

Abbasi leaves ECC
ISLAMABAD (NNI): Former premier Shahid Khaqan Abbasi resigned from the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) over the differences on how to purchase LNG from Azerbaijan, media reports claimed Sunday. The development comes after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had said those criticising and backstabbing Finance Minister Ishaq Dar had room in the PML-N – the ruling party.

 @thefrontierpost

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

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIX No. 152 Regd. No. 241 ZIQA'AD 29 1444 -- MONDAY, JUNE 19 2023 PESHAWAR EDITION 08 PAGES PRICE. 30

PM announces day of mourning over death of Pakistanis in Greece shipwreck incident

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday announced the observance of a day of mourning on June 19 over the death of Pakistani nationals who lost their lives after a ship carrying migrants sank off the coast of Greece on June 14.

"Tomorrow, the national flag will fly on half-mast and special prayers would be offered for the deceased," PM Office Media Wing said in a press statement issued in the Urdu language.

Moreover, according to another notification of the PM Office, the prime minister has constituted a high-level four-member committee to conduct an inquiry into the tragic incident.

"In an unfortunate incident on 14th June, 2023, a boat carrying migrants capsized off the coast of Greece resulting in the deaths of Pakistani/AJK nationals along with other nationals. The number of casualties are being still ascertained. The prime minister, while expressing his grief over the incident and also taking a serious note of it, has been pleased to constitute an inquiry committee," the notification said.

The committee will be headed by its chairman Director National Police Bureau Ehsan Sadiq and Additional Secretary Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Africa) Javed Ahmad Umrani, DIG Azad Jammu and Kashmir Pooch Sardar Zaheer Ahmad and Joint Secretary Interior Division, FIA Faisal Nisar Ch. as its members. The inquiry com-

PM grieved over loss of lives in Kallar Kahar accident

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday while expressing condolences with the bereaved families of those passengers who lost their lives in ill-fated Kallar Kahar bus accident, expressed his deep anguish over the occurrence of repeated traffic accidents near the Salt Range on Motorway. On his Twitter handle, the prime minister expressed his deep grief over the loss of lives in yesterday's accident.

"My sympathies and prayers are for those families who have lost their dear ones in this painful accident," he said in a tweet posted in the Urdu language. Motorway authori-

ties should ensure that vehicles plying on Motorways have the required fitness and compatibility, besides, the drivers meet all the driving requirements, he stressed. The prime minister observed that with strict implementation of rules and regulations, travelling could be made safer.

At least a dozen passengers including women and children died on Saturday when a passenger bus lost control and overturned on the Lahore-Islamabad motorway some 130km from the federal capital. A Motorway police spokesperson had informed that the Lahore-bound passenger bus was passing through Kallar Kahar Salt Range when its brakes failed.

mittee would submit its report within one week. According to the notification, the inquiry committee would ascertain facts of the Greece boat tragedy, identify loopholes and lapses in the legal/enforcement mechanism in Pakistan that exposed precious human lives to the vagaries of human trafficking in this particular case and similar incidents in the past.

The committee is tasked to analyze similar past incidents and action taken so far and to take stock of the existing legal framework, enforcement measures (in the country) and international coordination to pre-

vent, control and punish human smuggling and to prepare short-and long-term recommendations (including legislation, enforcement measures, awareness campaigns and improvement of national and international coordination) to apprehend agents, facilitators, masterminds, rackets and for the eradication of the menace of human trafficking.

PM directs inquiry into human trafficking, causing deaths of Pakistani nationals in Greece boat disaster: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday directed for holding of an inquiry

into the human trafficking that led to tragic incident of migrants shipwreck near Greece with several Pakistani nationals onboard. The prime minister directed for an immediate crackdown against agents involved in the heinous crime of human trafficking and called for bringing them to justice.

The prime minister expressed his deep grief and sorrow over the death of Pakistani nationals in the tragic incident that took place off the coast of Greece, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. He said the entire nation including him shared their sympathies with the bereaved families. The prime minister also directed the officials of the Pakistan embassy in Greece to look after 12 Pakistanis rescued from the scene of the disaster.

The prime minister also directed for taking further stringent action against the elements involved in human trafficking, besides asking the law enforcement agencies for the identification of such traffickers who had been duping people to undertake such perilous steps. Upon the directive of the prime minister, Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) had deputed DIG Alam Shinwari as a focal person to facilitate information regarding those who lost lives in the incident and others who were injured.

Similarly, chief secretary Azad Jammu and Kashmir had also tasked a focal person to contact the Pakistan embassy and Greek authorities in Greece regarding the latest information over the casualties and injuries.

PML-N to win general elections with thumping majority: Maryam

LAHORE (NNI): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior vice president and chief organizer Maryam Nawaz has said that the party would win the upcoming general elections with thumping majority with the support of its committed workers and followers. Maryam Nawaz said that the PML-N was fully prepared to go into the elections and would emerge as an effective parliamentary force in the

general elections.

She said this during meetings with PML-N leaders including Punjab General Secretary Awais Leghari, Member National Assembly Nadeem Abbas, former MNA Abdul Majeed Khan and former provincial minister Naeem Khan Baba. She felicitated the party leadership over successful holding of General Council meeting in Islamabad and also congratulated

Maryam Nawaz on being elected Chief Organiser of the PML-N. They also expressed confidence in the leadership of Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Shehbaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz. Maryam Nawaz said the PML-N candidates would go into the elections with full preparation, adding that policies and guideline of Nawaz Sharif would be followed. She called upon the party workers to start people contact campaign.

Proposals of expenditure for current, development sides for first four months finalized: CM

PESHAWAR (APP): A highlevel meeting held here on Sunday with Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan in the chair, finalised proposals regarding the proposed expenditures both of current and development sides during the first four months of the upcoming financial year.

The proposed expenditures would be presented to the caretaker provincial cabinet for authorisation. Besides caretaker cabinet members Hamid Shah and Himayatullah Khan, the meeting was also attended by Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry, Additional Chief Secretary Planning and Development, Zubair Asghar Qureshi, Secretary Finance, Muhammad Ayaz and other relevant high ups. The meeting was given detailed briefing about various aspects of the current and development expenditures to be incurred dur-

ing the first four months of the fiscal year 2023-24. The meeting also finalised various proposals regarding austerity measures with the aim to create maximum fiscal space for development. These proposed measures would also be presented to the caretaker cabinet for final approval.

The proposals contain short term, mid term and long term measures to create more and more fiscal space.

For this purpose, a special meeting of the provincial caretaker cabinet would be held on 20th instant, it was decided in the meeting.

Talking on this occasion, the Chief Minister said that proposed expenditures for the first four months of the upcoming financial year, have been finalised in a very prudent manner in the prevailing financial constraints being faced by the provincial government, adding that the provincial caretaker setup, from the very first day of

its inception, had been struggling hard to steer the province out of this financial crunch.

He said that the provincial caretaker government has taken up the financial issue of the province with the federal government a number of times with the aim to get the due shares of the province under various federal transfers including NFC share of the newly merged districts, net hydel profits, oil and gas royalty etc.

The Chief Minister remarked that his government will make all possible efforts to maintain a balance between the expenditures and revenue receipts during the first four months of the upcoming financial year. He urged upon the meed of prudent and efficient use of the available financial resources, and directed the administrative secretaries of the provincial government for necessary steps in their concerned departments in this regard.

Nearly 100 dead as Indian states swelter in heat

BIHAR (Agencies): At least 98 people have died in the Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in the last three days due to extreme heat, according to officials.

As parts of India have been witnessing severe heat-waves in the last few days with temperatures exceeding 40 degrees Celsius at many places, 54 people died in northern Uttar Pradesh and 44 people in eastern Bihar. All 54 deaths in Uttar Pradesh were reported from one Ballia district, where at least 400 other people have been admitted to the district hospital for treatment.

Medical Superintendent

Dr SK Yadav, confirming deaths, said a team from the state capital Lucknow will be arriving to investigate the matter. "They will see whether any other disease is responsible for these deaths. Most of these patients had other accompanying diseases like hypertension and diabetes," Yadav told Anadolu.

Ballia district recorded a maximum temperature of 43°C on Saturday. Another 44 people died in the eastern state of Bihar due to hot weather conditions. Out of 44 deaths, 35 people died in Patna city alone, according to broadcaster India Today. Nine people have died in

other districts of the state.

Patna, the capital of Bihar, recorded a maximum temperature of 44.7°C on Friday. The temperature in the other 11 districts crossed 44°C. The Indian Meteorological Department predicted heat-wave conditions in many states in India and issued a red alert for Bihar. Many states have extended the summer vacation in schools due to the scorching summer.

Last year, a study published by the medical journal The Lancet said that deaths caused due to heat in India increased by 55 per cent between 2000-2004 and 2017-2021.

Zilhaj Moon sighted in Saudi Arabia; Hajj on June 27

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The Zilhaj creasent has been sighted in Saudi Arabia thus Youm e Arafat - the key ritual of Hajj, will be observed a day before Eid-ul-Azha on Tuesday, June 27, 2023. The official Twitter account Haramain Sharifain made the announcement. "The Crescent for the month of Dhul Hijjah 1444 was Observed in Saudi Arabia, subsequently Dhul Hijjah 1444 will begin tomorrow, Monday, 19 June 2023 pending official statement from the Royal Court. Day of Arafah: Tuesday, June 27, 2022 and the Eid Al Adha: Wednesday, June 28, 2023."

The Frontier Post

CTD arrests ‘terrorist’

LAHORE (APP): CTD Punjab, during an operation in Dera Ghazi Khan, arrested an alleged terrorist, who's a member of a banned outfit. CTD DG Khan received information from a reliable source that an active member of proscribed organisation, BLA, Muhammad Rashid Bashmani, was present in the area and was sharing controversial content against the government and the law-enforcement agencies through the social media.



BEIJING: U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken meets with China's Foreign Minister Qin Gang at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing.

Blinken, Qin hold ‘candid’ talks, US and China agree to meet again

BEIJING (Reuters): The U.S. secretary of state and Chinese foreign minister on Sunday held what both called candid and constructive talks on their differences from Taiwan to trade but seemed to agree on little beyond keeping the conversation going with an eventual meeting in Washington.

Speaking after a 5-1/2 hour meeting followed by a dinner, U.S. and Chinese officials both emphasized their desire for stable and predictable relations, but China was clear it regards Taiwan as the most important issue and greatest risk.

Making the first visit to China by a U.S. secretary of state in five years, Antony Blinken stressed "the need to reduce the risk of misperception and miscalculation" in his talks with Foreign Minister Qin Gang, the State Department said.

"Qin Gang pointed out that the Taiwan issue is the core of China's core interests, the most important issue in Sino-U.S. relations, and the most prominent risk," Chinese state

media quoted Qin as having told the top U.S. diplomat.

Before the talks, U.S. officials saw little chance of any breakthrough on the long list of disputes between the world's two largest economies, which range from trade and U.S. efforts to hold back China's semiconductor industry to the status of self-governed Taiwan and Beijing's human rights record. Ties between the countries have deteriorated across the board, raising concern they might one day clash militarily over the self-governed island of Taiwan, which China claims as its own.

Blinken's visit was closely followed by the rest of the world as an escalation between super powers could have worldwide repercussions on anything from financial markets to trade routes and practices and global supply chains.

Particularly alarming for China's neighbours has been Beijing's reluctance to engage in regular military-to-military talks with Washington.

In strikingly similar language, both sides said the talks were useful, with a U.S. spokesman describing them as "candid, substantive, and constructive" and Chinese state media characterizing them as "candid, in depth and constructive."

However, they did not appear to agree on much beyond that Qin should visit Washington to continue the conversation at a time both sides found convenient but neither specified. Both sides, however, emphasized the importance of making it easier for their citizens to visit, with Chinese state media saying they agreed to discuss increasing passenger flights and welcoming more students and business people.

Blinken, who postponed a February China trip after a suspected Chinese spy balloon flew over U.S. airspace, is the highest-ranking U.S. government official to visit since President Joe Biden took office in January 2021.

Pakistan has ‘no problem’ with US-India developing ties, if that not at Islamabad’s cost: Khawaja Asif

NEW YORK (APP): Pakistan has no problem with the United States developing a partnership with India if it is not at Islamabad's cost, Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif said in an wide-ranging interview with Newsweek, a leading American magazine. "I think we do not have any problem with the United States developing a partnership with India if it is not at the cost of Pakistan," he said, ahead of Indian Prime Minister Naredra Modi's visit to Washington where he is set have talks with President Joe Biden on June 22.

"That is one. And balancing between the relationship with United States and our regional partners, again, it is not like that. We have common borders with China, we have common borders with Afghanistan, Iran, India," Khawaja Asif said.

In the interview, he argued that substantial improvement is need to ensure Pakistan's stability, and key to that improvement is maintaining the increasingly difficult geopolitical balancing act between Washington, Beijing and other powers with whom Islamabad seeks good ties. Such relations, he underscored, are particularly important as Pakistan attempts to not only promote trade, but also counter

the increasing threat of cross-border terrorist attacks. About India, Khawaja Asif said that ever since Modi came into power some 10 years ago, the Indian outlook towards regional politics completely changed, with the abandonment of the secular ideology, which the country pursued since 1947.

"If you look at his (Modi's) politics in Gujarat, it was again based on anti-minority, it is based on communal tensions and of voting Hindu nationalist support by fanning sentiments against the community, and minorities, both Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, and so many other communities that are very large," he said.

"That has actually aggravated the situation between the two countries, with India taking a very nationalistic stand within the country, and obviously, India is a very big market, over 1.3 billion people. Everywhere in the world, the other big economies will need to have them as partners. "But Pakistan is not a very big economy, and [is] a vulnerable economy. All we have is a geographical location, which is strategic, which attracts, I would say, not all the good things, it sometimes attracts some things which really make us even more vulnerable."

Pakistan would like good relation-

ships with all the countries, he stressed. "We would like to improve our relationships with them if the relationship is not good.

"We want to live in peace. If there is no peace there, we will never be able to restore our economy the way we want to restore it," Khawaja Asif added. "So, I personally feel that some appreciation is required in Washington about our situation, and we should not be pushed into a situation where we have to make some very hard choices. Our relationship with America for us is very valuable. It has its history. It has some disappointments, some huge disappointments, but still we value our relationship with the United States and we want that relationship to flourish."

"We are big trade partners, we have a very large Pakistani diaspora in the United States and Pakistani interests over there. So, their business interests are also, considering our size, they are quite attractive and large." The defence minister said Pakistan's nuclear assets were "not for any jingoistic or hostile intentions." Since we attained nuclear capability, he said, the skirmishes, the wars, the battles between India and Pakistan have not escalated the way they escalated way back in 1965, and 1948, and then 1971.

