Pakistani products upon entering the Russian market.

Providing land for office, industrial estate:

President of IIA hails Chairman CDA

ISLAMABAD (APP): President of Islamabad Industrial Association (IIA) Ahmed Waheed on Sunday appreciated Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) Noorul Amin Mengal Chairman CDA for providing the land for the office and industrial estate of Islamabad Industrial Association to promote the industrial growth in the capital.

The President said that providing space for the Islamabad Industrial Estate and the central office was a long-standing demand of the businessmen of Islamabad, for the implementation of which the Chairman CDA is grateful for providing a very important facility to the industrialists.

Talking to media at the luncheon organized by IIA, he said that Chairman CDA has provided a huge opportunity for the businessmen and industrialists of Islamabad to resolve their problems by nominating me as a member of the CDA Board.

President, IIA Muhammad Ahmed Waheed thanked the Chairman CDA for including him on the CDA board and said that with this the industrialists and businessmen will contribute to the development of the country's economy.

On this occasion, Ahmed Waheed hailed Chairman CDA for approving all their demands, including industrial zone and land for central office and said that industries will flourish in Islamabad with such decisions.

He said that the industrial zones of Islamabad are providing employment to 500,000 people who have a great contribution to the country's economy.

He said that Islamabad Industrial Association was

established in 1960 and since then it has played an unparalleled role in the development of Islamabad.

President IIA said that 2000 companies are registered under Islam Industrial Association, out of which 600 are dynamic industries.

He said that Islamabad is the third largest tax-paying city of Pakistan and our association has a major role in it.

On this occasion, he thanked Chairman CDA for issuing orders to resolve all their demands, including the Kahuta industry and other issues.

While addressing the Luncheon hosted by IIA, Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) Noorul Amin Mengal announced the allotment of land for the central office of Islamabad Industrial Association (IIA) and Islamabad Industrial Estate and issued an order for its immediate implementation.

Chairman CDA said that the relevant directorate of CDA and IIA should hold a decision-making meeting in this regard as soon as possible and clear steps will be taken towards the implementation of this project.

On this occasion, he announced the nomination of the President of Islamabad Industrial Association Muhammad Ahmed Waheed as a member of the CDA Board and said that now the President of IIA will be included in the decisions making of CDA because he is a major stakeholder in Islamabad.

The Chairman said that the location for the Islamabad Industrial Estate has been decided and the construction of the Islamabad Industrial Estate will be started soon and in the meeting of the CDA Board, where President IIA Ahmed Waheed participat-

ed as a member.

He will participate as a member, where he will play his full role in the decision of CDA for the location of Islamabad Industrial Estate.

He said that President IIA Ahmed Waheed will now resolve his problems by playing his full role to resolve the problems of his association and industrialists as a CDA board member.

Chairman CDA Noorul Amin Mengal announced the allotment of land for the central office of the Islamabad Industrial Association and issued an order for its immediate implementation.

He said that the relevant directorate of Islamabad Industrial Association CDA should hold a decision-making meeting in this regard as soon as possible and clear steps will be taken towards the implementation of this project.

On this occasion, Chairman CDA announced to resolve the problems of Kahuta and Rawat Industrial Zone on a priority basis and announced all the modern facilities in it.

He further said that businessmen have a very important role in the country's economy and with the inclusion of businessmen and industrialists in the decisions of CDA, the country's economy will be strengthened and Islamabad city will develop.

Chairman CDA also announced the construction of a modern hospital and the allocation of space for a medical college on the demand of the industrialists of Islamabad.

In response to the demands of the first President IIA Muhammad Ahmed Waheed, President CDA said that CDA will soon decide to take the 33-year lease to 99 years and the issue will be finalized.

trade and industry.

The BMP chairman said that the Businessmen Panel has taken all trade and industry associations on board for preparation of proposals for the upcoming budget. He said that efforts were made to give government a set of suggestions for upcoming budget to make it business-friendly. He said the business community understands that government was utilizing its abilities to overcome economic challenges but at the same time the private sector considers itself duty-bound to point out the government hitches for speedy economic recovery.

He said that the FBR's reforms initiatives are not bearing fruit, as the revenue collecting agency could

increase the number of sales tax return filers mainly due to rise in the type of those filers, who haven't paid any tax, implying that bad governance and weak tax management of the tax department still persist. He said that the government's new measures seem to be inadequate to convince people to file tax returns due to arm-twisting by the FBR, creating unnecessary controversy due to continuous raids on business premises.

The BMP Chairman asked the government to enhance liaison with the business community with a view to broaden tax base and enhancing tax-to-GDP ratio, as the number of active taxpayers has declined. He urged the authorities to introduce new

tax incentives and extend the period of existing ones for attracting new foreign direct investments in line with the potential of the country. With a view to wipe out corruption there needs to develop local software and Apps with simplified system in Urdu so that interaction of human resource should be reduced, he suggested.

He said that the sustainable solution to Pakistan's problems lies in the structural reforms, as we can see very large inefficiencies in tax collection, which needs to be removed. So, the tax compliance must be improved and tax base should be broadened, which cannot be achieved with a single policy change, but by a systemic approach.

Mian Anjum Nisar suggested that taxes should be charged one time by any provincial or federal government, as provinces levy same kind of tax which the federal government has already imposed, escalating the cost of production and discouraging the registered manufacturers.

He called for harmonization of Sales Tax and Income Tax laws, getting rid of conflicting provisions, suggesting enhancing tax base by automation. He urged the government to improve tax structure so that business and investment could flourish in the country, as the existing tax structure discourages investment. He requested the government to focus on reducing tax rates and

expanding tax base by bringing all exempted sectors into the tax net.

The PIAF Chairman said that coordination between the government and the private sector was vital for economic growth, proposing the government to develop policies that could provide environment conducive to business in the country. He called for strict measures to stop illegal trade, as the smuggling is not only causing massive shortfall in revenue collection but also discouraging the legal businesses and documented economy. Majority of the people don't want to get them registered and preferred purchasing of smuggled goods mainly due to high duties on legal import, he added.

BMP calls for growth-oriented Budget 2023-24 for trade, industry

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has called for a growth-oriented Budget 2023-24 for the trade and industry, suggesting the government to make visible reduction in taxes, helping revive the businesses in the country, urging the government to hold thorough consultations with all stakeholders including the business community on the upcoming federal budget.

Former president FPCCI and Chairman Businessmen Panel (BMP) Mian Anjum Nisar said that the his group in consultation with business community across Pakistan has finalized its budget proposals, which have been sent to the rele-

vant departments and called upon the government to incorporate them in the Federal Budget 2023-24 as their implementation would address the key issues of trade and industry, facilitate better growth of business activities, improve tax revenue of government and help in revival of economy.

He stressed the need for reforming and simplifying the taxation system in consultation with the real stakeholders.

Dilating upon the key features of proposals, he said that the impact of political uncertainty has badly affected business and industrial sector and stressed that government should bring down GST and policy interest rate in order to ease the difficulties

of business community.

In a joint meeting of various trade and industrial sectors held to review the budget proposals for the upcoming fiscal year, Mian Anjum Nisar appreciated the government for its commitment of providing tax relief in the budget 2023-24, urging it that the major focus should be on greater relief to especially documented and registered SMEs rather than new taxation measures. Mian FPCCI former president said that BMP, in consultation with the FPCCI has finalized its budget proposals, also sent to the relevant departments, urging the authorities concerned to incorporate them in the Budget 2023-24, as their implementation would address the key issues of



In brief

34th National Games today

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) in collaboration with Balochistan Tennis Association will be organizing the tennis event of the 34th National Games at PTF Tennis Complex, Garden Avenue, Islamabad. The eighth-day event that commences on Monday will conclude on May 29, a PTF spokesman said on Sunday. Elite players of the 10 leading provincial and departments team of the country, Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA), Pakistan Army, Pakistan Air Force (PAF), Pakistan Navy, Higher Education Commission (HEC), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan and Islamabad are participating in the event. The strength of men athletes is 39 along with 10 officials, whereas that of women athletes is 30 women's athletes with seven officials. Six events will be played: Men's Team Event, Men's Individual Singles and doubles, Women's Team Event, Women's Individual Singles and Doubles.

Pak team to feature in 4-Nations Cup

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan men's national football team would feature in the Four-Nations Cup to be held in Mauritius from 8 to 18 June. According to the details, the tournament would provide an excellent opportunity for the team to showcase their skills and compete against other nations. With Mauritius hosting the tournament, along with Kenya and Djibouti as the other participating teams, the fixtures of the tournament would be shared in due course. In this regard, the camp for the preparations would begin in the last week of May. The camp would be aiming at helping the men in green to pull their muscles for the international event and prepare well to exhibit their prowess in a better way.

