

Asad Umar, 180 others booked

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The Islamabad police have registered a case against Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf leaders including Asad Umar, Raja Khurram and others for taking out a rally on Saturday in violation of Section 144. The FIR was registered in the Margala police station. Police nominated 47 PTI leaders including Asad Umar, Raja Khurram Nawaz and booked another unknown 180 workers in the case.

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Pakistan, Scotland to hold investment conference: PM

LONDON (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday said Pakistan and Scotland will hold a conference to attract investment in the fields of trade, education, technical training and renewable sources of energy. After meeting with First Minister of Scotland Humza Yousaf here, he told media that he had constructive talks with the First Minister who was a young man infused with passion and energy.

He said Pakistan enjoyed good relations with Britain and Scotland.

He said Scotland had expertise in the areas of solar, wind and hydro energy and Pakistan would like to take benefit from it. The prime minister mentioned that 80,000-strong Pakistani diaspora was playing an important part in economy of Scotland and their contribution will further strengthen ties between the two nations. Shehbaz said the people of Pakistan emerged successful when the National Crime Agency of the United Kingdom gave him a clean chit after two years of investigation in different countries including Dubai and Switzerland in a false case instigated by Imran Niazi.

Imran Niazi wasted Pakistan's money, time and energy and used all tactics to malign Pakistan by initiating false cases against his opponents,

he said adding lies of Imran were being exposed as he was a liar and cheat. Later in a tweet, the prime minister said he and the First Minister shared the enthusiasm to strengthen cooperation between Pakistan and Scotland in various fields, particularly education. "Thank you First Minister Humza Yousaf. I was extremely delighted to meet you. Happy that we share enthusiasm to strengthen cooperation between Pakistan and Scotland in various fields, particularly education. We are proud of your stellar success as a political leader of Pakistani-Scottish origin. My best wishes for your successful future," he tweeted.

PM Shehbaz, First Minister of Scotland agree to strengthen bilateral ties in diverse areas: First Minister of Scotland, Humza Yousaf called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif here on Sunday.

Felicitating the First Minister on his election to this important position, the prime minister observed that Mr. Yousaf's election underscored the important and positive contribution of the British Pakistani community to the progress and development of Scotland and across the UK.

He wished him success in the discharge of his responsibilities.

The two leaders agreed to further strengthen historic ties between Pakistan and Scotland, including in the domains of trade, investment, education, water management, wind & solar technology and people-to-people links. The two sides agreed to work collaboratively to promote joint ventures in education, skills development and renewables.

They also explored ways to leverage Scottish Pakistani entrepreneurs to promote investment in Pakistan. They also agreed to work collaboratively to address the challenge of climate change. In this regard, Pakistan suggested holding an Investment Conference in Scotland and separately arrange a road show to showcase Pakistan's renewable energy potential in Scotland.

The prime minister further thanked the Scottish government for its generous contribution to floods relief last year. The prime minister extended a cordial invitation to Mr. Yousaf to visit Pakistan, which he happily accepted. Mr. Yousaf leads the Scottish National Party and was elected in March by the Scottish Parliament to head the Scottish government. He is the first British national of Pakistani heritage to hold the coveted position.



LONDON: First Minister of Scotland Hamza Yousaf calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Pakistan, Afghanistan agree on need for coordination

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Foreign Ministers of Pakistan and Afghanistan on Sunday reaffirmed their desire to pursue continuous and practical engagement and emphasized the need for enhanced coordination to counter terrorism and deepening of bilateral cooperation.

Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari hosted Acting Foreign Minister of Afghanistan Amir Khan Muttaqi at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Office spokesperson said in a press release.

The two sides held a candid and in-depth exchange on key issues of mutual concern, including peace and security, as well as trade and connectivity. Regarding bilateral and transit trade, the two sides stressed the importance of removing impediments to trade in order to advance the goal of enhanced regional economic integration and connectivity.

The foreign minister also hosted a luncheon in honour of the visiting Afghan delegation at the Ministry. The acting Afghan foreign minister and the acting Afghan minister for commerce and industry are on visit to Pakistan from 05-08 May accompanied with high-level delegations.

Besides holding bilateral meetings, the acting Afghan foreign minister also participated in the 5th China-Pakistan-Afghanistan Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Dialogue yesterday, with the participation of the Chinese foreign minister, where the three sides agreed to advance political engagement, counter-terrorism cooperation and enhance trade, investments and connectivity under the trilateral framework.

Imran Khan castigates PDM for 'not implementing SC verdict'

LAHORE (NNI): The former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan castigated the PDM government for 'not implementing SC verdict'.

As per details, the PTI chairman Imran Khan said that yesterday people came out in solidarity with the Supreme Court and Chief Justice of Pakistan from 4200 different places. He said that the constitution of Pakistan defines the role of every institution. The former prime minister maintained that the constitution of Pakistan abides by-elections in 90 days and the nation stands behind the Chief Justice of Pakistan.

He lambasted the PDM government saying they are now openly attacking the Supreme Court. The PTI chairman Imran Khan said that 70 percent of people have no representation in the provincial and National Assembly.

Earlier, the former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan announced to hold public gatherings from Monday

(May 8) following the government's 'reluctance' to hold elections on May 14 despite orders from Supreme Court (SC).

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) held rallies in Lahore, Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Karachi, Peshawar and other cities on Saturday evening simultaneously.

Imran Khan blamed the government for deliberately taking steps for destroying the Constitution and the Supreme Court (SC). "A mafia is running propaganda against the CJP and SC judges. I am appealing to the nation to come out for showing their solidarity with the CJP on Saturday evening."

PTI unveils schedule for rallies in Punjab: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has unveiled the finalised schedule for rallies in Punjab.

According to the schedule, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf will hold five rallies in Punjab from Wednesday to Sunday. The scheduled rallies will kick off from Muridke on Wednesday. The second public gathering will be organised in Gakhar

Mandi on Thursday.

The third, fourth and fifth rallies will be held in Lalamusa, Gujar Khan and Attock respectively. The PTI chairman Imran Khan will lead all the rallies in Punjab.

Earlier, the former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan announced to hold public gatherings from Monday (May 8) following the government's 'reluctance' to hold elections on May 14 despite orders from Supreme Court (SC).

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Fulfilling fundamental responsibility to protect the Constitution: CJP

--Says SC not looking for excuses, will follow constitution in Punjab election case

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Justice Umar Ata Bandial said they are fulfilling their fundamental and moral responsibility to protect and implement the Constitution. Delivering his key speech to the gathering at a seminar titled "Rights for minorities in constitution of Pakistan," in Lahore Sunday, the CJP said running away from truth means running away from justice so it is a moral obligation to deal the cases on merit.

CJP Bandial said he was "optimistic" that the nation's leaders, institutions and people were all "committed to the Constitution". Chief Justice Bandial also spoke about the ongoing Punjab election case, stating that the court was not looking for excuses and was committed to following the constitution.

Referring to the negotiation process between the government and the PTI, he said the apex court was informed that they had not concluded yet. "We have nothing to do with that but at least they are conscious that they have a duty to comply [with] the Constitution and we are there to support that effort otherwise our judgement is there, it has a force of its own, it may not be implemented today but it will last to the test of time and shall be implemented tomorrow," the chief justice pointed out.

He said the rights of minorities in Pakistan are clear in the constitution. "Article 21 of the Constitution provides guarantees to the rights of minorities." The CJP added that no discrimination against minorities will be tolerated. "The country's Constitution allows everyone to lead lives in accordance with their religious freedom," he said.

The apex court chief further said that a 5% quota has been kept for minorities in employment, which is being implemented. In Islam, there is no room for quarrels even on the basis of religion Respect for humanity and respect for each other's religion needs to be kept in mind, he said.

Justice Umar said in Islam, there is no room for quarrels even on the basis of religion, adding that the protection of the rights of the minorities in every case should be ensured.

He reiterated judges of the apex court could not close their eyes if the Constitution mandated polls within 90 days of an assembly's dissolution.

"When it comes to constitutional enforcement we must not blink our eyes. If it says 90 days for holding elections, [then] it is our duty to say that and not our choice, instead of finding a reason why we should avoid saying that."

The chief justice said the matter was being called a "controversy". The chief justice said the Supreme Court and its judges had no existence individually but "as a unit [and] as a constitutional organ and that is how we function".

"The important thing is when the Supreme Court speaks on merit then its judgement has moral authority. That becomes even more important when those judgements are not appealed or no review is filed then which means no one has any objection to the judgement. "If a review is filed then it will be heard

because no judgement is binding unless it becomes final. But if a judgement is not challenged then it becomes final so let's see what happens now," the chief justice said.

CJP Bandial said: "The implementation bench is always there so file an application and let's see what happens."

Justice Umar lamented that the country has been facing extremism for the last thirty years due to which at least 80,000 Pakistanis were killed.

He recalled that Justice Cornelius was a shining star in the history of Pakistan's judiciary. "Justice Cornelius was an excellent and worthy man who joined the judiciary in 1930. Justice Cornelius served in the judiciary for 17 years. Justice Cornelius declared the order of Malik Ghulam Muhammad, the third governor-general of Pakistan illegal.

Turning his attention to Pakistan's ongoing struggle with terrorism, the chief justice noted that the country had lost more than 80,000 lives in the war against terrorism.

COAS pledges full support for China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir has reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to China-Pakistan Strategic relationship while pledging full support for China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), according to the ISPR statement on Sunday.

According to the ISPR, media wing of the military, Army Chief General Asim Munir met Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister H.E. Qin Gang at his office on Saturday.

Matters of mutual interests including regional security and defence cooperation came under discussion. During the meeting, the COAS reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to China-Pakistan Strategic relationship. He also pledged full support for China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project, which is a vital component of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

The Army Chief appreciated China's unwavering support for Pakistan on regional and international issues. Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang underscored the importance of the longstanding strategic relationship between the brotherly nations and expressed his satisfaction over the progress made on

COAS for enhanced Pak-Afghan cooperation

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief of Army Chief (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir on Sunday met Acting Afghan Minister for Foreign Affairs, Amir Khan Muttaqi and stressed the need for enhanced cooperation between the two brotherly neighbours to effectively tackle the common challenges of terrorism and extremism.

The COAS and Afghan Acting Foreign Minister discussed issues of mutual interest including aspects related to regional security, border management, and formalisation of bilateral

the CPEC while reiterating China's commitment to its timely completion. He also appreciated Pakistan's efforts in maintaining regional peace and stability, especially the support of Pakistan Armed Forces for provision of security to Chinese Nationals and projects in Pakistan.

The two leaders also discussed the evolving security situation in the region.

Gen Asim Munir acknowledged China's role in promoting peace and stability in the region, and

security mechanisms for improvement in the current security environment, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said. The Army Chief reiterated the need for full support and commitment from the Afghan Interim Government in matters of mutual interest.

Foreign Minister Muttaqi appreciated Pakistan's traditional support for the people of Afghanistan and acknowledged the important role that Pakistan continues to play in facilitating peace and development in Afghanistan.

both sides agreed to enhance their existing cooperation in defence and security domains to effectively counter common security challenges.

The meeting concluded on a positive note, with both sides reiterating their resolve to further strengthen the time-tested, all-weather friendship between Pakistan and China.

Army Chief General Asim Munir also met Acting Afghan Minister for Foreign Affairs, Amir Khan Muttaqi, at his office.

The COAS and Afghan Acting FM discussed issues of mutual interest including aspects related to regional security, border management, and formalisation of bilateral security mechanisms for improvement in the current security environment. Gen Asim Munir stressed the need for enhanced cooperation between the two brotherly neighbours to effectively tackle the common challenges of terrorism and extremism. He reiterated the need for full support and commitment from the Afghan interim government in matters of mutual interest.

Foreign Minister Muttaqi appreciated Pakistan's traditional support for the people of Afghanistan and acknowledged the important role that Pakistan continues to play in facilitating peace and development in Afghanistan. He also expressed his desire to work closely with Pakistan to promote regional stability and prosperity.

Both sides agreed on the importance of maintaining regular contacts to strengthen bilateral ties and address issues of common concern. The COAS reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to a stable, peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan, the ISPR concluded.

Mardan lynching incident

Police say situation is in control

MARDAN (NNI): The police on Sunday said that the situation was 'under control' and investigations being started after a man was lynched by crazy mob at a political rally in Mardan.

DPO Najeebullah Rehman said the police took the body in possession and the crowd was dispersed adding detailed investigations have been started.

Meanwhile, SSP Operations Rokhanzeb Khan added the event occurred at political rally organized by the PTI.

A local cleric named Nigar Alam was attacked by people with punches, kicks and clubs. SSP Operations Rokhanzeb Khan added even the police efforts to rescue the cleric proved futile as the people barged into the shop and attacked Nigar. This is a painful, however not the only incident in Mardan, as in 2017, Mashal Khan, a young aspiring soul was attacked on the allegations of blasphemy.

Pakistan slams Indian attempts to distort Bilawal's remarks

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Pakistan has slammed Indian attempts to distort remarks by Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari during his recent visit to Indian city of Goa to attend Shanghai Cooperation Organization Council of Foreign Ministers (SCO-CFM) Summit.

The Foreign Office Spokesperson has said any insinuation, associating foreign minister's remarks over G-20 meeting in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) with a threat of violence, was not only mischievous but also highly irresponsible. "Any insinuation, associating foreign minister's remarks with a threat of violence, is not only mischievous but highly irresponsible. It is an attempt to shift focus from the foreign minister's key message of conflict resolution through dialogue and in accordance with international law and UN security council resolutions," the statement read.

In a news statement issued in Islamabad on Sunday in response to media queries regarding a video clip insinuating that

Foreign Minister of Pakistan Bilawal Bhutto Zardari threatened India over conduct of a G-20 meeting in IIOJK, the FO spokesperson said: "It is an attempt to shift focus from the foreign minister's key message of conflict resolution through dialogue and in accordance with international law and UN security council resolutions."

"In a number of public pronouncements during his recent visit to India, the foreign minister emphasized the critical importance of relevant UN Security Council resolutions for a peaceful settlement of Jammu and Kashmir dispute. Clearly, he based his case on international law," it was reiterated. The spokesperson further stressed that the journalistic norms must be respected while reporting on sensitive inter-state matters.

The ministry of foreign affairs, the spokesperson further said, had already articulated Pakistan's position on the G-20 Tourism Working Group meeting in IIOJK in its press release

on April 11.

Pakistan had already expressed its strong indignation over India's decision to hold the G-20 Tourism Working Group meeting in Srinagar on 22-24 May.

Scheduling of two other meetings of a consultative forum on youth affairs (Y-20) in Leh and Srinagar in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) was also termed as 'equally disconcerting'.

"India's irresponsible move is the latest in a series of self-serving measures to perpetuate its illegal occupation of Jammu and Kashmir in sheer disregard of the UN Security Council resolutions and in violation of the principles of the UN Charter and international law. Pakistan vehemently condemns these moves," the earlier press release on April 11 maintained. Such events could not hide the reality of Jammu and Kashmir being an internationally recognized dispute that had remained on the agenda of United Nations Security Council for over seven decades.



Two robbers tortured to death in Karachi

KARACHI (INP): Two robbers were caught and tortured to death by the local residents in Karachi's Orangi Town. According to details, three robbers were caught red-handed by the outrageous crowd in Orangi Town's Sector 14C. The masses tortured two dacoits to death, while the third one managed to flee from the scene.

The bodies were moved to Jinnah Hospital. The identity of the dacoits could not be ascertained as per initial reports. The police said a motorcycle used by the robbers was recovered. They further said robbers killed a man during a robbery at a grocery store yesterday. Shortly before the incident, the robbers also snatched a motorcycle from outside the wedding hall?

Earlier this year, two dacoits were killed another was taken into custody in injured condition after an alleged police encounter in the port city.

Efforts afoot to promote skills education: Tanveer

LAHORE (INP): Federal Education Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain has stated that incumbent government is making all out efforts to provide opportunities to special persons to help them realize their desired goals.

He was addressing a ceremony held for distribution of wheelchairs among special students under the Prime Minister's Electric Wheelchair Scheme at the Punjab University in Lahore. The Minister said that special persons were precious assets to society.

He said that the initiative of electric wheelchairs for physically challenged students was launched in 2018, and so far more than 600 such young people had received the chairs from the Higher Education Commission. The minister asked all departments including the educational institutions to build ramps in their buildings to facilitate the special citizens.

Karachi battery thief gets unique punishment

ISLAMABAD (NNI): A battery thief was awarded a unique punishment by residents of Surjani Town, Karachi after he was caught red-handed.

According to details, the battery thief in Surjani Town Sector 4A area of Karachi was caught by the residents on the stop and was punished in the West's way with 'community service.' According to mobile and CCTV footage of the incident, footage recorded from a mobile, the battery thief can be seen cleaning the street as punishment.

While in the CCTV footage, the youngster can be seen coming to the street to steal the battery of the car, but he could not succeed. The battery thief was caught by the citizens while fleeing from the area on a bike. The battery thief was first tortured by the citizens of the area, while later he was forced to clean the street. Garbage in the street was also picked up by a battery thief.

Punjab CM fixes cotton support price at Rs8,500

LAHORE (NNI): The caretaker government of Punjab has set a target area for cotton cultivation at five million acres and production target to 8.2 million bales while fixing the minimum support price at Rs8,500 in order to boost the cotton production in the province.

A meeting, chaired by Punjab Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi, also decided to give a special incentives package to farmers to increase the area for cotton cultivation and production.

Moreover, the Punjab government was also considering a proposal to give agricultural easy loans to the farmers. A detailed plan has been requested from Bank of Punjab on the proposal of easy loans. The Chief Minister tasked each division, and district to achieve the target of cotton area under cultivation.

According to Mohsin Naqvi, the minimum support price of cotton has been fixed at Rs8,500 for which assistance will also be sought from the federal government. He also directed to ensure the availability of certified cotton seed. The federal government would also provide assistance, the CM stated, adding that strict action would be taken against those who sell poor quality seeds and counterfeit pesticides.

Furthermore, Mohsin Naqvi gave the go-ahead to conduct a vigorous campaign to expand the cotton-sowing area.

The meeting presided over by Punjab CM Mohsin Naqvi in London before his departure to Lahor also directed immediate

mobilization of Agriculture Department and Administration. The meeting was attended by Provincial Ministers SM Tanveer, Aamir Mir, Patron Chief of APTMA Gohar Ijaz, Fawad Mukhtar, Shahid Sattar, Dr Jawad, Secretaries, Chairman PITB, Chief Executive Officer, Punjab Investment Board, Chief Secretary, Secretary Agriculture South Punjab, Commissioners and other concerned authorities. Meanwhile, the Vice Chancellor of Agriculture University Faisalabad also participated in the meeting through video link.

Punjab CM says will not allow anyone to threaten 'institutions': Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Sunday asserted that the interim government will not allow anyone to humiliate or threaten 'institutions and Intelligence agencies' in the province.

Taking to Twitter, the Punjab CM said: "We will not allow anyone to humiliate or threaten our institutions and Intelligence agencies in Punjab". "It is our foremost responsibility as responsible Pakistani citizens to condemn these elements who are actually benefiting enemies of Pakistan," he said. Mohsin Naqvi assured that the government will implement the law and the culprits will be held accountable as per law. A day earlier, the caretaker Punjab government announced to conduct a 'transparent and impartial' audit of the free flour scheme following the allegations levelled by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Shahid Khaqan Abbasi.

PIC Karachi to conduct training workshop to identify fake news and anti-state propaganda

F.P Report

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

Members of Karachi Press Club, journalists associated with various TV channels and newspapers and media studies students will participate in the training workshop. In the two-day training workshop, Senior Trainer, Director News Aaj News and former CEJ Director Kamal Siddiqui will serve as lead trainer, while Karachi Press Club (KPC) Secretary General Shoaib Ahmed and other important personalities will be guest speakers. The workshop will educate participants on

using tools to identify fake news and anti-state propaganda.

During the workshop, participants will be taught advanced tools to identify fake news while also being trained to understand global or domestic propaganda against the state.

On the second day of the workshop, Director General (DG) Public Relation (PR) Erum Tanveer will distribute certificates to the participants & hand over shields to the guest speakers and trainers.

Pakistan Information Center has so far provided training to more than 10 thousand journalists, Media Students & Social Media Influencers across the country, while this year also the center plans to provide training to 2000 more journalists & students. Pakistan Information Center provides training to journalists in all four provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Kashmir and Islamabad.

'Slow pace of solarisation unacceptable for economy'

F.P Report

KARACHI: Pasban Democratic Party (PDP) Altaf Shakoor here Sunday said that the slow pace of economy is not in favor of the economy, and the federal and provincial governments must allocate required resources and attention to this national cause.

He said due to hyperinflation electricity has now become too costly and beyond the reach of the common man. He said even a small family has to pay an electricity bill of thousands of rupees which is not possible. He said the only way to cope with this situation is to provide every household with the facility of solar power. He said the present government was ambitious for making a solar Pakistan but now it seems that it is missing the focus and commitment. He said solar panels should be provided to the poor families free of cost through Benazir Income Support Program and on interest free loan basis to low income families through banks.

Altaf Shakoor said there is an ample capacity to establish solar parks in the nook and corner of the country especially

in its southern plain and desert areas. He said government through public private partnerships should establish mega solar parks in Balochistan, Sindh and South Punjab, besides all other suitable locations to generate cheap and clean electricity.

He said atomic and hydel energy are other cheapest sources for generating electricity. New dams and atomic power plants should be established with the cooperation of friendly countries, especially China. He said Pakistan needs to be made self-sufficient in energy and for this purpose the government has to redirect its priorities and policies.

He said rapid industrialization depends on availability of affordable energy. He said costly electricity and gas has already affected our exports. He said joblessness and poverty is on the rise which could be only checked with an ambitious rapid industrialization plan for which ample supply of cheap and clean alternative energy sources are a must. He demanded of the federal and provincial governments to awake from deep slumber and pay full attention to solarisation of Pakistan on a fast track basis to end energy poverty from the country.



LAHORE: Special Representative to the Prime Minister for Interfaith Harmony and Middle East Hafiz Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi addressing a press conference.