Terrorist commander among three killed in Dara Adam Khel IBO

RAWALPINDI (INP): Three terrorists including a most wanted terrorist commander Zafar alias Zafari were killed in intelligence based operation (IBO) of the security forces in Dara Adam Khel on Sunday.

The intelligence sources said that on an security tip-off, operation was conducted against extremists on Saturday-Sunday midnight during with a most wanted Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) terrorist commander Zafar Khan alias Zafari son of Ghulam Siddique, along with his two accomplices Hasan Khan son of Mohammad Imran, hailing from Bazi Khel, Dara Adam Khel and Anas alias Ali belonging to Nangarhar Afghanistan were killed.

The intelligence agencies and security forces hunt down terrorists by adopting unconventional operational procedures based on corroborated intelligence. Reports said that terrorist

commander Zafri was a resident of village Malan of Dara Adam Khel and reached Peshawar from Nangarhar province of Afghanistan on May 22, 2023. Terrorist Zafri was also a former member of Tehreek-e-Taliban Afghanistan (TTA) and was involved in 26 grenade attacks in Pakistan. Commander Zafari was involved in dozens of terrorist attacks against security forces, coal contractors, businessmen and influential people and so far had stolen more than Rs 100 million in extortion and kidnapping for ransom. The slain terrorist Hasan Khan was an expert in sniping and grenade attacks and was a part of Tehreek-e-Taliban Afghanistan from 2019 to 2021 and lost Nangar province of Afghanistan several times.

Terrorist Hasan Khan had joined Tariq Gidar group in 2022 whereas the killed terrorist Anas in 2018 was an expert sniper and involved in ter-

rorist attacks against security forces in North Waziristan and South Waziristan districts.

The local people were fully cooperating with the security agencies against the terrorists due to which these terrorists were not getting any hiding place. Due to the rejection of the local population, the terrorists were forced to secretly bury their dead terrorists.

The coal miners, business community and common people of the area breathed a sigh of relief with the elimination of the wanted terrorists.

The security forces would continue their continuous efforts to make the country safe and free from terrorism with the cooperation of the people. Effective and timely operations of intelligence agencies and security forces have narrowed the ground for terrorists inside and outside the country, the ISPR said.

Measures taking to develop underprivileged, neglected districts in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali, on Sunday said that steps are being taken to bring underprivileged and neglected districts on par with developed areas of the province. The Malakand Division, particularly the district Dir, is blessed with natural beauty, and promoting tourism in the region will create employment opportunities for the local population.

In this regard, it is crucial for local officials and youth to play their role in promoting tourist activities. Governor Haji Ghulam Ali expressed these views during a meeting here at Governor House with a 28-member delegation, consisting of elected chairpersons, councilors, and representatives from political parties, including the Peoples Party of Pakistan, Jamaat-e-Islami, and

Awami National Party. The delegation, led by Chairman Maulana Ashfaq Hanafi, apprised the Governor of various issues related to the Dir district and highlighted the challenges faced by local municipalities. Governor Haji Ghulam Ali assured the delegation of his full cooperation in finding solutions to their problems.

He said that the provincial government is committed to ensure equal development in all urban and rural areas of the province. Furthermore, the federal government is also providing assistance to expedite the development process.

The Governor said that local representatives are closest to the people and, therefore, funds have been allocated in the budget for elected municipal representatives to initiate developmental projects at the grassroots level.

Governor Haji Ghulam Ali urged the elected representatives from all districts, especially those from northern areas, to promote the natural resources of their respective regions not only at the national level but also worldwide.

He said that the scenic beauty of these areas is a gift of Allah, and it is the responsibility of the government to promote both tourism and sustainable population growth.

The delegation expressed gratitude to the Governor for his cooperation and assured him of their commitment to resolving the issues at hand.

In addition, Governor Haji Ghulam Ali attended the Star Property Show organized under the auspices of Star Marketing at a local hotel in Peshawar. The event showcased 22 major housing and construction projects.

Addressing the gathering, the Governor appreciated the private sector's enthusiastic investment in the housing sector, which not only provides employment opportunities but also reduces the burden on the government to provide housing solutions.

He urged investors in the construction industry to ensure that modern standards are met and to prioritize the provision of recreational and sports facilities for the people. He acknowledged the services of the construction sector, which plays a significant role in providing employment opportunities and introducing innovative architectural designs in the country.

Governor Haji Ghulam Ali commended the federal and provincial governments for their joint efforts in facilitating the construction sector, particularly housing projects.



PESHAWAR: Delegation of Chairmen of LG bodies and elders from district Dir meeting with Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali at Governor's House.

Minister condemns killing of lady education officer

PESHAWAR (APP): Caretaker Minister Planning and Development Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Hamid Shah on Sunday condemned killing of a lady Sub-Divisional Education Officer (SDEO) Rizwana Shaheen.

In a statement issued here the minister said that it was a cruel incident and those involved would be brought to justice.

He prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to bereaved family members to bear this irreparable loss with fortitude.

It is worth mentioning here that Sub-Divisional Education Officer (SDEO) Rizwana was brutally killed in her house at Zere Meri Khel area of Landikotal district Khyber.

The police has arrested her husband Najibullah who was allegedly involved in her murder.

Police crackdown on criminals in City

PESHAWAR (APP): The Police crackdown on criminals in different localities across Peshawar with four suspects wanted in different crimes were arrested and recovered arms and drugs.

According to detail, Police arrested four suspects during the crackdown which were identified as Shahid Parvez, Mohammad Adil, Noorullah and Zubair are among the arrested accused.

The accused are involved in illegal arms and other crimes with one Kalashnikov, two pistols, and several cartridges were recovered from the arrested suspects, police said.

Norcotics social scourge: Govt and people work together with missionary spirit for uprooting

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: KP Minister for Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control Haji Manzoor Khan Afridi on Sunday said that Norcotics are ugly social scourge wherein the government and the people must work together with a missionary spirit for uprooting it from our society.

Similarly, the delegation requested the provincial minister to exempt small housing units up to five marla from property tax, to which the provincial minister said that the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has been already approached in this respect and it is expected that he will announce good news to the people soon.

The delegation drew the provincial minister's attention to certain public welfare and civic issues and, which were thoroughly discussed, while Haji Manzoor Afridi assured them of their proper redressal. The delegation also informed the provincial minister about the growing epidemic of narcotics that was infusing in our youth especially.

It was told that new types of drugs are spreading like poison in Peshawar as elsewhere in other parts of the province and appealed that emergency measures be taken at the

government level to control this monster, while in some places it was also pointed out that complaints existing about the presence of suppliers in addition to drug addicts in certain suburbs of the city. The provincial minister directed the Excise and Narcotics Control Secretary to take immediate action with tangible results in this regard.

He was talking to a delegation of Dir Welfare Organization, that called on him in Peshawar under the leadership of its president Haji Sultan Yusuf alias Dir Lalaji while the delegation also included Chairman Executive Body Haji Muhammad Saeed, General Secretary Master Zahir Shah and other officials.

The delegation also apprised the provincial minister about the issues being faced by the people in registration and Ineqalat of houses and commercial properties in Peshawar, especially the problems of Khana e kasht issue, to which the minister replied that though it's concerned with Revenue Department but he would surely contact the related quarters to solve it accordingly.

The delegation drew the provincial minister's attention to the improvement of recreational facilities in Peshawar city and also

complained that due to several restrictions, people could not use the available parks facilities.

Haji Manzoor Khan Afridi clarified that he has already discussed it with the Provincial Minister of Local Government, Barrister Sawal Nazir, and it has been decided that the ladies and gentlemen who come for morning walks in parks of Peshawar city till 8 am. Entry will be absolutely free so citizens should take full advantage of this relief.

According to this decision, he said, no gate fee will be charged from public in Hazar Khawani Park and no gate pass will be required so citizens can use the walking track and exercise equipment free of cost in addition to morning walks in the park.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker provincial minister Irshad Qaisar presiding over Senate Meeting of Khyber Medical University Peshawar.

Relief Department taking steps to combat dengue fever: Secretary

PESHAWAR (APP): The Relief, Rehabilitation, and Settlement Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is taking steps to combat dengue fever in collaboration with local and international organizations under the Provincial Dengue Control Action Plan.

As part of this effort, the international organization Médecins du Monde (MDM) on Sunday provided

3,900 mosquito nets and 2,950 health kits to the Relief Department of KP. Abdul Basit, Secretary of the Relief, Rehabilitation, and Settlement Department, KP said that sessions on dengue prevention have been conducted in 560 schools, 241 colleges, and 9 universities so far.

He said that the relief supplies would be distributed in high-risk areas identified by the Relief Department.

The distribution will be carried out through the Rescue 1122 and Civil Defence Agencies. Secretary Abdul Basit emphasized the significance of MDM assistance, stating that these efforts are of utmost importance as the public is affected by dengue every year.

He highlighted the importance of mutual cooperation

between government departments and international organizations like MDM in effectively tackling public health challenges. He mentioned that the awareness campaign includes sessions, meetings, workshops in educational institutions, door-to-door campaigns, billboards, mosque announcements, hoardings, radio messages, and impactful social media initiatives.

True face of PTI exposed on May 9

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Adviser to the Prime Minister Engineer Amir Muqam has said that the merger of Shahji Gul Afridi's political party Tehreek-e-Islahat with the Muslim League (N) will lead to a green revolution in the erstwhile FATA and Peshawar Division. He said that the purpose of the reception for the first time is to let all understand the high significance of joining hands with

Gul Shah Jee. The advisor added that on behalf of my leadership and all the workers, I once again congratulate Shahji Gul Afridi and thank him. Engineer Amir Muqam said that the true face of PTI has been exposed on May 9 and 10 that it is an anti-Pakistan party, now it has become a thing of the past and will never come to power again. He further said that only Nawaz Sharif and Muslim League (N) have the solution and vaccine to the

country's problems. The adviser said that after the upcoming general elections, the country will be rescued from its difficulties under the leadership of Quaid Nawaz Sharif. He also thanked all the leadership and workers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muslim League N, especially those hailing from Swabi, Mardan, Peshawar District, Peshawar City and Khyber District, who gave him a warm welcome.

Alhaj Shah Ji Gul Afridi

while speaking on the occasion said that he joined the Muslim League-N because Nawaz Sharif can solve the problems of the people in the real sense and will take the country out of the current crisis.

Muqam announced that a grand public meeting will be held on July 16 to celebrate Shahji Gul Afridi joining PMLN, in which party organizer Maryam Nawaz will also participate along with other prominent political figures.



PESHAWAR: Intending pilgrims attending a training session at Haji Camp Complex Hayatabad.

KP cops foil terrorist attack at check post

PESHAWAR (INP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police personnel foiled the terrorists attack at Bara Qambar Khel police post in Khyber district of the province.

The police foiled the attack by taking full retaliatory action in which four officers sustained injuries in the exchange of fire.

The injured personnel were shifted to Hayatabad Medical Complex. Peshawar Police said clearance operation continues in the area.

Exploring hydel potential inevitable for sustained economic uplift

PESHAWAR (APP): Citing the importance of cheap power generation for a country's economic and social growth, developed and developing countries around the world give special impetus to hydel power generation.

With soaring prices of petroleum products, reliance on oil for power generation is being lessened around the globe, pushing countries to build more water reservoirs not only to fulfil growing energy needs but to enhance agricultural yields.

Like other SAARC countries, Pakistan is also confronted with the grave challenge of an energy crisis due to high population growth, power pilferage and non-construction of dams.

Despite 60,000MW hydel power potential, including 30,000MW mere in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the energy crisis has further deepened in recent years due to increase in petroleum prices, high reliance on fuel to run powerhouses,

taxation, "kunda culture" and non-construction of new dams.

Prof Dr Muhammad Naeem, Economics Department of the Swabi University said hydel energy was cost-efficient for developing countries like Pakistan and underscored the need for the construction of water reservoirs and small dams for sustainable economic growth and floods mitigation in the wake of climate change challenges.

Dr Naeem said China had constructed about 98,000 dams and India 5,334 dams, while Pakistan had built only 150 dams since its independence and no big dam after Tarbela.

"The rivers in northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab are most suitable for construction of dams, especially small ones," he added.

When contacted, Engr Zahoore Hussain, Director Projects, Wapda (North) said 72 percent work on multipurpose Kurram Tangi (Stage-1) Bannu and North

Waziristan had been completed and expected to be inaugurated in November next year.

He said the design and feasibility study of its stage-II was under process which would be completed with a loan assistance of Asian Development Bank.

Engr Zahoore said the dam would store around 1.2 million acre feet water besides generating 80.9 MW electricity, adding over three million people of southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would be directly benefited from the dam.

Besides completion of 108MW Golen Gol dam in Chitral, the government had accelerated work on Mohmand dam of 800MW with 1.293 MAF water storage capacity that after completion would supplement/irrigate 160,000 acres of existing land and about 18,237 acres of new land with annual benefits of Rs2.23 billion, he mentioned.

Likewise, 300 million gallons water per day

would also be provided to Peshawar for drinking purpose with benefits of Rs.957 million from Mohmand dam, which would also help saving Peshawar, Charsadda and Nowshera from floods.

Meanwhile, construction work on a high voltage direct current (HVDC) converter station was in progress at Azakhel Bala Nowshera district under the CASA-1000 Project for transmission of 1300 MW inexpensive, clean, and environment-friendly electricity from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan via Afghanistan to Pakistan.

The CASA-1000 Project carried a great example of mutual cooperation between the governments of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan aimed at harnessing clean energy trade and building a shared regional electricity market, fighting climate change, and increasing standard of living for their populations.

According to KP Energy Department, 36.6MW

Daral Khwar HPP Madain Swat was completed and electricity generation with over Rs1.3 billion annual benefits started. Likewise, 300MW Balakot HPP worth Rs 85 billion approved by ECNEC would be constructed on River Kunhar in Mansehra.

Similarly, 496MW Spat-Gah HPP amounting US\$ 1,015 million is being developed for which MoU between KP government having 26pc share and M/S Korea Hydro and Nuclear Power Company (KHNP) with 74pc share was signed.

XEN Engr Ziaullah Khan of PESCO Power Distribution Company told APP that KP was currently receiving about 1873MW electricity from the national grid while its demand was about 3220 MW, facing a shortfall of 1347 that was being fulfilled through load management.

Under aggregate technical and commercial losses (ATCL) formula, the official said the areas with high ATCL losses such as

Bannu, rural areas of Peshawar including Warak Road, Chagarmathi and Regi and Di Khan district were facing brunt of load shedding (16 hours), while there was no load shedding at Hayatabad and Gulbahar due to high recovery rate and lack of power pilferage.

