

Speaker NA survives unhurt
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf survived unhurt in a road accident at Mandra-Chakwal road on Thursday. According to details, while saving to a cow which suddenly appeared on road, the vehicle of Speaker NA rammed into security squad vehicle. However, the Raja Pervez Ashraf and his squad remained unhurt in the accident.

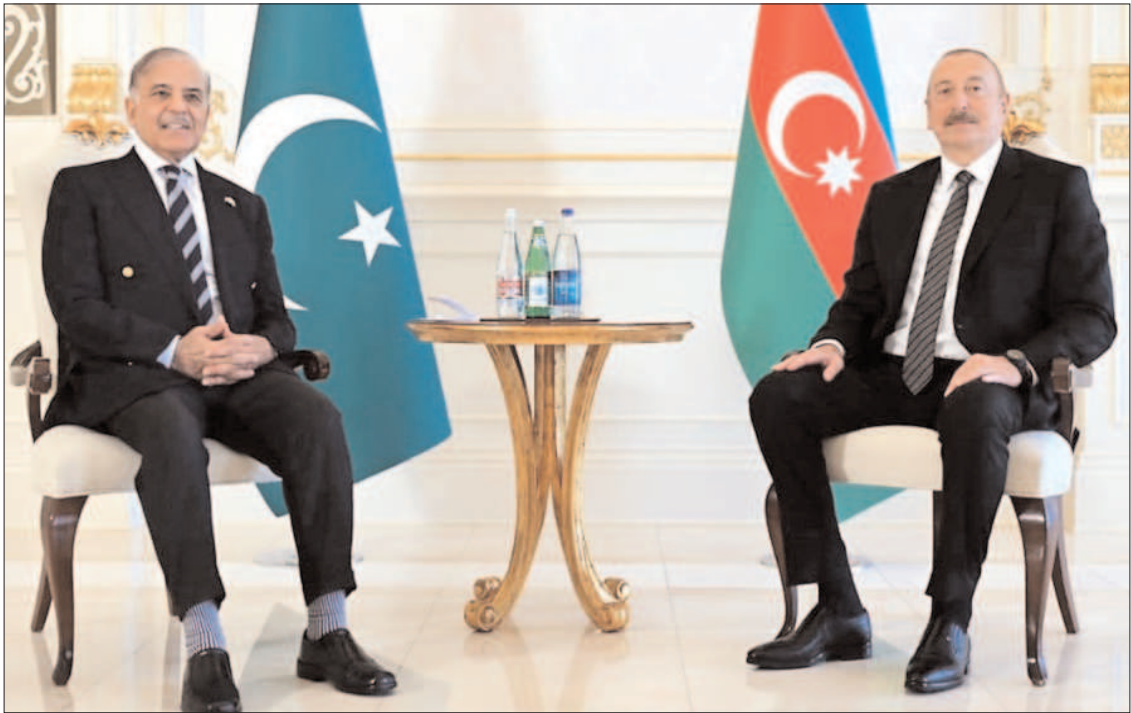
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President okays Bill
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday signed the Daycare Centres Bill 2023, under which such setups for minor children will be established at the public and private departments in Islamabad. The president Dr Arif Alvi assented to the bill in line with Article 75 of the Constitution, the President's House said in a statement.

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BAKU: Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif meeting with Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev.

Cyclone lies 145km south of Ketī Bandar

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Very Severe Cyclonic Storm (VSCS) "BIPARJOY" over north-east Arabian Sea has moved further north-eastward and now lies near Latitude 22.8°N & Longitude 67.9°E at a distance of about 245km south of Karachi, 210km south Thatta and 145km south of Ketī Bandar, according to a PMD report at 6:28pm on Thursday.

According to Climate Change Minister Sherry Rehman statement on Twitter, the cyclone has slowed down but the "core remains intense, adding it would not make landfall before nightfall now. According to a PMD, maximum sustained surface winds are 120-140 Km/hour gusts 150 Km/hour around the system center and sea conditions being rough/phenomenal around the system center with maximum wave height 25 feet. Moving northeastward, the VSCS "BIPARJOY" is likely to cross between Ketī Bandar (Southeast Sindh) and Indian Gujarat during next 2-6 hours as a Very Severe Cyclonic Storm (VSCS) with packing winds of 100-120 Km/hour gusting 140 km/hour. PMD's cyclone warning center, Karachi is continuously monitoring the system and will issue update accordingly.

Under its influence: Widespread rain-thunderstorm with some very heavy/extremely heavy falls accompanied with squally winds of 100-120Km/hour gusting 140km/hour likely in Thatta, Sujawal, Badin, Tharparker, Mirpurkhas & Umerkot districts from today to 17 June. Dust/thunderstorm-rain with a few heavy falls & accompanied with squally winds of 40-60 Km/hour likely in Karachi, Hyderabad, Tando Muhammad Khan, Tando Allayar, Shaheed Benazirabad & Sanghar districts on today and tomorrow. Dust/thunderstorm-rain with isolated heavy falls likely in Hub, Lasbella & Khuzdar districts of Balochistan today & tomorrow.

'Pakistan cannot accept everything IMF says': Dar

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Hours after the International Monetary Fund (IMF) expressed concerns about the government's failure to broaden the tax base through the budget for the fiscal year 2023-24, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said that Pakistan is a sovereign country and cannot accept everything the lender demands.

Addressing the Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue, he responded to the IMF objection to the tax exemptions given in the recently unveiled budget. "Pakistan is a sovereign country and cannot accept everything from the IMF," the financial czar told the parliamentarians. He also added that as a sovereign country, Islamabad should have the right to give some tax concessions. "The IMF wants us not to give tax concessions in any sector."

The finance minister of the country assured the senators that the government knew how much tax it needs to collect and form where the revenue can be generated. He added that this was the reason the government increased the tax target from Rs7.2 trillion to Rs9.2 trillion in the upcoming budget. "This target is apart from tax exemption. No budget is coming from tax-exempt sectors. We will take the IMF into confidence on this," he said while urging that Pakistan should be allowed to decide on the matter.

The minister also added that the government in the

new budget is focusing on four drivers for economic growth. He also spoke about the package given to the IT sector, explaining that the government cannot "ban" giving concessions to the youth in the IT sector just on the IMF's demands. "We want to give employment opportunities to the youth through development in the IT sector," the federal minister said. He added that the government has set a target of achieving \$15 billion in IT exports in the next five years. "IT exports were \$2.5 billion this year which is very less. We want to take IT exports to \$4.5 billion in the coming year," he added. Talking about the widespread default mongering, the finance minister said that geopolitics is happening against Pakistan so the country defaults.

"Foreign hostile elements want Pakistan to turn into another Sri Lanka and then the IMF negotiate with Islamabad," Dar said. Slamming the amendments made to the State Bank of Pakistan Act during the previous government's tenure, he said amendments led to "a state within a state". "The amendments made to the State Bank Act are unsustainable," he further added.

According to the finance minister, changes were made in the SBP's governing laws but they are not complete yet. On Pakistan's external payments, he assured, once again, that the country will not defer any foreign payment. "Pakistan does not need to go to Paris Club to resched-

ule loans. We will manage external payments of Pakistan," he also said. The finance minister further added that even the managing director of the Washington-based lender had assured that Pakistan would not default and the country would get good news on June 30.

The minister also told the senators at length about the economy and the IMF as it was reported earlier today that the IMF had expressed dissatisfaction with Pakistan's budget for the fiscal year 2023-24. The IMF said the government has missed an opportunity to broaden the tax base and reduce tax expenditures as well as terms of tax amnesty against the fund's programme conditionality. Seeking major changes in the budget, the Washington-based lender stated it stands ready to refine this budget ahead of its passage from the Parliament.

In response to a question about the global lender's opinion on the budget, IMF's Resident Chief in Pakistan Esther Perez Ruiz said the staff remains engaged (with the government) to discuss policies to maintain stability. "However, the draft FY24 budget misses an opportunity to broaden the tax base in a more progressive way, and the long list of new tax expenditures reduces further the fairness of the tax system and undercuts the resources needed for greater support for vulnerable BISP recipients and development spending," she said.

2nd round of talks between TLP, govt held

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah and Minister for Economic Affairs Sardar Ayaz Sadiq held the second round of talks with the negotiation committee of the Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) on Thursday.

The TLP committee was comprised of Dr Shafiq Ameen, Ghulam Abbas Faizi, Mufti Muhammad Umeir Al-Azhari, Maulana Ghulam Ghaus Baghdadi, and Jeelan Shah. During the talks, both sides agreed to conduct an impartial and speedy trial for the individual who blasphemed against Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

They also agreed to install a filtering system to remove profane and indecent content from social media. Furthermore, in order to prevent blasphemy against the sacred elements of Islam, a consensus was reached to enhance capacity and efficiency of the existing institution, enabling it to effectively carry out its work.

It was also agreed in the meeting to take steps toward the formal establishment of the Counter Blasphemy Department. The Foreign Affairs Ministry would issue a letter to the American government within three working days to seek the release of Dr Aafia Siddiqui, and the government would take more serious measures toward her release and repatriation. Additionally, they agreed to de-notify all PEMRA and PTA notifications against TLP, and the accused under 295C would also be charged under the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) section 7. The negotiations were underway between them regarding the reduction of petrol prices and other demands.

Pak-Russia sign MoU

SAINT PETERSBURG (APP): Pakistan and the Russian Federation on Thursday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for cooperation between Pakistan Customs and Russia's Federal Customs Service on Exchange of Statistical Data on Mutual Trade.

Pakistan's Ambassador to Russian Federation Shafqat Ali Khan signed the MoU on behalf of Pakistan Customs while Secretary Commerce Muhammad Saleh Farooqi witnessed the signing ceremony held here on the sidelines of Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum, a press release issued by the Ministry of Commerce said.

Minister of Trade and Investment at Pakistan's Embassy in Moscow, Shaukat Hayat Cheema, was also present on the occasion. In order to implement the memorandum, the two parties will cooperate in the sphere of exchange of information on the methodology used for the maintenance of foreign trade statistics, its significant changes as well as the exchange of statistical data on mutual trade, except the data, not subject to disclosure or constituting a state or commercial secret.

The Frontier Post

Islamabad, Baku sign document to boost trade cooperation

BAKU (APP): Azerbaijan will start sending cargo containers of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) to Pakistan from next month, PM Office said on Thursday. The decision was taken at a meeting held between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev at the Azeri capital Baku.

This is the second major achievement for Pakistan towards fulfillment of energy needs after recently receiving the shipment of crude oil from Russia. During the meeting, PM Sharif informed the Azeri president that the federal cabinet had approved receiving the LNG cargos from Azerbaijan. Every month, one cargo on concessional rates will reach Pakistan.

Shehbaz Sharif has been working on the said deal with Azerbaijan for last six months, the PM Office said. The two leaders agreed that Azerbaijan would help Pakistan fulfill its energy needs through cooperation in the fields of oil and gas. Pakistan State Oil (PSO) and State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) will collaborate at government-to-government level to workout the energy resources, the PM Office said.

It was agreed that Azerbaijan would invest in the alternative energy sector of Pakistan including the solar power generation. On import of Pakistani rice to Azerbaijan, both the countries agreed on formulating a comprehensive mechanism on exemption of duty. It was agreed that Azerbaijan Airlines - AZAL, will operate its two flights to Islamabad and Karachi in a week. The two sides also agreed to increase cooperation in defence, agriculture, trade and transport. Pakistan is the second country in the world which recognised Azerbaijan after its independence. On March 1, 2017, then prime minister Nawaz Sharif and President Ilham Aliyev had signed an agreement on cooperation in defence production.

Meanwhile, Pakistan and Azerbaijan signed a Statement of Understanding to enhance bilateral cooperation, particularly to boost the volume of energy trade.

The document was signed by Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar and Azerbaijan's Minister of Economy Mikayil Jabbarov at a ceremony witnessed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, along with his cabinet members. The signing of the Statement between Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Economy of Azerbaijan is aimed at promoting bilateral trade.

The document establishes a framework for fostering closer collaboration between Azerbaijan and Pakistan and promoting trade between the two countries. Recognizing the importance of expanding their friendship and economic partnership, the ministers expressed their dedication to diversifying trade and enhancing economic development through this agreement. Under the agreement, both countries will collaborate to create favourable conditions for bilateral trade by sharing trade information, organizing events, conducting studies to identify exportable products, and promoting economic cooperation.

For this purpose, both countries agreed to mobilize their efforts to finalize a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) by early August of 2023. They emphasized the potential benefits that the PTA would bring and affirmed their commitment to working collaboratively to realize the shared goals outlined in the Statement of Understanding. The signing of this agreement marks a significant milestone in the economic partnership between Azerbaijan and Pakistan, strengthening the foundation for increased trade and economic cooperation. It is expected to create new opportunities for businesses, enhance bilateral investment, and contribute to the overall growth and prosperity of

both nations.

Shehbaz thanks Azerbaijan for support to IIOJK dispute, assures backing Karabakh issue: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif thanked President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev for his consistent support to Pakistan on the dispute of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

The prime minister in a tweet assured the Azeri president of Pakistan's steadfast support on the issue of Karabakh. He mentioned that he had a wonderful meeting with President Ilham Aliyev, in which the present state of bilateral relations between the two countries was reviewed. "We have agreed to upgrade the ties commensurate with our excellent relationship," he said.

PM Shehbaz said, "According to our shared resolve, the enhanced cooperation in trade, investment, energy, defence, tourism, and higher education sectors will form the bedrock of cooperation." The prime minister said he and his delegation were deeply impressed by the love that the people of Azerbaijan had for Pakistan and its people.

"The sight of Pakistani flags fluttering in Baku was a feast for the eyes," he added. He said the people-to-people bond based on mutual love and respect was the strength of bilateral relationship. He said the shared resolve at the leadership level had the potential to reshape the bilateral ties in line with demands of the contemporary era. "Together, we will make it happen, Insha Allah," he said.

The Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also visited Ichari, ancient part of Baku, where he took round of different historical buildings and a museum. He also visited the old Multan Caravan Serai where the trade caravans travelling on the old Silk Road used to reside. The prime minister was shown the artifacts on display in the museum.

PPP's Murtaza wins Port City's mayoral election

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leader Murtaza Wahab won Karachi's mayoral election on Thursday, becoming the first elected chief of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation belonging to PPP.

Voting was held for the post of Karachi mayor and deputy mayor at the Arts Council of Pakistan as the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) held the elections for the two major seats. The mayoral contest was between Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) candidate Barrister Murtaza Wahab and Jamaat-e-Islami's (JI) Hafiz Naeem Ur Rehman, as all the other candidates had withdrawn their nomination papers. The respective deputy mayor candidates of the PPP and JI are Salman Abdullah Murad and Saifuddin.

According to the entry register 303 elected members reached the polling station. Three elected members were brought in an armoured personnel carrier. However, sources within ECP confirmed that 333 members reached the city council while 33 were absent. The PPP is the largest party in the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation City Council, with 155 seats. However, it is short of a simple majority required to have its mayor elected. The PPP has also secured the support of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, but their combined strength is also short of a simple majority.

The second and third largest parties in the city council are the JI and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) with 130 and 63 seats respectively. As the PTI has supported the JI, their combined votes appear to be 193, which is more than the simple majority in the House of 367 members. However, with the emergence of a forward bloc within the PTI, the result may go either way. In case

JI to observe 'black day'

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Sirajul Haq announced to mark Friday as "Black Day" after Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) Murtaza Wahab was elected as Karachi's mayor, defeating JI's Hafiz Naeem Ur Rehman. "Black Day will be observed across the country tomorrow against the controversial Karachi Mayoral Election. I appeal to every democrat to participate in tomorrow's gathering," the JI chief said in a tweet.

Addressing a press conference outside Arts Council, Jamaat Islami Karachi chief Naeem has demanded of the Chief Election Commissioner to declare the mayoral election in Karachi as void and issue a new schedule. "We had the 192 while PPP had 173 voters," he claimed. Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman also announced to approach courts against Karachi mayor poll.

In a letter to ECP, the JI leader said: "the Sindh government abducted 29 PTI council members to restrain them from casting vote in the election." "The election commission should cancel this 'fraud exercise' and issue a new schedule for polls," JI letter read. "It is prime objective of the election commission to hold fair and transparent election, but the electoral body was utterly failed in it," according to the letter.

"The doors of the hall were closed at the time of the mayor's election, while 29 PTI members were stopped from casting vote after abducting them from homes," JI spokesperson complained in the letter.

Wahab wins, it will most probably result in allegations of horse trading by the JI and PTI and the two parties might approach the judiciary to nullify the election.

Lambasting JI for supporting PTI, Sindh Information Minister Sharjeel Memon said that Jamaat-e-Islami has joined hands with people involved in May 9 riots. Meanwhile, Rehman questioned the returning officer saying that more than 30 elected members have gone missing.

"There are reports that these persons have been detained and it was the ECP's responsibility to bring these people," he said. Rejecting the "rigged mayoral contests," the PTI said that the PPP has preferred rigging over elections from day one. "The PPP tried to bar elected members from casting votes by arresting them," the PTI said, warning that Wahab would suffer the same fate as Hamza Shahbaz did in the Punjab chief minister elections.