Governor announces to establish cell to resolve overseas Pakistanis' problems

KARACHI (PPI): Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori has announced to establish a cell in Governor House to resolve problems of overseas Pakistanis which would be headed by an Additional Secretary.

This he announced while addressing a reception in his honour by Pakistani Community of Houston, according to a Governor House statement issued on Sunday. Consul General of Pakistan Aftab Chudhry, renowned community leaders Tanveer Ahmed, Saeed Sheikh, Dr. Asif Qadeer were also present on the occasion. Governor Sindh while thanking for the reception, lauded the services of overseas Pakistanis and said that the county men settled abroad were an asset of Pakistan. "Their contributions towards the economy of the country

were unmatched", he observed.

Governor Sindh further said that the economic conditions of our beloved mother land require attention of all of us. "Pakistan has given us fame, honour, respect and prosperity and it the time return something according to our capabilities and resources", he opined.

He said that all stake holders have shown reservations over digital census and as such steps should be taken to resolve the same.

Referring to his plan to train 50 thousand youth in the field of Information Technology, he said that this would be started under Governor's Initiative soon after his return to Karachi. "This training would empower youth to earn 3 to 5 five lac rupees per month", he added.

Discussing his endeavour to open

Governor House for masses during holy month of Ramadan for Iftar. Governor Sindh said that he wanted to interact people directly. "As many as 3 lac people came to Governor House for Iftar and the joy on their faces was his reward", Governor Sindh said.

He said that masses want rulers amongst them so they could inform them about their grievances. "Problems confronted by masses could only be resolved if they are highlighted and his only motive to be with general public during seher and iftaar was to get first hand knowledge of their major issues", he further added. Earlier, Governor Sindh was received by Consul General of Pakistan Aftab Chudhry, and office beaters of democratic party at Houston airport.

Elahi accuses Sharifs of conspiring against judiciary

LAHORE (NNI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Chaudhry Parvez Elahi claimed on Sunday that the Sharif brothers were planning to conspire against the judiciary from London. Speaking to media, Mr Elahi took a swipe at Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supreme Nawaz Sharif, claiming, "Nawaz Sharif's people are trying to humiliate the judiciary. Shehbaz Sharif has spent a lot of time in London with Nawaz Sharif. What has he done to this country?"

"The Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) played with the country's constitution. The politics of revenge will not end for the entire life of the Sharif family," he claimed.

Highlighting the role of the judiciary in the country, Mr Elahi said this country will survive if the people are with the judiciary. Every institution is hidden behind the judiciary. If we don't have judiciary then no one should give the rulers even a single penny. The administration of the country rests only

with the judiciary."

"Currently, 20 of our people are being detained. There are 17 cases registered against me. There are 123 cases registered against Imran Khan. The PDM-led government has turned the entire country into a jail," he rued.

Speaking about Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari's visit to India, Mr Elahi said, "How Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has represented the country in India? Bilawal was defending those who not even shook hands with him."

Uncollected waste exposing Lahorites to health hazards

LAHORE (APP): Uncollected waste and poor disposal mechanism is exposing millions of Lahorites to serious health hazards as Lahore Waste Management Company seemingly falling a bit short of ensuring metropolitan's cleanliness.

With Lahore, the second largest city in the country generating more than 7690 tons of solid waste daily, citizens at different localities are seen complaining of uncollected waste lying at streets and roadsides.

Despite action by the LWMC, it has also been observed that a chunk of waste is either dumped in vacant plots or burnt in open emitting hazardous smoke irking the residents of those areas.

Mohsin Raza, a student at Anarkali hostel complained that improper cleanliness at food-street was emitting stinking smell and breeding mosquitoes in the area.

"We can't sleep at night due to the smell and mosquitoes biting. As we can't afford air-conditioner in our rooms and have to sleep by keeping windows open, therefore, fouling smell and mosquitoes biting have become a nuisance for us," he said.

He pointed out that a visit to the area especially the streets could make officers of the company realize the actual situation. "Moreover, it is not this particular area but some other parts of the city are also a victim to cleanliness and hygiene issues."

The situation is not alike everywhere as in some areas, the LWMC workers are seen waste collecting and its vehicles disposing of this waste at proper dumping sites.

But, in a metropolitan spreading over miles where there are funds and infrastructure constraints, one cannot expect an ideal situation.

Muhammad Akhtar, a resident of Ichhra locality has informed that although in some areas generally, waste collection workers collect waste in the morning yet there is no arrangement or mechanism for waste collection in the evening.

"Therefore, we need a comprehensive strategy to keep the city clean," he said as a number of other residents in Shadbagh, China

Scheme, Misri Shah, Salamatpura, Daroghawal, Sabzazar, and Sabzi Mandi areas supplemented his opinion.

Residents of these areas have also complained of respiratory and skin diseases due to improper hygiene and cleanliness situations demanding more efforts for ensuring clean and healthy living.

Pakistan generates approximately 49.6 million tons of solid waste per year, increasing more than 2.4 percent annually. But, like other developing countries, our country also lacks an overall waste management infrastructure, creating serious environmental and health problems.

There are also challenges like inadequate waste management equipment, lack of urban planning and awareness among residents.

Mehmood Khalid Qamar, a noted environmentalist has commented that besides other environmental challenges, proper waste disposal was emerging as a gigantic task with every passing day.

"Due to rising population and rapid urbanization, ensuring proper waste disposal as well as cleaner and healthy environment has become an uphill task," he said. "If we did not rise to the occasion, the coming years see more ailing people as well as mounting health bills."

He said a selected spot for piling garbage near Lakhu Deher and Karol Ghati is also causing a nuisance for the residents, making the surrounding area unhealthy and foul-smelling.

"When these heaps of rubbish would continue to grow within and in the city's outskirts, environmental situation and air quality would continue to deteriorate," he added. "If we dream cleaner cities for tomorrow, we need to tighten our belts today."

Meanwhile, the LWMC Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Babar Sahib Din has contested the residents' and experts' claims stating that the body was making all possible efforts to ensure cleanliness in the city. "The government is investing more than Rs1.25 billion to improve solid waste cleanliness

mechanisms in the city," Sahib Din said. "Besides waste collection and cleanliness in different areas of the city, the company also runs awareness campaigns to educate citizens about the importance of cleanliness."

He informed that LWMC enforcement teams have conducted special operations in different areas penalizing 466 irresponsible citizens and shopkeepers imposing Rs 1.5 million in fines during the last 15 days of April. "During this period, the enforcement teams completed inspections of more than 5,500 places and 11 illegal dumping vehicles were seized on-the-spot registering 12 FIRs," he informed. "Fine was also imposed for violation of the Local Government Act and more than 752 warning notices were issued on violations."

Sahib Din said the management was pursuing a zero-tolerance policy against illegal dumping of garbage on streets and roadsides and strict action is taken against violators.

He said the LWMC also conduct workshops and awareness sessions in collaboration with trade unions, schools, colleges and associations to educate people about their responsibility to keep the city clean. "No government, authority or agency can keep any metropolis clean without the cooperation of its citizens," he said and informed that the company was also taking part in the Clean and Green Pakistan initiative.

Sahib Din said after the success of the 'model project', waste and trash segregation would be formally started across the provincial capital. Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) has recently signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Akhtar Hameed Memorial Trust (AHMT) to improve the waste management process by adopting scientific procedures. After its poor performance during the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf regime, the present administration is buttressing efforts to ensure a cleaner and healthier environment for Lahorites no matter how much time it takes to achieve the set goals.



LAHORE: Youngsters jumping and bathing in canal to get relief from hot weather in Provincial Capital.

Governor mingles with people living in walled city

PESHAWAR (APP): The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali here on Sunday visited different areas of the walled city and spent some time among citizens and traders, who seemed quite happy to see the Governor among them.

The local people and traders apprised the Governor regarding issues being faced by them at various fronts.

The governor visited the residence of renowned religious scholar Molvi Ameer Shah Gillani (late) alias Molvi Gee at Yakkatoot and met with his son Syed

Mohammad Noorul Hasnain Gillani alias Sultan Agha. The Governor also visited the residences of Nazim Haji Abdul Wahab Safi, the late Mufti Haroon Ibrahim, Maulna Khairul Bashar and former Nazim Gul Wali.

The Governor offered fateha and expressed condolences over the departed souls and prayed to Allah almighty to early recovery of sick people.

Citizens and businessmen praised KP Governor Haji Ghulam Ali for maintaining social relations among people and accessibility, even after assuming

such an important position.

In addition, a 15-member delegation from Britain, Canada, United States, Germany, led by Awami National Party Saudi Arabia President Dr. Muzamil Shah and Haji Bahadur also met the governor at the Governor House on the welfare services of Pakistanis living abroad and the country's situation.

Former FATA Deputy Ameer JUIF Mufti Muhammad Ijaz Shinwari also met the governor and discussed the problems and difficulties of merging districts.

Use of zinc solubilizing bacteria recommended for higher wheat productivity

PESHAWAR (APP): A recent study conducted by Dr Shah Khalid of Agriculture University Peshawar has revealed that despite cultivation of wheat on a huge area in Pakistan the obtainable yield was not only less than the potential production but also have micronutrient deficiency.

Dr Shah Khalid said that the low yield and quality of the wheat crops are attributed to various factors including improper fertilization, salinity, less availability of organic matter and others that bring nutrients deficiency particularly micronutrients and create serious risks for human and animal health especially in developing countries like Pakistan.

The scholar who had successful completed his Ph.D in the "Enhancing Wheat Productivity and Zinc Biofortification through Zinc, Compost and Zinc Solubilizing Bacteria" concluded that use of zinc solubilizing bacteria increases wheat growth, yield and nutrients uptake thus is recommended for production of higher quality wheat.

He found that poultry manure compost along with zinc solubilizing bacteria is recommended for enhanced wheat productivity and soil fertility.

Dr Shah Khalid said that being basic food crop wheat is grown on about 225 million hectares worldwide and its trade is projected to be worth \$50 billion globally and consumed in low and middle-income countries around the world as a rich source of proteins and as a high source of calories.

Referring to FAO, he said that wheat production in the world in 2021 was

794 million tonnes, making it the second most-produced cereal crop after maize.

He said that wheat covers 9168 thousand hectares in Pakistan, producing 27.464 million tonnes with an average yield of 2996 kg ha-1, while Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is producing 1361.5 thousand tonnes of wheat annually.

He deplored that although wheat is covering large acreage in Pakistan, but the obtainable yield is very less than the potential yield and also have micronutrient deficiency, adding that chronic inadequate Zinc (Zn) intake particularly from cereal-based diets is the major cause of Zn malnutrition, and biofortification in the developing countries.

He said Zn deficiency affects plant growth and crop yields and badly affects the quality of protein contents in grain, adding that Zn plays a significant role in plants growth and its deficiency in plants seriously affects various vital processes occurring within plants.

Dr Khalid concluded that poultry manure compost along with Zinc solubilizing bacteria is recommended for higher wheat productivity, soil fertility and for obtaining higher productivity and profitability of wheat crop under the Agro-climatic, condition of Peshawar.

Police thwart bid to smuggle weapons

PESHAWAR (APP): Police thwarted an attempt to smuggle weapons and recovered from a motor car in an operation on the Indus Highway, said police on Sunday. In an intelligence-based operation, the alleged arms smuggler Muhammad Kaleem resident of Warana Mir Hasan Khel was arrested. The weapons seized in the operation include one anti-aircraft gun, three Kalashnikovs and 2400 cartridges. The successful operation was carried out by SHO Muhammad Riaz Shaheed police station Islamuddin and his police team during checking near Tunnel Toll Plaza. Case has been registered against the alleged accused involved in the smuggling of weapons.



PESHAWAR: Members of Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) Women Wing cutting a cake during Eid Milan party.

Preservation of 3 Mughal era gardens imperative to promote eco tourism

PESHAWAR (APP): Once known as the city of flowers and gardens, Peshawar was losing its three Mughal era gardens due to encroachment and loss of greenery due to changing weather patterns and its proper upkeep was required to revive its past glory.

The famous gardens of Peshawar including Wazir Bagh, Shalimar Gardens and Jinnah Park (old Canningum park) where flowers were blossom these days in the past, were now marred by encroachment, dirt and plastics scattered all around undermining its natural beauty.

Gone were the days when joy of small kids was boundless while seeing colourful butterflies hovering over flowers of spring and dense pipal trees in the Mughal era Wazir Bagh garden where greenery has started dying due to improper upkeep and increased urbanization.

Chasing butterflies and hide and seek of small children among the thickly grown pipal trees used to be

a great fun and laughter but all these charms wore off as the time passed by and today this historic garden was giving barely a deserted look.

Pipal trees were so thick that one would get the impression of night even during broad daylight in the summer season.

Wazirbagh gardens is located at Yakatooth area in South of Peshawar City on vast land and was a source of recreation for Peshawarties over centuries.

The oldest garden used to be comfortable place for senior citizens while sitting under the cold shade of pipal trees in soothing environment coupled with chirping of birds and exchanged views of their life experiences and day to day happenings with their children plays around in its lush green lawns.

Wazir Bagh was used for morning exercises by Peshawarites due to its awesome walking tracks and lush green lawns and became a unique source of recreation and picnic spot.

Today, it is disappointing to see missing chirping birds, colourful butterflies and ladybirds due to vanishing of the canopy pipal trees at Wazir Bagh due to lackluster approach of the local communities, past government, deforestation and improper up keeping.

"Since my childhood, I used to visit this historic park for exercise on its beautiful tracks snaking through its thickly grown tall pipal trees with people sitting around in sprawled lawns," Qaisar Khan, a retired employee of PESCO told APP at Wazir Bagh.

Recalling his past memories, he said, tourists were highly impressed by its sprawled lawns, fountains, pods, apricots, peaches, pomegranates and colourful flowers.

Shinwaris, Afridis, Mohmands, Bajauris and Khattaks besides domestic and foreign tourists used to come here in droves to spend some time in a relaxed environment under its shady trees.

It was also a great source

PHC grants bail to alleged culprit

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Justice Sahibzada Asadullah granted culprit on sureties of Rs2 Lakh in famous Hangu murder case.

According to prosecution, Hukman Gul along with his brother killed Arshad Mehmood on land dispute on 12 March 2023 in the premises of Hangu city police station.

The counsel Syed Naem Bukhari Advocate informed that trial court has rejected the petitioner's bail plea while he is nominated as agitator in the case.

The counsel argued that it isn't that established that the petitioner was present at the crime scene or not during the trial.

The applicant counsel opposed the bail plea while argued that crime was committed in bright daylight and one eye witness is also available. PHC declare that petitioner can't be held behind the Bar till establishment of the fact grant bail on surety bonds of Rs2 Lakh.

Development of metropolis top priority

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial leader of Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) Syed Fayyaz Ali Shah on Sunday said that the development of metropolis is the first priority of our party.

People have attached all their hopes to Qaumi Watan Party which is proof of joining of people belonging to different political parties.

He expressed these views while addressing the joining ceremony organized in the house of Haji Pir Muhammad in PK 81 Rashid Garhi. On this occasion Mohib Khan's family and dozens of people announced to join QWP.

Syed Fayyaz Ali Shah welcomed the newly joined people and put them party caps. He said that the Qaumi Watan Party under the leadership of Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao can solve the problems confronted by public.

He said that the past government led by PTI wasted the nine years of people and deprived Peshawar from any development. He said that QWP would resolve all the problems faced by people on priority basis if came into power.

Nanbais held

PESHAWAR (INP): The district administration in a grand operation against selling underweight roti (bread) and profiteers on Sunday arrested more than eight Nanbais (bread-maker).

Assistant Commissioner Peshawar Syeda Zainab Naqvi visited different markets in Bilal Lane and Arbab Road and found the Nanbais were not complying with the government price list and avoiding the orders of prescribed weight of roti.

The AC along with a contingent of police conducted a grand operation and arrested eight shopkeepers for selling bread (roti) underweight and at high prices. She directed all the shopkeepers to follow the official price list and avoid profiteering, otherwise they would face strict legal action.



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali meeting with a shopkeeper during his visit to city market.

PPP leaders vow to rejuvenate party

PESHAWAR (APP): PPP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa commemorated 16th death anniversary of the slain leader Syed Qamar Abbas with pledge to rejuvenate the party at gross-root level in the provincial metropolis of the province.

The death anniversary of the slain leader was organized under the auspices of the Provincial Sports & Cultural Wing PPP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Peshawar Press Club (PPC) with former provincial president Engineer Mohammad Hamayun Khan in the chair here on Sunday.

Besides, the former provincial president PPP, senior vice president Syed Ayub Shah, Divisional President, Liaquat Shabab, Divisional President Kohat, Jabbar Khattak, Khawaja

Yawar Naseer, Amjad Khan Afridi, Anwar Zeb Comrade and others attended the ceremony.

Addressing the participants of the anniversary, former provincial president PPP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Engineer, Mohammad Hamayun Khan pledged that the party would be re-organized in the province before the general elections.

He said that today price-hike and unemployment have once again become the major issues of the nation and the party would have to wage a struggle for their resolution.

He said that the present government has assumed the reign of power in difficult situations as due to the ineptness and incompetency of the PTI government,

the economy of the country has deteriorated.

He said that to bring the country out of the prevailing situation, the party would continue the mission of martyred leaders and organize the party workers.

On this occasion, Senior Vice President PPP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Syed Ayub Shah called for handing over of the party offices to active workers to revive the popularity of the party.

He dispelled the impression that PPP has become weakened in Peshawar and said that during the recent local bodies' polls, the party candidate for the mayor slot has secured over 27000 votes in the city district, which speaks of the confidence of the people in PPP.

ICRC to celebrate 160th anniversary for serving humanity

Zeeshan Anwar

Today, World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day is being celebrated around the world. The event marks the 160th anniversary of the movement that began in 1859 in response to the needs of those affected by the war fought at the location of Solferino. Just a few years later in 1863, the International Committee of the Red Cross was established as a humanitarian organization that would serve humanity during any type of disaster.

Today, the movement has grown, present in 192 countries in the form of national societies that help communities in natural or man-made disaster response efforts.

In recent years, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society has faced many challenges to serve humanity during disasters, including earthquakes in 2005, floods in 2010 and 2012, earthquakes in 2015, and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. and now the devastating floods in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that affected over 1 million people, leaving them homeless and without access to food, shelter, and medical treatment.

During these difficult times, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society has worked alongside government agencies and initiated mega-relief operations to serve those affected by disasters.

According to Habib Malik orakzai, Chairman of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the floods were so severe that it was impossible for any agency, including the government, to reach all affected individuals alone. Therefore, the Red Crescent Society played a critical role in providing aid to those in need during these disasters.

"So far, the relief efforts have reached more than 900000 flood victims. This includes free medical treatment and medicines for up to 108,000 people, food for 7,944 people in the initial days, ration for 52,017 people, basic first aid for 954 people, clean drinking water for up to 200,000 people, cash assistance for 525 affected individuals during emergencies, mobile phone cards distributed to 1,060 families to restore contact with their separated loved ones, provision of high-quality tents to 160,000 people for shelter during flood conditions, and distribution of mosquito

to nets to more than 38,000 people.

In this mega relief operation, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society received assistance from the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Norwegian Red Cross, the German Red Cross, the Turkish Red Crescent, and local philanthropists. The overall cost of this relief operation exceeded 901.7 million rupees.

All these operations were made possible due to the hard work of the dedicated volunteers of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society, numbering more than 10,000 across the provinces. These volunteers, without any compensation, made sure that all these areas were reached where no one else could.

On this special day, the head of the International Committee of the Red Cross for the delegation in Peshawar, Jihad Nabhan, says. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was founded in 1863 and together with Red Cross and Red Crescent partners, we have completed 160 years of humanitarian action worldwide. This is not just a jour-

ney of 160 Years; it's a history full of sacrifices, of saving human lives and protecting their dignity, caring for wounded and sick and preserving humanity amidst wars, conflicts, and other situations of violence. For the ICRC, most importantly, it is a landmark occasion to remember our relationship with Pakistan which began in 1948. We have a proud legacy of standing firm with the people and government of Pakistan as they faced difficulties with resilience and courage. Over the last 75 years, ICRC has always risen above circumstances to provide assistance to the affected communities. Currently, the ICRC is providing technical, material, and educational support to healthcare services, Physical Rehabilitation, cooperating with the Pakistan Red Crescent Society, community risk education, humanitarian forensics, restoring family links, and promoting International Humanitarian Law in Pakistan. Let me assure you that the memories of this remarkable presence of the ICRC in Pakistan continue to build our motivation and strength. We look forward to further strengthening the legacy of our neutral, impartial, and independent humanitarian services.

Excise police recover 18kg narcotics in two actions

PESHAWAR (APP): Excise police during a crackdown recovered more than 18 kilogram of narcotics in two separate operations, said spokesman of Excise Department on Sunday.

In the first action, the excise police team led by SHO Excise Police Peshawar Region Rasool Rehman Khattak on a tip off, signalled a vehicle bearing number LRV 3710 to stop near town police station. The driver of the car however, speeded up the car in a bid to escape.

The police team chased the vehicle and succeeded in arresting the smuggler Tariq, resident of Landikotal while the other accused made his escape good.

The police team recovered 15kg heroin from the hidden chambers of the vehicle.

In another action, the Excise Police Mardan Region led by SHO M. Riaz recovered 3.6kg hashish and arrested two accused.

The police on a tip off searched the bags of two persons waiting for a vehicle to leave for Islamabad. On search the Excise police recovered 3600 gram hashish from a bag and arrested two smugglers identified as Azadullah of Karak and Ziaur Rehman of Charsadda.

Secretary Excise Department Ihsan Ullah, Director General Akmal Khan and Director Narcotics Control Engineer Dr Eid Badshah have appreciated the excise teams over successful operations.

They said that no narcotics dealer will be left free to play with lives of people for their personal gains.



In brief

Three killed, 15 injured

SWAT (INP): Three people were killed and 15 injured when a van plunged into a drain in the hilly area of Kabal district of Swat on Sunday. According to a private media report, the incident took place when a van was going to Mingora from Dardyal. Immediately after the accident, the Rescue teams shifted the dead bodies and the injured to a nearby hospital where first aid was provided to the injured.