He said Swat, Swabi, Interior Peshawar and Hazara were comparatively better in term of low line losses and high recovery.

Similarly, in merged areas, 180 MW was being drawn from the express transmission line against 1000 MW demand with 820MW shortfall due to power stealing through direct shock, a senior official of Tribal Electricity Supply Company (TESCO) told APP.

Meanwhile, the government has earmarked a sum of Rs 107413.044 million for various ongoing and new schemes of the power sector in the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) for the financial year 2023-24.

According to the budget-

ary document, out of the total allocation, the government allocated Rs 81,774.431 million from the local component while Rs 25,638.613 million from the foreign aid component.

Under ongoing schemes in KP, Rs 1600 million each were earmarked for 220kV Hairpur Substation and 220kV Swabi Substation, Rs 1,059 million for replacement of LT Bare conductor with ABC Cable in Peshawar Khyber Circle and Bannu Circle, and Rs 964 million for electrification works at different valleys of District Chitral in the PSDP for FY 2023-24.

Similarly, a sum of Rs 13,800 million had been specified for evacuation of power from Suki Kinari, Kohala, Mahal HPPs, Rs 5,667.094 million for evacuation of power from 2160 MW Dasu stage-1, and Rs 16,099.255 million for 500 kV HVDC Transmission system between Tajikistan and Pakistan (CASA-1000).

Additionally, eight projects for supplying electrici-

ty to Special Economic Zones (SEZs) have been allocated a total of Rs. 7,267.352 million and by the end of June 2024, the transmission sector is expected to have an additional capacity of 3,750 MVA on the 500kV grid and 6,900 MVA on the 220kV grid. The transmission lines will be extended by 522 km on the 500kV level and 668 km on the 220kV level.

Resultantly, 6,985 villages would be electrified and 1,403,592 consumers for Distribution Companies (DISCOs) would be facilitated besides extending distribution lines of 132 kV by 1,843 km, and the capacity of 132 kV grids would be strengthened by 4,199 MVA.

Despite all these steps, there was still a need to work on more hydel power plants and establish large reservoirs for growing energy needs and trends of urbanization if Pakistan wanted to strengthened its economy and step into the developed world.



In brief

Girl killed for honour

BUREWALA (INP): A man slain his daughter for honour in Burewala district on Sunday, police said. The suspect identified as Muhammad Hanif attacked his daughter Sajida with a sharp-edged weapon and slit open her throat. The accused then alerted the police about the incident and was later taken into custody. The Saddar police shifted the body for autopsy and launched investigation. The suspect told the police that he developed suspicion over his daughter's character.

Robber killed in encounter

MANDI BAHAUD-DIN (INP): A robber was allegedly killed while his accomplices managed to escape after exchange of fire here in Khewa area on Sunday. According to the media reports, in the Khewa area, police came across with bandits group after having intelligence based information. The bandits seeing police party opened fire on them. Police retaliated with fire also. Police claimed that one robber was gunned down by the firing of his accomplices. The deceased robber has yet to be identified. Two other suspects managed to escape during crossfire. The body was shifted for autopsy. Police have started searching to arrest his accomplices.

Minor killed, mother injured

ARFOWALA (INP): A minor girl was killed and her mother suffered critical wounds after tractor driver lost control over steering in Arifwala on Sunday, police said. The tractor was taking turn and hit the pedestrians. The injured woman was admitted to the tehsil headquarters hospital. In another incident, a youth lost his life after being hit by a train near Kissan Adda in Okara. A Rescue 1122 ambulance shifted the body to the state hospital.

Drive against measles started

GILGIT (INP): A six-day long immunization campaign against measles will begin in the Gilgit Baltistan from Monday. Coordinator National immunization Program Gilgit Baltistan Dr Iqbal Rasool said that over eleven hundred children have been affected by measles in Gilgit, Nagar, Hunza, Astore and Diamer. He said the campaign will be launched in 20 union councils for which a medical team comprises 125 staff has been constituted.

Man killed in firing of robbers

KANDHKOT (INP): A man was killed and four others injured in firing of robbers on two vehicles during robbery in Bakshapur police station jurisdiction here on Sunday, police said. According to police, the robbers opened fire at a car after driver did not stop during robbery at Indus Highway in Kandhkot district Kashmore. The car driver Tabehuddin Khoso was killed on the spot in the firing. In firing on another vehicle, four people sustained bullet wounds and robbers fled the scene. The body and injured were shifted to civil hospital and police after registering a case into the incident started investigations.

30 outlaws held, looted cash

CHINIOT (INP): The police arrested 30 outlaws belonging to seven inter-district robber gangs, recovered looted cash, jewelry, snatches vehicles, bikes and other valuables worth millions of rupees during separate action in different areas of Chiniot.

Govt striving to give relief to poor

SARGODHA (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Gas and Petroleum Chaudhry Hamid Hameed said on Sunday Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) led coalition government was making all-out efforts to provide maximum relief to the poor and deserving segments of society in its limited resources.

Talking to APP here on Sunday, he said the PML-N, during its previous tenure, launched significant uplift projects, eliminated terrorism, overcame power outage, revived economy and achieved other milestones for progress and prosperity of the country.

He said that in 2013, before formation of the PML-N government, the country was facing severe economic challenges, power outages, terrorism, and the international media was labelling Pakistan as most dangerous country in the world, but the PML-N, after coming to power, adopted comprehensive strategies to restore the country's image,

eliminate terrorism, overcome power load-shedding and revive the economy of the country.

The minister said the PML-N government introduced a policy of 3Es: Energy sources and solutions, elimination of extremism and economic revival to put the country on road to development and progress, which was successfully achieved. He said over 11,000 megawatts of electricity was generated and added to the national grid only in four years, steering the country out of darkness.

It was a historic achievement as no government in 65 years could generate and add such a large quantity of electricity to the system, he added. Hamid Hameed said that for action against terrorism and extremism, the security forces and law enforcement agencies were provided all resources and support to eliminate terrorism and ensure peace in the country, adding that officials of security forces had rendered great sacrifices in war against terrorism and suc-

cessfully eliminated terrorism from the country. Hamid said due to China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a number of foreign companies showed interest in investing in CPEC projects, while the foreign investors declared Pakistan safe for investment, he said.

The PML-N government launched projects to construct roads and motorways of 2,000 kilometers, besides setting up campuses of universities even in underdeveloped areas of the country for imparting higher education to the youth, he added.

The SAPM said some elements could not digest the country's development and prosperity and they hatched a conspiracy against the then prime minister Nawaz Sharif. He stressed the need for changing life-style as a collective measure to revive country's economic situation and strike a balance between country's income and expenditures, asserting that country's debt burden needed to be decreased, otherwise, poverty rate could escalate till 2025.

58th meeting of syndicate of KUST held

F.P. Report

KOHAT: The 58th meeting of the syndicate of Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST) Syndicate was held under the chairmanship of Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Sardar Khan. The meeting was attended by

Prof. Dr. Anwar-ul-Hassan Gillani (nominee of the Chairman HEC), Syed Hidayat Jan Ex-Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Nominee of Chancellor), all deans, elected members of faculty and administration cadres. Registrar KUST along with nominees of Secretary HED, Secretary Establishment and Secretary Finance attended the meeting. The

Vice Chancellor warmly welcomed all the members of the syndicate.

Syndicate approved minutes of the selection board regarding promotion cases of two TTS faculty one as a tenured Professor in the Department of Social Work and other as Assoc. Professor in the Department of Zoology along with appointment of two Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies in BPS (GPF/CPF).

The minutes of 20th affiliation committee was also approved by the forum along with nomination of syndicate member as member of the affiliation committee after the completion of tenure of a member.

The syndicate endorsed

the compliance of the Chancellor's order and decision of the syndicate regarding streamlining service path of promotion of Superintendent in the administrative cadre along with removal of anomaly regarding MS/MPhil as acceptable qualification for appointment as Assistant Professor in the Public Sector Universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In the end, the VC KUST Prof. Dr. Sardar Khan thanked the provincial government as well as all the members of the syndicate that are cooperating for implementing policies/proposals for the universities and for their active participation in the meeting.



KOHAT: Vice Chancellor Kohat University of Science and Technology Prof. Dr. Sardar Khan chairing 58th Syndicate meeting.



Police arrest accused in charge of firing case

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): The Dera police have arrested an accused who shot injured a student over refusal to his friendship proposal recovering a Kalashnikov along with ammunition here in the limits of Paharpur police station.

According to a police spokesman, an unknown person had shot injured a Second year student for refusing his friendship proposal. On which, District Police Officer (DPO)

Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani, taking notice of the incident, formed a special team under the leadership of SDPO Paharpur Circle Kashif Sattar for immediate arrest of the culprit.

The police team led by SDPO Paharpur Circle Kashif Sattar along with Kirri Khaisour police station SHO Shahjahan Khan, using modern scientific techniques, traced and arrested accused Tahir Shehzad son of Muhammad

Riaz resident of Malakhel. The police party also recovered a pistol used in the crime. The search for second accused involved in the crime was underway.

During the initial interrogation, on the revelation of the arrested accused, the police recovered a Kalashnikov with ammunition.

It worth mentioning here that the same accused had shot injured another undergraduate boy for his friendship proposal some two years ago.

Control room set up at Livestock Headquarters

FAISALABAD (APP): The Livestock Department has set up a control room at its divisional headquarters to deal with any cattle-related emergency during the monsoon and rainy season.

Director Livestock Dr Haidar Ali Khan said here on Sunday that the control room would also monitor entire activities of veterinary staff during Eid days. He said that veterinary officials were strictly directed to ensure spray against ticks (chichri) at all sale points, established across the Faisalabad division, for sale and purchase of sacrificial animals.

He said that ample quantity of veterinary medicines was also provide to the field staff so that they could deal with any emergency amicably during the Eid days as well

as during monsoon and rainy season.

The livestock farmers could contact the central control room through telephone number 041-9330769 in case of any emergency. More control rooms would also be working at district, he added.

Woman's body found

The body of a septuagenarian woman was found from a deserted place in the area of Ghulam Muhammad Abad police station.

Rescue 1122 spokesman said here on Sunday that some passers-by spotted the body of an aged woman lying at a deserted place near Jawad Club and informed the Rescue 1122.

The Rescue team handed it over to the Ghulam Muhammad Abad police who started investigation

for its identification and ascertaining cause of death, he added.

FESCO issues shutdown programme

The Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) has issued shutdown programme for Monday for necessary repair, maintenance and expansion of electricity lines.

According to the programme, power supply from Taja Beerawala feeder linked with 132-kV Bhowana grid station, will remain suspended from 6 a.m. to 11 a.m. while Asim Textile, Habib Haseeb (SEL), Bibi Jan, Zayarat (SEL), Johal (SEL) and new Asim feeders connected with 132-kV Bandala grid station will observe shutdown from 7 a.m. to 12 noon on Monday (June 19, 2023).



QUETTA: Ex-Speaker Balochistan Assembly Rahila Hameed Khan Durrani distributing certificates to participants in Business Expo of Islamic University.

Woman gives birth to quadruplets at once

DIR LOWER (INP): A woman gave birth to quadruplets at once on Sunday at a private hospital in Timargarh, the doctor told media men.

The woman residing in Maidan, who was a delivery patient, was brought to the private Jasmin Hospital of Timargarh.

She was advised to have an operation by a lady doctor of another hospital, but senior gynecologist Lady Dr Lubna Tahir of Jasmin Hospital skillfully delivered the woman in a normal manner without an operation. "I have one boy and three girls," the woman said.

According to hospital officials, "The mother and child are doing well and discharged from hospital after spending several hours in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU)." The newborn babies' parents were overjoyed with the birth of the four children and hailed the services and expertise of Lady Dr Lubna for the normal delivery.

26 injured in bus-tanker collision

SHEIKHUPURA (INP): At least 26 people were injured in collision between a bus and a milk tanker at Gujranwala road here on Sunday, rescue sources said.

According to details, a bus carrying over three dozen people collided with a tanker carrying milk near Kot Ranjeet Interchange in Sheikhupura.

As a result of accident, 26 people were injured. The rescue personnel reached the scene and shifted the injured to District Headquarter (DHQ) Hospital.

The police impounded both vehicles and after registering a case into the incident started an investigation.

Notorious criminal held, narcotics recovered

The police arrested a notorious criminal wanted in dozen of cases and recovered narcotics during operation in suburbs of Sheikhupura on Sunday.

In line with the directives of DPO Zahid Nawaz Marwat and under the supervision of DSP CIA Adnan Bukhari, operation was conducted against wanted criminals.

Inter-district dacoit gang busted

PAKPATTAN (INP): Police in Pakpattan have arrested four members of an inter-district gang of dacoits who would rob people of their valuables by posing as policemen, police sources said. Sources further said that the police had also recovered stolen items worth Rs740 million as well as sophisticated weapons from those arrested.

On the other hand, SHO Saddar police station Rai Khizar Hayat has said that the dacoits, members of Ifikhar alias Khari gang, had also shot and injured a private TV channel reporter when he resisted their robbery bid.

The SHO has further said that the dacoits were identified with the help of footage obtained from CCTV cameras while they were committing robbery at a ghee manufacturing unit sometime back.

Murtaza inaugurates Sui gas provision project

ABBOTTABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Javed Abbasi on Sunday inaugurated the Sui gas provision project in village Phalkot Galyat that would completed with the cost of Rs 11 million.

While addressing a public gathering on the occasion, he said that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government had neglected the people of the Hazara division during its four-year tenure.

Murtaza Abbasi said that PTI had the worst four years of rule in the history of Pakistan and they don't

have any developmental project to present. In contrast, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has initiated several projects worth billions of rupees for the people of Hazara.

The PTI government has increased inflation day by day during its government while our government has reduced the prices of petrol, diesel, and flour, adding he said.

The minister said that despite the conspiracies against Pakistan Prime Minister Mian Shahbaz Sharif is standing firmly against them and will res-

cue the country from the crises, during every tenure of PML-N the country has always progressed rapidly.

It was further mentioned that our manifesto is dedicated to serving the people, and this process will continue.

On this occasion, former MPA Sardar Aurangzib Nalootha, Zulfaqar Javed Abbasi, Malak Mohabbat Awan, Malak Faisal, Sardar Asif, and others addressed and stated that Murtaza Javed Abbasi has brought historical development work in one year in the region and there is no match for it.