Before the voting began, Sindh Labour Minister Saeed Ghani had said that

the 173 members who were to vote in favour of Wahab were present inside the hall. Workers of Pakistan People's Party and Jamaat-e-Islami clashed Thursday outside the venue for mayoral election minutes after PPP's Murtaza Wahab was declared winner in the election.

Charged workers pelted each other with stones prompting police and Rangers to disperse them through baton charge. Earlier, Pakistan People's Party candidate Murtaza Wahab was elected Karachi mayor defeating Jamaat-e-Islami candidate Hafiz Naeemur Rehman.

Murtaza Wahab bagged 173 votes while Naeemur Rehman could secured 161 votes. The election was held on show of hand basis. The voting started at 11:00 am. The election was held at the Arts Council's auditorium. Out of 366 members, 333 members were present at the polling venue while 33 members could not reach the polling venue to cast their vote. As the voting started, the doors of the auditorium were closed.

UK appoints first female British HC to Pakistan

LONDON (Agencies): The United Kingdom (UK) has announced the appointment of Ms Jane Marriott OBE as the next British High Commissioner to Pakistan. The first female British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Jane is due to take up her role in mid-July.

Prior to this appointment, Jane Marriott was the High Commissioner to Kenya from September 2019 to June 2023, a press release said. In this role she delivered a new UK-Kenya Strategic Partnership, strengthening ties across mutual prosperity, sustainable development, security and stability, people-to-people links and tackling climate change.

Under Jane's leadership, she oversaw the launch of new clean, green, sustainable energy projects as well as delivering UK-Kenyan cooperation to create the first-ever Kenyan Marine Commando Unit, underlining the UK's commitment in the fight against terrorism in Kenya and the region. Jane also supported the restoration of over 1,000 hectares of deforested land, and under her leadership, the UK established a "Digital Access Programme" in partnership with Kenyan stakeholders in the tech industry to train users on digital inclusion, cyber hygiene, and the regulation of online content.

Jane brings a wealth of thematic and regional experience to her new role having joined the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) in 2001, following roles in the Cabinet Office and Home Office. She has previously served as: Director of the UK's Joint International Counter-Terrorism Unit; Joint FCDO Director for the Middle East and North Africa; Ambassador to Sana'a, Yemen (2013-15); Deputy and Acting Ambassador to Tehran; and as an adviser to the US Special Representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard Holbrooke.



In brief

Police arrest three robbers

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Police have busted a gang and arrested three robbers and street criminals besides recovering Rs 100,000 cash, two snatched motorcycles, weapons and other items from their possession, in an operation against criminal elements. According to a police spokesman, Naseerabad Police arrested three accused namely Tariq, ring-leader, Salman and Mubashir, who were allegedly involved in various robbery, bike snatching and street crime cases. He informed that the police team constituted under the supervision of SHO Naseerabad Police Station on the directives of SP Potohar, Muhammad Waqas Khan conducted a raid and managed to net the criminals who were record holders. The accused had been sent to jail for identification parade, he added.

IRSA releases 234,300 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 234,300 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 333,000 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1445.61 feet and was 47.61 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. The water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 140,300 cusecs and 85,000 cusecs, respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1143.00 feet, which was 93.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded at 71,400 cusecs and 28,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur has been recorded as 108,800, 106,400, 58,700 and 22,600 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 73,300 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 28,700 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

AIOU begins autumn admissions from July 15

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Allama Iqbal Open University's (AIOU) admissions for the autumn 2023 semester will commence from July 15. Every citizen of Pakistan must encourage the children who are deprived of education in their area to take admission. Vice Chancellor AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood said in a meeting with tutors and resource persons at Faisalabad Regional Campus. Director General Regional Services, Dr. Malik Tauqir Ahmad Khan and Regional Director Faisalabad, Dr. Bashir Ahmad Samim, CEO and DEO of District Education Authority were also present in this meeting held regarding the admission campaign. Dr. Nasir Mahmood said that AIOU is expanding its regional network to provide educational facilities to every Pakistani child. He added that the university provides free matric education to the people of Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan and tribal districts. AIOU also provides scholarships to jail inmates, transgenders, and special persons. Dr. Nasir said that this semester, the admission campaign will be carried out as a movement. Regional Directors, tutors, resource persons, and students should conduct door-to-door admission campaigns across Pakistan to convey the message of the AIOU. Later, VC AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood planted a tree in the Faisalabad campus regarding the plantation campaign.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Rana Tanveer Hussain addressing the launching ceremony "Leadership for Inclusion" School Leadership programme in Federal Schools.

Wafaqi Mohtasib inspection team visits Isamabad Airport

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: On receiving a number of complaints from the domestic and international passengers pertaining to Islamabad International Airport, the Wafaqi Mohtasib Mr. Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi, constituted an inspection team comprising officers of the Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat headed by Senior Adviser Overseas Pakistanis. The team visited the airport on 15 June 2023 to assess the functioning of the personnel deputed at the airport as well as to look into the procedural issues, especially working of the joint search counters. Consultations were held with the ASF, ANF and Customs representatives. It was observed that within the resources available, the task assigned to them was being carried out satisfactorily. Their input for improving the mechanism was noted for further action by the concerned authorities.

Inspection Team also visited National and International and CIP lounges, baggage claim

area, immigration counters, health services, Airport Security office, and other related agencies counters. The team directed to install CCTV cameras at joint search desks of the FIA, ANF, ASF and Customs.

The directions for displaying bill boards disseminating information for passengers in Urdu and English regarding prohibited items be displayed at all counters were passed to administrative staff. The Wafaqi Mohtasib received some complaints of demanding unlawful money from the passengers. The inspection team directed the airport management to conduct inquiry against such elements involved in this activity and submit report accordingly.

The team also observed the absence of representative of Ministry of Religious Affairs and directed the concerned Ministry to make their representative available at OWFD during Haj flights. It was also brought into the notice of inspection team that the check-in staff was asking for the printed copy

of the E- reservation for which it was decided that the Airport Management will install printer at the counter to facilitate the passengers. It was also recommended by the team that a pamphlet showing the list of prohibited items be attached with ticket and the same may also be displayed on screens at the airport, to facilitate passengers.

The team took the notice of non-availability of "Visa Protection Stamp" for the convenience of travelling immigrants and directed for its immediate availability. The team also visited One Window Facilitation Desk (OWFD) which has been established on the direction of Federal Ombudsman to facilitate overseas Pakistanis having representatives of all 12 Federal Agencies present round the clock, to assist and resolve the passenger's complaints on the spot.

The Airport official informed that as per direction of Ombudsman, Separate counters for senior citizens, females and diplomats have been earmarked during the process of check-in and visa control.

Traffic Police to ensure road discipline in city

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Traffic Officer Dr Syed Mustafa Tanveer has urged the force personnel to discharge their duties professionally and work hard to maintain a good image of the force. In a meeting held here at Traffic Headquarters, he asked policemen to adopt a courteous attitude with the public and make more efforts for the equal implementation of traffic laws on roads showing politeness and a firm attitude.

The meeting was attended by all Zonal DSPs and other police officials as well as jawans among others. The purpose of the meeting, which was organized under the direction of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPPO) Dr Akbar Nasir Khan, was to discuss personal and departmental improvements and to provide an opportunity for the participants to present their suggestions. Acknowledging the esteemed status of Islamabad Capital Police as

a role model, Dr Syed Mustafa Tanveer stressed that every person entering the city looks up to them.

He commended the dedication of every officer and young official who tirelessly serve the citizens day and night, even in challenging weather conditions such as cold, heat, rain, and storms. The Chief Traffic Officer urged them to uphold decency and manners in all situations and ensure the resolution of parking issues and the enforcement of the law.

In particular, the Chief Traffic Officer emphasized the importance of maintaining ethical conduct, highlighting how even a minor mistake could tarnish the department's reputation. Conversely, he emphasized that the good work of the officers and young officials is instrumental in raising the department's standards.

To further enhance law enforcement efforts, Dr Syed Mustafa Tanveer called for more effective actions against traffic law

violators. He also stressed the need for officers and young officials of Islamabad Capital Police to be present in rush-prone areas, ensuring smooth traffic flow and preventing transportation difficulties for citizens.

By diligently implementing traffic laws, the department aims to send a message to visitors from other regions that there is no room for mistakes. Failure to comply with traffic laws will result in the issuance of tickets.

Additionally, Chief Traffic Officer Dr Syed Mustafa Tanveer assured the officers and young officials that all necessary facilities would be provided to them during duty hours, recognizing the importance of supporting their work. Islamabad Capital Police aims to strengthen its commitment to professionalism, law enforcement, and citizen service, establishing itself as a model for other law enforcement agencies in the country.

ANF seizes 184 kg drugs in seven operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in their ongoing operations against drug traffickers conducted seven raids across the country and managed to recover over 184 kg of drugs besides netting five accused including two Afghan nationals, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday.

He informed that in an operation, 22.8 kg hashish was recovered from a vehicle intercepted near Motorway Toll Plaza Islamabad. The recovered hashish was concealed in the CNG cylinder of a vehicle. During the operation, an accused resident of Peshawar was arrested.

In another operation, two kg heroin and two kg Ice drug concealed in secret cavities of a vehicle were recovered.

The vehicle was intercepted near Sangjani Toll Plaza on G.T Road. Two Afghan nationals were also arrested on the spot. The spokesman said that during an

operation on Hub River Road, Karachi, 22 kg of hashish was recovered from a parcel being sent through a passenger bus service from Chaman to Karachi.

In another operation, 32.4 kg of hashish was recovered from a truck intercepted on Ring Road Peshawar.

An accused who was trying to smuggle drugs from Bara to Karachi, a resident of Khyber was arrested during the operation. Nine kg hashish concealed in the Bara area of Khyber was also seized, he said adding, 70.8 kg hashish and 22.8 kg opium were recovered from a vehicle stopped near Sianwali Interchange, Faisalabad.

The accused were trying to smuggle drugs through a vehicle by affixing an official number plate. An accused resident of Peshawar was arrested on the spot. Separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process, he added.

Education Ministry approves new National Curriculum of Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training has approved the new National Curriculum of Pakistan after seventeen years of the previous curriculum that was notified in 2006.

A notification in that regard has been issued by the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training.

The task of curriculum development for grades 9 to 12, was carried out in an inclusive manner. Relevant stakeholders were taken on board with all the steps of curriculum development, the notification said. An intensive consultation exercise was carried out with the stakeholders including policymakers, academics, practitioners, parents, and students from across Pakistan, it added.

For this purpose, not only policy dialogues were conducted across Pakistan but also a number of curriculum workshops

were held to take feedback from the concerned. Moreover, all concerned were also invited to share their feedback via an online portal.

After regional curriculum workshops in each province, a final curriculum workshop was held at National Curriculum Council (NCC) Secretariat Islamabad where nominated experts from all the provinces, Azad Jammu & Kashmir, and Gilgit Baltistan signed off the curriculum for nine subjects: Urdu, English, Islamiyat, Pakistan Studies, Math, Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Computer Science. Meanwhile, in order to ensure the implementation of the curriculum, several meetings of the stakeholders were convened. However, after detailed deliberations, the curriculum has been notified for Islamabad Capital Territory and for the institutions under the Federal Ministries.

PJSC appeals Prime Minister to notify federal safety commission for journalists

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Key media stakeholders have urged Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif to urgently fulfil his pending promise of operationalizing the Federal Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals Act, passed in 2021, to allow journalists to combat impunity of crimes against them.

This appeal came in a meeting of the federal chapter of the Pakistan Journalists Safety Coalition (PJSC), a grouping of journalist representative bodies, national and international media watchdogs, human rights commissions, digital rights groups, human rights advocates and political parties, among others, in a meeting held in Islamabad.

PJSC successfully influenced the process of the passage of the federal and Sindh legislations, both of which made Pakistan the first country in the world to specifically legislate on safety of journalists inspired by the UN Plan of Action on Safety of Journalists and Issues of Impunity. The PJSC is currently working with the Sindh Commission for the Protection of Journalists and Other Media Professionals. The PJSC meeting also expressed concern at the ongoing wave of intimidation against journalists in the country and repeated attempts by both the previous and present governments to make media and free speech related laws and regulations more dra-

conian. The meeting pointed out that dozens of journalists have been arrested, kidnapped, assaulted, injured since the passage of the Federal Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals Act, passed in 2021, but were not able to benefit from it in the absence of a safety commission. It noted that both the Imran Khan and Shahbaz Sharif governments have failed to notify a commission and appoint a chairperson to operationalize the law.

It unanimously passed a resolution demanding the following from the federal government:

Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif must fulfil the promise he made at an international conference in Islamabad in December 2022 to formally operationalize the Federal Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals Act, 2021, by urgently notifying the federal safety commission for journalists. The law was enacted 19 months ago – its non-operationalization continues to mock the extraordinary parliamentary consensus from all major parties that passed it, including by PML-N, PPP, PTI, JUI, ANP, MQM, PML-Q, BAP and others, and allows impunity of crimes against journalists to perpetuate itself, particularly in Islamabad. The federal government must, as promised, start the process of removing Section 6 from the Federal Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals Act, 2021, which makes it mandatory on journalists to prove

their "good faith and intent" if their journalism is challenged and before they can benefit from the law. Section 6 effectively nullifies the spirit of the otherwise excellent law. This "pre-qualification" clause must be removed from the law. The federal government and its subordinate institutions must stop branding of journalists as traitors and enemies of the state and desist from invoking colonial-era laws and concepts in dealing with dissent and debate within the media landscape. This is having a chilling effect on Article 19 and 19A of the constitution and undermining the fourth pillar of the state and will worsen Pakistan's already precariously poor rankings on global media freedom indexes.

The federal government must stop efforts to bring in any proposed regulations or legislation aimed at curbing freedom of expression and access to information and no changes in laws and rules and regulations related to and free speech, including online freedom of expression, must be made without broad-based consultations with all key relevant stakeholders.

All existing adversarial cases against journalists must be immediately withdrawn, allowing them due process of law, and journalist Imran Riaz, who has been missing for several weeks, must be produced before a court of law to allow him to defend himself in accordance with the law. No journalist should be arrested.

cyclone emergency situation reviewed

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister Secretary Communications and Chairman National Highway Authority (NHA) Captain (ret) Muhammad Khuram Agha on Thursday chaired an emergency meeting of the NHA officials in Quetta and reviewed arrangements to handle situation arising out of Cyclone Biparjoy.

As there was danger of more intensity in the cyclone, and some low-lying areas of Balochistan might be affected by the storm at any time, he added. On the special instructions of the Prime

Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Minister of Communications Asad Mahmood, the Federal Secretary of Communications and Chairman NHA immediately had reached Quetta.

NHA member Balochistan Shahid Ihsanullah while briefing him said that necessary machinery and staff had been sent to all sensitive places which would be ready all the time to deal with any emergency. He said that in Dana Sar highway affected by yesterday's landslide had been opened for traffic immediately.

ly while they were in touch with the Meteorological Department to get latest updates on weather situation. While reviewing the emergency meeting and all the arrangements, Khuram Agha issued instructions to the relevant officials and staff of NHA that the national highways should be kept open for traffic in any case during the possible storm and public grievances should be redressed in time.

CORRIGENDUM

With reference to the advertisement published on dated 09th June 2023, for Invitation to Bid (ITB), the last date is hereby extended till June 23rd 2023 at 02:00 PM.

Other terms and conditions of the said job advertisement will remain same.

REQUIRED

(Faculty / Staff/ Consultancy Services)

Applications are invited from Pakistani Nationals for the following Faculty and Administrative positions at Iqra University, H-9, Islamabad Campus:

Faculty Positions

- > Professor(s): Computer Sciences
- > Professor(s): Business Administration
- > Professor(s): Social Sciences

Required Qualification & Experience:

- > As per HEC Criteria
- > Applicants with degree(s) from technically advanced countries will be preferred.

Administrative Positions

- > Deputy Registrar (Academics)
- > Manager Marketing & Placement

Deputy Registrar (Academics):

- > Required Qualification & Experience:
- > MS/M. Phil Degree or equivalent degree from HEC recognized University/institute
- > At least 5-7 years of experience in the relevant field, preferably in the University or Degree awarding institute

Consultancy Services

Iqra University, located in H-9, Islamabad, is seeking a dynamic and experienced individual or firm to join our team as a Marketing/IT Consultant. The selected candidate/firm will be responsible for managing the overall marketing, IT services and social media activities of Iqra University Islamabad H-9 Campus.

Requirements:

- **For individuals:** MBA Degree or equivalent degree in the relevant discipline from an HEC recognized University/institute. Minimum of 3-5 years of experience in the relevant field, preferably in a University or Degree awarding institute.
- **For Firms** Firms are requested to share their portfolios along with the application.

How to Apply:

Send application with a detailed CV/Resume to Manager HR:

hr@iqraisb.edu.pk

Please mention the Position you are applying for in the Subject line.

