

KARACHI (APP): The Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee Pakistan announced on Monday that the Zil Hajj moon has been sighted in Pakistan, adding that Zil Hajj 01, 1444 A.H, will fall on June 20 (Tuesday), thus Eid ul Azha in Pakistan will be observed on June 29 (Thursday). Chairman Ruet-e-Hilal Committee Pakistan Maulana Syed Abdul Khabir Azad announced the decision following a meeting of the committee.



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PM underlines need to invest in young talent

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday stressed that they have to make huge investments on the country's youth because those nations had always excelled whose youth got skills and requisite degrees in different fields.

Addressing a ceremony of Prime Minister's National Innovation Awards, the prime minister expressed his pleasure over the strides made by the country's youth in different fields by utilizing their talents and skills. The country's future was in the safe hands and they had to make investments on the youth's talent as they direly deserved it, he added.

The prime minister said that it was a matter of satisfaction as these young people strived during their educational careers and showed their innovative skills in IT sector, biodiesel, traffic lights, motorbike etc. Under Prime Minister's National Youth Award Programme, a total of Rs 160 million were distributed among the 100 talented youths who had achieved innovative business projects.

The prime minister said that Pakistan was facing financial challenges, but he was confident that they would steer the country out of these issues. Such situations arose in the lives of nations, he said, stressing that the Pakistani nation has to make the determination and chart its way forward and once they had decided, then nothing could hamper it.

The prime minister also expressed his gratitude to China for supporting Pakistan during the economic constraints by extending \$1 billion loan facility. During the last 75 years, he opined that foreign debts proved a hefty burden upon Pakistan whereas those nations had progressed that utilized the foreign loans and returned it

on the basis of their talent, honesty and skills.

"We have to get rid of these debts as they could not thrive on the foreign debts," he said, adding the country was gifted with precious resources. The prime minister, without naming the previous government, said that he would not go into details about the man-made crises in the past.

He said the challenges were faced by the nations and stressed that they should make a promise to change fate of Pakistan without seeking foreign debts. Referring to 1971, he said they lost one part of Quaid's Pakistan but never learnt lessons from the past.

The prime minister said the leg-pulling and game of allegations must be ceased and they all have to agree upon unified national agenda as being practiced by different countries. "The whole nation has to decide upon one national agenda with salient contours for foreign and economic policies," he reiterated.

The prime minister also regretted that words of certain personalities in the previous government had annoyed China. Despite all this, China stood by Pakistan in difficult time, he said and lauded the role of other brotherly and friendly countries of Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar. China had made a \$30 billion investment in flagship China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Terming the achievements of young innovators as 'outstanding', the prime minister lauded the contributions of their teachers and parents, adding, the entire nation felt pride over them. Referring to awarding amount, the prime minister said that one million rupees to each winner was not sufficient considering the current inflation, as it was less when compared with the past.

In the past, he said as Khadim-e-Punjab, he introduced Punjab Skills

Development company initiative which was first launched in the southern Punjab. He said that millions of rupees were spent not on brick and mortar type of structures, but training was imparted to the talented youth.

They gave away Rs10,000 per student and companies trained them, he added. Further elaborating his point of view, the prime minister said that governments always played a catalyst role to spur activities for industries and agriculture. Whereas thousands of laptops were given to the high achievers in Punjab province on pure merit. Similarly, these were also distributed in Gilgit and Baltistan and Kashmir, he added.

The prime minister said during the Covid pandemic, these laptops helped the students to continue their educational activities besides, providing them with self-employment opportunities. He said during the tenure of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif laptops were also distributed by the federal government.

He said it was his desire to provide laptops to every child of the country. On the occasion, the prime minister called the ambassador of Azerbaijan on stage and appreciated Azerbaijan leadership for an agreement to supply LNG to Pakistan. Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Youth Affairs Shaza Fatima Khawaja, in her speech, said meetings of the youth with top business ideas would also be arranged with the investors to implement their ideas.

She said Rs 100 billion business loans were dispersed in the last decade while over one million free laptops have been distributed among talented students that proved life-changing for them. On average, she said Rs 7 billion per year business loans were distributed in last 10 years while Rs 30 billion in business loans were distributed among the youth in last one year.



ISLAMABAD: As a token of appreciation and to thank the people and government of Azerbaijan for hosting Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his delegation last week, the PM is holding the hand of Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan, Khazar Farhadov during a ceremony.

PPP's Murtaza sworn in as Karachi mayor

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader Murtaza Wahab was sworn in as the mayor of Karachi today (Monday) after he won the elections and defeated Jamaat-e-Islami's (JI) Hafiz Naeem Ur Rehman.

Wahab's oath was administered by Provincial Election Commissioner Sindh Ejaz Anwar Chohan. Following Wahab's oath, his deputy Salman Abdullah also took oath of office. The oath-taking ceremony of the mayor and deputy mayor was attended by PPP Chairman and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah, various ministers and advisors.

Newly-elected Mayor Murtaza Wahab was born in Karachi on December 25, 1983. He received his education from Government Commerce College and a law degree from the University of London. Wahab is a lawyer by profession. He has held the position of advisor on law from May 2015 till November 2016. He was also elected unopposed as senator in August 2017, a position he held till retirement in March 2018.

