

Asad Qaiser moves IHC
ISLAMABAD (INP): PTI leader Asad Qaiser has approached the Islamabad High Court (IHC) seeking details of any case registered against him under Section 3 of the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) ordinance. In his plea he has asked the IHC to direct the Islamabad district commissioner to provide details on any such cases if they are filed against him and also asked for the grounds to be provided.

 @thefrontierpost

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

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIX No. 135 Regd. No. 241 ZIQA'AD 12 1444 -- FRIDAY, JUNE 02 2023 PESHAWAR EDITION 12 PAGES PRICE. 30



ISLAMABAD: Minister for National Food Security, Tariq Bashir Cheema called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Two sepoys embraced martyrdom

F.P. Report

KECH: A group of terrorists targeted a security forces' post through fire in Singwan Area of District Kech of Balochistan along Pakistan-Iran Border.

Since troops on the Post were already alert and responded gallantly with all available weapons, a heavy fire exchange ensued. Security forces pushed back the terrorists successfully however, during the intense fire exchange, two brave soldiers, Sepoy Hasnain Ishtiaq age 34 years resident of District Dera Ghazi Khan and Sepoy Inayat Ullah age 27 years resident of District Jhal Magsi embraced Shahadat while fighting bravely with the terrorists.

Security forces have launched an immediate sanitisation operation in the area and are in communication with Iranian authorities across as well to deny terrorists any opportunity to escape. Security Forces, in step with the nation, remain determined to thwart attempts at sabotaging peace and stability all along the borders in Balochistan.

Funeral prayer of Shaheed Sepoy Saqibur Rehman offered: Funeral prayer of Sepoy Saqib Ur Rehman, (age 25 years), resident of District Mardan, who embraced Shahadat on 31 May 2023 while fighting gallantly against terrorists during attack on Polio team in North Waziristan, was offered earlier at Bannu and at his native town in Mardan on Thursday.

Sepoy Saqib Ur Rehman while offering ultimate sacrifice ensured the safety of all members of the Polio Team, says an ISPR press release. Shaheed was laid to rest with full military honours.

A large number of serving and retired officers/soldiers, civil government officials, relatives of shaheed and public attended the funeral prayer. Armed Forces of Pakistan stand resolute against nefarious designs of the enemies of Pakistan, who are hell-bent to spoil hard-earned peace. These sacrifices will not go in vain and further strengthen our resolve to continue the fight against terrorism till its elimination.

ATC releases 13th PTI activists

F.P. Report

MARDAN: The anti-terrorist court Mardan on Thursday released thirteen accused who were arrested in connection to the May 9, incidents.

As per the information provided by police and court sources, the all the thirteen accused were taken into custody over their alleged involvement in May 9, violence and attacks on military installations and different state installations. The accused were booked under 19 different sections of law.

However, the anti-terrorist court Mardan granted bail to all the thirteen arrested accused and issued their release orders. Those who were released, identified as Salman, Atif Noor, Liaquat Ali, Sawood Khan, Ajmal Shah, Nasir M e h m o o d , Suleman, Farooq Hussain, Syed Ali Shah, Qasim Khan, Yasir, Muhammad Salman.

PTI President Parvez Elahi arrested

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) President Parvez Elahi was arrested by anti-corruption officials from Lahore outside his home on Thursday.

The former Punjab chief minister was taken into custody by the anti-corruption personnel after pulling over his car near Zahoor Elahi's residence in Lahore's Gulberg area. Elahi's spokesperson has confirmed the development. The development came after an anti-corruption court last week discarded his interim bail over his failure to appear before the court citing health issues.

His arrest was required in the Rs70 million corruption case related to the embezzlement of development funds allocated for the Gujrat district. The anti-corruption court judge also declared Elahi's medical certificate bogus which claimed that he had been experiencing chest pain.

The anti-corruption spokesperson in a statement said Elahi was taken into custody while trying to flee and added that he was wanted in various corruption cases. The spokesperson also said that Elahi was arrested as his bail was discarded by the court for submitting a fake medical certificate. In a statement to the police, Elahi's driver said the PTI leader was fleeing to Gilgit Baltistan along with a convoy of four vehicles.

He said Elahi was not travelling in a bulletproof vehicle and added that police tried to break the car's window after the PTI president refused to open the door. Speaking to media, Punjab caretaker Information Minister Amir Mir said Elahi was wanted by the anti-corruption police in a graft case. He said the PTI president was fleeing from his residence when the police intercepted his vehicle and took him into custody.



The minister added that resistance was put up during the arrest but the police managed to arrest him. The PTI leader's spokesperson said Elahi's son Rasikh and Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain's sister were also present with him during the arrest. Elahi's arrest came as hundreds of PTI leaders and workers have been arrested since May 9 violent protests erupted almost across the country.

The crackdown on PTI leadership in the wake of the May 9 riots triggered a wave of desertion in the former ruling party with many bigwigs including Shireen Mazari, Fawad Chaudhry, Aami Mehmood Kiani, Ali Zaidi and others have parted ways with the party in protest against the violent protests. Elahi was appointed as the PTI president in March this year only a month after he along with 10 former MPAs left the PML-Q to join the PTI.

Moonis Elahi, the PTI president's son — who is active in politics and played a key role in convincing his father to join the PTI ranks — said his father was arrested in a fake case. Moonis said his father and mother had already asked them to support the PTI even if they were arrested.

LHC orders release of PTI leaders, workers

LAHORE (PPI): Declaring detention of PTI leaders and workers, including senior party leader Dr. Yasmin Rashid, in connection with incidents of violence on May 9, 2023 null and void, the Lahore High Court (LHC) on Thursday ordered their immediate release.

As many as 45 detainees, belonging to 11 districts of Punjab namely Lahore, Wazirabad, Jhang, Sheikhupura, Hafizabad, Sialkot, Mandi Bahauddin, Gujrat, Nankana Sahib, Narowal and Gujranwala, had challenged their detention orders by deputy commissioners in the LHC.

In his verdict on the petitions, Justice Safdar Salim Shahid wrote that reaction to the arrest of a political leader on May 9 was unfortunate. "And unfortunately the government, too, ordered the arrest of thousands of PTI leaders and workers in a rush without taking into account the consequences," read the verdict.

The judge further wrote that if the government had any evidence of the involvement of these people in acts of violence, it had lot of time to order their arrests. Furthermore, the decision read, those taken into custody must be knowing the charges

against them so that they could defend themselves.

The court said unluckily the events of May 9 presented a "distorted" picture of a democratic and peaceful country to the world. "It was the government's duty to enforce writ of the state on that day. It is extremely unfortunate that police picked up and dumped a political party's leaders and workers in jails without registering cases against them," read the decision. The court observed that the notifications issued by deputy commissioners were the violation of section 3 of Public Maintenance Ordinance, 1960.

KP CM: NMDs issues to be resolved on priority

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a bid to resolve the public issues of the people of newly merged districts by caretaker Chief Minister KP Muhammad Azam Khan, the third round of the weekly sessions for the people of merged districts was held here in Chief Minister's House on Thursday.

A large number of people of the merged districts hailing from different walks of life attended the session and apprised the Chief Minister of the issues faced by them. The majority of those issues were related to education, health, road infrastructure and other sectors of public service delivery. senior Member Board of Revenue, Administrative secretaries of provincial departments and other relevant officials were also present on the occasion.

The chief minister listened to their issues attentively and directed the quar-

ters concerned for necessary steps to resolve those issues on priority basis. The elders of merged districts lauded the initiative of the caretaker chief minister to hold weekly session with the people of merged districts, and said that this initiative will prove to be helpful in resolving the long-standing problems of the tribal people.

They said that merger of erstwhile FATA into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was, no doubt, a good step, but the newly merged districts were still suffering from multiple challenges needing special attention of both the federal and provincial governments. They also demanded of the federal government that development funds of the merged districts including those of the Accelerated Implementation Program (AIP) should be released without any delay so that long-lasting issues and deprivations of the merged districts could be redressed.

Addressing on the occasion, the Chief Minister said that such weekly sessions will continue to be held in future as well adding that progress was underway to resolve the issues put forward by the people of merged districts in the first two round of the sessions.

The chief minister further said that the caretaker provincial government was going all out to get the constitutional rights of merged districts adding that the issue regarding nonpayment of funds for NMDs has been taken up with the federal government. "People of the merged districts have been suffered a lot for the last four decades and the caretaker provincial government was not only well aware of this but also making every possible effort to resolve their issues" he said and assured that all available resources would be utilized to complete the ongoing development projects in the newly merged districts.

PTI's Pervaz Khattak steps down from party position

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) senior leader Pervaz Khattak announced stepping down as the party's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chapter president late Thursday.

Addressing a press conference in Islamabad, the PTI stalwart said it was difficult for him to continue serving as the party's KP chapter president amid the prevailing political crisis.

Khattak said he would announce the future course of action after consulting his friends and party colleagues. The PTI leader further said that he had taken the decision to leave the party post after thorough consideration.

Meanwhile, former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) MNA from Multan Muhammad Ibrahim Khan decided to quit politics. As per details, Former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf MNA Ibrahim Khan said that he started his politics in 2022 when he was elected from NA 158.

He condemned the May 9 attack on the military instalments and public buildings and said that he personally decided to leave politics. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) General Secretary Yasir Humayun Sarfaraz earlier decided to quit his party over the May 9 violence.

Usman Dar's brother quits politics: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Usman Dar's brother Amir Dar on Thursday decided to leave the embattled party and quit politics. Addressing a press conference, Mr Dar condemned the events that unfolded on May 9, adding that he was deciding to quit politics due to business commitments.

"I suffered losses in business because of politics. I have no conflict with any institution," he added." Speaking about the political future of his brothers, Mr Dar said, "It is up to Usman Dar and Asad Dar to stay or leave the party."

Earlier today, PTI Sindh President Ameer Bakhsh Bhutto relinquished his post. Addressing a press conference along with PTI Sindh Vice President Allah Bakhsh Unar, Mr Bhutto said, "Now I am not interested in politics. I am ready to sacrifice for the sake of the country and my companions". He added, "I will decide the political future in consultation with my companions".

Speaking about the events that transpired on May 9, Mr Bhutto said, "The vandalism on May 9 is condemnable." Taking a jibe at the embattled party, Mr Bhutto said, "Why were military installations attacked?" Meanwhile, Mr Unar also relinquished his posts following the May 9 mayhem.

LPG prices slashed by Rs 37 per kg

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The price of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) has been reduced by Rs 37 per kg across the country, as per new notification. According to the notification, the new price for imported LPG has been fixed at Rs 197 per kg, reflecting a significant reduction. Additionally, the price of domestic cylinders has been decreased by Rs 438.

In response to the price adjustment, Irfan Khokhar, Chairman of the LPG Dealers Association, stated that the commercial cylinder price has been reduced by Rs 1,686. As per the new rates, the domestic cylinder will be sold for Rs 2,322, while the commercial cylinder will be available for Rs 8,933. Furthermore, the Finance Minister, Ishaq Dar, has also announced the revised prices of petroleum products for the next 15 days. The price of petrol has been reduced by Rs 8 per litre, bringing it down to Rs 262 per litre. In addition to the reduction in petrol prices, the government has announced a decrease of Rs 5 per litre in the price of high-speed diesel, with the new rate being Rs 253 per litre.

Pakistan fully capable to deal all challenges

Prime Minister to attend President Erdogan's inauguration ceremony in Ankara on 3rd: FO

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will attend the inauguration ceremony of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara on June 3, the Foreign Office said Thursday. The prime minister is paying the visit at the invitation of President Erdogan, who was re-elected to his office on May 28.

"The prime minister's visit will be a reaffirmation of the deep-rooted fraternal ties between Pakistan and Türkiye," Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch at her weekly press briefing. The FO spokesperson said the prime minister would convey warm felicitations on behalf of the government and the people of Pakistan to President Erdogan.

The prime minister would also extend an invitation to President Erdogan to attend the 7th Meeting of the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council (HLSCC) in Islamabad, she said. Mumtaz Baloch said Minister of State (MoS) for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar would undertake official visits to Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Belgium from June 5-13.

"The MoS will hold meetings at the ministerial level to discuss political engagement and cooperation in development, trade and climate change," she said. She will also meet lawmakers and local entrepreneurs. In Belgium, she will hold meetings with members of the European Parliament and senior officials of the European Commission.

In Sweden, the Minister of State will attend the Annual Meeting of the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) as a keynote speaker. She will present Pakistan's perspective on issues of regional and global importance, and interact with leading European decision-makers, experts, think-tanks, and influencers for debates on foreign policy priorities and challenges. The FO spokesperson said Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari was currently in Jordan to attend the wedding of Crown Prince Hussein at the invitation of the Royal family of Jordan.

From Jordan, the Foreign Minister would travel to Iraq from the 5th to 7th of June at the invitation of the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Dr. Fuad Hussein. This was the Foreign Minister's first visit to Iraq, she added. "During the visit, the Foreign Minister will meet the Iraqi leadership. In his meeting with his counterpart, the two sides will discuss a range of issues of common interest and

explore avenues of bilateral cooperation."

She said the Foreign Minister would formally announce the establishment of the Pilgrimage Centre in Karbala to facilitate Pakistani Zaireen (pilgrims) and perform the ground-breaking of the Embassy Complex. "A number of agreements are also expected to be signed related to the education sector, cultural cooperation and visa facilitation," she said.

The FO spokesperson said Pakistan was deeply concerned over India's latest move seeking the death penalty for prominent Kashmiri leader Yasin Malik. Last year, Yasin Malik was awarded a life sentence in a contrived case, marked by fabricated charges and denial of fair trial. He is being held in inhumane conditions in the notorious Tihar jail despite his deteriorating health. Malik is being denied access to family members, privileged access to lawyers, and quality health treatment.

"India's latest move is another instance of political vendetta aimed at silencing the Kashmiri leadership and intimidating the Kashmiri people," she said. She urged the Indian authorities to bring an end to the "farce of a trial" of Yasin Malik and provide him with quality health treatment and allowed him to live freely among his family.

Replying to a question, the FO spokesperson said the National Security Committee's statement had clearly spelt out the factual situation around the May 9 events. "We believe that Pakistan is fully capable of dealing with all domestic challenges in accordance with our laws and our constitution. We are cognizant of our constitutional obligations to protect the rights and property of all our citizens. We are committed to ensure observance of national law, maintaining public order and respecting the Constitution, and democratic traditions and human rights principles. These constitutional guarantees and fundamental freedoms are underwritten by our judiciary." To another question, Mumtaz Baloch said Pakistan had its consistent position that all states should abide by their international legal obligations and non-proliferation commitments, and avoid steps inconsistent with such commitments. The issue of stationing nuclear weapons on territories of NPT non-nuclear weapon states, at present as well as in the past, needed to be carefully examined by all parties to the Treaty as it had serious repercussions for global peace and security.

Young farmers to get loans on easiest terms: Marriyum

F.P. Report
ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Thursday said the nation had witnessed both "constructive and destructive" mindsets in the last one year as the former brought destruction to the country while the latter served the masses.

"Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif during his ongoing government tenure stabilized the economy while the former ruler sowed the seeds of hatred, chaos and anarchy to train the armed groups which resulted into the May 9 tragedy," the minister said while addressing a news conference. She said the former ruler would not be remembered as a pragmatic leader as he had played no role in bringing political and economic stability in the country.

On the other hand, PM Shehbaz Sharif and the coalition government's foremost priority was to ensure political and economic stability in the country as both were intertwined, she added. "We have inherited a ruined economy from the previous government of PTI which left the country at verge of default due to its inefficiency and incompetence," she said, adding economic uncertainty was now on the retreat with end of political uncertainty.

"The spell of misguidedness seems to be breaking while the spell of hatred, mischief and anarchy is ending," the minister remarked. Marriyum recalled that the previous government first signed the IMF programme, then violated, and finally suspended it. On the other hand, the present coalition government was holding negotiations with the IMF as it was determined to complete the ongoing programme.

She said the incompetent and inefficient PTI regime had laid economic mines and when ousted from the power, it resorted to agitation and long marches to disrupt the development process which was initiated by the coalition government under the leadership of PM Shehbaz Sharif. "The youth was brainwashed and the politics of arson and vandalism was promoted to ruin the economy," she said while citing the May 9 tragedy as an example when armed groups attacked the sensitive installations.

The minister said the masses were reaping benefits of the reform agenda initiated by the coalition government in last one year with all the economic indicators had been on upward trajectory. The price of LPG domestic cylinder had been reduced from Rs 2,759 to Rs 2,321, which would provide Rs 438 relief to domestic consumers per cylinder, she said, adding the commercial cylinder price had also been reduced by Rs 1,686.

She said the commercial LPG cylinder was earlier being sold at Rs 10,619 and now its price had been fixed at Rs 8,933. The price of cooking oil was decreased by upto Rs 70 per kg, whereas that of flour and wheat had been reduced by Rs 35 to Rs 40 per kg. She said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif gave a historic package for farmers which proved a harbinger of bumper wheat crops. The prices of flour, wheat and cooking oil had come down today due to the government policy initiatives.

On the directives of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, she said, young farmers were given loans on the easiest terms and subsidy was given on the DAP fertilizer prices and due to all the initiatives, today the country was moving towards economic stability. Today, the value of the dollar dropped by about Rs 27 due to the prudent policies of the government, she said, adding the PM had directed that direct relief of reduction in the prices of oil, flour and LPG cylinders should be passed on to the common people.

The prime minister, she said, had started consultations related to the budget with the departments concerned and he had formed two sub-committees regarding agriculture. The committees, she said, would be responsible for ensuring supply of quality seeds, import of modern machinery and equipment, and ensuring their availability. The prime minister directed that all agriculture tube-wells should be fully solar powered and he directed to ensure the best support price of wheat for the prosperity of farmers. She said the scheme to provide direct subsidy on fertilizer to farmers would be implemented in an effective way. The committees would submit their report to the Prime Minister within three days. He also directed to work on oil seeds policy for cooking oil production in Pakistan, she added.

She regretted that the previous government changed the name of the youth programme which was launched by the former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, but failed to empower the youth through their socioeconomic development. The programme had been revived to distribute to 100,000 laptops among the youth, she said, adding the young entrepreneurs continued their work with any disruption during the coronavirus pandemic just due to the laptop scheme which was launched in line with the vision of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.



Three of robbers gang held

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan Rangers Sindh and Police in a joint intelligence based operation in Orangi Town arrested three of an alleged robbers gang and recovered stolen motorcycles, illegal arms and ammunition from their possession. Arrested were identified as Noman alias Chotta, Zeeshan and Mooda, according to a news release issued here on Thursday.

During initial interrogation they confessed their involvement in more than 70 robberies and snatched 150 mobile phones, cash Rs. 0.5 million from citizens and stolen 10 motorcycles. Raids were being conducted to arrest their other accomplices. Arrested along with recovered arms, ammunition and stolen motorcycles were handed over to police for further legal proceedings.

LWMC plans major cleaning operation before Eid

LAHORE, (APP): The Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) has launched a special cleanliness drive in view of upcoming Eid-ul-Adha 2023. Special zero waste operation was being conducted in all nine towns of the city in phased manner, said a spokesperson here on Thursday. In the first two days of the drive Data Ganj Baksh Town and Gulberg Town were being made zero waste. In order to make the zero waste operation successful more than 1,600 workers and 120 additional vehicles were allocated in Data Ganj Baksh Town while 740 workers and 128 vehicles including mini dumpers and compactors were working in Gulberg Town. During the zero waste operation 24 open plots in Gulberg Town and six open plots in Data Ganj Baksh Town would be cleared.

To review the ongoing zero waste operation, LWMC Chief Executive Officer Babar Sahib Din along with deputy CEO LWMC Fahad Mehmood and Muhammad Aurangzeb visited the Muslim Town Mor, Canal Road, Barkat Market, Gulberg Main Boulevard, Data Darbar and adjoining areas.

Commissioner inaugurates skills training programme

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Liaquat Ali Chatha on Thursday inaugurated a skills training programme for male and female students here at Government College of Technology. The commissioner while addressing the participants said the program of imparting skills and technical education to the student during summer vacations was a major initiative of the Punjab government. The commissioner stated that he was a member of the committee formed in that regard and was aware of the importance of the program.

The program would have constructive effects, he said adding, technical education training was a joint effort of different departments including ICI, SDD, HED, and SED.

Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Liaquat Ali Chatha advised the students not to waste their precious time during summer vacations and they should learn skills.

In developed countries children were imparted technical education and given training during holidays, he added. It is possible to eliminate unemployment through skill and technical education, the commissioner maintained.

Pakistan Navy Ship conducts rescue operation in Arabian Sea

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan Navy Ship (PNS) SAIF while carrying out routine patrolling in the Arabian Sea, expeditiously responded to a distress call by a stranded Fishing Vessel AL ZUBAIR and saved the valuable lives of six fishermen.

The fishing vessel had suffered engine failure and subsequent flooding due to rough sea conditions, a Pakistan Navy news release said.

PNS SAIF swiftly responded to the distress call at night and safely recovered six stranded fishermen.

Medical assistance was provided onboard and the fishermen were subsequently shifted to Gwadar.

The fishermen's community has lauded the efforts of the Pakistan Navy in saving precious lives at sea. Pakistan Navy, besides ensuring combat readiness at all times, remains vigilant to contribute to ensuring the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) through sustained presence and monitoring of activities within the Maritime Zones of Pakistan.

Peoples Bus Service to get mobile app soon: Sarjeel

F.P. Report

KARACHI: A high-level meeting of the Transport Department was convened under the leadership of Sharjeel Inam Memon, the Minister of Information, Transport, and Mass Transit.

During the meeting, Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon instructed that the implementation of the intelligent transport system and e-card system should be expedited without delay.

In the meeting, Transport Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon emphasized the urgent completion of the People's Bus Service app development. Secretary Transport Saleem Rajput, MD Sindh Mass Transit Authority, and other officials were present at the meeting.

Additionally, Minister Sharjeel Inam

Memon issued orders for the immediate activation of the command and control system of the People's Bus Service.

During the meeting, Sharjeel Inam Memon addressed the issue of a shortage of chargers for electric buses and stressed the need for their immediate resolution. He emphasized the urgency of arranging chargers as quickly as possible. Furthermore, he highlighted the importance of bringing EVI buses onto the roads promptly to enhance the travel facilities for the public, in conjunction with the availability of chargers.

Sharjeel Inam Memon also emphasized the need to initiate bus services promptly on routes where they have not yet been implemented. He further stressed the immediate completion of the construction of stops for the People's Bus Service.



Sanjrani, Thai Envoy discuss matters of mutual interest

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani and Ambassador of Thailand to Pakistan Chakkrid Krachaiwong here on Thursday discussed matters of mutual interest, focusing on further enhancing the close and cordial relations between the two countries.

Acknowledging the longstanding bond between the two countries, the Chairman expressed his appreciation for the monuments preserved in Pakistan, which have played a pivotal role in fostering a lasting and robust

relationship between the nations. The ambassador highlighted the significant role played by thousands of Pakistanis residing in Thailand, acting as a bridge to connect both nations said a news release. During the meeting, both parties emphasized the need to strengthen bilateral relations across various sectors, including investment, education, science, and technology. The Thai Ambassador expressed a warm welcome to the continuous development of bilateral relations between Pakistan and Thailand.

100,000 laptops to be awarded among talented students

ISLAMABAD (APP): As many as 100,000 laptops will be awarded to the talented students of public sector universities/higher education institutions across the country under the Prime Minister's Laptop Scheme (Phase-III).

The scheme, announced by the Prime Minister, aimed at providing high-quality latest laptops to young and talented students on merit through an online and transparent system.

According to the Higher Education Commission (HEC), students can apply through a dedicated online portal www.pnyp.gov.pk till June 20, 2023.

The purpose of this scheme was to bring improvement in the quality of science and technology education, including ICT. The project will also increase productivity and efficiency by providing advanced IT technologies to the students. It is pertinent to

mention that in the past, two similar schemes have been successfully executed under the same programme executed by the HEC, Pakistan.

The eligibility criteria for awarding laptops to the stu-

dents is that they must be studying in Public Sector Universities/ Degree Awarding Institutes duly recognized by HEC. Students must be enrolled till June 30, 2023.



KOHAT UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

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Re-Auction Tender Notice (Single Stage, Single Envelope)

Kohat University of Science & Technology, Kohat invites sealed tenders for the disposal of used /unserviceable items (200 KVA Generator, Iron & wooden scrap, batteries, tyres, used Answer Sheets and newspapers in bulks) "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS". Which can be inspected (LOT-wise) on any working day (Mondays to Fridays) between 9:00 am to 3:00 pm at Main Store KUST.