Important Notes:

Only shortlisted candidates will be called for an interview. No TA/DA will be admissible for the interview.

LAST DATE TO APPLY: June 20, 2023

CORRIGENDUM

TENDER NOTICE SERVICES HOSPITAL PESHAWAR

زیر دستگی کوہر مہر ہسپتال پشاور کیلئے فزول جو کہ انکم ٹیکس ایگزٹیکٹس کے ساتھ رجسٹرڈ ہوں، سے مندرجہ ذیل اشیاء کیلئے برائے سال 2023-24 مزاد کا عمل کیا جائے گا۔ یہ مزاد یکم ستمبر 2023ء کو شروع ہوگا۔ مزاد دہرہ ذیل شرائط کی پیشکش مطلوب ہیں۔ ہر طرح سے عمل کی پیشکش مورخہ 22-06-2023 سے ہر اس کر 26-06-2023 10 بجے بذریعہ رجسٹرڈ ڈاک یا کوئیز سرورسز چھانچا جائے گا۔ جو کہ اس دن 11:00 بجے پھر کیمپن کے سامنے کھولے جائیں گے۔ دستی بندیز ہرگز وصول نہیں کئے جائیں گے۔ تاہم شرائط وضوایا حسب ٹینڈر لاءا گونگے۔

مزید یکم ستمبر ٹینڈنٹ سرورسز ہسپتال پشاور

INF(P) 1296/23, The Frontier Post Peshawar, Date: 16-06-2023

OFFICE OF THE ACCOUNTANT GENERAL PAKISTAN REVENUES SUB OFFICE, QUETTA PAKISTAN AUDIT & ACCOUNTS COMPLEX, ZARGHOWN ROAD NEAR IMAD CHOWK, QUETTA Phone Exchange : (091) 923416-923419 Fax : (091) 9234320

اطلاع برائے وفاقی پیشتر

محکمہ ایف جی پو پشاور کے رہنما ذیل پیشتر جن کی پیشکش ایک ڈائریکٹ کریٹ سسٹم (DCS) پر مشتمل نہیں ہوئی ان کی ہولت کے لئے مشترک کیا جاتا ہے کہ اپنے مندرجہ ذیل پیشتر دستاویزات براہ راست اکاؤنٹس آفیسر پیشتر سے کی جاتی ہیں۔ اس سب آفس کو، پاکستان ڈائریکٹ اکاؤنٹس کیپٹل سروسز کوڈ کے تحت پیشتر کریں۔

1۔ اسٹیٹ ٹی بی ڈی ایکس ہاؤس ایک

2۔ ڈائریکٹریٹ 43-ATM

3۔ ٹی بی ڈی ایکس کیپٹل سروسز ہاؤس ایک

4۔ آفیسر کیپٹل

5۔ ایکس آفیسر فارم (محکمہ ایکس سے تصدیق شدہ)

6۔ شادی کارڈ ایکس

7۔ پیو پشتر کے لئے نان میرٹ ٹولکٹ

اسٹیشن ٹیکس کی جی معلومات کے لئے درج ذیل نمبرز پر رابطہ کریں۔

1۔ اسٹنٹ اکاؤنٹس آفیسر 0321-8033036

2۔ اسٹنٹ اکاؤنٹس آفیسر 0321-8001809

3۔ اکاؤنٹس آفیسر 0321-8023764

(Accounts Officer) Admin AGPR (Sub-Office) Quetta PID(Q)361/2022



Jirga meeting of elders organized

PESHAWAR (APP): A 60-member Jirga meeting called on Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali at the Governor's House, consisting of tribal chiefs, owners, and elders of the merged district of Bajaur here on Thursday.

The Tribal Jirga apprised Governor Haji Ghulam Ali about the problems and difficulties faced by the business community and the people of the area related to electricity load shedding, educational institutions, hospitals, irrigation, and infrastructure.

"Despite the economic crisis, the federal govern-

ment has allocated 57 billion rupees for the merged districts in the budget," Haji Ghulam Ali informed the Jirga elders.

"The federal and provincial governments are taking serious steps to ensure the socio-economic development of the merged districts," Haji Ghulam Ali told the Jirga members.

He said, "Tribal districts have become part of the province, problems and difficulties will be solved according to the constitution and law."

"The tribal people have always supported the country's integrity and unity,

national institutions, and defense institutions including the Pakistan Army, which is a matter of pride," Haji Ghulam Ali said.

"Bajaur is a peaceful area and the land here is also fertile," he said.

He said, "An efficient irrigation system can be implemented with the installation of solar tube wells for the development of the agricultural sector in Bajaur. For the first time, the elders are making the Governor's House like their home and they thanked the Governor for listening to their problems and giving assurance for their solutions."



PESHAWAR: 60-member Jirga of Bajaur meeting with Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali at Governor's House.



PESHAWAR: Minister of State Faisal Karim Kundi giving a cheque of Rs.40 million to President High Court Bar Association Malik Hidayat and General Secretary Waqar Alam Advocate.

Turkish envoy discusses trade, economic ties

PESHAWAR (APP): The Turkish Ambassador to Pakistan Dr. Mehmet Pacaci called on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Adnan Jalil, here in the Civil Secretariat on Thursday.

During the meeting the provincial minister and Turkish ambassador discussed matters of bilateral interest with special focus on economic and trade relations. The Turkish ambassador was also given a detailed briefing on potential sectors for investment.

Talking on the occasion, the caretaker minister expressed that Pakistan and Turkiye have deep rooted religious and culture based relations, which have his-

toric aspect.

He said that both countries have extended support to each other at the time of every need, saying this bond will always remain intact.

The provincial minister highlighted the possibilities of investment in various potential sectors before the Turkish ambassador and said that the province has attractions for investment in tourism, mineral, engineering, technical education, hydel power, agriculture and other sectors and invited Turkish investors for making investment in these sectors of the province.

He on behalf of the caretaker provincial government congratulated the Turkish ambassador on re-

election of the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and also expressed good wishes for the people of Turkiye.

Speaking on the occasion, the Turkish ambassador said that Pakistan and Turkiye have been tied in the bonds of Islamic brotherhood and cultural harmony and are interested in further expansion of these relations.

The ambassador said that no doubt Khyber Pakhtunkhwa offers opportunities for Turkish investors and he will make efforts to attract the investors of his country to make investment in the potential sectors of this province.

On this occasion, they both also agreed to further strengthen bilateral trade and business relations.

PIC unveils upgraded pediatric ward

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar Institute of Cardiology proudly presents its newly upgraded Pediatric Ward, made possible through the generous support of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency.

The ward's unveiling took place during the visit of Dr. Mehmet Pacaci, the Turkish

Ambassador to Pakistan, who graciously inaugurated the facility and assessed the outstanding healthcare services provided by PIC.

The enhanced Pediatric Ward now boasts cutting-edge machinery, including Infusion pumps, ECHO machines, screens, and dedicated play areas for children. These state-of-the-art upgrades will greatly benefit

young patients with cardiac disease, ensuring the highest standard of care and comfort.

Dr. Mehmet Pacaci expressed his satisfaction in strengthening communication channels between the Peshawar Institute of Cardiology and Turkish institutions, setting the stage for further advancements in the field of pediatric cardiology.

KMU declares MBBS examination 2022 results



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Medical University (KMU) Peshawar has announced the MBBS Final Professional Session 2022 Annual Examination Results. A total of 1915 students from 16 medical colleges of the public and private sector participated in the exam, out of which 1794 students passed, thus the overall success rate was 93 percent.

According to the results, Sumyya Habib, a student of Northwest School of Medicine (NWSM), Peshawar, stood first with

1464 marks, Saima Khan Mehsood of Gomal Medical College, Dera Ismail Khan, secured second position with 1431 marks, while Rahat Khan of Saidu Medical College (SMC) Swat grabbed third position by scoring 1430 marks.

According to the details, 1915 male and female students from 10 public and 6 private sector medical colleges of the province participated in the said examination, out of which 1794 students succeeded, while the overall result was 93 percent. It is worth mentioning that the MBBS final professional exam has a total of

1600 marks; at least 50% of marks are mandatory for success in each subject.

Meanwhile, the vice-chancellor of KMU Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq congratulated the successful students, especially the first, second, and third position holders, and said that these young doctors are the pride of the nation.

He said that these young doctors will not only fulfill the expectations of their parents and teachers but will also play an essential role in the welfare of society by making the service of suffering humanity the motto of their lives.

Malgary Doctoran demands restoration F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Malgary Doctoran played delay in promotion of General cadre doctors and argued competent to restore 240 general cadre posts while demanded 50% increase in salaries, on Thursday.

The demands were by Malgary Doctoran in a meeting chaired by the president Dr. Haider Ali while general secretary Dr. Rohail, Senior Vice President Dr. Hamid Bangash and Information Secretary Shahzad addressed the participants.

The speakers claimed that 8 months earlier Promotion Board was held for general cadre doctors but till today their notification didn't issued while their salaries are closed and previous government policies continued with full zeal.

Malgary Doctoran requested Governor, Chief Minister, Advisor and Secretary's health to address the issue by promoting general cadre doctors and adjustment in Medical Teaching Institution (MTI).

They argued that MTI's Board of Governors didn't adjusted general cadre doctors which is against the law.

Malgary Doctoran requested the redressal of their grievance otherwise they will be compel to approach each and every forum in favor of their demands.

'Materials in Orthopedics' organized F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A one-day workshop on "Materials in Orthopedics" was held here on Thursday. The workshop aimed at sharing the best practices in the field of materials used in orthopedics was jointly organized by the Department of Mechanical Engineering, UET Peshawar and Department of Orthopedics, Peshawar General Hospital (PGH).

The Vice Chancellor UET Peshawar Prof. Dr. Iftikhar Hussain addressed the audience as chief guest. He emphasized over the increasing importance of materials in orthopedics which will help expand the scope of orthopedic care through cutting edge technology taking place in material sciences and engineering fields.

He appreciated the efforts of Prof. Dr. Rizwan M. Gul, Chairman Department of Mechanical Engineering UET Peshawar for arranging the workshop on "Materials in Orthopedics" under the project titled "Ultra High Molecular Weight Polyethylene with Rigid Reinforced Structures for use in Artificial Joint Application" funded by HEC and Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF), which is an important topic to mitigate the development of material defect or malfunction that can have catastrophic consequences for the patients, he added.

The experts recommended for concerted efforts between the medical doctors and engineers from the field of material sciences in order to develop sustainable and long lasting orthopedic materials, implants and devices for advancement in the field of orthopedics in Pakistan.

The workshop particularly focused on the main factors of friction, wear and lubrication (Tribology) and Mechanical Properties in Total Joint Replacement.

The speakers included Prof. Dr. Rizwan M. Gul, who gave an overview of materials in orthopedics and recent developments in use of UHMWPE in Total Joint Replacement.

ATC convicts 2 policemen for lifetime imprisonment

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Special Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Peshawar convicted two policemen (Raiders) for lifetime imprisonment in killing of student belonging to Bannu, on Wednesday.

According to prosecution, police raiders named Rustam resident of Ghari Qamar Din and Rooh Ullah resident of Pandhu opened firing on car at 2'o clock AM at midnight on 8th March 2021 in which Mubashir Ahmad Wazir was killed.

The firing opened near Railway station on Dalazak road while police raiders escaped after shooting the

motorcar in which Mubashir Ahmad was killed who reached Peshawar test to obtain admission in higher studies.

The police raiders named Rustam and Roohullah was nominated in the First Information Report (FIR) after conclusion of investigation while challan was submitted before the court after their arrest.

Special ATC has convicted policemen Rustam and Rooh Ullah for lifetime imprisonment after establishment of murder with police raiders as well as conclusion of arguments.

Although, Additional District and Session (AD&SJ) Syed Badshah

has rejected bail plea of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Mahmood Jan in murder case while accepted bail petition in attempt to murder offense.

Former Deputy Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly and PTI leader Mahmood Jan booked in several offenses including murder and attempt to murder as well as opening firing on Essakhel tribe.

According to prosecution, Mahmood Jan has opened firing on Essakhel procession over land dispute in the premises of Regi police station in which two persons were killed while several others were injured.

Former Deputy Speaker

has approached Session Court for bails while AD&SJ accepted bail in section 324 offense while rejected pleas in 302 offense and ordered to kept behind bars. Moreover, AD&SJ Peshawar Atta Ullah Jan has turn down bail plea of alleged fraudulent in bounce cheques while the accused was arrested from the court's room.

According to prosecution, Khalil Ullah has issued three cheques of Rs.2.4 million which was bounced while approaching the bank, however, Sami Ullah the complainant has filed First Information Report at Faqirabad police station in this regard.

HEC and federal govt approved groundbreaking project

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) and the Federal Government have recently approved a groundbreaking project with a budget of over Rs. 2 billion to strengthen the Women University Swabi (New Campus). This approval is a major milestone for the university and holds immense potential to uplift the academic and co-curricular facilities available to the students. The project comprises various vital components such as civil work, ICT networking services,

furniture and fixtures, lab equipment, books and journals, the Project Implementation Unit (PIU), operational vehicles, and a contingency fund.

The civil work component of the project involves the construction of significant structures including academic blocks, a central library, students' hostels, a multi-purpose hall, an examination block, a cafeteria, a guest house, the Vice Chancellor's house, and external developmental works. These infrastructural developments will provide a conducive environment for learning and

empower students to excel academically while actively participating in co-curricular activities.

The successful approval of this project is a testament to the continuous efforts and dedication, as well as the personal interest and support of the Vice Chancellor Women University Swabi Professor Dr. Nasir Jamal Khattak, Registrar Waqar Ahmad and Director of Planning & Development Shafi Ullah Marwat. The upgraded facilities and resources will contribute to the overall development of the university and offer enhanced

educational opportunities for its students. This initiative reflects the HEC and the Federal Government's commitment to promoting women's education and investing in the development of educational institutions across the nation.

IRSA holds 'Book of Kindness' F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: International Relations Students Association (IRSA) of the Department of International Relations, UOP arranged a two-day literary event called "Book of Kindness," which proved to be a resounding success, attracting the participation of numerous students.

The primary objective of this campaign was to foster benevolence and enhance literacy. Students were actively encouraged to bring any books they no longer desired or required and exchange them with a diverse selection of books donated by their peers.

The book exchange presented a valuable opportunity for students to acquire new reading materials, while simultaneously offering a means to part ways with unwanted books. Additionally, it served as an excellent avenue for students to forge new connections and cultivate friendships.

Inspired by the triumph of this endeavor, the IR department plans to expand the campaign to other departments, aspiring to engage more and more students.

Such initiatives hold immense value as they contribute to the advancement of kindness, literacy, and community cohesion.

Senate meeting of UET okays budget estimates



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Minister for Higher Education Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Irshad Qaisar chaired the 13th meeting of the UET Peshawar Senate held the other day in the Governor House Peshawar.

The Vice Chancellor, UET Peshawar Prof. Dr. Iftikhar Hussain briefed the meeting about the progress and budget of the university. The meeting approved the proposed budget estimates of Rs. 2414.521 mil-

lion for the year 2023-24. The University was appreciated for its efforts of curtailing its cost from different areas and ensuring austerity measures at its best. During the meeting, the Vice Chancellor thanked the provincial government as well as HEC for their support and reiterated that the University's overall performance as per the Times Higher Education ranking for the previous has shown outstanding results in engineering and over all categories due to

excellence in faculty research, quality teaching and academic linkages. Justice (R) Irshad Qaisar commended the untiring efforts of Dr. Iftikhar Hussain and his team for the academic uplifting of the university.

The meeting was attended by Dr. Aneela Mehfooz Durrani, Secretary Higher Education Department, KP, Prof. Dr. Misbah Ullah, Treasurer, Dr. Khizar Azam Khan, Registrar UET Peshawar and other senior officials.

Strict disciplinary action to be taken: KPIC

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) KP Information Commission (KPIC), Mrs. Farah Hamid Khan took serious notice of non-compliance, in personal hearing of complaint no 9594 of Mr. Shaheer Durrani resident of District Peshawar here in the Commission office.

Complainant namely Mr. Durrani filed a complaint under Section 23 (1) of the RTI Act 2013 to the Commission against the University of Engineering & Technology Mardan (UETM) wherein he had sought information regarding the appointment details of Additional Registrar from the PIO/ Deputy Registrar Establishment

Mr. Ishaq Khan and Mr. Kamran, Law Officer UETMardan. CIC directed the PIO/Registrar UET Mardan to proactively disclose all the 12 categories of information of the University as mandated in the Section 5 of the KP RTI Act 2013 on the official website of the University which will not only help in merit based appointments but also enhance public trust in the government institutions.

While adjudicating another complaint no 9975 of Dr. Khalid Khan, who had filed a complaint with the Commission against KP Information Technology Board. Wherein he had requested for provision of attested copies of amended KP IT Act, amended

Service Rules, details of foreign and domestic visits of the employees of the KP IT Board etc.

The CIC took serious notice of non-compliance of Section 5 of the KP RTI Act i.e. Pro Active Disclosure of Information and directed the PIO/ Deputy Director Finance KP IT Board, Mr. Yasir Shafique to provide the relevant documents to the complainant with in the stipulated time so as to meet the objective of transparency in the province.