MCF starts drive today

FAISALABAD (INP): The Municipal Corporation Faisalabad (MCF), in collaboration with Parking Company and City Traffic Police (CTP), will launch a campaign against encroachments in the city from Monday, May 8, 2023. Chairing a meeting here on Sunday, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ali Anan Qamar directed the MCF and Parking Company authorities to complete all necessary arrangements for the campaign to make it a success. He said that parking facility had been provided at Zail Ghar Parking Stand and Parking Plaza outside Chinot Bazaar. Therefore, citizens and traders, businessmen and shopkeepers should park their vehicles at designated sites, he added.

1 killed, 3 hurt in road mishap

ATTOCK (APP): One person was killed and three others injured, all of them critical when a speedy loader rickshaw rammed in to a motorcycle on Haji Shah road near China Chowk in the limits of Attock Police station on Sunday. Police and rescue 1122 sources said that a speedy rickshaw recklessly driven by unknown driver rammed in to a motorcycle coming from opposite direction as result, the motorcyclist identified as 23 years old Abdul Qadeer died on the spot while three persons on board rickshaw were injured critically. The dead and injured were shifted to the District Headquarters Hospital Attock. Police registered a case and launched further investigation.

Man arrested in murder case

SIALKOT (APP): The Sialkot police arrested main suspect of double murder immediately after the incident and recovered murder weapon from him. According to the police, the 22-year-old accused Zohaib killed Meeran Bibi and her mother-in-law Hafeezan Bibi in Ratta Arian area of Saddar police station, Sialkot. The accused had alleged illicit relationships with Meeran Bibi. The accused strangled Meeran Bibi and killed Hafeezan Bibi with a knife. SHO Saddar police station Akram Shehbaz, along with a police team, arrested the accused with the help of scientific technology and recovered the murder weapon from him.

Youth murdered

SHIRARPUR (INP): A youth was murdered while resisting a robbery bid near village Ghulam Rasool Solangi in Kashmir on Sunday. The victim was identified as Asghar Ali Mazari, who used to work in a private company, the police said, adding that some unidentified armed robbers intercepted him at gunpoint and tried to snatch his belongings. Asghar, however, put up resistance which annoyed the robbers and they opened fire at him. Resultantly, the youth died due to bullets. The family of the deceased staged a protest in front of the Guddu police station.

IGP pays tribute to injured policemen

ABBOTTABAD (APP): Inspector General Police (IGP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Akhtar Hayat Khan on Sunday enquired about the health of the injured police officers at Ayub Medical Complex who sustained injuries during a raid to apprehend a gang of robbers and fugitives at Sadar and Kot Najibullah Police stations in district Haripur last night and paid rich tribute to them. DIG Hazara, Tahir Ayub Khan was also present on the occasion.

According to details, Constable Raja Khuda Bakhsh was martyred in firing by a gang of robbers, while Constable Amir Asif was critically injured during patrolling in the area of Kot Najibullah police station, Haripur. Constable Malik Saifullah was also injured in firing by the criminals during the raid on the fugitive gang in the area of Sadar police station. Both constables are under treatment in the Medical ICU and Orthopedic Ward.

The IG rewarded both

brave police officers with cash prizes and flowers and appreciated their courage. The IG also met with the injured police officers' relatives and assured them of complete cooperation from the department.

He directed the doctors to provide all possible medical facilities for their treatment and said that every officer and policeman in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is playing a vital role in the fight against terrorists and criminals, our brave police officers are our valuable assets, and the nefarious intentions of criminals and terrorists cannot weaken our resolve, adding he said. Prior to this, the Inspector General visited the Traffic Warden Office, Special Branch Office, and the compound under construction for the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) along with DIG Hazara Tahir Ayub Khan.

SSP Traffic Warden Arif Javed Khan, SSP CTD Hazara One Tariq Mahmood Khan, and SSP Special

Branch Hazara Kabir Muhammad Khan briefed about their respective units' performance, and the IG reviewed the performance of all three units and instructed them to improve their professional performance further.

The IG said that he is taking a personal interest in making the CTD and Special Branch more active so that the elimination of terrorism, extortion, and other crimes can be ensured. Both units should monitor extremist and antisocial elements strictly, make their units stronger at sensitive and important locations, and gather important information.

Giving instructions regarding the Traffic Warden Police, he said that Abbottabad Traffic Warden Police is doing a great job. Hazara region is a tourist destination, where tourists from all over the world visit, so improve the traffic system further so that the provision of travel facilities to tourists and other people can be ensured.

Cold wave emerged after week-long downpour

ABBOTTABAD (APP): A new cold wave emerged in the upper parts of the Hazara division after a week-long continuous heavy downpour coupled with hail storms and snowfall on the hills.

According to details, usually, the month of May is the start of the summer season in the Hazara region but this year continuous heavy rains all over the region particularly in Abbottabad and Mansehra districts dropped the temperatures significantly and moreover, hailstorms and snowfall in the hilly areas of Kaghan, Naran and Babusar Top played a vital role to change the weather conditions.

Unfortunately, climatic changes also affected the weather in district Mansehra, during last year in the month of July Noori Top and Babusar Top of Kaghan Valley received more than two feet of snow which were unprecedented, on the other month of December which is known as for heavy snowfall in the region was dry.

Later, snowfall started in late January 2023 and continued till February, during the month of March the snow started melting due to a heat wave but once again Kaghan Valley received more than three feet of snow during April and all mountains of the area were blanketed with a thick layer

of snow.

Environmental experts claim that if the situation persists then the spring season and autumn seasons would also be eliminated and, moreover, the two reaming winters and summer are also under huge threat. This is the time to pay attention to the issue of climatic change and take some concrete measures for the resolution of the issue.

The metrology department has forecasted more rain, hail, thunderstorm and snowfall in the upper parts of district Manshera during the coming few days which would bring more changes in the temperature and would also affect the tourism industry as well.

Two Agri Dept's officers kidnapped from office

D.I. KHAN (APP): Two officers of the Agriculture Department Tank were kidnapped by armed persons from Kulachi tehsil on Sunday.

According to a police spokesman, District Director Agriculture Department in Tank Hussain Ahmad resident of Bannu and Deputy Director of the Agriculture Tank Muhammad Shahid Betanni resident of Lakki Marwat came here to the Agriculture office situated in the Ranazai area of Kulachi Tehsil for a meeting.

Meanwhile, some 8 to 10 armed men came on motorcycles and abducted both officers from the agriculture office at gunpoint.

After receiving the information about the incident, the local police reached the site and started investigating the matter.

2 bootleggers held, 110 liters liquor recovered

Cantt police during crackdown against outlaws arrested a bootlegger and recovered 110 liters of liquor from his possession, said district police spokesman on Sunday.

The operation was conducted on the directives of District Police Officer Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani.

The police teams conducted raids in different areas lying in the limits of Cantt police station. During the raids accused Muhammad Rafiq son of Muhammad Siddiq resident of Hanif Town, was arrested and 80 liters of liquor was recovered from the possession of the accused.

During another action, 30 liters of local liquor was recovered from another accused.

Police registered sepa-

rate cases against the both the arrested persons.

Petrol pump sealed during action against profiteering, faulty gauges

The district administration has sealed a petrol pump on Paniala road, Tehsil Paharpur and different others were fined during action against profiteering and irregularities in gauge.

The district administration took action after receiving public complaints against the petrol pumps involved in overcharging.

Assistant Commissioner Paharpur Aneeq Anwar, following the directions of Deputy Commissioner DI Khan Mansoor Arshad, inspected various petrol pumps on Paniala road.

During the inspection, the AC checked the prices, gauges and cleanliness situation at the petrol pumps.

DPO orders security audit of banks

SIALKOT (APP): District Police Officer (DPO) Sialkot Muhammad Hassan Iqbal has issued orders for security audit of banks and financial institutions across the district.

It is a responsibility of the police to complete the SOPs of the Home Department with the bank administration regarding security. He was giving instructions to the district police officers under the

24/7 policing system in the light of IGP Punjab Dr Usman Anwar directives.

The DPO said transactions of funds in banks and financial institutions require foolproof security. It is common practice for lawbreakers to rob banks and financial institutions by chasing them outside the bank and commit robberies and dacoities.

He said that it is the responsibility of the SHO

and the DSP concerned not only to check the security of banks located in their areas on a daily basis but also complete the SOPs regarding security in the banks and financial institutions. The SOPs include having functional CCTV cameras at all times and using metal detectors.

The DPO said, "I myself will keep a check on the security of banks and financial institutions."

Preteen swindlers deprives shopkeeper of cash

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): A gang of preteen swindlers deprived a shopkeeper of cash Rs 550,000 at Alipur on the premises of the City police station on Sunday.

According to police sources, a group of swindlers aged of seven to 13 years was active in the city depriving citizens of cash and other valuables. A shopkeeper namely

Shahid Abbas reported to police that he was sitting in his mobile accessories when a preteen girl entered the shop while two other girls of the gang ages seven to nine years were standing outside the shop.

The girl demanded a hands-free from him, in the meanwhile, the minor girls standing outside the shop started crying loudly.

The shopkeeper went outside the shop to inquire about the girls when a teenage boy entered the shop and took away cash Rs 550,000 from the draw and escaped.

The shopkeeper also presented the CCTV footage of the incident to police. However, City police have started the investigation into the incident, police sources added.



QUETTA: Laborers with their tools waiting for daily wages work while sitting along road side.

4 persons of family killed over domestic dispute

ABBOTTABAD (INP): At least four persons including three women were shot dead and a minor boy sustained injuries in a domestic dispute in village Lari Syedan Thandyani an area of Nawan Shahr police station here Sunday.

According to the details, in a domestic dispute, the husband shot dead his wife, two sisters-in-law and brother-in-law and managed to escape from the crime.

In the incident, four persons including three women and a teenage boy were killed while a two-year-old child boy miraculously survived despite receiving a gunshot.

The injured persons were identified as 30 years old Saima, 26 years old Kiran, 25 years old Arham and 13 years old Zeeshan. The rescue team shifted the four dead bodies to the DHQ Hospital in Abbottabad.

Nawan Shahr police registered a murder case of four people and started an operation to arrest the accused.

Three drug dealers held, hashish recovered

D.I. KHAN (INP): District police during its ongoing operations against menace of narcotics arrested three drugs dealers and seized a quantity of narcotics.

According to a police spokesman, District Police Officer (DPO) Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani issued instructions for action against drugs to make society free from scourge of narcotics and drugs.

A team of Paharpur Police station led by its SHO Atta Ullah Khan, taking action against criminals, arrested accused drug dealer Muhammad Farooq son of Hafiz Ghulam Qasim resident of Hafizabad. The police also recovered 1215 gram hashish from his possession.

Similarly, a team of Dera Town Police Station led by SHO Khalid Javed Lashari arrested an accused drug dealer Bakht Ullah S/o Rehmat Ullah R/o Khairabad recovering 105 gram hashish from him. In another action, the Dera Town Police arrested accused Tahir Abbas son of Rabnawaz resident of Lak-Kalan, Darya Khan. The police also recovered 510 gram hashish from his possession and registered separate cases against the arrested accused.

44 power pilferers held

MULTAN (INP): MEPCO have caught 44 power pilferers during separate operations launched throughout South Punjab in a day, official said on Sunday.

MEPCO teams accompanying task forces raided different places in Multan, Vehari, Sahiwal, Rahimyar Khan, Muzaffargarh, Bahawalnagar, Khanewal, and Dera Ghazi Khan and detected theft of 60,444 electricity units.

A sum of over Rs1.6 million fine was imposed while applications were sent to police stations concerned for lodging cases against 40 pilferers over involvement in tampering with the body of meters, direct supply, installing loop in meters, slowing down meters, meter dead stop and meter screen wash.

Re-conduct of population census demanded in APC

D.I. KHAN (APP): The Dera and Tank Civil Society Action Committee on Sunday expressing reservations over the recent population census demanded holding the census in both districts again.

The demand was presented during an All Parties Conference (APC) organized by Dera and Tank Civil Society Action Committee here at Mufti Mahmood Library Hall.

During the conference, a unanimous resolution was passed to reject the census and raised questions about it.

The resolution demanded that the federal and provincial governments, the Federal Bureau of Statistics and the district

administrations of Dera and Tank hold the census again in order to remove the concerns and to address the flaws, shortcomings, weaknesses and negligence.

It was also decided that a protest camp would be set up and a rally would be taken out on May 14.

In the APC, the trade and labour unions of Dera and Tank, literary personalities, representatives of Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F), Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP), Tehreek-Minhaj-ul-Quran, Awami Tehreek, Jamaat-e-Islami, Shia Ulema Council, Saraikstan

Tehreek, National Labor Federation, Baloch Ittehad, All Teachers Association, All Clerks Association, High Court Bar Association, District Bar Association, District Bar Association, Saraiki Students Movement, Saraiki Youth Parliament and others participated.

Earlier, Head of the action committee Dawar Khan Kundi welcomed the participants. He said the views, suggestions and advice presented in the APC would be considered and a comprehensive plan of action would be drawn up for the future, adding the full guidance and support of the civil society would be obtained for its implementation.

Traffic police launches helmet campaign

FAISALABAD (INP): The City Traffic Police (CTP) have launched a helmet campaign in Faisalabad to minimise casualties occurring due to un-helmeted motorcyclists on roads.

Spokesman Mehar Asif Naveed said here on Sunday that traffic police collected data from various hospitals and Punjab Emergency Services (Rescue-1122), which revealed that road traffic accident prove fatal for those motorcyclists who travel without wearing helmet.

Therefore, Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Maqsood Ahmad Lone directed the traffic police to launch a helmet campaign in Faisalabad and pursued the bikers to wear helmet while

traveling on roads as it would help to protect the life of motorcyclist in case of any road mishap.

Hence, the traffic police started helmet campaign in the city and set up an awareness camp in Chenab Club Chowk.

The traffic police also distributed pamphlets and helmets among bikers in addition to advertising the drive on the social, print and electronic media so that motorcyclists could use helmet while driving their bikes.

The traffic police also warned the motorcyclists that strict action would be taken against them after May 8, 2023 if they would travel on roads without wearing helmet, spokesman added.

Secretary reviews uplift projects

QUETTA (APP): Secretary Fisheries and Coastal Development Balochistan Hafiz Mohammad Tahir Kakar visited the coastal areas of Lasbela, Hub, Gadani and Kund Malir.

During his visit, he inspected the site of Ecotourism Resorts and Beach Parks projects under construction by BCDA a handout issued by DGPR on Sunday said.

Talking to the officials of the fisheries department, the secretary of fisheries

said the Government of Balochistan was committed to preserving the natural & ecosystems of the coastal belt.

"Efforts are afoot to making comprehensive and long-term efforts to boost tourism and the blue economy," he added.

Earlier, DG BCDA Jahanzeb Khan briefed the Secretary of Fisheries & Coastal Development on the ongoing beach resort and ecotourism projects at Kundmalir.

Man allegedly kills wife

RAJANPUR (APP): The cruel husband got angry about giving birth to a baby girl and allegedly killed his wife by opening fire in the tribal area of Rojhan.

According to details, Hakim Ali s/o Haji Bakhtiar resident of the Doli area of Rojhan was annoyed with his wife over giving birth to a daughter and killed her by opening fire and fled away from the crime scene.

Upon receiving the information, Border Military

Police (BMP) reached the spot and handed over the body to heirs after a post-mortem from THQ Hospital Rojhan Mazari.

Circle incharge BMP, Fahad Mazari, told APP that the cruel husband was very angry with his wife for her refusal to go to her in-laws and for giving birth to a baby girl which he took this step.

A case has been registered against the accused and the culprit would be arrested soon.

Youth killed, 3 injured in road mishap

ATTOCK (INP): At least one person was killed and three others injured in collision between motorcycle and a rickshaw, rescue sources said on Sunday.

According to details, the accident took place at Haji Shah Road in China Chowk of Attock where an over-spending motorcycle rammed into a rickshaw.

A 23-year man identified as Abdul Qadeer s/o Muhammadullah Jan was killed on the spot while three others including 28-year Muhammad Zaheer s/o Muhammad Javed, 25-year Touqeer Hussain Shah s/o Sabir Hussain Shah and 30-year Muhammad Ismail s/o Muha Muhammad Nawaz, all hailing from Haji Shah area sustained critical wounds.

The body and injured were shifted to hospital and the police after registering a case into the incident started an investigation.

4-member gang busted

SIALKOT (NP): The district police have busted a gang namely Shamoon gang involved in dacoity and robbery incidents and arrested its four members including the ring leader.

According to a spokesperson, SHO Muradpur police station Inspector Mian Abdul Razzaq, along with a police team, traced the gang and arrested its members. The police recovered six motorcycles, Rs 350,000 in cash, mobile phones and weapons from the gangsters.

The accused confessed to dozens of robberies in different areas of Kotli Loharan, Headmarala and Muradpur police stations. Police sent the accused behind bars after registering separate cases against them.

Motorcyclist killed

FAISALABAD (INP): A motorcyclist was killed in a road accident, in the precincts of Dijkot police station.

Rescue-1122 spokesman said here on Sunday that 60-year-old Shaukat Ali, resident of Chak Jilandar was riding a motorcycle on Samundri road when he slipped and fell onto the road near Jahangir Morh. He received serious injuries and died on the spot.



PM aide calls on Uzbekistan minister

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Adviser to Prime Minister for Political and Public Affairs, National Heritage and Culture Engr Amir Muqam, met his counterpart, Minister of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Uzbekistan Ozodbek Nazarbekov at Mayor's of Sardara Region Akmal Jan residence.

According to a PID statement on Sunday, Minister of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Uzbekistan welcomed the Adviser to Prime Minister and said that the two countries have always had friendly and brotherly relations, says a press release here.

Adviser to Prime Minister conveyed his deep gratitude to the government of Uzbekistan, for the generous hospitality. During the meeting, they discussed mutual interest issues including possibility of strengthening ties in cultural ties between the two brotherly countries.

Minister of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Uzbekistan Ozodbek



Nazarbekov acknowledged the potential for cooperation in the field of cultural heritage and expressed his desire to undertake joint ventures on a progressive basis.

He warmly welcomed the Adviser to Prime Minister in the III Bakhshi International Festival.

Nazarbekov Ozodbek Akhmadovich promised to make concerted efforts to further promote the cultural and sports exchanges and cooperation, so as to deepen mutual understanding and friendship between the two peoples of Pakistan and Uzbekistan.

Vietnam reports record-high temperature

HANOI (AFP/APP): Vietnam has reported a record-high temperature, with climate experts warning such extreme weather events would continue.

The country's scientists have warned that global warming is exacerbating adverse weather, with the region sweltering under a heatwave in April -- when neighbouring countries also registered record temperatures. A temperature of 44.1 degrees Celcius (111.38 degrees Fahrenheit) was measured in Vietnam Saturday, the National Centre for Hydro Meteorological Forecasting said, breaking the 2019 record of 43.4 degrees Celsius.

Farmer Nguyen Thi Lan told AFP that temperatures in the central city of Danang had been increasingly hot, forcing workers to start earlier than ever. "We have had to finish before 10:00 am to avoid the heat," she said.

Lan said forecasters said temperatures had risen to nearly 40 degrees Celsius.

"But at lunchtime, I think it was much hotter."

Vietnam's weather varies from north to south, but the entire country is now entering its hottest summer months.

The record temperature was measured indoors at Hoi Xuan station in northern Thanh Hoa province. It topped the previous high of 43.4 degrees Celsius, recorded in April 2019 at Huong Khe District in central Ha Tinh Province.

"This is a worrying record in the context of climate change and global warming," climate change expert Nguyen Ngoc Huy told AFP from the capital Hanoi.

"I believe this record will be repeated many times," he said. "It confirms that extreme climate models are being proven

to be true."

Across the country, weather experts and authorities had warned the population to remain indoors during the hottest parts of the day.

Danang has asked Vietnam's industry and electricity ministries to "cooperate to effectively deal with the heat, possible drought, lack of water," according to state media.

Officials have also told the city's water supply company to ensure that there are adequate "supplies of water for domestic use".

At midday Saturday, Hanoi city centre was almost empty as many remained indoors to avoid the sun.

In April, Asian countries sweltered under hot conditions -- posting record or near-record temperatures.

The Thai meteorological department reported a

record-equalling 44.6 degrees Celsius in western Tak province, while Myanmar media said a town in the country's east reported decade-highs of 43.8 degrees.

While both countries typically endure a hot period before the rainy season, the intensity of the heat has exceeded previous records.

Further west, the capital of Bangladesh -- long dramatically impacted by climate change -- recorded its highest temperature since the 1960s.

At the same time, Indian weather authorities said parts of the country were experiencing temperatures roughly three to four degrees above normal.

A recent report from the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned that "every increment of global warming will intensify multiple and concurrent hazards".

Evacuations spur UN watchdog concern over Ukraine nuclear plant

MOSCOW

(AFP/APP): Evacuations from the front line around Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant prompted safety warnings from the UN nuclear watchdog on Saturday, as a string of recent strikes escalate predictions of a looming spring counteroffensive.

Moscow has blamed Kyiv -- and its Western supporters -- for an escalating number of long-range attacks and sabotage operations, including on the Kremlin. A car bomb on Saturday wounded prominent nationalist writer Zakhar Prilepin and killed his assistant in an attack Moscow pinned on both Kyiv and Washington.

The head of the Russian paramilitary group Wagner meanwhile asked Moscow to let Chechen fighters relieve his forces at the flashpoint city of Bakmut in eastern Ukraine.

Citing stepped-up shellings by Kyiv, Moscow has ordered families with children and elderly to temporarily evacuate a slew of Russian-held areas in southern Ukraine, including the town near Europe's largest nuclear plant.

"The general situation in the area near the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant is becoming increasingly unpredictable and potentially dangerous,"

IAEA chief Rafael Grossi said in a statement on Saturday. "I'm extremely concerned about the very real nuclear safety and security risks facing the plant."

The removal order has led to "a mad panic and no less mad queues" at the checkpoint into Russian-annexed Crimea, said Ivan Fedorov, the mayor of Melitopol in Zaporizhzhia Oblast. With buses ferrying people out every 20 to 30 minutes, he said stations have been drained of gasoline. "The partial evacuation they announced is going too fast, and there is a possibility that they may be preparing for provocations and (for that reason) focusing on civilians," Fedorov wrote on Telegram.