He has also held portfolios such as Anti-Corruption Establishment, environment, climate change, coastal development and information. In 2021, he held the position of administrator of Karachi, legal advisor and spokesperson of the Sindh government.

Audio leaks: IHC seeks reply from AGP

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Islamabad High Court has directed the attorney general for Pakistan to submit his reply in the audio leaks case in four weeks. IHC's Justice Babar Sattar on Monday heard the petition filed by former chief justice of Pakistan Saqib Nisar's son against his summoning before the special committee probing the purported audio tapes involving judges and politicians.

During the hearing, the court directed Attorney General Mansoor Usman Awan to submit the reply within four weeks and also asked him to provide copies of his reply to the parties as well. The court extended its injunction against summoning the son of the former chief justice before the special committee. On May 31, the IHC suspended the summons issued to Najam Saqib, son of former CJP Saqib Nisar, by the Parliamentary Committee set up to probe the purported audio leaks and sought a reply from the government in the case by June 19. The court asked the government to inform it about the elements behind recording audios of conversations.

No differences with PML-N: Bilawal

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Monday responded to the reports of rifts between his party and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N), saying that there are no "political differences" between the ruling parties. "The PPP's committee will meet Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif today once again. There is no political difference with the PML-N, however, there can be differences in policy," said Bilawal while addressing the media persons after Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab's oath-taking ceremony.

"There has been a good working relationship with the PML-N leaders. However, it is our right to have a difference of opinion and we will continue to raise it on a relevant forum," said the PPP chairman. Bilawal said that he doesn't see any political difference with the PML-N in future as well.

Talking about the con-

cerns of his party, the chairman said that the PPP wants a non-controversial census, adding that they had issues with the previous census as well. "I think that this census will remain controversial in the future," he added. Bilawal also spoke about the funds for the rehabilitation of the flood victims in Sindh, hoping that the reservation of funds will be resolved and the federal government should contribute to the relief.

He added that they will place the party's manifesto before the entire nation. He also said that PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari is coming back soon and will go to Lahore. "The PPP has been fighting against politics of hatred and extremism in this city for years and the leaders of PPP have sacrificed their lives for the country and restoration of democracy," said Bilawal.

The party chairman said that they will respond to the rigging allegations with their performance, adding that "we do not snatch elections, they are snatched from us." Bilawal assured

the people of Karachi that his party has solved the problems in past and will continue to do so. "Karachi is the only city which can save the country and free it from the issues. I will take a personal interest in the issues of Karachi," he added.

"The politics of division and hatred must be rejected. We will solve the problems of the city by uniting." "There are many problems in Karachi which are related to the federal and provincial government. However, the provincial government will cooperate with the mayor of Karachi," he said.

Bilawal further assured the people that tax money collected by the local government will be spent on them, adding that the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) will work together with the private sector in the city. He said that the issue of water in Karachi will be solved collectively, adding that Murtaza Wahab's performance will be better than all previous mayors.

Punjab unveils Rs1.719tr budget for next 4 months

LAHORE (Agencies): The Punjab caretaker government has unveiled the provincial budget for the next four months with an outlay of Rs1.719 trillion, proposing a 30 percent increase in salaries of employees of all grades.

The caretaker cabinet which met under the chair of Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi earlier on Monday stamped the budget for the next four months with a surplus of Rs336 billion. The provincial government has proposed a 30 percent increase in employees of all grades and five percent increase in pensions. However, there will be 20% hike in the pension of those who are over 80 years. Presenting the Punjab budget at a news conference in Lahore, provincial minister Amir Mir said there was an increase of 31 percent in education spending. He said the four-month Punjab budget will be Rs336 in surplus and the caretaker chief minister has decided to immediately retire Rs600 billion loans.

Minister said no new tax was introduced in the budget and one billion rupees have been allocated for setting up an endowment fund for the journalists. According to the budget document, Punjab will get Rs3,645 billion from the federal budget under NFC Award while the revenue target has been set at Rs579 billion. The province will get Rs30 billion under net hydel whereas it will received Rs240 billion from sales tax. World environment agencies will provide Rs167 billion to the province while Rs70 billion

have been spared for providing relief to the public. The budget documents also allocate Rs65 billion for agriculture sector. In the budget, Rs325 billion have been allocated for the development programme during the four months. The caretaker cabinet spared Rs195 billion for education, Rs183 billion for health, Rs70 billion for social protection, Rs10 billion for PKLI, Rs8.8 for climate change, Rs1 billion for journalists endowment fund, Rs47 billion for agriculture development, Rs18 billion for irrigation and Rs5.3 billion for IT sector.

Rs426.87 billion has been allocated for ongoing development schemes previously approved by the former Punjab Assembly, as per the official budget document. Additionally, Rs941.34 billion has been earmarked for current expenditures. In line with the federal government's announcement in the federal budget, the interim setup intends to increase salaries and pensions in the province. The proposed budget allocates a total of Rs413 billion for salaries, pensions, and other expenses of government employees. The increased salaries and pensions will place an additional burden of Rs42 billion on the provincial exchequer. Furthermore, the budget documents reveal that the Punjab government currently owes Rs565 billion to various banks and anticipates making a mark-up payment of Rs32 billion in the fiscal year 2023-24.