Commissioner orders recovery of govt dues

FAISALABAD (APP): Divisional Commissioner Madam Silwat Saeed has directed the Revenue Department to take appropriate steps and ensure full recovery of all government dues till June 30, 2023.

Chairing a meeting, she reviewed the recovery progress in the division and expressed dismay over slow recovery pace. She directed the assistant commissioner revenue to accelerate their efforts for ensure 100 per cent recovery of water charges, agriculture income tax and other dues.

She said that targets had already been assigned to all revenue officers and they should complete their assignments up to June 30.

She said the Punjab government had issued very clear instructions for ensure 100 per cent recovery of all government dues and stern action would be taken against negligent, lethargic and delinquent attitude of the recovery

officers. Additional Commissioner Revenue Tariq Niazi, Additional Deputy Commissioner Revenue Faisalabad Abdullah Mehmood and others were also present in the meeting whereas deputy commissioners of Jhang, Toba Tek Singh and Chiniot joined it through video-link.

FWMC finalises plan for Eid days

The Faisalabad Waste Management Company (FWMC) has finalised a comprehensive plan to ensure cleanliness in city on Eid-ul-Azha days.

During a meeting, Chief Executive Officer Faisalabad Waste Management Company (FWMC) Azeem Shaukat Awan reviewed the plan and directed his subordinates to ensure all necessary arrangements well before time.

He said that standard operating procedures (SOPs) should be implemented strictly for digging ditches at dumping site to

dispose of entrails and waste of sacrificed animals.

He said that rains were also expected during the Eid days and a comprehensive strategy should also be devised to deal with rain related emergency. He said that the company had obtained sufficient funds and salaries to the staff would be paid before Eid.

He also directed the FWMC staff to ensure immediate repair and rehabilitation of all vehicles and machinery so that those could be used effectively for disposing of remains of sacrificed animals during Eid days.

He also stressed the need for creating awareness among the public about properly disposing of waste and entrails of sacrificial animals at designed sites.

He said media should also be used for creating awareness in addition to distributing waste bags among people, he added.

Traffic police installed speed cameras on bypass

ABBOTTABAD (APP): The Abbottabad traffic police Sunday have initiated strict checking through speed cameras that were installed on Havelian Dhamtoor bypass road to curb overspeeding and avoid accidents. The traffic police also issued warnings to the overspeeding drivers and imposed fines on them.

According to the details, SSP Traffic Arif Javed Khan following the directives of

Inspector General (IG) Police KPK installed speed-checking cameras on Havelian Dhamtoor bypass road with the aim to control the increasing accidents and overspeeding on the Bypass road.

In this regard, on a daily basis, under the supervision of SSP Traffic Arif Javed Khan, Assistant Sub-Inspector Naem Akhtar is checking overspeeding vehicles with speed cameras at various locations of

the bypass road.

Traffic police issued warnings to some of the vehicles and imposed fines on overspeeding vehicles to prevent accidents caused by overspeeding and to safeguard precious lives.

One minor burnt to death

ATTOCK (APP): One minor burnt to death while over two dozen huts of Afghan families burnt to ashes in Nartoppa village near Chach motorway interchange in the limits of Hazro town of Attock on Sunday, police and rescue sources said.

According to sources, an Afghan family was making food at its hut when all of the sudden LPG stove burst.

The 4 years old Abdullah who was sleeping in the haunt could not be saved and burnt to death while two dozen huts turned in to ashes when the Rescue-1122 fire tenders reached at the site and extinguished the fire.

Valuables worth thousands of rupees of the families were also burnt in the fire and they rendered under the open sky.

The Frontier Post

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Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at
Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town,
Peshawar.
Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001
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Rioters’ trail and spiel of military tribunals

PPP leader and reputed senior lawyer, Chaudhry Aitzaz Ahsan has filed a petition in the Supreme Court challenging trial of civilians in military courts and prayed for the cancellation of the federal government’s decision in this regard. According to the petition, the federal government has rubber-stamped the corps commanders’ decision of trying the perpetrators of May’s 9 attack in the military court. The petition further reads that the decision of holding military court trials of civilians under Section 2 of the Army Act has been in contravention of Article 59 of the Constitution. Petitioner argued that Section 94 of the Army Act and the rules of 1970 are incomparable and pleaded with the court to declare Section 94 and the relevant rules unconstitutional. The petitioner also seeks the court to revoke the government’s decision of handing over the accused to the military authorities and sought their release from government custody.

The state and the people of Pakistan fell victim to the merciless and pugnacious policies of their leaders. Years-long combative politics seriously polarized the nation while persistent political anarchy badly marred the economic situation in the country. The contesting political groups have transfigured politics into personal enmity and blatantly use illegal means and discourteous methods to frustrate their adversary. The sensitive foreign policy matters, economic policies, and most important decisions relating to national defense became a mere political tool for the opposing factions. The May 9 violence and trail of the rioters has opened up another Pandora box in the country. The military and coalition government are determined to try the culprits involved in attacks on military and state installations in the military courts under the Pakistan Army Act, 1952, and other relevant provisions under the constitution. The government has handed over dozens of accused to the military for their onward trial in the military courts, while Federal Cabinet and the National Assembly okayed the government’s decision to this effect.

There had been tremendous public uproar in the country and criticism from the global community including the United States, human rights groups, foreign media, and civil society against the government’s decision regarding the trial of May 9 rioters in the military courts, who perceive it a violation of fundamental rights of the Pakistani citizens. Meanwhile, the coalition government remained steadfast in its decision so far. The government claims that it ensures the protection of the fundamental rights of the accused/criminals and the law gives them the right to appeal in the higher courts in the country.

Presently, a nationwide debate is underway in the country over the issue of military courts, while a majority of scholars, human rights activists, civil society, media persons, and lawyers associations have contradicted the government’s decision and condemned the constitution of military courts over May 9 violence. The critics are of the view that the government has the authority and all resources available to expedite the culprit’s trial in the common courts while Anti-Terrorism Courts (ATC) are another suitable forum to deal with such issues, that can be used to try May 9 rioters instead of dragging military in this issue. The coalition partners also have differences on this subject and various other issues that have now become more visible after the recent exchange of statements between the PPP Chairman and senior leaders of the PML-N regarding the allocation of funds for flood victims in the recent budget. Currently, a senior PPP leader and legal expert had brought this issue to the Supreme Court which would surely examine the case in the light of the provisions of the constitution and will deliver an unchangeable verdict about this controversy.

May 9 incidents are certainly condemnable and all the culprits involved whoever and from which group they belong, must be punished through transparent investigations and a fair prosecution. Yesterday Sheharyar Afridi distanced himself from the drug case filed against Rana Sanaullah by the PTI government and put the entire burden on ANF, while his mentor already accused the former Army Chief of all misdemeanors committed by him during his whole tenure as Prime Minister over three and a half years. No doubt Shehbaz and his aides will level the blame for their current-day wrongdoings on Army Generals in the future. Unfortunately, this fiasco is likely to end up in professional and reputation loss to the national institutions including the Pakistan Military, the judiciary, the parliament, and others. Pakistan has an abundance of declared and invisible enemies who undoubtedly unceasingly working to weaken our defense forces and create a rift between the public and the military. The government and the military must not take an egoistic approach on this issue as if the court’s verdict comes against the military tribunals it would be an embarrassing situation for them. Pakistan is passing through a crucial phase that merits resilience and wisdom from the leadership instead of rigidity and confrontation, which bridges the gap, promotes unity, and moves the nation toward stability and growth.

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Latin America is the EU’s new super priority

Andrew Hammond

Latin America has previously been called the “lost” or “forgotten” continent, yet it is now assuming a much higher strategic importance, especially in the wake of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

For decades, the region was often overlooked by some key Western powers — especially much of Europe — given that its economic growth generally was not as fast as that of Asian emerging markets, while its poverty was not as great as that in much of Africa.

Yet since the war in Ukraine began, European attention has quickly turned to this vast continent, which is home to half a billion people, the world’s largest reserves of arable land, plus huge amounts of wider resources, including critical minerals and the largest share of renewables in the world.

Last month, UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly gave a speech in Chile in which he argued that the “tectonic plates of world politics are shifting once again,” with “Latin America’s demographic and economic weight ... giving more voice and more influence.”

Specifically, he called for Brazil to be given a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, and argued that the UK is the region’s “oldest friend,” some two centuries after bilateral ties were first established.

However, it is the EU that might be warming its ties with Latin America at the fastest pace. Similarly to authorities in the UK, key figures across the 27-member bloc recognize the region’s huge future potential. The EU’s foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, even said last month that this emerging market has the potential to become the Arabian Gulf, given its critical mineral assets, such as lithium.

This growing importance of Latin America to Europe was also showcased in the EU’s new Global Gateway strategy. And also by the major, intensified push to finally secure a trade deal between the EU and Mercosur, the Southern Common Market, creating a combined market of about 720 million people.

The EU’s flagship Global Gateway strategy is mobilizing up to 300 billion (\$328 billion)

of investment globally for sustainable, high-quality projects between 2021 and 2027 in areas such as the green and digital transition, transport and energy infrastructure, health, education, skills and research, and sustainable finance.

Examples of projects that the EU is embedding in Latin America, specifically, as part of the strategy include critical raw material value chains for lithium and copper, green hydrogen production, and the expansion of electricity transmission networks.

Building on the strategy, the EU is also making a big push for a trade deal with the Mercosur bloc; Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay. This has been agreed in principle but efforts to finalize it have been frozen. The trigger for the current intensified push to get it concluded is not only that Europe knows it urgently needs to diversify its trade links and become less dependent on Russia and China for its raw material value chains. In addition, the departure of controversial Jair Bolsonaro from the Brazilian presidency at the end of last year has added to the political “window of opportunity” to get a deal over the finish line.

During her major official visit to Latin America last week, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen pledged along with Brazil’s President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and Argentina’s President Alberto Fernandez that the Mercosur deal will be concluded by the end of this year. This echoes calls from other senior European politicians, including German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who said during a trip to Argentina last year that “the negotiations have now lasted long enough” and he and other EU partners want the agreement to be ratified in 2023.

The EU-Mercosur agreement has been in the making for more than two decades, during which two-way trade has increased even without a finalized deal, and both sides want the talks expedited ahead of a key EU-Latin America summit on July 17-18. While the agreement was officially concluded in 2019, both sides are still advocating for additional clauses.

This might sound straightforward. However, there is a danger it could result in previous, carefully negotiated economic trade-offs within the wider deal being reopened, which risks causing more delays.

For instance, Lula has said: “I have faith that we will announce this Mercosur agreement soon but with better quality to ensure that Latin American countries can have an industrial policy.”

He wants to reorient the trade relationship with the EU away from the prospect of Brazil simply being a giant agricultural powerhouse for European consumers, and reopen negotiations to add provisions relating to reindustrialization, technology transfer, and wider issues such as human rights.

On the European side, the two main sets of concerns center around agriculture — a key concern for France, which is Europe’s largest producer in this sector — and Brazil’s commitments to tackle deforestation.

On the latter issue, several EU countries, members of the European Parliament, and activists have expressed grave concerns about the fate of the Amazon rainforest, and the European Commission is negotiating additional text in the agreement with Mercosur that would include more sustainability commitments.

EU trade negotiators last year presented an additional document to the Mercosur countries to try to assuage concerns in Europe about these issues, especially deforestation in the Amazon. The European Commission hopes this additional instrument will avert the need to completely reopen the wider trade agreement.

Taken together, this is why a window of opportunity might now exist to get the trade deal over the line before next year’s EU election campaigning begins, thereby cementing the deepening of ties between the two regional powers.

However, if an agreement cannot be concluded in the next six months, it might well get pushed out beyond next year, given that the next European Commission, which will come to power in the second half of 2024, will require time to settle in and start delivering on its priorities.

Lebanon desperately needs a president, but Hezbollah does not

Nadim Shehadi

There is an “end of time” mood in Lebanon. Beirut feels like a combination of the last days of Byzantium, with all the internal bickering, together with the fall of Rome, with a vibrant nightlife and fully booked restaurants. At the same time, the country’s institutions are crumbling, one after the other.

The process is driven by a series of default options with the inability to make decisions, except those taken by default. The failure once again to elect a president this week is a perfect example of how the system is blocked and being held hostage until it complies.

It also means that the country is heading toward more paralysis and further erosion of institutions. The mandate of the governor of the central bank ends in July, and that of the commander of the army a few months later. Neither of them can have their terms renewed, nor can an appointment currently be made to replace them.

Lebanon is slowly disintegrating, with no president, a paralyzed parliament and a caretaker government with limited powers. Soon it might also be without a functioning judiciary, army or banking system.

It is the perfect crime, because nobody is responsible. The inability to take

any action means everything happens by default and everyone accuses everyone else. In the meantime, the saga of the presidential election, and the scandals surrounding the governor of the central bank, keep the country busy and are a distraction from the main issue, which is a combination of inertia and atrophy resulting from blocking the system at every stage.

The fact is that Lebanon desperately needs a president but Hezbollah does not. The current state of the country is ideal for Hezbollah’s operations. With the collapse of the banking sector and the financial meltdown, Lebanon is now largely a cash economy made sustainable, to a certain extent, by a regular inflow of dollars from the Lebanese diaspora to support their families. The whole economy, and its global connections, is being transformed into a giant money-laundering machine. The bickering brings the country down, while the festivities keep it going.

The biggest question about the election of a president is no longer who will win. It is how long the void will remain and will there be a new president at all. The office has been vacant for long periods before.

If there is a pattern to observe in recent years, it is one of increasing periods of political paralysis: 18

months between 2006 and 2008, 29 months between 2013 and 2016, and an average of nine months taken to form a government. By those measures we are still at a relatively early stage of the current crisis.

We have been here many times before and there are endless examples how a blocked political system leads to paralysis, resulting in the de facto default options.

One of the main issues that divides the Lebanese is an uncertainty about interpreting and explaining what happened and how the country reached the stage it is at.

The two sides of the endless debate can be summarized by considering the question of whether what has happened is the result of what seems to be a Ponzi scheme, perhaps driven by a desperate attempt by the central bank to hold the economy together in the face of a government vacuum. Or whether it was a fraudulent bankruptcy with the government defaulting on its debt and throwing the burden on society.

The Ponzi scheme theory is the most attractive explanation and the simplest to understand. The central bank attracted deposits through high interest rates in order to service the country’s debt, the fiscal deficit and the balance of pay-

ments deficit. In the meantime, the government deficit was getting larger, especially after 2016, as a result of infrastructure projects and a significant salary hike.