Wagner chief says Moscow promised more ammo after Bakmut pull-out threat: Russian paramilitary leader Yevgeny Prigozhin said Sunday he had received "a promise" of more ammunition from the Russian army, after he threatened to pull his frontline Wagner troops out of Bakmut. "They promised to give us all the ammunition and armaments we need to continue the operations," said Prigozhin, following his blistering attack on mil-

itary chiefs over the situation in Bakmut, the epicentre of Ukraine's fight against Moscow's forces. He said they had been assured "that everything necessary will be provided" to fighters around Bakmut. Prigozhin's Wagner group has spearheaded the grinding, months-long Russian assault on Bakmut, almost capturing the city in the longest and bloodiest battle of the campaign. While Prigozhin has made similar threats to pull out in the past, the emotive language used in Friday's video statement and the scathing personal criticism of the leaders of Russia's campaign in Ukraine were unprecedented. He threatened to "pull out Wagner units from Bakmut because in the absence of ammunition they are facing a senseless death". Without more support, Prigozhin had said he would pull back his fighters on May 10, "and withdraw Wagner units to rear camps to lick our wounds". Prigozhin also said Sunday that General Sergei Surovikin will from now on take "all decisions concerning Wagner's military operations in cooperation with the defence ministry."

Thais queue at temples, schools as early voting begins

BANGKOK (AFP/APP): Thais queued under the blistering sun outside temples, shopping centres and schools to cast their early ballots Sunday ahead of a much-anticipated election next week.

More than two million Thais nationwide are registered to vote early ahead of the kingdom's May 14 election, which is shaping up to be a clash between army-backed establishment parties and resurgent opposition movements.

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha, who took power in a 2014 coup before cementing control in a controversial 2019 election, has been languishing in opinion polls with voters favouring old-school opposition party Pheu Thai and the more radical Move Forward Party.

But with an electoral system heavily stacked in favour of the army-backed parties, challengers must achieve a landslide victory to have any hope of forming the next government.

"I hope this election will change the country in a better way," said shopping mall worker Srisuda Wongsad-ad, 28, after casting her ballot.

She was among hundreds queuing quietly at a polling station in

Bangkok's fashionable Ekkamai district to vote at the Wat That Thong temple, overlooked by golden standing buddhas.

"I am voting for a candidate and party that I like, that can answer my needs," she said, adding that she was voting early as it was more convenient for her.

Elsewhere in the capital, the Royal Paragon Hall shopping centre was packed with voters, albeit cooler ones, enjoying the complex's air conditioning. Despite the early hour, temperatures across the capital -- which like much of Thailand endured a vicious April heatwave -- were soaring and expected to hit 39 degrees Celsius later Sunday.

Shortly before midday outside one of Bangkok's largest poll sites at Ramkhamhaeng University, machines sprayed a fine mist of water over orderly queues as the day's heat rose.

But crowds were still out in force, with traffic and congestion around busy polling stations.

"I am quite excited," said first-time voter Pasawee Sriarunothai, 20, who will not be in Bangkok on May 14.

"I decide to cast my vote based on the party's policies, and I hope

this election will bring the country a better future," Pasawee said.

"I want the new generation to be running the country. I want to try something new," said Nanthapon Phomput, 28, before voting at Wat That Thong.

Among the challengers are opposition party Pheu Thai, fielding Paetongtarn Shinawatra -- daughter of exiled former leader and billionaire Thaksin Shinawatra -- as a prime ministerial candidate.

While Pheu Thai remains in the lead, Paetongtarn was overtaken as surveyed voters' preferred PM candidate by Pita Limjaroenrat, leader of the rival opposition Move Forward party.

Polls will close at 5:00 pm (1000 GMT), with alcohol sales across Thailand banned until 6:00 pm.

Authorities had anticipated large numbers of early voters.

Police told local media Saturday there would be around 3,000 security officers on duty across the capital, and warned of heavier traffic congestion around poll sites.

An additional 100,000 Thais living overseas will also vote early, with some having already done so.

More than 52 million citizens are eligible to vote in this election.

Slovakia's interim government resigns

BRATISLAVA

(AFP/APP): Slovakia's Prime Minister Eduard Heger said Sunday he has tendered the resignation of his caretaker government amid a rumbling political crisis. MPs in the EU and NATO member country toppled Heger's four-party coalition government in a vote of no confidence in December.

Since then, an interim government led by Heger has been running

the country until fresh elections are held on September 30.

"I have asked the president to revoke my mandate," Heger told reporters.

He promised to coordinate his decisions with President Zuzana Caputova, who he is due to meet later on Sunday.

"I will leave it to the president to try to bring Slovakia to free and democratic elections with an inter-

im government," Heger said.

The political crisis in the country of 5.4 million deepened this week.

On Thursday, Agriculture Minister Samuel Vlcian announced his resignation after a case involving a 1.4-million-euro (\$1.6 million) subsidy to his company.

On Friday, Foreign Minister Rastislav Kacer also said he planned to leave the government, without specifying why.

Sudan maternity hospital fights to save lives under fire

KHARTOUM (AFP/APP): When a maternity hospital in the Sudanese capital came under bombardment, Esraa Hesbalrasoul snatched her premature twins from an incubator and rushed out in a panic.

In the chaos, only one of the infants survived.

Hesbalrasoul now tends to her baby in a small hospital in the capital's twin city of Omdurman that for weeks has struggled to weather the near-cessless fighting.

Numerous medical facilities have been shelled in the fighting that broke out on April 15 between rival generals and the forces they command.

The battles have left only 16 percent of hospitals in Khartoum fully functional, according to the United Nations, putting countless lives at risk.

But the small Al-Nada hospital in Khartoum's twin city of Omdurman remains a lifesaver, keeping its doors open to offer vital health care despite the mounting odds.

When strikes shook the ground on April 20 around the facility initially caring for the twins, "we were told we had to evacuate everyone right away", Hesbalrasoul told AFP.

"There were no ambulances available so we had to transport our babies as best we could," she said.

"But one of them died because of the lack of oxygen."

Her tragedy is hardly an isolated

one.

The UN estimates that there are "219,000 pregnant women in Khartoum, including 24,000 women expected to give birth in the coming weeks".

Al-Nada is one of the rare facilities they can turn to.

Its director, Mohammed Fattah al-Rahman, in particular credits a generous donation from the Sudanese American Physicians Association (SAPA-USA), which has allowed it to keep running.

With this money, "we have been able to deliver 500 births, naturally and through caesarian sections, and to admit 80 children", he told AFP, surrounded by premature babies in incubators.

But the war is never far from the dimly lit facility. Sounds of gunfire and blasts can often be heard echoing in the distance.

There is no air conditioning, only overhead fans that attempt to relieve the heat which often reaches up to 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) even before the blazing peak of summer.

As the war rages, killing hundreds and injuring thousands so far, much of Sudan's meagre medical resources have been diverted to tending the war-wounded with urgent care.

"There have been no obstetrics or paediatric services since the beginning of the conflict," Rahman says. That meant that Sudanese couple Fatima and her husband

Jaber could find no facilities to treat their young son for meningitis, until they arrived at Al-Nada, which offers paediatric care as well as maternity facilities.

Even before the war broke out, mothers and children faced grave dangers in Sudan, one of the world's poorest countries.

Almost three out of every thousand women die in childbirth in Sudan, eight times higher than the figure in neighbouring Egypt, according to the UN children's fund, UNICEF.

It says 56 out of every 1,000 Sudanese children die before reaching the age of five.

Last year, the UN estimated that one in three Sudanese needed to walk more than an hour to get medical care.

Today, the small team that keeps the Al-Nada hospital going fears conditions will soon force them to stop their essential work.

"Our stocks of medicines are starting to dwindle," said Alaa Ahmed, a pharmacist at the hospital. "If it goes on like this, everything will collapse."

The prospect of getting more supplies from the government warehouse on the other side of the Nile River is not only unlikely -- it is closed and inaccessible -- but possibly deadly while combat rages. As a result, Ahmed laments, "A lot of people ask me for medicine but unfortunately I can't give it to them".

UK to mark coronation with street parties and a concert



LONDON (AFP/APP): Thousands of local street parties were planned on Sunday on the second day of events to mark the coronation of King Charles III, ending with a concert in front of 20,000 people at Windsor Castle.

After days of back-to-back diplomatic receptions, garden parties and rehearsals for Saturday's event at Westminster Abbey, Charles, 74, and Queen

Camilla, 75, will host a private reception.

They will then join the evening concert at the castle west of London. Charles's coronation as monarch of the United Kingdom and 14 Commonwealth countries around the world was the first in Britain for 70 years.

The glittering ceremony, steeped in 1,000 years of tradition and ritual, was attended by global royalty and

world leaders. But Sunday's events are a shift in emphasis. While the coronation ceremony has its roots in the England of 1066, the "Big Lunch" parties look to bring modern Britain's communities closer.

Monday has been declared a public holiday -- meaning people can let loose on Sunday without having to worry about a hangover. Charles and Camilla hope the long week-

end "will provide an opportunity to spend time and celebrate with friends, families and communities", Buckingham Palace said.

After the post-World War II hardships, street parties were a major feature of Queen Elizabeth II's coronation in 1953 -- and a memorable part of celebrations for her long reign in 1977 and last year. The Big Lunch is an attempt to keep alive that more neighbourly spirit.

Mass shooting at Texas mall leaves fatalities, 9 wounded

WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): A shooter opened fire at an outlet mall north of Dallas, Texas on Saturday, and emergency officials confirmed fatalities and said at least nine wounded people were rushed to area hospitals.

Some of the victims were as young as five years old, CNN reported.

A police officer was in the mall on an unrelated call when gunfire broke out around 3:30 pm (2030 GMT), said chief Brian Harvey of the Allen, Texas, police department.

"He heard gunshots, went to the gunshots, engaged the suspect and

neutralized the suspect," Harvey said. "He also then called for ambulances."

Harvey confirmed there had been fatalities but declined to give a death toll, saying "we do not have an accurate count."

Allen Fire Chief Jonathan Boyd said his department "transported nine victims to area trauma facilities."

Texas Governor Greg Abbott called the mass shooting an "unspeakable tragedy."

Authorities initially thought there might be a second shooter at Allen Premium Outlets, a sprawling shopping complex in the city of Allen,

25 miles (40 kilometers) north of Dallas, CNN said.

Police combed through stores in the mall, and photos and drone video from the scene showed shoppers and store employees rushing into parking lots.

Harvey later said police believe the unidentified shooter, who CNN said was wearing tactical gear, "acted alone."

A father who arrived at the mall after his daughter, who was inside, phoned to tell him about the shooting, also told CNN that police had informed him there may have been a second shooter. "We saw the police

outside the door, and they told us we had to go, and that they are still looking for the person," Jaynal Pervéz said, according to CNN. "There's no more safe places. I don't know what to do."

With more firearms than inhabitants, the United States has the highest rate of gun deaths of any developed country -- 49,000 in 2021, up from 45,000 the year before.

There have been more than 195 mass shootings -- defined as four or more people wounded or killed -- so far this year in the United States, according to the Gun Violence Archive.

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JALIL AFRIDI
Managing Editor

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Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town,
Peshawar.

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001
Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573

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

Pak-Sino friendship and contemporary challenges

Pakistan’s Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has categorically endorsed that Pakistan will continue to support China on all core issues of its national interests as the Pakistan-China friendship is irreversible. Addressing a joint press stakeout alongside his Chinese Counterpart in Islamabad, Mr. Zardari underscored the support both nations had for each other on issues of core interests in both bilateral and multilateral forums and appreciated China’s steadfast support to Pakistan in all issues including the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir. Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari termed the CPEC a win-win initiative for both nations and strongly rejected the notions of so-called debt sustainability or debt trap propaganda that had been continuously propagated against Chinese investments and financial support to Pakistan. Meanwhile, the Chinese Foreign Minister and State Counselor, Qin Gang hailed all-weather Pak-China friendship and appreciated Pakistan’s crucial support for Beijing at global forums. Foreign Minister Gang assured that China will always work with Pakistan through the platform of CPEC, to align bilateral development strategies, share China’s development opportunities, and build an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future.

Pakistan and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) are brothers in arms and time-tested friends. Their friendship has proved its resilience during all odds in the past and firmly stood in the face of extreme coercion of the United States and its allies in recent years. Both nations are engaged in multiple bilateral and multilateral formats and actively pursuing their mutual goals through joint work and cooperation. The recent round of the Pak-China Strategic Dialogue briefly covered all aspects of bilateral relations between the two nations. The leadership from both nations identified the marvelous project of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a main pillar of their bilateral collaboration and agreed on aligning bilateral development strategies, sharing each other’s resources, expertise, and opportunities to build a shared and prosperous future for their people.

The current geopolitical environment and global competition pose serious challenges to the ever-flourishing Pak-China partnership, as Western adversaries are trying to disrupt and undermine Sino-Pakistan relations through continuous middling, conspiracy theories, and unrestricted propaganda campaigns. The US-led Western bloc had been persuading Pakistan to abandon Beijing and join the Western club amid heightened rivalry between China and the United States. Traditionally, Islamabad had enjoyed a good relationship both with Beijing and Washington throughout the past. Pakistan categorically refused to be a part of any bloc politics and expressed its willingness to play a bridging role between two warring nations. However, Islamabad faced unprecedented challenges in maintaining its neutrality amid economic frailty and worsening payment deficient crises over the past year. Recently, Islamabad decided to distance itself from the China-centric so-called democracy summit hosted by the Biden administration, which clearly illustrates Pakistan’s sincerity toward China’s national interests and sovereignty. Resultantly, Pakistan failed to receive substantial economic aid from the IMF despite fulfilling all pre-conditions obviously due to Washington’s displeasure and the US’s unimaginable influence over the global lender.

During the recent Pak-China Strategic Dialogue in Islamabad, Pakistani leadership undoubtedly discredited Western propaganda against the CPEC and Chinese investment in the country. Islamabad reconfirmed its support for China and Foreign Minister Bilawal called the Sino-Pakistan friendship irreversible. State Counselor Gang reiterated China’s economic, political, and diplomatic support for Islamabad and acknowledged Pakistan’s real concerns regarding resurrecting terrorism in the region. Realistically, Pakistan should not be a part of global power politics and alliances against any nation in the world. However, Islamabad must first protect its national interests and take care of the genuine needs of its partnering nations including China, the US, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and other friendly nations having conflicting ideologies and manifestos. The Islamabad Summit has removed all misperceptions about the Pak-China relationship and reinvigorated hopes regarding the realization of broader regional connectivity, economic revival, and prosperity that equally benefits all nations in the region.

Bluesky repeats most of Twitter’s mistakes

Dave Lee

Back in 2018, while looking at the monster he helped create, Jack Dorsey started thinking out loud: What was wrong with Twitter? Why were people so cruel to each other? Why did it foster such divisiveness? Why did hate go viral?

The company put out a request for proposal for anyone who had smart ideas on tackling these issues. Dorsey focused on learning the principles of “healthy” conversations. He came to understand that the hard-coded mechanics of Twitter were a major contributing factor in how we behaved. The “hellsite,” as people half-jokingly call it, was by design.

“Right now we have a big Like button with a heart on it and we’re incentivising people to want it to go up,” he told an event hosted by tech magazine Wired. He pondered removing the “like” function as well as other aspects of social validation, such as follower counts. Others pointed out that the “quote tweet,” where you could comment on someone else’s post and bring it to the attention of the frothing masses, was another highly-flammable feature. Dorsey pledged to do better.

How dispiriting it has been, then, to use Bluesky.

‘Hottest club online’

The new app backed by Dorsey that launched in February has been ordained by some as the post-Elon Musk Twitter alternative we have been waiting for. Rolling Stone magazine last week called it the “hottest club online.” There are more than 1 million people on its waiting list,

and last weekend saw some Twitter heavy-hitters join the platform, such as US Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and the comedian Dril.

Bluesky was spun out of an R&D project set up by Dorsey when he was CEO at Twitter to look at the potential for a decentralised social network. The concept is that by creating an open protocol, you can stop any single app or company having total power over the

“It all went south,” Dorsey finally conceded this weekend in a “skeet” — a post on Bluesky — discussing the fallout from Musk’s buyout of Twitter. “But it happened and all we can do now is build something to avoid that ever happening again.”

Nothing I’ve seen so far has convinced me Bluesky is that “something.” The small number of users

stage, creating the same incentives to drum up divisiveness or offence. In fact, the biggest complaint from users so far is that it’s missing some of Twitter’s other features. Yet it looks so similar you almost have to double-check which app you’re using.

Many people would argue I’m missing the bigger picture, which is this: Bluesky is decentralised,

ness of moderation

This open platform — called the Authenticated Transfer Protocol, or AT Protocol — is the key innovation here. It’s open for anyone to use and build upon, and cannot be controlled or bought by any single entity, such as a billionaire fed up with imagined wokeness. The controversial business of moderation is intended to be shared across many apps and servers, each with their

like with Mastodon, another Twitter alternative, dismissed by many as being too complicated for new users due to its sprawl of different servers and nerdiest clientele.

The creators of Bluesky have described their app as a reference point for how others might build their own using the AT Protocol, a sort of best practice for usability and features. Which is why I find Bluesky so frustrating. Regardless of the underlying technology, the functionality for the end user remains the same, as do the cursed mechanisms that turned right-minded people into conspiracy theorists, exposed young Black footballers to racist abuse and created Marjorie Taylor Greene.

In keeping with Dorsey’s track record, Bluesky is big on aspiration, but lacking in fine detail. The company has yet to explain how its decentralised moderation will work in practice. Who will do it? Who will pay for it?

The lack of clarity on how Bluesky can sustain itself is another urgent concern, given that its funding initially came from Twitter. We have also yet to hear the rationale for why others might wish to create Bluesky apps and servers. What’s in it for them? How will users know who can and can’t be trusted?

As several Bluesky users have remarked, it’s all a bit like watching a plane being built in midair. Those on board should think long and hard about giving Bluesky and Dorsey the chance to repeat mistakes of the past.

Under the “What’s Hot” tab, viral posts take centre stage, creating the same incentives to drum up divisiveness or offence. In fact, the biggest complaint from users so far is that it’s missing some of Twitter’s other features. Yet it looks so similar you almost have to double-check which app you’re using. Many people would argue I’m missing the bigger picture, which is this: Bluesky is decentralised, which gives it resilience and a strength over Twitter. If I don’t like the Bluesky app, for instance, I could theoretically access the same posts from its users with an alternative app, one whose functionality and content policies that may be more to my liking. If I don’t like the viral posts I’m seeing, I will one day be able to change the ranking system, thanks to an algorithm “marketplace,” the Bluesky team hopes.

network, in the way Twitter and Facebook do over their respective services today.

Dorsey, who isn’t running Bluesky but sits on its board, is simultaneously the best and worst person to be involved in building such an alternative. Best, because he’s done it before. Worst, because, well, look what happened. This was the man who described Musk as the “singular solution” he trusted to save Twitter, despite glaring evidence to the contrary.

today, less than 100,000, has lulled fans into a false sense of security. All lightly populated networks feel better at first. At scale, there is no reason Bluesky users won’t behave how Twitter users did.

Bluesky’s development team have already recreated some of Twitter’s most toxic elements. The like and follower counts are there. The quote tweet — or skeet — function, too. Under the “What’s Hot” tab, viral posts take centre

which gives it resilience and a strength over Twitter.

If I don’t like the Bluesky app, for instance, I could theoretically access the same posts from its users with an alternative app, one whose functionality and content policies that may be more to my liking. If I don’t like the viral posts I’m seeing, I will one day be able to change the ranking system, thanks to an algorithm “marketplace,” the Bluesky team hopes.

The controversial busi-

Cultural influence on art: Understanding the connection

Hamed Bin Mohamed Khalifa Al Suwaidi

Art is a powerful medium that transcends boundaries and connects people from different parts of the world. One of the most important aspects of art is cultural identity, which refers to the unique characteristics, beliefs, and traditions that define a particular group of people. Cultural identity plays a critical role in shaping the creation and interpretation of art, influencing artists’ subject matter, style, techniques, and reception by audiences.

Cultural identity shapes the subject matter of art, influencing artists to create works that reflect the experiences, beliefs, and traditions of their community. The subject matter of art can range from the personal to the political, reflecting the social, cultural, and historical context in which it is

created. For example, the works of Mexican painter Frida Kahlo often explored themes such as identity, gender, and the struggle for freedom and independence, reflecting the cultural and political landscape of Mexico during her lifetime. Similarly, the work of Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama reflects her personal experiences with mental illness, as well as her cultural heritage and upbringing in Japan.

Artistic styles and techniques

Cultural identity also shapes the style and techniques that artists use in their work. Different cultures have unique artistic traditions and techniques passed down from generation to generation. For example, African art is characterised by its vibrant colours, bold patterns, and

natural materials such as wood and clay. In contrast, Japanese art is characterised by its simplicity, elegance, and use of materials such as paper and ink. By incorporating these techniques and styles into their work, artists can create pieces that are not only beautiful but also reflective of their cultural heritage.

The interpretation and reception of art are also influenced by cultural identity. How we perceive and interpret art is influenced by our cultural background and experiences. For example, a work of art considered beautiful and meaningful in one culture may be perceived differently in another. The cultural context in which the artwork is created and viewed plays a significant role in shaping

our interpretation and understanding. By acknowledging the cultural context in which an artwork is created, we can gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of its meaning and significance.

In today’s globalised world, cultural identity has become increasingly important in creating art. Artists are drawing inspiration from multiple cultural sources, creating works that reflect a blend of cultural influences. This fusion of different cultural elements can lead to the creation of unique and innovative works that are reflective of the complexity and diversity of contemporary society. However, it is also important to note that incorporating different cultural elements in art can

also lead to issues of cultural appropriation.

Cultural appropriation refers to the adoption of elements of one culture by members of another, often without permission or understanding of their cultural significance. This can lead to the exploitation and commodification of cultural traditions, resulting in the erasure of their meaning and value. It is essential for artists to be aware of the cultural context in which their work is created and to approach the incorporation of cultural elements with respect and sensitivity.