The Commission is strongly committed to enable the citizens to have access to information of public importance and helping in building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Fatimid Foundation holds ceremony F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Fatimid Foundation arranged a ceremony World Blood Donation Day in which donor including different colleges and universities along with large number from every walk of life were present.

The chief guest of the ceremony was Director Peshawar Model Degree College Muhammad Ghayur Sethi while members of Rotary Club along with large number of civil society members were present at the occasion. The participants visited thalassemia ward and met with the patients.

Fatimid Foundation Administrator Badar Hussain briefed the participants regarding facilities and operations of the foundation.



In brief

Shopkeepers hold protest F.P. Report

LARKANA : Last day, a protest demonstration was held in front of the press club by the shopkeepers' association in Garilo City, a suburb of Larkana, in which Shafiq Ahmad Mangi Majid Jatoi, Ghulam Abbas Solangi and others said that Zeeshan, a shopkeeper near Garilo, Jatoi, who was taken hostage by unknown armed men and subjected to severe torture for resisting the robbery of lakhs of rupees, is undergoing treatment in a hospital in Larkana, he said that the robbers were on the roads between Garilo Police Station and the nearby Rashid Vigan Police Station. Raj hai day looting is going on but the police is helpless in front of these beasts.

Bid to smuggle narcotics foiled

FAISALABAD (INP): The Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) on Thursday foiled a bid to smuggle huge quantity of narcotics from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to Punjab and arrested three drug peddlers. On a tip-off about smuggling of drug from tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to Faisalabad started snap checking of vehicles at Gulistan Colony. During search of two suspicious cars, 200 kilogram hashish was recovered from secret cavities of the vehicles. The ANF impounded the vehicles with recovered hashish and arrested three drug pushers who were being investigated.

One killed, 20 injured in clash

JAFFARBAD (INP): A marriage ceremony converted into battle field when two group attacked each other after exchanging hatred words in Jaffarabad district of Balochistan on Thursday. According to media report, two participant groups in a wedding ceremony quarreled each other over a minor issue. Both group attacked on and other with rods, daggers and axes. In result one person was killed and 20 others suffered injuries during clash. On receiving call about the incident, Police and ambulances arrived at the scene and handled the injured. Police also collected the all possible evidence and started investigation. Police shifted the dead body of the deceased to hospital for autopsy.

Levies squad seizes arms

CHAGAI (PPI): Special levies squad, Chagai claimed to have seized cache of arms, ammunition, including land mines, missile rounds, and drugs, in an operation conducted in Essa Kur area near Pak-Afghan border on Thursday. Following the directions of Deputy Commissioner, Chagai, Hussain Jan Baloch and Assistant Commissioner, Dalbandin, Abdul Basit Buzdar, staff of special levies squad, Chagai under the supervision of Karim Notezai, Incharge, special levies squad, Chagai seized arms and ammunition, including two missiles, two land mines, 440 rounds of LMG, 130 rounds of SMG, 100 round of Aircraft and about 20 kilogram opium, in a raid conducted at Essa Kur area near Pak-Afghan area in district Chagai. Further investigation was underway.

Two killed

LASBELA (INP): Two including a woman died while children among 10 others were injured in collision between passenger coach and a truck here on Thursday, police said. The accident took place in Kathore Kad near Bela area of Lasbela where a Quetta bound over speeding passenger coach coming from Karachi collided with a truck.



QUETTA: Activists of APCA holding a protest rally for acceptance of their demands.

KP Minister, CEO EZDMC visit Jalozei EZ

F.P. Report

NOWSHERA: KP Minister for Industries, Commerce & Technical Education (IC&TE), Adnan Jalil, along with Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KP-EZDMC), Javed Iqbal Khattak, visited the Jalozei Economic Zone on Thursday.

This visit was aimed at exploring the thriving industrial landscape within the zone and showcasing the remarkable achievements of the company for promotion of industrial growth in the province. During their visit, they inaugurated Aqua Pura Smart Industry, a state-of-the-art facility specializing in advanced drinking water treatment technologies. This cutting-edge enterprise will only contribute to the local economy.

Furthermore, Minister Adnan Jalil and CEO Javed

Khattak have had the opportunity to witness the development of Khalid Zubair Chemical Industry that is under construction. This upcoming venture holds great promise for the industrial sector and will play a pivotal role in fostering innovation, job creation, and economic prosperity.

Emphasizing the importance of environmental sustainability, the provincial minister Adnan Jalil and CEO Javed Khattak also planted a tree under the "green plantation drive" campaign. This symbolic gesture underscores the commitment of KP-EZDMC towards creating a greener, cleaner, and more sustainable industrial landscape.

The dignitaries also took a comprehensive tour of the economic zone, visiting various industrial sites and engaging in constructive discussions with industrialists. These interactions aimed to foster collaboration, address challenges,

and explore opportunities for further growth and development within the zone. KP-EZDMC's relentless efforts in promoting industrial growth in the region are commendable as through visionary approach and unwavering commitment, the Jalozei Economic Zone has been transformed into a vibrant hub of innovation and economic activity.

The company's proactive initiatives have attracted local and foreign investments, creating employment opportunities, boosting exports, and catalyzing overall economic progress. The visit to Jalozei Economic Zone is a testament to the Government's unwavering dedication to fostering a conducive environment for industrial development. The visit not only highlighted the remarkable achievements, rather also reaffirmed the commitment of KP-EZDMC to build a prosperous future for the region.

Chief Secretary KP visits Swat

F.P. Report

MINGORA: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry Thursday visited Swat and inspected the affected road of Bahrain Bazar due to flooding in tourists resort Tehsil Bahrain.

The Chief Secretary during his visit, told media men that efforts have been taken to bring the Bahrain Bazar trouble free. The District Administration, he said, has taken measures on an emergency basis for the early restoration of Bazar Road.

Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry, the Chief Secretary KP, said that the aim and objective of the visit is to give assurance to the people running their businesses in Bahrain bazar that the government has taken quick action in this connection. He said Bahrain bazaar was affected because of the flood waters and faced difficulties so he himself visited the area.

All institutions are active for the restoration of road infrastructure in the affected areas as soon as possible. Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry said. The caretaker provincial minister for communication and construction Muhammad Ali Shah, and the corresponding secretary were also accompanied by the Chief Secretary.

He said, full funds will be given for the rehabilitation of the affected road. Bahrain will take all possible measures to restore the beauty and splendor of the bazaar, the Chief Secretary assured. For the convenience of tourists, restoration of the flood-affected road as soon as possible is the first priority, Chief Secretary KP said. An alternative bypass from Bahrain Bazaar is also being planned, Chief Secretary informed.

'Transmission line to be restored'

THATTA (INP): Energy Minister Engineer Khurram Dastgir on Thursday visited Jhimpir – a rural area of Thatta district in Sindh – to monitoring the restoration work launched after strong winds triggered by Biparjoy knocked down a transmission line.

He said the National Transmission and Dispatch Company (NTDC) was working on the eight affected power pylons of 132KV transmission line toppled a day earlier, which would be completed within three days. This transmission line connects the three wind power plants – Indus, Liberty I and Liberty II – established in the Jhimpir area to the nearby grid station and thus to the national grid. Known as "Jhimpir Wind Corridor", the region is considered most suitable for wind power generation and thus become first location selected for this purpose in the country.

Talking about the effects on national grid, the minister told media that supply of 60 megawatts of electricity had been suspended while the remaining 134 megawatts generated in the Jhimpir Wind Corridor were still supplied to the national grid.

Picturesque tourist destination destroy in militancy: Kumar

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: Minister of State and Chairman of Prime Minister's Taskforce on Gandhara Tourism Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani on Thursday said that Malamjabba, located in the Swat Valley of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province is a picturesque tourist destination renowned for its natural beauty and adventure opportunities but unfortunately due to terrorism it was affected.

During his two-day visit to Buddhist Archaeological sites, located in Swat valley Minister Kumar visited Malamjabba and said he visited Malamjabba to promote inter-faith harmony and generate revenue through promotion of religious tourism.

Minister for State Dr Ramesh Kumar said that nestled amidst the stunning Hindu Kush mountain range, Malamjabba offers breathtaking panoramic views, lush green meadows attract tourists from all over the world. The region is blessed with a moderate climate, making it an ideal getaway for nature lovers, hikers, and skiing enthusiasts, Kumar added.

The resort offers well-groomed slopes, ski lifts, and equipment rentals, catering to both beginners and experienced skiers, said Dr Kumar. Ramesh Kumar further said that the region is also home to several beautiful lakes and offers a variety of other activities for tourists to enjoy.

He said Malamjabba boasts a rich cultural heritage, with several historical sites and archaeological remains scattered throughout the valley. Tourists can visit ancient Buddhist stupas, monasteries, and



ruins that provide insights into the region's past and generate employment opportunities for locals.

He said that he is working on bringing a National Gandhara Tourism Policy to boost religious tourism. It is a place where you can immerse yourself in the beauty of the mountains, rejuvenate your senses, and create unforgettable memories, Dr Ramesh Kumar added. The minister earlier visited heritage sites including Bazira, Shigardar Stupa, Ghelegay Buddhist monument, museum, Butkara Stupa 1 and 2, Saidu Stupa, Wali Swat graveyard, White Palace and other close vicinity sites.

Markazi Tanzeem of Tajiran Mardan hold meeting

F.P. Report

MARDAN: An emergency meeting of the Markazi Tanzeem of Tajiran District Mardan (Zahir Shah Group) was held under the chairmanship of Markazi-e-Tanzeem Tajiran Provincial General Secretary and Mardan Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Zahir Shah Khan Mardan Chamber Office of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

In which the Tanzeem-e-Tajiran Chairman Ghulam Sarwar Saraf, General Secretary Waqar Bacha and other markets and presidents of all markets, General Secretaries and members of the Central Cabinet participated in large numbers.

In the meeting, the pharaoh-tempered attitude and corruption of Halal Foods Authority (HFA) staff Deputy Director Assistant Director (DDAD) in Mardan District was dis-

cussed. The said officials of Halal Food Authority are taking undue advantage of their position and forcing businessmen to comply with illegal demands along with mental torture.

The current example of this is that three days ago, they illegally seized a Suzuki vehicle with cold drinks from a shopkeeper named Abdullah and took the vehicle to his office by tricking them and kept demanding for three days that they would give him 100,000 rupees and then leave the vehicle with the goods, then fifty. A thousand came. But the shopkeeper kept insisting that I have charged the full rate from the person from whom I bought the goods and I have the receipt with me.

And I give you his address and phone number everything you first send the goods to the laboratory if it is wrong then I am with you and the one from whom I took it has also

cheated me. Then I also have a claim against them. But they said that you should leave them and finish the conversation with us, otherwise I will file a report against you. Many such incidents are his way of doing things. Therefore, the purpose for which the authority is constituted,

Because of people like them, the relevant departments are not very efficient. And there are problems for business people too, so we strongly demand the Chief Minister, Caretaker Azam Khan, Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali, Minister of Food and Secretary of Food and other relevant authorities to Take departmental action against them and immediately dismiss them. Otherwise, there will be Duma Dum Mast Qalandar through shutter down strike in Mardan and the entire province. And all traders will cooperate with the Halal Food Authority and close the tax net.

Dengue virus awareness campaign arranged

T.M. Report

DIR LOWER: On the directives of the Deputy Commissioner Dir Lower the District Administration along with Rescue 1122 Dir Lower held an awareness campaign regarding dengue virus and heat stroke in the district on Thursday.

Secretary Relief, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Department Abdul Basit, Director General Dr. Khateer Ahmed and Deputy Commissioner Iftikhar Ahmed graced the occasion as guest. District

Emergency Officer Abrar Ali was also present in Jamia Darul Uloom Education Al-Qur'an Khal and Smart School System in Timargarh regarding the prevention of dengue virus and heat strokes. A campaign was conducted to create awareness among students. The participants also distributed pamphlets and brochures in this regard.

On this occasion, Abrar Ali, Emergency Officer of Rescue 1122 Dir Lower, said that door-to-door campaigns, community base campaigns and social media campaigns are going

on throughout the district in order to ensure safety to the general public. He also thanked district administration, specially Secretary Relief, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Department Abdul Basit, Deputy Commissioner Dir Lower Iftikhar Ahmed and Director General Rescue 1122 Dir. Khateer Ahmed for extended all out support in educating the general public regarding taking precautionary measures about dengue virus and heat stroke. He also thanked the elders of the area who participated in large numbers.

Four of Rajanpur family shot dead over old enmity

RAJANPUR (PPI): Four of a family were shot dead due to old enmity in Rajanpur on Wednesday morning. The attackers made their escape good after committing the tetra murders. The slain included a man, his two sons and a daughter.

The incident was reported in precincts of Saddar Police Station in Kota Qaim area of Rajanpur. Police said the killings were appeared to be

revenge of an old murder. Police have sent the bodies to hospital for medico-legal proceedings while initiating further investigation into the horrible incident.

Punjab Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi took notice of the four murders and sought a report from Dera Ghazi Khan RPO. Ordering immediate arrest of the killers, the chief minister directed the police high to ensure provision of justice

to the affected family by bringing the accused to the court of law.

Punjab IGP Dr Usman Anwar has also taken notice of the Rajanpur murders and sought a reported from Dera Ghazi Khan RPO. The IGP directed Rajanpur DPO to ensure immediate steps for early arrest of the accused. He also directed police high-ups to ensure provision of justice to the family of victims on priority basis.

Two women among six killed

SHIKARPUR (PPI): Six people including two women died in an armed clash between two groups of Jatoti tribe in Shikarpur on Thursday. According to the Shikarpur senior superintendent of police (SSP), the clash between Zeddu and Rattu groups of Jatoti tribe took place over old enmity for 'honour'.

The bodies of the deceased identified as Mai Khatun, Parvezan Mai, Rattu, Irshad, Bakhsh Ali, and Sodar were shifted to Khanpur Hospital. Police personnel were dis-

patched to the area to prevent further bloodshed. It is to be noted here that dozens of people are murdered every year on the accusation of adultery for 'honour'.

Despite the government's claims, announcements and legislation, the incidents of murder and clash between clans have not been controlled so far. Irresponsible use of cell phones is stated to be the main reason behind the increase in the incidents of honour killing.

Funeral prayers of policeman offered

F.P. Report

TIMERGARA: The funeral prayers of Lower Dir Police Constable Abdul Shamal, who passed away during duty, is performed with official honors at Police Line

ed. On this occasion, the dead body of the constable was saluted by the knife-wielding squad of Lower dir police, while the DPO Lower dir placed floral garlands on the corpse.

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Will rulers quash their ego to bring politico-economic revival?

PRIME Minister Shehbaz Sharif has recently admitted that political stability was highly important to achieve economic strength, attract investment, and ensure development and prosperity in the country. According to him, there would be no economic stability until there is no political stability, as both are interlinked with each other. During the inauguration ceremony of Captain Karnal Sher Khan Shaheed Road in Rawalpindi, the Premier noted that the government's political opponents were hatching conspiracies and spreading false propaganda when there was political instability in the country, how any businessman could be ready to invest in the country. The Premier accused the previous government of breaching the agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which shattered the credibility of the country and currently, the Washington-based lender was hesitant to resume its agreement. In a bid to pay tribute to a renowned national war hero, the incumbent government named the famous IJ Principal Road separating Capital territory from Rawalpindi, as Captain Karnal Sher Khan Shaheed (Nishan-e-Haidar) road. The Prime Minister commended the sacrifices of martyrs and noted that those nations remained alive and moved forward with pride that remembered their martyrs and respected their Armed Forces.

Over the past years, Pakistan slid into a deep economic crisis because of multiple economic challenges including low foreign reserves, a global energy crisis, high inflation, bad governance, and climate-induced events such as droughts and superfloods. In contrast, an all-time high political anarchy created by the ruling elite and opposition worsened the situation for the masses. The severe economic issues and price hikes pushed the middle and lower middle classes below the poverty line, while low government spending in the social sectors including health and education sharply declined the living standard of the public. Currently, a bed-sick economy is taking its last breaths amid the countrywide shutdown of business and reduced trade activities, however, leaders are busy in their political dogfight, election saga, and social media campaigns to let down each other in the forthcoming electoral contest.

Being the Chief Executive and Premier of the country, Mian Shehbaz Sharif has much worry about the economic meltdown, monetary challenges, public issues, and social and economic degradation in the country. The Premier has identified the political instability as a core reason for ongoing economic turmoil in the country, while Prime Minister himself and his aides persistently advocating for a charter of the economy to rescue the nation from the prevailing impasse. However, this verbal sloganeering and bandwagoning have no positive impact on the current situation as ruling political pandits are not moving an inch from their position regarding dialogue with their adversary to forge consensus on disputing issues. No accord could be achieved without engagement, dialogue, and statesmanship, hence negotiations of paramount importance to end antagonism, deadlock, and confrontation, that marred each aspect of our national life over the past two years.