Tender documents (Single form for all lots) containing Terms & Conditions and form can be collected from the office of Secretary, UAC KUST (Manager ORIC, Mr. Shahid ul Islam) on cash payment of Rs.1000/- for Tender Form (non-refundable) or can be downloaded from University website i.e. www.kust.edu.pk, and cost thereof may be attached in the shape of Bank draft with the tender form.

Sealed tender along with call deposit (Refundable) will be received up to 11:00 AM on or before JUNE 22, 2023 opened at 11:30 AM on the same day in the Ifrikhar Auditorium, KUST in the presence of the bidders, who may choose to attend. Bid Security will have to be attached as given in tender documents. Applicable taxes will have to be deposited accordingly by firm/bidder in addition to bid price. Bidders may opt for ONE or more than one LOT(S) on a single form.

However, successful bidder will be announced for each lot separately based on highest bid for each LOT.

Convener
University Auction Committee
KUST Ph. # 0922-52914032



LAHORE: Pigeons picking food thrown by the people as Mercy in the Provincial Capital. —APP Photo

Chief Secretary Sindh reviews public-private partnership projects

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Chief Secretary Sindh, Dr. Mohammad Sohail Rajput, presided a meeting to review the progress on public-private partnership projects in the province.

The meeting was attended by the Syed Qasim Naveed Qamar, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Sindh for Public-Private Partnership Projects, Senior Member Board of Revenue Baqaullah Unar, Commissioner Karachi Muhammad Iqbal Memon, Secretary Local Government Syed Najam Ahmed Shah, Secretary Finance Sajid Jamal Abro, Director General PPP Unit Assad Zamin, while All divisional commissioner, DIGs, Deputy Commissioners and SSPs have attended the meeting Via video link.

The meeting reviewed various projects, including the construction of Malir Expressway, M9-N5 Link Road, Ghotki Kandhkot Bridge, Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and other significant initiatives.

Speaking on the occasion the Chief Secretary Sindh said that Sindh's Public Private Partnership Unit is far ahead of many countries as it has successfully completed various mega projects. He



urged the officers to use all their abilities for timely completion of remaining PPP projects. He said that Sindh Government believes in providing facilities to the people at their doorstep and the construction of these roads and bridges will bring prosperity to the respective areas and provide employment opportunities.

Chief Secretary Sindh took note of the issue of debris dumping in Malir River and issued a directive to the Commissioner of Karachi to lodge FIRs against the responsible individuals. It was highlighted during the meeting that unauthorized encroachments continue to surround Ghotki Kandhkot Bridge, on this the CS

directed concerned Deputy Commissioners to remove the encroachment. The Chief Secretary also directed DIG Larkana to ensure the security of personnel engaged in the construction of Ghotki Kandhkot Bridge. The Chief Secretary also instructed SMBR to resolve the land-related issues pertaining to all ongoing PPP projects.

Syed Qasim Naveed Qamar, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Sindh for Public-Private Partnership Projects said that Public-private partnership projects are among the finest initiatives of the Sindh government, leading to notable transformations in the province.

Murad takes up KCR project to resolve its land issues

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has once again taken up Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) Project and directed the Board of Revenue (BOR) to resolve all its land issues so that a joint working group with Chinese authorities and the federal government could be constituted for further action.

This emerged in a meeting held under his chairmanship here at CM House. The meeting was attended by Minister of Information & Transport Sharjeel Memon, Advisor Law Murtaza Wahab, Chief Secretary Sohail Rajput, Chairman P&D Hassan Naqvi, SMBR Baqaullah Unar, Secretary to CM Raheem Shaikh, Secretary Transport Saleem Rajput, and others. Minister Transport Sharjeel Memon briefing the CM chief minister said that

the project was put on the back burner during the tenure of the PTI government. Otherwise, the project was most important to resolve the transport problem of the city. Chairman P&D told the chief minister that the federal government, with the efforts of the chief minister, has sent the feasibility of the KCR to Chinese authorities through the Ministry of Planning & Commission of Pakistan.

Sharjeel Memon said that inclusion of KCR in CPEC and handing over of KCR Right of Way (RoW) to the Government of Sindh. The Chairman/ Secretary of Railways constituted a four-member committee of Railway Officers to finalize the modalities regarding handing over of Pakistan Railway/ KCR land to the provincial government.

Government of Pakistan Ministry of National Food Security and Research

SITUATION VACANT

Applications along with C.Vs are invited for the following post lying vacant in Pakistan Central Cotton Committee (PCCC) of Ministry of National Food Security and Research on contract basis, initially for a period of three (03) years further extendable for another term of three years subject to satisfactory performance. The requisite conditions of appointment are specified below:

PAKISTAN CENTRAL COTTON COMMITTEE (PCCC)				
Name of Post & Scale	No of Posts	Age Limit	Prescribed Qualification / Experience	Quota
Chief Executive Officer, CEO Pay Scale (Equivalent to MP-I)	01	45 Years (Min)	PhD in any related discipline i.e., management or administrative sciences from HEC recognized university with 14 years professional experience, out of which five (05) years' experience should be in leadership position	Merit
Period: 3 - years, extendable for another term, depending upon satisfactory performance		62 Years (Max)	OR Masters in management or administrative sciences from HEC recognized university with 18 years post qualification experience, out of which five (05) years' experience should be in leadership position	

- The age limit shall be calculated on the closing date of submission of applications.
- The recruitment will be made strictly according to government policy and instructions.
- Interested eligible candidates may apply online on National Job Portal (NJP) website: www.njp.gov.pk, and fill up the application form properly by within 15 days of publication of this advertisement. Manual/hard copies of applications will not be entertained
- Applicants already in Government service should apply through proper channel and submit hard copies along-with CVs, in addition to submission of application on NJP. However, advance copies can be submitted. Applications duly forwarded by the department concerned must reach within 45 days of publication of this advertisement.
- Incomplete application form will not be entertained.
- No TA/DA will be admissible for test/interview, only shortlisted eligible candidates shall be called for test/interview.
- Applications received after due date or incomplete applications will not be entertained.
- This Ministry reserves the right to cancel the advertisement/process of recruitment at any time, if the circumstances, so warrants.

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RESERVE SUPPLY DEPOT ASC PESHAWAR CANTONMENT TENDER NOTICE

- Reserve Supply Depot Army Service Corps, Peshawar Cantonment invites sealed quotation from all government contractors for provision of materials for development/ upgradation of this depot out of budget allotment for FY 2022/2023.
- Quotations will be deposited in envelopes named as "CO RSD ASC Peshawar Cantt"
- All quotations / bids will be submitted latest by 16 June 2023 at 1400 hours and will be opened in the presence of all bidders on 16 June 2023 at 1430 hours in Commanding Officer, RSD office.
- The Commanding Officer, Reserve Supply Depot Army Service Corps Peshawar Cantonment, reserves the right to reject any or all quotations/bids at any time by assigning plausible reasons to the bidders.
- List of goods and other related information may be obtained from Reserve Supply Depot, Army Service Corps Peshawar Cantonment during working hours.

Mob No: 0345-4888423 - 0345-9309446



KP's merged districts:

Era of progress, uplift is about to begin: Governor

PESHAWAR (APP): The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali has said that the era of real development and prosperity in the merged districts is about to begin now, powers and funds will be transferred to the merged districts and especially to the elected local government representatives of the merged districts very soon.

He was talking to a 30-member delegation of the Ittehad Malikan (Alliance of Malikis) which called on him here at the Governor's House on Thursday.

The delegation led by Haji Lali Shah was comprising Muhammad Afzal Khan, Malik Ayaz, Malik Sultanzeb, Malik Hafizur Rahman, Haji Syed Ahmad Jan, Mufti Hanifullah, Malik Khanzeb Malik Faqir, Malik Faqir, Malik Wali, Malik Hasib, Malik Ehsanullah, Malik Fazl Rabi, Malik Shater, Malik Usman, Malik Muhammad

Shah, Malik Wazir, Malik Shirin, Malik Mashuq, Malik Nawaz Khan, Malik Abdul Nasser, Malik Hazrat Noor, Malik Umar Wahid, Malik Muhammad, Malik Khanzada, Abu Bakr Shah and others. Provincial Ministers Mohammad Adnan Jalil and Fazal Elahi were also present on the occasion.

The Governor said that the transfer of powers and funds will help in development of all areas of the merged districts and development initiatives will be seen at the street level.

He said that the federal government has prepared development plans to address the deprivations of the tribal people in collaboration with the provincial government which will start an era of the development and prosperity in these areas.

The delegation informed the governor about administrative and regional problems and difficulties in Bajaur and especially pointed out the problems related to tax exemption, electricity and gas, health sector.

The governor said that merged districts are part of the province and the problems of these areas will be solved according to the constitution and law, but it is a pity that despite the merger of the former government during its 4 years rule it has miserably failed in the release of funds to the merged districts.

He said the present federal government is not only releasing funds to address the deprivations of these areas rather also starting development projects.

He assured the delegation that all administrative and regional problems including health, education, and commercial sectors will be resolved in all the merged districts including Bajaur and a clear change will be seen.

Alleged rapist sent to jail

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Judicial Magistrate Peshawar Salman Nadir has sent alleged rapist of minor to jail on 14 days judicial remand, on Thursday.

According to prosecution, alleged rapist Attiq-ur-Rehman has raped 13 years girl in the premises of Pandhu police station while latterly she along with newborn were dead delivery at hospital. Police has registered First Information Report under different section of relevant law and arrested him while last he has produced before Judicial Magistrate Peshawar after police remand.

Judicial Magistrate Peshawar Salman Nadir sent alleged rapist to jail on judicial remand for 14 days after conclusion arguments. It is worthy to mention that a female LHV is also arrested in the case while her remand had already obtained.

Minister visits Directorate

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Law and Human Rights (HR), Justice (Retd) Irshad Qaisar here Thursday visited Directorate General Law and Human Rights and inquired about its working and operational matters.

Director General Human Rights, Muhammad Idrees Khan briefed the minister about working of directorate and status of human rights in the province.

He informed caretaker minister about modus operandi of inquiries and cases under KP Promotion, Protection and Enforcement Act 2014. He also highlighted the working of Media Research Wing, training courses, workshops and Memorandum of Understandings signed with Islamia College and Benazir Women University. Speaking on the occasion, caretaker minister directed to compile a report of problems being faced by the directorate and said that efforts would be made to resolve them.

Bid to smuggle arms foiled

PESHAWAR (APP): The District Police on Thursday foiled a bid to smuggle illegal arms and arrested four members of inter-provincial arms smugglers.

The accused had hidden illegal weapons at Haji Camp Adda to smuggle the stock to other cities, police said.

Police recovered 130 rifles of 12 bore from a warehouse and arrested accused Junaid Khan, Muhammad Ali, Azmatullah and Ali Khan on the spot.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan addressing delegation from merged areas.

Courts disposed-off 100% freshly instituted cases across province

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) has disposed-off more than 99% while district judiciary superseded number from institution of cases as per the vision of the Chief Justice Musarrat Hilali regarding the dispensation of justice, a series of administrative actions were taken after the assumption of the office.

This was disclosed by PHC in press statement while added that Her ladyship devised an effective case management system and established special

benches which contributed towards expeditious disposal of the cases is being appreciated at large. The below statistics for the performance report of Peshawar High Court for the month of April 2023 as total Cases Instituted during the month 1950 while decided 1945 petitions and remaining pendency stands at 42132 at the court.

Similarly, Chief Justice has chaired a number of meetings with the judges of the family courts and the District Judiciary for gearing up their efforts tirelessly to come up with the expectations of the general

public.

Chief Justice & Judges of Peshawar High Court are fully committed, towards the expeditious disposal of the cases and the dispensation of justice in the best public interest.

She has shown her satisfaction over the performance of the District Judiciary as the available data shows that the disposal against institution was found over and above 100% ratio.

The cases instituted 34186 at District Judiciary while disposed of 35028 remaining pendency stands at 266288 in the trial judiciary.

Psychiatric training session organized

PESHAWAR (APP): Psychiatric training session for the employees of Radio Pakistan and Associated Press of Pakistan Peshawar was held here Thursday after their offices were burnt down by the violent mob on May 10 last.

The trauma training session was organized by Ifikhar Psychiatric Hospital Peshawar at the premises of Radio Pakistan Peshawar building.

Renowned psychiatrist, Professor Dr Ifikhar Hussain shared his experience and professional knowledge with the employees of both the organizations regarding combating trauma, anxiety and depression after such horrible incidents.

He said such trauma situation could be countered through shared will power, positivity and strength. He said such tragic and

catastrophic situations come on nations and it could out of it through strong belief on their own abilities, and will power.

Dr Ifikhar Hussain and others psychologists shared different techniques with employees of both the organizations and handed over free medicines to them.

The doctors, paramedics and pharmacists also attended trauma training sessions.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali addressing representatives of Local Government during an emergency meeting.

Minister annoyed over delay in arranging minorities' annual festival

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Information and Minorities' Affairs has expressed annoyance over delay in holding religious festivals of minorities in the province and directed constitution of a committee to arrange the programmes regularly.

Talking to various delegations of the minorities here at his office the minister Feroz Jamal Shah

also directed that the committee would comprise the representatives of the minorities to take pragmatic steps.

He announced that the minority communities could celebrate their annual festival and rituals at the hall of Auqaf building, said a press release issued here Thursday.

Earlier, the delegations informed the minister about the problems being faced

by the minorities and demanded spending of Rs 300 million allocated for different festivals and adventure programmes for minorities.

They also discussed allocation of land for Shamsan Ghat and graveyard for minorities, scholarships for students, stipends for windows and other issues.

The Minister assured the delegations that all their

KP announces to operate govt schools under contract

PESHAWAR (INP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Education department announced to operate government schools under public-private partnership.

According to the details, KP Education department decided to operate the government owned schools under public-private partnership, aiming to enhance the quality of education and improve overall performance.

The Secretary of Education has expressed dissatisfaction with the performance of administrative officers and teachers within the KPK Education Department.

The KP education department announced that the public-private partnership project has been successfully completed. In the initial phase, specific schools will be operated under this partnership.

The decision to implement the project aims to ensure ownership of government schools.

Seminary's administrator shot dead

PESHAWAR (INP): Unidentified armed men gunned down administrator of a seminary in Yakatoot area of the provincial capital Peshawar on Thursday and fled the scene.

Police said that unknown culprits sprayed bullets at Qari Muhammad Raheem, the administrator of Madrasa Mehraj-ul-Quran.

As a result of firing, Qari Muhammad Raheem was killed on the spot and accused fled the scene.

The body was shifted to hospital for postmortem. DSP Sabrab, Mukhtiar said that the incident seems to be outcome of personal grudge, however, a case has been registered into the unknown culprits and police was investigating the case from different angles.

Minister, WB officials discuss setup of RDC

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Muhammad Adnan Jalil held a meeting with the Country Director World Bank Najib Benhassine here on Thursday.

The minister and the top official of the World Bank discussed the commercial and economic development activities in the province and the support provided by the international financial institution in this regard.

During the meeting, President of Peshawar Small Chamber of Trade and Industry (PSCTI), Salman Elahi, Chairman, Finance Committee Khalid Farooq, former President of the

Chamber Shakeel Saraf, Principal of the Centre of Excellence in Technical Education Hayatabad Dr. Hazrat Hussain and officials of the World Bank were also present on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, the provincial minister informed the official of the World Bank about the problems faced by the entrepreneurs in the province and the overall situation of the province and asked that the World Bank should include the views of the business community in its upcoming financial support projects.

He also discussed matters relating to the establishment of a proposed Research and Development

Centre (RDC) to be set up in the Industries Department with the World Bank officials and apprised him of its aims and objectives.

The provincial minister said that the centre will help attract foreign and domestic direct investment to the province and asked the World Bank to provide technical and technical assistance to the technical training system to prepare manpower in line with the requirements of the modern world.

The Country Director World Bank assured that he will be in touch with them in the future to provide possible support in the mentioned sectors of the province.

Govt asked to extend time limit for repatriation of export proceeds

PESHAWAR (APP): All Pakistan Fruit & Vegetable Exporters, Importers and Merchants Association (PFVA) Thursday demanded of federal government to extend time limit for repatriation of export proceeds for fruits and vegetables from 45 days to 120 days.

In a press statement issued here, Patron in Chief PFVA, Waheed Ahmad asked the federal secretary commerce to extend the period for submission of export proceeds on fruits and vegetables to 120 days.

The government's support in facilitating a more favorable environment for exporters would greatly contribute to the growth and

development of the export sector, he added.

Waheed while recalling minutes of his recent meeting with the secretary commerce on the subject, said the exporters were being forced to pay 3 percent to 9 percent for delayed payments. The payment in question had to be repatriated within 45 days if cargo shipped on DP basis and up to 120 days if on open account, he added.

However, due to perishable nature of cargo, normally shipment of fruits and vegetables are being shipped on DP terms as banks do not offer long tenure to fruit and vegetable sectors especially to low volume exporters and

therefore it is not possible for exporters to bring in revenue within 45 days due to long transit time of shipment and ultimate sell of fruits and vegetables and awaiting returns of damaged fruits and vegetables back to importers.

It would be appropriate to highlight that the fruit and vegetable sector is unique in nature of business due to highly perishable commodities, it handles and thus there are specific provisions in the SBP manual that facilitate the export of fresh fruits and Vegetables, he added.

The exporters in the sector often ship their consignments based on open prices, making it challenging to

obtain the full value of the consignment. Moreover, factors such as decay of fruits and Vegetables, diseases, container malfunctions, loss of debt and other issues may result in losses that cannot be repatriated.

"Therefore, we urge the government to review its policy and extend time limit for repatriation of export proceeds for fruits and vegetable," Waheed reiterated.



PESHAWAR: Chief Organizer of Muslim League (Q) Chaudhry Ghulam Sarwar addressing a press conference. — F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) in collaboration with Peshawar Press Club (PPC) Jointly organized the Gulshan Aziz Photo Exhibition, a seminar and a Ghazal night for the journalists' families.

The event was inaugurated by the caretaker advisor for tourism and culture, Zafar Mehmood, in the presence of Director General of KPCTA, Bakhtiar Khan, Director General Khan-e-Farhang, Asghar Khusrabad and President of Peshawar Press Club, Arshad Aziz Malik.

Various photos related to culture and tourism were displayed in the photo exhibition and received praise from the attendees. The

first prize of the photo exhibition was awarded to Shehryar Anjum of the Associated Press of Pakistan, followed by Bilawal Arbab and Hamza Khan. Shehryar Anjum received Rs. 20,000, while the second and third position holders received Rs. 10,000 and Rs. 5,000, respectively.

Addressing the event, the caretaker advisor for tourism and culture, Zafar Mehmood emphasized that Pakistan is a country richly endowed with numerous tourist attractions, and visitors can enjoy all four seasons here. He highlighted the importance of social media in promoting the tourism sector, noting that the world has become aware of the beauty of Pakistan through social, print and electronic media.

He said that the photographers should capture the beauty of Pakistan and inform foreigners about the country's hospitality, friendly atmosphere and peaceful environment. He also suggested that cultural representatives would visit Iran to promote the beauty and rich traditions of the people living in Pakistan. Furthermore, he said that the beauty of the KP province would be explored and cultural events would be arranged in districts such as Bannu, Hazara, Abbottabad, D. I. Khan and Swat.

The Director General of KPCTA stated that the promotion of tourism would not only attract foreign tourists to KP but also strengthen the economic conditions of the local population. He emphasized the

need for sustainable tourism and acknowledged it as one of the biggest challenges faced by the tourism industry. He assured that the government would provide all necessary facilities, including hotels and developed infrastructure, to facilitate tourists.

He also mentioned ongoing projects to promote tourism through Public-Private Partnership and the launch of four integrated tourism zones to open new tourist sites. In addition, rest houses would be established in areas with inadequate accommodation facilities and camping pods would be installed in areas without rest houses. Currently, ten tourist spots have camping pods installed.

The President of Peshawar Press Club,

Arshad Aziz Malik, appreciated the efforts of KPCTA in promoting tourism and culture in KP and organizing the event for the journalist community. He highlighted the contributions of photojournalist Gulshan Aziz and encouraged journalists to play a role in promoting the natural beauty and peaceful environment of KP.

Renowned Ghazal maestro, Hamid Ali, performed at the event and captivated the audience with his exceptional singing, including his specialty, Ghazal. He mesmerized the audience with his talent for combining music with poetry.

Famous Pashto singer, Sitarayounas also performed at the event and sang various cultural and traditional folk songs.



In brief

Five killed in Mastung mishap

MASTUNG (PPI): Five passengers were killed and six others injured in a collision between a passenger coach and a bus on main highway near Jungle Cross in Mastung district on Thursday. The coach travelling between Mastung and Quetta collided with the bus destined for Khuzdar. The dead and the injured were transported to Shaheed Nawab Ghaus Baksh Raisani hospital. Police are investigating the incident to determine the element of negligence on part of drivers.

Ex-MNA Shahid Khattak arrested

F.P. Report

BUNER: Former Member National Assembly (MNA) from Karak Shahid Khattak along with two other Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) named Mena Khan Afridi and Jalal Mohamad from Peshawar were arrested in a midnight operation here from a domestic guest house located in Manjar Bajkatta area of tehsil Gagra, district Buner. The guest house owned by local PTI leader Bakhtyar Hussain Khan. The security agencies confirmed to this correspondent the raiding party was dashed from Peshawar and the raid was conducted mid night and all of wanted accused were taken to undisclosed destination with them. The security agencies and locals were confirmed when contacted the domestic guest house was owned by PTI Gagra general secretary Bakhtyar Ali Khan. However, none of the agency confirmed wether owner of the guest house was arrested or not. The security agencies told to The Frontier Post that former MNA nominated in several offsite FIRs no; 225 and 265 were registered against him on dated 9 May and 15 May. As per the agencies the PTI Peshawar leaders Mena Khan Afridi and Jalal Mohamad were also charged in FIR no 433 was lodged against them on dated 10th May.

One electrocuted in Shah Dad Kot

F.P. Report

SHAH DAD KOT: A 30 years youth electrocuted at near Nasirabad taluka in village Sonu Gondal, last day. According to details, the deceased was electrocuted while stealing electricity mainline wires in the village of Sonu Gondal Qamber Shah Dad Kot district, while the identity of the deceased youth could not be found. According to details, the youth was seen many times by local people stealing electricity wires, but when asked, he used to reply to everyone that he was connected to WAPDA.

One killed in road mishap

F.P. Report

MARDAN: One person was killed and three others sustained injuries in road accidents in two different parts of the district, police and rescue-1122 sources told here, on Thursday. In the first incident, one teen aged boy died on the spot while the other received multiple injuries when a Tracter-Trolley hit a motorcycle coming from opposite side in sharkai area of tehsil Katlang. The slain teen-aged boy was identified as Arsalan, 12, and the injured named as Usman, 18. The personnel of rescue-1122 rushed to the spot soon after getting information about the accident and took the injured and dead body of boy to hospital for further medico-legal procedure. In the second incident, two bikers were injured when their motorcycles collided head-on with each other on the road located near the Shergar police station.



QUETTA: Former PTI leader Naimat Ullah addressing a press conference.

Police martyr's family given Rs 50,000 cheque

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The additional inspector general of police Hameedullah Khan and district police officer Tariq Iqbal handed over a cheque of Rs 50,000 to heirs of a police martyr Bakht Zamin, a resident of Ouch who was killed at Talash bazaar.

The police officers also handed over a letter written by the Inspector of Police Akhtar Hayat Khan Gandapur to the family and said the police department would never forget its martyrs and their families. They said that all available resources would be utilized for the martyrs' children welfare. They said the martyrs were their pride and they would never compromise on them.

Police recovers expensive phone within 24 hours: The Lower Dir police recovered an expensive cell phone stolen from a resident in Balambat bazar within 24 hours. According to details one Taufiq Ahmad a resident of college area in the limits of police station Balambat had lost his cell phone somewhere in Balambat bazar and submitted a written complain in the office of the District Police Officer (DPO) Lower Dir Tariq Iqbal. The police department

traced the International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) through CDR.

SHO police station Balambat tasked the case to Hawalder Alam Sher to investigate into the matter. "I repeatedly tried to contact on the SIM placed in the phone and called the person to police station who told during the investigation that he had purchased the phone set in Timergara 'Sunday Mela' from an unknown person", Hawalder Alam Sher told this scribe that the owner did not want to pursue the case in the court. He said that the Lower Dir police had recovered more than 100 phones during the current year. Taufiq Ahmad thanked the police department for handing over him the phone in a short span of time.

Rescue 1122 responded to 574 cases in last month: Emergency Rescue Service 1122 responded to 574 cases including medical help, fire eruption and traffic incidents during last month.