Murray puts Nuggets on brink of NBA finals

LOS ANGELES (Agencies): Jamal Murray scored 37 points for the Denver Nuggets as they beat the Los Angeles Lakers 119-108 to move one win away from reaching the NBA finals for the first time in their history. The victory gave the Nuggets a 3-0 lead against the Lakers in their best-of-seven Western Conference finals series. Murray's team-mate Nikola Jokic added 25 points, including 14 in the fourth quarter. "We kept them at a distance for most of the game," said Murray. "I just felt like we executed throughout the game and hit first." Murray scored 30 of his points in the first half to put the Nuggets in control at the home of the Lakers as he also registered seven rebounds, six assists and a game-high five three-pointers. The next game is in Los Angeles on Monday (01:30 BST Tuesday) and no team in NBA history has recovered from a 3-0 deficit to win a series. "We got to get one, just get one at a time," said LA Lakers star LeBron James, who scored 23 points in game three. "Just focus on game four, that's all you can think about. Obviously, this game is over with. We had some opportunities and we didn't come through."



MANCHESTER: Ilkay Guendogan of Manchester City lifts the Premier League trophy following the Premier League match between Manchester City and Chelsea FC at Etihad Stadium.

Man City beat Chelsea to celebrate Premier League title triumph

MANCHESTER (Agencies): Manchester City celebrated their third consecutive Premier League title on Sunday as a much-changed side was still good enough to beat Chelsea 1-0 at the Etihad.

Pep Guardiola's men clinched a fifth title in six seasons on Saturday when second-placed Arsenal were beaten 1-0 at Nottingham Forest.

That gave Guardiola the luxury of resting most of his star names with one eye on the FA Cup and Champions League finals next month as City go for the treble.

The strength of City's squad was exemplified by Julian Alvarez, who has spent most of the season as Erling Haaland's understudy, scoring his 17th goal of the campaign to extend the English champions' unbeaten run in all competitions to 24 games.

But a festive afternoon for City was marred at full-time as thousands of fans spilled onto the pitch despite pleas from the club to remain in the stands. Guardiola made nine changes in all from the side that thrashed Real

Madrid 4-0 in midweek.

The youthful hosts were still too sharp for the beleaguered visitors early on and took the lead on 12 minutes. Alvarez continued his stunning season for club and country as the Argentine World Cup winner swept home Cole Palmer's pass.

Palmer made the most of a rare Premier League start and was unlucky not to double City's lead when his goalbound effort was cleared off the line by Trevoh Chalobah. Defeat confirmed that Chelsea will end a miserable campaign in the bottom half and a familiar lack of cutting edge in front of goal showed why the Blues have struggled under three different managers this season.

Raheem Sterling should have marked his return to the Etihad with at least one goal but was denied by a fine save by Stefan Ortega when one-on-one with the German goalkeeper.

Moments later Conor Gallagher headed onto the post with just Ortega to beat. But the lack of jeopardy for both sides shone through as the

majority of the game was played out at a snail's pace under the unusually baking Manchester sun.

Not that the home fans minded as they serenaded their side with cries of "champeoness" and bounced around doing the Poznan celebration with their backs to the pitch.

Chelsea had the better chances in the second-half to at least avoid a seventh defeat in nine games under caretaker boss Frank Lampard.

Even when the stand-in City goalkeeper Ortega was finally beaten by Sterling, John Stones was on hand to clear off the line. Mykhailo Mudryk and Cesar Azpilicueta also wasted late chances to grab a point.

At the other end, Calvin Phillips was inches away from his first City goal as the England midfielder's header came back off the inside of the post. Alvarez had a second goal ruled out for handball by Riyad Mahrez 20 minutes from time before Guardiola gave the home crowd what they wanted by unleashing Haaland from the bench.

Gomal University to Organize Badminton Tournament

F.P. Report

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: The Gomal University is going to organize first 'Shuhada-e-Pak-Army Badminton' tournament here at its Quaid-e-Azam Campus from Monday to pay homage to the martyrs of the armed forces.

The tournament is jointly organized by the varsity's Directorate of sports and Department of Public Relations on the special directions of Gomal University Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Shakib Ullah to pay homage to the martyrs of the Pakistan Army, said a press release issued here.

The Vice Chancellor, being a chief guest, would inaugurate the event on May 22 which would be going on till May 23.

About 21 teams of electronic, print and social media journalists from Dera Ismail Khan would participate in the event.

All the participating teams were divided into two pools. The semi-final and final matches would be played on May 23rd.

Gomal University Director Sports of the university Dr. Wasim Khan and Public Relations officer Raja Alamzeb already held a meeting with journalists in this regard. During the meeting, the organizers conveyed the rules and schedule of the tournament to journalists.

Speaking on this occasion, Dr. Wasim said that organizing the event was not only aimed at remembering the martyrs of Pak-Army but also to send a message to the new generation that all the security forces were the pride of the nation.

Huang threw her racket to a delighted spectator.

In the men's singles, Lee Yun Gyu was easily out-matched by Shi Yuqi, unable to deal with Shi's powerful smashes and laser focus.

The long rallies between Chen and An, who looked increasingly frustrated as the match wore on, drew gasps from the crowd.

PCB brings Mickey Arthur, Bradburn in selection committee

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has announced major changes in the selection committee by confirming three appointments to the national men's selection committee, which will select senior, Shaheens and U19 sides.

The new selection committee comprises Haroon Rashid (chair), Hassan Cheema (selection commit-

tee secretary and manager analytics and team strategy for national men's side), Mickey Arthur (national men's team's director), and Grant Bradburn (national men's team's head coach).

The presence of Cheema, who has worked as strategy manager and data analyst in franchise cricket around the world, Arthur and Bradburn will aid in strategizing for the

approaching and upcoming series, enhance the bench strength and provide a proper pathway to performing players in Shaheens and U19 sides to graduate to the national side.

The first task of the selection committee is to name the players for the fast and spin bowling camps next month in Lahore, which will be announced in due course.

KP Fencing team wins 2 silvers, five bronze medals in 34th National Games

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Fencing team won 2 silver and 5 bronze medals in the ongoing 34th National Games 2023 at Quetta, former gold medalist javelin thrower athlete and Director sports University of Swabi Iltaf Hussain told APP here on Sunday.

Sharing details, Iltaf Hussain, who also held a record as Javelin thrower in the South Asian Games in Sri Lanka, disclosed that Baryal Khan got a silver medal in the Epee individual category besides teaming up with Awais

Khan, Sudais Khan and Zarak Khan claimed another silver medal in the Epee Men's team event.

Similarly, Awais Khan, Mubbasir, Ikrash and Baryal Khan also claimed bronze medals in Foil and Sabre Men's team Events.

In the Women's event, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Fencing team Amna got bronze in Foil Women's individual category while Komal, Muskan, Humaira and Shehla got a Bronze medal in Epee Women's Team Event.

Iltaf Hussain, who is also Secretary General KP

Fencing Association and former international athlete Muhammad Shah, who is the President of the Association congratulated the players for winning two silver medals and five bronze medals in the National Games.

Altat Hussain said that they have tried to provide full equipment to both male and female players during a week-long camp, they held for the players on their own resources as there was no schedule whatsoever from the official concerned about the camps.

KP Baseball team beat Yousafzai Baseball Academy Swabi 2-1

PESHAWAR (APP): With the support of the District Sports Office, a baseball series was held between the provincial baseball team and Yousafzai baseball team Swabi at Tehsil Mayar, Chota Lahore on Sunday.

Regional Sports Officer Muhammad Tariq Khan and Tehsil Mayor Chota Lahore Adil Khan graced the occasion as guests of the final and prize distribution ceremony.

In the first match of the Tri-Series of Baseball, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Baseball team recorded victory at 11-9 but it was the second match of the series in which Yousafzai Baseball Academy staged a comeback and leveled the tally 1-1 after winning the match by 17-13 runs.

In the third match of the Series in which Khyber Pakhtunkhwa team registered victory at 9-8 runs in a hotly contested match of the five innings only. In the end, Regional Sports Officer Tariq Khan, District Sports Officer Swabi and Tehsil

Mayor Lahore Adil Khan gave away trophies and cash prizes to the players.

Muhammad Tariq Khan appreciated DSO and Tehsil Mayor for holding the Baseball Series. He said Swabi is producing international fame players, both male and female, in baseball because of the Yousafzai Academy. He said the American Baseball Coach and Japan team Baseball coaches also paid a visit to the Academy and appreciated the player's part of the Academy.

He also appreciated the President of Pakistan Baseball Federation for extending support in this connection by providing different competitions from time to time to the players of the Swabi district. He said soon Director General Sports Captain (ret'd) Khalid Mahmood would visit the Academy and he is hopeful he would also provide some baseball gears to the Academy so that the players could be trained and coached through modern lines.