Currently, the country has reached the brink of collapse and our leaders must not hope for any external aid to get resolve their economic issues. No friendly nation and global donors could rescue a nation whose leaders are not ready to pause their political agenda and end their egos to secure their nation from the genuine risk of economic default. The high cost of living has become intolerable and the impact of inflation has been multiplied by the prevailing political anarchy as the dollar has crossed the psychological threshold of Rs. 300 per buck. The unending tussle between the ruling coalition government and the PTI-led opposition has completely nose-downed the country's economy. Neither the government nor the opposition has a sense of the devastating effects of their rigid attitude and each of them is trying to champion the situation through accusations, and unreal sloganeering without taking crucial measures urgently needed to abreast political stability and economic growth.

It is high time that our leaders feel the sensitivity of the situation, and cease their hostility by initiating a dialogue with each other to discuss national issues, and forge consensus over conflicting policies to chart out a framework, that paves the way for the highly essential charter of democracy and charter of economy. For that purpose, the government has to demonstrate big-heartedness and generosity, whereas Prime Minister Shehbaz has a very crucial role in that context. Anyway, the time would illustrate whether Primer acts on the call of the day or continues point-scoring and political exploitation during his remaining term in office.

Blinken's visit an important step toward restoring US standing in the region

Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg

THE visit of US Secretary of State Antony Blinken to Saudi Arabia last week has dispelled misconceptions about the state of the US-Saudi and US-GCC partnerships. There had been speculation about a rift between the two sides following March's Saudi-Iranian deal, through Chinese mediation, to resume diplomatic relations.

Readmitting Syria to the Arab League was another source of tension between the US and its Gulf partners; the US was clearly unhappy with seeing Bashar Assad in Jeddah last month to attend the Arab League Summit. These developments came on top of disagreements over OPEC's policies, especially its coordination with Russia over production levels, and what was seen as China's growing influence in the region.

These issues were enough for pundits outside the region to assume there was irreparable damage to the GCC-US relationship, especially Washington's ties with Saudi Arabia. Similarly, pundits in the region saw the US as ambivalent about its continued presence here, despite its protestations otherwise. Memories have faded of President Joe Biden's visit last July and his assertions about Washington's "enduring commitment" to Gulf security. His speech in Palestine was also forgotten, during which he reversed his predecessor's policies on Israeli settlements and called for an independent and viable state for the Palestinians.

Although the senior leaderships in both camps knew better, those public perceptions predicted a difficult if not failed visit

before it even started. However, the results of Blinken's three-day visit - his first solo visit to the region since becoming secretary of state more than two years ago - have disappointed the pundits in both camps. It has reassured US partners in the Gulf about America's commitment to regional security and brought relief to Washington that things here are not what they looked like from D.C., more than 10,000 km away. Following Blinken's meeting with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on June 6, the

even if there are issues on which they may disagree. They discussed regional security and important elements of their "strategic, ambitious and growing partnership," according to a public statement issued late on June 7. There was also a serious discussion of issues on which they had somewhat differing views lately, including Iran, Syria and Ukraine. Starting with what they agreed on, the US reaffirmed its commitment to the security of the region, recognizing its vital role in

they reviewed their defense cooperation through the frequent joint military exercises and their close partnership through the Combined Maritime Forces framework. They further discussed the outcomes of four GCC-US working group meetings from earlier this year - on integrated air and missile defense, maritime security, counterterrorism and Iran - and explored the possibility of reconvening them later this year. They also decided to convene a meeting of their

ment to freedom of navigation and maritime security and countering aggressive and illegal actions at sea or elsewhere that might threaten shipping lanes, international trade and oil installations in the GCC states. On the nuclear issue, they did not dwell on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, as it happened in the past, but reaffirmed their general support for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and an enhanced role for the International Atomic Energy Agency.

On Syria, another divi-

nized parameters, and the Arab Peace Initiative. They also opposed unilateral moves regarding settlements and Jerusalem, thus again reversing the Trump administration's support for Israel's illegal moves.

On the Ukraine war, on which the two sides did not completely agree on all of its details, they nevertheless agreed on the importance of respecting the principles of sovereignty and international law, including the UN Charter, and the obligation to refrain from threats or the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. They also called for intensified efforts to find a peaceful solution and deal more effectively with the humanitarian fallout, including extending the UN Black Sea Grain Initiative to facilitate the export of grain and other food supplies from Ukraine. Sudan has been a bright spot in Saudi-US cooperation in recent weeks and the ministers supported their diplomatic efforts there and called on the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces to silence their guns.

In all, Blinken's visit has reenergized the Saudi-US and GCC-US partnerships and dealt with disagreements in an effective and constructive manner. After removing the misunderstandings that were magnified by the media, continued engagement at the ministerial and technical levels is now needed to move forward and take this partnership to higher levels, including in the economic sphere, where win-win opportunities are abundant. Instead of bemoaning China's growing presence in the region, the US should increase its own.

Arab News

Following Blinken's meeting with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on June 6, the US said the two affirmed their "shared commitment" to advancing stability, security and prosperity across the Middle East and beyond, including through their ongoing partnership in diplomatic negotiations to stop the fighting in Sudan and working toward a comprehensive political agreement to achieve peace, prosperity and security.

US said the two affirmed their "shared commitment" to advancing stability, security and prosperity across the Middle East and beyond, including through their ongoing partnership in diplomatic negotiations to stop the fighting in Sudan and working toward a comprehensive political agreement to achieve peace, prosperity and security. They also discussed deepening economic cooperation, something in which the US has been lagging compared to China, its chief economic rival.

On the following day, there was a meeting with GCC foreign ministers in Riyadh, under the framework of the GCC-US Strategic Partnership announced in 2015. They agreed that the partnership is there to stay and thrive,

the global economy and international trade. The two partners would work together for peace, security, stability, integration and economic prosperity in the Middle East, including through infrastructure projects to promote regional integration and interconnectivity, such as connecting the GCC electric grid with those of its neighbors, starting with Iraq, where the project was finally launched on June 8.

On defense and security cooperation, they voiced their shared determination to contribute to regional security and stability and the upholding of navigational rights and freedoms, and of collective efforts to address threats to the security of vessels traveling through the region's waterways, in a veiled reference to Iran. For that purpose,

joint cybersecurity team later this year and explored the possibility of convening other working groups previously set up to deal with the military and security aspects of their partnership. On controversial issues such as Iran, where disagreement preceded Blinken's visit, the ministers stressed the need for diplomacy and de-escalation. The US "welcomed" the decision by Saudi Arabia and Iran to resume diplomatic relations, but stressed the importance of what was included in the Saudi-Iran-China statement of March 10 about adherence to international law, including the UN Charter, which has been the core issue behind GCC-Iran and US-Iran differences in the past. While on Iran, they announced their commit-

sive issue in this partnership, they nevertheless welcomed Arab efforts to resolve the crisis in a step-by-step manner, consistent with UN Security Council Resolution 2254, as agreed during the May 1 Amman consultative meeting of the Arab Ministerial Contact Group on Syria. Reference to the resolution should reassure all that the GCC and the US remain committed to a political solution through the UN's mediation process, which has been lagging behind in recent months. On the Palestine question, the two sides underscored their commitment to a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in accordance with the two-state solution, along the 1967 borders, with mutually agreed swaps consistent with internationally recog-

Brexit was Johnson and Johnson was Brexit. Now that he has gone, Britain must think again

Martin Kettle

IT is easy to overlook the fact that something larger is at stake amid the Conservative party's midsummer mayhem. Something larger, for sure, than Boris Johnson's petulance or Nadine Dorries' attention-seeking. Something affecting us all, not just the Tory party. Something that underlies everything else about current British politics and will outlast the current excitement. That something is the future of Brexit.

Yes, Johnson's latest self-centred lord-of-misrule melodrama is remarkable even by his own standards. Yes, Dorries' latest career move, going postal in parliament, on the run from her own resignation, is providing a suitably disturbing coda to an already dauntingly disturbing political career. And, yes, Rishi Sunak's laboriously constructed authority as prime minister is again under threat from the intertempore disloyalty that has become the default setting of a section of the Tory party. So, yes, much of this pantomime is indeed about Johnson's desperation to remain at the centre of the stage - as those smirking outings with his dog each morning for the cameras confirm. Some of that may

really be about trying to manoeuvre himself back into parliament in a safer seat at the general election, though his strategy has clearly not been thought through.

All of it also raises existential questions for the Conservatives, a party that was for so long the international paradigm for pragmatic adaptation in the cause of electoral success, even in the era of Margaret Thatcher. The question "What does the Conservative party now stand for?" is harder to answer these days. The Tory party Jenga tower sometimes feels just a brick away from collapse. Nevertheless, behind all of this stands Brexit itself. This crisis, in other words, goes beyond the short-term problems of the Sunak government and the struggle over the Tory party's identity. The link between the events of the past week and Britain's break with Europe is umbilical, because the cord that binds them is Johnson himself.

Part of this, but not all of it, is about the lies that were integral to both Brexit and Johnson's fall. Lies about pandemic lockdown parties pushed Johnson from government and now from the Commons. But lies about Brexit were also the reason

why he got into No 10 in the first place. His political banishment and humiliation for one set of lies ought to call into question his earlier political coronation for a different set. It was ever thus with Johnson. His departure is not a tale of an essentially decent and truth-telling man who ruined it all by lying. Johnson's contempt for truth and rules is lifelong. His housemaster at Eton, Martin Hammond, famously nailed the problem many decades ago when he wrote: "I think he honestly believes that it is childish of us not to regard him as an exception, one who should be free of the network of obligation which binds everyone else." Telling the truth matters to you and me. It does not matter to Johnson. Johnson's conduct in the pandemic and since receiving the draft of the privileges committee report is fully in line with that Eton report. Any other prime minister would have been scrupulously careful not to break the rules that his own government had imposed. Many would have erred on the side of caution and self-denial. None of that applies to Johnson because it would not have occurred to

him that it should. He is the self-appointed exception, a sociopathic narcissist. He has departed because, in his view, he is infinitely more important than any precedent, or rule or institution.

But the same applies to his attitude to Brexit. He didn't really have a strong view about whether to leave or remain. But he did have a strong view about which was best for Boris Johnson. Having made his choice, he said whatever came to hand in the campaign, whether it was true or wise, just as he had done in his journalism. A serious political leader - serious in the sense of according priority to national needs not the leader's own advantage or gratification - would never have been so reckless. Later, he claimed to be the one who could get Brexit done, but that was another lie; these were mere words and this was a mere pose. He had no idea what would work or do damage and he didn't care either. In their book, Johnson at 10, Anthony Seldon and Raymond Newell distil Johnson's career into three core traits: his charisma, his self-absorption and his selfishness. Their common thread is an absence of moral seri-

ousness, reflected in the way he lived and ruled. "Causes, commitments, colleagues, as well as pledges, policies and partners were regarded as merely transitory and transactional," they write. "Any could be jettisoned when they no longer served his interests or pleasure." Events have confirmed the truth of that. European Union, parliament, Conservative party. Who really cares? Not Johnson. Johnson has now, it seems, walked away from party politics. Perhaps he has departed for ever. Perhaps he will return. A minority of Tories, an even smaller minority of voters and a handful of overmighty newspapers are still praying for another act. For the rest, Johnson leaves behind a damaged personal reputation, a damaged party, a damaged system of government, a damaged parliamentary democracy and a damaged country.

The political system on which Johnson attempted for so long to impose his personality and his lack of standards has, by and large, repulsed his assault. But it has taken losses in doing so, and a second assault cannot be ruled out. Leaders such as Johnson sometimes win and sometimes lose. But they always

damage, and the damage must be repaired and must be guarded against in future. That is why, in an important sense, these past few days are fundamentally about Brexit. Until recently, Brexit had become a taboo. It felt inevitable that a generation would have to pass before it was politically possible for a new form of relationship to be constructed with the EU that would undo the harm of the vote in 2016. Economic struggles, the challenges of climate and migration, and the war in Ukraine all make the need for that rebuilding more pressing. A steady shift in public opinion towards closer cooperation, followed by Johnson's fall, now opens the door to a much more determined re-engagement. That will not be easy. But the biggest lie that Johnson ever told, and the one that was most widely believed, was over Brexit. It has resulted in the largest piece of damage of the many he inflicted on the country. Johnson's fall and unpopularity ought, therefore, to reopen Britain's relationship with Europe. That is too big a question for this or any other future government to keep locked away in the too-difficult box. It is time, in other words, to take back control.

Waiving US visas for Israelis would be a mistake

Daoud Kuttab

MY American-Palestinian cousins, the Awad family, have a routine for whenever they come to visit us in Jerusalem. They try to avoid flying into Ben Gurion airport in Tel Aviv because if the Israelis refuse them entry - as happens to many Americans because of their national origin, religion, or public criticism of Israel - they would have to fly back all the way to the US.

Instead, they usually enter Palestine from Jordan through the King Hussein Bridge Border Crossing. As an occupying power, Israel still operates the Palestinian side of this crossing. So when entering the occupied West Bank through that crossing, the Awads still face the Israeli discriminatory practices, but at least if they get denied, it would mean just a return to Jordan. My cousins also choose to travel via Jordan because they can leave their phones with relatives in Amman and not have to hand them over to the

Israelis at the border. Electronics get searched for - among other things - any criticism of Israel or support for the boycott movement, which immediately results in refusal of entry.

The Awads always bring an extra book or two to read and a spare deck of cards. Once they arrive at the Israeli passport control and flash their US passport, they are almost always asked to wait a long time. So they take out the books and the cards and enjoy their time until a random Israeli security officer decides whether they can enter their homeland or not. Once the Awads cross the border, they know they are still not safe. Discrimination against American citizens continues inside Palestine, where the Israeli occupation runs a vast network of checkpoints. They know, for example, that as Americans visiting Palestinian family members or friends, they may not be allowed to drive across a checkpoint together in the same car, as some of them may be ordered to disembark and not allowed to proceed.

They also know they are lucky not to have Palestinian documents. If Americans who hold Palestinian IDs attempt to go to occupied Jerusalem to visit the Al-Aqsa Mosque or the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, they are stopped at one of the many checkpoints along the way and turned away. These Americans also do not have the option to fly into Tel Aviv, as Palestinian ID holders are not allowed to use it.

There are myriad ways in which Americans can be denied entry or restricted in their travel while in occupied Palestine. And they don't have to be of Palestinian descent to face such mistreatment at the hands of the Israeli authorities. Because of all these restrictions, when the Awads do make it to Jerusalem to visit us, it is a special joy for us because we know what they have had to go through to reach us. I and my children, who are American citizens, know all too well Israel's discriminatory policies.

Meanwhile, illegal Israeli settlers - regardless of whether they are American or not - are allowed to live on occupied land in Palestine, in violation of international law. And, of course, they are free to go wherever they want in occupied Palestine.

Despite Israel's egregious record in discriminating against Americans, the Biden administration is about to admit it into the US Visa Waiver Program, which would allow Israelis to travel to the US without applying for a visa at a US embassy or consulate. The visa waiver programme is a privilege reserved only for countries meeting federal statutory requirements including one known as "reciprocity". Reciprocity means that a US national should be treated the same way an Israeli national is treated when travelling to the US. How Israel can possibly meet the reciprocity requirement when the US Department of State has long advised American travellers that they can

expect to be discriminated against when travelling to Israel is hard to understand. However, the current US ambassador to Israel Tom Nides, who is leaving his post in August, seems eager to gift Israel admission into the Visa Waiver Program. He is set to oversee a one-month "trial period" starting July 1 during which Israeli authorities are supposed to allow Palestinian Americans to enter Israel and allow them to use the Tel Aviv airport.

How compliance during this one month will ensure that Israel will stop its discrimination against all Americans is unclear. The Israeli government can simply restrain the border authorities for 30 days, pretend that they are changing their ways and once the visa waiver is granted, resume its odious policies. The Israelis are well aware that the US government would rarely take away a benefit it has given to Israel because of the political costs it may incur. So, the return of discrimination against American citizens at border crossings con-

trolled by Israel is unlikely to result in its suspension from the Visa Waiver Program. Israel should not be given special treatment and granted an exception from full compliance with federal law. The US ambassador to Israel should not have the authority to negotiate the rights of American citizens away with such ease. It would not only allow Israel to solidify its discriminatory practices but may also encourage others to start mistreating Americans in the same way. If the US government admits Israel to the Visa Waiver Program without its explicit formal agreement to end all discriminatory practices against all Americans (including Palestinians, Muslims, Arabs and defenders of the Palestinian cause), it would put its stamp of approval on the extension of Israeli apartheid-like policies onto American citizens. Israel would never accept that its citizens be treated with anything less than equal dignity and neither should the United States.

Aljazeera



SCCI for signing of FTA to strengthen Pak-Turkiye trade ties

E.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) suggested signing of a free trade agreement to further strengthen bilateral trade and economic relations between Pakistan and Turkiye.

Speaking to members during visit of Dr Mehmat Pacaci, Ambassador of Republic of Turkiye here at chamber house on Thursday, the SCCI acting president Ijaz Khan Afridi said that vast investment opportunities exist in various potential sectors so that can further improve mutual trade volume between Pakistan and Islamic Republic Turkiye.