According to monthly performance report of Rescue 1122 Lower Dir, 275 cases of medical emergencies, 15 cases of fire eruption, four incidents of violence, two incidents of drowning were dealt by

workers during last month.

As many as 147 patients needing emergency help were shifted to various hospitals of the district while 80 patients were shifted in ambulance service to hospitals situated outside the district. Rescue 1122 has also started different initiatives to aware people about preventive measures against heat-stroke and dengue.

Young man found dead

FAISALABAD (INP) A body of a young man was recovered from a Gogera branch canal in tehsil Jarranwala on Thursday.

Rescue 1122 said that locals spotted a body in the Barala branch near Chak no 356-JB. The team reached the spot and fished out the body which was later identified as Hakeemullah (31).

The body was handed over to Rodala road police. Meanwhile, a woman named Kaneez Bibi of Saeed colony, canal road suffered injuries when the roof of a dilapidated house collapsed near Quran academy. She was shifted to Civil Hospital.

Rescues 1122 serves 3377 people

Saqib Mushtaq

LODHAN: Rescue 1122 rescued 3377 people disrescued during monthly performance report by District Emergency Officer Dr. Syed Majid Ahmed, he said that according to the report, Rescue 1122 Lodhran received 14 thousand 29 calls in the month of May 2023.

Out of which 03 thousand 03 hundred 99 calls are for emergency. 2 thousand 227 calls for information. While 8 thousand 4 hundred 3 were irrelevant, harassing and false calls. Rescue 1122 last month 570 road traffic accidents. As many as 15 incidents of fire. Responded, to 265 different types of emergency calls including 61 crime cases, 01 drowning and 2487 medical emergencies. In these accidents, Rescue 1122 rescued 3377 people in which 1540 victims were given first aid on the spot.

Moreover, 1828 victims were shifted to nearby hospitals after providing first aid while 09 people died on the spot. Rescue 1122 responded to 110 emergency calls per day maintaining an average response time of 7.8 minutes per emergency. District Emergency Officer Dr. Syed Majid Ahmed said that providing the best service to the public for the protection of life and property of citizens is the first priority of Rescue 1122.

Political instability impacted country's economy: QWP

F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) Chairman Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao on Thursday said that terrorism, and political instability had impacted the country's economy.

He was speaking at the condolence reference for known lawyer Nisar Ahmad Khan Advocate at the District Bar Charsadda, said a press release. The QWP leader paid glowing tributes to Nisar Ahmad Khan Advocate and lauded his efforts for the cause of the Pakhtuns.

Aftab Sherpao said the residents of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were bearing the brunt of inflation as the province lacked the resources to generate jobs and provide relief to the people. He feared that the federal government may

not be able to provide relief to the people in the next budget.

He maintained that in the prevailing circumstances, the political parties should rise above political divide, set aside their differences and join hands to work for the uplift of the country and the wellbeing its people at this critical juncture. Commenting on the economic situation in the province, he recalled that the political leadership from the province recently called on the caretaker chief minister and assured him that they would play their role in finding solutions to the problems the cash-strapped KP was facing.

Criticising the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for the May 9 mayhem, the QWP leader said the protest would have been more

effective had the Imran Khan-led party staged peaceful demonstrations instead of indulging in vandalism. He said the country had seen many political movements in the past, but it has never experienced violent protests in which government and military installations were attacked.

He said the May 9 incidents of violence would have far-reaching impact on the country, adding that the perpetrators of the violence should be identified and brought to justice. Aftab Sherpao underlined the need for creating job opportunity for the youth so that they could be prevented from indulging in acts of violence. He said that the youth should be equipped with the skills so that they could channel their energy into positive activities.

Police arrests four members of alleged dacoit gang

Fazal Haq

MARDAN: Police has arrested four members of alleged dacoit gang involved in looting of passengers on the way through a fraudulent flying coach services and recovered stolen items from their possession while the vehicle used in the crime was confiscated, on Thursday.

Under the supervision of SDPO Sheikh Maltoon Circle Resham Jahangir and under the leadership of SHO Bakhtzada Khan, Sheikh Maltoon police along with the investigation team conducted a successful operation through modern scientific and professional strategy and investigation on May 1.

Plaintiff sue Ali Rehman Resident Hadi Kalay, who went to Gondal Punjab to buy cattle, Takhtbhai and his maternal uncle were sitting in a flying coach and were robbed of cash by a group of dacoits who were sitting in the guise of other passengers near the ring road. Alam, Hayat Khan son of Lal Muhammad, Ehsanullah son of Sharif Khan and Mir Muzamil son

of Nusrat Ali were arrested after gaining access to Nowshera.

MCCI demands relief in upcoming budget: The president of Mardan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) Zahir Shah has said that presenting a public budget is a big challenge in the current economic conditions, but he has stressed on the government to seriously consider the problems of businessmen in the next budget and reduce the interest rate.

Not to be burdened with low and additional taxes. He said that without political stability, the national economy cannot be strengthened. The business community across the country is worried about the high cost of electricity, gas and taxes.

Due to the daily increase in prices and expensive raw materials, it has become impossible for them to keep the wheel of industry and trade active. He suggested that in order to increase the revenue, not only such a sector should be brought into the tax net, but also the unnecessary expenditure should be reduced, the

search for new resources, the doors of tax evasion through corruption and collusion should be closed.

Youth commits suicide

PATTOKI (INP): An employee of optical glass factory employee committed suicide after killing workmate over minor dispute in tehsil Pattoki of district Kasur on Thursday.

Police said that Abdullah, a worker of optical glass factory located in Rasheed Colony at Chunnian-Halla road exchanged hot words with his collage identified as Noman. The verbal clash turned violent after which accused Abddullah gunned down Noman and committed suicide with the same weapon. The Rescue 1122 volunteers shifted the bodies to tehsil headquarter hospital Pattoki for post-mortem and police after registering a case into the incident started an investigation.

Karachi's actual population

THE final official census figures reported in the different censuses from 1981 to 2017, have generated controversy and disagreement with regard to actual population of the Karachi city. The last census conducted in 2017 also met the same fate whereby almost all the parties of the province rejected the findings of the census. Unfortunately, the present digital census (2023), to the extent of Karachi city, is once again being made controversial from the start by certain political parties such as MQM & JI whose leaders are playing to the gallery.

The mainstream leaders of these two parties claim gross under-reporting in Karachi's head count. For example, the representatives of political organizations claim that the city of Karachi is the biggest city of the world (population wise) with a population of over 30 million inhabitants. It is to mention that even with the reported population of 16.05 millions according to the 2017 census Karachi is the biggest city of the country as well as province. It constitutes almost 30% of the province's total population.

The contention expressed by Karachi based political leaders representing primarily a major ethnic group projecting the city's population more than 30 million population seems credulous. The claim is also contrary to the available facts and ground realities. The local and provincial leaders along with the citizens have the right to question the census results. However, such claim requires to be supported by the cogent evidences and objective statistical data lest it should only be treated as a propaganda having political motives and nefarious designs. It is also a reality that the issue of Karachi's census has been used as a political tool by the political party of the city in past.

It appears that inflated number of population in Karachi makes it easier for the political parties to claim the ownership of the city. Moreover, these organizations also attempt to woo their voters that the urdu speaking population of city is deliberately and historically under-counted to suppress their political power.

Interestingly, the groups alleging the under-counting of the due headcount in Karachi have so far not propounded any convincing justification to deny the statistical data being reported on different media.

There is need to understand that Karachi is now no more predominantly inhabited by Urdu-speaking people as it is presently home to diverse ethnic groups and communities. Further, the successive findings of the census and neutral observers establishes a major decrease in the percentage of the Urdu-speaking population over the last four decades. The final results of the 6th Population and Housing Census 2017 released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) shows that out of Karachi's total population of 16,024,894, urdu speaking populace has come out to be 6,779,142.

The population count pertaining to the period between the 1981 and 1998 and from 1998 till 2017 indicates a substantial decline in the proportion of Urdu speakers from 54.34 to 48.52 to 42.30 per cent reflecting the decline in the Urdu-speaking population by 12.04 percent. The steady decrease in the ratio of the Urdu-speaking population is result of demographic changes mainly caused by migration in past four decades. Thus, even if the methodological errors are corrected and the genuine grievances and the objections raised by the political parties on the issue are addressed, the rectification will not change the composition of Urdu speaking population.

Nevertheless, the determination of the exact and actual population of Karachi has become the need of the hour as to whether or not the city's population exceeds 30 millions. The assertion requires deep introspection by the demography experts who may take into account the entire parameters such as birth rate, annual growth, density of the population, outflow, in-migration and out-migration and other relevant indicators to come up with the objective findings. The historical analysis of the growth pattern of the city since 1947 till date how-

ever, does not vindicate the assertion.

The in-depth analysis of the population growth of Karachi city transpires that the manageable city of Karachi having population of 450,000 people mainly Sindhi speaking, witnessed an unusual and tremendous growth in its population in the wake of the partition of India. The major mass influx of mainly urdu speaking Muslim refugees from India and their settlement in Karachi city after independence quadrupled the city's population changing its demographic pattern and very character. Further, being the capital of Pakistan till 1958, Karachi also housed a big number of federal government officers and officials adding to the already thick population figures.

In its early years, labour class from up-country also migrated to the port city in search of employment. The city also attracted a substantial number of entrepreneurs and businessmen for commercial ventures. The economic growth rate and the congenial socio-economic environment during the development era of Ayub Khan also accelerated the settlement of outsiders in the city. Finally, Bhutto's development projects in the city such as Steel Mills and the vacuum left by secession of East Pakistan also tempted many up-country inhabitants to Karachi. At the same time, certain other factors contributed towards the growth of population in the city. For example, the government facilitated the re-settlement of the affected families of Mangla dam in Karachi. A significant number of Biharis from Bangladesh were also adjusted in the city.

The better education facilities, standard of living, civic amenities and higher level of urbanization also attracted the migration to the city. Thus, the city of Karachi witnessed unprecedented annual growth in its population from 1947 to 1980. However, such momentum was not possible to be continued for indefinite time. The growth of the population and character of the demography of Karachi city started to change from 1981 due to over-all different phenome-

nons.

The objective and empirical analysis will reveal that the annual growth of Karachi's population since 1981 has slowed down for a variety of reasons. First, the diminishing natural child birth rate across the country and lower family size has limited the in-migration of surplus labour to this city. Considering the education and income level of urdu speaking population of Karachi, the average family size in Karachi is even lesser. The family planning, late marriages and educational attainment has also stalled the growth rate in the city.

The trend of immigration to foreign and perpetual brain drain of Urdu speaking youth from Pakistan also reduces the growth of overall population. Moreover, Karachi could not keep up with the pace of industrial expansion as the other cities of the country also started to develop after partition. Cities such as Lahore, Faisalabad, Multan, Peshawar, Islamabad and Quetta also emerged on the scene. Above all, the emergence of MQM on Karachi's political scene during 1980's put a brake on the traditional growth pattern of the city. The precarious law and order situation, frequent turbulence, mass killings, strikes, ethnic and lingual riots crippled the city's progress. The arrival of Afghan refugees during the same decade added to the crime scene. The political turmoil resulted in the collapse of civic amenities. The dream city of Karachi lost its attraction. The policy makers, businessmen, general public also found other alternatives.

The establishment of dry ports in various cities of Punjab including Peshawar and Quetta neutralized the importance of Karachi as a port city. The accelerated industrialization in Punjab and undertaking mega projects in upper country created enormous job opportunities. Moreover, the planned growth of the cities such as Lahore and better livelihood conditions mainly in Punjab stopped the migration of Punjabis to Karachi. Similarly, the respective governments in provinces of KPK also paid attention to the city of Peshawar

by providing urban facilities. The borders and customs points were opened in KPK & Balochistan which made a way for enormous trading opportunities for the locals. In the meantime, Islamabad also appeared as a modern and developing city attracting the settlements from Punjab and KPK.

It is not difficult to understand that the a city hit by turbulent politics and characterized by violence, fear, terrorism, killings and extortions cannot flourish. Moreover, the bad governance, corruption, unemployment as well as crises related to water, electricity, sewage and public transport do not encourage settlements nor investments. The prospective migrants and the investors abandoned preferring Karachi as their first choice city. The role of media projecting Karachi as one of the poor governed city and bereft of infrastructure and civic facilities also retarded the growth of city.

The migration to the city also nosedived due to the spoiling of the earlier image of Karachi being the most urbanized and clean city offering the better education and health facilities. It can be safely assumed that Karachi has failed to maintain its rate of economic growth as well as standings in literacy and educational attainment. The better social indicators in cities like Lahore in terms of infrastructure, water supply, housing and amenities, electricity and gas supply, and sewage facilities has led to the out-migration of Punjabis from Karachi to the cities of Punjab.

The earlier migration bursts and major influx effected for seeking jobs in factories like Steel Mills, for setting up of businesses, resettlement of land, and other such ventures rising the population of city have not taken place. Though the limited migration from rural areas to the city is taking place however, it constitutes a little fraction. It cannot be equated with the earlier population bursts. Thus, it will be in the fitness of things, that all the stakeholders including the local and provincial political parties such as MQM, JI, PPP along with the representatives of civic

society and natural observers should accept the new realities viz a viz Karachi's population. The political parties may stop playing to the gallery for the preference of party interests and to appease the voters who have been misled to believe that Karachi's population is more than 30 millions.

There may be a certain degree under-counting of the people which may be brought to the notice of the authorities along with the evidences so that every individual residing in the city is counted. The under-statement in the over-all population head-count due to non-accountal of the people who are in transit to the city may also be evaluated properly. It is believed that a substantial number of people though not actual residents of the city, come and live in the city for few days for different purposes such as taking delivery of the goods, business meetings, official trips, pleasure visits, meetings etc. A significant number of illegal immigrants who have obtained the fake residency documents also amplify the number of population.

From above facts, it can be summarized that undue political scoring on the issue of census in Karachi is not in interest of the city and the province. Therefore, the federal government should ensure appropriate, accurate and transparent registration of demographic data in the current 2023 digital census. However, it is also imperative that the unverified population statistics, un-necessary extrapolations of the population figures and its self projection may be avoided. Above all, the political representatives may be cautious to present the unvindicated figures which mislead the people and trigger conflict.

The government should also strive to engage with the politicians to resolve the long standing issue of actual and exact population of Karachi on the basis of the objectivity and evidential data. The true and fair determination of Karachi's population will put an end to the hypothetical figures. The objective findings and results of the population census may be accepted by all the political stakeholders and may not be subjugated to the politics of any political party.



Bakhmut falls silent as Russia and Ukraine trade air raids

MOSCOW (Agencies): After 10 months of warfare, ground assaults have largely come to a halt and the guns have mostly fallen silent in the city of Bakhmut. Russian troops paused to rotate out the Wagner Group mercenaries who spearheaded the battle to capture the eastern Ukrainian city. Ukrainian forces paused a flanking manoeuvre that recently captured the high ground around Bakhmut "to perform other military tasks".

Only one combat clash was reported in the 66th week of the war - on Saturday. "There are no active battles there - neither in the city, nor on the flanks," Ukraine's Deputy Defence Minister Hanna Maliar said in a Telegram post. "Instead, the enemy is actively shelling the outskirts of the city and the approaches to it," in a video interview he posted to his Telegram channel, Wagner boss Yevgeny Prigozhin said he had lost 20,000 mercenaries in the battle for Bakhmut alone.

The Russian defence ministry has not said how many supporting troops were killed from airborne and mechanised units. "The amount of killing that took place is really hard to imagine ... there's rotting bodies, I'm sure, everywhere still," retired US Colonel Seth Krummrich told Al Jazeera. "They were talking about human waves ... Prigozhin was becoming really frustrated shoving all these mercenaries in, trying to take 10 metres [32.8 feet] of ground," said Krummrich, who has led special forces detachments in Afghanistan and the Middle East, and currently serves as vice president for Global Guardian, a security consultant. Russia claimed victory in Bakhmut on May 21, and nine days later Ukrainian eastern forces spokesman Serhiy Cherevaty admitted the city itself was



in Russian hands.

"The enemy fought for this district centre for 10 months, but did not manage to capture it until the end," he said. He hinted at an anticipated Ukrainian counteroffensive. "The Russians are well aware that, in addition to military losses, failure to hold the city can also cause them great reputational losses," Cherevaty said. "I think the Russians are setting themselves up for an incredible failure," Krummrich said. "With the imminent counteroffensive, they stand to lose Bakhmut and much, much more. If they're going to claim a Russian victory to the Russian people now, they're going to lose big-time if they get their supply lines cut off and they end up having to abandon the city." Ukraine has said it has 12 trained and equipped battalions ready to throw into the counteroffensive, and Krummrich believed weather was now the only factor holding them up.

"The units are trained, so I believe as soon as the ground dries, they're

going to go." "The Russians are sitting in Bakhmut, they understand what's coming next, they understand they're going to get attacked," he said. On May 28, Ukraine's general staff said 80 Russian troops had deserted their positions in Lysychansk, the city in Luhansk province Russian forces seized last July. Another 30 Russian troops deserted in Bakhmut, taking military equipment with them, the staff said. Instead of continuing the attritional ground battle for Bakhmut, Russia and Ukraine turned to a largely psychological war in the air. On May 26, Ukraine's air force said it had destroyed an airborne armada of 31 drones and 17 missiles overnight, including 10 Kh-101 and Kh-155 missiles fired from Russian planes over the Caspian Sea, seven S-300 and S-400 repurposed air defence missiles fired from occupied Zaporizhia, and 31 Iranian Shahed-131 and Shahed-136 drones. The targets were "critical infrastructure and infrastructure of the defence forces" in the east of the

country, said the air force. Ukrainian military intelligence spokesman Andriy Yusov said the operation was chiefly of propaganda value.

"The enemy would like to show that their 'analogovnet' weapons can do something to the Ukrainian army and Western weapons. But it turns out not," he said. Two days later, Ukrainian air defences shot down at least 40 drones Russia launched at the capital, Kyiv, said the city's mayor, Vitali Klitschko. Falling debris killed a man and wounded a woman. The pre-dawn attacks came on the last Sunday of May, when the capital celebrates "Kyiv Day", the anniversary of its official founding 1,541 years ago. And the following day, Ukraine's commander of the military, General Valery Zaluzhny, said the armed forces had destroyed all 11 Iskander-K and Iskander-M cruise missiles launched north of the border into Ukraine. But on May 30, Ukraine seemed to have responded by sending eight drones to Moscow. Russia said it had jammed or shot down all eight drones. In a post on Telegram after the attack, Alexander Khinshtein, a prominent member of Russia's parliament from the governing United Russia bloc, said three of the eight drones had been downed over Rublyovka, a suburb west of Moscow where much of Russia's political and business elite live. "This is clearly a sign of terrorist activity," Russian President Vladimir Putin said. Ukrainian Colonel Petro Chernykh commented, "If drones of unknown origin break through multi-layered defences and practically fly to the capital of a country that considers itself a superpower, do their weapons have any value?"

Wagner boss Yevgeny Prigozhin blamed the defence ministry for a

weak defence. "You, the defence ministry, have done nothing to launch an offensive," Prigozhin said. "How dare you allow the drones to reach Moscow?" Ukraine denied responsibility. "We have nothing directly to do with this," Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak said. Russia's ambassador to Washington blamed the US for encouraging the attack, and mocked the Biden administration's statement that it was gathering information on the incident. "What are these attempts to hide behind the phrase they are 'gathering information'?" Anatoly Antonov said in remarks published on Telegram.

"This is an encouragement for Ukrainian terrorists." On May 29, another attack by two drones caused an explosion in Russia's Pskov region near the border with Belarus that left an oil pipeline's administrative building damaged, local Governor Mikhail Vedernikov said. Ukraine has sometimes initially denied responsibility for attacks it later claimed. The New York Times reported unnamed US sources as saying Ukrainian special forces or military intelligence were behind a similar drone attack on the Kremlin on May 3. On May 27, the leader of Ukraine's intelligence service confirmed Kyiv's involvement in an explosion that badly damaged the Kerch Bridge, connecting Russia to Russian-occupied Crimea, seven months after it happened. Ukraine has also denied involvement in a May 22 incursion onto Russian territory by anti-Putin Russian nationalists. The Russian commander of that raid said his group would soon return. "I think you will see us again on that side," said Denis Kapustin at a news conference in Ukraine, describing himself as the commander

of the Russian Volunteer Corps.

"Every operation that takes place on the territory of Russia forces the military leadership to move a large amount of forces precisely to that quadrant, therefore laying bare some parts of the front, parts of the border," he said. "The shaping of the battlefield is happening now for the counteroffensive," Krummrich said. "We see the attacks behind enemy lines, we see the attacks in Russia by those militias. We see the drone attacks in Moscow. That is all shaping what is coming next," he said, adding that the complexity was aggravating Russian decision-makers, already politically divided over a war that is not going well. "Russia now has to defend all the way back to their capital. They're already spread thin. So, they're going to have a lot of complex decisions to make about where to put their forces. If the last 15 months are any indicator, they will absolutely put their forces in the wrong place, and they're going to lose," Krummrich said.

"We need to prepare for an arduous war," Wagner boss Prigozhin said in his interview. "We are in such a condition that we could f***ing lose Russia - that is the main problem ... We need to impose martial law," Russian former President Dmitry Medvedev also sought to prepare public opinion for a long fight. "This conflict will last a very long time, most likely decades," the RIA news agency cited Medvedev as saying during a visit to Vietnam. US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Mark Milley said Ukraine could liberate all of its territories by military means, "but probably not in the near future", adding that such a war would be "bloody and difficult". "Russia will not win this war militarily," Milley said.

Australia braces for judgement in war crimes' defamation case

SYDNEY (Agencies): A judge in Australia will announce his judgement on Thursday afternoon in a defamation case brought by Ben Roberts-Smith, the country's most decorated living soldier. Anthony Besanko will start delivering his decision at 2.15pm (04:15 GMT) in Sydney's Federal Court after Roberts-Smith sued three newspapers for defamation in the wake of a series of reports in 2018 that accused him of war crimes.

The case transfixed Australia through 110 days of hearings that were delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic and ended with closing arguments in July 2022. Proceedings involved more than 40 witnesses and are estimated to have cost as much as 25 million Australian dollars (\$16.3m). Here is what you need to know. Ben Roberts-Smith was born in Perth in West Australia in 1978, and signed up for the Australian army when he was just 18, later completing two tours of East Timor. He joined the elite Special Air Service Regiment (SASR) in 2003. Deployed to Afghanistan multiple times between 2006 and 2012, Roberts-Smith was awarded the Victoria Cross, Australia's highest honour, for his "most conspicuous gallantry in action in circumstances of extreme peril" during a mission in 2010 to track down a senior Taliban commander. Roberts-Smith, who is divorced with twin teenage daughters, left the military 10 years ago and took a degree in business, later joining the Seven Network media group and becoming a motivational speaker.

Seven provided an initial loan to help fund the legal action, pitting it against rival media group Nine, which owns the Age and the Sydney Morning Herald. The former soldier "sat masked and unreadable" at the back of the court throughout the hearings, the Sydney Morning Herald reported as the case closed. The United Kingdom's Guardian newspa-

per said Roberts-Smith sat in the same seat for each hearing with the bearing of an "impassive observer" even as witnesses - including dozens of serving and former soldiers as well as Afghan civilians - gave detailed testimony of his alleged brutality. The Sydney Morning Herald, the Age and the Canberra Times newspapers in 2018 ran articles on the alleged killing of Afghan civilians by members of Australia's special forces while deployed in the country in the years between 2009 and 2012. As well as accusing Roberts-Smith of being complicit in the murder of six Afghans, the publications also alleged he bullied fellow soldiers and punched his former lover. In bringing the case, Roberts-Smith said the articles damaged his reputation because they suggested he "broke the moral and legal rules of military engagement" and portrayed him as a criminal.

He said they also suggested he "disgraced his country and the Australian army". Denying the allegations, Roberts-Smith said he had been "greatly injured" by the articles' publication and was seeking aggravated damages and costs. He has not given a figure for the amount he was seeking. Defamation laws in Australia have recently been amended to control the size of potential payouts but the Roberts-Smith case is being fought under an earlier law allowing for unlimited damages. The Sydney Morning Herald and the Age both opted for the "truth" defence, which means they have had to prove to the judge that the allegations they printed about the soldier's conduct were true - on a balance of probabilities. The burden of proof in the civil court is lower than in criminal cases. "Because the principal defence here is truth, what the trial has become is a de facto war crimes trial," David Rolph, a professor at the University of Sydney law school who specialises in media law, told the Reuters news

agency.