Cultural identity also plays a critical role in representing marginalised groups in art. Historically, art has often been used to represent dominant groups and reinforce their power and status. However, in recent years, there has been

a growing movement towards the representation of marginalised groups in art, with artists drawing inspiration from their cultural heritage and experiences to create works that challenge dominant narratives and promote social justice.

For example, contemporary Indigenous artists such as Kent Monkman and Rebecca Belmore use their art to challenge colonialism and the marginalisation of Indigenous people in Canada. Their work draws on Indigenous traditions and cultural practices while also incorporating contemporary techniques and styles, creating pieces that are visually stunning and socially and politically relevant.

Cultural identity plays a critical role in the creation and interpretation of art. It shapes an artist’s subject.

US elections are more democratic now

Jonathan Bernstein

Colin Allred, a former NFL player now in his third term in the US House, plans to give up a safe Texas seat to take on Ted Cruz for the US Senate in 2024. He is probably Democrats’ best hope to challenge the Republican incumbent. While his bid, announced ON Wednesday, is a long shot, Allred’s candidacy is proof that the torrent of money involved in political campaigns, and specifically the huge number of small-scale donations, has been a boon for American democracy.

A lot of people have been critical of the unprecedented sums of cash that even US House campaigns now raise from donors who give under \$200. The surge in small donations, especially in non-presidential elections, has occurred over the last decade thanks to the ease of online fundraising. Raphael Warnock raised a staggering \$81 million from small donors in 2022, about 45 per cent of the total, during his successful quest for one of Georgia’s Senate seats. Plenty of House candidates in that election cycle raised \$2 million or even \$3 million that way — far more, in all cases, than such candidates could raise from all sources before fundraising went online.

How small donors can help campaigns

The first campaign famous for relying on small donors was Jerry Brown’s go-nowhere presidential run in 1992, which asked supporters to call an 800 number to donate. Howard Dean’s slightly more suc-

cessful 2004 presidential campaign was the pioneer for raising shockingly large amounts over the internet. Key to the whole thing is the low overhead; before the internet, campaigns could solicit relatively

Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene. The rise in small donations also hasn’t curbed the influence of wealthy corporations and individuals.

tion, which involves making promises during the campaign about what they will do and how they will act if elected.

The new small money

To sceptics, the gusher of small-bore campaign donations has elevated fringe candidates who either have no chance of winning, thus “wasting” the money, or who might win their races but have no interest in actually governing. This, critics say, is how you wind up with, say, Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene. The rise in small donations also hasn’t curbed the influence of wealthy corporations and individuals. But the fear about new money in campaigns is misplaced. Well-funded campaigns are good for democracy, and small donations are a healthy way to raise it. For elections to be meaningful, they need to be seriously contested. Too often in the US, this has only been true in the most competitive districts. Without real campaigns, the winners have little incentive to do the hard work of representation, which involves making promises during the campaign about what they will do and how they will act if elected.

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hasn’t kept big money from wealthy people and large interests out of politics; indeed, the courts have loosened restrictions on big money. But small money leaves candidates far less dependent on a relatively small group of well-funded interests.

New sources of campaign financing

There is no question that new sources of campaign financing have produced

more genuine campaigns. Consider Texas’s Senate races. Beto O’Rourke raised \$80 million to take on Cruz in 2018, much of it from small Democratic donors. While O’Rourke narrowly lost, his was the

best showing by a Democrat running against an incumbent senator in Texas in decades. Allred might not match O’Rourke’s total, but without ready small money, Allred probably wouldn’t even be making the attempt to unseat Cruz. Compare the O’Rourke-Cruz matchup with the contest for the same Senate seat in 2006. Then-Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison

spent \$6.6 million; her obscure opponent spent all of \$1.4 million. Six years before that, a perennial candidate with the celebrity-like name of Gene Kelly won the Democratic primary because no one else had the money to spend on a vanity campaign; Kelly spent less than \$5,000 in the general election.

A criticism of small-scale donations is that they encourage political publicity stunts to grab donors’ attention, whether it’s a committee hearing appearance that goes viral or a member of Congress who yells at the president during the State of the Union address. But politics has always had flashy campaigners.

It’s true that donations from small donors sometimes sap funds and energy that might be better deployed elsewhere. That was the case in 2020 when Kentucky’s Amy McGrath spent a whopping \$56 million in small donations, more than half the \$96 million total raised for her campaign, yet lost badly to then-Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. But all sources of campaign financing have inefficiencies. And the political system is healthier if Democrats in Kentucky or Texas and Republicans in California are able to mount real campaigns and help sustain opposition parties in places where they are unlikely to win.

There are plenty of reasons to worry about the state of US democracy. Small money isn’t one of them.

A world with monarchs: Long live the kings and queens

With Britain’s King Charles III officially coronated, the “empire on which the sun never set” is looking a little shabby.

In addition to the United Kingdom, 14 former British colonies still maintain Charles as their monarch and head of state, but many of his subjects around the world are reconsidering the arrangement.

Barbados became a republic in 2021, and Jamaica has initiated a similar process of constitutional reform. Others might soon follow. Why should countries from Belize to Tuvalu maintain as their nominal head of state an old white man living in a middling power far away from them?

Americans, of course, find it difficult to understand why anyone would accept hereditary rulers, or why a purely ceremonial office has any value. But constitutional monarchy is alive and well in some of the world’s most developed countries. It should be jettisoned only after careful consideration of its significant benefits.

Start with what a constitutional monarchy is not: absolute monarchy, in which kings and queens actually exercise real power. Eight countries, mostly oil-rich states in the Middle East, remain absolute monarchies.

Constitutional monarchies must also be distinguished from republics, in which the head of state is either elected by the people or by their representatives in parliament. Heads of state in republics serve only for a limited term, whereas a monarch typically holds the job for life.

So defined, constitutional monarchy is not a rare phenomenon: there are currently 34, representing 18% of the roughly 193 independent countries. These are an extraordinarily successful set of countries by any standard, including most of Scandinavia, Japan, and the Benelux countries, as well as Charles’ domains of Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.

According to the Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2022, ten of the world’s top 20 democracies are constitutional monarchies, as are nine of the 20 richest countries. And eight of the ten most enduring national constitutions provide for a monarch.

The surviving monarchies have done so mostly because, over a long period of time, they yielded power to legislative assemblies

elected by the people. This process of political reform started with Magna Carta in England, and played out in the 19th century in most other countries.

When monarchs resisted encroachments on their power, they usually lost their thrones — and sometimes their heads. When they yielded, they became

Tom Ginsburg

coordinating among themselves. The Netflix series “The Crown” includes a fictionalized account of Queen Elizabeth II’s intervention to head off her cousin Lord Mountbatten’s idea of a coup during Harold Wilson’s premiership.

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Monarchs also provide a form of political insurance, being able to step in during periods of national crisis. A famous example is King Juan Carlos I of Spain, who helped thwart a coup d’etat launched in his name in 1981. He went on television and ordered the armed forces to return to their barracks, even as he was communicating individually with key generals, which helped prevent them from coordinating among themselves. The Netflix series “The Crown” includes a fictionalized account of Queen Elizabeth II’s intervention to head off her cousin Lord Mountbatten’s idea of a coup during Harold Wilson’s premiership. Some supposedly constitutional monarchs, however, have been known to abet coups against their own governments. Instead of acting like King Juan Carlos to undermine military coup-makers, Thailand’s King Bhumibol Adulyadej assented to ten coups during his 70-year reign. And Queen Elizabeth’s representative in Australia, Sir John Kerr, provoked a constitutional crisis when he ordered the removal of the elected prime minister, Gough Whitlam, in 1975. In their role in investing governments in parliamentary systems, monarchs can sometimes make subtle decisions that help political parties overcome deadlocks. In other crises, the monarch can act as a focal point for national resistance to invaders. During World War II, Norway’s King Haakon VII refused to recognize the government of the Nazi collaborator Vidkun Quisling, instead choosing to leave his country for the duration of the war. Monarchs can also protect minorities during a crisis.
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Constitutional monarchs in Morocco, Denmark, and Bulgaria made a special point of protecting their Jewish subjects during WWII. Morocco’s King Mohammed V refused to comply with Vichy French orders to round up Jews during the war and the Danish King apocryphally donned a yellow Star of David.
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figureheads, but also signaled to conservatives that their interests were secure.

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In our era, the symbolic unity provided by monarchy can limit the most problematic forms of populism. Populist demagogues like Viktor Orban in Hungary, Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey, and Jaroslaw Kaczynski in Poland typically claim an exclusive, almost mystical connection with the “people,” whom they alone can protect from the elites, and demonize their opponents as “enemies of the people.” Such claims, however, are ineffective under a constitutional monarchy. The job of embodying the people is already occupied, limiting how much symbolic power any other individual can accumulate.

So, whereas Erdogan fashions himself as a new Sultan, and Hugo Chavez, the late Venezuelan leader, liked to invoke president-for-life Simón Bolívar, it is difficult to see how a British, Danish, or Norwegian equivalent could credibly emerge. The closest one can get is a disruptive leader like former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who, frustrated at his chief adviser, petulantly insisted, “I am the führer. I am the king who takes the decisions.”

With a monarch atop the system, that claim falls flat. This is confirmed by data from the Global Populism Database showing that constitutional monarchies experience less populist rhetoric in political speeches.

To be sure, actually being a constitutional monarch is a job from hell. A constitutional monarch is in some sense a prisoner of society, playing only a ceremonial role, spending his or her days cutting ribbons and giving bland speeches, while having every move dissected for entertainment. No wonder some royals quit the family business: along with Prince Harry, Princess Mako of Japan gave up her title in 2021, and Denmark’s Prince Joachim is the latest to decamp to the United States.

As Jamaicans and others consider whether to join Harry in leaving the Crown behind, they would do well to consider why constitutional monarchy has remained so successful in the 21st century. King Charles might appear to be the vestige of an archaic system, and no doubt his realm will shrink in the coming years. But it will not disappear, and for his remaining subjects that may be a very good thing.



The music industry has an AI problem

H. Drew Blackburn

When an AI-generated song called Heart on My Sleeve was uploaded to major streaming services by an anonymous TikTok user, it quickly went viral on social media, amassing millions of plays. The track, which features Drake and the Weeknd’s AI-generated voices, has heightened concerns about whether those behind the music were maliciously targeting hip-hop and Black people.

Given the rate at which Black culture is appropriated, it’s important to remain vigilant and call out blatant offenders. But because Ghostwriter977’s identity and intentions remain elusive, dismissing Heart on My Sleeve as a clear-cut example of artificial intelli-

was a ghostwriter for years and got paid close to nothing just for major labels to profit.” Ghostwriter977 could be a disgruntled amateur artist. They could very well be a troll whose motive is to devalue hip-hop and, to an extent, Black culture. Or they could be an agent of chaos trying to sow discord in the music industry. All of the unknowns make it imperative for the industry to act fast.

How Universal Music Group, home to both Drake and the Weeknd, responded after Heart on My Sleeve went viral may be an indication of how things could play out. As first reported by the Financial Times, the company sent a letter to

disastrous. Heart on My Sleeve is far from the first song to dabble in using AI, but it is one of the first to sound so convincing if you don’t pick it apart, piece by piece, bar by bar. Have you heard Drake’s recent records? With songs like Way 2 Sexy, and Search & Rescue, Drake has been making music that sounds like AI Drake for years. Heart on My Sleeve could have passed for his latest single, and in its wake, more AI-generated Drake records have popped up, sounding virtually indistinguishable from the real artist’s work.

Just three years ago, OpenAI put a song on SoundCloud that attempted to conjure a Beatles record. The result was something that sounded like cryptic

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AI’s endless capabilities require ironclad copyright protections that go even further than the precedent set by Midler v. Ford Motor Co. In 1988, the US Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit ruled that a well-known entity, Bette Midler, was entitled to control over her distinctive singing voice when used for profit. Clear laws and rights are needed on the books that protect artists and explicitly mention AI. Unchecked, it could be disastrous. Heart on My Sleeve is far from the first song to dabble in using AI, but it is one of the first to sound so convincing if you don’t pick it apart, piece by piece, bar by bar. Have you heard Drake’s recent records? With songs like Way 2 Sexy, and Search & Rescue, Drake has been making music that sounds like AI Drake for years. Heart on My Sleeve could have passed for his latest single, and in its wake, more AI-generated Drake records have popped up, sounding virtually indistinguishable from the real artist’s work. Just three years ago, OpenAI put a song on SoundCloud that attempted to conjure a Beatles record. The result was something that sounded like cryptic organised noise that was both sanguine and malevolent. What’s happening now is that we are experiencing the first records that actually sound convincing, thus proving that the technology is adapting through progressive learning algorithms. People’s eagerness to use AI technology at the expense of rap artists, as opposed to other genres, could easily be explained by the fact that hip-hop is the most popular genre of music among young people in America.
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gence colliding with racism and gross stereotypes — as we saw with the AI-generated rapper FN Meka — might be oversimplifying a complex situation.

What is undeniable is that Ghostwriter977 robbed artists of their consent and likeness. Calling out theft isn’t just the responsibility of people engaging in internet discourse. Regulating the use of AI technology in music and legally holding developers and users accountable should be top of mind for everyone in the music industry — artists and executives alike.

Remarkably, the Heart on My Sleeve fiasco is happening alongside other copyright disputes, including allegations that Ed Sheeran ripped off Marvin Gaye’s 1973 classic Let’s Get it On for his 2014 hit Thinking Out Loud. While there are clear differences between the two cases, it’s a reminder that the music industry takes any semblance of theft very seriously.

In a comment under a TikTok post promoting Heart on My Sleeve, Ghostwriter977 wrote, “I

streaming platforms asking them to block developers from using the label’s catalogue to “train” AI technology.

The battle is in its infancy, but it’ll be up to the courts to decide what constitutes legal use of these platforms, who gets to profit and how much they can collect.

For now, it’s in the best interest of UMG — which controls about one-third of the global music market — to step up, but who knows how long labels will actually be on the artists’ side or if this will become yet another way to exploit musicians.

AI’s endless capabilities require ironclad copyright protections that go even further than the precedent set by Midler v. Ford Motor Co. In 1988, the US Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit ruled that as a well-known entity, Bette Midler, was entitled to control over her distinctive singing voice when used for profit. Clear laws and rights are needed on the books that protect artists and explicitly mention AI.

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As access to AI becomes more widespread and social media allows for anonymity, we must keep the conversation going around cultural appropriation and technology, knowing that the answers won’t always be as clear as black and white.

However, there is no grey area here: AI-generated music must be produced in a way that is equitable and fair for artists. That will require a substantial amount of vigilance. Get your good shoes on and tie them up tight, because there’s a long road ahead.

Developing world needs a new approach to sustainable development

For decades, the prevailing consensus around sustainably developing “the rest of the world” has always centered on adopting export-driven strategies and the allure of the rapid economic growth that follows soon after. In a nutshell, if countries invested in infrastructure and built their manufacturing bases, they could expect windfall export revenues that would pay off the astronomical costs of leapfrogging into the future. But it turns out — as with most things in life — it is never that simple.

The obsession with a one-size-fits-all sustainable development strategy worked for Asia’s tiger economies, which achieved explosive growth, primarily driven by exports and sustained by sophisticated trade and financial hubs. To date, just four of those economies now contribute more than \$3 trillion to global gross domestic product, which is comparable to the combined GDP of 15 Arab countries, explaining the allure of adopting such an approach. However, even if infrastructure-driven, export-led strategies may have worked wondrously in Asia, they should never have been promoted as the silver bullet for the world’s low to middle-income countries in Africa and elsewhere.

A vital aspect of the export-driven growth model is the substantial investment in infrastructure to harness each country’s untapped potential, increasing economic activity. Its advocates would also frequently cite the successes in Asia, yet even the developing countries that poured

resources into infrastructure developments are still lagging behind their Asian counterparts in crucial manufacturing sectors like textiles. This suggests that more than just infrastructure is needed for economic growth and a universally applicable model.

After all, such strategies have their fair share of shortcomings beyond the occasional hiccup. Often, there is a tendency to overlook that African countries, for instance, do not possess the same competitive advantages as the Asian countries that successfully implemented this export-driven growth model. For example, while Asian countries could rely on a vast pool of low-wage labor, wages in Africa are generally higher than in other nations with similar income levels, putting them at a disadvantage from the get-go.

Moreover, focusing on infrastructure drove surges in imports, increasing domestic demand for cheaper foreign goods, choking local, nascent manufacturing capacities and contributing to balance of payments issues. This, in turn, forced poorer countries to take on significant debt loads (which have tripled in the last decade) to sustain this erroneous model. The increased cost of servicing that debt crowded out national budget priorities crucial to sustainably growing their economies, such as healthcare and education.

Granted, the short-lived spike in domestic demand could spur some economic activity, but such increases have never been sufficient to create good, well-paying jobs for the millions of

Hafed Al-Ghwell

young people entering the labor force every year. As a result, unemployment rates are rising and inequality is growing between urban and rural areas and between different segments of society. And that is not all.

There is a certain wry cynicism in insisting that the world’s developing countries build export economies from the ground up. But assuming they succeed, where will those exports go? Poorer countries still need to overcome numerous obstacles in global and even regional trade due to protectionism, making it impossible to exploit their comparative advantages and potentially diversify their economies. Moreover, if developing countries retaliated with trade barriers of their own, it would impede the capital, resources, labor and services its infrastructure and local industries need to sustain the desired export-led economies.

Aside from protectionism, debt distress and instability, other significant headwinds, from food and water insecurity and energy poverty to threat multipliers like worsening climate change, pandemics and conflict, make it even more difficult to subscribe to sustainable development models that do more harm than good. Therefore, it is way past time for Africa, including the Maghreb, to chart alternative paths toward economic growth by taking nuanced approaches considering each country’s unique needs and challenges to build a more sustainable and equitable future for all.

Instead of fixating on

infrastructure investments and manufacturing capabilities, Africa can learn valuable lessons from Latin American countries with similar resource endowments. One such lesson is the importance of prioritizing agricultural productivity enhancements by focusing on cost-effective measures aimed at small-scale farmers who stand to gain the most from increased productivity. Latin America and Africa share similar land and climate conditions, but they also share a long history of massive public investments in infrastructure in anticipation of sophisticated export economies.

Boosting agricultural productivity has several advantages. First, it helps ensure food security and improved nutrition for the continent — a critical prerequisite for sustainable development. Second, increasing the income of smallholder farmers directly impacts poverty reduction, while extra disposable income can be used to invest in or sustain other sectors. Third, higher agricultural productivity can also lead to value-added agro-processing industries, which create jobs and spur economic growth. Lastly, it improves environmental sustainability through reduced pressure on natural resources such as land, water and forests, combined with less pollution from chemical fertilizers, reduced greenhouse gas emissions from burning fossil fuels (e.g., diesel) used for irrigation pumps and less soil erosion due to fewer tilled fields.

Given Africa’s complexities and unique challenges,

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Int’l carpet exhibition in October: PCMEA

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Carpet Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PCMEA) has decided to hold 39th World Exhibition of Carpets in October this year in Lahore and advance contacts are being initiated to attract foreign buyers.

PCMEA Senior Vice Chairman Usman Ashraf told the media on Sunday that they had high hopes of the authorities concerned to extend supportive hand to make the mega exhibition a big success, and also share cost of hospitality package for the foreign buyers/ participants in the exhibition. “Our target is that we

have to achieve success in the style of the exhibition held in neighboring country recently, for which the support of the government is inevitable,” he added.

Usman Ashraf said that in consultation with all stakeholders, the Association had fixed dates of October 4 to 6, 2023 and preparations had also been started in this regard. He said every PCMEA member was committed that no effort would be spared at individual and collective level to make the exhibition a success.

He added said, “Our effort is to convince maxi-

mum number of foreign buyers to participate in the exhibition. We request the government to cooperate with us in this regard so that the foreign buyers can be offered the best hospitality package.

The vice chairman said that in the coming days, the delegation of the association would also hold meetings with the relevant government officials.

He said that a condition has been imposed for the aspirants to take a stall in the exhibition that they would display the most beautiful and quality products so that the handloom

carpet industry could be strengthened through the global exhibition. In this regard, he said, correspondence was being started with foreign buyers in advance and the Association was also considering the proposal of sending delegations to countries where Pakistani products were in high demand.

Usman Ashraf hoped that government would extend full technical and financial support so that the exhibition could prove to be an effective platform for the promotion of handmade carpets of Pakistan.



MULTAN: A vendor displaying and selling cherry boxes to attract customers at his roadside setup.

Pakistan needs change in economic development

ISLAMABAD (APP): President South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Ifitikhar Ali Malik on Sunday said Pakistan needs a paradigm shift, a fundamental change in its approach to governance and economic development.

Talking to a delegation of traders led by Mian Ejaz Ahmad Arain CEO The Falcon International in Lahore, he said Pakistan is confronted with various challenges, such as political instability, corruption, poverty and terrorism, said a press release.

He said economic security is necessary for every state and Pakistan needs paradigm shift to strengthen its relations with its neighboring countries—China, India, Afghanistan, and Iran—and engage with regional organizations like SAARC and the Economic Cooperation Organization for sustainable stabilisation of its economy to offset hovering threat of default.

He said in prevailing quagmire the proponents of the paradigm shift suggest that Pakistan needs to move away from its traditional mindset and adopt a more progressive and pragmatic approach to tackle its problems which could include measures such as strengthening democracy, promoting merit-based appointments, investing in education and healthcare, promoting economic growth and job creation, and improving relations with neighboring countries.

He said Pakistan’s economy is in dilapidated condition, whatever the reasons may be but Pakistan for its survival has to revisit its priorities to steer the country out of prevailing economic crunch.

Ifitikhar Ali Malik, an octogenarian vet trade leader of South Asia said now philosophy of globalisation turning into regional block as 18 countries including China, Russia, Turkiya, Malaysia and India have jointly planned future trade in local currency by neglecting US dollar monopoly.

Specifically talking about the projected economic growth of our border sharing rival country of which overall exports cross an all-time high mark of \$750 billion since gaining independence in 1947 however they are eyeing to achieve \$2 trillion goal in near future.

Golootlo introduces hotel flash sales in partnership with Ascendant

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Golootlo, in partnership with Pakistan’s largest hospitality technology company - Ascendant, has launched a hotel booking platform for its 40 million customers that enables them to conveniently book hotels online through their mobile app.