To formulate the budget for the four-month period and forecast projections

for the entire fiscal year, the caretaker government established a Joint Priorities Committee (JPC). The JPC has already given its approval to the proposed budget, offering recommendations on the allocation of funds for various sectors. As per the JPC's proposals, Rs69.8 billion has been allocated for ongoing development schemes in higher education. Rs4.64 billion for literacy and non-formal education, Rs64.84 billion for primary and secondary healthcare, Rs58.21 billion for school education in province. Rs32.18 billion for industry, commerce, and trade, Rs11.44 billion for youth affairs and sports, Rs4.82 billion for tourism and archaeology, Rs8.81 billion for environmental protection projects, Rs3.41 billion for information and culture, Rs62.69 billion for irrigation, Rs2.3 billion for labor and human resources Rs24.26 billion for livestock and dairy development, Rs12.69 billion for population welfare, Rs5.47 billion for social welfare and Baitul-Mal, Rs1.85 billion for special education, Rs29.35 billion for transport, Rs10.6 billion for energy development projects, and Rs2.9 billion for women development.

Furthermore, the JPC has proposed an allocation of Rs8.5 billion for urban development, Rs3 billion for law, order, and parliamentary affairs, Rs2.64 billion for local government and rural development, Rs5 billion for planning and development, Rs3.95 billion for the provincial assembly.

PTI govt imposed in country to fulfill foreign agenda: Fazl

F.P. Report

TANK: Jamiat Ulema Islam Fazl (JUI-F) Chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman on Monday said he had raised voice against the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government which was imposed to fulfill the foreign agenda in the country.

He expressed these views while addressing a public gathering after inaugurating mega development projects worth billions of rupees in Tank. On this occasion, Fazl inaugurated a 36-km long Tank to Pezu Road and a link road from Tank to Yarik Interchange of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) at a cost of Rs 4 billion.

Fazl, who is also chief of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), said "We have ended the government which was imposed in 2018 rigged elections." He said the role of that evil has been removed from the politics of Pakistan and now that would not be allowed to rise again. He said, after coming into power in the federation, the JUI-F got approved several projects worth in billions of rupees within only one year.

He said JUI-F served the people before and would continue to do so in the future. On this occasion, Federal Minister for Communications Asad Mahmood said the ten-year period of darkness has been ended in the province.

He said he was aware of the deprivations and sufferings of his constituency's people that was why recently the streets of the area were cemented in the entire district at a cost of Rs 500 million. Similarly, he said, the upgradation of DHQ Hospital and work on Tank Zam Head Dam would also be started soon under the provincial government. The federal minister said a pipeline would be laid from Gomal Zam Dam to resolve the long-standing issue problem of water in the city. He vowed, "Tank is a stronghold of JUI-F and will remain so." Earlier on their arrival in Tank, the PDM chief and the federal minister were warmly welcomed by JUI-F students and workers. The public gathering was also addressed by former MPA Mehmood Bhatni.

Asif calls strong action against human trafficking

ISLAMABAD (APP): Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Monday emphasized the need for firm action against individuals involved in the illegal transportation of people abroad.

Speaking on floor of the National Assembly, the minister expressed deep grief and sorrow over the tragic deaths of Pakistani migrants in a recent boat incident near the coast of Greece. Minister Asif highlighted that numerous families in Azad Jammu Kashmir, Sialkot, Gujranwala, and Gujrat were currently enduring immense grief as a result of the incident.

He called for a collective effort from the government and opposition parties to take stern action against human traffickers, emphasizing the urgency to put an end to this illegal movement. While acknowledging the arrest of some individuals within the country, Asif stressed that these human trafficking networks also exist in various other countries. He urged international cooperation to effectively combat this issue.

To demonstrate solidari-

ty with the bereaved families affected by the boat tragedy, the nation observed a day of mourning. Additionally, Khawaja Asif once again offered his sincere apologies to the Vice Chancellors for using an inappropriate word during his speech in the National Assembly. He expressed deep respect for teachers and educational institutions, highlighting his personal connections with those who had provided him an education.

However, he lamented the prevalent corruption within society, describing it as an unfortunate and accepted norm. Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf expressed profound grief, reflecting the collective sorrow felt by the entire nation. The Chair further emphasized the government's responsibility to take decisive action against human traffickers and stressed the importance of educating people about the risks associated with illegal immigration.

While participating in the budget debate, Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz Shahnaz Saleem Malik said the government had presented a balanced budget in

the face of difficult economic situation. She said reduction in the prices of petroleum products had provided relief to the people. Pakistan People Party Nafeesa Shah said political stability was a must to ensure economic stability in the country.

She emphasized for the economy of charter to steer the country in the right direction. As regards the budget, she said it envisaged incentives for the SMEs and the IT sector while raise in salaries had been given to the employees. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Asiya Azeem emphasized for enhancing the budgetary allocations for the education sector, adding it was important to take the country forward on the path of development. Balochistan National Party Muhammad Hashim Notezai observed that development schemes of Balochistan province had been ignored in the budget. He said the ongoing schemes in the province must be completed on fast track basis. Waheed Alam appreciated the increase in pension of EOBI and the minimum wage to thirty two thousand rupees.