In their initial filings, the publications cited the Geneva Conventions on the treatment of prisoners of war as well as on the protection of civilians in war, noting that Australia was a party to the conventions. In one of the most searing allegations, witnesses for the newspapers told the court how in 2012, a handcuffed Afghan man in the village of Darwan was killed after Roberts-Smith kicked him off a cliff and then ordered two other soldiers to shoot him. Roberts-Smith and another soldier gave evidence that the killing was lawful because the man was working for the enemy as a scout. The defence has argued that soldiers who gave evidence against Roberts-Smith were gossips, motivated by greed and jealousy. Thursday's judgement comes amid a growing focus on the conduct of Australia's military. The landmark Brereton report, which was released in much-redacted form in 2020, found there was "credible evidence" members of the special forces had unlawfully killed 39 people while deployed in Afghanistan.

No soldiers were named in the report but it recommended 19 current or former members of the special forces be investigated by police over 23 incidents involving the killings of "prisoners, farmers or civilians" between 2009 and 2013. An Office of the Special Investigator (OSI) was established and in March, it charged a 41-year-old former soldier with murder over the death of an Afghan man. The OSI did not name the man but Australia's public broadcaster ABC identified him as Oliver Schulz, a decorated former soldier with the special forces, who was shown in an investigation broadcast in March 2020 shooting an Afghan man lying on the ground. He is the first serving or former member of the Australian military to be charged with war crimes and faces a life sentence if found guilty.

Blast in east Lebanon kills five

DAMASCUS (AP): A blast at a military base controlled by a Syria-backed Palestinian faction in eastern Lebanon killed five Palestinian militants and wounded 10 others, according to two Palestinian officials with the group. The faction said an Israeli airstrike caused the blast, but that account was disputed by an Israeli official, speaking on condition of anonymity, who denied the country had any role in the incident. Israel does not typically respond to foreign reports.

In Beirut, a Lebanese military official said the explosion was the result of a blast within the base, adding that there was no airstrike. An official with a regional group allied with the Syrian government, said the explosion was the result of a "human error" that occurred when militants were handling ammunition. Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity. Anwar Raja of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - General Command, told The Associated Press in Damascus that the Israeli strike hit positions in the eastern Lebanese town of Qusaya near the border with Syria. He said two of the wounded were in critical condition. Another PFLP-GC official, Lebanon-based Abu Wael Issam, told the AP that his group will retaliate "at the suitable time." He added that the strike will not deter his group from "escalating the fight against the Israeli enemy."

The Lebanese army and Lebanon's militant Hezbollah group also had no immediate official comment on the airstrike. Raja attributed Israel's denial to "the sensitivity of the situation in Lebanon," a suggestion that any acknowledgement of a strike by Israel would push Hezbollah to retaliate. It has been rare for Israel to carry out airstrikes on Lebanon in recent years.

Israel launched strikes in southern Lebanon in April, a day after militants fired nearly three dozen rockets at Israel, wounding two Syrian workers and causing some property damage. The Israeli military said at the time that it had targeted installations of Hamas, the Palestinian militant group, in southern Lebanon. The PFLP-GC has positions along the Lebanon-Syria border as well as military presence in both countries. The group had carried out attacks against Israel in the past. The militant group became known for major attacks against Israel, including the hijacking of an El Al jetliner in 1968 and the machine gunning of another airliner at Zurich airport in 1969. In 1970, it planted a bomb on a Swissair jet that blew up on a flight from Zurich to Tel Aviv, killing all 47 passengers on board.

Monitoring equipment returns to Iranian sites

VIENNA (Reuters): The UN nuclear watchdog has re-installed only some monitoring equipment originally put in place under the 2015 nuclear deal with major powers that Iran then ordered removed last year, the watchdog said in two reports seen by Reuters.

The re-installed equipment is a fraction of what the International Atomic Energy Agency had planned to set up to improve its surveillance of Iran's nuclear activities, as the IAEA said it had agreed with Iran in March in a bid to defuse a standoff between both sides over Iran's cooperation.

The limited progress described in the reports did, however, include the installation of real-time enrichment monitoring equipment on the only lines of centrifuges enriching uranium to up to 60% purity, near weapons grade, at Natanz and Fordow, a senior diplomat said.

At the same time, Iran's stock of uranium enriched to up to 60% has continued to grow and is now roughly enough for two nuclear bombs, one of the two confidential quarterly reports to member states showed. Iran has been pressing ahead with its enrichment programme, which it has been progressively expanding and accelerating, including at its under-

ground Fordow site that was developed in secret and which may have been built inside a mountain to protect it from potential air attack. The 2015 Iran nuclear deal imposed strict limits on the types of centrifuges Iran could use and where as well as the purity it could enrich to and the amount of enriched uranium it could hoard, in exchange for the lifting of international sanctions against Iran. After then-President Donald Trump pulled the United States out of that deal in 2018 and re-imposed sanctions, Iran breached and moved well beyond the deal's nuclear restrictions, to the point IAEA chief Rafael Grossi has called the deal an "empty shell" and diplomats say there are scant chances of reviving it. One IAEA report said Iran now had 114.1 kg of uranium enriched to up to 60% and in the form of uranium hexafluoride (UF6), which can easily be enriched further - an increase of 26.6 kg from the previous quarter.

About 42 kg of uranium enriched to 60% is what the IAEA calls a "significant quantity", defined as "the approximate amount of nuclear material for which the possibility of manufacturing a nuclear explosive device cannot be excluded". A senior diplomat has cautioned, however, that in

practice it would take more than 55 kg of uranium enriched to 60% to make one bomb because some material is wasted during enrichment. In addition, Iran's total stockpile of enriched uranium continues to grow and is now 23 times the 202.8-kg limit imposed by the 2015 deal, at 4.7 tonnes, the report said. The IAEA also reported that after years of investigation and lack of progress with Iran on explaining uranium particles found at three sites, Iran had given a satisfactory answer on one of them to explain the presence of uranium particles there. While the particles could be explained by the presence of a Soviet-operated mine and lab there and the IAEA had no further questions, a senior diplomat said, the IAEA's assessment remained that Iran carried out explosives testing there decades ago that was relevant to nuclear weapons.

The added monitoring equipment included surveillance cameras at a site in Isfahan where centrifuge parts are made, one report said. The other added that the IAEA "awaits Iran's engagement to address" issues including the installation of more monitoring equipment and the two remaining sites where uranium particles were found.

Chechen troops said to mobilise as Russian children flee border

WASHINGTON (Agencies): Fighters from Russia's Chechnya region under the command of leader Ramzan Kadyrov have likely been ordered to take a leading role in the fighting in Ukraine in a week when the governor of Russia's Belgorod region announced the evacuation of children amid ongoing cross-border attacks from Ukraine. The Institute for the Study of War (ISW), a Washington, DC-based think tank, said in its latest report on Thursday that Russian military commanders had likely ordered the Chechens into battle following the withdrawal of Wagner Group mercenary forces from the destroyed city of Bakhmut.

According to the ISW, Kadyrov claimed that his forces had received new orders and would be deploying to "active combat activities" to "liberate" a series of settlements after assuming responsibility for the front line in Ukraine's southeast Donetsk region, which includes the contested city of Bakhmut. Kadyrov said that Chechen special forces were preparing for offensive operations ahead of Ukraine's expected counteroffensive to reclaim territory from Russian forces. "The claimed return of Chechen forces to offensive operations would break Kadyrovites from a nearly yearlong hiatus from participating in high-intensity combat operations" in Ukraine, the ISW said. Chechen fighters have primarily operated in areas behind the front line fol-

lowing their involvement in the bloody battles in Ukraine's cities of Mariupol, Severodonetsk and Lysychansk, the institute said.

"The Kremlin may perceive Chechen units as an untapped assault force that can restore Russia's ability to sustain simultaneous offensive efforts on multiple axes of advance," the ISW added. However, the ISW also noted that if reports of 7,000 Chechen troops in Ukraine are correct, Kadyrov's forces will not have the numbers "to mount multiple significant offensive operations successfully". Describing himself as a "foot soldier" of Russian President Vladimir Putin, Kadyrov had previously deployed his Chechen Republic forces in support of Russian military operations in Syria and Georgia. Reports of the possible return of Chechen forces to offensive operations come amid intensifying shelling of the border region of Russia's Belgorod, where authorities have begun evacuating children from the districts of Shebekino and Graivoron. Belgorod's regional Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said on Telegram that the first 300 evacuated children would be taken to Voronezh, a city about 250km (155 miles) further into Russia. Another 1,000 children will be removed to other provinces over the coming days, he said.

"The question of children's safety in the two districts... is very important," Gladkov said. "All of us, adults,

are very worried." A correspondent for state-run agency RIA Novosti near Voronezh said buses had arrived with about 150 people on board. Gladkov said the situation was growing worse in the village of Shebekino, where he reported more shelling during the day that injured four people but did not cause any deaths. The governor also urged Russian forces to launch attacks and capture Ukraine's Kharkiv region, including Kharkiv city, to create a buffer zone between Belgorod and Ukraine, according to the ISW. Heavy shelling of Shebekino was reported early on Thursday morning by local news sources. One person was reportedly killed and two others were wounded in a strike on a centre for displaced people in Belgorod. Several oil depots in the region have also been hit in recent weeks. The attacks on Russian soil have come as Kyiv says it is preparing for a major offensive against Moscow's forces.

"The situation is quite alarming," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said about the shelling of Belgorod. "We have not heard a single word of condemnation from the West so far," Peskov said of the attacks which have affected Russian civilians in the region. More than a year into its Ukraine campaign, Russia has experienced intensifying attacks on its territory, with an unprecedented incursion by Russian anti-Putin fighters last week into Belgorod and a drone attack on Moscow.

UN chief implicitly flays Cambodia's elections

UNITED NATIONS (AP): UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres implicitly criticized Cambodia's upcoming elections for failing to be inclusive, after the top opposition party was not allowed to register. The Candlelight Party would have been the sole credible challenger to the governing Cambodian People's Party in the July elections, but the country's Constitutional Council last week refused to overturn a ban on its registration in a decision that cannot be appealed.

"The secretary-general reiterates that inclusive elections, in which a plurality of views and voter choices is represented, are important to engender confidence in the electoral process and underpin the ability of Cambodia's people to exercise their democratic rights," UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters. "As (Guterres) said during his visit to Cambodia last year, it is vital that civic space be open, for human rights defenders to be protected, and for civil society to play a wider role in society, all of which remain critical in preserving Cambodia's substantial development gains and consolidation of peace," Dujarric said. He

said: "The secretary-general reaffirms the commitment of the UN to support a peaceful and democratic Cambodia that fully respects the human rights of all its citizens."

The entrenched Cambodian People's Party has held an iron grip on power for decades and controls almost every level of government. Prime Minister Hun Sen, an authoritarian ruler in a nominally democratic state, has held his position for 38 years.

The absence of the Candlelight Party leaves only Hun Sen's party, its allies and small parties that lack a national presence to contest the July 23 elections for the 125 members of the National Assembly. Hun Sen's eldest son, army chief Hun Manet, is widely expected to replace his father as prime minister after the polls. Before the Constitutional Council ruling, UN independent human rights investigators including Vinit Muntarbhorn, the investigator on Cambodian rights, expressed alarm at "the restrictions imposed on the right of political parties to participate in elections," citing the election committee's May 16 refusal to register the

Candlelight Party.

After the Constitutional Council refused to overturn the election committee's decision, the US State Department said it would not send official observers to witness the elections. "Contrived legal actions, threats, harassment, and politically motivated criminal charges targeting opposition parties, independent media, and civil society undermine Cambodia's international commitments to develop as a multiparty democracy" spokesman Matthew Miller said in a statement. The Candlelight Party is the unofficial successor to the Cambodia National Rescue Party, which had posed a serious challenge to Hun Sen's party before being dissolved by a controversial court ruling before the 2018 elections.

Hun Sen's party then swept those elections, winning all the seats in the National Assembly. Western nations declared the 2018 election was neither free nor fair, and imposed mild economic sanctions in response. Most prominent opposition politicians are now in self-imposed exile to avoid being jailed on various charges they say are trumped up and unfair.

The Frontier Post

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Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at
Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town,
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Dr. Affia’s ordeal and Pakistani prisoners abroad

IN an unexpected move, Dr. Aafia’s elder sister met her after two decades of imprisonment at the infamous FMC Carswell prison in the United States where she is detained over the last several years. According to the reports, British attorney Clive Stafford Smith accompanied Dr. Fauzia Siddiqui during the meeting while Pakistani lawmaker Senator Mushtaq Ahmad Khan is next in line to visit Aafia Siddiqui in the coming days. Both sisters met each other after 20 years and their meeting spanned over two and a half hours. Their meeting took place in a room separated by a thick glass wall, while Dr. Fauzia was neither allowed to touch her sister nor she was permitted to show her the pictures of Aafia's children and other family members.

The sad story of the Pakistani neuroscientist Dr. Aafia Siddiqui spanned over the past two decades while the role played by the Pakistani State and its Institutions during her arrest and afterward was highly regrettable throughout the past. The suspicions and doubts surround the whole story of Dr. Aafia Siddiqui who lived in the United States for over a decade and completed his Ph.D. study. Although, the FBI thoroughly surveilled her and had a complete analysis of her activities, communication, and nexus with any terror or extremist group but could not arrest her in the United States because of a lack of solid evidence/ proof until then. There had been reports regarding her apprehension by Pakistani authorities and later by the Afghan Police in 2008. She was accused of involvement in terrorism and attempting to attack American soldiers at the Bagram Airbase in Kabul. A US Court in Manhattan, New York convicted her of a crime and awarded 86 years imprisonment, which she was serving at FMC Carswell jail in Texas. What so ever the case/ charges might be, after all, Aafia was a Pakistani citizen, and her case had been a matter of great embarrassment and shame for the Pakistani nation. Ironically, such type of prosecution and indictment had never been witnessed by the world from the American juries who often announce life imprisonment for the suspects involved in mass shootings at schools and other public places. Although, there had been various occasions, diplomatic and legal provisions available to the Pakistani government to ensure a fair trial for her or at least bring its citizen back to the country that was missed by the successive governments in the past. Historically, Pakistan handed over Raymond Davis, a proven assassin who killed two Pakistanis in broad daylight, to the US government after paying his diyat/ compensation from the national exchequer, but did nothing in Aafia's case, because, Pakistani Baboos at Foreign Office and other institutions gave importance to foreign laws and their comfort instead of national interest/prestige.

A lot had been written and said regarding the case of Dr. Aafia Siddiqui over the past two decades in local and foreign media, while the bulk of the story had been dumped in the secret files of Pakistan ISI and the American CIA and the FBI. Factually, there is no misperception regarding her affiliation with the extremist groups and the alleged role of a facilitator/ sympathizer in that regard but largely she had been mishandled by the US agencies and Pakistani LEAs at the early stage. Later, Pakistani Strategists intentionally avoided her returns because of security reasons, legal technicalities, and sensitivities attached to the issue. Thus, a weak lady, who fell prey to Islamic extremism in love for her religion was put at the mercy of Western crusaders and biased American judges who left no stone unturned to push her into the jaws of death.

In fact, the case of Dr. Aafia Siddiqui has become more political than legal or security issues for both governments. Pakistani leaders and political parties commonly use this issue for political lobbying while successive Pakistani governments missed several opportunities to bring Aafia back even though the Pakistani public desires her return to serve her imprisonment in the country or otherwise. Presently, there is significant normalcy in the US government's stance on the issue, and the Pakistani nation must stand up and thrive for justice for Aafia. So, the government takes this issue with the Biden administration decisively and resolves this ordeal as soon as possible. Although, her entire life is destroyed but whatever is left should be given to her with dignity and respect. Similarly, thousands of Pakistanis are currently languishing in jails in multiple destinations across the world for minor felonies but there is no one to pursue their cases and get them released from unending imprisonment in other nations. Pakistani envoys abroad must spare a few movements from their busy bureaucratic schedule to look into cases of Pakistani citizens detain in foreign prisons and provide them with necessary legal assistance for an early release and dignified repatriation to the country.

What to expect now that Erdogan has five more years as Turkish president

Mohamed Chebaro

MANY people in Turkey and many more outside the country might have wished for President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to lose this week's election. But Turkey's Islamist, populist leader has defied the odds, as well as a united and well-organized opposition, to woo the electorate once again. He now has another five-year mandate, but he also seems to have put himself on course to stay in power for much longer.

He won Sunday's presidential election runoff ahead of Kemal Kilicdaroglu despite the country's economic challenges and harsh headwinds ahead. The people voted for him, albeit with a slim margin, despite the cries of government failures that contributed to the death toll from the earthquakes that hit the country in February and reduced to rubble several cities and towns, which now await reconstruction.

Erdogan won despite the divisive religious versus secular narrative he has adopted and the ethnic tensions that persist with the Kurdish community. Following his victory, regional allies and foes alike will have to contend with and work with Erdogan, whether in search of a lasting settlement in Syria or in ensuring the Ukraine grain export deal is extended to avert global food shortages. Ankara under Erdogan will also

continue to have a constructive approach, balancing its geopolitical interests to keep simultaneous good relations with Russia, China and, closer to home, its Middle East neighbors, as well as Turkey's strategic allies in NATO and the West.

Turkiye's longest-serving leader's four-point victory margin was the narrowest of any of his elec-

cally and an astute strategist on the regional and international levels. His initial years in office showed him to be a moderate leader who was adamant about reining in Turkey's military and hoped to get his country to join the EU, while using Turkey's membership in NATO to comfort doubters about his

debates, from intervening militarily in Syria's civil war to engaging in controversial gas exploration in the Mediterranean, rubbing the Greeks up the wrong way in the process. Turkey's hosting of millions of Syrians who were fleeing the violence in their country was initially applauded, but Erdogan's

sell Turkish-made military drones to Kyiv.

Only a few years ago, Erdogan insisted on procuring the S-400 Russian-made air defense system despite Washington's displeasure and its subsequent decision to chalk Turkey off the list of countries involved in the F-35 combat aircraft project. The Americans are now close to agreeing to supply

office, Erdogan will likely find a formula to climb down and open the way for Sweden's membership. Europe and Turkey have long been linked at the hip with a transactional type of relationship, where cooperation is driven only by interests and often resembles the haggling in Turkish bazaars.

After two decades at the helm of Turkish power, Erdogan remains a divisive figure and a bruiser, a masterful orator who transformed Turkey's ceremonial post of president into the key office of power in the republic. Erdogan's victory was partly due to the continued backing of the conservative voters, who remain largely devoted to him after his success in embracing their Islamic identity and making it acceptable in the previously heavily secular system. They continue to back him because they see in him a nationalist bent on raising the country's influence worldwide, while charting an independent course that reflects Turkey's own national interests. In a fractured world order, Turkey's president is expected to double down on his brand of populism, which has served him well so far despite the division it sows in society. But his long-term success will hinge on his ability to calm the markets and offer a clear path to recovery from the worst economic crisis to hit the country since the 1990s.

Like Erdogan or loathe him, over two full decades in power he has proved to be a street fighter domestically and an astute strategist on the regional and international levels. His initial years in office showed him to be a moderate leader who was adamant about reining in Turkey’s military and hoped to get his country to join the EU, while using Turkey’s membership in NATO to comfort doubters about his country’s Islamic identity and its conformity with democracy. Though joining the EU is, from a Turkish point of view, no longer a priority, his relations with the European powers are likely to continue to be shrouded in skepticism.

tion victories, highlighting the country's sharp polarization. But that is unlikely to dampen his will, his rhetoric or his global ambitions as his country this year marks its centennial. In his victory speech, Erdogan promised the world that the country will, under his leadership, continue its march through what he labeled the "Turkish century." Like Erdogan or loathe him, over two full decades in power he has proved to be a street fighter domesti-

cally and its conformity with democracy. Though joining the EU is, from a Turkish point of view, no longer a priority, his relations with the European powers are likely to continue to be shrouded in skepticism.

Although key European leaders rushed to congratulate Erdogan on his reelection, many are often uncomfortable with Turkey's stance of putting itself at the heart of major international conflicts and

inclination to use them as leverage in discussions with European nations less so. Erdogan's tendency to play both sides is not likely to abate any time soon, as the world remains more divided and conflictive than ever. His closeness to Russian President Vladimir Putin has often irked his allies in NATO, especially after his refusal to enforce the sanctions regime imposed on Moscow due to its invasion of Ukraine. He has, however, continued to

Turkiye's air force with older, yet still very versatile, F-16 fighter jets. NATO partners are likely to remain anxious while waiting for Ankara to approve Sweden's stalled bid to join the defense alliance. Erdogan has so far blocked the application, accusing Stockholm of sheltering Turkish opposition figures with alleged links to outlawed Kurdish militants, although many in the West believe that, now that he has won a new term in

and impartiality, which require an objective distancing from the suffering, rather than getting closer to the victims.

If international agencies cannot deliver effectively under the current circumstances in Sudan, why should its mammoth UN appeal be funded? Besides, even if they are able to do something here and there, it will be through local partners and an inefficient transaction process that consumes 30 percent of aid given. That cannot be right at a time when there are immense humanitarian needs, limited resources and a moral imperative to maximize the benefit of each humanitarian dollar. For example, in the global marketplace of misery, Sudan is competing with 68 countries, for which international organizations want \$55.9 billion in humanitarian aid. Why don't donors go directly to local agencies that know their own people and needs and can devise creative delivery methods while willingly going where other angels fear to tread? Just like the Nuba I saw a decade ago. Sudanese doctors, engineers and myriad local community groups are already doing that in the current crisis. But in supporting local efforts, it is important not to transfer risk to them; all six aid workers killed so far this year were local Sudanese.

The reason that supporting Sudanese aid groups directly is not popular is that granting small amounts to many agencies is hard work for donors, who prefer

writing big cheques to a few large global bodies that monopolize the international system. A further excuse is lack of confidence in the integrity of local organizations, although fraud, corruption and other abuses within international bodies is more costly. Fortunately, the Sudanese are not waiting for international agencies. Their large diaspora in the Gulf, Africa, Europe, US and Australia has found ways to help their relatives and friends through informal money transfers. Expatriate Sudanese across the world are busy through their networks and social media mobilizing resources.

The advantage of trickling aid in small, decentralized ways is that this has a greater chance of getting to the people who need it most. In contrast, dumping billions of aid dollars, including via the shiny warehouses and vehicles beloved of big agencies, provides tempting targets for looters and fuels the war economy. But small-scale aid is not so photogenic for the media covering Sudan's drama and, therefore, gets less recognition. Sudan will eventually get beyond the current crisis, whenever its rulers are ready for peace. Meanwhile, there is plenty of pain and suffering to be endured. It is the duty of humanitarians to lighten that burden and it requires more courage and smarter working. This means trusting and supporting the Sudanese to help their own people in their own way.

A more courageous, smarter humanitarianism is needed to ease Sudan’s pain

Mukesh Kapila

I hovered at the ill-defined Sudan-South Sudan border watching the Nuba Mountains being firebombed. It was 2013 and the region was besieged by then-President Omar Bashir's forces. Witnessing his relentless scorched-earth policy, I pondered on how to bring humanitarian succor to people cowering in Nuban caves.

Locals showed me how. When dusk fell, they emerged from ramshackle shelters in South Sudan's border town of Yida and left food packages at the frontier - culled from their own meager refugee rations. Their Sudanese kith and kin collected them when darkness forced the warplanes to leave. That is how local solidarity kept the Nuba alive. Barred from themselves crossing the border into Sudan, enlightened aid agencies that recognized the resourcefulness of refugees increased their aid allocations. Knowing that part of that would get into the Nuba Mountains, they understood that was a cost-effective way to help. There was no concern with corruption or aid going astray because the beneficiaries were unlikely to steal the milk from their own babies' mouths.

I am reminded of that experience now while watching the unfolding of the latest chapter of Sudan's decades-long trauma. The warring between the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudan Armed Forces has already displaced more than a million people, including

large refugee outflows into South Sudan, Chad, Egypt and Ethiopia, adding to these countries' own instabilities. Thousands have been killed and wounded, alongside raping, looting and pillaging. Public services providing water, electricity, healthcare, internet access and communications have broken down and hunger stalks the land. When peace-making proves difficult, we offer humanitarian aid as consolation. And so, while waiting to see if ceasefire mediation will succeed, the UN has sharply revised upward its international humanitarian appeal for Sudan. This demands \$2.6 billion for critical food, health, nutrition, water, protection, shelter and education. The needs are unarguable: some 25 million Sudanese, or more than half the population, require urgent life-preserving assistance.