With the official exchange rate of the Lebanese pound pegged to the US dollar, the gap in funding could only be filled by attracting more dollar deposits through an increasing interest rate that caused the gap to grow even bigger and eroded foreign currency reserves. Like an attempt to keep a barrel filled with water while giant holes appear in the side and are draining it, there comes a time when the holes get too big and the barrel runs dry.

The fraudulent bankruptcy theory can similarly be simplified. The government is in deficit and borrows money to pay salaries and finance subsidized goods. This debt is financed largely by the central bank borrowing from other banks. The government defaults on its debt, declares the country bankrupt and leaves the financial system — in other words, the central bank and the other banks — to sort it all out but with no measures in place to control the drain on resources (the holes in the barrel), and the declaration of bankruptcy has suddenly shut off the tap. The barrel now has no tap from which

to fill it and the holes have grown even bigger.

In the first scenario, the responsibility lies mainly with the central bank, which kept the Ponzi scheme going without taking any steps to remove the currency’s peg to the dollar. In the second case, the blame is with the government for deciding to declare bankruptcy without any measures in place to control the consequences. This resulted in the depletion of reserves and left the central bank to attempt to control the collapse, and banks and depositors to bear the financial burdens.

Both of these explanations have holes in them and the arguments about which is the more correct could go on forever. But in both cases the key element is political paralysis. The economy was shrinking through long periods of paralysis. There could be no monetary policy because of paralysis. The default on international debt in 2020 happened, well, by default because the government was paralyzed and unable to make a decision.

Those who pushed for defaulting on the debt assumed that parliament would be able to enact reforms in time but that parliament was blocked. So reserves were drained, also by default, through the smuggling of subsidized goods. A capital control law would have helped but it

US civil rights efforts defend minorities, just not Arabs

Ray Hanania

The US Supreme Court last week voted to reject a congressional redistricting map in Alabama it said diluted the power of Black voters, affirming a fundamental principle on minority rights. The ruling could have a direct impact on a similar issue in neighboring Louisiana, where African Americans have charged that a proposed congressional remapping does not give them the political strength they merit according to the state’s demographics.

These cases offer just a taste of the many ongoing legal challenges that are asserting that, in many American states, powerful political groups have intentionally sought to weaken the political strength of minorities including Blacks, Hispanics and Asians.

Every 10 years, using Census statistics and demographic data, states and local governments redraw the districts in their areas, often with a focus on strengthening the ruling party’s chances of winning future elections — a process known as gerrymandering.

A major consideration when redistricting is the preservation or strengthening of concentrations of minority communities, ensuring that their voices are augmented by grouping them together, rather than dividing them. The data that drives this process comes in part from the US Census, in which most minority groups are identified and counted.

However, Arab Americans are not included in the Census or in the civil rights political power dynamic that drives the redistricting efforts every 10 years. Despite being a smaller minority group compared to Blacks and Hispanics, they are concentrated in large pockets in a handful of states.

So, the Arab American community’s demographics are, for example, significant in the 3rd Congressional District in Illinois, where more than 110,000 Arab American voters and their extended families live. This district has been held by Democrats since 1975 and is overwhelmingly Democratic. It was ranked by The New York Times as having the eighth-largest Arab American population of 50 American congressional districts and it reportedly has the highest concentration of Palestinian American voters.

But when redistricting the state following the 2020 Census, instead of expanding that base by drawing in Arabs and Palestinians who live in nearby districts, the Democrats decided to divide the 3rd Congressional District, spreading the Arab American and Palestinian populations across five of the newly drawn-up districts. Essentially, the Arab and Palestinian vote that was once considered strong has been diluted.

The 3rd District was apparently at the top of the Democratic Party’s target list to disembowel. The district was represented by Marie Newman, a Democratic progressive who not only challenged the party’s positions on healthcare and economic empowerment, but also became a strong voice for Arab and Palestinian rights.

Analysts have argued that the

district was redrawn to strengthen the Hispanic vote in Illinois. In the 2022 Democratic primary election, Newman was pushed into a nearby western suburban district, the 6th District, and forced to run against a strong Democratic incumbent, Sean Casten. Newman lost. Instead of championing Arab rights, Casten has pandered to the community, doing little if anything to give it a voice in Washington. In the newly redrawn 3rd District, first-time Hispanic candidate Delia Ramirez was elected to Congress, giving Hispanics another voice.

While dividing the old 3rd District into five parts, Democrats also divided and weakened the voting power of the Blacks, Hispanics and women who live there. But the difference between Blacks, Hispanics and women and the Arab community is stark.

Dividing the 3rd District did little to undermine the voice and political power of African Americans, Hispanics or women, but it destroyed the potential for growth in the Arab American representation. In the current House of Representatives, there are 60 African Americans, 56 Hispanics or Latinos and a record 129 women. But there are only five Arab Americans, three of whom are part-Arab and only two whose ethnicity is fully Arab.

Although Newman is not Arab — in fact, her husband is Jewish — she was a champion of Arab and Palestinian rights, along with many other progressive issues that challenged the platform preferences of the Democratic Party. Dividing the 3rd District and forcing her to run against a longer-tenured Democrat like Casten ensured that Newman’s advocacy for Arab and Palestinian rights would end. This meant she would not be able to continue embarrassing the Illinois Democratic Party, which has, over the years, been anti-Arab. For example, Illinois was among the first of the 27 US states to adopt laws punishing citizens and companies that support a boycott of Israel’s government because of its breaches of human rights and its anti-Palestinian policies.

Casten’s new 6th District has a large Muslim population, but the majority of Muslims in America — nearly 28 percent — are non-Arab and are not considered a threat by pro-Israel activists or the Illinois Democrats who champion Israel’s advocacy.

Since losing her seat, Newman has gone on to serve as CEO of the Little City Foundation, which addresses the needs of children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Simply returning Newman to office is not enough. What needs to happen is for Arab Americans to set aside their internal political differences, come together and file a federal lawsuit to challenge the redistricting of Illinois on the basis that the new congressional map dilutes the voice of Arab Americans.

As last week’s Supreme Court verdict showed, this legal argument seems to work for every other ethnic group in America. So, why not Arabs too?



PIDE conducts thorough evaluation, providing invaluable insights and recommendations

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: To maximize the budget's impact and align it with national goals, the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) MacroPolicy Lab has conducted a thorough evaluation, providing invaluable insights and recommendations.

The Lab's analysis focuses on optimizing resource allocation, addressing socio-economic challenges, and fostering sustainable development, said in a press release here on Sunday.

The policy recommendations put forward by the PIDE MacroPolicy Lab aim to enhance the budget's effectiveness and drive economic growth. These recommendations have been formulated after a comprehensive evaluation of the budget proposal.

According to a Press Release issued from the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), MacroPolicy Lab insights highlighted key areas of focus that will contribute to the long-term development of Pakistan.

Focus on Export Promotion, The Lab recommends that the government prioritizes export promotion as a crucial element for

economic growth.

It suggests boosting investors' confidence and encouraging a favorable business environment.

The budget proposals should include measures to stabilize and enhance the exports sector, such as providing incentives for the IT industry and free-challenges.

Additionally, the government should facilitate the remittance of earnings by allowing registered freelancers to open and maintain dollar accounts in local commercial banks.

Evaluation of Taxes and Withholding, to strengthen the tax system and revenue generation, the government needs to evaluate taxes and withholding practices.

The Lab highlights the detrimental effects of withholding taxes on financial inclusion and suggests promoting the use of digital payments in certain cases. The budget should also focus on expanding the tax net by considering sectors like agriculture and retail.

Prioritize Productive Growth: To drive productive growth, the government should prioritize sectors that can generate higher value-added outputs, employment opportunities, and contribute to overall

economic development.

The Lab emphasizes the need to incentivize the manufacturing and export sectors for sustainable productivity gains. It also recommends allocating a portion of the budget for research and development grants, fostering innovation and addressing national challenges.

Address Debt and Debt Servicing, the budget proposal should address the growing concern of public debt and debt servicing.

The Lab highlights the need for managing both external and domestic debts effectively. Long-term debt restructuring strategies should be explored to alleviate the burden.

To avoid further accumulation of debt, the government should aim to achieve its tax revenue targets and ensure fiscal discipline.

Public Sector Development Program, efficient utilization of resources is crucial in the current economic situation.

The Lab suggests reevaluating allocations to certain schemes and focusing on targeted sector promotion. Funds should be directed toward youth investment programs, establishing digital labs for startups, and implementing monitoring

and evaluation mechanisms to ensure transparency and accountability.

Foreign Exchange Measures, while measures to attract remittances are important, the government should also develop a roadmap for attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) and diversifying exports.

The budget should address the heavy reliance on textile exports and explore ways to promote other sectors.

Expenditure Highlights, the Lab emphasizes the need for careful consideration in allocating funds for salaries and pensions of government employees.

Differentiated increases and addressing the pension system's sustainability are key factors to reduce income inequalities.

The budget should also divert higher funds toward education and target social sector programs effectively.

The PIDE MacroPolicy Lab's recommendations provide valuable insights for optimizing the federal budget's impact and aligning it with national needs.

By incorporating these recommendations, the government can effectively address socio-economic challenges and drive sustainable development.



FAISALABAD: A vendor displaying seasonal fruit (apricot) to attract customers while shuttling on road.

Pakistan made hunting ground for elites: Shahid

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt said on Sunday Pakistan has been made a hunting ground for the elites.

Influential people consider Pakistan a gold mine that is being robbed mercilessly to fill their coffers, he said.

In a statement issued on Sunday, Shahid Rasheed Butt said that no serious attempt has ever been made to expand the scope of taxes in any budget.

Tax evaders have always enjoyed a free ride while taxpayers have been broken by continuously increasing the burden on them, and this process is still going on with full force, he added.

The business leader said that the elite have been devouring the country's resources for decades, but there is no end to their rent seeking and greed. Shahid Rasheed Butt said that we have been made into a nation where basic needs are impossible to meet, justice, equality, and prosperity are nowhere to be found, and the country's survival is linked to begging.

The policymakers have only one goal in mind, to serve the elite; therefore, they don't correct the direction of the economy. Taxes are always imposed on those who are already taxed, which increases the burden on the document economy, while no effort is made to tax those who do not pay taxes, he observed.

No budget has ever been presented that tried to broaden the tax base, bring money earners into the tax net, or reduce the impact of taxes on the poor.

The whole emphasis of the tax system is to increase reliance on indirect taxes because they are easy to implement. Indirect taxes do not harm the elite but damage the masses.

The business leader said that there is no doubt that the IMF is a monster that has ruined many low-income countries and pushed millions of people into poverty. Its purpose is to support Western countries by robbing the resources of developing countries in collaboration with other global institutions.

Federal Minister for Industries & Production visits FPCCI

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Industry and Production Makhdoom Syed Murtaza Mahmood on Sunday visited Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI).

The minister also met with President FPCCI Irfan Iqbal Sheikh and discussed ways and means to promote small and medium enterprises in the country.

Speaking on the occasion, Irfan Iqbal Sheikh urged the need of industrial development to attain rapid economic growth.

He said that industrial development will help in increase of export curtail

imports and generate employment opportunities for the people.

He said that whenever we borrowed from the IMF, our GDP growth decreased instead of increasing and also become a reason for other economic hardship.

He said that present century is the century of economy and economically strong nations will rule the world.

He said that it takes time for SMEs to quickly integrate and align with larger industrial units and urged the need of proper financing and facilities to SMEs.

President FPCCI also

suggested to allocating special space for SMEs in special economic zones, besides providing skilled and technical education.

He urged the government to ensure the provision of special facilities and interest-free loans to promote SMEs in rural areas to curb migration toward the major cities.

Speaking on the occasion, Makhdoom Syed Murtaza Mahmood said that government is determined for industrial development.

He said that measures are introduced in budget for industrial development in the country.

PBF holds geopolitics responsible for stalled loan

LAHORE (INP): Vice President Chief Organizer, Pakistan Business Forum (PBF), Chaudhary Ahmad Jawad has said that there are more chances that Pakistan will not be able to finish the IMF program that ends at the end of June. However low foreign exchange reserves and steep debt repayment schedule for fiscal year 2024, which begins in July, the nation faces a larger balance of payments crisis in the coming year.

In interaction with media persons here on Sunday, he said that international powers have pitted Pakistanis against one another and are attempting to capitalize on the country's internal division.

"With China, Iran, and India as neighbors, our geographical situation is the best in the world. By capitalizing on the significance of our location, we stand a chance of becoming the richest nation in the world. However, we did not act as," he added.

Jawad stated that for a nation of 250 million people, the situation would have gotten too close to the edge for too long if funding support did not arrive quickly or if there was no other option.

PBF, on the other hand,

believes that for the economic revival, it is time to select option "B." Because the IMF was not the answer for any economy.

The PBF maintained that the only indigenous solution that can steer Pakistan out of the crisis is one that adheres to a few fundamental principles, such as simplifying and broadening the tax base rather than squeezing the current taxpayers and harassing business and industry. In this regard, the 2023-2024 tax goal is appreciated.

In addition, in order to manage export earnings due to a lack of funds, they request targeted subsidies for the five export-oriented sectors of textiles, IT, leather, sports, and surgical goods in electricity and gas tariffs to make them competitive through a regionally competitive energy tariff mechanism.

They say that the government should also help remittances by bridging the exchange rate gap between open markets and banking channels and protecting the assets of Pakistanis living overseas.

They also include measures to encourage industrialization, export substitution, and the revival of sick units. They also make

all economic policies in consultation with real stakeholders and give the agriculture sector the necessary subsidies to make sure the country has enough food.

Regarding the oil facility, Ahmad Jawad added, "My opinion is that right now, more than discount we need to get cargo on credit."

Pakistan typically acquires the majority of its energy from Gulf nations, with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates serving as its primary suppliers. Pakistan's budget for the upcoming fiscal year, which begins in July, does not include any such facility from its Middle Eastern ally, despite the fact that Saudi Arabia has frequently provided fuel on credit.

A PBF official said he thinks the cost of getting cargo all the way from Russia via Oman rather than from nearby Gulf countries could also cut into Pakistan's potential gain.

"Russian cargoes are not as cheap as they used to be, let's say 10 months ago when India began purchasing from Russia. There was a different pricing level at the time. Prices have increased as more international traders have begun to buy.

GFS Builders delivers nothing but excellence, says CEO Irfan Wahid

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief Executive of GFS Builders and Developers, Mr. Irfan Wahid, is one of the leading builders in Pakistan who, with vast experience in business management, has worked in top executive positions for 6 years in England and the United States. His mission is to make Pakistani real estate accessible and convenient to everyone. He received his MBA degree from the University of Washington, while he did Real Estate Courses at the London School of Economics.