Pakistan outwit Hong Kong in Women's Baseball Asia Cup

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan got off to a flying start in the 3rd Asian Women's Baseball Championship (Women's Baseball Asia Cup), downing hosts Hong Kong 16-1 in their inaugural fixture on Sunday, according to information received here.

Pakistan's hitters Alina Masood scored four runs, Zahida Ghanni chipped in with three runs, while Ayesha Ejaz, Arim Barkat and Tasmia Rubab scored two runs apiece.

One run each was scored by Sana Arooj, Manahil Ahmed and Najma Zafar.

Sadia Bibi showed excellent pitching on behalf of Pakistan.

In other encounters, India defeated Thailand 9-8 in a thrilling contest, while Indonesia tamed Sri Lanka 24-3.

Pakistan will take on Sri Lanka in their second match on Monday, while in their third match, they will face Indonesia on Tuesday.

I am ready to play anywhere in world, says Rizwan

PESHAWAR (APP): The unflappable Pakistan wicket-keeper batsman Mohammad Rizwan Sunday said that he is ready to play anywhere in the world for Pakistan and is trying hard to keep the national flag always high among world cricketing circles.

Talking to media men during the Annual Shama Award Ceremony at Shama Cricket Academy, Muhammad Rizwan said that it does matter where we are playing. The thing that matters to me is giving performance and shouldering responsibility whenever the team needed, he replied.

"I always focus on hard work, " cricketer Muhammad Rizwan said; "The same I used to tell the youngsters coming in from U13, U16 and U19 levels as there is plenty of talent but such talent needing a proper guideline like we had from our seniors," Rizwan said.

"It is amazing the talent coming in from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and we should see the spirit of our children by providing them proper guidelines so that they could come up and excel at national and international level. The motivation is key to these children," Muhammad Rizwan said.

"One thing is very much

clear that without hard work nothing is possible therefore, I urged the youngsters to do hard work and replace us by serving the national team and our beloved country," Muhammad Rizwan said.

Answering a question, he said: "We will play wherever PCB says." "We are fond of cricket, we are not afraid to play as players," Muhammad Rizwan added. If children are given the best guidelines, they will be the stars of the future, Muhammad Rizwan said.

About another question, he said, fitness is very important for any cricket and my main focus is on my fitness as if I will be fit I will run more and serve my country, Muhammad Rizwan said.

Born on June 1, 1992, Muhammad Rizwan has represented Pakistan in international cricket since 2015 and captains Pakistan Super League (PSL) franchise Multan Sultans. He is considered as one of the best batsmen in world cricket at the moment. Rizwan is the only batter to score 2000 runs in a calendar year in T20s. He is a right-handed batter and wicket-keeper and has scored centuries in all three international formats including Tests, One Day Internationals and Twenty20 Internationals.

He is the vice-captain of the Pakistan cricket team in Test cricket. He was one of the Wisden Cricketers of the Year in 2021. He was also the ICC Men's T20I Cricketer of the Year 2021 and led the Multan Sultans to victory in the Pakistan Super League 2021. Mohammad Rizwan is the leading run scorer in T20 International in a calendar year with 1326 runs in 26 innings at an average of 73.66.

Earlier, as chief guest in the Shama Annual Award Ceremony, Muhammad Rizwan distributed Award-2023. General Manager Associated Industries Nowshera Zeeshan Hameed, Peshawar Region President Gulzada Khan, Secretary Haroon Khan, Head Coach Fazal Akbar Shah, Peshawar District Cricket Association President Muhammad Asghar accompanied him on this occasion.

Presidents and secretaries of various associations and clubs including Ali Khan, Secretary Hanif Shah were present in the ceremony. U13 player of Shama Cricket Club, Muhammad Farooq, who had shown the best performance in the PCB Championship and was the top scorer, was also honored. According to the management of Shama Cricket Club.

Andy Murray withdraws from French Open

LONDON (Agencies): Britain's Andy Murray has withdrawn from the French Open to prioritise the grass-court season in the build-up to Wimbledon.

Murray, 36, has only played at Roland Garros once since 2017.

The three-time Grand Slam champion won the clay-court Challenger event in Aix-en-Provence in May but has struggled for consistency on the surface.

The French Open, the second Grand Slam of the year, takes place from 28 May to 11 June.

Murray lost to long-time rival Stan Wawrinka in Bordeaux earlier this week and also had early exits at the ATP Tour events in Rome, Madrid and Monte Carlo.

He did, however, beat world number 17 Tommy Paul when he came back from a set down in Aix-en-Provence against the American to secure his first clay-court title since 2016 and his first singles trophy for four years.

Murray said earlier in May that he was not sure about playing at Roland Garros, telling the Guardian: "It's just what the right thing is to prioritise at



this stage in my career.

"I trust my body now but I'm aware that my best chance of having a deep run is more likely to happen at Wimbledon," Murray is set to play in the Cinch Championships at Queen's Club, which takes place from 19-25 June.

The first event of the British grass-court season will be the Surbiton Trophy from 4-11 June.

Murray reached the 2016 French Open final, when he was beaten by Novak Djokovic, and reached the semi-finals the following year, with Wawrinka ending his challenge.

The Scot dropped to 503 in the men's rankings after having career-saving hip resurfacing surgery in 2019 but has worked himself back up to 42nd in the world.

In January's

Australian Open, he spent 10 and a half hours on court in victories over Matteo Berrettini and Thanasi Kokkinakis, before being beaten in the third round by Roberto Bautista Agut.

Murray joins 14-time champion Rafael Nadal in withdrawing from Roland Garros, while Italy's Berrettini and Australia's Nick Kyrgios have also pulled out.

Analysis - Playing on grass considered best preparation for Wimbledon. Murray's principal goal right now is Wimbledon - and if at all possible trying to get himself seeded.

He is currently ranked 42, and although only the top 32 will be seeded, a few players will inevitably be missing through injury.

By not playing at Roland Garros, Murray passes up the chance for some significant ranking points. But the trade off is that he is now likely to be able to play in the Surbiton grass-court Challenger event which takes place in the second week of the French Open.

Murray has played on clay in Madrid, Aix-en-Provence, Rome and Bordeaux in the past month.

China claim record 13th Sudirman Cup badminton title

SUZHOU (Agencies): China claimed a record 13th Sudirman Cup title on Sunday, defeating South Korea on home soil at the first major sporting event in the country since the lifting of pandemic restrictions.

Cheered on by a raucous crowd brandishing red and white thundersticks and loud horns in the eastern city of Suzhou, China made short work of the Korean side, beating them 3-0.

Chen Yufei defeated world number two An Se Young 21-16, 22-20 in the women's singles to seal victory, prompting the packed stadium to erupt in cheers and the entire Chinese team to rush onto the court to dance in a circle.

The tournament is one of badminton's most important, and the stakes are higher



than usual this year because performances will count towards qualification for the 2024 Paris Olympics.

China had come through a tricky semi-final against Japan on Saturday, with the men's doubles pair of Liu Yuchen and Ou Xuanyi saving four match points before finally prevailing. South Korea beat Malaysia 3-1 on

their way to the final on Saturday. Zheng Siwei and Huang Yaogong lost the opening game of the mixed doubles but pulled it back in a tense point-for-point second game to eventually triumph 18-21, 22-20, 21-8.

A jubilant Zheng jumped up and down in excitement, ripped off his shirt and threw it into the crowd. His partner



In brief

IRSA releases 155,900 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 155,900 cusecs water from various rim stations with an inflow of 147,900 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1425.59 feet and was 27.59 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 45,400 cusecs and 50,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1115.40 feet, which was 65.40 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 44,600 cusecs and 48,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 64,100, 62,000, 39,200 and 13,300 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 33,300 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 15,200 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

CDA shifts 42 stray dogs to neuter center

ISLAMABAD (APP): As part of an ongoing comprehensive drive, the Capital Development Authority (CDA) has shifted 42 stray dogs to the 'Stray Dogs Control Center' established in the federal capital. The campaign is being carried out by the CDA across different sectors of the capital city. In a tweet, Chairman CDA Noor ul Amin Mengal said as promised by the Authority, around 42 dogs entered in Stray Dogs Population Control Centre, out of which 22 are males, 11 females and nine puppies. He said the authority had taken the action on the complaints lodged by the residents of different sectors of the federal capital. 29 dogs were operated, out of which 13 females and 16 males, he added. The CDA chief said that the authority had also started a massive Trap, Neuter, Vaccinate and Return (TNVR) campaign for the stray dogs as well to make Islamabad a model city by thoroughly introducing the practice. The Islamabad administration had already vaccinated and neutered stray dogs instead of killing them that helped to reduce the population of stray dogs. The vaccination will help prevent unnecessary pain and suffering of stray dogs, and also reduce dog bite incidents.