But in contexts where civilians are targeted and violations of international humanitarian law and war crimes are common, how will the aid get to needy people across this vast land? Not just photographed and tweeted on arrival in Port Sudan before being stockpiled indefinitely due to security problems that hinder their distribution. If we cannot do that, we risk creating an illusion of assistance. This is cruel - somewhat like displaying a glass of water just beyond the reach of a thirsty person. What, then, is the point of a multibillion-dollar appeal, other than as an abstract exercise in the quantifica-

tion of inhumanity?

International humanitarian agencies must be honest about what they cannot do in Sudan, especially when trust is so low. That was eroded when most of the foreign angels of mercy working there flew away after fighting erupted on April 15. Abandoning their local colleagues and clients to face the horrors on their own was an echo of the similar abandonment and dire consequences seen in Afghanistan in 2021. This shames the modern humanitarian system, which has become more and more risk averse, even as it has expanded in size, ambition and complexity, demanding ever more resourcing. That is not to overlook the courage of individual aid workers who stayed or did not want to leave Sudan but were obliged to do so by their employers, as several frustrated colleagues told me. At the root of the problem is the institutionalization of humanitarianism: this is no longer a vocation but a business. And like any prudent enterprise, it must be run so as to minimize risks and liabilities. Caring organizations doing their duty to keep their staff out of harm's way can hardly be criticized.

But the perverse consequence is that humanitarians' operating space and contribution gets ever more limited and their relevance diminishes further. The Sudanese are entitled to ask why they should bother with international humani-

tarians when they cannot be relied upon when most needed. Compounding the concern are the metrics of humanitarian assistance, such as counting stomachs fed, diseases cured, roofs provided and so on. In our technocratic but depersonalized age, we have forgotten that, in circumstances where the giving of aid is not possible, there is still the imperative to hold a suffering person's hand, hug a lost child, shed a tear alongside a distressed mother. Or just witness what is going on.

My previous experience in Sudan's darkest moments is that, when people are most distressed, their sense of reality is sharpest. They jettison false hopes of rescue when outsiders cannot or will not help. Nevertheless, they still do not want to be left alone or forgotten by the outside world. Because, as one Sudanese mother told me, their suffering is then meaningless. And that is unbearably heart-breaking. But measuring the value of bringing consolation and compassion through our presence without necessarily being able to provide physical assistance is very difficult. Perhaps that is why there is no space in Sudan's multibillion-dollar appeal for a humanitarian goal of "providing empathy." In any case, it would be very difficult to do that through conventional humanitarian operations because these operate on the principles of neutrality

and impartiality, which require an objective distancing from the suffering, rather than getting closer to the victims.

If international agencies cannot deliver effectively under the current circumstances in Sudan, why should its mammoth UN appeal be funded? Besides, even if they are able to do something here and there, it will be through local partners and an inefficient transaction process that consumes 30 percent of aid given. That cannot be right at a time when there are immense humanitarian needs, limited resources and a moral imperative to maximize the benefit of each humanitarian dollar. For example, in the global marketplace of misery, Sudan is competing with 68 countries, for which international organizations want \$55.9 billion in humanitarian aid. Why don't donors go directly to local agencies that know their own people and needs and can devise creative delivery methods while willingly going where other angels fear to tread? Just like the Nuba I saw a decade ago. Sudanese doctors, engineers and myriad local community groups are already doing that in the current crisis. But in supporting local efforts, it is important not to transfer risk to them; all six aid workers killed so far this year were local Sudanese.

The reason that supporting Sudanese aid groups directly is not popular is that granting small amounts to many agencies is hard work for donors, who prefer

The Moscow drone attacks bring Russia’s war to its doorstep - and put Putin’s alternative reality at risk

Jade McGlynn

RUSSIAN authorities are trying to downplay a series of drone attacks across Moscow, including on its most elite area, Rublyovka. The Kremlin has blamed Ukraine, although Kyiv has denied any involvement in the attacks - the first of this scale on Russian soil since it invaded Ukraine 15 months ago.

Russian media reports originally suggested as many as 30 drones targeted the city, and videos of (apparent) direct hits on buildings went viral. But soon Kremlin officials reclaimed the narrative. Moscow mayor Sergei Sobyenin claimed only eight drones had participated in the attack, and insisted any damage to buildings was caused by debris after they were shot down. Defence minister Sergei Shoigu, buoyed up by support from politicians and president Vladimir Putin's spokesperson Dmitry Peskov, tried to distract

from the embarrassment, citing the number of Ukrainian soldiers killed by Russian forces, and the Nato equipment Russia has purportedly destroyed.

But Russian social media paints events in a less stoical light. Although there is little sign of panic, the reaction to the drone attacks should not hearten the Kremlin or any Russians who mistakenly believed its claims that the war would not come to their homes. While this moment perhaps falls short of bringing a tideshift in attitudes, it does mark an important step further down a path of societal cynicism towards the state's ability to wage, or win, its war in Ukraine.

Most attention has been elicited by the attacks on Rublyovka, a series of villages to the west of Moscow where Putin's luxurious Novo-Ogaryovo state residence is located. Russia's ruling classes, including the prime minister, live there in "cottages",

a word taken from the English but used here to describe gauche and gargantuan mansions. A video apparently showing a drone hitting one such turreted pink "cottage" has been shared widely on Telegram. The location is significant. Rublyovka has come to symbolise how out of touch Russia's political classes are with real life and the country's many troubles. Speaking last week, the leader of the Wagner mercenary group, Yevgeny Prigozhin, mentioned these tensions, arguing that Russia's decision-making elites live in a fantasy world where the war doesn't affect them - and that that needs to change for victory over Ukraine.

Naturally, such coincidences raise the temptation of conspiratorial thinking - could Russia have attacked itself? After all, since war broke out on 24 February 2022, it is no longer possible to say that Putin, or the

Kremlin, would never do that. But there is little reason for the authorities to stage such an embarrassing stunt, which they have gone to great lengths to downplay. For some Russians, "false-flag" claims are just another way to centre their own state's power, and to deny Ukraine's capabilities. More classic conspiracy theories abound. Russian military bloggers supportive of the war blame the US, which they view as ultimately responsible.

Regardless of the plausibility of these different theories, Russian readiness to embrace conspiracy points to evidence of a growing anxiety among the general population and a sense among the political classes that Putin and his cronies are no longer able to control events. Other social media users were dismissive of the attack, rightly claiming it wasn't much compared with what

Russians were doing to Ukraine, albeit said without any sympathy for the latter. But there is also growing cynicism and sarcasm at Russia's insistence that the war "is all going to plan", and increasing exasperation at the gap between hyperbolic rhetoric and the Kremlin's inability to realise its militaristic ambitions.

The ongoing mockery of Kremlin propaganda lines should not be taken as evidence of dissidence or an appetite for liberal democracy; indeed, many such people approvingly cite Stalin as an example of a non-corrupt leader who had the moral vigour to do whatever it took. Instead, it is better understood as the natural consequence of Russia's war against reality. It is one thing to deny objective notions of truth when they have no tangible meaning for you but quite another when this objective truth explodes over your mansion. Tuesday's drone attacks poke another hole

in Russia's aggrieved unreality - in which Red Army-heir Russian heroes are saving ordinary Russophile Ukrainians held hostage by CIA/British/gay parade-backed Nazis. This intense propaganda narrative, in place since 2014 and rooted in a worldview of Russia's innate "great-power-ness" and western malice, is not a cynical lie but something that Vladimir Putin appears to profess genuinely.

But you can't resist reality forever: it has its way of making itself known, often in the least expected ways. It is there in the Russian recruitment ads, parroting second world war-parodic patriotism but ending crassly with lucrative offers of sign-up money. It is there when the Russian elite lambasts the west, but keeps their children and assets there. And it is there this week in the drone attacks on Moscow, and, most importantly of all, on Rublyovka.

The Guardian

The idiot West is sleeping as the end of the world draws near

Allister Heath

JUST like George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, it turns out that the Arnold Schwarzenegger Terminator franchise was a blueprint, not a work of science fiction. When Skynet, a network of computers created by the military contractor Cyberdyne Systems, gained self-awareness, panicky humans tried to deactivate it. The newly formed artificial intelligence (AI) identified "all humans as a threat", "decided our fate in a microsecond: extermination" and launched a nuclear attack on every major city.

Four decades on, fiction risks becoming fact. In the most chilling warning since the Szilard petition of 1945 and the establishment by Albert Einstein of the Emergency Committee of Atomic Scientists, many of the world's greatest AI experts are convinced it could destroy humanity, that the technology poses an existential threat to our survival as a species. "Mitigating the risk of extinction from AI should be a global priority alongside other societal-scale risks such as pandemics and nuclear war," pleads a letter signed by Sam Altman of ChatGPT-maker OpenAI, Demis Hassabis of Google DeepMind and many others. Other founding godfathers of AI have quit their jobs and expressed regret at their life's work. Their terror is palpable, as is the sense that this time we have gone too far, that our institutions cannot cope, that AI will be hijacked to build weapons of mass destruction or to rule over us.

They could all be wrong, and there are huge benefits to AI as well as costs, but why isn't this the number one priority of every

politician in the world? How can anybody believe that some silly pact, or a puerile EU regulation, might be the answer? We face a profound philosophical and practical choice: what is the meaning of life and intelligence? How do we make sure humanity remains in charge of machines? How do we trade off productivity growth against the risk of annihilation? This is surely the most complex question we have ever faced, and yet our shockingly unserious society cannot face up to it. The global elites have again got their priorities wrong. They have focused obsessively on climate change, turning a real but surmountable problem into an anti-Western religion, but are bizarrely nonchalant about much greater threats. I'm not downplaying the large disruption and cost of climate change, but it won't come anywhere close to terminating life on Earth, unlike a nuclear war, biowarfare or out-of-control AI. Our rush to net zero, by reducing growth, is in fact limiting our ability to wage an AI war with a Chinese state that continues to belch out carbon dioxide.

The most immediate risk to humanity's survival is nuclear war. Russia may yet launch tactical nukes on Ukraine; China may invade Taiwan; or a terror attack could push India and Pakistan into total conflict. Yet the most pressing danger comes from nuclear proliferation, a slow-burn crisis that contradicts woke narratives and is thus overlooked. North Korea remains a major threat, but Iran is the real danger: it keeps enriching uranium and wants to annihilate Israel. Where is the anti-proliferation Greta Thunberg? The other great danger is biowarfare. It is

insane that we still tolerate gain of function research, which enhances viruses genetically: at some point, a super-potent virus may be released accidentally or intentionally, killing billions and destroying civilisation. Where is the outrage, the parade of concerned activists?

Out-of-control AI could prey on a growing pathology at the heart of Western society: our vulnerability to social contagion. Instead of creating an army of resilient, independent, hyper-educated rational individualists with all of human learning at our fingertips, smartphones have reduced us to an uber-emotional, animalistic, dopamine-addled mob. There is plenty of information, but little knowledge. Instead of being able to think for ourselves, we are slaves to fashion, not only when it comes to dressing but also opinions, consumption and financial decisions. Radicalised by social media, elite opinion-formers embrace absurd views at breakneck speed. Politicians, businesses and celebrities take their cue from a revolutionary vanguard that subverts public sentiment. Our society no longer understands the purpose of free speech, as described by John Stuart Mill in *On Liberty*. Instead of engaging in Socratic argumentation to get to the truth, we use words to virtue-signal and to camouflage base emotions. Our elites claim to be universalist humanists, but are in fact born-again tribalists who spend their time pitting in-groups (those who repeat the favoured platitude of the moment) against the out-groups (anyone who disagrees).

We no longer know how to think critically. Subjectivity and nihilism rule supreme: the

deranged, post-modernist woke cargo cult claims that there no longer is truth, just our truths. Ideas are at best positional goods, fashion statements and markers of social hierarchy, and at worst tools of oppression. Words are devoid of any essential meaning: expressing "right-think" signals high status (even if the opinion is nonsense, such as the claim that China had nothing to do with Covid) and "wrong-think" (such as support for Brexit) implies low-status. Alex Tabarrok of George Mason University argues that our society is not merely increasingly capricious but also prone to a new madness of crowds. Technology, by increasing transparency and reducing transaction costs, has "intensified the madness of the masses and expanded their reach. From finance to politics and culture, no domain remains untouched." Bank runs are more frequent, with deposits moved from online accounts as soon as rumours begin to circulate. Fake news, boycotts, fury, demonstrations, health panics and calls for crackdowns become the norm. There are no error-correcting mechanisms.

Such a world - governed by the opposite principles to those developed by Nassim Nicholas Taleb in *Antifragile* - is vulnerable to manipulation, and hence to weaponised AI. Imagine a deepfake video watched 20 million times in a couple of hours that warns of an imminent terror attack, or "proves" a politician was a fraud hours before an election: the impact would be catastrophic. "Can we survive technology?" - so asked John von Neumann, the 20th century's greatest mind, in 1955. Could the answer really be in the negative?

The Telegraph



The war on Russia's doorstep just got uncomfortably close

Michael Bociurkiw

THOSE expecting that the upcoming Ukrainian counteroffensive will be a shock and awe bombing campaign similar to the 2003 US strikes on Iraq will be disappointed. To be sure, there is a sort of unspoken pressure on the administration of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to press ahead with its planned counteroffensive as soon as possible - and demonstrate that the billions of dollars of Western military aid is capable of pushing Russian President Vladimir Putin at least back to pre-2022 full-scale invasion lines.

Ukrainian leaders and military planners need also to be mindful of developments across the Atlantic, where its most powerful ally, the United States, could see the return of Donald Trump in 2025 to the White House - and with that, a likely drop in support.

Yet Kyiv seems to be playing cagey, implementing a long-range view of the counteroffensive, avoiding being pressured into action and keeping battlefield plans close to its chest. We already know Zelensky needs time to build up weapons stocks and to train troops.

But make no mistake. The much talked about counteroffensive is increasingly coming into view - not with an Iraq-style type of invasion - but with subtle and some might say brilliant strikes against Russia. These started last week with a cross-border attack from anti-Putin Russian nationals in the Belgorod region, followed by strikes from Ukrainian armed forces on the Russian-occupied port city of Berdiansk.

Later in the week, US officials shed new light on the alleged drone attack on the Kremlin on May 3, claiming it was likely carried out by Ukrainian military or intelligence. Then on Tuesday morning a drone attack on the Russian capital brought the conflict to Russian soil with fresh clarity. Moscow blamed Ukraine for what it described as a "terrorist attack," while Kyiv denied involvement in the strike, which caused minor damage and injuries.

Whoever is to blame, one thing was for certain: it gave Moscow residents a taste of what people in the Ukrainian capital are facing day after day. Indeed Russia continues to pound Kyiv with almost daily strikes - including terrifying drone attacks on Kyiv Monday and Tuesday morning, with the latest killing one and injuring at least three others.

But it was the incursion by two anti-Kremlin groups which claimed to have controlled, at least temporarily, 16 square miles of Russian territory last week, that set Ukrainian Telegram channels on fire. Claimed to be acting independently of Ukrainian forces, the combatants' provocation prompted a major evacuation and represented the most intense fighting inside Russia since the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

There are clearly chinks in Putin's armor. Should these types of disruptive

attacks increase in frequency and spread to other regions within Russia. One might speculate that they could lead to a tipping point for Putin's hold on power. The aim here appears not to actually occupy Russian land - but to send a message to Putin and the Russian public that the Ukraine war is a waste of blood and treasure.

There are more reasons for Russia to worry. With the acquisition of long range cruise missiles with stealth capabilities, such as Britain's "Storm Shadow" missiles that can travel 155 miles, Kyiv now has the ability to strike well into Russian occupied territory

York Times published a piece about the affiliation of a leader of the RVC to neo-Nazi splinter groups.

If proven true, it could be used by the Kremlin spin machine to paint Ukraine as a haven for Nazis, one of the false pretexts for the invasion. Wisely, Zelensky and his inner circle have remained mostly quiet about the incursions. It is almost impossible to determine how big a threat, if any, the incursions represent to Putin. But it is hard to believe that the man who is reported to be traveling around his country in an armored train carriage instead of the presidential airplane is having restful nights, especially since the war has been going any-

There are clearly chinks in Putin's armor. Should these types of disruptive attacks increase in frequency and spread to other regions within Russia. One might speculate that they could lead to a tipping point for Putin's hold on power. The aim here appears not to actually occupy Russian land - but to send a message to Putin and the Russian public that the Ukraine war is a waste of blood and treasure. There are more reasons for Russia to worry. With the acquisition of long range cruise missiles with stealth capabilities, such as Britain's "Storm Shadow" missiles that can travel 155 miles, Kyiv now has the ability to strike well into Russian occupied territory and even into Russia itself.

and even into Russia itself. It's way beyond the 49 mile capability of US-provided missiles. While such a scenario may make officials in Washington anxious that it could escalate matters, European officials seem to be looking the other way as Kyiv becomes more aggressive in their shortlisting of Russian targets. What is more, if Ukrainians are prevented from striking key military sites deep within Russian territory, then the question has to be asked: What is the point of this David and Goliath fight with one hand tied behind Kyiv's back?

The latest incursions, if they were associated in any way with Kyiv, were executed with brilliant timing as they occurred when Russian forces are pre-occupied elsewhere along the frontline trying to gain territory and defend occupied lands. The Russian Volunteer Corps (RVC) and the Freedom of Russia Legion appear to be Russian volunteers backing Ukraine and with the intent to topple Putin. Unlike the RVC, the Legion claims to be fighting under the leadership of Ukrainian command and "out of the wish of Russians to fight in the ranks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine against Putin's armed gang." Just as word began to circle the globe about these two insurgent groups who had little name recognition - even among those of us who follow the region closely - the New

thing according to plan. Even Wagner boss Yevgeny Prigozhin warned last week that Russians might move to topple the regime if the so-called "special military operation" continues to go sideways. What is perhaps likely in the short term, is that Russia will use a hybrid strategy to attack Ukraine and make life uncomfortable for the West. That means a continuation of the daily strikes on Kyiv and other major centers (which, by depriving residents of sleep, is a form of psychological warfare); the weaponization of food by restricting ships carrying grain and other agricultural products from Ukraine to western markets; and even the weaponization of migration by creating enough fear from drone and missile attacks to prevent the millions of Ukrainians refugees from returning home. It is reasonable to assume that Putin will not end this war voluntarily, by submitting to a ceasefire or peace deal. Rather, Putin appears to believe he can win by running out the clock. Collateral damage has never been a concern for Putin, only his own safety and power. Now, it seems the buffer between Moscow and the frontline, is rapidly shortening. And with the war he started getting uncomfortably close, I believe Putin's days in office could be numbered as well.

CNN

Just how safe is Fukushima's 'contaminated' water?

David Fickling

MORE than 12 years after the disaster that closed Japan's Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, the country will soon dispose of one of the most enduring legacies of the disaster. Some 1.3 million metric tons of water, most of it used to cool the radioactive material at the core of the plant, will be filtered and cleaned up before being pumped slowly to sea once a 1-kilometer (0.6 mile) pipe is completed in the coming weeks. It may take decades to trickle out the water at a pace slow enough to keep radioactive concentrations at sufficiently low levels - but that hasn't prevented bitter opposition from some of Japan's Pacific neighbors.

"Continuing with ocean discharge plans at this time is simply inconceivable," Henry Puna, secretary-general of the Pacific Islands Forum intergovernmental group, wrote earlier this year. "I fear that, if left unchecked, the region will once again be headed towards a major nuclear contamination disaster at the hands of others." China has also condemned the plan, while South Korean nuclear experts will be doing their own monitoring of radiation levels. These widespread fears are spurious. There's zero risk to human life from releasing Fukushima's contaminated water at sea under the plan proposed by Tokyo Electric Power. Drinking a glass of it direct from the outflow pipe would expose you to about as

much radiation (from trace quantities of the hydrogen isotope tritium) as you'd get from eating a dozen bananas. Once further diluted in the vast waters of the Pacific, the radioactivity decreases to homeopathic levels. The 1.3 million metric tons of water that Tepco needs to get rid of sounds like a lot - but the Pacific Ocean holds roughly 500 billion times that amount.

At the same time, Japan of all countries should be empathetic in dealing with the sometimes irrational opposition that nuclear energy can generate. For decades, US nuclear submarines and aircraft carriers visiting local ports had to give authorities 24 hours' notice so that geiger checks could be carried out - despite more than 1,000 dockings passing without incident. A 20-minute unapproved arrival in 2001 prompted the country's foreign minister to temporarily call off such visits. In the 1960s, even agreed visits often prompted thousands of demonstrators to turn out.

That unique political environment is inseparable from the fact that Japan is the only nation which has had atomic weapons used against it. You would have expected the nation that razed Hiroshima and Nagasaki to be a little accommodating of local sentiments on this issue. Even so, the US's observance of the radiological theater around ship visits was a potent

example that, in diplomacy, listening and pragmatism are usually more important than being right. Pacific nations have a similar history. Though no country has suffered the death toll that Japan endured from nuclear weapons, the dozens of bombs tested in the Marshall Islands released energy about 5,000-times greater than that of those dropped on Japan. It has been left with a grim legacy of cancers and birth defects. Most Pacific nations became independent from their former colonial powers in the late 1970s and early 1980s, at a time when both the US and Japan were looking to the region's vast spaces as a dump for radioactive waste. Fighting against those policies and establishing a nuclear-free zone south of the equator was a foundational event for many young nations, quite as much as pacifism was in post-war Japan.

Some circumspection earlier in the process might have paid off. It took China's aggressive diplomacy in the region before Japan, the US and Australia started to reverse decades of neglect and began making serious attempts to woo and listen to Pacific island governments. As recently as 2015, then-Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told a delegation of island leaders meeting some 40 kilometers from the Fukushima plant "to support Japan's effort without being misled by rumors." That sort of scolding

response was thankfully absent in his successor Fumio Kishida's summit on the sidelines of the Group of Seven meeting earlier this month with Prime Minister Mark Brown of the Cook Islands. Pacific leaders, in turn, appear to have been mollified by the greater transparency and dialogue. There's a lesson here for nuclear advocates, too. It's common now for supporters of an enhanced role for nuclear energy to dismiss the safety regulation around atomic plants as an unnecessary and costly imposition that must be swept away, sparking a renaissance of atomic power. That's an unrealistic and ultimately counterproductive ambition. Every form of major infrastructure has to deal with public opinion, and in a democracy, you don't get to rule whether your opponents' arguments are valid enough. That's a problem for renewables as much as nuclear. Europe closed nine factories for wind turbine parts between 2018 and 2022, according to BloombergNEF, as demand slumped in a region that has effectively outlawed onshore wind farms from swathes of its territory. Still, the solution isn't to gripe about the injustice of it, but to work with the regulation we have and seek changes where we can to build the clean energy the 21st century needs. If Japan's problems with the Pacific serve to reinforce this lesson, that's no bad thing.

The Japan Times

The Asian way key to building peace

Zhang Chi

THE 20th Shangri-La Dialogue, to be held at the Shangri-La Hotel in Singapore from June 2 to 4, is expected to promote peace and development in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond, considering that it will bring together defense ministers of many countries to discuss security issues in the Asia-Pacific region and work out the ways to maintain peace.

China once again sends a high-level delegation, led by State Councillor and Minister of National Defense Li Shangfu, to attend the dialogue. Along with attending the dialogue, Li will also pay a visit to Singapore from May 31 to June 4. Amid the fast-changing international situation and increasingly complex major-country competition, peace and development have become the most valuable global public goods. As such, major countries need to assume global responsibilities with an open mind and uphold the hard-won peace and development.

One key factor behind Asia's remarkable development achievements in the past four decades is that the majority of Asian countries, including major powers in the region, are committed to maintaining peace, promoting development and interacting in an "Asian way", which emphasizes that differences and conflicts be managed and resolved through peaceful means. It is for these reasons that Asia has become the fastest-growing region in terms of economic and social development. The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and the "Bandung Spirit", which emerged nearly 70 years ago, have now

become part of the collective wisdom of the people of Asia. And countries such as Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia have been vigorously advocating "Asian values" and an independent development path.

At the 19th Shangri-La Dialogue in 2022, members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations such as Indonesia and Malaysia reiterated their commitment to pursuing an independent and balanced foreign policy and "solving Asian problems in an Asian way". Mutual respect, mutual benefit, equality, consensus through consultation, and accommodation of the concerns of all parties involved are among the important principles of the "Asian way". In stark contrast, the United States and NATO have been involved in a series of conflicts and humanitarian disasters in the Middle East and Europe over the past 40 years. The US is also trying to extend NATO to the Asia-Pacific, so it can interfere in the security affairs of the countries in the region and push forward its "encirclement" strategy against China. Needless to say the US' design will trigger conflicts in Asia, destabilizing the region and jeopardizing its development.