Mr. Irfan Wahid is an elected Vice Chairman of the Memon Supreme Council and a member of the Association of Builders and Developers of Pakistan (ABAD). He has served as

Vice President of the Defense Builders Association. With a wide array of knowledge in the construction and industrial sector, Irfan Wahid is sharing a vision of collaboration and innovation that propels clients and partners forward together.

Talking about GFS, he said, "GFS Builders and Developers is one of Pakistan's leading construction companies with over 2 decades of invaluable experience and expertise in the construction and development sector. We believe in building long-lasting business relationships with our clients because every client is important to us. Our relationships are built on trust and integrity, providing the best services and delivering nothing but excel-

lence."

Responding to a question about his projects, he said that Seven Wonders City Islamabad is one of the modern yet unique housing projects in the premises of Islamabad. Seven Wonders City has land of over 200 acres, close to the CPEC-Ring Road Interchange and M2-Motorway (Lahore-Islamabad).

Similarly, North Town Residency - Phase 1 is another important project that lies in the heart of North Karachi, comprising more than approximately 300 acres of land. It provides a luxurious and peaceful lifestyle within secured gated boundaries. We offer the opportunity of construction at 50% payment including banking facilities.

CEO Irfan Wahid point-



ed out that GFS has secured many awards for becoming the best builder because of my attention to detail and commitment to quality. Another thing that makes me stand out is my ability to communicate with clients. GFS Builders has also donated a 1400 sq. yds. plot for charity cause to M.S.R Memorial Hospital in North Town Residency Karachi. "It does not matter how big your contribution is. Just your contribution matters."

Hanif: Automakers themselves responsible for their heavy losses

ISLAMABAD (INP): Senior Vice President of Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW), Dr. Hanif Mughal said on Sunday that automakers are themselves responsible for their business losses to the tune of billions of rupees. Greed, incompetence, dishonesty, and ignoring competition brought these companies to the brink of collapse, he added.

In a statement issued here, Dr. Hanif Mughal said that import restrictions have damaged this sector because these companies continued to rely on imports and

ignored local manufacturing for decades.

These companies don't deserve to be called automakers, as they are merely auto assemblers that import spare parts worth billions of dollars from different countries to assemble cars locally that are substandard in quality.

Hanif Mughal said that these irresponsible companies have continuously violated the principles of honesty and competition, forcing people to buy substandard and unsafe vehicles at high prices and not allowing

other popular brands to survive in Pakistan.

The quality of their products is such that the Japan-assembled old models cost more in Pakistan than their newer models, he said and added they are more popular among the public because they are more comfortable, safer, reliable, and better in every way.

The business leader said that according to a company that has been assembling vehicles in Pakistan since the eighties, due to import restrictions, it has lost nineteen billion rupees in the

first quarter of the last financial year, while according to another company, its net profit has decreased by 89%.

He said that at present all the big companies have to stop the production process again and again, due to which they incur huge losses, but they still want to import parts instead of importing technology to start local manufacturing.

In this situation, even the bank employees have found it difficult to meet the auto financing targets as the purchasing power of the public has been depleted.

Bangladesh High Commissioner stresses tapping Pak-BD trade potential

LAHORE (APP): High Commissioner of Bangladesh to Pakistan Muhammad Ruhul Alam Siddiqui Sunday called for focusing on the untapped trade potential between the two countries.

During a meeting with business community at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry here, he cited global economic factors, inflation and the ability to import goods as reasons why the trade volume between Pakistan and Bangladesh had not exceeded the US\$1 billion mark.

The high commissioner acknowledged that Bangladesh imports more from Pakistan than it exports, particularly textile raw materials, given Bangladesh's position as the second-largest exporter of ready-made garments in the world. However, he noted a significant reduction in Bangladesh's exports this year due to global factors.

Similarly, Pakistan's ability to import has been affected by its current account deficit and global economic factors.

Highlighting the importance of regional trade, the high commissioner expressed his belief that SAARC had not been successful in harnessing the benefits of trading in the region compared to ASEAN and the EU. He lamented the underdevelopment of regional trade in South Asia and stressed the need to explore avenues for mutually beneficial trade.

Addressing the challenges, posed by the global factors, the HC called for concerted efforts to achieve a win-win situation in trade between the two countries. Recognising Pakistan's potential, he encouraged the LCCI to form a delegation to visit Bangladesh and explore areas of interest for investment.

During his tenure, the

high commissioner observed minimal trade disputes between the two countries, citing their shared characteristics and commonalities. He urged focus on advantageous sectors, such as food processing, where Pakistan possesses expertise. He also expressed Bangladesh's willingness to facilitate investment in this sector through special incentives.

The Bangladeshi HC further mentioned that his country, which previously imported fertilizers from Russia and Ukraine, was now prepared to import the commodity from Pakistan. With both countries acknowledging the potential for increased trade and cooperation, efforts were underway to strengthen economic ties and explore new avenues of collaboration.

The LCCI president said that other than India, both Pakistan and Bangladesh were key members of

SAARC in terms of the size of their economies, so it was imperative for them to find ways to utilise the platform for enhancing their share in the regional trade. He said that although the balance of two-way trade was heavily in favour of Pakistan, at present the volume of bilateral trade was still below the actual potential.

Considering the size of global trade of Bangladesh that was around US\$129 billion (total exports US\$63.4 billion and total imports US\$65.6 billion), they need to make some concentrated efforts to enhance the present level of bilateral trade.

The LCCI president said that according to the State Bank of Pakistan statistics, the two-way trade between Pakistan and Bangladesh was around US\$800 million during 2021-22. Pakistan's imports from Bangladesh were to the

tune of US\$77 million while our exports to Bangladesh ranged to US\$721 million. "We expect better trade figures this year as during the first 10 months of current fiscal year (July 2022-April 2023), our exports to Bangladesh stood at US\$644 million while our imports from Bangladesh were US\$66 million," he added.

Kashif Anwar said that Pakistan was a major supplier of cotton fabrics, cement, yarn, carbonates, vacuum pumps, Synthetic organic colouring matter, leather and other textile items etc. to Bangladesh. On the other hand, the major imports from Bangladesh included jute, unmanufactured tobacco, synthetic staple fibres, Hydrogen peroxide, Yarn of jute, cotton waste, tea and slide fasteners etc. There was a need to focus on exploring new avenues for enhancing

trade so that the trade volume could be taken well beyond the current figure of around US\$2 billion.

He said that Pakistan had huge potential of exporting various items to Bangladesh which were being imported from other countries. For example, the fabrics imports of Bangladesh were around US\$5.5 billion, coal US\$1.2 billion, wheat US\$697 million, sugar US\$462 million, synthetic filament yarn US\$417 million and parts of footwear US\$270 million etc. Pakistan could certainly enhance its exports to Bangladesh in these sectors.

Kashif Anwar said that other potential areas where Pakistan and Bangladesh could enhance economic cooperation and trade were Information Technology services, iron and steel products, surgical Instruments, processed food, plas-

tic products, automotive parts, edible fruits, sports goods, pharmaceutical products and chemicals etc.

He said that there were also tremendous opportunities for the investors to Bangladesh to invest in various sectors in Pakistan through Joint Ventures (JVs) including tourism, agriculture, value added textiles, construction sector and energy sector especially renewable energy.

The LCCI President said that in order to establish productive economic relations, there was a need to address all the issues. For this purpose, efforts needed to be employed to facilitate frequent interaction between the business sectors through organizing business delegations.

Honorary Consul General of Bangladesh Qazi Humayun Fareed and Fareeha Younis EC member also spoke on the occasion.

China approves 70 fixed-asset investment projects

BEIJING (APP): China's top economic planner approved 70 fixed-asset investment (FAI) projects in the first five months of the year, with combined investment totaling 667.2 billion yuan (about 93.59 billion US dollars), official data showed.

The projects were mainly in the high-tech, energy and transportation industries, according to the National Development and Reform Commission.

In May alone, 14 FAI projects worth 288.8 billion yuan were approved, the data revealed.

Fixed-asset investment, one of the drivers of China's economy, went up 4 percent in the January to May period, according to data from the National Bureau of Statistics.



Mitsotakis on course to return as Greek PM in new vote

ATHENS (AFP/APP): After an inconclusive election in May, Greece returns to the ballot box next Sunday with conservative former prime minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis on course to win a second straight four-year term. Polls show that Mitsotakis' New Democracy party is in line to be the clear winner, with between 40 and 43.9 percent of the vote.

Mitsotakis, 55, last month cruised to victory with a score of 40.79 percent, more than 20 points ahead of his nearest rival, former leftist prime minister Alexis Tsipras.

But he fell short of a workable parliamentary majority and declined to form a coalition government.

A Pulse poll for private Skai TV last week said nine out of 10 New Democracy voters would vote conservative again on Sunday.

Mitsotakis says that under his stewardship, Greeks paid lower taxes and the country became a success story attractive to investors, posting growth above the European average and returning tourism revenue to nearly pre-pandemic levels.

"I promise Greeks that (economic) growth will continue," he told Skai TV last week.

"We are more experienced, more prepared and more determined."

Mitsotakis' critics counter that he showered billions of euros on political allies and friendly media, tried to bury a major wiretapping scandal and attempted to dodge responsibility for

Greece's worst train disaster in February. This time, Harvard graduate and former McKinsey financial consultant Mitsotakis faces a challenge on his right that could determine the size of his parliamentary group. A new hard-right party, Niki, narrowly missed out on parliamentary seats in May and is now polling over the required 3 percent threshold, as is the established nationalist party Greek Solution.

Another new party, Plefsi Eleftherias, headed by hard leftist former parliament speaker Zoe Konstantopoulou is also likely to clinch parliamentary representation.

And former finance minister Yanis Varoufakis also seeks election under the radical left MeRa25 party.

If eight parties succeed in entering parliament on Sunday, the winner will need a higher percentage of the vote to maximise their parliamentary group in the 300-seat chamber.

Mitsotakis has been criticised for warning that a third election could be held in August, at the height of the busy tourism season, if a government cannot be formed after Sunday.

Last month, the former PM blamed deep policy differences with his closest rivals, leftist leader Alexis Tsipras and socialist head Nikos Androulakis, for his refusal to form a coalition government after May's ballot.

And he has declined to cooperate with any hard-right party.

The upcoming election is held

under new rules that give the winner a bonus of up to 50 seats, facilitating efforts to form a single-party government. The vote will be conducted in the shadow of a migrant boat disaster on June 14 that claimed 78 lives, with hundreds more feared missing and unlikely to be found.

But the tragedy, which has been declared Greece's worst maritime accident, is not expected to heavily influence the election result.

The election could also spell the end of Tsipras' 15-year control of the leftist Syriza party, as he has already lost five electoral contests to Mitsotakis. The son of a prime minister and uncle of the current mayor of Athens, Mitsotakis also touts his administration's defence spending and a tough policy on migration.

After the May 21 ballot, he boasted that all but one of the country's 59 electoral regions had "turned blue", the colour of the New Democracy party. He then vowed to wrest the last remaining region, Rodopi, from Syriza. But the ex-PM raised eyebrows by claiming that it was interference from historic rival Turkey among the area's Greek Muslim minority that had helped Syriza secure the region.

"There was very strong interference from the Turkish consulate in favour of specific (Syriza) candidates... with (SMS) messages that said 'Turks support Turks'," he told Skai TV last week.

First batch of Yemeni pilgrims arrives in Jeddah

JEDDAH (SPA/APP): The first batch of pilgrims from the Republic of Yemen, consisting of 270 pilgrims, arrived yesterday at King Abdulaziz International Airport (KAIA) in Jeddah to perform the Hajj rituals of 1444 AH.

They were received upon arrival by the Yemeni Vice Consul Ahmed Al-Saadi and several officials from the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah.

The Yemeni pilgrims praised the facilities and services provided by the government of Saudi Arabia to help pilgrims perform their Hajj rituals with ease and comfort.

The Ministry of Hajj and Umrah announced last week that it will facilitate the arrival of Yemeni pilgrims for this year's Hajj season and Umrah rituals from Sanaa International Airport to KAIA airport in Jeddah, just like it facilitates their arrival through land crossings. This reflects the Kingdom's keenness to facilitate the performance of Hajj and Umrah rituals for pilgrims and visitors from all Arab and Islamic countries.

Anxious wait for news after 41 dead in Uganda school attack

MPONDWE (AFP/APP): Distraught families gathered at a mortuary in western Uganda on Sunday for any news of their loved ones after a militant attack left dozens of students dead and others missing.

Officials say at least 41 people, mostly students, were massacred at a secondary school near the border of the Democratic Republic of Congo late Friday by militants.

Victims were hacked, shot and burned to death in a brutal attack at Lhubirha Secondary School in Mpondwe that has shocked Uganda and drawn condemnation from around the globe. The army and police have blamed the Allied Democratic Front (ADF), a militia based in DR Congo, who fled back to the border with six abductees in captivity after the attack.

The military said it was pursuing the attackers and would recover those kidnapped. Many of the victims were burned beyond recognition when the attackers set a locked dormitory ablaze, frustrating efforts to identify the dead and account for the missing. At a mortuary in Bwera, a town near where the attack occurred, families wailed as the bodies of their loved ones were put into coffins and taken away for burial.

Mali junta holds vote on new constitution

DAKAR (AFP/APP): Malians go to the polls on Sunday to pass judgment on the governing junta's constitution, which has fuelled speculation that the country's strongman ruler will seek an election.

The West African nation has been under military rule since an August 2020 coup, which came after a decade of instability marked by militant insurgencies and political and economic crisis. Some 8.4 million citizens are eligible to vote "yes" or "no" on the draft constitution in the first electoral test for leader Colonel Assimi Goita, 40, who has vowed to lead the country back to civilian rule in 2024 elections.

Voting begins at 0800 GMT and results are expected within 72 hours. But election turnout is typically low in the country of 21 million, where many have grown weary of chronic instability, while others face the direct danger of militant attacks in central and northern regions. Security is an ever-present concern -- there is always the risk of an attack. For this reason the vote will not be held in some parts of the country, including in Kidal, the ex-rebels' stronghold in the north.

The junta will be judged on turnout as a measure of its ability to restore stability, as well as an indicator of

people's enthusiasm for the junta's agenda.

The junta has advertised the new constitution as the answer to Mali's inability to tackle its multiple crises.

Mali's recent woes began in 2012, when separatist insurgents in the north -- long seen as marginalised by the southern government -- aligned with Al-Qaeda-linked Islamists to seize vast swathes of territory.