Golootlo discount platform now offers discounts and rebates on up to 1600+ hotels and guest houses in 50 cities across Pakistan. Golootlo is Pakistan’s leading discount platform which also features amazing deals such as buy one, get one free Zinger deal for all its users. The partnership is set to elevate the travel experience for Golootlo app users by offering the best prices across all hotels in Pakistan, including exclusive discounted deal of the week.

Speaking on the occasion of the launch ceremony, Mr. Ahsan Aslam, Managing Director Golootlo said: “We are thrilled to collaborate with Ascendant, which shares our commitment to providing excellent value to our customers. This partnership will enable Golootlo users to enjoy hotels and resorts at discounted prices, making their travel experience even more memorable across Pakistan”.

CEO of Ascendant, Mr. Andre Privateer said: As the only hospitality tech provider able to offer real time rates and availability at more than 80% of Pakistan’s hotels, we serve the tourism sector by making the online booking experience better for the consumer. Through this strategic alliance with Golootlo, their customers can now book and pay with

ease through their mobile app. Golootlo is one of the biggest platforms for discount deals in Pakistan and we are committed towards giving them even bigger discounts at national and international hotels”.

Golootlo is Pakistan’s first and largest QR and debit card-based discount app and platform. It enables users to get industry-leading discounts at over 27,000 merchants across 170 cities in Pakistan. With its platform integrated within several of the country’s leading apps and debit cards issued with various top banks, Golootlo has created an expansive ecosystem of over 15 million users.

Ascendant is a specialized hospitality technology company revolutionizing the tourism landscape in Pakistan by unlocking exceptional value for travel suppliers and customers.

Risks to economy loom large as govt facing \$3.5 billion debt repayments challenge: BMP

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: As the government has been struggling to secure a bailout from the International Monetary Fund, the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry’s Businessmen Panel (BMP) on Sunday warned that the government will have to pay almost \$3.5 billion in debt payments in just two months, with the domestic economy nose-diving due to non-serious and poor policy decisions and mismanagement of the economic managers.

FPCCI former president and Businessmen Panel (BMP) Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar expressed the hope that the government and the IMF will reach an agreement on the program review but the risks are large to haunt the economy, reflecting that a default or debt restructuring is an increasingly real possibility, he warned.

He observed that the rupee continued to remain at lower ebb while the key interest rate has been escalated by the central bank to the record historic level of 21%, which will destroy the economy completely.

Anjum Nisar observed that the country is reeling from an economic crisis with inflation surging to

36.5 percent, the highest in its history and the highest in South Asia, while a bruising political battle is raging between the government and the opposition party.

Though the government has removed caps on the exchange rate, imposed taxes, raised energy tariffs, and scaled back subsidies in an attempt to unlock the IMF funding, besides raising key interest rates to a record 21 percent but all in vain. Finance Minister has been claiming that there’s no way Pakistan is going to default, however, the economist constantly claim that the country is on the brink of default.

He said that the government, which has been negotiating to restart a \$6.5 billion bailout with the IMF for about half a year, is racing to avert a default as the foreign exchange reserves come under pressure, as they currently provide an import cover of just one month despite the fact that he country has secured financing support from countries in the Middle East and China, a key IMF condition.

Anjum Nisar said that the debt payments underscore the crucial need for Pakistan to resume its bailout program that has been stalled since November last year. The

\$1.1 billion tranche is part of a \$6.5 billion bailout package the IMF approved in 2019, which is due to end in June, prior to the budget. So far, Pakistan has received \$3.9 billion.

Asking the authorities to include serious and progressive fiscal reforms in the IMF program FPCCI former president observed that it is very clear that IMF programs focus on stabilization and crisis management rather than growth-oriented policies that require structural reforms.

He stressed need for a revisit of government policies including the coordination exercise between the Ministry of Finance and SBP, as no independent economist could support the economic policies that are currently in place.

The government needs reminding that remittance inflows were 29.4 billion dollars last fiscal year and this large inflow was also due to the fact that the interbank and open market rates did not diverge significantly during the previous tenures.

He observed that coordinating fiscal and monetary policies may be beneficial yet with inflation attributed to administrative decisions in nearly all recent Monetary Policy Statements and the government unwilling to imple-

ment key reforms in the power sector and tax structure the SBP needs to be vigilant in ensuring market-based exchange rate policy and a positive discount rate while the Ministry needs to revisit its tax policy, utility pricing policy and of course continued massive injections into loss-making state-owned entities.

He said that the central bank has already increased the interest rates to the highest ever level of 21% that could not contain inflation, which surged to 36.4% in April — the highest level in the past 59 years. But the increase in the interest rates has caused a significant surge in the government’s debt servicing cost, which is now estimated at around Rs5.3 trillion as against the budgeted figure of Rs3.95 trillion.

Since the start of the IMF program in July 2019, Pakistan has doubled the policy rate. The IMF report said that where the policy stance was loose and inflationary pressures persisted, tighter monetary policy should be considered to stabilize inflation and inflation expectations like in Egypt, Pakistan, and Tunisia.

In countries where inflationary pressures continue and the stance is loose, a tighter monetary policy should be considered, the report reiterated.

Healthcare Policy in Pakistan, Need for consensus and uniformity

Sohail Khan

Pakistan’s healthcare policy is facing a dilemma as the country struggles to keep up with its healthcare needs. Currently, the state of the country’s political affairs heavily influences its healthcare policy, and the long-term consequences are not being considered. Political expediency has become more important than thoughtful policy creation.

In his book, “The Healing of America: A Global Quest for Better, Cheaper, and Fairer Healthcare,” T.R. Reid explores healthcare systems in different countries, highlighting four basic healthcare models:

1. The Beveridge Model recommends a single-payer national health service that is financed by

the government using taxpayer money and provided by health staff that are considered government employees (e.g. Britain and the United States Veterans Health Administration)

2. The Bismarck Model is represented by a decentralized system in which healthcare is jointly funded by ‘sickness funds’ employers and employees through payroll taxes deducted directly from employee paychecks (e.g. Germany, France, and Japan.) Even though both healthcare providers and payers (non-profit) are private entities, the government still wields a relatively tight control on prices.

3. The National Health Insurance model is a hybrid of the Beveridge and Bismarck models in which the government is the single-payer for healthcare

(Beveridge) and the providers are private (Bismarck) (e.g., Canada, Taiwan)

4. The out of pocket model is the least evolved system in which patients pay for healthcare out-of-pocket at point-of-care on a fee-for-service basis.

Healthcare in Pakistan: The Lancet conducted a study that ranked Pakistan’s healthcare system 154th out of 195 countries, with a mere 2% of GDP allocated for healthcare expenditures. The private sector serves approximately 70% of the population, and 78% of the population pays for healthcare out-of-pocket. Pakistan has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world. In addition to the high prevalence of communicable diseases, Non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascu-

lar problems, diabetes, cancer, and coronary heart disease account for 20.5% of the disease burden and 2.5% of disabilities. They also cause 58 % of all deaths in the country.

Pakistan’s healthcare system is a blend of many models, including the Beveridge Model, the Bismarck Model, the Out-of-Pocket Model, and others. The predominant payment model remains out-of-pocket, with 78% of the population seeking care at private sector hospitals. Few Pakistanis receive employment-based health insurance, which falls under the Bismarck Model, and most insurance companies in Pakistan are private, for-profit corporations. The Armed Forces Institutes cover eligible patients under a single-payer system, similar to the

Beveridge Model. Sehat Sahulat program is a health insurance launched by the Government of Pakistan to provide health coverage to underprivileged families. It is hybrid of the Beveridge and Bismarck models, however, it has resulted in propagation of mini private hospitals without meeting basic hospital safety protocols as well as exponential increase in unnecessary treatments (C-Sections, Cardiac angioplasties) and compromising quality of care. It also does not provide coverage for primary prevention strategies. Sehat card also has many administrative and sustainably challenges in the future. The Sindh Government is running multiple autonomous institutions (NICVD, NICH, JPMC, GIMS, and SIUT) with independent service regula-

tions funded by the government (partially supported by private donations, Zakat funds), providing care to the masses at their doorsteps. Primary healthcare activities managed external private & non-government organizations like People’s

Primary Healthcare Initiative (PPHI Sindh) with support from the government. The Sindh government has done great in providing quality services to the masses but it may also run into sustainability issues in the future.

Which Healthcare model is best for Pakistan?

As described above, different healthcare models have challenges and limitations. In our opinion, the ideal healthcare model should have mixed cost coverage method which should include employer provided insurance mixed with pri-

rate insurance and some out of pocket charges. A system based on completely free of cost might run into sustainability problems.

An exemplary case study is Taiwan’s National Health Insurance (NHI) system which was implemented in 1995. NHI consolidated all the prevalent insurance schemes into a single, nationwide health insurance system, provides good accessibility and comprehensive coverage while keeping waiting times short and costs low. The program covers nearly all of the population of Taiwan and provides comprehensive medical services, including preventative care, primary care, hospitalization, and long-term care. The program is funded through a combination of government subsidies, premiums paid by insured individuals and

their employers, and co-payments for medical services. The program has reduced the financial burden of healthcare on individuals and families, which has led to increased healthcare utilization and better health outcomes. The program has also helped to control healthcare costs and ensure that healthcare services are affordable for everyone.

Pakistan must reach a consensus on whether access to healthcare is a universal right of all citizens, followed by a national debate and movement to rid ourselves of our healthcare shortcomings and strive towards universal health coverage, ensuring everyone’s access to healthcare. While Pakistan’s healthcare system is not the best in the world, it has the potential to improve.



In brief

Gavaskar suggests IPL break for Rohit

NEW DELHI (Agencies): Batting great Sunil Gavaskar has advised India captain Rohit Sharma to take a break from the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL) to keep himself fit and fresh for the World Test Championship (WTC) final against Australia next month. Mumbai Indians captain Rohit fell for his 16th duck in IPL, most by any batters in the tournament's history, in Saturday's defeat by Chennai Super Kings and now has five runs from four innings. The off-colour opener demoted himself to number three against Chennai but fell for his second successive duck after attempting an ill-fated scoop shot against Deepak Chahar. Rohit will lead India's bid for the WTC title at the Oval on June 7 and Gavaskar felt a break could do wonders to the opener's fitness and confidence. "I would say that Rohit should maybe take a break for the time being and keep himself fit for the World Test Championship final," the former India captain told Star Sports channel. "He can come back again for the last few matches, but right now (he should) take a little bit of a breather himself." New Zealand beat India in the final of the inaugural WTC in 2021 and Rohit would have to lead by example if they are to prevail this time around despite mounting injury woes. India will be without pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, recovering from a back surgery, and first-choice wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant, who remains sidelined after a horrific car crash in December. Batters KL Rahul (thigh) and Shreyas Iyer (back) have also been ruled out of the contest at the Oval with injuries.

Sterling win at UFC 288

NEWARK, N.J. (AP): Aljamain Sterling landed enough stiff knees and elbows in a split-decision victory against a battered Henry Cejudo that the punishment may push the former UFC two-division champion back into retirement. Moments after winning his ninth straight bout and surviving his latest 135-pound championship title defense in the main event of UFC 288, Sterling's fight night was only heating up. Bantamweight challenger Sean O'Malley stepped inside the cage, stripped off his jacket and stood nose-to-nose with Sterling (23-3) as the two fighters launched into profanity-laced tirades against each other and eventually needed to be separated. "Get this (expletive) out of my cage," Sterling shouted Saturday night at the Prudential Center. They might get their championship match later this summer. UFC President Dana White wanted Sterling-O'Malley to fight in August in Boston — and not late night in New Jersey. "It was a bad idea," White cracked of inviting O'Malley inside the octagon. Cejudo's comeback after a three-year retirement also might have been a bad idea. Cejudo, the only person to win an Olympic gold medal and a UFC title, held the bantamweight crown when he abruptly retired in May 2020 after he successfully defended the championship against Dominick Cruz. Cejudo said he was a "little confused" about his future plans and would return home to his family — his wife is expecting the couple's second child — and think hard about his fight future.

Murray beats Paul in Aix-en-Provence final for first title since 2019

AIX-EN-PROVENCE (Agencies): Andy Murray won his first title in nearly four years by beating Tommy Paul in the final of the ATP Challenger event in Aix-en-Provence.

Briton Murray, 35, came back from a set down against American top seed Paul to win 2-6 6-1 6-2.

It is the three-time Grand Slam champion's first title since winning in Antwerp in 2019, and his first on clay since 2016 in Rome.

It is his first title at the second-tier Challenger level since 2005.

"This last year, 18 months, has been a bit of struggle with my game. But [my team] have been there supporting me and working with me to try and get better," said Murray.

"We keep going from here."

Fifth seed Murray took a late wildcard entry into the tournament to get more clay-court match time before the French Open, following first-round exits from Monte Carlo and Madrid in April.

After a slow start against Paul, in which the world number 17 won the opening four games en route to taking the first set, Scotland's Murray found his level at the start of the second set and reeled off five successive games.

Paul, a semi-finalist at this year's Australian Open, got on the board but Murray levelled the match on his first set point and picked up where he left off in the decider, immediately breaking his opponent's serve.

He missed out on the opportunity to go 3-0 up by failing to convert two

break points, and later saw another go begging before he finally broke 25-year-old Paul again in what turned out to be the penultimate game, before serving out the match.

Victory means Murray will rise to 42 in the world when the rankings are updated on Monday - his highest world ranking since May 2018.

His win over Paul marks his third victory over a top-20 player this year, after beating Matteo Berrettini in the first of his enthralling battles at the Australian Open in January, and Alexander Zverev in Doha in February.

The French Open, the second Grand Slam of the year, starts on 28 May with Murray aiming to play in it for only the second time since 2017.



BIRKENHEAD: Missy Bo Kearns of Liverpool Women celebrates after scoring the second goal during the FA Women's Super League match.

34th National Games' Torch warmly received by hockey Olympian Rahim Khan at Bacha Khan Airport

PESHAWAR (APP): The Torch of the 34th National Games, which was lit at Mazar-e-Quaid Karachi on Sunday morning, was brought to Bacha Khan International Airport by Flight No. 9P865 in Fly Jinnah and was received by Hockey Olympian Rahim Khan here on Sunday evening.

General Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Olympic Association Zulfikar Ali Butt, Deputy Director of Operations Janshed Baloch, Deputy Director of Sports Syed Jafar Shah, Deputy Chief de Mission Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Contingent for 34th National Games Ilyas Afridi, Tehsinullah, international gold medalist Taekwondo player Hania Khan, Ex-Sports In-charge Khpal Kor Model school Swat and national player Miss Sumayyah, President Sports Writers Association KP Asim Sheraz and other officials of the KP Olympic Association were also present.

The 34th National Games Torch was carried

hand to hand and a large number of men, women and children and other visitors present at the Airport waiting for their loved one at the arrival and departure counters held photos and video sessions with the Torch soon after reaching Peshawar.

Officials of Fly Jinnah, PIA, ASF, CCA also participated in the ceremony at the Airport. The Torch would be brought from Bacha Khan International Airport to Peshawar Sports Complex where legends including Jansher Khan, Qamar Zaman, Mohib Ullah Khan, four times international gold medalist athlete Bahre Karam, National Badminton Champion Murad Ali, Asian gold medalist Murad Khan, international medalist boxer Hadi Kamal, Senior Vice President Pakistan Olympic Association and former sports minister KP Syed Aqil Shah, Adviser to the Chief Minister on Sports and Youth Affairs Riaz Anwar, Secretary Sports Mushtaq Ahmad, Director

General Sports Captain (Retd) Khalid Mahmood, other office-bearers of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Olympic Association would receive, followed by an official Dinner and fire-work.

The Torch would stay at the Peshawar Sports Complex overnight and would be handed over to the officials of the PAF Base Peshawar and Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali at Governor House.

From the Governor House in the morning, the Torch Relay through traditional Tangha would be taken to interior City including Sethi House, Gol Ghatrri, Fort Balahisar, and Peshawar Museum. In this connection a gathering reception would also be organized in Sethi house, followed by a Musical Night and official dinner.

On the morning of May 9, the Torch would be handed to the officials of the Punjab Olympic Association at the Attock Bridge (Khairabad) by KP Olympic Association.



NEWARK: Aljamain Sterling, of Jamaica, kicks Henry Cejudo during the fifth round of a bantamweight title bout at the UFC 288 mixed martial arts event Sunday.



KARACHI: Babar Azam walks back early in his 100th ODI, Pakistan vs New Zealand, 5th ODI.

Russians return at judo worlds, Ukraine boycotts

DOHA (AP): Russians returned to international judo competition on Sunday for the first time in nearly a year at the world championships as Ukraine boycotted the key Olympic qualifier.

Competing under the name of "Individual Neutral Athletes," the Russians had a slow start in Doha as their first competitor, Sabina Giliyazova, lost her opening contest to France's Blandine Pont. Three more Russians are due to compete Monday.

Seventeen judokas from Russia and two from its ally Belarus were listed as competing at the world championships despite several of them having apparent ties with the Russian military. Ukraine removed its team from the event last week in protest.

The International Olympic Committee favors allowing Russians and Belarusians to compete as neutral athletes without national symbols as qualifying ramps up for next year's Paris Olympics. The IOC — which last year recommended excluding Russian competitors on security grounds but now argues that would be discriminatory — has left the final decision to the governing bodies in each sport.

Some sports like track and field have kept an exclusion in place on Russians and Belarusians in international events. Several more Olympic sports have said they are preparing to readmit Russians and Belarusians, but haven't yet done so, some citing a need for extra time to decide on a process or vet athletes. The International Judo Federation has moved comparatively fast.

The IJF allowed a Russian team without national symbols at the first Olympic qualifying event in June 2022 in Mongolia, which Ukraine boycotted, but then backtracked and excluded Russia and Belarus for the rest of 2022. The world championships were the first time that either Russia or Belarus entered a team since then for a major international judo event.

The IJF published the Russian and Belarusian entries for the world championships on April 30, just before the deadline.

Pakistan needs to take all-out measures to improve hockey: Shahnaz Sheikh

ISLAMABAD (APP): Star Olympian Shahnaz Sheikh believes with rapid changes happening in the international hockey, Pakistan needs to take all-out measures to improve the national game.

There were times when Pakistan was the most successful team in World Cups, Olympics and Champions Trophy with winning four World Cups in 1971, 1978, 1982 and 1994. Pakistan also has three gold medals in Olympic Games field hockey tournaments in Rome 1960, Mexico City 1968 and Los Angeles 1984.

Then the downfall began and an always-winning team that played all World Cup editions, could not qualify for 2014 and 2023 mega events.

Sheikh pleads to blend young players with expe-

rienced hands for forming a squad that owns the potential to beat any team in the world.

"Players need to improve their movements and points marking in the D area. They should avoid counterattacks and improve the conversion of penalty corners. If we get three to four penalty corners at least two must be utilized," Shahnaz told APP.

"We need to strongly work on all these things if we want to improve our game. Our players must play with unity and avoid individual point scoring in any game," he commented.

At present, the Pakistan national hockey team holds the 16th spot in International Hockey Federation (FIH) rankings, further suggesting measures for improvement, he said, there were around 28

education Boards in the country with hundreds of schools affiliated with each board.

"Therefore, if each government school is allowed to participate in tournaments, the total number of participating teams would be in hundreds. This practice would be a sort of talent hunt bringing new players to the national squad." He also suggested designated hockey fields to promote the game as he recalled, "in our times plentiful of national and district tournaments were held annually for improvement of players mental and physical strength." "Then there were different departments, offering jobs to players. But, rapid changes in the hockey setup affected the game badly," he said.



LOS ANGELES: Golden State Warriors forward Draymond Green, left, rejects a shot by Los Angeles Lakers forward Jarred Vanderbilt, right, during the first half.

LeBron's Lakers rout Warriors 127-97, take 2-1 series lead

LOS ANGELES (AP): LeBron James didn't take a shot in the first quarter of Game 3 for the first time in his NBA-record 275 play-off appearances, and the Los Angeles Lakers' home crowd rumbled with mild uncertainty each time he passed the ball instead.

Turns out James and his Lakers were just taking a while to warm up before they steamrolled the Golden State Warriors.

Anthony Davis had 25 points and 13 rebounds, a slow-starting James finished with 21 points, eight assists and eight rebounds, and the Lakers took a 2-1 lead in their second-round playoff series with a 127-97 victory Saturday night.

D'Angelo Russell hit five 3-pointers while scoring 21 points for the seventh-seeded Lakers, who remained unbeaten at home in the postseason with a strong defensive effort against the reigning NBA champions. Los Angeles seized control in the middle quarters, outscoring the Warriors 63-38 to turn

Game 3 into a laugher.

"We're one of the best defensive teams in the league, if not the best," James said. "For us to reach our potential, we have to defend at a high level. Not one team in this league tests you more in that than Golden State, so we have to be alert for a test on every single possession."

James curiously didn't shoot the ball until well into the second quarter, yet he led the way while Los Angeles pulled away. The 38-year-old also mixed in a handful of plays that defied his age and 20 years of NBA experience, making a deft spin move and blocking a shot on the other end shortly after he leaped the front row of fans and ran well up into the stands following a deflection.

"That's just how the game was going," James said of his unusual start. "I didn't want to force it. Just let the game come to me and make my imprint when needed." Stephen Curry scored 23 points and Andrew Wiggins had 16 in

a collective stinker for the Warriors, who committed 19 turnovers and never mounted a response to the Lakers on either end in the second half. Golden State went 13 for 44 on 3-pointers — making just 10 while the game was still competitive — after hitting 21 in each of the series' first two games in San Francisco.

Game 4 is Monday night in Los Angeles.

Davis had an impressive bounce-back game under both baskets, blocking four shots and leading the Lakers' latest strong defensive effort. Los Angeles has built its 16-5 run since March 17 on defense, and the Warriors couldn't hit enough shots from the perimeter to counteract their disadvantages in size and athleticism.

"After that first quarter, guys just really turned it up," Lakers coach Darvin Ham said. "They dialed up their competitiveness, and their communication was great. ... We were just playing a really physical, forceful downhill game."