The US has been instigating conflicts between countries to maintain its global hegemony. Guided by the "America first" strategy, it has been trying to curb the development of other countries. It has also been coercing other countries to join what it calls the "democratic alliance" through the

use of tariffs and other means to establish exclusive geopolitical "circles", exacerbating divisions and confrontations among countries in order to fulfill its own narrow goals. In Europe, the US has used the Ukraine crisis to rally its allies and impose sanctions on Russia, even though the European countries are also suffering the consequences of the sanctions. In the Middle East, the US has forced its European allies to follow its foreign policy and impose sanctions on Iran, which has severely compromised the interests of the European countries. As a result, the United Kingdom, France and Germany have found different ways to bypass the US sanctions and establish non-dollar trade channels with Iran.

In the Asia-Pacific, the US has led the establishment of the Quad with Japan, Australia and India and the AUKUS security alliance with Australia and the UK. And Washington's "Indo-Pacific" Economic Framework for Prosperity excludes three of the 10 ASEAN member states, in a bid to create divisions within ASEAN. It is clear therefore that the US' actions are exacerbating confrontations and increasing the risk of a new Cold War, which could shatter global peace and harm global development. On the other hand, this year marks the 10th anniversary of President Xi Jinping's proposal to help build a community with a shared future for mankind and, over the past decade, China has been reiterating the concept. China has also

proposed the Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative and Global Civilization Initiative, which are complementary. Chinese civilization is secular, and the essence of a secular civilization is openness and inclusiveness, which is precisely what the world today needs to maintain peace and promote development.

In fact, as a responsible major country China has made significant achievements in promoting inclusive multilateralism. China has always supported the idea of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security. It supports ASEAN's central role in regional cooperation, doesn't take sides on any issue, and advocates that countries use peaceful means to resolve their disputes and differences.

It has been promoting the development of the Belt and Road Initiative, which has expanded the scope for bilateral and regional economic cooperation for mutual benefit. And while the growth of BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has helped improve global and regional governance, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement has injected new vitality into the region's economic development. Despite the US' repeated attempts to smear China, the recent visits and discussions on cooperation between Chinese leaders and the leaders of many other countries indicate that China has become a crucial force safeguarding peace and development.

The China Daily

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Pakistani rupee edges up against US dollar

ISLAMABAD (INP): As uncertainty about the IMF loan programme continued to grip the money market, the Pakistani rupee edged up against the US dollar in the interbank business on Thursday.

According to the information extracted from the forex dealers, the local currency was appreciated by 37 paise against the greenback and was currently being traded at Rs285.10.

On Wednesday, the Pakistani rupee had sustained marginal losses against the US dollar, depreciating by 0.04% in the interbank market. At close, the currency settled at 285.47, a decline of 12 paise.

In a key development, Minister of State for Finance Ayesha Ghous Pasha had said that the IMF

does not have the mandate to interfere in the internal affairs of Pakistan.

According to a Reuters report, IMF mission chief for Pakistan Nathan Porter said on Tuesday that the IMF remained in touch with the government in Pakistan in order to pave the way for a board meeting before a financing programme expires at the end of June.

Porter said that broadly speaking, "overcoming the present economic and financial challenges would require sustained policy efforts and reforms for Pakistan to regain strong and inclusive private-led growth."

While the IMF does not comment on domestic politics, the IMF official said it hopes "a peaceful way forward is found in line with

the Constitution and the rule of law," referring to Pakistan's political instability.

Talking to newsmen in Islamabad on Wednesday, Ayesha Pasha said that the IMF programme is ending on June 30, adding that no discussion had been held regarding extension of the current programme.

Pakistan had signed the current 36-month \$6 billion Extended Fund Facility in July 2019. The IMF, however, extended the programme by nine months to June 30, 2023 and its size was also increased to \$6.5 billion. Over the past almost four years, the programme has been derailed at least four times, including on two occasions during the tenure of the current coalition government.

Gold prices dip by

Rs.5, 400 per tola

APP adds: The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs5,400 and was sold at Rs229,000 on Thursday against its sale at Rs234,400 the previous day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs4, 629 to Rs196,331 from Rs200,960 whereas the price of 10 grams 22 karat gold went down to Rs.179,970, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola silver decreased by Rs.50 to Rs.2,700 whereas that of ten gram went down by Rs.42.86 to Rs.2,357.68.

The price of gold in the international market increased by US\$7 to \$1967 against its sale at \$1960, the association reported.

UAE's envoy met Federal Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates, Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salim Al-Zaabi Thursday called on the Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar.

During the meeting, they conversed about the deep rooted brotherly ties and discussed various areas of common interest for further strengthening the trade and economic ties between the two countries, said a press statement issued by finance ministry.

The ambassador also reciprocated interest of the United Arab Emirates government for expanding investment in various sectors of the economy of Pakistan.

Ishaq Dar acknowledged that United Arab Emirates had been a great partner of Pakistan in various fields including energy, refinery, petroleum and trade.

He appreciated and welcomed the investment proposals of the UAE in Pakistan and assured of complete support and cooperation by the government.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of UAE Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salim Al-Zaabi meeting with Federal Minister for Finance & Revenue Mohammad Ishaq Dar.

Desert lands transformed into cultivable farmland

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Ambassador of Kazakhstan in Pakistan, Yerzhan Kistafin visited Samson Agri Farm Rangpur Muzaffargarh and participated as the chief guest in a groundbreaking ceremony of the Centre Pivot Hitech Irrigation System and a solar power unit at Samsons Agri Farms Rangpur Muzaffargarh visited by Samsons Group and Haier Group.

The event witnessed the presence of distinguished dignitaries, including District Administration officials, senior police officials & leaders from the business community, said in a press release issued here on Thursday.

Ambassador Kistafin commended the joint venture for its transformative efforts and emphasized the importance of mutual business activities and cooperation among friendly states.

This joint venture led by Samsons Group CEO, Waseem ur Rehman, along with Haier Group executives, Khalid Afridi and Faisal Afridi, successfully converted barren desert lands in Muzaffargarh, Punjab into cultivable farmland.

The transformative initiative not only generated significant employment opportunities for local communities but also led to a substantial increase in foreign exchange earnings for Pakistan. The project's commencement, involving the acquisition of over 5,000 acres of desert land in Muzaffargarh, Punjab, has garnered immense acclaim both within Pakistan and abroad.



By adopting the advanced Central Pivot Hitech Irrigation System, an American methodology, the company has successfully cultivated Rhodes grass, a high-demand animal feed.

Moreover, the joint initiative by Samsons Group and Haier Group has generated substantial employment opportunities for local residents, providing both permanent and daily wage jobs over the past five years.

Demonstrating their commitment to social responsibility, Samsons Group and Haier Group have organized frequent medical camps, providing free healthcare services to underprivileged individuals in the vicinity.

The companies have also established a healthcare unit and a water filtration plant to address the essential needs of the local community.

Waseem ur Rehman, CEO of Samsons Group, revealed plans to establish a hospital, a Grand Mosque, and a school as part of the ongoing efforts to contribute to the region's welfare.

It is Pertinent to mention here that last year during a visit to the site, His Highness Prince Mansour Bin Mohammad Bin Saad Al Saud, Governor of Hafr Al Batin Region, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), expressed his admiration for the Samsons Group and Haier Group initiative.

His Highness underscored the initiative's significance in promoting sustainable agriculture practices and fostering economic growth. As a symbol of solidarity, the Governor planted a tree on the premises, signifying the commitment to environmental sustainability.

Serena Hotels sign MoU with Agha Khan Agency for Habitat



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels, a leading hospitality group committed to sustainable tourism, has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Agha Khan Agency for Habitat (AKAH) to pursue IFC EDGE (Excellence in Design for Greater Efficiencies) Building Certification for its two upcoming hotels, Hunza Serena Hotel and Sost Serena Hotel. The signing ceremony took place at Islamabad Serena Hotel.

The MoU signifies a significant milestone for Serena

Hotels as it further strengthens the company's commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainable practices in the construction and operation of its properties. The collaboration with the Agha Khan Agency for Habitat Pakistan, (formerly known as Agha Khan Planning and Building Service, Pakistan or AKPB-SP), a global leader in promoting resilient and sustainable habitat solutions, will technically assist that the new hotels are designed and built to the highest international standards of energy efficiency and resource conservation.

EDGE Certification is a globally recognized green building rating system developed by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group. It promotes sustainable practices in the building industry by incorporating measures for energy efficiency, water conservation, and the use of environmentally

friendly materials. By pursuing this certification, Serena Hotels aims to minimize the ecological footprint of its hotels and provide guests with an exceptional and sustainable hospitality experience.

During the signing ceremony, Management from Serena Hotels and AKAH expressed their enthusiasm for the collaboration and their shared vision of creating environmentally responsible and climate resilient structures. They emphasized the importance of sustainable tourism in preserving the natural and cultural heritage of the regions where the hotels are located.

Speaking about the collaboration, Aziz Boolani CEO Serena Hotels, South and Central Asia said, "We are delighted to partner with the Agha Khan Agency for Habitat in our pursuit of IFC EDGE Certification for our new hotels. Sustainability lies at the heart of Serena Hotels' ethos, and this collaboration will enable us to enhance our commitment to responsible tourism. We look forward to setting new benchmarks in green building practices and providing our guests with an unforgettable and environmentally conscious stay."

Ms. Nusrat Nasab, CEO AKAH Pakistan stated,

"Our collaboration with Serena Hotels will contribute towards the AKDN's Environment & Climate Commitment and our net-zero carbon emission goal. AKAH brings technical expertise in green buildings, climate smart initiatives and nature-based solutions. Hotel industries that are environmentally responsible, culturally sensitive, and aesthetically pleasing will definitely promote eco-friendly sustainable tourism and employment opportunities in the region".

The Hunza Serena and Sost Serena hotels, currently under construction, are strategically positioned in the breathtaking landscapes of Hunza and Sost in Pakistan. These properties are designed to blend harmoniously with the surroundings, taking inspiration from local architectural traditions and incorporating modern sustainability principles. Once completed, Hunza Serena and Sost Serena hotels will join Serena Hotels' portfolio of environmentally conscious properties, which have been recognized globally for their sustainable practices and commitment to community development.

Pakistani handicrafts shine in China

BEIJING (INP): A throng of Chinese customers gather around Humayon's stall, asking for information about the Pakistani handicrafts including wooden chairs and desks, bronze kettles, bronze animal figurines and hand-made soaps, at a cultural and tourism exhibition held in China's northeast city of Harbin.

Humayon's company is one of the four Pakistani enterprises to participate in the exhibition. The remaining three also showcase handicrafts such as carpets, blankets and jades.

"We run a physical store in Kashgar which specializes in a wide range of Pakistani wooden and copper artifacts," Humayon told China Economic Net (CEN) in an interview, adding that the expertise behind these meticulously carved bottles, pots, and plates highlights the stunning intricacy of the designs and patterns, and the uniqueness of Pakistani craftsmanship.

CEE at IBA partners with PMN

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Center for Executive Education (CEE) at IBA and the Pakistan Microfinance Network (PMN) have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to establish a partnership aimed at supporting the microfinance sector.

The collaboration will involve the development of specialized training programs for professionals in the sector, which will be facilitated by IBA's CEE. The signing ceremony took place at PMN's office in Islamabad, with attendees from IBA including Dr. S Akbar Zaidi, Executive Director IBA; Dr. Asad Ilyas, Registrar IBA; Dr.

Abdullah Zafar Sheikh, Dean School of Business IBA; Kamran Bilgrami, Director Center for Executive Education, IBA; Dr. Sharjeel Hasnie, and team from IBA. Mr. Ali Basharat, Head of Operations from PMN and other PMN Leadership members were also present on the occasion.

Recently, the IBA Karachi has established a new office in Islamabad expanding its nationwide imprint. IBA's executive education center, known as the IBA CEE (Center for Executive Education), is currently operational at NIBAF in H-8, Islamabad.

PMN is an organization that represents major micro-

finance banks, non-banking microfinance institutions (NBMFIs), and government support programs. Through this partnership with IBA's CEE, they will deliver specialized leadership and management training programs for professionals in the microfinance sector. The MOU signing ceremony in Islamabad marked the celebration of this collaboration.

Dr. Akbar Zaidi acknowledged the significance of microfinance institutions while appreciating PMN's role as the industry's central repository of information. He also highlighted that PMN has meaningfully contributed to establishing the sector's credibility on a



global level.

Syed Mohsin Ahmad, CEO of PMN, expressed his satisfaction with the collaboration, emphasizing

the value of IBA's expertise in delivering research-based training to enhance the skills of professionals in the field.

6th Edition of LEADERS IN ISLAMABAD BUSINESS SUMMIT concluded



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Nutshell Conferences Group and Martin Dow Group, in strategic partnership with Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OICCI), and Unity Foods Limited, concluded the 6th Edition of the LEADERS IN ISLAMABAD BUSINESS SUMMIT; this year's theme was "The BIG Rethink," with a pledge to revisit and rethink the way we work and the way we live.

The second day of the Summit saw 4 sessions, which comprised 11 addresses, 2 conversations and 2 panel discussions; topics varied from the digital future to the landscape of education, and from shaping narratives to climate change.

Senator Sherry Rehman, Federal Minister for Climate Change, spoke about going green for safety and survival. "Pakistan produces plastic trash equivalent to the might of two K2 mountains annual-

ly, and having signed the plastic treaty in Paris recently, I would request at least the big hotels to get rid of the plastic bottles that they're serving water in."

In a conversation with Mosharraf Zaidi, Founder, Tabadlab, Senator Rehman pushed the local pollution agenda as strongly as the international one, and she stated that Pakistan's adaptive capacity for compliance with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is in question. Despite being a low

emitter, Pakistan is a frontline state for climate change. She defined corporate CSR as too limited for the required effect. She stressed that more needs to be done for inclusivity, and rethink is in order. She urged media organizations to stop politicizing climate change and give sufficient space to discourse around it.

Gen Zubair Mahmood Hayat, N.I. (Rtd), Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (2016- 2019), spoke on the power of narratives and raised pertinent questions about how, as a nation, Pakistanis need to build a narrative for a better future. The way our Holy Prophet PBUH changed it, the way Martin Luther King changed it, and the way Nelson Mandela changed it. "We are required to think deeply around our political, social, and economic aspects. We need to come out of our comfort zones and take up bigger ideas instead of taking baby steps. We must match our policies with execution and take ownership of our political, national, and individual narrative."

"Imagineering - The Future of Education"

proved to be an insightful dialogue. Eminent educationist Shafqat Mahmood, Former Federal Minister for Education, joined online. Dr. Amjad Waheed, Chief Executive Officer, NBP Funds and Puresh Chaudhary, Founder & President, AGAHI, also shared their insights about the changing landscape of academia and the urgency around flipping the mode to student centered.

Shafqat Mahmood stressed that the Government has to intervene: "Focus on both skill-based education and a unified national curriculum are important to reduce the divide between the haves and the have-nots, secure the future of this country by ensuring social mobility for all."

Dr. Amjad Waheed shared the worrisome statistics for the out-of-school children; "Out of the 53 million children, 23 million are out of school. Brick-and-mortar schools are not the solution with a shortage of teachers and funds." Mosharraf Zaidi summed up the conversation by asserting the fact that education cannot be a one-time discussion over a two-day

summit; it needs to be the thread that connects all discussions.

"The Digital Future - Emerging Issues" had 6 illustrious speakers delivering individual addresses by Muhammad Salman Anjum, Founder & CEO, InvoiceMate, UAE; Jouni Keranen, Executive Chairman, Kuuhubb & Partner, swissOne Capital; Oscar Ramos, General Partner, SOSV, Managing Director, Orbit Startups; Jimmy Nguyen, CEO, Blockchain for All, and Michael Foley, Regional Director, Airtel Africa. The topics ranged from Metaverse to Blockchain, as well as leadership and collaborative models. Zouhair Khaliq, Founder & General Partner, Teamup Ventures, summed up the learnings of the session in his speech.

Michael Foley spoke at length about the potential of the Metaverse and emphasized that Pakistan has immense untapped potential if it is fully explored. "Metaverse is the environment where users can immerse themselves and achieve greatness. People interact and can exchange ideas which

shows the current trends of the emerging markets."

Muhammad Salman Anjum stressed on the need to build trust between banks, investors, and SMEs so they can conduct transactions with ease. "We use Blockchain and AI, not just because these are buzz words, but because they ensure efficiency of processes and effective fraud detection. With InvoiceMate, we will be playing the role of an aggregator and would be looking after due diligence to ensure a seamless process between banks and businesses."

Jouni Keranen said; "The BIG Rethink means celebration of failures, because people miss out on successes when they refuse to take risks because they keep limiting themselves."

Oscar Ramos appreciated transformation and said that it does not happen in a vacuum. "In transformation, all aspects are impacted. The embedded financing influences health, education, sectors which are of sheer importance for all."

Jimmy Nguyen encouraged people to find new ways to learn and shared various experiences where

countries learnt from disruption. "If we look at Vietnam, e-learning came around 2006/2007 but it accelerated greatly during and due to Covid-19, and as of now there are more than 100 start-ups in Ed-tech in the country."

Zouhair Khaliq shared his optimism. "There is no dearth of hardworking people in Pakistan, and it is encouraging to see start-ups participating in the rethink. The fountain of growth in Pakistan is not the academia and the think tanks; instead, it's the start-ups that are growing like mushrooms in this country."

Another sub-theme, "Imagineering the Future," saw an array of specialists addressing the audience, including Dr. Rehan Al Taj, Founder & CEO, PXDX FZ LLC, UAE and Partner & Head of Projects, Gabriel Jobs, KSA; Kabeer Naqvi, President & CEO, U Microfinance Bank Limited; Ghanzanfar Azzam, President & CEO, Mobilink Microfinance Bank Limited; Abdul Haseeb, Managing Director, TMC; and Farhan Hassan, Head of Easypaisa Wallet Business.



In brief

World Swimming C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): A 4-member national team would feature in the World Swimming Championship scheduled to be played in Fukuoka, Japan from July 23 to 30. "Men and Women swimmers from all over the world will participate in the world swimming championship," Secretary General, Pakistan Swimming Federation (PSF), Ahmad Ali Khan told APP. He said four national swimmers including two males and as many females would represent Pakistan in the championship. "Male swimmers include Syed Muhammad Haseeb Tariq and Muhammad Aman Siddiqui while female swimmers comprise Bisma Khan and Jahara Nabi," he said. He said Pakistan Swimming Federation had prepared a plan to organize a training camp for the athletes in preparation for the World Swimming Championship. "High quality training will be provided to the players to improve their techniques and skills as per international standards," he said.

Rashid out of first two Sri Lanka ODIs

C O L O M B O (Agencies): Rashid Khan has been ruled out of the first two ODIs against Sri Lanka with a lower-back injury. The Afghanistan Cricket Board stated that "he will remain under full medical observation, and is expected to return for the final ODI on June 7". The three-match series begins on June 2, with the second game to be played two days later at the same ground. Just seven days after the ODI series, Afghanistan are scheduled to play a one-off Test against Bangladesh in Chattogram. Rashid was recently involved in the IPL, where his side Gujarat Titans lost the final to Chennai Super Kings on Monday night. He was the tournament's joint second-highest wicket-taker with 27 strikes. In Rashid's absence, Mohammad Nabi, Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Noor Ahmad will have to shoulder extra responsibility in the spin department. Noor also had a successful IPL stint for Titans, grabbing 16 wickets from 13 games at an economy of 7.82. However, he has played only one ODI and one T20I for Afghanistan. Last month, Afghanistan announced a strong 15-member squad, led by Hashmatullah Shahidi, for the Sri Lanka ODIs. Having sealed direct qualification for the upcoming ODI World Cup, Afghanistan will be looking at this series to get their preparations going for the marquee event. Sri Lanka, meanwhile, will treat it as a build-up for the Qualifier tournament in Zimbabwe, starting on June 18.

DG Sports visits Cricket Stadium

PESHAWAR (APP): Director General Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Khalid Mahmood Thursday visited ICC Cricket Stadium and Hayatabad Sports Complex to review the facilities over there, besides, directing the contractors to complete the work on the Stadium in time. Administrator Hayatabad Sports Complex and international Karate coach Shah Faisal briefed them about the facilities provided to the players, ongoing development work in the complex and the upgradation of the Hayatabad Cricket Stadium as per International Cricket Council and Pakistan Cricket Board requirements.



PARIS: Linda Noskova of the Czech Republic plays a shot against Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina during their second round match of the French Open tennis tournament at the Roland Garros stadium.

Coach confirms Messi's last match for PSG this weekend

PARIS (AP): Lionel Messi arrived two years ago wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with "Ici C'est Paris" (This Is Paris) — a favorite cry among Paris Saint-Germain fans — and to chants of "Messi! Messi! Messi!"

The soccer superstar will leave the team on Saturday not quite so revered.

The cheers have been replaced by jeers and boos in recent weeks at the Parc des Princes, where the World Cup winner will play his final game for the French league champion.

Christophe Galtier confirmed on Thursday that the looming end of the season is also the end of Messi's time at PSG.

Messi will bow out in their league finale against Clermont on Saturday. His

contract expires at the end of June.

"I had the privilege of coaching the best player in the history of soccer," Galtier said. "This will be his last match at the Parc des Princes, and I hope that he will receive the warmest of welcomes."

PSG recruited Messi in August 2021 with the ambition to finally win the Champions League. The team is still waiting.

Although PSG won its record-extending 11th French league title last weekend, it again exited Europe's top tournament in the round of 16.

Messi's adventure in France has been bitter-sweet. In spite of pretty good statistics, he has been embodying the team's shortcomings in

the view of many PSG fans who have repeatedly whistled his name sarcastically in recent weeks.

After struggling to adapt to the French league — the seven-time Ballon d'Or winner scored only six league goals in his first 26 games — Messi improved this season as he developed an efficient understanding with forward Kylian Mbappe.

In 31 league matches, the 35-year-old Messi has 16 goals and delivered as many assists. In all competitions, Messi netted 21 times and had 20 assists for PSG.

"This year, he has been an important part of the team, always available, always committed during training sessions," Galtier said. "I don't think any of

the comments or criticisms are justified."

Despite Galtier's support, PSG's appreciation of Messi has not always been so positive.

Last month, the club suspended him following an unauthorized trip to Saudi Arabia. Messi has a commercial contract with Saudi Arabia to promote tourism and has been linked with a lucrative move there at the end of the season.

There has also been talk of a return to Barcelona, where he spent the majority of his career, or to the United States to play in MLS.

Messi arrived at Barcelona at age 13 and left having won 35 titles. He helped the club win the four Champions Leagues, 10 Spanish leagues, and seven Copa del Reys.

Paralympic Games begin as 250 Children's with different Abilities turn-up

PESHAWAR (APP): Colorful Paralympic Games under the aegis of District Sports Officer and District Administration Peshawar got underway here at the historical Tehmas Khan Football Stadium with more than 260 Children, both male and female athletes with different abilities turned up.

The Children with different abilities are taking part in 12 different Games from nine institutions working in Peshawar that are related to the Children With Different Abilities including Special Education Complex Intellectual Challenged Children, Hayatabad, Govt of KP Special Education Complex (IPCC), Govt Girls Institute for Children hearing speech Yakatoot, Peshawar, Govt Institute for Challenged Children Boys, Center for Intellectually and Physically Challenged Children Pajagai, Special Education Complex (CHSI), Govt Institute for Challenged Children with hearing and speech impairment, Govt Education Complex-Phase-5, Peshawar.

The festival was a colorful event at Tahmas Khan Football Stadium in Peshawar. It started with the special guest Commissioner Peshawar Muhammad Zubair Khan formally

cutting the ribbon. On this occasion, he was accompanied by Secretary Sports Captain (ret'd) Mushtaq Ahmed, DG Sports Captain (ret'd) Khalid Mahmood, Director Female Games Rashida Ghaznavi, Director Sports Azizullah Khan, Deputy Commissioner Peshawar Shah Fahad, Additional Deputy Commissioner Peshawar Muhammad Imran Khan, Assistant Commissioner Rao Hashim, Assistant Commissioner Junaid Khan, International Cricketer Muhammad Haris, District Youth Officer Sajid Afridi and District Sports Officer Peshawar Miss Gul Rukh and other important personalities were present in the sports festival.

More than 250 children from different Educational Institutions working for Children with Different Abilities are participating in 12 different Games like Football, Standing Cricket, Wheelchair Cricket, Badminton, Table Tennis, Weightlifting, Race, Ludo, Tug of War, Sack Race.

Speaking on this occasion, Peshawar Commissioner Mohammad Zubair Khan said that the purpose of this event is to encourage these children and to convey the message that these children are not less than anyone else. There

is enough talent in these children, he said, adding, "The children get encouragement that they are not disabled and they are also an important part of this society. He said that these children also have the right to the state and various activities will be started for the welfare of these children while such events would also be organized on a regular basis.