Nation mourns loss of lives in Greece ferry disaster

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The nation observed a mourning day on Monday over the Greece boat disaster, in which dozens of precious lives were lost. An overloaded ferry had capsized in the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Greece on Wednesday.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif had announced Sunday observance of a mourning day to share the grief of the grieving families. The national flag flew at half-mast across the country. Various bar councils and civil society members held special prayers, 'Ghaebana Namaz-e-Janaza' (funeral prayers) and 'Fateha khawani' in the native villages, towns and cities of victims of the ferry disaster. The United Nations Human Rights office said in a statement on Sunday that at least 500 people were still

missing and that dozens of people were known to have perished. A good number of women and children were among the missing persons in the 'horrific tragedy' that left at least 78 people dead. The ferry boat was carrying up to 750 people that went down 50 nautical miles off Pylos in southern Greece, it further said.

In his condolences message on Saturday, PM Shehbaz Sharif expressed condolences with the bereaved families, who lost their loved-ones in the unfortunate ferry disaster. On his Twitter handle account, he said: "My thoughts and prayers are with the bereaved families who lost their loved-ones in the unfortunate ferry disaster in the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Greece." He further said Pakistan's embassy in Athens had identified 12 Pakistanis rescued by Hellenic Coast Guard. The embassy was in

contact with the Greek authorities for further updates.

Conditions on the boat were so bleak that even before the ferry sank, there had already been six deaths, after it ran out of freshwater, a noted British daily newspaper 'The Guardian', claimed on Sunday.

Meanwhile Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Chaudhry Anwarul Haq on Saturday expressed his profound grief and sorrow in a statement over the loss of precious human lives in boat disaster in Greece, in which dozens of Pakistanis including those hailing from Azad Jammu Kashmir, had reportedly died.

Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) on Sunday observed state mourning over the boat disaster in which at least 700 people, including over 50 belonging to AJK, feared drowned.



Dams play important role in agricultural uplift of country

PESHAWAR (APP): Caretaker provincial minister for irrigation, Haji Fazl Elahi on Monday said that dams play an important role in the agricultural development of any country, while the agriculture sector is affected due to the lack of an excellent irrigation system, which results in shortage of food items.

After the completion of the Remodelling of Warsak Canal project, the water flow in the Warsak canals will increase up to 1250 cusecs. The flow of seven hundred cusecs of water will increase with this project. Most of the areas of Peshawar and Nowshera are irrigated from the canals coming out of Warsak Dam.

Unfortunately, a lot of our water is being wasted.

He expressed these views during his visits to various ongoing projects of the Irrigation Department in Khyber and Mohmand districts. During the visit, Chief Engineer South Yasin Khan, Project Director Remodelling of Warsak Canal Rooh

ul Mohsin, Superintendent Engineer Batoor Zaman Khan and relevant officials of the Irrigation Department were present.

Minister Irrigation Haji Fazal Elahi visited the pump house of Warsak Canal in Jamrud where he inspected various parts of the pump house and inquired about their functions.

On this occasion, Project Director Remodelling of Warsak Canal System Roohul Mohsin said during the briefing that the total number of pumps in the pump house is five in which four are in use while one pump is on standby, work is going on for the upgradation of the grade station in the pump house, which will be completed soon.

Meanwhile, minister Haji Fazl Elahi reviewed the work on the tunnel under the Remodelling of Warsak Canal project in Malaguri where the Chinese company is doing development work.

The officials of the Chinese company while giving a detailed briefing

regarding the construction of the tunnel to the caretaker provincial minister of irrigation said that a wide area will be irrigated from the Kabul River through this tunnel.

The total length of this tunnel is 5.4 km and the construction work started in March 2023. The project will be completed by February 2027.

Haji Fazl Elahi, while directing the completion of the project within the stipulated time, said that after the completion of the project, abundant water will be available to the farmers which will increase their production.

Minister Haji Fazl Elahi also visited Warsak Dam where he inspected different parts of the dam. The officials briefed the caretaker provincial minister about the various parts of the dam. The Provincial Minister for irrigation inspected various parts of the canals coming out of Warsak Dam and gave necessary instructions to the concerned authorities.

Governor takes notice of excessive load shedding

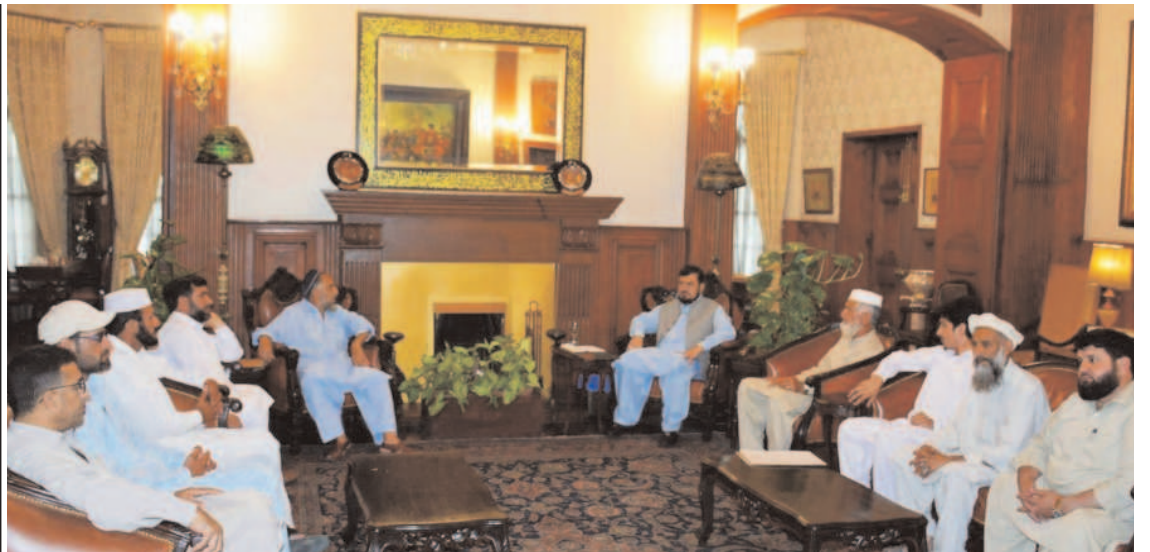
PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali here Monday summoned the meeting of Wapda and Sui Gas authorities at Governor House Peshawar after people complaints about excessive load shedding of these services and issued letter to their high-ups to attend it on Tuesday.