He emphasized the need of launching joint ventures and taking mutual benefits from each other's experiences, exchange of business delegations and exploring new avenues of investment in the both countries.

Ijaz Afridi also called for removal of irritants and hurdles in issuance of business visas to Turkiye. He also called upon Islamabad and Istanbul to take pragmatic steps for enhancing bilateral trade volume, especially for signing a free trade agreement.

Dr Mehmat Pacaci, while responding to various

queries of the SCCI's members on the occasion said that Turkiye and Pakistan have enjoyed a strong trade, economic, diplomatic and common cultural relations.

However, he said the bilateral trade and economic relations weren't to the level which needed to be.

The diplomat said huge potentials exist to enhance bilateral trade between Turkiye and Pakistan and called for exploring and exploiting all new avenues of investments at the optimal level.

Dr Mehmat Pacaci mentioned that the Preferential Trade Agreement was signed recently between Turkiye and Pakistan, which is a step forward to further improve the mutual trade and economic relations between the two countries.

But, the envoy said the step was insufficient for promotion of bilateral trade and stressed the need to sign a free trade agreement between the two countries.

Dr Mehmat Pacaci expressed hope that if Turkiye and Pakistan can manage to sign the FTA then the bilateral trade and economic relations would further improve.

The diplomat while mentioning about exchanges of students' delega-

tions, investments in fruits, honey, tourism, black and other potential sectors said that a strong coordination and cooperation was dire need of hour between Turkiye and Pakistan so that the both countries would take mutual benefits by making investments in the afore-stated important sectors.

Talking about the problems to the business community in gaining visas for Turkiye, Dr Mehmat Pacaci said that a proper mechanism was being adopted for issuance of tourism and business visas.

He, however, assured that business visas will be issued on a fast-track basis on recommendation letter of the SCCI.

Earlier, the SCCI's acting president Ijaz Afridi highlighted the prospects of Pak-Turkiye bilateral trade relations and pointed out potential sectors wherein a huge opportunities were available to make investment and to enhance the mutual trade volume between Pakistan and Turkiye.

Welcoming the signing of PTA between Pakistan and Turkiye, he also emphasized the need for signing of Free Trade Agreement between the two countries so that it can help to achieve the desirable bilateral trade promo-

tion target of \$5billion and onward \$15billion.

Ijaz Afridi also emphasized the need for taking joint initiatives for promoting barter trade between Pakistan and Turkiye.

On the occasion, the SCCI acting president Ijaz Afridi congratulated Recep Tayyip Erdogan on being re-elected as President of Turkiye for the third time.

The meeting was attended by former presidents Fuad Ishaq, Zahidullah Shiwnari, Faiz Muhammad Faizi, Zulfikar Ali Khan, Sherbaz Bilour, former SVPs Ziaul Haq Sarhadi, former vice presidents Abdul Jalil Jan, Abidullah Yousafzai, industrialist Sikandar Raza Kuli Khan, Director Turkiye Ambassadorial Office Turkiye Embassy Islamabad Ghaz-anfar Mehmood, Malik Riaz, SCCI's executive committee members Haji Ghulam Hussain, Monawar Khurshid, Javed Ahmad, Minhajuddin, Naeem Qasmi, Abdul Hakim Shinwari, Laal Badshah, Hamza Ibrahim Butt, Kashif Amin, and Faiz Rasool, Saddar Gul, Mazarul Haq, Fazal e Wahid, Zahoor Khan, Waqar Ahmad Zaki, Ihsanullah, Nisar Ahmad, Ishfaq Muhammad, traders, importers and exporters and others.



PESHAWAR: Acting president Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ijaz Khan Afridi presenting a shield to Ambassador of Republic of Turkiye Dr. Mehmat Pacaci during his visit to Chamber's House.

PSX loses 145.28 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) shed 145.28 points on Thursday, a negative change of 0.35 per cent, closing at 41,369.17 points against 41,514.45 points the previous day.

A total of 149,676,270 shares were traded during the day as compared to 179,644,403 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs.3,606 billion against Rs.3,755 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 309 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 77 of them recorded gains and 208 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 24 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were TPL Properties with 21,691,380 shares at Rs.13.81 per share; WorldCall Telecom with 17,474,550 shares at Rs.1.15 per share and Bankislami Pak with 9,352,057 shares at Rs.17.55 per share.

Colgate Palm XDXB witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.78.55 per share price, closing at Rs.1,125.89, whereas the runner-up was Bata (Pak) with an Rs.49.48 rise in its per share price to Rs.1,846.48.

Allawasaya Tex witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.176.96 per share closing at Rs.2,188.00; followed by Sapphire Fiber with Rs.71.34 decline to close at Rs.1,010.00.

Foreign reserves reach \$9.378b

KARACHI (APP): The total liquid foreign reserves of Pakistan stood at US\$ 9,378.2 million while reserves held by the central bank reached US\$ 4,018.7 million. The State Bank of Pakistan, in a statement issued here on Thursday, informed that foreign reserves of the central bank increased by US\$ 107 million to US\$ 4,018.7 million in the week ended on June 09, 2023.

Meanwhile, net foreign reserves held by commercial banks stood at US\$ 5,359.5 million, it added.

In the previous week, ending on June 02, 2023, total liquid foreign reserves held by the country was US\$ 9,334.8 million.

Among them, foreign reserves held by the central bank were US\$ 3,912.2 million while net foreign reserves held by commercial banks were US\$ 5,422.6 million.

Gold prices increased

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs1,700 and was sold at Rs220,700 on Thursday against its sale at Rs219,000 the previous day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs1,458 to Rs189,215 from Rs187,757 whereas the price of 10 grams 22 karat gold went up to Rs173,447 from Rs172,111, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten-gram silver remained unchanged to close at Rs2550 and Rs2,186.21 respectively.

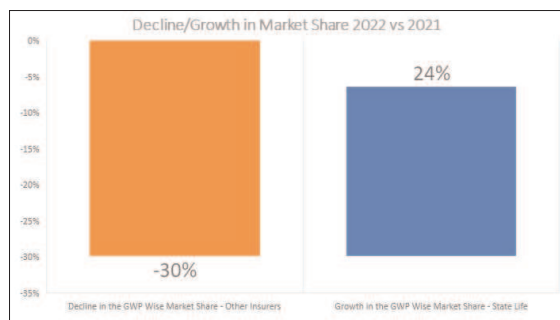
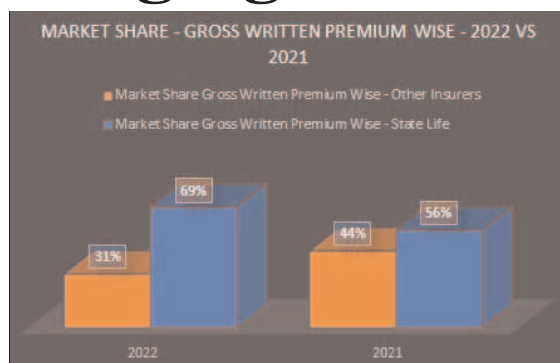
The price of gold in the international market decreased by US\$ 19 to \$1929 against its sale at \$1948, the association reported.

State Life: A beacon of stability and reliability in challenging times

Nabeel Akhtar

In the face of economic turmoil and challenging times, State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan shines as a beacon of success and resilience in the insurance industry. Led by the dynamic Mr. Shoaib Javed Hussain, the corporation has achieved remarkable growth in 2022, surpassing all previous business records. With a focus on building a differentiated and profitable organization that exceeds stakeholder expectations, State Life not only drives its own growth but also propels the entire insurance landscape in the country.

State Life's unparalleled performance and strategic growth can be attributed to its highly competent leadership, diversified management, and professional team. Despite a slight decline in the cumulative results of the insurance industry in 2022 (excluding State Life's Gross Written Premium), State Life has achieved close to a 69% growth compared to the previous year, resulting in all-time high revenue. Its Gross Written Premium (GWP) of PKR 286 billion plus surpasses the combined GWP of all other insurance companies in Pakistan, which stands at approximately PKR 127.87 billion. State Life's growth has played a significant role in driving the industry's



overall progress, contributing to a nearly 43% growth in the industry in 2022. State Life Insurance Corporation's market share in 2022 has increased close to 70%, compared to 55% plus in the previous year, which is close to 24% growth in the market share as well.

This outstanding performance is the result of various strategic initiatives implemented by State Life. The corporation has introduced individual and corporate health insurance, established window takaful operations, and formed strategic partnerships which, have

not only reduced disparities and financial barriers but have also positioned State Life as an industry leader in innovation.

State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan, under the leadership of Mr. Shoaib Javed Hussain, has emerged as a trailblazer in the insurance industry. With a clear focus on bolstering the industry's contribution to the nation's GDP, State Life plays a pivotal role in fortifying the economy's backbone through the strategic alignment of technology, data, and a human-centric approach.

Prize bonds:

Last date for encashment of withdrawn extended

E.P. Report

KARACHI: The Federal Government has given another opportunity to the public to get the withdrawn prize bonds of Rs.7500, 15,000, 25,000 and Rs.

40,000 redeemed/encashed by June 30, 2023. Earlier, the government had fixed deadline of June 30, 2022, for redemption/encashment of these prize bonds, however, considering that some of the prize bond holders could not get their bonds redeemed a final opportunity has been given for encashment of

prize bonds till 30th June 2023. The investors of aforementioned prize bonds have following options of encashment or exchange.

Encashment at Face Value

Conversion to Premium Prize Bonds of Rs.25,000 and/or Rs.40,000 (Registered)

Replacement with Special Savings Certificates (SSC) or Defense Savings Certificates (DSC)

The prize bonds can be redeemed from SBP Banking Services Corporation office and branches of commercial banks across

the country till 30th June 2023. The SBP has issued necessary instructions to commercial banks to accept requests from general public for encashment or exchange of the prize bonds till the extended date.

The general public holding these bonds is encouraged to avail this final opportunity and get their holdings redeemed before 30th June 2023. These prize bonds shall not be encashable or exchangeable after the expiry of the extended deadline, thereby rendering them worthless.

RCCI and Chambers of Alexandria signs accord

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Egyptian Chamber of Commerce of Alexandria, headed by Ahmed El-Wakeel, President of the Chamber and President of the Federation of Chambers of the Mediterranean Basin (ASCAME), signed a cooperation agreement with the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) at the Chamber's headquarters here on Thursday.

The agreement aims to enhance opportunities for cooperation between the business communities of the two countries and to harness all capabilities and resources to activate all commercial businesses in the two countries, through the organization of international exhibitions, conferences and various events.

RCCI President Saqib

Rafiq signed and exchanged the MOU documents on behalf of RCCI. Shahraiz Ashraf Malik, Former Vice President of RCCI, Sidra Haq, Commercial Attaché at the Embassy of Pakistan Egypt, and Ali Tamkeen, Commercial attaché at the Embassy of Pakistan, members of the Board of Directors, Ashraf Abu Ismail and Mahmoud Marei, among others, were also present on the occasion.

Ahmed Al-Wakil, President of the Egyptian Chamber of Commerce in Alexandria, gave an overview of the history of the "Alexandria Chamber" and underlined the significance and depth of Egyptian-Pakistani relations, pointing out that it is necessary to hold joint meetings between the

members of the Alexandria and Rawalpindi Chambers in various fields, to increase the volume of trade between the Egyptian and Pakistani sides.

Saqib Rafiq, in his remarks, explained that the "Alexandria Chamber" was of special importance to Rawalpindi Chamber, stressing that the main objective of the meeting was to discuss mechanisms for increasing trade exchange, and concluding more trade and commercial agreements.

He expressed the belief that Egypt is the ideal gateway to Africa, and therefore cooperation in the economic, trade and investment fields must be strengthened, to increase the volume of trade exchange and increase the volume of investments between the two sides.

Industrialization is key to success, says Federal Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Industry and Production Makhdoom Syed Murtaza Mahmood said that industrialization is key to success and stressed giving due attention to this important sector.

He said this while visiting the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI), meeting with FPCCI President Irfan Iqbal Sheikh, and prominent members of the business community to seek suggestions for improvement in SMEs, said a press release issued here.

Aminullah Baig, Vice Presidents Engineer MA Jabbar, Vice Presidents Mirza Abdul Rahman, Chairman Coordination Syed Asad Haider Mashhadi, Convener FPCCI were present on the occasion while Muhammad Nadeem Qureshi, Vice President Coordinator

Lahore Office Muhammad Ali Mian joined through video link.

Speaking on the occasion, Irfan Iqbal Sheikh, President FPCCI said that Pakistan will not be able to stand in the list of developed nations until industrialization in Pakistan is not our top priority.

Development of industry will help in increase of export curtail imports and generate employment opportunities for our people. He said that the present century is the century of economy and economically strong nations will rule the world.

It takes time for SMEs to quickly integrate and align with larger industrial units until proper financing and facilities are not provided to them.

President FPCCI suggested that special areas in our SEZs should be allocat-

ed for SMEs.

The FPCCI recommended that the government should ensure the provision of special facilities and interest-free loans to promote SMEs in rural areas to curb migration toward the major cities.

Federal Minister for Industry and Production said that now everyone has realized that we have to think about the country and make policies that can move the country forward and he assured that many of the proposals presented in the meeting regarding the improvement of SMEs will be adopted and hoped that it will bring good results.

Agreeing with President FPCCI he told that financing SMEs is a major issue and a major reason that they can't move forward.

He said that he is fully aware that there are many

difficulties have occurred in setting up an industry and the Ministry of Industries and Production is working to provide a grant of 10 billion to the SME Fund through easy financing.

He told that regarding women entrepreneurs, the government has signed a 200 million dollar agreement with Asian Development, which will have far-reaching results.

He hoped that the business community and the government should work together to formulate policies for the future. Former FPCCI Vice President Sohail Altaf, SAARC Chamber Executive Member Safdar Zaman Shah, President Haripur Chamber Tayyab Swati, Sumit Fargh Alvi, Nadeem Mansoor Syed, Aminur Rehman, Tariq Mehmood Jadon and others also spoke on this occasion.

Special Olympics World Games at Berlin: Jubilee Life Insurance sends-off Pakistan contingent

E.P. Report

KARACHI: Jubilee Life Insurance, Pakistan's largest private sector insurance company, proudly supported the send-off event for the Special Olympics Pakistan contingent participating in the prestigious Special Olympics World Games, Berlin, 2023. The reception, organized and hosted by Ronak Lakhani, Chairperson of Special Olympics Pakistan, was held in Karachi to honor the athletes and showcase the spirit of inclusivity.

Jubilee Life Insurance recognizes the importance of promoting sports and embracing diversity across all segments of society. As a responsible corporate social entity, Jubilee Life Insurance is committed to supporting initiatives that foster inclusivity and pro-

vide equal opportunities for special individuals.

Farhan Akhtar Faridi, Group Head - Retail Operations, Marketing and Administration, Jubilee Life Insurance, expressed his enthusiasm about supporting the Special Olympics Pakistan contingent, "At Jubilee Life Insurance, we firmly believe in the power of sports to bring people together and include everyone from different segments of the society. It is an honor for us to contribute to the success of the Special Olympics Pakistan team, and we wish them the very best in their endeavors at the Special Olympics World Games."

The send-off reception brought together a diverse gathering of athletes, coaches, parents of the participants, Special Olympics Pakistan's Brand Ambassador, Yasmin Haider,

renowned actress Sarwat Gilani, and other esteemed dignitaries. The event served as a platform to celebrate the exceptional achievements of the Special Olympics Pakistan contingent, who will be representing the nation with pride at the Special Olympics World Games.

The Special Olympics World Games, scheduled from June 17 to 25, is a remarkable international event that showcases the extraordinary talents and abilities of athletes with intellectual disabilities.

Tokyo stocks close lower

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks closed modestly lower Thursday after policy decisions from the US Federal Reserve and China's central bank, with focus shifting to the European Central Bank.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index slipped 0.05 percent, or 16.93 points, to 33,485.49, while the broader Topix index ended down 0.02 percent, or 0.56 points, at 2,293.97.

The dollar fetched 141.19 yen in Asia, up from 139.94 yen in New York on Wednesday.

Japanese markets zig-zagged between positive and negative territory during the session, influenced by profit-taking and support from US tech rallies.

Overnight, the Fed maintained interest rates as expected, but signalled plans for additional increases, while the People's Bank of China cut a key rate on Thursday morning. Now, traders are awaiting the European Central Bank's policy decision later in the day, Daiwa Securities senior strategist Shuji Hosoi said.

The ECB is expected to again hike interest rates and signal that the fight against inflation is not over yet. "In that case, the yen would depreciate further, and dollar-denominated Japanese shares would be cheaper for foreign investors, prompting drastic changes in stock prices," Hosoi said.