The event will be held continuously in the future. During the opening ceremony, these children also performed a beautiful March Past with national athlete Faiza Shakir leading all nine contingents. Earlier, the ceremony started with the recitation from the Holy Quran by class 7th student Uzair, followed by Naat presented by class 9th student Ali Rehman and some of the melodious national songs sung by Nouman, and Yasir.

In the Tug-of-War matches played on the opening day, the children of the Government School for the Blind Nishtarabad Peshawar defeated the team of Special Education Complex, while the female Tug-of-War competitions, Yaka Tut defeated Pajagai. Shoaib was declared the best player of the Games who scored 57 individual scores including five sixes and five boundaries besides taking three wickets.

French Open 2023 Rybakina beats Linda Noskova at Roland Garros

PARIS (Agencies): Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina underlined why she is among the French Open favourites with a convincing win over rising Czech star Linda Noskova.

Kazakhstan's Rybakina won 6-3 6-3 against the 18-year-old to move into the third round on the Paris clay.

Rybakina, 23, showed her ability on the red dirt by winning the Italian Open title last week and this was her eighth successive victory on the surface.

The fourth seed will play Spain's Sara Sorribes Tormo in the last 32.

Rybakina is part of the emerging 'big three' on the WTA Tour, alongside Poland's Iga Swiatek and Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka, with the trio having won the past four Grand Slam titles between them.

They are the leading players on the WTA Tour this season, although the Kazakh is still fourth in the 52-week rankings - behind American Jessica Pegula - after not receiving points for winning Wimbledon last year.

Rybakina reached the Australian Open final in January, losing to Sabalenka, but showed with the win against Noskova she looks capable of going far at Roland Garros.

Her best performance came in 2021 when she reached the quarter-finals. Top seed Swiatek, the defending champion, continues her bid for a third French Open title when she faces American world number 102 Claire Liu later on Thursday.

Sabalenka, 25, is already through to the third round, earning another straight-set win when she beat compatriot Iryna Shymanovich on Wednesday.

Casper Ruud through to third round

Fourth seed Casper Ruud moved into the French Open third round with a four-set victory over Italy's Giulio Zeppieri. The Norwegian, 24, was in control early on and after being forced into a fourth set, he rallied to secure a 6-3 6-2 4-6 7-5 win.

Ruud is chasing a first Grand Slam title after losing in the finals at the US Open and Roland Garros last year. He will face Argentine Thiago Agustín Tirante or Zhang Zhizhen of China in the next round.

After breaking early in the first two sets, Ruud struggled for rhythm in the third and a fired-up Zeppieri won it with his first break of the match.

Ruud got the break in the fourth and, serving for the match for the second time, sealed the win in three hours and four minutes.

German 22nd seed Alexander Zverev, a semi-finalist for the past two years, is in action later on Thursday when he takes on Slovakia's Alex Molcan in the night match on court Philippe Chatrier - the same venue where he made such a painful exit last year when an ankle injury forced him to retire from his semi-final against Rafael Nadal.

Americans Taylor Fritz and Frances Tiafoe, the ninth and 12th seeds respectively, also have second-round matches on Thursday.

Jabbar Bhatti gearing up to attempt Nanga Parbat on Saturday

ISLAMABAD (APP): Renowned Pakistani mountaineer Lt Col (R) Dr Jabbar Bhatti on Saturday will embark on the expedition to conquer 8,126-metre Nanga Parbat, the world's ninth highest peak, located in Diamer, Gilgit-Baltistan.



"I along with other four members of my outfit will depart from Islamabad to attempt the peak," Jabbar told APP on Thursday.

The other four members of Jabbar's team include Asif Bhatti, Dr Naveed, Saad Muhammad and Faheem Pasha. With a death probability of 21%, Nanga Parbat continues to claim its place in the top five most dangerous mountains in the world. Till now 85 of the climbers have died while attempting it.

"I'm well aware of the challenges. The temperature may drop from -35C to -40 C, while the wind can blow at a speed above 300 kph. But I feel myself well in shape and fully prepared for the task. This is what a mountaineer should always be ready to face," he added.

Jabbar's batchmates from Faisalabad Medical College remember him nurturing his urge to climb mountains but not at the expense of his education. He surprised his fellow batchmates in 1981, when he as a final year student opted for a two-week climbing course through Alpine Club of Pakistan, yet ended up achieving The Best Graduate Award in MBBS.

The next few years were to define his future. In 1982 he joined the Pakistan Army and in 1983 he attended a climbing course at the celebrated French National School of Mountaineering (ENSA). In 1984 all of a sudden, he ended up filling a vacant slot of military liaison officer with an expedition.

This very expedition, Gasherbrum-I & II, was led by the world's renowned

Austrian female Olympian arrives in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Four-time Austrian female Olympic judoka Sabrina Filzmoser is arriving in Pakistan on Friday to attempt K2 (8,611-metre) the world's second highest peak, a Pakistan Judo Federation (PJF) official said on Thursday.

"She intends to ride on bicycle on Sunday from Islamabad to K2 Base Camp via Skardu before climbing K2," Masood Ahmed, the vice president of PJF told APP.

The 43-year-old Austrian, who owns two world bronze medals and as many European titles in judo in her division (-57kg), did a similar project in May last year on Mount Everest by successfully reaching atop the world's highest peak.

She is also the Chair of World Judo Athletes Commission and Climate Ambassador of IJF.

"En route from Islamabad to K2, she will be meeting various judo clubs as part of her campaign to promote this sport.

"While on her return (from K2) she has consented to impart training to female judokas in Islamabad," Masood added. According to Masood, it would be for the first time that a judo personality of this stature is visiting Pakistan and will be training female judokas after completion of her expedition.

"She has been world number one, claiming two medals from the world championships besides lifting European champion title twice. Our promising athletes will learn the skills and get valuable tips from her," he said. As an IJF Climate Ambassador, Sabrina and has made it her mission to live true to that role. Through her activities she is contributing to educate people about the serious issue of climate change.

PSO to sponsor top ranked Ibrahim Mohib of Pakistan Army in National, Int'l Squash events



PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan State Oil (PSO) is going to sponsor Pakistan No. 1 top ranked squash player Ibrahim

Mohib of Pakistan Army in the national and international events in and around the world, former World Champion Mohib

Ullah Khan told this while talking to APP here on Thursday.

Mohib Ullah Khan, a elder brother of squash

wizard Jansher Khan informed that during his meeting with Managing Director Pakistan State Oil Syed Muhammad Taha, he confirmed that Ibrahim Mohib of the Pakistan Army would get full sponsorship from the Pakistan State Oil either in the national or in the international events besides providing all the playing gears including rackets, shoes, uniform, balls and ensuring facilities of proper diet during his various outings.

Ibrahim Mohib, a promising player of the Mohib Ullah Squash Academy run by Pakistan Sports Board since 2006 wherein the academy produced prominent players in both the junior and senior ranking at national and international levels.

He said a key support has been extended by the Pakistan Sports Board Mohib Ullah Khan

Squash Academy from time to time and coaches including Pervaz Ali, Adil Khan and Head Coach Shehzad Mohib who are playing key role in promoting squash besides training and coaching the promising upcoming players in different age groups including U9, U11, U13, U15 and U17.

When contacted his coach Shehzad Mohib, he said, it is certainly a new beginning that Pakistan's top lubricant company and a brand name like Pakistan State Oil is sponsoring squash players, both for the national and international events.

He said with such sponsorship, Ibrahim Mohib, who belongs from a legendary squash family like his uncle Jansher Khan, his grandfather Mohib Ullah Khan, would get much needed international exposure. He said international exposure is key to

promote the game of squash and its players.

Ibrahim Mohib, who is currently National U17 No. 1, but he has achieved top position in the age group of U11, U13, U15 and now holding the top ranking position in the U17 by playing for Pakistan. Ibrahim Mohib either held the top position or remained runners-up in various age groups national junior events.

He said looking after his current performance, the Pakistan State Oil came up with such sponsorship. He said sponsoring Ibrahim Mohib or other squash players means providing services to the country from Pakistan State Oil.

He said hopefully after Ibrahim Mohib, PSO would extend support to other players holding the top ranking position in other age groups. Former World Champion Mohib

Ullah appreciated the Managing Director Pakistan State Oil for extending sponsorship to Ibrahim Mohib.

Mohib Ullah Khan, who is the founder of the PSB Mohib Ullah Squash Academy, which a key in producing international players in squash, also lauded the efforts of the Mohsin Ali Mangi, Chief Strategy Officer Pakistan State Oil and Mansoor Khan, General Manager PSO for the positive role toward promoting squash in the country.

Talking about the initiative taken by PSO, Mohib Ullah, also thanked Brig. Ahmad Saeed, Director Sports Army Control Board, for supporting all games particularly squash that is why the players of Army had given excellent performance in the recently concluded 34th National Games Quetta.



In brief

ICT admin responding

ISLAMABAD (APP): Under the guidance of Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon, the administration of Islamabad is responding proactively to the effects of heavy rainfall in the region. According to the Meteorological Department, Islamabad is expected to experience more rain in the upcoming days. In light of the forecast, Assistant Commissioners and staff from the Rescue Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI) have been instructed to be present in the field, actively assessing the situation. Deputy Commissioner Irfan Nawaz Memon said the ICT administration of Islamabad was fully committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of its residents during adverse weather conditions. He emphasized the importance of measures taken beforehand to address potential challenges. He noted that the water level in the drains passing through the slums of E11, G9, H13, I9, F7, and G7 remained normal and under control. The DC said in the event of any emergency, dedicated teams for rescue, emergency response, and disaster management were on high alert. These teams are equipped with dewatering sets to swiftly address any complaints received, he added.

CTP lodges 36 FIRs against encroachers

RAWALPINDI (APP): City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi, on the directives of Deputy Inspector General Traffic, Punjab Mirza Faran Baig, removed encroachments from the city roads by taking action against the rules violators, said a CTP spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that CTO was ensuring smooth flow of traffic on city roads as per the vision of the Inspector General of Police, Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar. CTP conducted operations under the supervision of Commissioner Rawalpindi Division and City Traffic Officer, Rawalpindi and cleared several areas while 36 FIRs were also lodged against encroachers during last month, he said. Over 186 hand-carts were also confiscated while a large number of encroachments were removed in operations conducted with the help of the departments concerned, he said. The spokesman said that CTP issued 2426 challan tickets to violators of no parking and 2349 to those creating hindrances for other road users.

Police foil drugs smuggling bid

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) on Thursday foiled an attempt to smuggle a large quantity of drugs near Burhan Interchange on the Islamabad-Peshawar Motorway, recovering 17 kg of opium and 41 kg of hashish. According to an NHMP spokesperson, the officers signalled a suspicious vehicle coming from Peshawar to stop, but the driver fled the scene. The NHMP officers chased the suspicious vehicle and near Burhan Interchange, the driver escaped the scene while leaving the vehicle behind on the road. During a search huge quantity of drugs was recovered from the suspected vehicle. The search for the escaped driver continued, the spokesman added. The beat commander of NHMP was also present at the spot along with the force during the operation. The recovered drugs were handed over to ANF Attock after the completion of the legal procedure.



ISLAMABAD: H.E. Dr. Riina Kionka, Ambassador of the European Union (EU) to Pakistan calls on the Federal Minister for Economic Affairs, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq.

Minister for early dredging, desilting of all nullahs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Caretaker Provincial Minister Housing and Public Health Engineering, Barrister Syed Azfar Ali Nasir Thursday directed Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) to complete the dredging and desilting projects of all nullahs by June 30 to ensure drainage of water in case of heavy rains. The minister directed WASA officials in a meeting held here at the Commissioner's Office, where he was given a detailed briefing on different ongoing projects and the performance of different departments.

Commissioner Rawalpindi Liaquat Ali Chatha, Deputy Commissioner, Rawalpindi, Hasan Waqar Cheema and heads of all the departments concerned

participated in the meeting.

Later, addressing a press conference, the minister informed that on the special directives of the Punjab Chief Minister, the performance of the government departments was being reviewed.

"We are striving to improve individual performance of the government officials through effective monitoring," he said adding, efforts were also being made to find solutions to the problems being faced by the government departments".

He said visits were being conducted in all the divisions so that hindrances if any in the public welfare projects could be removed.

"We have to perform our professional responsibilities with dedication and hard work for public wel-

fare," he said adding, the doors of the government officers should always be opened for the citizens.

He directed Deputy Commissioner, Rawalpindi to launch a grand operation to remove encroachments from all city areas and zero tolerance policy should be adopted against encroachments. He was informed that security cameras had been installed on the cash boxes at 72 shrines (Darbars) being managed by the Aqaf Department.

The Minister while talking about the May 9 incidents informed that eight vehicles of Rescue-1122, which were being used for the public welfare, were burnt. Metro Stations were also burnt and damaged in Rawalpindi which would be rehabilitated at a cost of one billion rupees, he added.

'World now acknowledging Pakistani youth expertise in IT'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication Syed Amin Ul Haque on Thursday said that World now acknowledging Pakistani youth expertise in Information Technology and Telecom sector.

"Pakistan's skilled IT experts, time zone, and fluent English speaking with excellent accents have unique importance in Digital World. The World is now openly acknowledging the expertise of Pakistani youth in information technology. "The minister expressed these views during meetings with different International delegations on the sidelines of GITEX Africa Digital Summit, and the Global tech exhibition being held in Morocco from May 31 to June 2.

The meetings discussed global challenges including revolutionary initiatives in the IT & Telecom sector by the Government of Pakistan said a news release received here.

The Minister also held an important meeting with Secretary General Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO), Ms. Deemah Al-Yahya. During the meeting, both sides discussed bilateral issues and measure to enhance digital cooperation between the member states of DCO.

Sheikh Rashid excoriates rulers for 'avarice'

RAWALPINDI (NNI): State was of paramount importance in state and politics, said Sheikh Rashid — the head of his own faction of Muslim League — but alleged that the way the sanctity of home had been trampled and bribes demanded in police stations was very unfortunate.

In a series of tweets posted on Thursday, Mr Rashid claimed that everyone from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to Australia and from China to Saudi Arabia was advising the government to act wisely but the greed of being the ruler had reached a dreadful level. The government had proved to be a complete disaster and the dollar wasn't available even for Rs320, said the former interior minister on a day which saw a historic single day decline in the value of greenback against the Pakistan rupee.

He said that a joint survey of Pakistan Railways and the Provincial Government was also conducted in 2013-14 to identify accident-prone/vulnerable un-manned level crossings across the country.

The official said that it also mentioned Section 12 of the Railway Act of 1890 that the district administration or road authority should bear the expenses for the upgrade of these unmanned level crossings.

manned and autonomous million and private bodies Rs 5685.736 million.

Pakistan Railways has upgraded as many as 167 vulnerable un-manned level crossings to manned level crossings, out of 550 which are identified by the department over the entire railway network last year.

"The relevant provincial government provided the finances to Pakistan Railways for the upgradation of un-manned level crossings in the country," he added. He said the present government was taking several steps including the up-gradation of unmanned and vulnerable railway level crossings across the country in collaboration with respective provincial governments.

The official said there were two types of level crossings over the Pakistan Railways network, un-

manned and manned level crossings, adding that the un-manned level crossings were without gate leaves. "There are a total of 1,565 unmanned level crossings over the entire railway network and as per railway policy in vogue, the up-gradation of any unmanned or manned level crossing is the responsibility of road owning authority," he added.

He said that a joint survey of Pakistan Railways and the Provincial Government was also conducted in 2013-14 to identify accident-prone/vulnerable un-manned level crossings across the country.

The official said that it also mentioned Section 12 of the Railway Act of 1890 that the district administration or road authority should bear the expenses for the upgrade of these unmanned level crossings.

Rescue-1122 put on high alert to cope with possible flood

RAWALPINDI (APP): The emergency service, Rescue-1122, which is fully equipped to cope with the possible flood in Nullah Lai, has been put on high alert to cope with emergencies.

According to a Rescue-1122 spokesman, the rescuers deployed in low-lying areas particularly in Katarian, Gawalmandi, Sowar and other low-lying areas would remain on high alert round the clock to provide timely emergency response, medical treatment and transportation facilities to possible flood victims.

The Rescue-1122 has also requested people not to stand on the banks in low-lying areas along Nullah Lai during flood and follow instructions given by the flood control room. However, City District Government Rawalpindi has also completed all the arrangements to cope with the flood situation.

According to a district administration spokesman, the Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chatha had directed the authorities concerned to complete Nullah Lai cleanliness work before start of Monsoon rains.

The small drains should also be cleaned so that water in the Nullah Lai during monsoon rains could flow smoothly.

Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) Rawalpindi spokesman informed that the Agency on the directives of Caretaker

Punjab Provincial Minister Barrister Syed Azfar Ali Nasir had launched a special campaign to clean sewerage lines and using winch machines to fully clean the lines.

Special arrangements had been made following Meteorological Department's warning of above normal rains during Monsoon, he said and informed that WASA had kicked off an emergency operation to clean sewerage lines with the help of modern winch machines which were introduced to fully clean the sewer lines.

The spokesman informed that Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chatha and Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi Hasan Waqar Cheema during a visit to Fuji Colony had inspected the ongoing cleaning of sewage lines work.

Cleaning of sewage lines with modern machines by WASA is a very good initiative, the Commissioner said.

Section-144 had been imposed around Nulla Lai and strict action would be taken against those found dumping garbage and solid waste in Nullah Lai in violation of orders of the district administration, he added.

He further said that WASA had finalized the Monsoon 2023 plan like every year which included cleaning of sewerage lines, annual cleaning of Nullah Lai as well as inspection of WASA machinery.

Pakistan, law nation's red line not Imran Khan: Sherry Rehman

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman on Thursday said that the country and its law were the red line of the nation and not Imran Khan who was trying to defend the worst attack of May 9.

In a series of tweets, the Minister criticized Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan for his recent remarks and adamant attitude towards the violence of May 9th. Senator Rehman said that since May 9, Imran Khan has changed his position several times on violent protests and attacks on sensitive installations.

He has adopted an apologetic attitude regarding May 9 and his attitude would lead the country to a new tragedy, she

added. The minister said that defending May 9 was tantamount to complicity in these attacks as Imran Khan should have apologized to the nation for these shameful incidents.

She regretted that Imran Khan was still defending May 9. He was arrested in an open and shut case of \$60 billion alleged misappropriation, and not in a bogus case, Sherry Rehman said.

"How did he call his arrest 'Red Line'? Was Imran Khan above this country and the law?," the Minister queried. She reprimanded Imran Khan and demanded that he should stop thinking of himself as the "Red Line" of the country. She said that there was no place for violence, chaos, and divisive politics in the country.

Benazir Nashonuma Program reaches over 659,500 women and children

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) has served over 659,500 women and children under the Benazir Nashonuma initiative until now through provision of health and nutrition services. Among the total beneficiaries, a total of 320020 pregnant and lactating women (PLW) and 339480 children have been facilitated so far.

According to an official source, these beneficiaries had been served through the network of over 470 Nashonuma Centers across the country.

The Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) intervention of Benazir Nashonuma was designed in August 2020 to increase the uptake of Health and Nutrition services of its beneficiaries.

The primary objectives of the program were to

prevent stunting in children under two years of age, improve weight gain of pregnant women during pregnancy, reduce anemia and micronutrient deficiencies and prevent low birth weight.

World Food Programme (WFP) is the lead implementing partner for Ehsaas Nashonuma.

The programme aims to address stunting among pregnant and lactating women (PLW) and their children less than two years of age through the provision of additional cash of Rs. 2,000 per quarter per PLW and boy child and PKR 2,500/- per quarter per girl child of BISP beneficiary families.

In return, mothers are required to attend regular antenatal health checks and awareness sessions during pregnancy, consume specialized nutri-

tious food (SNF), and take their children for immunization and regular health checks.

According to the statistics, Pakistan's high rates of malnutrition (40.2 percent stunting, 28.9 percent underweight, and 17.7 percent wasting) are indicative of an ongoing child nutrition crisis.

Such levels of malnutrition rank Pakistan as the second-highest burden country in the region.

The first 1,000 days of a child's life are a window of opportunity to lay a strong foundation for later achievements.

This timeframe is a period of enormous change characterized by a high degree of plasticity in the child's neurological development.

Investments in the early years of life are the foundation of human capital, and human capital is a key

106 social media accounts blocked on request of Islamabad police

ISLAMABAD (APP): Around 106 social media accounts have been blocked on the request of Islamabad police for promoting sectarianism, and propaganda against state institutions. According to an Islamabad Police spokesperson, the step was taken in response to the findings of the Provisional of Violent Extremism Unit (PVE) of the capital police's Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD).

It is worth mentioning here that PVE is monitoring the social media accounts involved in different illegal activities,

including sectarianism, anti-state, terrorism, and anti-Islam. Police said that the unit had recommended to Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to block 203 accounts, out of which 106 had been blocked by now. In this regard, separate requests were sent by the Counter-Terrorism Department to the FIA for the closure of each account with the details, along with screenshots of illegal activities. Following the request of Islamabad police, a total of 106 social media accounts have been blocked.

ANF recovers 243 kg drugs in seven operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in their ongoing operations against drug smugglers conducted raids in different areas of the country and managed to recover 243 kg drugs besides netting eight accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday.

He informed that in an operation near Peshawar Motorway Toll Plaza, ANF recovered 1.8 kg opium and 19.2 kg charras from secret cavities of a car. Two accused residents of Buner were also rounded up during the operation.

In a joint operation at Faisalabad International

Airport, ANF and ASF recovered 3.2 kg Ice drug from the possession of a Sharjah-bound passenger, going on flight no G9-563.

In third operation at Allama Iqbal International Airport, Lahore, four charras-filled capsules were recovered from the possession of a Sharjah-bound passenger, resident of Bannu, going on flight no PA-412.

In fourth operation at Jinnah International Airport, Karachi, over 1240 grams Ice drug concealed in jam bottles were recovered from the possession of a Doha-bound passenger, going on flight no QR-0605. The spokesman

informed that in fifth operation conducted near Gadap Town, Karachi, ANF recovered 172.8 kg charras, concealed in secret cavities made in fuel tank of a truck. Two accused including an Afghan national were sent behind the bar.

In sixth operation near Kucklak bypass, Quetta, five kg charras was recovered from the possession of an accused.

In seventh operation conducted in Panjur area, 40 kg charras concealed in bushes was recovered.

Separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Education, Professional Training Rana Tanveer Hussain in a group photograph with students during his visit at Pakistan Sweet Home.

Minister met local officials

KABUL (Agencies): Acting Mines and Petroleum Minister, Sheikh Shahabuddin Delawar, during his visit to the Northern provinces, met with local officials of Mines of Sar-i-Pul Province. The officials of Mines and Petroleum of Sar-i-Pul shared administration reports of the department with Acting Mines and Petroleum Minister, Sheikh Shahabuddin Delawar, a statement said released by the Ministry.

The Frontier Post

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ARA Director in Turkey

KABUL (Agencies): Director of the Afghanistan Railway Authority (ARA) Mullah Bakht-ul-Rahman Sharafat will take part at the meeting of the Middle East sector of the International Union of Railways (UIC), a statement from the authority said. ARA highlighted the importance of Mullah Sharafat's attendance at the UIC meeting as it would enhance collaboration and exchange of expertise in the railway sector, according to the statement.

Afghan authorities continue to intensify repressing women, girls

KABUL (Khaama Press): The head of the women's rights division at Human Rights Watch said, on the one hand, the Taliban are persistently pleading for recognition and inflow of international aid, and on the other hand, they continue to intensify repressing Afghan women and girls.

Heather Barr, interim co-director of the Women's Rights Division at Human Rights Watch on Wednesday said on Twitter that the Taliban are reluctant for meaningful talks.

Reuters news agency has revealed that Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, Qatar's Prime Minister met with the Taliban supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada in southern Kandahar province on May 11.

The group's supreme leader Mullah Hibatullah



Akhundzada is reluctant to interact with the international community, Reuters reported quoting from local sources.

Barr said on Twitter she does not think this meeting signals Taliban interest to engage with the international community. She believes this issue has been raised mostly at a meeting of a senior Qatari official with Hebatullah Akhundzada.

Previously, the Taliban spokesperson had said that Mullah Hassan Akhund, the group's acting deputy prime minister in a meeting

with his Qatari counterpart had urged Qatari officials to play a decisive role in building trust between Afghanistan and the international community.

Over the past 20 months, Taliban leadership has continuously issued restrictive orders against Afghan women and girls' rights to education and work. In the latest decree, the group has barred female staff from working for the United Nations agencies and aid organizations.