The Governor directed Chief Executive PESCO and General Manager SNGPL to come to Governor House along with concerned staff on Tuesday.

The Governor said people complaints were being received over several hours load shedding and unavailability of gas in Peshawar City and its adjoining areas that was a matter of great concern.

Matters related to demand and consumption of electricity and gas besides period of load shedding and consumers problems would come under discussion during the meeting.

The Governor reiterated that he would make efforts to provide relief to masses during hot weather from load shedding.



PESHAWAR: A delegation of Kohistan district meeting with Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali at Governor's House.

Shamshad paid tribute to Mubarak

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Provincial Election Commissioner (PEC) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shamshad Khan has expressed his deep sorrow over the demise of a senior official of Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Mubarak Khan who died due to cardiac attack on Friday night.

Mubarak Khan was posted in PEC KP office at Peshawar as Senior Personal Assistant. All officers and officials arranged Quran Khwani for his esaal-e-swab.

The PEC paid tribute to his sincerity and honesty in performing his official tasks and said ECP has missed a dedicated official.

His funeral was held in North Waziristan on Saturday and was buried in his home town grave yard in Miran Shah.

Mental Health Policy Round Table held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Institute of Living and learning (PILL), in collaboration with University of Manchester and Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust, organized a Mental Health Policy Round Table with Director General Health Sindh, Mr Irshad Memon. CEO PILL, Prof. Nasim Chaudhry, Professor and Chairman, Department of Psychiatry at Ziauddin Hospital, Prof. Imran Bashir Chaudhry, and Professor of Psychiatry and Director Research Global Mental Health, University of Manchester, Prof. Nusrat Husain hosted the Chief Guest and more than 30 experts in psychiatry, critical care medicine, public health, policy making, oncology, cardiology, psychology, rehabilitation, implementation sciences, community medicine, economics and others.

DG Health, Dr. Irshad Ahmed Memon thanked and appreciated PILL and extended his full support to improve mental health services across Sindh. He also remarked that the Government of Sindh is willing to provide full support for critical unmet needs in areas including burns rehabilitation, breast cancer, cardiac rehabilitation, self-harm and suicide prevention, and severe mental illnesses across the province.

Prof. Nasim Chaudhry, Prof. Imran Bashir Chaudhry and Prof. Nusrat Husain thanked Dr. Memon and all the guests for joining the key meeting. Prof. Nusrat Husain urged all stakeholders to support this important initiative and improve public mental health through the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies programme (IAPT-PK) in Sindh.

Explore, promote countless tourist attractions

Adnan emphasizes need for concerted efforts

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce and Technical Education Adnan Jalil, emphasized the need for concerted efforts to explore and promote the countless tourist attractions in our province to invite foreign visitors.

He expressed these views during a briefing held at the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA), which focused on tourism opportunities in the province and the efforts of KPCTA to explore them.

He stated that cultural and tourism activities should be effectively pro-

moted at the local, national, and international levels to inform both local and foreign tourists about our rich traditions and to highlight the tourism potential and beautiful spots in the province.

"Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has beautiful tourist spots and great tourism potential, but these opportunities need to be explored, developed, and introduced globally to attract more visitors," he said. He also emphasized that tourism can play a crucial role in socio-economic progress, and its significance cannot be denied even in today's modern world.

He mentioned that the KP Board of Investment

and Trade would also promote and highlight KPCTA projects at various forums with the aim of attracting foreign investment in the tourism sector of KP.

During the briefing, Director General (KPCTA) Muhammad Bakhtiar Khan, General Manager Planning Hayat Ali Shah, Manager Marketing and Information Hamyoon Khan, GM Tourism Sajjad Hamid, Manager Digital and Transformation Cell Baseer Ahmad and other officials were present.

The DG KPCTA highlighted various initiatives aimed at attracting tourists and the efforts being made to facilitate and guide them at tourist places.

KMU senate approves Rs.628.136m budget

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Medical University (KMU) Peshawar on Monday approved annual budget 2023-24 consisting of 2987.906 million expenditure and 3616.043 million income.

This approval was given in the 16th meeting of the KMU Senate, held under the chairmanship of the caretaker provincial minister for higher education; Justice (Rtd) Irshad Qaiser, at Governor House Peshawar. Besides, acting Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Rubina Nazli and Registrar Inamullah Khan, Secretary to Governor Mazhar Irshad Khan, Secretary Higher Education Department Dr. Aneela Mahfooz Durrani, Additional Secretary HED for Universities Javed Iqbal, Additional Secretary Establishment Muhammad Saeedullah, Additional Secretary Finance Wasif Rehman, Director General Finance HEC Ghulam Nabi, and other members attended the meeting.