CDA all set to develop new parks

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) is all set to develop several new modern parks in the federal capital to provide better recreational facilities to the residents. "The civic authority has already developed around 37 public parks in the federal capital during the last ten years and is working on a policy to increase their number in the coming years," official sources in the CDA told APP. "We need three to four months to develop a new park after completion of the codal formalities." At present, they said the federal capital had six amusement parks, which were considered sufficient to cater to the recreational needs of Islamabad residents. "But the policy has been made that whenever a new sector will be developed, an amusement park will be constructed along," they added. The sources said that the CDA was developing several new sectors, including I-11, I-12, I-14, I-15, I-16, D-12, and Park Enclave, adding that Model Villages and parks were also being developed in the said areas.



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State on Poverty Alleviation & Social Safety Faisal Karim Kundi addressing a press conference at Press Information Department.

'IK who accused US of overthrowing his govt now begging its Congress members'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman on Sunday said Imran Khan who waved the letter and accused the US of overthrowing his government was now begging the American Congress members to favour him.

In a flurry of tweets, the federal minister responded to Imran Khan's request for intervention from the American Congressman.

Senator Rehman said the so-called "American

Conspiracy" narrative has collapsed. "Imran Khan created a narrative of American conspiracy for a year, now asking Congress members to raise their voice in his favour," she added. Imran Khan, she said had conspired against the foreign interests of the country for the sake of his politics.

"Now he is making conspiracies so that foreign countries interfere in the internal affairs of Pakistan in his favour. Is the world unaware of judicial facili-

tation, relief, and shameful events of May 9?" Sherry Rehman said.

The Minister added that Imran Khan's fascist government tried false cases against her leadership and sent them to jail.

"Did we ask the outside world to interfere in domestic affairs?" she queried.

Sherry Rehman said Imran Khan has done politics in the name of accountability, now he was looking towards the world to avoid accountability and responsibility.

E&T authorities directed to take strict action against 'tout mafia'

RAWALPINDI (APP): Caretaker Minister for Communication and Works, Excise & Taxation and Narcotics Control Punjab, Bilal Afzal has directed the authorities concerned of Excise and Taxation (E&T) to take strict action against the 'tout mafia'. According to an E&T spokesman, the minister during a visit to Rawalpindi Excise and Taxation Office directed the authorities concerned to take all possible steps to facilitate the citizens and improve service delivery.

The minister visited the offices of Director Excise Rawalpindi and reviewed the working of the Motor and Property Tax branches. Director Excise Rawalpindi, Imran Aslam gave a briefing on the occasion. Elimination of the 'tout mafia' from Excise offices was the top priority of the government, Bilal Afzal said. The government departments should improve service delivery so that the 'tout mafia' could be discouraged, he added. The presence of 'touts' in any department means that the office work is not going well, Bilal Afzal added. The agents and 'tout mafia' would be monitored across Punjab, the Minister said adding, all the officers of the government departments had been directed to facilitate the citizens and improve service delivery as per Chief Minister's vision. He further instructed the officers of the Excise department to make all-out efforts to achieve the arrears recovery targets.

Talha hosts grand reception for dedicated 'Road to Makkah' project staffers

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Senator Muhammad Talha Mahmood hosted a grand reception on Saturday night at his farmhouse to honor the dedicated staff members of the 'Road to Makkah' project from Saudi Arabia.

The event was attended by esteemed guests, including Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki, as well as diplomats from Iran, Afghanistan, Malaysia, Palestine, and other countries.

In his address to the gathering, the minister expressed his gratitude to the Saudi government and emphasized the significance of the Saudi people to the Pakistani nation. The extravagant dinner reception served as a symbol of the strong bond between the two countries, and its popularity was evident by the presence of numerous journalists from various media outlets. The programme was not limited to the venue itself; it was being watched nationwide.

Minister Talha highlighted the deep-rooted and exceptional relationship

between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. He acknowledged their longstanding history of positive ties in the realms of politics, security, and economics.

Furthermore, he praised King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman for their leadership, emphasizing that Saudi Arabia had always played the role of a supportive "big brother" to Pakistan during challenging times, providing aid and resources whenever needed.

Minister Talha expressed his admiration for Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki, commending his unwavering efforts in maintaining cordial relations between the two countries. He described the ambassador as a bridge connecting Pakistan and Saudi Arabia through thick and thin. Highlighting the immense love and reverence the Pakistani nation holds for Saudi Arabia as the center of Islamic values and sanctities, he expressed his confidence in the Saudi government's ability to provide the best Hajj arrangements for Pakistani pilgrims this year.

FM Bilawal truly advocated for rights of Kashmiri people: Kundi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Faisal Karim Kundi Sunday said that Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto has always fought for the cause of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and reflected the true sentiments of Kashmiri people.

"Bilawal Bhutto carried forward the mission of his mother Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto and Grandfather Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto," the minister said while addressing a press conference here.

Faisal Kundi said that Bilawal Bhutto was going to start a three-day visit to Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) where he will meet with parliamentarians in Kashmir and also address the Legislative Assembly on May 22. The minister said that Chairman PPP would also address a public gathering

at Bagh, AJK. "PPP has always supported Kashmir cause. Unfortunately, the previous government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf had nothing to do with the right of self-determination of Kashmiris," he added. Due to the positive and sincere efforts of Bilawal Bhutto at diplomatic fronts, he said that some countries have refused to attend G-20 conference in IIOJK.

About the ongoing political situation in the country, the minister said the whole world was condemning the unfortunate incidents that happened on May 9 after the arrest of PTI chief Imran Khan. "Parliament is the best forum to address all the challenges being faced by the country and if Imran Khan would have to stay in the Parliament then dialogue among the political parties can move forward," he added.

Divisional Public Schools launched in Attock, Jhelum

RAWALPINDI (APP):

Divisional Public Schools have been launched in Attock and Jhelum districts,

said a Commissioner's Office spokesman. He informed that the classes of Attock Divisional Public School were started on May 3 while the Jhelum Division Public School was opened for regular classes on May 20.

He further informed that Commissioner Rawalpindi Liaquat Ali Chatta here the other day visited Divisional Public School Rawalpindi and inaugurated the portal

of the school.

On the occasion, the Commissioner was briefed that the entire data of the school's children would be updated on the portal and the parents would be able to monitor their children's school attendance and academic performance through the portal.

The papers would also be uploaded on the portal after the results of the monthly test and annual school examinations.

The alert message of children's absence from the school would reach to the parents in time. Similarly, a

message would also be sent to the parents in time if, a child comes to the school from home but not enters the school.

The Commissioner during the visit directed the authorities concerned to ensure the bio-metric attendance of all teachers and staff. "Our aim is not to memorize the books but to give the best training to the children to make them useful citizens of the country," the Commissioner said.

The Commissioner also urged the teachers to educate the children along with moral teaching.

Gwadar - Transforming into dynamic regional economic engine

ISLAMABAD (APP): After stagnant progress on our future lifeline project during past four years - the China Pakistan Economic Corridor and important segment of Road and Belt Initiative of the Chinese government, is once again on way to taking strides.

The deep seaport of Gwadar, a crucial component of CPEC, has a special strategic significance as a facility not simply ensuring Pak-China connectivity but hyperlinking Central Asia, South Asia and the Middle East, making it a center of future economic activities. The project envisaged and executed during the PPP and the PML-N governments suffered a snail pace progress during Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf regime due to reasons well known to Imran Khan led coalition. But now after the collective efforts of the civilian government as well as the establishment, it is once again inching closer step by step, to turning into a game-changer monetary hub for Pakistan and regional countries as well.

In line with its method to operationalize the seaport and deliver financial benefits to capture the alternate boom, the authorities in recent past imported around 450,000 Metric Tons (MT) wheat through nine vessels anchored at this newly-built facility. "The initiation of trade activities with the import of wheat via Gwadar Port has marked the beginning of a new era of business, trade and commercial activities that would significantly benefit underprivileged Balochistan, especially Gwadar and Makran," said an official at Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives.

"All the contractors, workforce, customs clearing agents, shipping agents, labor contractors and food suppliers etc, engaged in operation of Gwadar port for imports by TCP (Trading Corporation of Pakistan) are 100% from local population... and it will definitely help uplift living standards of the people of Balochistan," the official said.

In the second week of the current month, the ministry also announced

the completion of the China Exhibition and Trading Center in a record time of six months at the Gwadar deep-sea port with the cost of \$12 million. The project was completed by the China Offshore Ports Handling Company (COPHCL).