Rupee sheds 18 paises against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani Rupee on Thursday weakened by 18 paises against the US Dollar (USD) in the interbank trading as it closed at Rs 287.36 against the previous day's closing of Rs 287.18.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollars in the open market stood at Rs 291.5 and Rs 294.5 respectively. The price of the Euro went down by Rs1.03 to close at Rs 311.18 against the last day's closing of Rs 310.15, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen lost two paises to close at Rs 2.03, whereas an increase of Rs 0.97 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs 363.69 as compared to its last day's closing of Rs 362.72.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal appreciated by 4 paises and 5 paises to close at Rs 78.23 and Rs 76.62 respectively.



Chinese PM meets with Abbas in effort to increase ME presence

BEIJING (AP): Chinese Premier Li Qiang met with visiting Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on Thursday in a drive by Beijing to elevate relations and increase its overall presence in the Middle East. Li, who took office just this spring with little foreign policy experience, called Abbas "an old friend of the Chinese people" who has made "important contributions to the promotion of China-Palestinian relations."

The meeting came a day after Abbas was greeted with full military honors by Xi Jinping, China's president and head of the ruling Communist Party. The sides then announced the formation of a "strategic partnership," paving the way to boost China's influence in the region at a time when Beijing's chief rival for global influence, the United States, is seen as withdrawing from the region following the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and complications in ties with regional power Saudi Arabia.

China, meanwhile, is seeking energy resources and markets for its military and civilian exports while also promoting its version of authoritarian government as part of joint challenge with Russia to the Western-led democratic world order. Beijing has long maintained diplomatic ties with the Palestinian Authority, and it appointed a special envoy to meet with Israeli and Palestinian officials. But its experience in the region is mainly limited to construction, manufacturing and other economic projects. China relies on such partnerships to bolster its diplomatic posture and give large Chinese corporations a leg up when negotiating infrastructure deals in line with the government's



"Belt and Road Initiative," which has left many struggling countries in deep debt to Chinese banks.

China also has sought close ties with Israel to expand its diplomatic presence and to gain access to high technology. Abbas' visit follows China's hosting of talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia that resulted in the restoring of diplomatic relations between the two Mideast rivals and boosting China's standing in the region. The Riyadh-Tehran rapprochement was seen as a diplomatic victory for China as Gulf Arab states perceive the United States as gradually withdrawing from the wider region.

China has hosted a growing list of world leaders since reopening its borders in the spring after a three-year

virtual shutdown due to its extreme "zero-COVID" policy. Those have included French President Emmanuel Macron and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, whose visits sparked controversy over China's pursuit of its campaign to cut off foreign support for self-governing Taiwan and block criticism of its human rights record.

Next week, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is expected to make a visit to Beijing that was postponed over the presence of an alleged Chinese spy balloon over the US. Diplomatic relations between Washington and Beijing are at their lowest in decades over trade, technology, US support for Taiwan and an intensifying competition for influence in Asia and elsewhere.

Russia calls Ukraine's MH17 accusations at WC 'fiction'

THE HAGUE (Reuters): A lawyer for Russia dismissed Ukraine's account of the downing of Malaysian Airlines Flight MH17 in World Court hearings earlier this week as "fiction". Ukraine accuses Russia before the UN's top court of violating a UN anti-terrorism treaty by equipping and funding pro-Russian forces, including militias who shot down Malaysian Airlines Flight MH17, killing all 298 passengers and crew in July 2014.

Last November, a Dutch court found that Russia had "overall control" over the separatist forces and had supplied the BUK missile system which was used by militias to shoot down the plane. Ukraine repeated the Dutch court findings in its case before the International Court of Justice (ICJ), but Russia's lawyer Michael Swainston dismissed it as "fiction". "This did not happen, no BUK Telar came from Russia," he told the court on the final day of hearings. In its case at the ICJ, also known as the World Court, Kyiv also claims Russia breached a UN anti-discrimination treaty by trying to erase the culture of ethnic Tatars and Ukrainians in Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014. In its final submissions, Ukraine asked the ICJ to find Moscow guilty of breaching its treaty obligations and order it to pay reparations. Russia denies systematic human rights abuses in Ukrainian territory that it occupies. It also says it has met its obligations under the UN treaty against financing terrorism.

It has asked the court to throw out Ukraine's claim which stems from 2017 and was filed well before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The ICJ is expected to rule on the case before the end of this year.

Darfur governor abducted, killed

DARFUR (Agencies): A regional governor has been killed after publicly blaming the deaths of civilians on Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) amid an expansion of the country's almost two-month-old war into cities in the west of the country. West Darfur state governor Khamis Abakar was killed, an armed group he commanded said, hours after he accused the RSF and allied fighters of "genocide".

Details on his death were unavailable but the Reuters news agency reported that two government sources said the RSF was responsible for the killing. The Sudanese army also took to social media to accuse the RSF of "kidnapping and assassinating" the governor. The killing had added a "new chapter" to the RSF's "record of barbaric crimes that it has been committing against all the Sudanese people", the army said on Facebook, calling the incident a "brutal act". The RSF did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Mini Arko Minawi, the governor of the Darfur region, said the slain provincial governor of West Darfur was abducted and killed hours after giving an interview to a television station. Abakar had told Al Hadath TV that civilians were being killed and international intervention was required.

"Civilians are being killed randomly and in large numbers," he had said. Video footage circulating on social media appeared to show a group of armed men, some wearing RSF uniforms, detaining Abakar. Other clips purportedly showed the governor on the ground with wounds to his neck and face. The United Nations said that the conflict in Sudan had displaced more than 2 million people, and escalating attacks in Darfur could amount to "crimes against humanity".

Australia creates law to stop Russia from building new embassy

CANBERRA (AP): Australia's Parliament passed legislation on Thursday to prevent Russia from building a new embassy near Parliament House citing threats of espionage and political interference, as tensions grow between Moscow and a major supporter of the Ukraine war effort. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said the legislation would extinguish Russia's lease on the site of a second embassy based on the advice of security agencies.

"The government has received very clear security advice as to the risk presented by a new Russian presence so close to Parliament House," Albanese told reporters. "We are acting quickly to ensure the lease site does not become a formal diplomatic presence," Albanese said. Australia's government condemns Russia's "illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine." Australia is one of the most generous providers of military hardware, training and aid to Ukraine of any country outside NATO and has escalated sanctions against Russia since the war began in February 2022. Australia's growing hostility toward Russia became apparent last year when Australian officials demanded Moscow be held accountable for Russian cybercriminals suspected of hacking the nation's largest health insurer, Medibank, and dumping customers' personal medical records on the dark web. It is unusual for Australia to attribute blame to a country for an unsolved cybercrime.

Albanese said opposition and other lawmakers that are not aligned with the government were briefed on the legislation and had agreed to pass it through both chambers Thursday. The government holds a majority in the House but not the Senate. Within three hours of Albanese publicly announcing the bill, it had become law, passing the House then the Senate. The law is expected to take effect later Thursday when it is rubber-stamped by Governor-General David Hurley, representing Australia's head of state, King Charles III. Home Affairs Minister Clare O'Neil was later more specific about the Russian threat while addressing Parliament, saying the "scope for espionage and foreign interference from the site would have been a substantial risk for the nation."

"The action is direct and decisive. We do not have any interest in sugarcoating this message," O'Neil said. "We will not stand for espionage and foreign interfer-

ence in our country. We will act in the face of danger to our democracy and our citizens and we will do so without any apology to anyone." Opposition leader Peter Dutton said the Parliament was united against the Russian threat. "We won't tolerate foreign espionage conducted in a way that is against our national interest. We won't tolerate people seeking to interfere with electoral processes in our country," Dutton told Parliament. Albanese did not directly answer when asked if there were also security concerns about the Chinese Embassy across a street from the Russian site. "We're dealing with this very specifically, and it's based upon very specific advice as well about the nature of the construction that's proposed for this site, about the location of this site, and about the capability that would present in terms of potential interference with activity that occurs in this Parliament House," Albanese said. The Russian Embassy said it would comment later Thursday. The Australian government decided to act after Russia won a Federal Court case last month that prevented its eviction from the site now under construction.

The 99-year lease was canceled by local Canberra authorities on the basis of a lack of construction activity since Russia was given the lease in the diplomatic precinct of Yarralumla in 2008 and plans for the complex of buildings were approved in 2011. Under the lease conditions, Russia had agreed to complete construction within three years, but only a single, small perimeter building of the planned complex has been built. Russia has said it already spent \$5.5 million on the site. The National Capital Authority, which administers embassy leases, decided to terminate the Russian lease, citing that "ongoing unfinished works detract from the overall aesthetic, importance and dignity of the area reserved for diplomatic missions." Russia currently occupies the former USSR embassy in the suburb of Griffith, farther from Parliament House than the new site. The Yarralumla site would provide Russia with two clusters of buildings. The Russian Embassy would remain in Griffith and Australia's Embassy would remain in Moscow, Albanese said. O'Neil said no embassy would be allowed on the site. "The principal problem with the proposed second Russian Embassy in Canberra is its location. This location sits directly adjacent to Parliament House," O'Neil said.

UN nuclear chief delays Ukraine visit

KYIV (Reuters): UN nuclear chief Rafael Grossi delayed a trip to Ukraine's Russian-held Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant (ZNPP) because of security concerns, diplomats said. Grossi had been expected to visit the facility following talks with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv, but a diplomatic source said the visit would be delayed by "some hours".

"Security checks are currently being conducted, in view of the general situation in the region. The Director General's mission to the ZNPP is expected to take place soon," the diplomatic source said. Russian news agency Interfax quoted a Russian-installed local official as saying Grossi would visit on Thursday. "He's waiting to be able to travel safely," a senior Ukrainian government official told Reuters. The official did not say when Grossi would arrive at the plant in south-eastern Ukraine. Moscow and Kyiv have reported heavy fighting in southern and eastern Ukraine since the start of a Ukrainian counteroffensive. Grossi, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), said in Kyiv that he was "very concerned" that the nuclear plant could be caught in Ukraine's counteroffensive to retake Russian-occupied territory. The IAEA said it needed access to a site near the Zaporizhzhia plant to check water levels after the nearby reservoir lost much of its water because of the destruction of the Kakhovka dam downstream on the Dnipro River. The two sides have accused each other of sabotaging the dam, leading to flooding. Western countries are still gathering evidence but believe Ukraine had no reason to inflict such a disaster on itself.

Satellite images from June 13 confirmed a sharp drop in the level of the Dnipro since the dam was destroyed. Russian forces captured the hydroelectric dam and the nuclear plant in southern Ukraine shortly after their February 2022 invasion. The Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant uses a cooling pond to keep its six reactors from potentially disastrous overheating. The Kakhovka reservoir was normally used to refill the pond but cannot do so now because of its falling water level, Ukrainian nuclear authorities have said.

Kwara boat accident: 100 dead and more missing

ABUJA (Agencies): More than 100 people have drowned and more are missing after a boat carrying them down the River Niger in south-western Nigeria capsized, authorities say. The vessel was carrying around 300 passengers travelling from Kwara state to Niger state after a wedding. Search and rescue efforts were continuing, officials said.

The boat capsized after part of the vessel collapsed, causing water to flood the boat, police said. There are differing reports of the exact number of people confirmed dead. Kwara state police said 106 had died, with around 144 rescued from the river. It added that more than half of the dead came from the village of Ebu, while another 38 were from nearby Dzakani village. Earlier, the Emir of Patigi Ibrahim Umar Bologi II - the traditional ruler of the area where it happened - said more than 150 people were feared to have drowned.

One survivor, Mohammed Alhassan, told the BBC many women died trying to save their children. He said his sister had survived but her 7-year-old son did not make it. Another survivor, Aisha Mohammed, said she lost three adult daughters, who were soon to be married. "The incident was very sad, and it shocked the whole community," Mohammed Salihu, a relative of one of the victims, told AFP news agency. The cause of the incident is still being established. Local police said part of the vessel collapsed, causing it to flood and then capsize. But the Emir of Patigi told journalists that river waves overtook the boat and forced it to crash into a tree that had washed into the river, causing the boat to capsize. Kwara state Governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq gave his "heartfelt condolences" to the victims' loved ones - and said rescuers were continuing to search for survivors. He visited the

affected villages and promised to provide them with one thousand life jackets to kickstart a safety education initiative. He also said he had initiated discussions with the National Inland Waterways Authority on how to better enforce safety regulations. Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu said he was "deeply saddened by the news of the tragic boat accident that claimed the lives of our people in Kwara State". "That the victims were guests at a wedding ceremony made the unfortunate accident more painful," he added. River accidents in this part of Nigeria are common. People who live in the villages bordering the River Niger - which runs through the centre of the country - often use the river as it can be faster than roads, which are often poorly maintained and dangerous, due to the presence of kidnapping gangs. However boat operators often overload their rickety vessels in a bid to earn more money.

Erdogan defies pressure over Sweden's NATO application

ISTANBUL (Agencies): President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has rebuffed growing international pressure on Turkey to ratify Sweden's NATO membership bid before the military alliance meets in July. Western officials had hoped Erdogan would soften his position on the diplomatically charged issue after he secured a hard-fought re-election last month.

But Erdogan signalled no major shift in comments released by his office while Turkish and Swedish officials were locked in last-minute negotiations in Ankara. "Sweden has expectations. It doesn't mean that we will comply with them," Erdogan was quoted as saying. Sweden and Finland applied for membership together after Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year, marking a dramatic pivot after decades of military neutrality. Finland became NATO's 31st member in April after the Turkish parliament ratified its request, but Turkey has held off on approving Sweden's bid. NATO wants to bring Sweden into the fold by the time the leaders of its member nations meet for a summit in Lithuania's capital,

Vilnius, on July 11-12. The officials in Ankara discussed what Finland and Sweden have done to address Turkey's concerns over what it calls "terrorist" groups and their supporters living in the Nordic nations. Erdogan said earlier that the Turkish delegation at the meeting gave the message: "Don't expect anything different at Vilnius." Sweden's chief negotiator said that Turkey and Sweden will continue their discussions but added there was no specific date. "It's my job to persuade our counterpart that we have done enough. I think we have," Oscar Stenstrom said. "But Turkey is not ready to make a decision yet and thinks that they need to have more answers to the questions they have." Turkey's government accuses Sweden of being too lenient towards groups that Ankara says pose a security threat, including Kurdish armed organisations and people accused of associations with a failed coup attempt against Erdogan's government in 2016. A series of demonstrations in Stockholm, including a protest by an anti-Islam activist who burned the

Quran outside the Turkish embassy, also angered Turkish officials.

Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson has said his government has done what it promised in an agreement reached with Turkey last year, which was intended to secure Ankara's ratification of its NATO membership. Last week, Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billström was told by his Turkish counterpart, Hakan Fidan, that Ankara needed to see more "concrete steps" from Sweden. Erdogan also mentioned pro-Kurdish and anti-NATO rallies that took place in Stockholm while he was holding talks with the alliance's secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, in Istanbul this month. He said he planned to attend the July summit in Lithuania unless "extraordinary" circumstances arise. Turkey cannot approach Sweden's NATO bid positively while "terrorists" were protesting in Stockholm, Erdogan said. Sweden has focused on extraditing suspects with links to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and passed an "anti-terrorism" law, but Ankara has made it clear those actions are not enough.

Shi'ite Parliament Speaker Berri, a Hezbollah ally, did not schedule a new session. It leaves Lebanon with no immediate way of filling a post vacant since the term of the Hezbollah-allied President Michel Aoun ended in October. Azour thanked lawmakers who backed him, saying he hoped the will expressed by "the majority of deputies" would be respected. Hezbollah lawmaker

Hussein al-Haj Hassan said the group was ready for dialogue but sticking by Frangieh, a friend of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

George Adwan, a Christian lawmaker with the anti-Hezbollah Lebanese Forces party, said the vote was "a major victory" because it showed Azour close to 65 votes. But with parliament fractured, analysts say the logjam may now require the

type of foreign intervention that has resolved past crises in Lebanon, including the 1989 deal mediated in Saudi Arabia that ended the civil war. Lebanese political sources have anticipated that a new detente between Saudi Arabia and Iran could play out in Lebanon, but say they have not yet sensed pressure as other issues - including the Yemen war - take precedence.

Lebanon's crisis deepens as presidential vote collapses

BEIRUT (Reuters): The powerful Hezbollah group and its allies thwarted a bid by their rivals to elect a top IMF official as Lebanon's president, sharpening sectarian tensions and further dimming prospects for preventing a collapse of the state. Four years since Lebanon went into a financial meltdown that marks its worst crisis since the 1975-90 civil war, parliament failed for a 12th time to elect

someone to fill the post reserved for a Maronite Christian under the country's sectarian system.

The standoff has opened a fresh sectarian fault line, pitting the Iran-backed, heavily armed Shi'ite Muslim Hezbollah against Christian factions including its own ally, Gebran Bassil, who endorsed IMF official Jihad Azour for president. Neither Azour nor Hezbollah-backed candidate

Suleiman Frangieh came close to winning the 86 votes needed to win in a first round vote. Azour, the IMF's Middle East Director and an ex-finance minister, won the support of 59 of 128 lawmakers. Frangieh secured 51. Hezbollah and its allies then withdrew from the session, denying the two-thirds quorum required for a second vote in which 65 votes are enough for victory.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi getting his biometric verification for driving license, at Islamabad Traffic Police F-8 Office.