While presenting the revised budget for 2022-23 as well as the budget estimates for 2023-24 before the Senate, KMU Treasurer Waseem Riaz said that the credit for the university's surplus budget goes to the entire management of the university under the leadership of KMU VC Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq, especially the financial team, whose day-to-day hard work and excellent financial management have enabled the university to deliver a surplus budget, which is a source of satisfaction for all of us.

He presented the revised surplus budget of Rs. 689.250 million for the year 2022-23 in addition to the surplus budget of Rs. 628.136 million for the new fiscal year 2023-24. He said that in the new financial year, the university has decided to establish some new institutes and to pay attention to the stability of already established institutions and ongoing educational programs for which a significant amount has been allocated in the budget.

Later, while addressing the meeting, the provincial minister for higher education Justice (Rtd) Irshad Qaiser hailed KMU's surplus budget and hoped that KMU would not only maintain this status in the future but also the university will implement viable projects for profitable investment of surplus funds.

While appreciating the financial discipline of the university, she emphasized the need to allocate more money in the budget for giving scholarships to needy and intelligent students.



PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Choudhry presiding over meeting regarding good governance.

AD&SJ grants bail to 2 PTI's activists

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Additional District and Session Judge (AD&SJ) Peshawar Muhammad Qasim Khan has granted bail to PTI Youth activist Mena Khan Afridi and Jalal Mohmand, on Monday.

According to prosecution, Meena Khan and Jalal Mohmand allegedly involved in vandalism in the premises of Hashnagri police station after arrest of Imran Khan by NAB over corruption charges. It worthy to mention that the accused had obtained bail for fourth times while also obtained relief in three offenses earlier.

5-day anti-polio drive starts in 7 districts

PESHAWAR (APP): Based on the data of the presence of poliovirus in different districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a five-day special polio campaign started in seven districts of the province on Monday.

The campaign will be conducted in Nowshera, Peshawar, Mohmand, Hangu, Khyber, Kohat and Charsadda districts.

Over 2,212 million children will be administered polio drops, said an official of the health department.

Similarly, 107,000 children will be administered polio drops in the Afghan refugee camps of Buner, Chitral, Dir, Haripur, Mansehra, Malakand, Mardan and Swabi and in the special union councils located on the Pak-Afghan border, the official said. 8441 teams have been formed for the 5-day campaign, including mobile, fixed and transit teams while 14,926 police personnel have been deployed for the security of polio workers.

Sunikhel tribe demand coal mountain demarcation dispute should be resolved

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sunikhel Ulama Kol Committee elders of Sunikhel Dara Adamkhel community have complained about the irresponsibility of the relevant administration and the alleged provocative actions of the Akhoral community in the ongoing mountain demarcation dispute with the Akhoral community with the collusion of the relevant district administration of the Mineral Department by taking notice from the government against the notices of closing coal mines and other issues, the Chairman of Sunni Khel Ulama Council Qum Sunikhel Maulana Abdul Waheed along with other representatives and leaders have demanded to provide justice by transparently investigating the matter in Peshawar Press Club.

Addressing a press conference, they said that we have our own land and property mountain boundaries, which are our modern back-property mountain boundaries, on which there is a demarcation dispute with the Akhoral nation, while the boundary wall has been set since the time of the leaders, but in 2019, the Akhoral nation rejected the boundaries.

The leaders also said that once due to security reasons, we were stopped from going to our mountain range towards Bulandar Watoy, which was taken advantage of by Pir Ata Muhammad, the alleged miscreant of the Akhoral nation.

We started oppression and coercion with various elements to violate our boundaries and started building a road to take possession of the mountain

belonging to us. No, while on 27.11.2022, the people of our nation went to their borders, the people of Pir Muhammad Akhoral opened fire on them.

The bar continued to commit violations and we kept making requests about it to the relevant administrations and institutions, but on the contrary, they kept putting pressure on us.

Meanwhile, the situation worsened, bodies clashed and the opposing side used heavy weapons, after which peace was maintained and the concerned administration imposed an ADR Jirga on the Sunni Khel nation, which is against the constitution of Pakistan and tribal customs.

Established a self-imposed buffer zone and forced us to accept the buffer zone while keeping some of our people in custody and forced them to

sign the agreement.

Then there was firing, but later, 11 people were killed without the permission of Qaum Sunikhel, which is a big tragedy, despite this, the opposing side is working continuously even after Aman Teega, against which requests were made to the relevant officers and district administration, but there was no hearing.

And our persecution continued while the Assistant Commissioner Dara issued a notice on 01.06.2023 that if you people do not collect Rs.5 crores till 7.06.2023, then they will stop the NOC and transportation of Sunikhel. approached the court, but despite this, AC Dara allegedly sent us a notice with the connivance of the mineral department that the coal mines will be closed, which is completely excessive.

Current NFC non-compliant with constitution, principles of equity for KP & MAs: Seminar

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: After the historic merger of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) with the Merged Areas (MAs) in 2018, promises made for the financing of developing the MAs have yet to be fulfilled. The burden to carry out this critical function has been left to the KP province despite the importance of mainstreaming the MAs being of strategic national importance.