Meanwhile, Minister for Planning Professor Ahsan Iqbal has directed to conduct third International Expo Gwadar June 2023 at the newly established EXPO center. This Expo would coincide with the 10-year celebrations of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in July this year.

The development under CPEC aims to transform Gwadar into a major trade and economic hub, facilitating regional connectivity and enhancing Pakistan's maritime trade. The port's potential to become an energy and transport corridor, coupled with its strategic location, makes it a focal point for international investment and economic cooperation, driving economic growth and regional integration.

The present government's sincerity in uplifting Gwadar can be gauged from the fact that soon after assuming office last year, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif visited the port city and announced a Rs 100 billion package for the Balochistan province, allocating a sizable amount for the city. Besides, the inauguration of some key infrastructure projects including the Eastbay Expressway, he also directed completion of all ongoing projects of health, water and electricity in Gwadar within the stipulated time. To give further impetus to the port's development, the Prime Minister also broke ground for associated sub-projects like Gwadar Seawater Desalination Plant, Jingtai Gwadar Private Limited, Hangmei Lubricant Plant, Hangang Agricultural Industrial Park, Gwadar Expo Centre and Gwadar Fertilizer Plant and distributed 3,000 solar panels. The 19.49 km six-lane Eastbay Expressway connecting Gwadar Port to Makran Coastal Highway, also provides a link to country's economic

hub Karachi. It is a major infrastructure mobility project in Gwadar parallel to the coastline and hoped to serve as a source of sustainable development in the area.

According to the official sources, some 20 new projects would be completed in 2023 and onward as per their scheduled timeframes.

They added that the projects completed so far in the city under the multi-billion dollar CPEC include Gwadar Port, Gwadar Free Zone South (Phase I), Eastbay Expressway, Pak-China Technical and Vocational Institute (PCT & VI), China-Pakistan Gwadar Faqeer Middle School, Fiber Optic, E-Custom system (WeBOC), Plant Tissue Culture Lab & Green House, livestock, women-led garment factory, Gwadar University and GDA-Indus Hospital.

The other ongoing projects in Gwadar include Gwadar Free Zone North (Phase II), the Gwadar Safe City Project, three electricity projects, the Gwadar Smart Port City Master Plan, the Gwadar Tourism Project, New management model of Pak-China Technical and Vocational Institute (PCT & VI), State of Art Shipyard Project, Oil Refinery project, Green Gwadar Project, Pak-China Friendship Hospital, fisher community projects, Gwadar Port dredging project, Export-oriented projects, Fishing industry, Warehouse industry and Gwadar Huafa Exhibition and Trading Center.

In the coming days, a number of new projects are being launched inaugurated in Gwadar - a centerpiece of the CPEC which is strategically located at the mouth of the Persian Gulf and has the immense potential to become a major hub for trade and commerce in the region.

What is direly needed is to ensure that no regime in future spoils such vital project for our economic growth through their faulty and inefficient policies. Because doing this not only enhance the loan burden on our economy and people but also pushed us years back on road to progress.

Tributes paid to Mirwaiz Molvi Farooq, Khawaja Lone on their martyrdom anniversaries

ISLAMABAD (APP): In Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, the All Parties Hurriyat Conference has paid rich tribute to prominent martyred Hurriyat leaders, Mirwaiz Molvi Muhammad Farooq and Khawaja Abdul Ghani Lone, on their martyrdom anniversaries.

Mirwaiz Molvi Muhammad Farooq was assassinated by unidentified gunmen at his residence in Srinagar on May 21, 1990. On the same day, over 70 mourners were killed when Indian troops opened indiscriminate fire on his funeral procession in the Hawal area of Srinagar. Twelve years later, on May 21 in 2002, unknown attackers shot dead Khawaja Abdul Ghani Lone when he was returning after addressing a gathering at the Martyrs' Graveyard in Srinagar. The APHC Vice Chairman, Ghulam Ahmed Gulzar, in a statement issued in Srinagar said, "Mirwaiz Molvi Muhammad Farooq, Khawaja Abdul Ghani Lone and other martyrs of the freedom movement are the heroes of Kashmiri people." He said the Kashmiris on the martyrdom anniversaries of these leaders vow to accomplish the mission of their martyrs at all costs, Kashmir Media Service reported on Sunday.

The APHC leader said that these noble souls sacrificed their lives for a great and sacred cause of freedom. He said, they were torch-bearers of the freedom movement, and their struggle, teachings and sacrifices are role models for the future generations of Kashmir. The Jammu and Kashmir Awami Action Committee (AAC) and Anjuman

Nusrat-ul-Islam also paid rich tribute to the prominent martyred Hurriyat leaders on their martyrdom anniversaries.

The AAC, in a statement issued in Srinagar, said its executive members, office bearers and workers participated in the special prayer meeting, while the head of the organisation Mirwaiz Umar Farooq could not participate even in this prayer meeting due to his continuous illegal house detention for nearly four years.

In the meeting, the participants said, "The Shaheed-e-Millat till his martyrdom selflessly and fearlessly acted as the spokesperson of his people and safeguarded their religious, political and social rights; and his contribution to Kashmiri society is unforgettable."

They expressed deep regret and resentment over the continued illegal and arbitrary detention of the head of the organisation, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq; and hailed his patience and perseverance all these years. In the end, prayers were offered for the forgiveness and elevation of ranks of Mirwaiz Molvi Muhammad Farooq, Khawaja Abdul Ghani Lone and the Hawal martyrs of May 21, 1990. The Anjuman Nusrat-ul-Islam organised a special prayer meeting to commemorate its former president Mirwaiz Molvi Muhammad Farooq, in which the teachers, students and staff of the schools run by this more than a century-old educational institution participated.

16 vans donated to ARCS

KABUL (Agencies): The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) donated 16 vehicles to the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) aimed at providing transportation facilities to people living in remote parts of the country, ARCS said in a statement Sunday. The vans are Land Cruiser type, which is equipped with a communication system that can be used in provinces to help people, according to the statement.

Deputy PM visits Herat

HERAT (Agencies): Mullah Abdul Ghani Beradar, Deputy Prime Minister in economic affairs travelled to the Western Zone and met with officials of 207 Al Farooq Army crops. Mullah Abdul Ghani Beradar travelled to Herat after the inauguration ceremony of Bakhsh Abad Dam in Farah province, where he evaluated the general security situation in the western region of the country. Commander Mullah Nasrullah Matti briefed Beradar about the security.

Media in Khost complain of shortage of content due to official policies

KHOST (TOLONews): The head of the media organizations in the southeastern province of Khost voiced concerns that they have been struggling with a shortage of content because their publications must meet Islamic Emirate policies.

The officials said that it is difficult to prepare their content rapidly in a way that also meets the demands of the Islamic Emirate.

"We face problems because the programs that were scheduled before and included music, those programs are banned now," said Sharifullah Sarwari, head

of Azmon radio station.

"If a particular law on the media has limits that are determined, then the media will be able to publish better programs," said Rizwan Miakhail, head of a media network in Khost. Some of the media-supporting organizations meanwhile urged the government to facilitate access to information and to allow media organizations to work on better content.

"We request that further progress be made in journalists' access to information," said Jamil Waqar, an official of the journalist safety committee.

The provincial head of the department of information and culture, Shabir Ahmad Osmani, said they have shared their consultations about the publications of media content.

"There is a lot of new media content in Khost. In addition to that, we have given them timely consultations to improve their programs," he said. After the fall of the former government, the Afghan media faced severe challenges including new restrictions, and economic hardship has forced many of them to halt their operations.

IEA fully committed to help investors

KABUL (Agencies): The Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar Akhund, visited a carpet manufacturing factory in Herat, his office said in a statement. During his stay, he met with a number of investors and businessmen from the carpet manufacturing industry in Herat.

In the meeting, the investors and businessmen shared their concerns and issues related to business and investment, seeking cooperation from the Islamic Emirate. Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar Akhund, encouraged investors and businessmen to invest in the country, emphasizing the importance of their contributions to Afghanistan's economic development, according to the statement.

"Operation of the large and standardized carpet factory in Herat highlighting the transformation that has taken place, as Afghan carpets, once exported under the names and trademarks of other countries, are now proudly exported under the name of Afghanistan," the statement quoted deputy PM as saying.

The Deputy PM for Economic Affairs assured the investors and businessmen that their concerns would be addressed and pledged full cooperation from the Islamic Emirate.

He reiterated the government's support for businessmen and investors and expressed readiness to assist them in any possible way.

Work on 8 uplift projects started

KANDAHAR (Agencies): The construction work on eight various development projects worth 12.8 million Afghani (some 146,328.70 US dollars) has been started in 8 districts of the country's southern province of Kandahar, the provincial Municipality said.