Govt presents optimized budget to tackle challenges

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training, Rana Tanveer Hussain, expressed his satisfaction with the recently unveiled budget, considering it the best possible outcome given the prevailing tough economic conditions. During his budget speech in National Assembly, he said that huge damage was inflicted on the economy during the tenure of the PTI government. He revealed that even PTI members themselves had expressed concerns about the struggling economy in their tenure and sought its revival.

The minister said the situation was even more challenging than initially anticipated, as revealed during the initial briefing to us in 2021 on the state of the economy. Reflecting on the efforts of the PML-N government from 2013 to 2018, he highlighted their successful endeavors to overcome various challenges, particularly in the energy and power sectors. Furthermore, he criticized the circumstances that led to Nawaz Sharif's removal from Prime Minister's office, citing the controversial Aqama case and the subsequent formation of a Joint Investigation Team (JIT).

He recalled that during Nawaz Sharif's last tenure as Prime Minister, foreign reserves stood at around 22-23 billion US dollars, inflation was approximately two percent, and the exchange rate was Rs. 105 per dollar. He said that PML-N government utilized foreign loans with responsibility and invested in infrastructure and

other projects such as ports, motorways, and metro systems, ultimately leading to a prosperous Pakistan. However, he expressed disappointment with the PTI government, accusing them of lacking vision and resorting to acts of aggression against parliamentary and state institutions, including an attack on Parliament and PTV.

The minister further alleged that the 2018 general elections were marred by manipulation, citing pre-poll and election day rigging. He accused the PTI Chairman of undermining the parliament, engaging in embezzlement, and participating in corrupt practices. He emphasized the importance of industrial growth while acknowledging that agriculture remains the backbone of the economy, and therefore, priority has been given to enhancing agricultural production. The minister highlighted the government's unwavering commitment to supporting farmers through a range of incentives aimed at strengthening the agricultural sector.

Additionally, he praised the PML-N leadership for their consistent encouragement of talented youth, emphasizing their commitment to nurturing young minds and providing them with opportunities for growth and development. Concluding his statement, the minister reaffirmed the PML-N's commitment to the country's progress and development, highlighting the party's determination to overcome the risks of default that existed when they assumed power.

Shazia highlights BISP's role in Pakistan

BERLIN (Agencies): The Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety (PA&SS) and Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Ms. Shazia Marri, participated in a panel discussion during the closing session of "Global Partnership to Support National Agendas: Joining Forces Towards Social Protection for All" held on Thursday in Berlin, Germany. During the discussion, Ms. Marri emphasized the importance of protecting marginalized and vulnerable segments of society and discussed Pakistan's efforts in this regard.

The closing session was moderated by Ms. Conny Czymoch, Independent international moderator and journalist. Other speakers, inter alia, included Ms. Svenja Schulze Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, BMZ; Ms. Esther Schüring, Social

Protection Advisor, GIZ; Mr. Colin Andrews, Program Manager, World Bank; Mr. El Hadji Ndiogou Diouf.

In her talk to the audience, Minister Shazia Marri shed light on the climate vulnerability faced by Pakistan. The country has experienced devastating floods in the past, including in 2010, 2011, 2022, and most recently this year. During the recent floods, approximately 33 million people were displaced, with 6000 pregnant women directly affected. However, the incumbent government, through the Benazir Income Support Programme, successfully distributed cash assistance to those affected by the recent floods.

Highlighting the significance of coordination, Minister Shazia Marri emphasized that BISP is working closely with provincial setups on social safety initiatives to maximize the benefits provided to the targeted segments of

society. She expressed willingness to share Pakistan's experiences with the representatives of the 58 countries present at the forum, showcasing the country's commitment to global collaboration for social protection.

Furthermore, Minister Marri informed the audience about the National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER), which serves as a comprehensive database of over 35 million households in Pakistan. The NSER enables BISP to gather essential data and add layers of information to enhance the targeting of beneficiaries, ensuring that adoptive social protection programme is more effectively tailored to the needs of the potential beneficiaries. Adaptive Social Protection is the way forward to deal with all sorts of shocks. Whenever we talk about the Climate Crisis - adaptive social protection has to be the crux of it, she concluded.

Cyclone potent threat to vulnerable communities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Senator Sherry Rehman on Thursday said the very severe cyclonic storm (VCSC) 'Biparjoy' of category-3 had observed a decline in its intensity but its density prevailed due to emerging weather conditions posing a potent threat to the vulnerable communities.

The federal minister flanked by Chairman National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik provided the latest update on the VSCS BIPARJOY to the media here. Senator Rehman said the cyclone's direction had changed from Karachi but its associated risks were prevailing in the impacted areas.

"The water level rise, rainfall, and storm alerts had already been issued whereas the four districts that would probably face the impacts are Thatta, Sujawal, Badin, and Ketī Bandar." "There is a shift

in the direction of 'Biparjoy' and landfall will take place at night. However, there are 17 different weather stations monitoring the situation and providing the most updated information," she noted. "The distance of the cyclone was almost 235 kilometers (km) from Thatta and it had reduced from 248 km to 230km from Karachi, which was 155 km away from Ketī Bandar has a wind speed of 120-140 km/h," she added.

The Minister added that the sustained surface wind speed was varying. Some 30 feet high waves could rise in the coastal areas and the local people have to stay alert. "The cyclone is moving from north to northeast. However, heavy rainfall is expected to take place around 100mm in Karachi, Hyderabad, Dadu, Tando Allah Yar, Tando Mohammad Khan, Sanghar," she said. Moreover, in Balochistan Lasbela, and Hub would also face the predicted rainfall. However, Thatta, Sujawal, Umerkot, Badin

and Tharparkar were to face very extreme rainfall of up to 300mm, she added.

"The government preparations have been made and were prepared to manage the natural disaster," she said. "The evacuation of around 81,925 people have been carried out from the coastal areas by Army, Navy, PMSA, Rangers, and other services during the process." She informed that Five Corps, 16 companies of Ranges, 1,400 soldiers, and 303 Pakistan Navy personnel were deployed in the field along with two battalions of Coast Guards whereas the Pakistan Air Force was kept standby to chip in the relief and rescue effort.

The government of Sindh was taking an effective lead in the process whereas all out efforts had been made to comfortably evacuate the masses from the impacted areas. "However, public resistance is natural and it's not a crime but rather there is a need to inform people to cooperate in this situation," she added.

Govt keeps fuel prices unchanged

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has announced keeping the fuel prices unchanged for the next fortnight. Finance Minister Ishaq Dar on Thursday announced the decision in a televised address.

Rejecting the media reports regarding fuel prices, Dar said the decision to maintain the fuel prices had been taken in view of international rates. The finance minister said international crude oil and gas prices had witnessed slight increase in the past few days. He said the government had cumulatively decreased the diesel and petrol prices by Rs35 and Rs20 in the last 30 days. The same prices will remain in effect till June 30, he added.

During the last fortnightly review on May 31, The federal government reduced the prices of petroleum products by up to Rs8 per litre. The price of petrol was reduced to Rs262 per litre after a cut of Rs8 while diesel came down to Rs253 per litre after a reduction of by Rs5.

The government's announcement comes as it faces increased pressure due to rising petrol prices — which had reached a record of Rs282 per litre earlier this year — and inflation, which is currently the highest in the region. The recent decline in global oil prices has provided some relief, but the government is still facing difficulty in keeping prices down as the rupee depreciates.

Rupee stable against dollar

ISLAMABAD (INP): Though the fissures remain in talks between Pakistan and IMF over budget, the Pakistani rupee managed to gain some value against the US dollar in the lackluster interbank market on Thursday.

As per the information obtained from foreign exchange dealers, the local currency was appreciated by 18 paise against the greenback and was currently exchanging hands at Rs287. On Wednesday, the Pakistan rupee after three consecutive losses had gained some ground against the US dollar with an appreciation of 0.28% in the interbank market. At close, the currency had settled at 287.18, an increase of 79 paise.

In a key development, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has rejected the budget for the next fiscal year. IMF representative Esther Perez said that the IMF had been discussing policies with the Pakistani authorities to maintain financial stability in the country. "The opportunity to widen the tax net in next year's budget proposals has been missed," she said. "Introducing tax amnesty in the budget is a violation of the loan programme. The tax amnesty scheme can affect the loan programme," she added.

"A long list of tax exemptions has reduced the transparency in the tax system," she pointed out. "Steps could have been taken to solve the problems of the energy sector in the budget. A strategy to deal with liquidity pressures in the energy sector could be included in the budget," she added.

"Resources for the BISP have been reduced in the budget for the next financial year," she said and added that the IMF was ready to work with the Pakistani government before the approval of the budget.

Pakistan has sovereign right to purchase crude oil from global market: FO

Muhammad Asad

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has the sovereign right to purchase crude oil from the global market according to its economic needs and financial interests. It was observed in response to a media query by Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch at her weekly news briefing in Islamabad on Thursday.

According to Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, Pakistan concluded an oil purchase deal with Russia after a comprehensive trade dialogue between the two nations. Pakistan faces a shortage of energy resources and it is most important for its economy. The Spokesperson stressed that it is the right of the country to satisfy its energy needs from the global market and procure crude oil from the least expensive source available in the market.

The Spokesperson told the media that the two-day 12th round of Pakistan-Iran Bilateral Political Consultations will begin in Tehran on Saturday. Pakistan delegation would be led by Foreign Secretary Asad Majeed Khan while the Iranian side will be headed by Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Ali Bagheri Kani. According to Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, both sides will hold

detailed discussions and will review all aspects of Pakistan-Iran bilateral relations covering political, economic, trade, investment, border security, education, climate change, and culture domains.

During the upcoming bilateral consultation, both Pakistan and Iran will also hold discussions on regional situations particularly Afghanistan, Kashmir, resumption of Iran-Saudi Arabia diplomatic ties, and regional peace and stability. To another question, he said that Foreign Secretary will hold a meeting with the senior Iranian leadership and the Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) during his trip to Iran.

While responding to a media query regarding the cyclone, the Spokesperson said that Pakistan has no contact with India regarding the cyclone that is likely to landfall on Pakistan's coast later in the day. To another media query regarding the recent arrest and release of pro-PTI Youtuber Adil Raja by British authorities, the Spokesperson said that she has no report about it. However, the government of Pakistan was determined to bring the perpetrators of the May 9 events to justice.

The Spokesperson did not com-

ment on the question regarding reports that the Afghan interim government was considering shifting TTP to the Northern parts of Afghanistan. However, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch admitted that Pakistan was continuously in discussion with Afghan authorities on the issue of the TTP and other terror outfits and all aspects of countering this menace remain under discussion between the two sides. While responding to a media query regarding the concerns raised by the US State Department Spokesperson about military courts in Pakistan, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said that Pakistan is a country of law and constitution and we remain committed to protecting our constitutional obligations to protect the rights and property of our citizens who enjoy constitutional guarantees and fundamental freedoms.

Any action of the government of Pakistan regarding the May 9 violence would be governed by the Constitution of the country, added Mumtaz Zahra Baloch. To another question, she confirmed that the continuation of the GSP Plus status of Pakistan is an important point of the agenda of the ongoing visit of the Minister for State for Foreign Affairs to the European Union.

Denmark to cooperate Pak in green energy infrastructure

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Danish Minister for Development Cooperation and Global Climate Policy Dan Jorgensen on Thursday agreed to enhance cooperation in building climate-resilient green energy infrastructure including wind energy to overcome the challenge of climate change and to resolve energy problems in Pakistan.

Talking to the media here after exchanging Joint Action Plan under Green Framework Engagement Agreement, the foreign minister said the agreement would set the stage for joint initiatives and projects in renewable energy and green transition. The minister hoped that policies would be formulated on behalf of the federal government to encourage international companies to invest in Pakistan's wind and other green energy sectors.

He said Pakistan was facing climate change challenges and last summer, historic floods hit the country resulting in the loss of precious lives and property.

Bilawal said despite challenges, the two countries were working towards an energy transition and creating green resilient infrastructure for the people. "There are a lot of areas that we can benefit from this cooperation," he added.

He said under the green framework agreement, the two countries would work together to overcome the challenge of climate change. It would also help create a healthy partnership in green framework that would also create more economic opportunities between the two countries. The agreement, he said would also help Pakistan to become an energy independent and economically prosperous country.

The foreign minister said the Danish government had been a leading voice and leading advocate for the green energy transition of climate agenda within Europe and Pakistan. He said partnering with the European countries on this ambitious agenda of green energy transition would not only have positive implications on Pakistan within the climate context but the economy as well. Terming

the agreement as very important, Danish Minister Dan Jorgensen said: "We share the same ambitions as we also want to fight climate change and both feel that international efforts to overcome the challenge are going too slow".

He assured the foreign minister of his country's full support in Pakistan's fight against climate change. He also called upon the international community to cooperate with Pakistan in this regard. He said Pakistan could be a superpower in wind energy keeping in view its location and wind potential. "We have decades of experience in wind energy, and we are ready to help Pakistan in this sector."

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said Pakistan and Denmark were facing the consequences of climate change in different scenarios as the latter was a developed country while Pakistan was a developing country. "I think it is a good example of how a developing world and the developed world partner together to find solutions and work together to face the challenge," he added.



KARACHI: A view of clash between PPP and Jamat-e-Islami activists during mayor election.

Financial woes: AJK universities seek solution

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In a crucial meeting held on Thursday, the Vice Chancellors of the five public sector universities in Azad Jammu and Kashmir met with Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, the Chairman of the Higher Education Commission (HEC). The Vice Chancellors expressed their concerns regarding the universities' financial, administrative, and other pressing issues.

During the meeting, the Vice-Chancellors unanimously conveyed to the Chairman that implementing the recent federal government budget's 30 and 35 percent salary increase for employees would be impractical for the universities. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, acknowledging the challenges faced by the universities, assured the Vice-Chancellors that the HEC is committed to

addressing these issues as a priority.

Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed informed the Vice Chancellors that the allocation for the recurring budget of higher education in the fiscal year 2023-24 amounts to 67 billion rupees, while an additional 70 billion rupees have been allocated for development projects. The recurring grant being provided to HEC by the federal government is 67 billion since 2017 while salaries and allowances have increased almost 100 percent over the past six years. Now it has become nearly impossible for the universities to meet their operational expenses with the current allocation.

Highlighting the financial difficulties faced by universities nationwide, Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed mentioned that on the request of HEC, the Baluchistan government has already provided a grant of 4 to 5 billion rupees to support

universities in the province. Similar recommendations have been made to the Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governments, urging them to address the financial constraints faced by universities in their respective provinces. Moreover, the HEC has appealed to the Punjab government and the Azad Kashmir government to prioritize and allocate resources from their budgets to alleviate the financial burden on universities within their jurisdiction.

The Chairman of the Higher Education Commission clarified that due to the 18th Constitutional Amendment, the responsibility of funding the higher education sector now lies with the provincial governments. Consequently, the Federal Ministry of Finance is unable to directly provide funding to universities located other than the federal territory.

Zardari, Bilawal greet Mayor, Dy Mayor, Dy

F.P. Report

KARACHI / ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has termed the success of the party candidates in the Karachi Mayor and Deputy Mayor elections as a historic success and a victory for the whole of Pakistan.

According to the statement issued by Media Cell Bilawal House, Chairman PPP extended congratulations to Murtaza Wahab Siddiqui for being elected Mayor of Karachi and Salman Abdullah Murad as Deputy Mayor. He said that the success is the result of the long struggle and sacrifices of the Jiyalas of Karachi. "The politics of hatred and division in the economic hub of the country reached its logical conclusion, and democracy is, undoubtedly, the best revenge," he added.

Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari vowed that his party would make Karachi the "Uroos-ul-Bilaa" (bride of cities) in true sense, and Karachi will now be the cradle of development, peace and brotherhood, adding that the problems of every street, neighborhood and area of Karachi would be solved without discrimination. "All the elected representatives of PPP, including Murtaza Wahab and Salman Abdullah Murad, have heavy responsibilities on their shoulders now, but I am sure that Jiyalas, who faced the toughest conditions in the past, will make a new history by carrying out their duties brilliantly," he added.

Hina meets EU officials

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Minister of State for the Foreign Affairs of Pakistan, Hina Rabbani Khar met the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP), Josep Borrell in Strasbourg.

Recalling her meeting with the High Representative on the sidelines of the second EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum in Stockholm, Minister of State expressed satisfaction on the ongoing cooperation between Pakistan and the EU based on the Strategic Engagement Plan. The Minister of State highlighted that Pakistan is engaging with the European institutions for building partnerships under various initiatives of the EU including the Global Gateway Strategy with a focus on green energy, and blue economies. She also expressed the desire to further enhance EU-Pakistan mutual engagement, especially legal pathways to migration while addressing EU's concerns on readmission.

Underscoring the importance of trade and economic cooperation, Minister of State emphasized that the EU's GSP Plus framework had been mutually beneficial and instrumental in growth of trade between the two sides.