In brief

IRSA releases 157,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 157,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 144,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1438.01 feet and was 40.01 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 37,700 cusecs while outflow as 48,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1122.10 feet, which was 72.10 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 41,900 cusecs and 45,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 75,100, 59,100, 38,300 and 9,100 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 43,700 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 12,200 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Snatcher gang held

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad capital police Sabzi Mandi police team apprehended three wanted members of a snatcher gang involved in numerous snatching activities and recovered motorbike and weapons with ammunition used in crime from their possession, a police public relations officer said. He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad capital police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city and protect the lives and property of citizens. Following these directives, the Sabzi Mandi police team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending three wanted members of a snatcher gang. The accused were identified as Haleem Khan, Mir Wali and Naimat Ullah. Police team also recovered a motorbike and weapon with ammunition from their possession. During the preliminary investigation, the accused confessed to being involved in numerous criminal activities in various areas of the city. Cases have been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway. CPO/ DIG Operations Islamabad Syed Shehzad Nadeem Bukhari appreciated the performance of the police team and further directed to intensify the crackdown against such elements.

Member of house burglar gang held

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad capital police Shalimar police team arrested a wanted lady member of a house burglar gang involved in numerous house burglar activities and recovered valuables from her possession, a police public relations officer said. He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad capital police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city. Following these directions, a Shalimar police station team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending a wanted lady member of a house burglar gang involved in numerous house burglar activities. The accused was identified as Nageena Bibi. Police team also recovered stolen valuables from her possession.



ISLAMABAD: Traffic Police officials checking the speed of vehicle with speed gun at Jinnah Avenue.

PM Shehbaz' keen interest in Gwadar, CPEC brings new life to port city's projects

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Soon after assuming office, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif took keen interest in the development of Gwadar and personally visited the port city last year, where he announced a 100 billion development package for the Balochistan province with a sizable amount fixed for the city besides inaugurating some key infrastructure projects including Eastbay Expressway.

During his visit to the city in June last year, the prime minister ordered to complete all the ongoing development projects of water, electricity and infrastructure in Gwadar in the stipulated time. He warned of zero tolerance on any further interruption in the projects of water and electricity saying that the 1.2 million gallons of desalination plant in Gwadar should be completed as soon as possible.

PM Shehbaz said the network of pipelines for the provision of water in houses should be immediately improved and also ordered an inquiry to identify those responsible for delaying the projects.

Shehbaz directed the relevant authorities to begin dredging at the Gwadar port besides taking practical steps for breakwater.

He further directed that the construction of Gwadar Hospital should be completed in September instead of December. He also ordered to include all 16,523 poor families of Gwadar in the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP).

The prime minister also broke ground for the Gwadar Seawater Desalination Plant by China Aid, Jingtai Gwadar Private Limited, Hangmei Lubricant Plant, Hangeng Agricultural Industrial Park, Gwadar Expo Centre and Gwadar Fertilizer Plant, besides distribution of 3,000 solar panels.

As a result of the prime minister's special directives, remarkable progress has been made so far on several projects in Gwadar.

According to official sources, some 20 new projects are on the way of completion in 2023 and onward years as per their scheduled timeframes. The 1.2 million gallon water per day desalination plant which is in the final stage, would be operational in a few weeks while the progress of Gwadar international airport is also on track and is likely to be completed in 2023. The other ongoing projects in Gwadar include Gwadar Free Zone North

(Phase 11), the Gwadar Safe City Project, three electricity projects, the Gwadar Smart Port City Master Plan, 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.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif inaugurated a component of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the six-lane Eastbay Expressway connecting the Gwadar Port with the Makran Coastal Highway, also providing a link to Karachi. The Eastbay Expressway is a major infrastructure project in the city of Gwadar. This construction of the 19-kilometer highway runs parallel to the coastline, and has four interchanges, two bridges, and a toll plaza. The expressway is designed to handle heavy traffic, and is expected to significantly reduce transportation costs and time for goods moving to and from the Gwadar port.

Exerting political pressure on US is crucial for Dr. Aafia's release: Lawyers

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The release of Dr. Aafia is as much a political battle as it is a legal battle. Apart from seeking legal avenues, the Government of Pakistan must do its part by creating political pressure on the US to secure Dr. Aafia's release. For this, Pakistan's Prime Minister, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Court must demonstrate the will and undertake all necessary measures to bring her back, urged speakers during a session on "Unending Woes of the US War of Terror: The Case of Pakistani Prisoner Aafia Siddiqui" held at the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS). The session was held with Clive Stafford Smith, British-American lawyer for Dr. Aafia Siddiqui, her sister Dr. Fowzia Siddiqui, and Imran Shafiq Advocate, her lawyer in Pakistan.

Dr. Aafia has an iconic status in Pakistan, and, at the same time, she is a symbol of unending misery thanks to the post-9/11 US panic and the War on Terror, said Clive who has been representing her case and has also been able to get over 80 other prisoners released from Guantanamo Bay providing them with

pro-bono legal aid.

He said that the counts of attempted murder, assaults, and criminal charges on her and information about her being extremist are all unfounded. Deprived of her liberty, she has been a traumatized victim of US brutality, unlawful imprisonment, and extreme injustice. According to the intelligence data, 98.5 per cent of 780 detainees in Guantanamo Bay have been subject to unlawful imprisonment wherein 764 out of 780 prisoners pose no threat to the US.

He said that there are a lot of difficulties and challenges in bringing Dr. Aafia back legally but, despite that, there are also several legal avenues that can be sought after including the right to be released on compassionate grounds, litigation, pardon, etc. Another significant avenue for this pursuit is the political pressure and influence on the part of Pakistan. In this case, a big question is what's Pakistan going to offer or put forward for her.

The release of Dr. Aafia is primarily Pakistan's cause, but the will to get her back to Pakistan has been

lacking in successive governments, said Imran Shafique Advocate. This scanty amount of willingness and sincerity demonstrated over time in pursuit of her release has only exploited the issue, as no consistent and significant official efforts have been done and her case is still pending in Islamabad High Court for no reason.

The release of Dr. Aafia is as much a political battle as it is a legal battle, he asserted. There are several ways that the Government of Pakistan can opt for, including repatriation, and exchange agreements like prisoner transfer agreements. But no government in its official capacity has ever utilized them.

The speakers called on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) of Pakistan to not delay in taking the required action in pursuit of her release. In this case, the supervisory role of the court is very important as it can take action against elements that resist her release and expedite the process. Along with this, pressure from the public and intelligentsia, media role, and diplomatic efforts also can exert a considerable influence.

PTI social media activist apologises over anti-army propaganda

ISLAMABAD (NNI): A social media activist belonging to former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) team has regretted and apologized over his conduct of propagating against Shuhada of the armed forces of Pakistan through his fake Twitter and Facebook accounts.

On his Twitter handle, Abdul Rehman Kamal, a resident of Charsadda, said that he had been an active social media member of PTI operating from Dubai, UAE. He further admitted that he was indulged in posting inappropriate language and propaganda against the Shuhada of armed forces on his Twitter account registered with the fake name of Raheela Sadpara. Kamal had been residing in Dubai and was PTI's social media team member for the last six years. He had three fake Twitter accounts and one Facebook. After realizing his mistake, Kamal said, he regretted his past conduct and vowed not to use any unsuitable language or tweets in future.

Bilawal upheld Pakistan's stance on Indian soil: Sherry

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman has said that Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari upheld Pakistan's stance on Kashmir during his recent visit to India.

Sherry Rehman in a media interview in Islamabad said that the Foreign Minister's decision to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in India was a courageous move and it was made after thorough consultation with all stakeholders, including the Parliament.

She said despite India's actions,

Pakistan cannot afford to withdraw from the membership of regional forums because they could play a vital role in safeguarding national interests.

During the meetings of these forums, Pakistan got a chance to consistently articulate its national position and convey its stance on various issues affecting the region, she asserted.

To a query, she made it clear that terrorism knows no boundaries and poses a common threat to all nations. Therefore, it is crucial to address this issue whenever an opportunity arises for open dialogue.

Bilawal's bold remarks on Kashmir reflected Kashmiris' true sentiments: Wani

ISLAMABAD (NNI): All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir (APHC-AJK) chapter leader Altaf Hussain Wani has appreciated foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for his effective articulation of Pakistan's principled stance on Kashmir in India.

Altaf Hussain Wani in a statement issued in Islamabad said that Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's bold remarks on Kashmir reflected the true sentiments of the Kashmiri people who have been struggling for their just right to self-determination.

He said that the foreign minister not only adopted a firm stand on the key issues of conflict between India and Pakistan but also highlighted the centrality of Kashmir dis-

pute and his country's demand that New Delhi should revoke all the illegal actions it had taken on and after 5th August 2019. He said Pakistan has clearly stated that before resumption of talks India must review its unilateral decision the fascist Indian government took in brazen violation of the United Nations Security Council resolutions.

Altaf Hussain Wani said the Government of Pakistan has made a wise and right decision of not resuming talks with India until New Delhi takes back its 5th August decision.

The APHC leader also took a strong exception to Indian foreign minister Jaishankar's undiplomatic outburst against Pakistan and its foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto and termed

his uncouth remarks as deeply reflective of his coarse mind and bad ethos.

Meanwhile, Another APHC leader Syed Faiz Naqshbandi in a statement in Islamabad also lauded the statement of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Foreign Minister of Pakistan of his clear and loud statement on Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir on the soil of India. He has also highlighted the systemic and massive human rights violations in the disputed territory and occupied Kashmir.

People of IIOJK, he said, are thankful for political moral and diplomatic support of Pakistan for Kashmiris. Kashmiris have been encouraged by the statement of Pakistan Army Chief Syed Asim Munir, Naqshbandi said.

City managers tighten belts to overcome water shortage in capital

ISLAMABAD (APP): With Federal Capital's population rising over two million from around 800,000 in 2008, the city managers are continuously under stress to meet the basic amenities needs of the residents. Besides cleanliness, waste disposal, pollution control and maintaining law and order, the provision of sufficient water to households has become a gigantic task as a shortfall in routine supply by the Capital Development Authority is forcing residents to purchase water from private operators.

As the population grew to 150 percent during the last 15 years, the available water resources are falling short of meeting the daily needs of the residents, especially during the summer season.

The main sources of water for Islamabad are the Simly and Khanpur dams which are dependent on rainfall and snow melting in the catchment areas. The Capital Development Authority (CDA) had ignored this issue during past decades and since the construction of the Khanpur Dam in the 1990s, no new source of water was explored. Experts believe that if the present situation continues, Pakistan would fall in the list of water-scarce countries within the next few years.

"Presently we are a water-stressed country and

shall slip down to the water shortage category in the next few years, if prudent policies are not adopted," said a renowned water expert. "What matters the most are our water usage habits. We waste thousands of gallons of water daily in bathroom usage, car washing, floor cleaning and watering our gardens," he stated.

He said our distribution system was also not updated and a lot of water was wasted through leakage. "Moreover, we also need a proper water metering system to ensure that everybody pays as per the calculation of water usage."

In recent years, the change in weather patterns has also rung alarm bells for the policymakers with rising temperatures and irregular rainfall feared to further aggravate the situation. Furthermore, rapid urbanization and illegal settlements in catchment areas have caused damage to the natural ecosystem, leading to soil erosion and reduced water storage capacity.

Torrential rains and flood-like situations in the capital have also affected catchment areas as well as the water distribution system while mismanagement and lack of awareness are other challenges for the authorities. "We are cognizant of the situation and have recently recommended changes in existing by-laws proposing the con-

struction of recharge wells for rainwater harvesting to replenish the city's groundwater resource," stated Deputy Director General Water (CDA) Sardar Khan Zimri.

He said the suggested amendments would make it mandatory for all homeowners to construct recharge wells alongside already constructed water tanks. "The recharge wells would help to ensure water storage as well as a recharge water table, which would help reduce the depletion rate."

Zimri said, currently Islamabad's water requirement was 220 million gallons per day (mgd) against the CDA's daily supply of only 70mgd and this demand was set to increase further due to the rapidly growing population.

He also mentioned initiatives like the construction of new dams, upgrading water supply infrastructure and promoting water conservation practices to address the issue.

However, seeing the ground realities it is obvious that solely depending on rainwater harvesting or constructing recharge wells is not enough as there is a dire need to change the water usage habits of people. If those consuming water rampantly are charged at the same rate as those using less water, the wastage cannot be controlled.

16 outlaws arrested

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad capital police apprehended 16 outlaws from different areas of the city and recovered drugs and weapons with ammunition from their possession, a police public relations officer said.

He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad capital police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city.

Following these directives, the Aabpara police teams arrested two accused namely Jameel and Yasir involved in possessing ille-

gal weapons and selling liquor and recovered 25 liters liquor and one 30 bore pistol with ammunition from their possession. Likewise, the Bhara Kahu police team arrested two accused namely Raja Qaiser and Bilal Khan and recovered 20 bottles liquor from their possession.

Similarly, the Phulgran police team arrested an accused namely Muhammad Nouman involved in possessing illegal weapons and recovered 1910 gram heroin, 640 gram Ice and one 30 bore pistol with ammunition from his possession. The Tarnol police team arrested an accused namely Zubair Khan

involved in possessing illegal and recovered one 30 bore pistol with ammunition from his possession.

Moreover, the Industrial Area police team arrested an accused namely Muhammad Nisar and recovered 02 repeaters one 30 bore pistol with ammunition from his possession. The Shams Colony police team arrested an accused namely Amjad Ali involved in drug peddling and recovered 515 gram hashish from his possession. The Koral police team arrested an accused namely Muhammad Atif involved in drug peddling and recovered 535 gram hashish from his possession.



ISLAMABAD: Labourers busy in construction work of IJP Road with the help of heavy machinery during development work in Federal Capital.

Poppy farmlands destroyed

KABUL (Agencies): Over 1,670 acres of poppy farmlands have been destroyed in the six provinces of the country. “300 acres of poppy farmlands in Spinghar and Nazyan, 296 acres of poppy farmlands in Kishim, 255 acres of poppy farmlands in Uruzgan, 73 acres of poppy farmlands in Nuristan, 184 acres of poppy farmlands in Laghman, 39 acres of poppy farmlands in Baghlan and 40 acres of poppy farmlands in other provinces of the country have been eradicated.

Refugees faces problems

TEHRAN (Khaama Press): The Iranian government stopped issuing special bank cards to Afghan refugees some time ago, making it difficult for them to buy bread from bakeries, a report published on Sunday. Afghan refugees are faced with similar restrictions to benefit from other public services in Iran. It is still unknown why the relevant officials at Iran’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs are not taking decisive actions in this regard.

Asia is comparable to a living body composed of soil and water. The heart that beats inside the body is Afghanistan. The destruction of Afghanistan would be the destruction of Asia. And in its progress and prosperity lies the well-being of Asia. - Allama Iqbal

347 people attempted suicide in past year in Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLONews): At least 347 people have attempted suicide in nine provinces of Afghanistan within the last year, TOLONews’ findings indicate. At least 60 of the people who attempted suicide lost their lives. Badakhshan is at the top of the list, with records of 251 suicide attempts. TOLONews reached out to a 20-year-old woman in Badakhshan who attempted suicide but survived after being taken to the hospital. Her relatives said that she attempted suicide after struggling with poverty. “She drank acid to commit suicide. We took her to

the doctor and then took her to Faizabad. We brought here two to three times here, she has now gone through surgery and she is in good condition,” said Sakhi, her brother. “We have registered 250 suicide attempts. Of them, 188 are female and 62 are male,” said Homayoun Frootan, head of the provincial hospital. After Badakhshan, TOLONews’ findings indicate there were 14 people in Ghor province, 11 people in Khost province, seven people in Sar-e-Pul province, five people in Nangarhar province, five people in Maidan Wardak, three people

in Bamiyan, two people in Urozgan and one person in Kapisa province who attempted suicide. “We registered three suicide attempts and the motive behind these suicides is said to be family violence,” said Sadidqullah Shaheen, commander of Bamiyan. “14 suicide attempts happened. The motives behind them were economic difficulties and family violence,” said Mustafa Haqqani, the head of security department of Ghor. The psychologists believe that many suicide attempts in Afghanistan are due to economic hardships

and family violence. “The suicide attempts happen mainly due to family violence, poverty, illiteracy, unawareness, being homeless and jobless and also facing an uncertain future,” said Qadeer Baran, a psychologist. According to local officials, a woman recently committed a suicide and ended her life in Faizabad, the capital of Badakhshan. A man also in Yangi Qala district of Takhar shot himself and ended his life, the provincial officials said. According to the World Health Organization, nearly 800,000 people attempt suicide globally every year.

‘No female worker banned in health sector’

KABUL (Agencies): Health Minister of IEA Dr. Qalandar Ebad said that no female worker has been banned from working in the health sector. Speaking at the 26th G5 High Level Experts Meeting on Health Cooperation in Tehran, Ebad denied the rumors and called it work of some selfish groups. “Some selfish circles sometimes spread rumors with the intention of confusing the minds of the society that female health workers are banned from work; while all female workers provide health services to their compatriots in the light of Islamic and Sharia rules to ensure the health of female patients, mothers and children,” Ebad told the meeting. Ebad also stated that cooperation in the field of health was important, especially in controlled infectious diseases. “Diseases do not know borders, we must fight such types of phenomenon together,” Ebad said. Ebad also spoke about the developments and achievements in the health sector and said that the public health ministry has now provided health services in areas where there had been none for years. “We have now provided the opportunity to provide health services to our compatriots in these areas, in some areas there is still work to be done, so coordination and assistance is needed in this area,” Ebad said.

IEQ urged to form inclusive govt



KABUL (Khaama Press): Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang on Saturday called on the Taliban’s de facto authorities to form an inclusive government and respect the rights of all people of Afghanistan. Gang said. Gang also reiterated on friendly relations between the neighboring countries – adding that neighbors should be friendly because they cannot change their locations. The foreign ministers of China and Pakistan emphasized on strengthening stability, economic and social development in Afghanistan. The two sides considered the continuation of the international community’s aid to Afghanistan of paramount importance. They also emphasized that Afghanistan Central Bank’s

“We are hopeful that Taliban will establish an inclusive government and respect the rights of all the people of Afghanistan,” Gang said. Gang also reiterated on friendly relations between the neighboring countries – adding that neighbors should be friendly because they cannot change their locations. The foreign ministers of China and Pakistan emphasized on strengthening stability, economic and social development in Afghanistan. The two sides considered the continuation of the international community’s aid to Afghanistan of paramount importance. They also emphasized that Afghanistan Central Bank’s

frozen assets should be released. Previously also, Afghanistan’s neighbors and the international community had called on the Taliban to form an inclusive government, in which all ethnic groups, political factions and women could see them represented. However, the Taliban-run administration has continuously ignored such claims and emphasized its priorities and policies. During the trilateral meeting, the Chinese side asked the Taliban Action Foreign Minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi that the Taliban should accomplish its commitment to fight terrorism and ensure the safety of Chinese nationals and institutions in Afghanistan.

‘Nangarhar’s historic market in Lal Pur must be preserved’

J A L A L A B A D (TOLONews): Some residents of Lal Pur district of Nangarhar province asked the Islamic Emirate to restore and protect the historical market of the district, which is nearly 300 years old. They said that the old “Hindu” market was made of clay and built by Sikhs and Hindus, but that it is no longer used for commerce and that some of its elements have been destroyed. “We ask officials to repair and restore this historical market, and to keep these historical areas,” said Bilton Afghan, a resident of Lal Pur district. “Now there is a good opportunity, because there are no security issues. If someone wants to work, we are ready to provide their security,” said Sardar Wali Abubaker, the governor of Lal Pur district. According to locals, this market, which was previously considered the largest local market, includes 72 stalls. The market’s gates, foundations, and wooden roof are still in their original form, but an area used for religious worship has



been totally demolished. Residents in this district said that the preservation of the “Hindu” market would result in increased commercial activity and would draw tourists and boost the local economy. “What we have learned from our fathers and grandfathers, is that it has more than a 300-year history,” said Baz Mohammad, a resident of Lal Pur district. “They had a Darmsal

(worship area) here, there were a few Hindu stores here, there were no Muslim stores,” said Abdullah, a resident of Lal Pur district. Nangarhar’s department of Information and Culture said that efforts are underway to restore all historical places in this province. “We protect such locations, and we also have a staff that periodically monitors them to ensure that they are not

destroyed. We will repair any areas that have been damaged by a natural disaster,” said Noor Mohammad Hanif, head of Nangarhar’s department of information and culture. Near the “Hindu” market in Lal Pur district there are numerous homes and fields owned by Hindus and Sikhs. However, during the recent wars, many of these properties were taken over and some were sold off.

‘Taliban court’s verdict to punish citizens violates human rights’

KABUL (Khaama Press): Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) has described the Taliban court’s verdict on retribution, stoning, and implementation of Sharia limits on alleged criminals as “shocking, terrible and group punishment”. The commission has said that the Taliban’s treatment could be registered as a violation and a mass crime against human rights at the International Criminal Court (ICC). AIHRC in a statement said the Taliban’s actions

are against the national and international laws and have violated all human values and all fair trial norms. Taliban Deputy Chief Justice announced the group’s courts have implemented 175 retributions orders, 37 stonings, 4 under the walling killing, 79 accused criminals paid a ransom, and Sharia limits have been executed on 103 others. Abdul Malik Haqqani, Taliban’s Deputy Chief Justice said some of these orders have been implemented, and others will be

executed in the coming future. AIHRC on Saturday (May 6) said that courts should go through the three stages of investigation, trial, and the defendants should have access to a defense lawyer, information and other basic requirements for a fair trial. The AIHRC commission described the Taliban’s actions as “secret trials” and “field trials”, and condemned them in the strongest terms. The AIHRC’s statement states, “The death penalty,

which is the most severe punishment, should not be applied and imposed on the accused by using pressure and imposition of the ideological demands of the Taliban and in the absence of accepted principles of proceedings and a fair judicial mechanism.” According to Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), the Taliban should not ignore the principles of fair trial and violate the rights of the accused by using cruel approaches.