"The projects include road projects, culverts, ditches and will be funded by the development budget of the provincial Municipality," the statement quoted the provincial Mayor Niamatullah Hassan as saying. Dozens of skilled and unskilled people will be provided with job opportunities in the projects, the statement said.

"The development projects are implemented by tax payers' money and for launching such projects in the province they should pay their taxes on time," the statement quoted.

A project worker Wali Mohammad said: "We are happy to have a work opportunity in our province, we will not be unemployed if there are more development projects."

Karim Barai, a community representative, said: "These projects are according to our will and we are happy about it. During winter these streets are in terrible condition and water enters public houses but after the work, the problem would be resolved."

Afghan-Iranian military officials meet in Kabul



KABUL (Khaama Press): Senior Military officials from Afghanistan and Iran met on Sunday in Kabul to discuss border security cooperation, the Ministry of Defence said in a statement.

A delegation led by the Iranian Army's deputy general staff arrived in Kabul to discuss enhancing cross-border cooperation amid the Hirmand water dispute between Afghanistan and

Iran.

The statement said that the Afghan acting Deputy Chief of the Army, Mali Khan Sadiq welcomed the Iranian delegation. The interim administration wanted good relations with Iran and committed to further cooperation in various sectors, including border security cooperation.

Meanwhile, the Iranian delegation positively

assessed the bilateral agreement in various sectors and assured cooperation and strengthening relations.

The two parties focused on border issues, improving their shared collaboration, and finding diplomatic solutions to their issues.

The meetings came amid tensions between the de facto authorities and Iran on Helmand Water River

rights.

Recently, Iranian officials asked the Taliban officials to respect their water rights from the Helmand River based on the 1973 accord. While the Taliban authorities responded that the Afghan authorities committed to the agreement; however, due to severe drought and lack of water in the river, the water cannot reach Iran.

Death sentence of 200 Afghans in Iran commuted to imprisonment

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) said on Sunday that the death sentence of 200 Afghan prisoners in Iran was recently commuted to imprisonment and they were handed over to the current Afghan government.

The ministry's spokesperson, Abdul Mutalib Haqqani, said that more than 2,000 of the 6,000 Afghan prisoners in Iran had been released and sent back to the country.

Haqqani noted that a

committee was established by the Islamic Emirate to handle the issues of Afghan prisoners in Iran.

"The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation is a member of this committee and with the efforts of this committee, more than 2,000 Afghans who were imprisoned in Iran have been released and were sent back to the country. In addition, 200 prisoners who had been given death sentences in Iran recently received jail terms instead and were sent back to Afghanistan,"

Haqqani added.

In the meantime, some political analysts said that in order to prevent the citizens of the country from going abroad, it is necessary to provide employment opportunities to the people. "Despite the fact that there are nearly 6,000 Afghan immigrants in Iran's prisons, the agreements made were only on some of these immigrants," said Asifa Stanikzai, an immigrant rights activist.

"First, employment opportunities for Afghans

should be created within Afghanistan. When Afghans have work in their homeland, they will not go to another country," said Wahid Faqiri, an international relations expert.

According to figures from Iran's foreign ministry, there are more than five million Afghan immigrants in the neighboring country.

Previously, an Iranian human rights organization said that in the last five months, seven Afghan immigrants were executed in Iran.

Afghan authorities commence sending pilgrims to Saudi Arabia

KABUL (Khaama Press): Taliban authorities have informed of the departure of the first group of Afghan pilgrims from Kabul International Airport, adding the first flight carrying 342 Afghan pilgrims to Saudi Arabia took off from Kabul on Saturday night.

Taliban's Acting Prime Minister Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, asked the Afghan pilgrims to sympathize and offer prayers for the sustainability of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

A number of senior Taliban members including acting Prime Minister, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, Abdul Salam Hanafi, acting Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Hajj and Religious Affairs of the group went to Kabul Airport to commence the transfer process of Afghan pilgrims.

Taliban's Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs added that dispatching Afghan pilgrims to perform Hajj had started from the capital and the process will soon start from other zones. According to the ministry, government offi-



cials and employees of the Ministry of Hajj tasked by the working committee and pilgrims were part of the first flight leaving for Saudi Arabia.

Afghanistan's Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs has said the Mawlawi Abdul Kabir asked the Afghan pilgrims to offer prayers for peace,

prosperity and sustainability of Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's Ministry of Transport and civil aviation has said that it will send some 30,000 Afghan pilgrims to Saudi Arabia to perform Hajj through four airports.

It is reported that Saudi Arabia has allowed up to 1 million people from both

inside and outside the country to join the Hajj pilgrimage this year, thus expanding the key event to worshippers from outside the Kingdom after two years of tight restrictions.

Afghanistan has been allocated a quota of 13,582 pilgrims to perform the Hajj in 2022, the Kabul Times Reported.

British man launches risky tours to southern Afghanistan

KANDAHAR (Khaama Press): A British man is charging £4,000 per person for dangerous tours to the Taliban's heartland in southern Kandahar and Helmand provinces through his company Safarat Tours, which he founded with former colleague Noori Qadtullah.

Sheffer and his Afghan partner took their first group of tourists to Afghanistan last October and he says a 'bigger group' including a photographer from New York Times is set to travel to Afghanistan in the coming weeks.

Freelance cameraman Joe Sheffer is charging £4,000 per person for the

tours to the southern (Kandahar and Helmand) provinces of Afghanistan through his company Safarat Tours, which he founded with former colleague Noori Qadtullah.

Sheffer and his Afghan partner took their first group of tourists to Afghanistan last October and he says a 'bigger group' including a photographer from New York Times is set to travel to Afghanistan in the coming weeks.

Freelance cameraman Joe Sheffer is charging £4,000 per person for the

The launch of this tour to Afghanistan has provoked a wave of criticism from the Conservative Party and British security officials.

Tobias Martin Ellwood, a member of the Conservative Party and Chairman of the British Defense Committee says that the Taliban will treat tourists not as visitors but as spies who will possibly face death sentence.

A former British authority who escaped from the Taliban wants this tour to

be canceled because people's safety is of paramount importance than visiting the war-torn at the moment country according to him.

Since the return of the Taliban to power in August 2021, Afghanistan's tourism industry has gone through difficult times with barely any foreign or local groups willing to visit the many historical sites and natural beauties of the landlocked country mainly due to security concerns.

PM meets scholars, influential figures



KABUL (Agencies): The Acting Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan Mawlawi Abdul Kabir has met with a number of scholars, elders and influential figures of Hoodkhil area of Kabul province, his office said in a statement Sunday.

The meeting was participated by a number of scholars, religious and influential figures of Kabul-based Paktia residents and they assured of their full support to the Islamic Emirate as well as assured of any nec-

essary cooperation with the current system, said the statement.

Expressing pleasures from full cooperation of the IEA's officials with the people, assured that they are ready for any sacrifices to keep and support the Islamic system, the statement said, adding that after the resumption of power by the IEA lots of problems have been solved and the remaining is suggested to the relevant officials to be solved as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, the Acting Prime Minister and Deputy PM Mawlawi Abdul Kabir

while, welcoming them, assured that the IEA's officials are making tireless efforts day and night to solve all challenges of Afghan people and provide them with any necessary facilities in the country, the statement added.

"One of the most important goals of the Islamic Emirate is to strengthen and keeping close the government's relation with the people, as a government will not last without the complete support of the people," the statement quoted the Acting Prime Minister.

Students call for reopening of universities for women

KABUL (TOLONews): A group of students called for the reopening of universities for women as five months have passed since the ban on higher education for female students.

They said that many female students will pursue their education overseas if the ban continues.

Some female students said they have become depressed after the closure of universities.

"It has been five months since the universities have been closed for women. They are faced with depression. They have become hopeless. I, too, have lost my ambitions," said

Freshta, a student.

Other students meanwhile said that education is the undeniable right of women and girls and the Islamic Emirate should reopen universities as soon as possible.

"I ask the Islamic Emirate not to remove us from society," said Susan, a student.

"We have a hadith from the Messenger of Allah which says getting an education is our right."

"We ask the Islamic Emirate to reopen schools, universities, and educational centers to us as soon as possible so that we can use our inalienable right to edu-

cation and develop our careers," said Waslat, another student.

Some university lecturers said that the presence of female students in universities is crucial for the improvement of society.

"There is a great need for education, for the reopening of schools, universities, and madrasas, especially at this time that we need to keep moving forward parallel with the world," said Mustafa Murtazawi, a university lecturer.

Previously, the Islamic Emirate said that efforts are underway on a curriculum for universities.