The KP Department of Finance organized a seminar to address the financing

requirements for the development of the MAs to build a consensus among those willing to take forward the needs of the province. The seminar, held in Peshawar, brought together key government stakeholders, politicians, and provincial cabinet members for a dialogue on the under-financing experienced by the MAs and the possible short and long-term solutions.

In his opening remarks, KP Finance Secretary Muhammad Ayaz emphasized the need for discourse on pursuing an equitable finan-

cial share for the MAs in the National Financial Commission (NFC) Award post-merger and ensuring that it is compliant with the Constitution of Pakistan. He highlighted the federal government's mammoth development promise to the MAs - the Accelerated Implementation Programme (AIP), saying it is a significant step in the right direction. Yet, fund releases under the AIP have been dwindling over time.

Dr. Musharraf Rasool Cyan, a member of the KP NFC, in his presentation, discussed the often-over-

looked implication of the 18th Amendment, which grants the MAs equitable fiscal rights to public resources under the NFC, the body responsible for the distribution of public revenue in Pakistan. Dr. Cyan's research demonstrated that since the merger, not only the promised sum of Rs. 100 billion was not provided, but releases against budgets fell well short of what was allocated, depriving residents of the region of their constitutional right. For the MAs, under the AIP, a sum of Rs. 30 bil-

lion was allocated this year, of which only Rs 3 billion have been released as the financial year ends. The current NFC award was decided pre-merger when the population of the province was five million less than the inhabitants of ex-FATA. The human development indicators of the MAs are comparable to Baluchistan, but as of 2018, according to the research, Balochistan was receiving more than twice the funds per capita for solving the same problems of deprivation in the MAs.



PESHAWAR: Chairman Sunni Khel Ulama Council Qum Sunikhel Maulana Abdul Waheed addressing a press conference. — F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza



In brief

ANF arrests six drug peddlers

QUETTA (PPI): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) on Monday claimed to have arrested six suspects accused of drug trafficking during separate raids carried out in Lahore, Islamabad, Multan, Karachi, Peshawar, Jiwani and Khyber. According to an ANF spokesperson, 140 ecstasy tablets, 14.4kg opium, 17.4kg hashish and 4.7kg weed were recovered from the culprits. Moreover, 4.3kg methamphetamine (ice) and three hashish-filled capsules were also recovered from the peddlers.

Livestock deputies 9 teams

F.P. Report

TIMERGARA: As Eid-ul-Azha approaches, the Livestock Department has been mobilized to prevent the spread of Congo virus, Lumpy Skin Disease virus and other infectious diseases in the cattle markets of Dir Lower and 9 teams have been formed to check and spray the animals in the cattle markets across the district until Eid-ul-Adha. Dr. Dilbar Khan, Director of the Department of Livestock Dir Lower, said that the Department of Livestock Dir lower has taken practical measures to prevent Congo virus, Lumpy Skin Disease virus and other infectious diseases in cattle markets on the occasion of Eid-ul-Adha and has formed 9 teams across the district. In which livestock doctors and dozens of officials are engaged in spraying them day and night with checking animals and so far the Department of Livestock Dir Lower has sprayed 13,000 cattle in the livestock markets of Dir Lower while the entrance and exit routes of the district are closed. However, the process of spraying on animals is going on. He said that till now no case of Congo Virus and Lumpy Skin has been reported in Dir Lower. He said that the citizens should strictly implement protective measures to prevent infectious diseases in cattle markets.

Bandit arrested in encounter

HYDERABAD (PPI): A section police claimed to have arrested a bandit in injured condition during an encounter near Akbari graveyard of Hyderabad city on Monday. According to a police report, a team of police signaled six suspected bandits riding on two motorcycles to stop, but they instead of stopping, started firing at the police. The police also exchanged the fire. In the shooting, one of the accused was injured and arrested with a weapon while his accomplices managed to escape under the cover of the fire. The arrested accused was identified as Waqas. The police operation was carried out on a tip-off that a six-member dacoit gang was roaming around with the intention of a dacoity, the police report said. The injured accused was shifted to a local hospital for treatment. Further investigation was underway, said police. They added that search for the fleeing accused was being carried out.

Two injured in court firing

BAKKHAR (INP): Two persons were critically injured during firing in the Bakhar courtroom on Monday, police said. As per details, the firing incident took place in the court of the additional sessions judge Kalorkot, Bakhar. Two people opened fire at the rival group during the hearing of the case, the police said.

NDMA conducts one-day workshop on coastal hazards

F.P. Report

QUETTA: NDMA's think tank, National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) conducted a one-day workshop on Coastal Hazards, Local Needs & Gap Analysis and



Framework for Remodeled National Disaster Preparedness and Response" at Quetta, in collaboration with PDMA Balochistan, Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering & Management Sciences (BUTEMS) and UNICEF Pakistan.

The workshop was aimed to bring together key stakeholders and experts to address the challenges posed by coastal hazards

along coastal belt of Pakistan, promote federal and provincial interdepartmental collaboration, knowledge exchange, and the explore effective strategies to minimize the impacts of coastal hazards and protect coastal communities, ecosystems, and infrastructure through collective wisdom. Over 200 participants from various fields, including Government departments, Academia, UN agencies, INGOs, NGOs and Media attended the workshop.