Efforts underway to create improved system for media in country: IEA

KABUL (Agencies): Minister of Information and Culture of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) said that problems for journalists will be addressed seriously and the ministry is working to create a system where domestic media can enjoy government privileges. During a visit to Ghazni province of Afghanistan, the Minister of Information and Culture Mullah Khairullah Khairkhal said to journalists and to the information and culture directorate that problems experienced by journalists will be seriously addressed on a national level. “The problems of journalists will be seriously addressed at the country level and the Ghazni Department of Information and Culture will be the second home of journalists, its door will always be open for them,” said Khairkhal. He also said that the media is a bridge in society, and that “the media has the status of a bridge in a society and the Ministry of Information and Culture is trying to create a system for domestic media from

the internal budget so that they can enjoy government privileges. In this meeting, Gulabuddin Amiri, the head of Ghazni Journalists’ Association, shared the problems faced by journalists and media in this province with the minister. The reason for the lack of access to information in this province was said to be because of a lack of professional people in the field in the provincial institutions. Meanwhile, local media officials said that since the

takeover of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), no media in Ghazni province stopped working. “With the arrival of the IEA, no media in Ghazni province stop their activities, but the number of media has increased compared to before, and there is harmony between journalists and information and culture department,” said the provincial head of information and culture Mullah Hamidullah Nisar. The Minister of Information and Culture Mullah

Khairullah Khairkhal in his speech said that America and Western countries are trying to present a negative image of Afghanistan to the international community. “America and Western countries are trying to show the negative image of Afghanistan to the international community, but domestic media can respond to their negative propaganda by publishing the true image of Afghanistan,” Mullah Khairkhal added.



16 people killed, injured in Afghanistan last week

KABUL (Pajhwok): Last week, the United Nations (UN) said that Participants the Doha meeting agreed on the need for a strategy of engagement with the incumbent Afghan authorities which China stressed over increased international community interaction with the ‘Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan’ (IEA). **Casualties:** Last week, eight people were killed and eight others injured in different incidents of violence nationwide. One robber was killed and seven arrested by security forces in the 16th police district of capital Kabul when they wanted to rob a house. Separately report showed that a youth killed a youth after verbal clash and injured his brother. Reports showed that unknown militants have killed a tribal elder in Logar, a boy body recovered in Ghazni while a girl body recovered in Urzgan provinces. In Nangarhar, seven people were injured in a clash on land while a man was killed in similar dispute in Logar province. A tractor struck a landmine in Logar which killed

the tractor driver. According to reports the previous week 13 people were killed and 11 others injured in different violent incidents nationwide. Before the regime change in August 2021, hundreds of civilians, insurgents and government forces would be killed and wounded every week. **UN Doha meeting on Afghanistan:** Last week UN held a global meeting of 22 special representatives and two international organisations on Afghanistan in Doha. UN Secretary General António Guterres said they had agreed on the need for a “strategy of engagement” with the Taliban, to help the country’s most vulnerable people. “Mr. Guterres made clear that the gathering had not focussed on recognition of the de facto authorities, but rather on developing a common, international approach to burning interlinked issues, such as terrorism, the crackdown on human rights, and the spread of drug trafficking,” he said. Guterres did not provide more detail about the start-

ing but added similar meeting would be convened again soon. US Special Representative for Afghanistan Thomas West on his Twitter handle wrote: “UN has made clear, this meeting was not about recognition. Focus was identifying shared interests and how we collectively advance them: on terrorism, repression of women & girls, devastating humanitarian crisis, and narcotics outflows, among others.” Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesperson of the acting government, said that government desired interaction with the world and asked the international community to invite the acting government representative as well to such meetings. A head of the Doha meeting Afghanistan’s Civil Society Organizations have demanded their participation in the upcoming Doha meeting and any negotiations with the de facto Afghan authorities. A number of civil society organisations in an open letter to the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres demanded that a roadmap to recognize the incumbent

Afghan government should include Afghan actors from diverse backgrounds. Acting Afghan government was not invited to the Doha meeting but the IEA political office head in Qatar Sohail Shaheen met Chinese and British envoys in Doha on the eve of the UN-led international conference on Afghanistan. Shaheen tweeted that he met Chinese special representative for Afghanistan ambassador Yue Xiaoyong and discussed with him various issues including the economy of Afghanistan. They talked about the current situation of Afghanistan, interaction and some other matters about regional connectivity. Shaheen also met Andrew McQuarry, the director of Britain’s operation and development office. Both sides discussed the current situation of Afghanistan and the ongoing UN-led meeting about Afghanistan. **SCO meeting:** Pakistan Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Friday said a peaceful and stable Afghanistan was a key not only to regional integration and economic

cooperation but also to global peace and stability. In his keynote address to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation’s (SCO) Council of Foreign Ministers in Goa, India, Bilawal said the situation in Afghanistan presented new challenges as well as opportunities. “We continue to call the international community to meaningfully engage with the Interim Afghan Government to better understand and influence the course of events”. India External Affairs Minister J. Shankar said that the formation of an inclusive government in Afghanistan, fight against terrorism and the rights of girls and women remained top priority concerns of the SCO. But Shaheen said that matters related to the recognition of the Afghan government and resolution of existing crises should be discussed in every international ad regional forums. Ahmad Zia Taka, assistant spokesperson of the IEA, said that besides Afghanistan’s economic, security and political issues matters related to counterterrorism and drug trafficking were discussed in the

Collective Security Treaty Organisation meeting. **World Press Freedom Day:** On the World Press Freedom Day — May 3 — UN expressed concern over the future of media and journalists in Afghanistan and added curbs on media outlets had increased by the acting government and journalist were forced to work in the environment of fear and threat. The acting government spokesperson Zabihullah Muhjahid said: “The value of the press in any country is not hidden from anyone and efforts should be made to strengthen it,” Mujahid told Pajhwok Afghan News during an exclusive chat. May 3 marks the 30th anniversary of World Press Freedom Day, proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in 1993. Mujahid said impartial media was key to a society’s development as it conveyed the people’s voice to the government and communicated government’s activities to the masses. The Ministry of Information and Cultural Affairs said that government was committed to the

freedom of press in line with the Islamic and national values, adding that IEA did not introduced a new media policy as yet. Free Media Support Organization (NAI) said that after regime change in Afghanistan more than half of the media outlets stopped functioning due to financial crisis. **Interaction with Afghan government:** Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning’s said that world should increase interaction with the acting Afghan government and encouraged the current Afghan authorities to form an inclusive government and maintain cordial ties with its neighbours. Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai has held a meeting with the EU Special Representative for Afghanistan Tomos Nikl- asson and stressed over the reopening of schools and reversal of orders to ban women from work and universities. They termed talks vital for durable peace in Afghanistan. Iran and India have expressed concerns over deteriorated humanitarian and economic situation in

Afghanistan and announced support to the formation of an inclusive government. **INGOs operation in Afghanistan:** United Nations’ chief Antonio Guterres slammed the Afghan caretaker government’s “unprecedented” curbs on Afghan women’s rights. He stated “to achieve our objectives, we cannot disengage” with the Taliban and said “it is difficult to overestimate the gravity of the situation” in the country. He noted that 97% of the population lived in poverty and that donor funding was drying up. Guterres emphasized that the current ban on local women working for the United Nations in Afghanistan was unacceptable “and puts lives in jeopardy”. “We will never be silent in the face of unprecedented and systemic attacks on women and girls’ rights,” said Guterres. A senior UNHCR official who arrived in Kabul last week said that UNHCR will continue its operation in Afghanistan and talk to the acting authorities regarding women work and education in the country.

Solution of Pakistan’s problems lies in Imran’s arrest, punishment: Marriyum

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Sunday that the solution of the problems being faced by Pakistan lied in Imran Khan's arrest and punishment for conspiracy against the country and for his corruption. In her reaction to Imran Khan's statement, she said it appeared that "the foreign agent has seen the video of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif with the British King Charles III."

The minister opined that Imran Khan's "dirty mentality" was creating intolerance and violence in society. "The country needs food, employment and

business, not fraud, mischief, disorder and distraction" being promoted Imran." The minister held Imran responsible for the extremist attitudes in the country, due to which people were being killed by mobs. She said Imran has been doing dirty politics on India and Kashmir and even using Islam for his ulterior motives.

Marriyum recalled that it was Imran Khan who prayed for the victory of Modi in 2019 Indian elections. Terming him as a foreign agent, she said Imran has called for agitation and creation of chaos the time the foreign minister of China was on a Pakistan

visit. The minister said that Imran had called for riots and anarchy after watching the video of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif with King Charles III. She said when work on CPEC accelerated, the PTI chairman suffered "a bout of insanity".

After Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto's successful visit to India in connection with the SCO meeting and his response to the Indian Foreign Minister, Imran Khan has completely lost his cool, she maintained.

She said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has held meetings with world leaders including the King of Great Britain.

Taking a jibe, she said

Imran could not see what Shehbaz Sharif was doing because he was wearing a "black bucket" on his head. She said mobs in Pakistan have become violent because Imran had spread intolerance in the country.

She said since 2013, Imran had been protesting and would continue to cry and weep on the streets in the future too. The election will definitely be held on time but Imran could not get selected as there neither Faiz nor Khosa, Saqib Nisar or Bajwa were available to facilitate him.

She advised Imran to go to the courts and face cases instead of doing agitation on the streets.



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Acting Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi take a stroll in Islamabad on Sunday.

Arab League readmits Syria as relations with Assad normalise

CAIRO (Reuters): The Arab League readmitted Syria after more than a decade of suspension on Sunday, consolidating a regional push to normalise ties with President Bashar al-Assad. The decision said Syria could resume its participation in Arab League meetings immediately, while calling for a resolution of the crisis resulting from Syria's civil war, including the flight of refugees to neighbouring countries and drug smuggling across the region.

While Arab states including the United Arab Emirates have pushed for Syria and Assad's rehabilitation, others, including Qatar, have remained opposed to full normalisation without a political solution to the Syrian conflict.

Some have been keen to set conditions for Syria's return, with Jordan's foreign minister saying last week that the Arab League's reacceptance of Syria, which remains under Western sanctions, would only be the start of "a very long and difficult and challenging process".

"The reinstatement of Syria does not mean normalisation of relations between Arab countries and Syria," Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit told a press conference in Cairo on Sunday.

"This is a sovereign decision for each country to make." A Jordanian official said Syria would need to show it was serious about reaching a political solution, since this would be a pre-condition to lobbying for any lifting of Western sanctions, a crucial step for funding reconstruction.

Sunday's decision said Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt and the Arab League's Secretary General would form a ministerial group to liaise with the Syrian government and seek solutions to the crisis through reciprocal steps.

Practical measures included continuing efforts to facilitate the delivery of aid in Syria, according to a copy of the decision seen by Reuters. Syria's readmission follows a Jordanian initiative laying out a roadmap for ending Syria's conflict that includes addressing the issues of refugees, missing detainees, drug smuggling and Iranian militias in Syria. Jordan is both a destination and a main transit route to the oil-rich Gulf countries for captagon, a highly-addictive amphetamine produced in Syria. Syria's membership of the Arab League was suspended in 2011 after the crackdown on street protests against Assad that led to the civil war. Several Gulf states

including Saudi Arabia began backing rebel groups fighting to oust Assad from power.

Assad later regained control over much of Syria with the help of his main allies Iran and Russia, but the war cost hundreds of thousands of lives and led millions to flee the country. Syria remains splintered with its economy in ruins.

Recently, Arab states have been trying to reach consensus on whether to invite Assad to an Arab League summit on May 19 in Riyadh to discuss the pace and conditions for normalising ties.

Responding to a question over whether Assad could participate, Aboul Gheit told reporters: "If he wishes, because Syria, starting from this evening, is a full member of the Arab League."

"When the invitation is sent by the host country, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and if he wishes to participate, he will participate," he added. Saudi Arabia long resisted restoring relations with Assad but said after its recent rapprochement with Iran - Syria's key regional ally - that a new approach was needed with Damascus.

Washington, which terms Assad's Syria a "rogue" state, has urged Arab states to get something in return for engaging with Assad.

Turkey’s undefeated Erdogan nears knife-edge vote

ANKARA (INP): Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan next Sunday puts his two-decade legacy on the line in a knife-edge vote against a powerful alliance built on anger over economic hardship and his authoritarian turn. The 69-year-old has become one of Turkey's most important and divisive leaders since his Islamic-rooted party ended half a century of secular rule and launched an era of social transformation.

Turkey became a strategic player with a vibrant economy and a modern army of drones that shifted battlefields in wars stretching from Libya to Ukraine.

Erdogan's global stature soared when he helped stem Europe's migrant crisis in 2016 - and then plunged when he unleashed a crackdown on dissent later that same year.

He enters one of the biggest elections of Turkey's modern era with his popularity weighed down by a crippling

cost-of-living crisis and the social aftershocks of a February earthquake that claimed more than 50,000 lives.

The real possibility of defeat has seen Erdogan defiantly turn to sharply polarising themes that have given the polls a powder keg feel.

He accuses the West of funding his "pro-LGBT" rivals and portrays himself as a defender of conservative values against attacks by foreign "terrorists". The increasingly febrile atmosphere prompted opposition leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu to ask supporters to stay home if they win.

"If we go out, there may be riots, armed people may take to the streets," the 74-year-old secular opposition leader warned.

The nation of 85 million appears as splintered as ever about whether Erdogan has done more harm than good in the only Muslim-majority country of the NATO defence bloc.

The entry of two minor candidates means that Erdogan and Kilicdaroglu will likely face each other again in a runoff on May 28.

But some of Erdogan's more hawkish ministers are sounding warnings about Western efforts to undermine Turkey's might through the polls. The parliamentary and presidential polls will see Erdogan face a six-party alliance that crosses Turkey's vast political spectrum and includes some of his former allies.

Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu has repeatedly referred to US President Joe Biden's 2019 suggestion that Washington should embolden the opposition "to take on and defeat Erdogan".

"July 15 was their actual coup attempt," Soylu said of a failed 2016 military putsch that Erdogan blamed on a US-based Muslim preacher.

"And May 14 is their political coup attempt."

Pakistan strongly, unequivocally supporting Kashmiris’ just cause

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Pakistan has reiterated its stand that negotiations with India are not possible till reversal of 5 August 2019 unilateral actions by the Modi-led fascist Indian regime. According to a report released by Kashmir Media Service Sunday Pakistan has been strongly and unequivocally supporting the Kashmiris' just cause and has remained the strongest voice in the world for the Kashmiris' right to self-determination.

It said Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressing a news conference after addressing the meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's Council of Foreign Ministers in Goa, India, has ruled out any change in Pakistan's position on the Jammu and Kashmir dispute.

It said Bilawal Bhutto Zardari had said that there would be no dialogue

with the Modi regime till review of 5 August 2019 illegal unilateral actions, 5 August 2019 illegal actions have not only violated international laws and United Nations resolutions but also bilateral agreements.

The report said that the All Parties Hurriyat Conference leaders had also welcomed the recent statements of the Pakistani leadership, saying Pakistan is the real advocate and voice of the oppressed Kashmiris.

It said Indian secret agencies are trying to mislead the Kashmiris through false propaganda that Pakistan has bartered away Kashmir. The entire Pakistan is fully standing by the Kashmiri people in their pursuit for freedom, it added.

The report maintained that Pakistani leaders had time and again reiterated that their all-out support to the Kashmir cause will continue unabated and

Pakistan would never leave Kashmiri people alone or at the mercy of circumstances.

It said Kashmiris' love and attachment with Pakistan is the main driving force behind their freedom struggle, adding Pakistanis and Kashmiri are connected with each other through strong natural, historical and cultural bonds.

The Jammu and Kashmir, it said is an internationally recognized dispute and India cannot change its status though unilateral actions.

The report revealed that India and Pakistan cannot have normal relations until Kashmir dispute is resolved as per the Kashmiris' aspirations, urging the world to put pressure on India to rescind its 5 Aug 2019 moves and start a meaningful and result-oriented dialogue with Pakistan to resolve the lingering Kashmir dispute.

No grounds for contempt of court against govt: Tarar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) Attaullah Tarar on Sunday said that there were no grounds for contempt of court against the government as all decisions have been made by the parliament. Parliament holds supreme authority since it framed the constitution, he added.

Talking to a private news channel, he said that the government is determined to conduct elections in the country this year, but if the current deadline persists, it will be a challenge to complete the process.

SAPM further said that there was still hope for a constructive resolution as the government and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) have reached a significant milestone by agreeing to hold simultaneous elections in the country.

"However, it is now impossible to proceed with the Punjab elections scheduled for May 14, while the government is resolute and will not back down from its stance, even under challenging circumstances," he asserted.

5,000 flee out-of-control wildfires in Canada

ALBERTA (INP): Alberta announced a state of emergency on Saturday as wildfires flared across the Canadian province, forcing 25,000 people to flee their homes in what a top official said was an "unprecedented" crisis.

Thousands more have been told to be prepared to leave on a moment's notice, as the number of fires -- fanned by strong winds -- jumped to 110.

One-third of the blazes were listed as out of control. "We've declared a provincial state of emergency to protect the safety, health and welfare of Albertans," the province's Premier Danielle Smith told a news conference after a meeting of her government's emergency management committee.

Earlier she said the province -- one of the world's largest oil-producing regions -- "has been experiencing a hot, dry spring and with so much kindling, all it takes is a few sparks to ignite some truly frightening wildfires."

"These conditions have resulted in the unprecedented situation our province is facing today," she said.

According to Smith, more than 20 communities have been evacuated and at least 122,000 hectares (301,000 acres) have burned so far.

The state of emergency declaration gives the government of Alberta "greater powers to respond to extreme situations," she said, including mobilizing additional resources and unlocking emergency funds. Almost all of Alberta -- which is in the midst of an election -- and much of neighboring Saskatchewan province as well as a large swath of the Northwest Territories face extreme fire risks, according to a federal government fire danger map. Federal Emergency Preparedness Minister Bill Blair tweeted that Ottawa stood ready to provide federal assistance, if needed.

Oil sands facilities were closely monitoring the dangers, but none have reported production disruptions.

Drayton Valley with 7,000 residents -- about 140 kilometers (85 miles) west of Edmonton -- was among the communities evacuated as firefighters battled an out-of-control

blaze.

Some 550 kilometers north of the provincial capital, a severe fire consumed 20 homes, a general store and a police station in the community of Fox Lake.

Residents were evacuated by boat and by helicopter. In the town of Edson, which has a population of more than 8,000, residents have also been ordered to "evacuate immediately."

In recent years, western Canada has been hit repeatedly by extreme weather, the intensity and frequency of which have increased due to global warming.

Forest fires in Canada's oil sands region in 2016 disrupted production and forced out 100,000 residents from Fort McMurray, pummeling the nation's economy.

More recently in 2021, the westernmost British Columbia province suffered record-high temperatures over the summer that killed more than 500 people, as well as wildfires that destroyed an entire town.

That was followed by devastating floods and mudslides.

‘Special body probing audio leaks’

ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): MNA Muhammad Aslam Bhootani on Sunday said former chief justice of Pakistan (CJP) Saqib Nisar and his son will be summoned by a special committee to audit, inquire and investigate the purported audio leaks with a PTI ticket holder.

On April 29, the saga of recent audio leaks took an interesting turn as a fresh clip emerged, purportedly featuring the voice of ex-CJP Nisar's son, demanding a "reward" for a "job done for a PTI ticket candidate".

In the audio, a voice purported to be that of Najam Saqib can be heard saying to the person on the other end that his father had worked very hard to get the job done, and the caller on the other side, said to be PTI ticket hopeful Abuzar Chaddhar, can be heard saying he would come to meet Najam's father after submitting the ticket.

In the clip, the voice said to be Najam's can also be heard asking Chaddhar to meet his father the same day and, in conversation with another caller -- identified as Mian Uzair -- asking for "not only delivery of the goods, don't take less than 120".



LAHORE: Chief Justice of Pakistan Mr. Justice Umar Ata Bandial being received shield during Annual Former Chief Justice of Pakistan Mr. Justice Alin Robert Cornelius Conference.

Israel demolishes Palestinian West Bank school

JERUSALEM (Reuters): Israeli authorities demolished a Palestinian school in the occupied West Bank on Sunday, drawing harsh condemnation from the European Union.

COGAT, a branch of the Israeli military, said in a statement that the building, located about 2 km from Bethlehem, had been constructed illegally and "was found to be dangerous to the safety of anyone studying or otherwise visiting there," and thus an Israeli court "had ordered it demolished."

The European Union Delegation to the Palestinians, on its official Twitter account, said it was "appalled" by the school's demolition, which it said would affect 60 Palestinian children. The demolition was "illegal under international law" and would "only increase the suffering of the Palestinian population and further escalate an already tense environment," the EU delegation said.

COGAT said the building's owner had refused several attempts by Israeli authorities to engage in dialogue over the status of the

structure before the enforcement of the demolition. Students and witnesses said the building had been brought to rubble with no trace of the school that once stood there.

"We got ready to come to school and when we arrived we didn't find the school," student Mohammed Ibrahim told Reuters.

"We want a school today! We want to study, if they (Israeli forces) will keep demolishing, we will keep building."

Witnesses also said the contents of the building had been confiscated. "They demolished the school and they took everything with them," a nearby resident and witness whose grandson was a student at the school Ismael Salah told Reuters. "All the furniture, they put them in trucks and took them."

Israel has often cited a lack of building permits, which Palestinians and rights groups say are nearly impossible to obtain, in destroying Palestinian structures in the West Bank, an area it captured in the 1967 Middle East war.

The Palestinians want the more

than half a million Jewish settlers there, along with Israeli soldiers, to leave the occupied territories. Israel balks at such sweeping pullouts, citing historical claims on the biblical lands. The Gush Etzion Regional Council, which represents a nearby block of Jewish settlers in the West Bank, welcomed the demolition.

"This is definitely another step in the persistent struggle for our State lands, Gush Etzion Regional Council Mayor, and Chairman of the Yesha Council, Shlomo Neeman said in a statement. "There is still a lot of work to be done."

The Palestinian Authority's ministry of education called the demolition a "heinous crime" and said it would cause "the school's students to be deprived of receiving their education in a free, safe and stable manner, similar to children in the rest of the world."

An Israeli official source told Reuters that the dispute over the building's safety had gone on for six years and that a nearby school would absorb the students displaced by the demolition.