Helicopter crash in northern Afghanistan kills two pilots

SAMANGAN (Khaama Press): Afghanistan's Ministry of Defense on Sunday confirmed that a helicopter of the air force (MD- 530) crashed while patrolling in the northern Samangan province, resulting in the death of its two pilots.

The defense ministry

said that the air force helicopter faced a technical problem after colliding with a high-voltage power line in the Khulm district of Samangan province, which resulted in the death of its two pilots.

The ministry offered condolences to the families

of the killed pilots and said a comprehensive investigation into the incident is underway.

Earlier, the head of the information and culture department of the Taliban in Samangan province told reporters that a military helicopter had crashed in the

Khulm district of the province.

This is not the first time a military helicopter is facing a technical problem and eventually crashes, leaving its pilots dead in Afghanistan.

Since the Taliban's takeover of power in Afghanistan in 2021, several air force helicopters have crashed due to unknown reasons.

On September 10, 2022, a US-manufactured Black Hawk helicopter crashed during military training in Kabul, leaving at least three Afghan crew members killed the Taliban's defense ministry said.

It is not known how many US choppers remain in the hands of the Taliban government. As the US-backed Afghan government collapsed in mid-August last year, dozens of Afghan pilots fled to Central Asian countries, including Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.



Marriyum calls Imran ‘liar’ as he rebuts news article on his wife’s corruption

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Sunday called Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan a "liar" as he tried to refute a news article on his wife Bushra Bibi's corruption and unceremonious removal of the former chief of an institution.

"If this wasn't the reason, what was? Do tell! The only reason you can't give another reason because you know that this is the real reason. LIAR," the minister said while responding to Imran Khan's tweet on his wife's corruption.

National Film Production Institute to help promote filmmaking in Pakistan: Marriyum: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Sunday that establishment of the National Film Production Institute will prove helpful in the promotion of film-making in the country.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of PTV's National Film Production Institute here, she said she was glad to see that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's vision of a training institute for film production was going to become a reality.

She said that due to their historic contribution, Pakistan Television and Radio Pakistan had heritage value in the history of the electronic media industry of the country. The minister said that unfortunately in the recent past film making had been reduced to only one class. However, she said it was a good sign that filmmaking

trend in private TV channels was increasing. The objective of National Film, Culture Policy 2018, revived by the present government last year, was not only to revive films but also to promote Pakistan's narrative all over the world through screen tourism.

Marriyum Aurangzeb said that film policy 2018, entertainment was given the status of the industry and given tax amnesty.

She said that in the film policy, attention has also been paid to restore the cinema houses in the country which were demolished when the industry deteriorated in the 1990s.

The establishment of the Film Institute, she continued was part of the vision of the development of this sector.

"Due to our initiatives, recent films have done good business both at local at the global level," the minister remarked.

"As far as electronic media is concerned, the PTV and Radio Pakistan have the biggest infrastructure," she said adding that steps were being taken to utilise that infrastructure for the betterment of the entertainment industry.

The minister said that PTV Academy should also create awareness among the children about the Constitution, democracy, and politics as well. Earlier Marriyum Aurangzeb inaugurated the National Film Production Institute. Secretary Information and Managing Director PTV Sohail Ali Khan and senior officers for the MoIB and PTV attended the ceremony.

Over 2000 PTI leaders and workers arrested in Punjab

LAHORE (PPI): Punjab police have claimed to arrest over two thousand miscreants involved in May 9 attacks, vandalism, violence, and arson on government institutions, according to a report on Sunday.

According to police officials, the process of arresting alleged rioters among the leaders and workers of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf is underway with the help of CCTV cameras of the Safe City Authority, video recordings from mobile phones and private cameras, and geofencing.

They are wanted in cases lodged against them under the Anti-Terrorism Act all over the province for carrying out attacks on the Corps Commander House in Lahore, public and private buildings, law enforcement agencies, and their vehicles. The sources said that raids continued in the homes of PTI workers and leaders even late at night.

The Punjab police claimed that at least 162 police officers and officials were injured in the violent activities of the miscreants across Punjab.

The violent mobs vandalized more than 97 vehicles used by Lahore and Punjab Police.

Punjab's caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi has said that all cases against miscreants involved in violence will be sent to anti-terrorism courts and military courts. "No perpetrator of a crime will be left unpunished," he said. "The miscreants will be brought to justice with evidence and proofs," the chief minister said.

22 Pakistanis released by India reach homeland

SAJJAWAL (PPI): The 22 captives, including nine fishermen, belonging to Pakistan were released from Indian prisons after years. The released Pakistan nationals have reached their homeland through Wagah border, officials said Sunday.

The release of the imprisoned fishermen after years brought joy to the faces of their parents. The fishermen belonging to different backgrounds include Qasim, Abdul Manaf Tahim, Sher Ali Sonaro Malla, Achhar Malla, Saleem Doriyo, and Ahmed Jatt.

No support left behind for Imran Khan: Tessori

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori said on Sunday that several leaders of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) were leaving former prime minister Imran Khan one by one. Addressing a ceremony, Mr Tessori claimed that there was no support left behind for Imran Khan. Speaking about the May 9 vandalism, Mr Tessori said, "The public buildings were attacked on May 9."

He urged political parties not to be part of any such conspiracy – vandalism – in the future, adding the political parties had been used for foreign agendas.

On the other side, the governor had recently inaugurated a "Bell of Hope" outside the Governor House's Gate No. 1, which will be used to resolve the issues of the people of Sindh. The bell will be available for use by aggrieved persons from 12 midnight till 8am every day.



MUZAFFARABAD: PPP AJK leaders received Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party Foreign Minister, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari during his three day Azad Jammu and Kashmir visit.

Erdogan eyes third decade of rule in historic runoff

ISTANBUL (AFP/APP): Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan

cruises on Sunday into the final week before an historic runoff election as the big favourite to extend two

decades of his Islamic-rooted rule until 2028. Secular leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu gave the opposition's best performance of Erdogan's dominant era in May 14 parliament and presidential polls.

The retired bureaucrat of Kurdish Alevi descent broke ethnic barriers and Erdogan's stranglehold on the media and state institutions to win almost 45 percent of the vote.

But Erdogan still came within a fraction of a point of topping the 50-percent threshold needed to win in the first round.

The 69-year-old leader did it despite Turkey's worst economic crisis since the 1990s and opinion surveys showing him headed for his first national election defeat.

Kilicdaroglu will now need to rally his deflated troops and beat the odds yet again to wrest back power for the

secular party that ruled Turkey for most of the 20th century.

The Eurasia Group consultancy put Erdogan's chances of winning next Sunday at 80 percent.

"It will be an uphill struggle for Kilicdaroglu in the second round," Hamish Kinnear of the Verisk Maplecroft consulting firm agreed.

Erdogan rode a nationalist wave that saw smaller right-wing parties pick up nearly 25 percent of the parallel parliamentary vote.

Kilicdaroglu is courting these voters in the second presidential round.

The 74-year-old revamped his campaign team and tore up his old playbook for the most fateful week of his political career.

He has replaced chatty clips that he used to record from his kitchen with desk-thumping speeches and pledges to immediately rid Turkey of millions of migrants. "As soon as I come to power, I will send all the refugees home," he said in his first post-election address.

He has chased the endorsement of

a little-known ultra-nationalist, whose tiny vote share pushed Turkey into its first presidential runoff.

And he has punched back against Erdogan's claims that he was associating with "terrorists" -- a code word for Kurdish groups fighting for broader autonomy in Turkey's south-east. "We have millions of patriots to reach," Kilicdaroglu said.

But Kilicdaroglu's sharp right turn could prove costly with voters from Kurdish regions that overwhelmingly backed him in the first round.

Kurds embraced Erdogan during his first decade in power because he worked to lift many of their social restrictions. They turned against him when Erdogan formed his own alliance with Turkey's nationalist forces and began to unleash purges after surviving a failed coup attempt in 2016. Kilicdaroglu's new and more overtly nationalist tone echoes a secular era during which Kurds -- who make up nearly a fifth of Turkey's population -- were stripped of basic rights.

May 9 vandalism “9/11-type” attacks on Pakistan’s national interests: Ahsan Iqbal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Sunday termed the Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf workers' May 9 vandalism of sensitive state installations as the "9/11-type" attacks on Pakistan's national interests.

The minister in an exclusive interview with APP said it was regrettable that a political party's (PTI) workers on May 9 stormed and destroyed many symbols of Pakistan's pride that include Jinnah House, Yadgar-e-Shuhada, fighter jets of the famous 1965 war and Chagai mountain model. He said this reaction to their leader's (Imran Khan) arrest over corruption charges was unprecedentedly irrational, unacceptable and not less than the 9/11 attacks carried out in the US in 2001.