Former colonial power France stepped in and helped push back the Islamists, but attacks have continued, and Bamako has since broken its alliance with Paris in favour of Russia and its Wagner mercenaries. Disputed parliamentary elections in March 2020, and mass protests against a government unable to reign in the insurgency, corruption and economic crisis, ended in a coup. Goita initially appointed an interim president, but kicked him out in a second coup in 2021 and stepped into the top job himself.

Now doubts are swirling over his commitment to step down next year.

Mali's ruling junta called on Friday for the immediate departure of the country's UN peacekeeping mission, a central and controversial actor in a security crisis that has claimed the lives of nearly 200 peacekeepers in the last decade.

The African nation's military rulers had increasingly imposed operational restrictions on the peacekeepers, ultimately accusing the mission on Friday of not only being a "failure", but even becoming "part of the problem".

The new constitution will strengthen the role of the president, who will have the right to hire and fire the prime minister and cabinet members.

The government will answer to the president, and not parliament as the current 1992 document states.

It will also give amnesty to those behind prior coups, reform the regulation of public finances, and force MPs and senators to declare their wealth in a bid to clamp down on corruption.

"Those who contest these provisions think that Goita will be a candidate in the elections" in 2024, said Bamako University sociologist Brema Ely Dicko.

A politician, speaking on condition of anonymity, said some in the military were hoping a new constitution would "reset the clock" -- erasing a previous commitment that Goita would not take part in the election. Goita, a former special forces commander who saw action during the 2012 rebellion, stays out of the limelight, and is known to be publicity shy.

Europeans scramble on air defence after decades of complacency

PARIS (AFP/APP): The intensity of the drone and missile war in Ukraine has laid bare gaps in European states' air defences that experts say will be difficult, time-consuming and costly to plug.

Anti-air systems will likely have a starring role at the Paris Air Show starting on Monday, predicts Richard Aboulafia, managing director of AeroDynamic Advisory.

"You're going to see a lot of talk about production capacity for missiles. The market for missiles is easily the fastest growing segment of the industry and yet the manufacturers simply can't keep up," Aboulafia told AFP. Western countries had enjoyed total mastery of the skies since the end of the Cold War and largely dropped the powerful defences once designed to protect NATO forces from Soviet aircraft.

France got rid of eight of its nine anti-aircraft artillery regiments, MPs flagged up in a recent report.

But NATO countries have been turning to air defence again in recent years as more states have acquired cruise missiles,

short-range ballistic missiles and drones, said Mark Cancian, a retired US marine colonel who is a senior adviser at the US-based Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). "They started it, but basically didn't get too far," Cancian told AFP.

"In another five years, I think there'll be a lot more out there, but that doesn't help Ukraine right now," he added. With anti-air systems and the missiles they fire lacking, the West is struggling to respond to Ukraine's pleas for supply -- whether for short- or long-range defences.

Berlin plans to spend five billion euros on anti-air from a 100-billion-euro (\$110 billion) fund for rebuilding its armed forces in the coming years, with the same amount budgeted in Paris for the period to 2030.

On the industry side, European missile maker MBDA has in recent months signed contracts worth two billion euros with France and Italy to supply 700 Aster missiles, used especially in the SAMP/T system.

And Poland will spend 2.2 billion euros on 44

launchers and hundreds of CAMM missiles.

Led by Germany, 17 European nations last year banded together on air defence with the "Euro Sky Shield" project -- although France, Italy and Poland have all stayed out.

The scheme would involve joint procurement for short-, medium- and long-range systems, including the German-made Iris-T, the American Patriot and the US-Israeli Arrow-3.

"It makes enormous sense" to harmonise across allied countries, Aboulafia said.

Nevertheless, "whenever NATO tries to standardise, obviously big decisions have to be made in terms of who takes lead on production and design", he added.

"We've seen this movie before and the big problem is always France," which is reluctant to cede industrial leadership, Aboulafia said.

"Germany's proposal does not take European security interests sufficiently into account, has failed to convince partners, and leaves many questions unanswered on the strategic, military, industrial, and economic levels," Berlin-based think-tank SWP

US plan keeps migrants waiting farther from border

SAN JOSÉ (AFP/APP): The opening of US migrant processing centers in Colombia, Costa Rica and Guatemala ensures that more than ever these countries will become waiting rooms for asylum seekers wanting American visas.

The "Safe Mobility" initiative rolled out by Washington in Central America -- the main corridor for tens of thousands hoping to reach the United States without visas -- attempts to expand legal pathways for asylum seekers while keeping them in countries farther from the US border. The new program started May 11 with the end of Title 42, which had allowed US authorities to return migrants across the border and deny them the right to seek asylum under rules put in place due to the Covid pandemic.

Migrants must now seek a virtual appointment on the movilidadsegura.org website, which is supported by the UN Refugee Agency and the International Organization for Migration.

New regional processing centers in Colombia and Guatemala will interview migrants for legal pathways to the United States, Canada and Spain.

In Costa Rica, Safe Mobility offices will facilitate ways for Nicaraguans and Venezuelans to migrate legally as long as they were in the country prior to June 12. US officials consider the new program a success.

A State Department official, speaking on background, said it expands lawful ways for migrants to



obtain visas "instead of making the dangerous journey to try to enter irregularly." The flow of US-bound migrants from South America -- mostly Venezuela and Ecuador -- has increased through the Darien, the perilous jungle isthmus between Colombia and Panama.

A recent UN statement said more than 100,000 people have crossed through the Darien so far in 2023, a sixfold increase from the same period last year.

US officials believe the new processing centers will make it easier for migrants to determine if they have a legal pathway to the United States and not have to put their lives in the hands of smugglers.

University of Costa Rica academic Carlos Sandoval told AFP this initiative responds to a strategy of moving immigration controls southward to implement "more border controls before the physical border."

"Mexico is the first border," Sandoval said. But US officials have sought to

place border controls "in Guatemala as well, and now it is coming to the south." In March alone, more than 160,000 people tried to cross into the United States from Mexico, according to the State Department.

Sandoval said three types of migrants converge in Central America on their way to the United States. There are Central Americans; those coming from South America, mainly Venezuela; and lastly people from other parts of the world.

"Central America has been and will continue to be a waiting room," he said.

Guatemala, Costa Rica and Colombia will be the strategic countries to "contain these migratory flows," said Gabriela Oviedo, Human Mobility Project coordinator at the Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL).

The United States proposes that migrants wait for processing in the country where they are, although there is no guarantee of a visa.

The three countries will have to "assist vulnerable refugees to get the help they need" to obtain legal status there while they await "lawful pathways to other countries, including the United States," the State Department official said.

But in colonial downtown Guatemala City, Diego Berrios, a 23-year-old Venezuelan, asks for money to continue his journey north despite the start of the migration program.

He arrived in Guatemala a few days ago and hopes to reach the US-Mexico border with his wife and daughters, aged one and eight, as soon as possible.

"Here in Guatemala, it is just a transit point," he told AFP.

Oviedo warns that "there is still no clarity" on how the processing centers will operate and what the procedures will be.

"We don't know how long they are going to take, what is going to happen to people who are denied these regular permits. There is a lot of uncertainty," she said.

South Africa's Ramaphosa tells Putin Ukraine 'war must be settled'

MOSCOW (AFP/APP): South Africa's president, in Russia as part of a delegation pushing for peace between Kyiv and Moscow, told his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on Saturday that the fighting had to stop.

His delegation put forward a set of principles that the Kremlin deemed "very difficult to implement", a day after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky ruled out talks with Moscow.

The delegation brought the voice of a continent that has badly suffered from repercussions of the Ukraine conflict, particularly with rising grain prices. "This war must be settled... through negotiations and through diplomatic means," South Africa's Cyril Ramaphosa said after talks in the suburbs of Saint Petersburg. Russian authorities have effectively banned the word "war" to describe their military operation in Ukraine.

Ramaphosa added that his delegation, which has leaders and senior officials from seven African countries, "would like this war to be ended".

Ramaphosa listed 10 principles, which included de-escalation, the recognition of countries' sovereignty, security guarantees for all countries, unimpeded grain exports through the Black Sea and sending prisoners of war and children back to their countries of origin. The mission included the presidents of South Africa, Senegal, Comoros and Zambia, as well as top officials from

Uganda, Egypt and Congo-Brazzaville. "Any initiative is very difficult to implement," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was quoted as saying by the state-run agency RIA Novosti.

"But President Putin has shown interest in considering it," Peskov said after the leaders held a meeting behind closed doors. Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the plan was "not formulated on paper". Putin had praised the delegation's "balanced" approach and said he was "open to a constructive dialogue with all those who want to implement peace based on the principles of justice and respect for the parties' legitimate interests".

Moscow has in the past repeated that any negotiations would need to take into account "new territorial realities". Zelensky, speaking on Friday after Ramaphosa called for de-escalation following their talks in Kyiv, repeated his position that Ukraine must recover territories lost to Russia to achieve peace.

When an air raid siren sounded in Kyiv shortly after the delegation's arrival earlier on Friday, forcing it to take shelter, Zelensky said it showed that Putin either did not control his army or was "irrational".

African countries have been divided over their response to the fighting. While some have sided with Ukraine, others have remained neutral or gravitated towards Moscow.

Efforts to secure peace appear increasingly perilous, analysts told AFP,

with both Kyiv and Moscow convinced they can win on the battlefield.

Ukraine launched a long-awaited counteroffensive earlier this month.

Russian officials -- including Putin -- have insisted the counteroffensive is failing despite Kyiv claiming some gains.

Kyiv said Friday evening that its units were having "tactical success" in nearly all areas where they were fighting in the south.

The Russian army, meanwhile, said it had repelled all assaults from Ukraine. If analysts doubted the African mission could secure a concrete peace, there had been hope it would achieve some concessions. Securing the future viability of a deal allowing grain from Ukraine to reach the global market would be one potential goal of the delegation. "This war is having a negative impact on the African continent and indeed on many other countries around the world," Ramaphosa said ahead of formal talks with the Russian president.

Putin said "the crisis on the global food market is by no means a consequence" of the Ukraine conflict.

Russia accuses the West of blocking its exports of fertilisers and threatens to pull out of a deal -- due to expire on July 17 -- that has allowed vital Ukrainian grain exports to resume through the Black Sea.

"We do not believe that shipments of Ukrainian grain supplies can solve the problems of poverty and

hunger," Putin said during the meeting.

Zelensky had asked the African leaders to "please, let them release our political prisoners. I think this will be an important result of your mission."

Referring to prisoners of war, Putin said on Saturday: "We are ready to continue this process."

In Ukraine, Russian and Ukrainian officials in the area devastated by flooding from the destruction of a Russian-held dam announced revised death tolls Saturday.

The toll in Russian-held areas had risen to 29, officials there said.

Kyiv said the number killed in its territory had risen to 16, with 31 still missing, and warned that the threat of air strikes "remains high across Ukraine".

"The enemy continues to focus its main efforts on the Lyman, Bakhmut, Avdiivka, and Maryinka axes and heavy battles continue," the defence ministry said in a statement.

In Washington, US President Joe Biden warned that the United States would not make special arrangements for Ukraine to join the NATO military alliance. "They've got to meet the same standards," he told reporters. "So we're not going to make it easy." Next week, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak will call on investors and businesses at a two-day summit in London to match Ukraine's "bravery on the battlefield" with support to get the country back on its feet.

Everyone has to shoulder responsibility, Iqbal tells Bilawal on budget complaint

NAROWAL (NNI): Federal Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal has said that the prime minister has always addressed complaints of allies.

Commenting on the complaint of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, PML-N minister said that the allies were part of the federal cabinet that passed the budget. "Over 80 billion rupees have been allocated for support to the flood victims of Sindh in the Benazir Income Support Program," he said. "In decisions made with unanimous agreement, everyone has to shoulder the responsibility," Ahsan Iqbal said. "One should avoid to make statements in public meetings," he said.

Ahsan Iqbal said that the coalition government had saved the country from default through concerted efforts.

"Pakistan's economy would take the road to progress due to a proper roadmap which has been formulated," said the minister while inaugurating the development division in Narowal.

Ahsan said when the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) government came into power along with its allies, there were two ways in front of the PML-N leadership, saving politics or the state, and the PML-N choose the latter option.

He alleged that 'change' of 2018 has become a nightmare for Pakistan. "Terrorism was eradicated from Pakistan under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif but the journey of progress from Pakistan was ended under conspiracy. The PML-N gave CPEC as a gift to the country but a clumsy, inexperienced worker was given a certificate of trustworthiness," he said. The Planning Minister said 'inexperienced worker' was made the country's prime minister and that person had not planned a

single project in four years stint in power.

Ahsan Iqbal said that the former prime minister built only the 'highway of hatred'. "Investors fled Pakistan because of this person," Ahsan Iqbal said. "If the PML-N leadership had not taken care of Pakistan, we would have defaulted," the minister said. The Planning Minister said that the Chairman PTI failed to give a single development project within his four years. "His inexperience destroyed the economy, the PML-N not holding reins of the country, the country had defaulted soon," he said. Talking about the China Pakistan Economic Corridor, he stressed that the project was supposed to life the people by attracting the foreign direct investment while claiming the PTI government ruined the pace of project due to which the FDI remained standstill.

Ahsan Iqbal highlighted that 'incompetent people' were given the reins of power, and they, in turn, wreaked havoc to the economy adding a dishonest person was given the certificate of honest which resulted in diminishing FDI in the country.

He said the PML-N government added 11,000 megawatts in the country electrical system that decreased load-shedding besides providing opportunities to investors. On the other hand, the PML-N has decided to take PPP on board about budget concerns and in this regard the government led team will hold a meeting with the PPP at Prime Minister Secretariat.

Sindh chief minister Murad Ali Shah is expected to sit in the meeting as well. The federal government brief the Sindh government on the fund's allocation for the rehabilitation of flood hit people of province.

PM thumbs up national athletes

ISLAMABAD (APP):

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday expressed his best wishes to the 87-member delegation of the country's differently-abled athletes who are taking part in the Special Olympics World Games 2023 being held in Germany from June 17 to June 25. "I am confident that our special and privileged athletes will use the mega opportunity to bring laurels to the motherland through their talent and determination," the prime minister posted on his Twitter handle.

He further said that in a delegation of 87 members consisting of both male and female sportspeople, Pakistan has a strong representation in the global event. "Now is the time to reap the fruit of hard work they put in while preparing for 11 games," he added.

The prime minister said that the delegation have the prayers of the whole nation with them. From June 17-25, 2023, Berlin, Germany will host 7,000 Special Olympics athletes and Unified partners from approximately 190 countries to compete in 26 sports. The athletes will be supported by more than 3,000 coaches and 20,000 volunteers.