Despite close relations between Qatar and the Taliban, Doha has criticized the gender policies of the Taliban against women. Meanwhile, Qatar's foreign minister had previously said that the Taliban's restrictive policies barring women's education and work are not acceptable for Qatar.

Recruitment test for Ombudsmen held in Kabul city

KABUL (TOLOnw): A spokesman for the Ministry of Vice and Virtue said that in an ombudsman exam more than 250 people participated, and it's expected that 200 people will be hired as ombudsmen for the ministry.

"They will be recruited in 22 PD, where we already have ombudsmen, now their number will increase. On this basis, 200 ombudsmen will be recruited in 22 PD of Kabul city," said Mohammad Sadiq Akif Mahajar.

Meanwhile, the academic deputy of Kabul University said that in order to implement the Islamic system, the presence of ombudsmen in the country is a serious need.

"In every sector of life to implement the Islamic system we need ombudsmen," said Mohammad Ashraf Ghirat, academic deputy of Kabul University.

The National Examinations Committee said that the exam will be given transparently.

"Nobody can assist someone fail or succeed, nobody can increase (an applicant's) numbers, transparency is very important for us," said Abdul Baqi Haqqani, head of the National Examinations Committee.

The National Examinations Committee said that it's the first exam of the ombudsmen and it is expected that this examination will also be held in other provinces.

Kandalan residents deprived of telecom facility

QALA-I-NAW (Pajhwok): Some residents of Kandalan area in north-western Badghis province have complained against the none-availability of telecommunication service and asked relevant authorities to address their problem.

Kandalan locality is situated 20 kilometres from Qala-i-Naw, the provincial capital, where around 2,000 families have been living and have no access to telecommunication services.

Bismillah, the resident of Chashma Sanjd locality, told Pajhwok Afghan News he travel one hour on feet to reach to a location where mobile signals are available.

Mohammad Noor, the resident of Angirak locality also complained against the lack of telecommunication service and said he had to walk for 50 minutes in order to find mobile signals.

He asked the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology and other relevant authorities to install mobile signals towers.

Mohammad another resident of the area, said they shared their issue with the government authorities but no action had been taken so far.

"During emergency situation we had to climb mountains to get signals, we ask the government to address our problems."

Allauddin Rohani, head of the Afghanistan Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (ATRA), acknowledged problems in the area of telecommunication in Badghis and added due to mountainous terrain in the province the telecommunication facility has been provided to all the areas.

He said currently 60 percent people in Badghis had access to telecommunication service and added after receiving application from the local people they will act for the installation of telecom towers.

This comes that most people in Badghis have no access to basic services and people in the provincial capital and other areas also complained against the quality of telecom services.

Acting PM urges for providing better services to citizens of Balkh

KABUL (Agencies): The Acting Prime Minister of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan met Balkh province Governor Haji Mohammad Yusuf Wafa at Sepadar Palace.

Balkh Governor shared details of his administration and the security situation of the province with Acting Prime Minister Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, a statement said released by Arg.

He said that the provincial administration in Balkh has better coordination with the local people and other organs and they strive to address the problems of the people in time.

For his part, Mawlawi Kabir thanked the governor of Balkh for the good coordination of the local bodies and said that serving people



better is the policy of the Islamic Emirate, which has been implemented to a large extent.

He gave necessary

instructions to the governor for better management affairs in Balkh, the statement added.

Meanwhile, on the day,

the acting prime minister of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan had a meeting with the governor of Kunduz.

IEA welcomes World Bank report on Afghanistan's economy

KABUL (Agencies): The Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) on Thursday welcomed the recent World Bank report on Afghanistan's economy.

The office says that facts related to the country's economic situation are reflected in the report.

Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar's office said in a statement that "the Islamic Emirate believes that if the international community pays attention to positive interaction instead of imposing restrictions, Afghanistan will progress further in the economic field and

the burden of responsibility on the shoulders of the international community will be reduced." "If all international organizations such as the World Bank present a true picture of the concrete realities of Afghanistan, the way of positive interaction with the Islamic Emirate will be paved," the statement read.

The World Bank report states that Afghanistan's exports and imports have increased, monetary stability has been maintained, and domestic revenues have increased.

According to the report, during January to April 2023, imports stood at \$2.4

billion, reflecting a 27 percent growth against the same period last year.

Iran remains the most significant import origin country (21 percent), followed by Pakistan (18 percent), China (16 percent), and the United Arab Emirates (13 percent), the World Bank reported.

However, the Jan-Apr 2023 merchandise trade deficit at \$1.8 billion is 38 percent higher than the \$1.3 billion observed in the comparable period of 2022.

Unofficial data for January to April this year indicates that Afghanistan's customs show total exports reached \$0.6 billion — a 4

percent rise compared to the same period in 2022.

The export growth during Jan-Apr 2023 can primarily be attributed to an increase in the exports of coal, by 13 percent, and textiles by 14 percent, the report stated.

Pakistan remains Afghanistan's largest export market accounting for 63 percent of total exports, followed by India (26 percent). Exports to Pakistan are mainly food and coal. Coal exports to Pakistan amounted to \$140.7 million in Jan-Apr 2023 — 13 percent higher than the coal exports in the comparable period last year.

Female street vendors in Kunduz ask for job training, work

KUNDUZ (TOLOnews): Women who sell second-hand clothes in Kunduz complained about the bad economic situation.

These women asked the government to provide them with training and jobs.

"If they provided work, or a tailoring workshop, we would be happy. Why not tailoring? It is good and has a good income," said Marina. "There is no income from our work. We come here but there is no work to do. The work situation is so bad, we want good work that has a good income," said Naziya, a seller.

"I have been a tenant for 23 years, I am a widow, I am sick, I am not receiving treatment, I have a sick child, he cannot work, these are my problems," said Khasiyat Mah, a clothes seller.

Meanwhile, the head of the information and culture department of Kunduz said



that if when the cases of these women are reviewed they are considered deserving, help will be provided to them. "Needy people in our province, if they are

women or children, are investigated and eligible people are registered. After that, they will be helped," said Matiullah Rohani.

According to United

Nations reports, after the restrictions on women's work in NGOs and broader restrictions on women's rights, many women are jobless.

Agriculture minister says sector will only grow if its mechanized

KABUL (Agencies): Afghanistan's agricultural sector will only develop once the industry has been mechanized, the minister of agriculture and livestock said.

Speaking at an event to mark Farming Day, at one of Afghanistan's research farms, Atallah Omari said that although Afghanistan is an agricultural country, there are many problems in this sector. "Unless farmers, investors and members of the research center of the agriculture sector work in coordination with each other, the country's agricultural system cannot have a positive result. We have started efforts to increase coordination and use seeds that have been analyzed and certified in the country in order to achieve self-sufficiency in terms of wheat and other agricultural products," Omar said.

Other officials from the ministry said they are providing farmers with approved seed in order to help them increase their yields. Currently, the ministry has promoted 46 types of certified seeds. "We have a high capacity in the analysis and certification of agri-

cultural products, and various international organizations cooperate with us in this area. We hope that the ministry will distribute land for the development of research farms," Nusratullah Talha, head of the Research Institute of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, said.

Data shows that Afghanistan needs 6.3 million metric tons of wheat annually, and it is expected that 5.2 million metric tons of wheat will be harvested in the country this year.

According to experts, if farmers do not use domestically certified seed, the grain shortage problem in the country will worsen.

"We need years of work in the regulation of the seed certification sector, and we are active in this sector, but farmers still do not use certified seeds," said Mohammad Qasim Obadi, a university professor.

The agriculture and livestock sector in Afghanistan is still largely conducted traditionally and despite opportunities offered over the years to invest in agriculture, not much attention was paid to this sector.

27% of Afghan citizens regularly use tobacco: MoPH

KABUL (TOLOnews): On World No Tobacco Day, the Ministry of Public Health said that twenty-seven percent of Afghan citizens regularly use tobacco, of which nearly three percent are women.

According to this ministry, more than forty-five percent of deaths in Afghanistan are caused by non-infectious diseases.

"Twenty-seven percent of Afghan citizens regularly use tobacco, and only 2.6 of them are women," said Mohammad Hassan Ghiyacy, deputy of Planning and Policy of the Ministry of Public Health.

According to the Chamber of Commerce and Investment, annually nearly a thousand containers of tobacco are imported to the country from various ports.

"Sometimes our friends who come from outside, our neighbors, may bring it with them," said Mohammad Younus Momand, acting head of the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI).

The Ministry of Public Health said that many youth and children use tobacco in Afghanistan. "It has been two or three weeks that we use tobacco because of lack of work and education," said Jamshid, a Kabul resident.

"We have seen the harm of tobacco, my request to young people is to not smoke and stay away from drugs," said Ahmad, a Kabul resident. According to the numbers of the World Health Organization, every year eight million people in the world die due to the use of tobacco.

Border protection IEA main responsibility



KABUL (Agencies): The commander of the 215th Azam Army Corps, while visiting from the Iran-Afghanistan border, said that the Islamic Emirate considers set protection borders one of its main priorities and responsibility.

The commander of 215 Azam Army Corps, Alhaji Mullah Sharafuddin "Taqi", ahead of a delegation traveled to Nimroz province to

assess the checkpoints located on the border with Iran, Defense Ministry said. The commander of the 215 Azm army corps held talks with top local officials of Nimroz province to discuss further strengthening of security of borders, according to the Ministry.

Referring to the recent conflicts, the commander of the 215 Azam Army Corps said, the Islamic

Emirate pledged protection of borders as one of its main responsibility and is also devoted to establishing diplomatic ties with neighboring countries, the Ministry added.

Likewise, he called the border forces the defenders of the borders, territorial integrity, and independence of the country and promised to cooperate in addressing their problems.

Profile: Jagmohan Singh, the only Sikh in Gardez

GARDEZ (TOLOnews): Jagmohan Singh is the only Afghan Sikh living in Gardez, the center of Paktia, and he says he loves his country and will never leave.

Jagmohan Singh complained about the different views of society towards him but said he believes that if the Islamic Emirate creates shelter and places of worship and provides work, many Sikhs will return to the country.

Jagmohan Singh's family left Afghanistan. He lives in a rented room in Gardez and has a shop of herbal medicines.

"I am all alone. My whole family has gone to India. We love this country. When everyone leaves here, the country will be empty and lost," said Jagmohan Singh.

"We ask the government to provide opportunities for our people so we can build houses, shops, and a market," said Jagmohan Singh.

Nearly 500 Sikh and Hindu families were living in Shahr-e-Kuhna in Gardez, but due to war many Sikhs were displaced to other provinces and many left Afghanistan.

Their place of worship and houses were destroyed in Shahr-e-Kuhna in Gardez. Some elders in Gardez shared good memories of Sikhs and Hindus.

"Some of them have gone to Khost and some of them to Ghazni, sometimes they came back here to their houses," said Ali Shah Khan, a Gardez resident.

"There were two groups; one of them was Sikh and the other was Hindu, and

their places of worship were separate," said Ghulam Ghawaildden, a Gardez resident.

Meanwhile, some local officials of Paktia said they honor the rights of Jagmohan Singh and they offer support. These officials said other Sikhs and Hindus of Afghanistan should return to the country.

"He is living in security, and we have provided work in this area," said Sawab Jan Islamyar, head of the Information and Culture Department of Paktia.

The alley where Jagmohan Singh has a shop used to be the place of business for many Sikhs and Hindus in the past in Gardez. Now, however, only Jagmohan Singh is left in this alley.

Water transfer to Kabul

Domestic company ready to invest in Panjshir

KABUL (Agencies): The Acting Industry and Commerce Minister, Nooruddin Azizi, met with Sayed Mohammad Toqeer, a representative of Habib Gulzar Group Company.

A representative of the Habib Gulzar Group Company said that the company is ready to invest in the transfer of Panjshir sea water to Kabul, according to the Ministry statement.

Meanwhile, the company pledged to bring (Nestle) a manufacturing branch of their companies to Afghanistan, the statement added.

For his part, Minister



Azizi welcomed the company's enthusiasm for investing in the country and stressed addressing the challenges of the mentioned company.

An estimated cost of \$3 million was measured for the transfer of this river water to Kabul, which can meet the needed potable water of Kabul residents.



KARACHI: President Dr. Arif Alvi witnessing the artifacts made by retarded children.

SC adjourns hearing on law to clip CJP's powers

— AGP says govt to review legislation

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The Supreme Court on Thursday adjourned the hearing till next week on a set of petitions against the Supreme Court (Practice & Procedure) Act, 2023, aimed at limiting the powers of the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP).

Attorney General for Pakistan Mansoor Usman Awan apprised the court that the federal government had decided to review the legislation (Supreme Court (Practice & Procedure) Act, 2023) and take into account the judiciary's advice. The 8-member larger bench

headed by CJP Umar Ata Bandial comprised Justice Ijaz Ahsan, Justice Munib Akhtar, Justice Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Ayesha Malik, Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi and Justice Shahid Waheed.

During the hearing, the CJP said the government should consult with the Supreme Court when it makes laws related to the judiciary. On April 13, the same bench had suspended the 'Supreme Court (Practice & Procedure) Act, 2023' before it was enacted.

However, on April 21, the bill did become law even as its implementation had been halted by the court.

The law envisages a three-member committee, comprising the CJP and two senior-most judges, which will via majority form benches as well as decide when to take suo motu action- powers that currently reside with the CJP alone. It also adds to the review jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, giving the right to file an appeal within 30 days of the judgement in suo motu cases.

Bilawal reaches Jordan

AMMAN (INP): Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, who has been invited by Jordan's royal family to attend a wedding function, reached Amman on Thursday morning. On June 5, the foreign minister will head to Iraq's capital Baghdad.

According to the Foreign Office (FO) spokesperson, Bilawal will visit the country on the invitation extended by his counterpart from Iraq. He elaborated that besides meeting his counterpart, the FM would also hold meetings with other government officials. Besides that, he went on to say, during his stay in Iraq, Bilawal would also pay his respects at shrines of saints. The spokesman said that apart from FO officials, several PPP leaders would also accompany the foreign minister to Iraq.

JI announces protest for Aafia release

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Amir Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Sirajul Haq has said the political engineering could not bring any solution, underlining the need for dialogue among the political forces to develop consensus on the national poll.

Addressing the JI central leadership meeting at Mansoorah on Thursday, he said that a government formed on the basis of transparent, free and fair elections could only pull the country out of current economic quagmire.

Sirajul Haq said the JI had initiated the efforts for the dialogue in the past month and it was still trying to bring the parties on table. He said the masses were the ultimate victim of the prevailing crises which was a direct result of the fight among the powerful for the protection of self-interests. He demanded the institutions stay apolitical and follow the duties assigned to them in the constitution.

He announced the countrywide protest demonstrations for the release of Dr Afia Siddiqui from the US prison, appealing to the masses to ensure their full participation in the agitation. He directed the JI workers to expedite "Dastak Mohim -Door to Door Movement" and spread the party message of corruption-free modern Islamic state among the people.

The JI chief demanded the government to provide relief to the poor in the budget instead of following the IMF directions. He called for restoration of subsidies on electricity and gas and cut in petrol prices. He said the NAB and the courts had failed to act against the looters and now the people should hold the corrupts accountable with the power of vote.

Siraj said the incumbent and former governments were equally responsible for the plight of the masses. He said Islamic system was the only solution to the country's problems. He said the masses should launch a peaceful democratic movement to get rid of the corrupt system.

The meeting congratulated Recep Tayyip Erdogan on his success in Turkey presidential polls, hoping Pak-Turk relations would further strengthen in future. It also condemned the Zhob suicide attack on the JI Amir, demanding fair investigation into the terrorist incident.

Niazi presided over a disinformation apparatus

PM directs FBR to stop illegal sale of tobacco products

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said that Imran Niazi could go to any extreme to distract attention from his culpability in the tragic events of May 9.

"Make no mistake about the evil intent behind Imran Niazi's latest ploy to defame our law enforcement agencies and police. Yet again, he is making misleading and baseless allegations of the "rights abuses" just to distract attention from his culpability in the tragic events of May 9," the prime minister said in a tweet.

"I am not surprised by his antics," Prime Minister Shehbaz said. He said that someone who could persistently use foul language against the state institutions, incite people to violence and attack the state symbols and military installations, and bring down martyrs' monuments, was capable of going to any extreme. The prime minister said that Imran Niazi presided over a disinformation apparatus that deployed fake news methodically to fool the people. "Everything about him is hate, division and lie," he remarked.

PM directs FBR to stop illegal sale of tobacco products: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Thursday directed the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) chairman to completely stop the illegal sale of cigarettes and tobacco products.

While talking to a delegation of

Pakistan Tobacco Company here, the PM said steps should be taken on emergency basis against the illegal sale of cigarettes and tobacco products. He also ordered that installation of track and trace system in all the cigarette factories in the country should be ensured by July 15.

He said the smuggling of cigarettes should be stopped, adding nobody would be allowed to cause loss to the national exchequer. He said strict action should be taken against those involved in selling of smuggled cigarettes and tobacco or those products on which taxes were evaded. Minister for Finance Ishaq Dar, Advisor to the PM Ahad Cheema, FBR chairman and high ranking officials attended the meeting.

Moreover, the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said Pakistan considered Japan as an important partner for its progress and prosperity and Japanese companies should avail the immense opportunities for investment in Pakistan.

The PM was speaking to President Toyota Asia Yoshiki Konishi and Chief Executive Officer of Indus Motors Ali Asghar Jamali who called on him here. Japan's Ambassador to Pakistan Mitsuhiro Wada, Vice Chairman Toyota Indus Motors Shinji Yanagi, Minister for Finance Ishaq Dar, Minister for Industries and Production Makhdoom Murtza Mehmood, Advisor to PM Ahad Cheema, Special Assistants to PM

Jehanzeb Khan and Tariq Bajwa and high ranking officials attended the meeting.

In a briefing, the prime minister was told that Toyota Indus Motors for the first time established a unit for the production of hybrid vehicles in Pakistan with an investment of \$100 million. PM Shehbaz Sharif welcomed the project of Toyota to produce hybrid vehicles in Pakistan.

The production of hybrid vehicles in Pakistan would decrease the import bill resulting in saving of precious foreign exchange, he said adding the government was providing all available facilities to the industries for investment in modern technologies in the country. The Japanese ambassador said leading Japanese companies were desirous of further investment in Pakistan.

During the briefing, it was told that in the current year from July, Toyota Indus Motors would start export of spare parts of vehicles and these exports would make Pakistan a part of the global supply chain. The prime minister said exports of spare parts should be enhanced by taking benefit of the capacity of the engineering sector in the country. He said it should be ensured that the spare parts for the vehicles to be sold in Pakistan should be manufactured locally. The participants of the meeting lauded the prime minister for his government's business-friendly policies.

PHC suspends arrest warrant under MPO

Prosecution approached High Court for cancellation of bails in vandalism

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Muhammad Naeem Anwar and Justice Shahid Khan has suspended arrest warrant issued by Deputy Commissioner (DC) Bajaur under Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) for Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) local leadership, on Thursday.

The counsel Muhammad Adil Khan Advocate argued that argued that DC Bajaur has issued arrest warrant of PTI's activists against local leadership including petitioner Muhammad Mehran and other in protests arranged after arrest of Imran Khan.

The counsel added that arrest's warrant of several persons issued who were not present at the locality and didn't participated in the protests. He argued that district administration is harassing PTI workers and may the petitioner can face arrest under 3MPO as imposed by DC Bajaur. The counsel requested for suspension of arrest warrant under MPO and producing of record of First Information Reports (FIRs) against petitioner.

PHC suspended arrest warrant issued by DC Bajaur on 12th May under MPO while ordered provincial government to submit reply after conclusion of arguments and adjourned further hearing date to be fix.

Although, Prosecution's department has approached PHC against release of accused involved in 9th & 10th May vandalism by Anti-terrorism Courts (ATC).

Prosecution's department has challenged bails of 310 accused while pleaded culprits were nominated directly for vandalism and arrested from the spot. The accused identified from Closed Circuit Camera Television (CCCTV) footage while identified by National Database and Registration Authority while arrested with help of Federal Investigation Agency and other law enforcement agencies, the appeal argued.

The appeal stated that accused has attacked public buildings including Election Commission of Pakistan office and burnt Radio Pakistan Peshawar center. The release of accused may cause disturbance and may cause law and order issues while pleaded PHC to cancel bails grant by ATC, the petition argued.

Meanwhile, PTI has withdrawn writ petition

seeking constitution of Joint Investigation Team (JIT) to probe 9th and 10th vandalism occurred after arrest of Imran Khan by National Accountability Bureau (NAB) from Islamabad High Court for necessary amendments.

PHC's divisional bench comprised of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Sahibzada Asadullah accepted plea for withdrawal of writ for necessary amendments. The counsel Qazi Anwar and Shah Faisal Uthmankhel advocates argued requested for establishment of JIT in lines with constituted for Panama leaks which will submit report on weekly basis before court.

The counsel requested for withdrawal of writ to incorporate further evidences in the petition because in the current plea only Peshawar was target for collection of evidence but now audios, videos and other documentary evidences are available from all over Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with applicant for amalgamation in the case. PHC has disposed-off writ petition after acceptance of withdrawal request from PTI for filing amended/fresh petition to incorporate further evidences in the case.



KARACHI: Indian fishermen on way to home at a train station after release from prison in Pakistan.

Rich tributes paid to Karnal Sher Khan Shaheed

F.P. Report

SWABI: Barrister Mian Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel, Minister for Information, PRs, Aukaf, Hajj, Religious and Minority Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on thursday paid rich tribute to Karnal Sher Khan Shaheed, the recipient of the highest military award, Nishan-i-Haider, and apologised to his family for the painful incidents of 9th May when the Kargil hero's statue was vandalised by protesters.

He visited the mausoleum of the martyred, and exchanged views with Anwar Sher Khan, Karnal Sher's elder brother. The Mardan

police, on 17th of May, had arrested an accused, Rehmatullah, from Gujar Garhi area for vandalising the statue of National hero, Karnal Sher, installed in front of the Punjab Regiment camp. Mr Feroz Jamal placed floral wreath at the grave of the martyred soldier and offered Fateha for the departed soul.

He said he had come to meet the family of Karnal Sher Khan to seek forgiveness for the tragic events that happened on 9th of May. He said Sher Khan and his family had made tremendous sacrifices for the motherland. "I felt very emotional and couldn't control my tears

while paying respect to the Shaheed, PTI goons vandalised the statue of this undisputed National hero who's even greatly honoured by those who fought", he added.

He expressed his apologies on behalf of the whole province and government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on the incident of 09th May 2023 and strongly condemn the incident. He furthered that In the 1965 Indo-Pak war, Major Raza Shah Kakakhil Sitara-e-Jurat sacrificed his life for the country and embraced martyrdom, the same blood is in our veins.

Alvi directs SRBC to pay dues to security company

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday directed the Shalimar Recording and Broadcasting Company (SRBC) to pay 10.32 million rupees outstanding dues to a company in lieu of security services, which SRBC had regretted to pay due to financial crunch.

He further directed the Secretary of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to ensure payment of outstanding dues in monthly installments within one year and, if necessary, seek approval of the competent forum within six months. These directions were given by Dr. Arif Alvi while rejecting a representation filed by SRBC against the decision of the Wafaqi Mohtasib (WM) that directed it to pay Rs 10,320,800 to a security company (the complainant company) on account of security services received from it. SRBC had admitted the outstanding dues but had expressed its inability to pay the outstanding amount, even in financial installments, due to financial constraints faced by it since 2020.

Feeling aggrieved, the security company approached the Wafaqi Mohtasib, which passed the orders in its favour. SRBC, then, filed a representation with the President, which was rejected. In his decision, the President said that it was strange that SRBC had adopted the stance before the President that it did not fall under the definition of "the Agency", which as per President's Order No. 1 of 1983 meant a Ministry, Division, Department, Commission or office of the Federal Government or a statutory corporation or other institution established or controlled by the Federal Government. He observed that SRBC was a public sector company, established under the Companies Act, 2017, and administratively controlled by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting under the Rules of Business, 1973.

Six killed in house blast

MUZAFFARGARH (PPI): At least six people including women and children were killed when a powerful explosion rocked a house in Kot Addu in Muzaffargarh District on Thursday.

Police and rescue teams were dispatched to the explosion site. According to Rescue personnel, the blast took place inside a house in Dhaira Deen Panah area of Kot Addu in which three people were also injured. Police and Rescue personnel were trying to determine the cause of the explosion. Deputy superintendent of police said the explosion took place when the scrap and other used material were being sorted out inside the house. As the bodies and the wounded persons were shifted to a hospital, the law enforcers started investigating the matter.