"The May-9 incident for Pakistan's Armed Forces was equivalent to the September-11 of America. The violent workers of a political party attacked Pakistan's heritage and the pride of the security departments. The 'Jinnah House' was not only the residence of a Corps Commander rather a heritage of the founder of the country," he observed.

He regretted that the PTI workers broke the statue of Captain Karnal Sher Khan Shaheed, a symbol of courage and bravery demonstrated by the Martyr in the Kargil battlefield and even admitted by the arch-rival India. "If they have broken the fighter jets of 1965 war, [it means] they have attacked the pride of Pakistan Air Force attained by defeating the enemy in the air war."

The minister said the model of

Chagai Mountain, which reminded the nation of nuclear tests carried out by its scientists that made the country's defence impregnable, was also set on fire. "There seems a scheme/method behind this madness as all such symbols were targeted selectively which had a link either with national heritage or pride of the Armed Forces."

Ahsan Iqbal said such serious offences could not be tolerated and forgiven by any country, reminding that charges were framed against all those who attacked the United States Capitol Hill at the behest of ex-president Donald Trump; and UK courts opened at the night for giving exemplary punishment to those involved in street riots, loot and plunder.

"So, these people too do not deserve any mercy as they have attacked the national heritage and pride of the Armed Forces," he said, adding that evidence-based legal proceedings would be initiated against those involved in the subversive activities. "Those who caused destruction in civil areas will be prosecuted under the civil law, while those who attacked military installations, will be tried under the Army Act." He said the enemies of Pakistan kept celebrating the subversive activities of the PTI, "Thus we made our enemies happy and brought tears to the eyes of our nation."

Answering a question, the minister said when the coalition government came into power last year; the national kitty was empty and the Finance Ministry was unable to release development funds for the last quarter of the fiscal year 2021-22-, which hap-

pened for the first time in the country's history due to failed economic policies of the past regime of PTI.

He said the PTI leadership was expecting that there would be a Sri Lanka-like situation within a few days, but the incumbent government under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif took bold steps, faced the crisis, and streamlined the affairs to a great extent. "The tough decision taken by the government has started yielding good results."

Last year, he said the country faced devastating floods in the majority districts of the country that caused around \$ 30 billion loss to the national exchequer, but despite all the financial constraints, the government initiated reconstruction and rehabilitation work in the affected areas.

Commenting on the issue of inflation, Ahsan Iqbal said it was all because of the four-year rule of the PTI which damaged the investment pouring into the country under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects. He said the PTI government laid the foundation of inflation by devaluing the rupee against the dollar and allowing the \$80 billion imports in its last year to show artificial growth and benefit friends by issuing import licences. In the damage-repair efforts, he said the current government resumed the stalled programme of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and restored ties with friendly countries that had been affected during the PTI rule. Replying to another question, the minister said the CPEC was a game-changer project not only for Pakistan but also the entire region.

KP Governor visits burnt Jinnah House Lahore

LAHORE (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali on Sunday visited Jinnah House Lahore after it was burnt down by miscreants and inspected it.

The Governor also visited Corps Commander Lahore House. The Governor expresses grief over burning of Jinnah House

Lahore and expressed solidarity with people of Punjab and Pakistan Army. The Governor said that he was grieved after seeing the destruction of Jinnah House Lahore and strongly condemned it on behalf of people and Government of KP. He said that after seeing the devastation of the Jinnah House it was cleared that

an organized conspiracy was made against the country and Pakistan Army and suggested strong action against the miscreants.

He suggested disassociation from a political party for its violent thinking, adding that even the enemy could not dare the way Jinnah house was vandalized.



Moscow claims it has captured Bakhmut, epicentre of Ukraine fighting

MOSCOW (AFP/APP): Russia said Saturday it has captured the east Ukrainian city of Bakhmut, epicentre of the fighting, as President Vladimir Putin congratulated his troops and private mercenary group Wagner.

The announcement from the Russian army came hours after Kyiv said the battle was continuing, while admitting the situation was "critical", and with Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky meeting G7 leaders in Japan. Bakhmut, a salt-mining town that once had a population of 70,000 people, has been the scene of the longest and bloodiest battle in Moscow's more than year-long Ukraine offensive.

The fall of Bakhmut, where both Moscow and Kyiv are believed to have suffered huge losses, would allow Moscow to bring home a key victory after a series of humiliating defeats. It would also come before a major counteroffensive that Kyiv has been preparing for months. Zelensky himself has warned that the fall of the city would open the way for Russian troops to capture more parts of Donbas. "As a result of offensive actions of the Wagner assault units, with the support of artillery and aviation of the 'Southern' unit, the liberation of the city of Artemovsk was completed," Russia's defence ministry said, using the Soviet-era name of Bakhmut.

"Vladimir Putin congratulated the assault units of Wagner as well as all servicemen of

units of the Russian armed forces who provided them with the necessary support and flank cover, on the completion of the operation to liberate" the city, the TASS news agency quoted a Kremlin statement as saying.

Wagner's boss Yevgeny Prigozhin earlier claimed the city had fallen to his mercenaries in a video posted on Telegram, in which fighters held Russian flags against a backdrop of ruins. "Today on May 20, around midday, Bakhmut was taken in its entirety," Prigozhin said in the video, adding that Wagner fighters would search the captured city before handing it over to the Russian army.

"By May 25 we will completely examine (Bakhmut), create the necessary lines of defence and hand it to the military," Prigozhin said. "We ourselves will go into field camps."

Artillery sound could be heard in the background of Prigozhin's video.

Ukraine, which this month claimed successes in and around Bakhmut, said earlier that the battle was not over.

"Heavy fighting in Bakhmut. The situation is critical," deputy defence minister Ganna Malyar posted on Telegram.

She said Ukrainian troops were "holding the defence" in the city's "Airplane area".

"As of now, our defenders control certain industrial and infrastructure facilities in the area," she said. It was not possible for AFP to verify either claim.

Zelensky wins new diplomatic, military support from G7

HIROSHIMA (AFP/APP): President Volodymyr Zelensky secured more arms, munitions and "unwavering" diplomatic support from G7 allies in Hiroshima Sunday, as Russia claimed victory in the battle for a devastated eastern city.

Meeting leaders from a bloc of rich democracies, Zelensky won a commitment from US President Joe Biden to provide yet more "ammunition, artillery, armoured vehicles" on top of access to F-16 jets. Top Zelensky aide Andriy Yermak said the US package included additional ammunition for HIMAR rocket launchers, artillery shells, anti-tank guided missiles and thermal imaging

systems worth \$375 million.

Zelensky's surprise trip to Japan has been a major diplomatic coup, putting his country and Russia's 15-month-long invasion firmly at the top of the agenda. But success in the negotiating rooms contrasted sharply with difficulties on the ground, as he reflected on the months-long battle for Bakhmut and new Russian claims to have taken control of the eastern city.

Asked about the fate of the former salt-mining town of 70,000 people, Zelensky was notably downbeat, saying "you have to understand there is nothing" there.

"For today, Bakhmut is only in our hearts," he said.

Ukrainian forces have

tried for months to keep a toehold on the town, forcing Moscow to commit significant numbers of troops there in the process.

On Saturday, Russian President Vladimir Putin congratulated mercenaries from the Wagner organisation and regular units for the operation to "liberate" the town. Zelensky's invitation to visit Hiroshima, a city synonymous with the horrors of nuclear war, was a "deeply meaningful" symbol of support, according to host Fumio Kishida, Japan's prime minister. "By inviting President Zelensky to Japan, we demonstrated the unwavering solidarity of G7 with Ukraine," he said.

plies, "looks forward" to the meeting, a senior administration official said, adding that it is expected to take place after 2:00pm (0500 GMT) Sunday.

Zelensky made a surprise appearance Saturday at the summit in Hiroshima -- another diplomatic coup a day after he attended the Arab League summit in Saudi Arabia.

The Ukrainian president, who was flown in on a French government plane, was able to meet not just G7 leaders but those from other key international players such as unaligned powers Brazil and India.

The fruits of his diplomatic efforts have already paid off, with the US announcing Friday that it would allow Kyiv to acquire F-16 fighter jets, the most sophisticated material yet supplied by the West.

Prigozhin meanwhile continued his running battle with Russia's military establishment. "The operation to capture Bakhmut -- the Bakhmut meat grinder -- lasted 224 days," Prigozhin said, wearing a camouflage uniform. Moscow's losses would have been far smaller if it was not for incompetent generals, he added.

Wagner, which spearheaded the fight for Bakhmut, is believed to have suffered huge losses in the months-long storming of the city. Prigozhin has long complained about Wagner not being given appropriate amounts of ammunition. "There was only Wagner here (in Bakhmut)," he said in the video.