27 PTI workers again held for meeting Imran

ISLAMABAD (PPI):

Police in Lahore on Sunday again arrested 27 PTI workers, who had been released recently after it was found out that they had visited the Zaman Park residence of former prime minister and PTI Chairman Imran Khan after their release. Quoting its sources, the TV channel reported that these workers were arrested at different police pickets while they were returning from Zaman Park. They further disclosed that most of those arrested belonged to different districts of Punjab namely Kasur, Lahore, Gujranwala and Sargodha.

Following the arrest of former prime minister Imran Khan on May 9, the accused were named in instances including arson and vandalism assaults, violation of Section 144, and hate speeches against state institutions.

BLF commander Nawaz Ali falls prey to militants' infighting

QUETTA (NNI): Nawaz Ali Rind, Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF) Commander, who belonged to Awaran, has been found dead in a neighbouring country in mysterious circumstances. Rind, who had been associated with the BLF since 2014, was involved in several attacks on security forces.

It is pertinent to mention here that cracks have begun to appear in the ranks of militant groups following the arrest of a separatist commander Gulzar Imam Shambay. Even BRAS, an alliance of Baloch separatist groups, has suffered a serious blow following the arrest of Shambay and other gains made by the security forces. So much so that they have now started pointing guns at their own commanders. It is hoped that such incidents will result in decrease in incidents of terrorism in Balochistan.



ISLAMABAD: Ms. Marriyum Aurangzeb, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting addressing the NASFF's high achievers who are leaving for Australia to participate in the National Amateur Film Festival Award.

Screen tourism best way to propagate country's narrative: Marriyum

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Sunday said that the revival and expansion of Pakistan's film industry were vital to project the national narrative through screen tourism.

"Screen tourism presents an opportunity to spread the narrative of Pakistan, as seen in the successful examples of Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Iran, where budding film industries have thrived", she said while addressing 25 high achievers of the National Amateur Film Festival Award bound to leave for Australia on Monday. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has sponsored these 25 students one-year training in New York Academy, Australia.

The government was to promote Pakistan's narrative, focusing on heritage, youth engagement, and tourism through screen tourism, she maintained.

The minister said it was high time to invest in Pakistan's entertainment industry, which currently enjoyed tax exemptions. "Over the next decade, I foresee a revival of the industry that will allow it to compete with neighbouring countries and even international markets," she said adding that the high achievers had the potential to make a significant impact in this field.

The minister recalled that Pakistan's film industry faced a significant setback between 1970 and 2000, causing its growth to stagnate. However, since 2000, the industry has experienced a boost, although its progress has been hindered by the absence of cinemas

and affordability issues, which limited access for the general public, she maintained. The minister said the government introduced a film policy in 2017 to address these challenges.

She said that extensive research and consultations with relevant stakeholders and experts were conducted to develop this comprehensive policy. Lessons, she added, were learned from countries with flourishing film industries or successful revivals, providing valuable insights.

Marriyum Aurangzeb said that incentives for the film industry were included in the 2018 budget, and after coming into power again last year, the coalition government established a dedicated film division in the ministry.

The film sector currently enjoyed zero taxation, with income tax exemptions for individuals and production houses. Import of equipment for film and drama production had also been tax exempted, she said.

The minister disclosed that the corporate entities providing funds for film production can claim CSR tax credits from the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), making it a significant incentive. Furthermore, she said, the government had approved a film finance fund with an initial allocation of Rs 2 billion. This fund, operated through the Film Council, will support budding producers in the production of films, television dramas, and documentaries.

The minister said for making entertainment accessible to the

general public, cinema income has been exempted from taxation for the first ten years, especially for those cinemas offering affordable ticket prices. She maintained that an excellent example of the cinema industry's revival was the monumental success of the new version of Maula Jatt movie. This version, not seen by those who made the original movie a hit, generated substantial business overseas in multiplex cinemas.

She said by taking advantage of this framework, young students and professionals, equipped with valuable skill sets, can tap into the immense potential of the film industry.

Marriyum said that universities like NUST, Iqra and LUMS as well as schools and colleges, offer film production and drama as degree courses, fostering a talent pool for the industry.

The revitalized PTV academy, equipped with modern studios, will be open to schools and colleges, allowing the youth to gain knowledge and experience in film production, she remarked. About the Australia-bound high achievers of the National Amateur Film Festival Award, she said as individuals embarking on this course, they were fortunate to be part of this endeavor.

Upon their return, they might even become instructors and produce films at the PTV academy, further contributing to the industry's growth. She congratulated them on their achievement, and wished them best of luck for their future endeavors.

No special discount on oil for Pakistan, says Russian minister

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Russia hasn't extended Pakistan any special discount on oil purchase, Russian energy minister has recently said.

In an interview to the Voice of America (VOA), Russian Energy Minister Nikolai Shulginov said there was no reduced pricing for Pakistan.

He said Russia had started exporting oil to Pakistan and had agreed to accept Chinese currency as payment, clarifying that the South Asian country did not receive any exclusive discounts on the purchase deal. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced Sunday that the first "Russian discounted crude oil cargo" had arrived and offloaded at the port in the southern city of Karachi. Sharif touted the ship-

ment as "the beginning of a new relationship" between Islamabad and Moscow. His petroleum minister later revealed Pakistan had paid in yuan for the first government-to-government Russian crude oil import.

"Oil deliveries to Pakistan have begun. There is no special discount; for Pakistan, it is the same as for other buyers," Russian state media quoted Shulginov as telling reporters on the sidelines of an international economic conference in St. Petersburg. His remarks raised questions about official Pakistani assertions that Moscow had agreed to supply oil to Islamabad at a discounted price under a deal the two sides negotiated earlier this year.

"We agreed that the payment would be made in the

currencies of friendly countries," Shulginov said when asked for a response to Pakistani assertions that the trade is taking place in Chinese currency. He also confirmed that the issue of barter supplies was also discussed, "but no decision has been made yet."

Cash-strapped Pakistan earlier this month allowed its state and private entities to open barter trade with several countries, including Russia, in an attempt to ease pressure on Islamabad's rapidly depleting foreign exchange reserves. Shulginov said that the two countries had not yet reached an understanding on prices for the export of liquefied natural gas to Pakistan. He noted that "the discussion is about long-term contracts, but so far, we are talking about spot supplies, and spot gas prices are now high."

No limits to expand ties with Pakistan: Iranian FM

TEHRAN (NNI): Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian has said that his country has no limits to expand relations with the neighboring Pakistan, as it has a special place in Iran's foreign policy.

Amirabdollahian held talks with Foreign Secretary of Pakistan Asad Majeed Khan in Iranian capital Tehran, Iranian media reported Sunday.

The top Iranian diplomat described the current level of Tehran-Islamabad relations as good and developing, saying that both sides should use all the existing capacities to further expand their relations.

The Pakistan official on his part emphasized the importance of expanding

relations with Iran. He also briefed Amirabdollahian on issues discussed during the latest round of consultative political talks held by senior Iranian and Pakistani officials. Meanwhile, Pakistan and Iran have agreed to deepen cooperation in trade, energy, transport, connectivity, cultural exchanges and educational linkages. The understanding was reached during wide-ranging discussions between Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Dr. Asad Majeed Khan and Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani on the occasion of 12th bilateral consultations in Tehran.

During the first round of two-day talks, both sides held fruitful discussions on

entire spectrum of relations. The Foreign Office said while reviewing the progress on implementation of decisions of last session, the meeting discussed all aspects of Pakistan-Iran bilateral relations covering political, economic, trade, investment, border security, education, climate change and culture domains.

The two sides also held discussions on regional situation, particularly Afghanistan, Kashmir, resumption of Iran-Saudi Arabia diplomatic ties and regional peace and stability. It may be recalled Pak-Iran talks come after Tehran reconciliation with Saudi Arabia through a China brokered peace deal. Pakistan also played its role in the process.

Police register case of fatal bus crash on M-2

KALLAR KAHAR (PPI): The Kallar Kahar police on Sunday registered a case against the motor vehicle examiner, owner, driver, conductor and terminal manager after a passenger bus fatally crashed onto the Motorway II on Sunday. At least 12 passengers were killed and 30 others wounded after the speeding bus destined to Jhang turned side down, bumped into the road divider and tossed over the other side of the road in Salt Range.

According to the First Information Report, the passengers had cautioned the terminal manager and driver about the condition of the bus. A video footage of the incident depicting the horrific crash went viral on social media on Saturday. Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday while expressing condolences with the bereaved families of those passengers who lost their lives in ill-fated Kallar Kahar bus accident.

JI announces to move court against Sindh LG polls' result

LAHORE (NNI): Jamat-e-Islami (JI) chief Sirajul Haq on Sunday announced to move court against the results of local government (LG) elections, wherein Pakistan People's Party (PPP) emerged as the single largest party.

Addressing a press conference, the JI chief said that the "theft of public mandate in Karachi" was unacceptable to the party, announcing to move court against the local government (LG) elections' result.

Sirajul Haq also announced to hold a protest outside the office of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on June 23. "JI always stand by people of Karachi and will not allow anyone to steal their trust," he added. He assured that his party would take back the public mandate, which according to him was stolen in Karachi Mayor elections. Haq

demand to hold mayoral elections against after bringing back the 30 elected UC chairmen of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). It is pertinent to mention here that Pakistan People's Party's (PPP) candidate Murtaza Wahab was elected Karachi mayor after securing 173 through a show of hand.

JI's candidate Hafiz Naemur Rehman secured 160 votes, the unconfirmed and unofficial results showed. The voting for Karachi mayor and deputy mayor was held at Pakistan Arts Council under strict security. The mayoral contest was between Wahab and Rehman, as all the other candidates had withdrawn their nomination papers, while Salman Abdullah and Saifuddin of PPP and JI, respectively contested for the post of deputy mayor.

According to the entry

register 332 elected members reached the polling station, as 34 members of the KMC failed to reach the Arts Council of Pakistan. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has announced the results of all the union councils (UCs) of Karachi. According to details, the PPP emerged as the largest party in the City Council with 104 chairman seats. It later got 34 seats reserved for women, five each for minorities, labour and youth, and one each for disabled and transgender persons. The party has 155 members in total.

Meanwhile, JI won 87 chairman seats in the local government (LG) elections, after which it got 29 reserved seats for women, four reserved seats each for youth, labour and minorities, and one reserved seat each for transgender and disabled persons.

Trump lacked power to declassify secret nuclear arms document, experts say

WASHINGTON (Reuters): Even when he was president, Donald Trump lacked the legal authority to declassify a U.S. nuclear weapons-related document that he is charged with illegally possessing, security experts said, contrary to the former U.S. president's claim. The secret document, listed as No. 19 in the indictment charging Trump with endangering national security, can under the Atomic Energy Act only be declassified through a process that by the statute involves the Department of Energy and the Department of Defense.

For that reason, the experts said, the nuclear document is unique among the 31 in the indictment because the declassification of the others is governed by executive order.

"The claim that he (Trump) could have declassified it is not relevant in the case of the nuclear weapons information because it was not classified by executive order but by law," said Steven Aftergood, a government secrecy expert with the Federation of Atomic Scientists. The special status of nuclear-related information further erodes what many legal experts say is a weak defense centered around declassification. Without providing evidence, Trump has claimed he declassified the documents before removing them from the White House.

Prosecutors likely will argue that declassification is irrelevant because Trump was charged under the Espionage Act, which predates classification and criminalizes the unauthorized retention of "national defense information," a broad term covering any secrets that could be helpful

to the nation's enemies.

Document No. 19 is marked "FRD," or Formerly Restricted Data, a classification given to secret information involving the military use of nuclear weapons. The indictment described it as undated and "concerning nuclear weaponry of the United States."

Trump, who pleaded not guilty on Tuesday, has said he declassified while still in office the more than 100 secret documents he took to his Florida resort home, Mar-a-Lago, a contention echoed by Republican lawmakers and other supporters.

But Aftergood and other experts said that the Atomic Energy Act (AEA) of 1954 - under which the Department of Energy oversees the U.S. nuclear arsenal - defines a process for declassifying nuclear weapons data, some of the U.S. government's most closely guarded secrets.

Israel set to approve thousands of building permits in West Bank

JERUSALEM (Agencies): Israel's nationalist-religious government on Sunday tabled plans to approve thousands of building permits in the occupied West Bank, despite US pressure to halt settlement expansion that Washington sees as an obstacle to peace with Palestinians.

The plans for approval of 4,560 housing units in various areas of the West Bank were included on the agenda of Israel's Supreme Planning Council that meets next week, although only 1,332 are up for final approval, with the remainder still going through the preliminary clearance process. "We will continue

to develop the settlement of and strengthen the Israeli hold on the territory," said Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, who also holds a defence portfolio that gives him a leading role in West Bank administration.

Most countries deem the settlements, built on land captured by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war, as illegal. Their presence is one of the fundamental issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Palestinians seek to establish an independent state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip with East Jerusalem as their capital. Peace talks that had been brokered by the United

States have been frozen since 2014. Since entering office in January, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition has approved the promotion of more than 7,000 new housing units, most deep in the West Bank. It also amended a law to clear the way for settlers to return to four settlements that had previously been evacuated.

In response to Sunday's Israeli decision, the Palestinian Authority - which exercises limited self-rule in parts of the West Bank - said it would boycott a meeting of the Joint Economic Committee with Israel scheduled for Monday.

Balochistan to unveil over Rs700b budget today

QUETTA (PPI): The Balochistan government will unveil fiscal year 2023-24 budget tomorrow (Monday) with an expected outlay of more than Rs700 billion and deficit around Rs150 billion, according to a report on Sunday.

Finance Minister Zamarak Khan Achakzai will present the growth-oriented and pro-people budget in the Balochistan Assembly.

This will be the 5th budget to be presented by the ruling Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) in the assembly.

The government is expected to announce over Rs200 billion development budget under the Public Sector Development Programme.

It is likely to increase the salaries of government employees by 15%. The provincial government anticipates Rs450 billion from the NFC programme.

It maintains that the Centre should help the province under the heads of gas royalty, bridge financing and relief for flood victims.

Finance Minister Zamarak Khan said that in the upcoming budget of the province, Rs5.8 billion are being allocated for Health Card, Rs2.7 billion for the supply of medicines in government hospitals, Rs2 billion for Balochistan Education Endowment Fund, Rs1 billion for public endowment fund, Rs2 billion for people's skill development programme, and Rs1.74 billion are being set aside for food security. Reportedly, more than 5,000 new posts would be created in the new budget.

A major chunk of the budget would be allocated for health, education, agriculture, food, rural development, communication, law and order, irrigation and drinking water and other sectors.