Pro Vice-Chancellor of BUTEMS, Dr Abdul Rehman, in his welcome remarks appreciated NDMA's proactive approach for disaster mitigation, while quoting the

recent example for dealing with cyclone Biparjoy, in terms of issuing timely early warnings, coordination among relevant stakeholders, and continuous monitoring of Cyclone.

The Chief Coordinator NIDM, Mr. Tanveer Piracha, highlighted significance of addressing coastal hazards, such as cyclones, storm surges, sea-level rise, and coastal erosion that are major contributing factors endangering coastal communities, infrastructure and ecosystems.

The workshop was constituted of several thematic plenary interactive sessions moderated by experts, generating discussions on issues specifically related to coastal emergencies. Participants appreciated efforts of NDMA for providing a platform to promote collaborative efforts towards ensuring preparedness and response during likely disasters. NDMA is committed to enlighten and upskill communities for making Pakistan a Resilient Country.

Tehsil council fails to address problems

F.P. Report

JAMRUD: Opposition councilors in Jamrud council demanded of the tehsil mayor to call the urgent tehsil council meeting to discuss problems being faced by the people of the tehsil.

In a joint meeting of the councilors of Pakistan Tehreek Insaf (PTI) Shamsheer Khan, Muhammad Irfan, Jamiat Ulema Islam, Fazal Rehman (JUI-F) councilors Maulana Saeed Haqqani, Maulana Abdul Qadeer and Shahid Khan Afridi, Haji Shahid Zaman of United Panel held in Jamrud on Monday asked the Tehsil Chairman to convene meeting of the council to discuss certain issues and to brought it in the notice of highup.

Counting problems being faced by the tribesmen they added excessive load shedding in Jamrud had made life of the laymen miserable besides large



scale cutting of forest in Tirah Valley posed a threat to the natural life and beauty of the Valley.

The councilors urged fair survey and respectful repatriation of the displaced people of Koki Khel tribe in the second phase. They expressed their dissatisfaction over the poor performance of the chairman and said during 15 months one moot was conducted that put a question mark on the efficiency of the chairman.

Opposition councilors demanded the chairman to form a core committee of

the tehsil council besides other ones to practically functionalize the council. They also criticized tehsil Municipal Authority (TMA) for ill-function and said their officials allegedly involved in corruption rather than work for the welfare of the tribesmen.

The vowed that for protection of their rights, they would participate in an opposition protest to be scheduled on Tuesday (today) against the provincial government in front of Provincial Assembly, Peshawar.

DHQ Hafizabad obtains equipment as donation

Hafiz Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: ASM District Headquarter Hospital Hafizabad Dr. Faiq Ali Tarar and Dr. Hamza set a good example of serving the ailing humanity to donate new ECG, six wheel-chairs and other necessary equipment on self-help basis.

ECG and Wheel Chairs were handed over to MS Dr. Shakeel Shahid through Deputy Commissioner Umer Farooq Warriach. DC lauded passion of Dr. Faiq Ali Tarar and Dr. Hamza for serving the people and declared that provision of easiness to the people was big means to get pleasure of almighty Allah and success in this world and hereafter. He invited the well-to-do people to come forward and take part in such good work.

Rescue 1122 imparts emergency evacuation

training: Rescue 1122 Hafizabad under leadership District Emergency Officer Engineer Adnan Nawaz imparted first aid and emergency evacuation training to Cops of Punjab Patrolling Highway Police. DSP Rafiqat Ali and other Cops participated in the training.

DSP and other officials of Highway Patrolling Police appreciated Rescue Training Programme and committed that personals of Highway Police would stand with Rescue 1122 for combating any emergency shoulder to shoulder.

Meanwhile, Assistant Commissioner HR and Coordination Ishfaq Rasul visited Rural Health Centre Vaneki Tarar and reviewed attendance of staff and availability of medical facilities being provided to patients in the Centre. He inspected different wards and medicines store and

checked record of medicines.

Accused held

PAKPATTAN (INP): The police on Monday arrested an accused who held killed his wife and parents-in-law over property dispute.

Police said that the accused of triple murder identified as Zaeher Baloch was arrested from insider River Sutlej. The culprit had killed his wife and parents-in-law over property dispute in Shamgarh area, Chakbaidi police station jurisdiction in Pakpattan. District Police Officer (DPO) Tariq Walyat said that the accused was at large after committing triple murder but was held by police early Monday morning. The detainee had also changed his appearance to save his of arrest.



QUETTA: Federal Minister for Narcotics Control Nawabzada Shahzain Bugti pressing button to burn drugs during a ceremony.

Measles prevention campaign kicks off

F.P. Report

MARDAN: A special measles prevention campaign has started in ten union councils of Mardan, children between the ages of six months and five years will be vaccinated against measles.

In this regard, District Health Officer Mardan Dr. Javed Iqbal and EPI Coordinator Dr. Imtiaz Ali says that cases of measles have been reported in different union councils of Mardan, Bukit Gunj, Mohabatabad, Sari Bahlul, Pat Baba, Moheb Banda, Katling, Mardan Khas, Jalala, Toru, Fatima and Power Station, which has led to the outbreak of measles. There is a risk of spreading due to which the measles prevention campaign has been started in the elected union councils of Mardan to prevent the measles epidemic so that the measles epidemic can be controlled before it spreads.

He said that the experience in the affected areas medical staff including card doctors has been deployed. He appealed and said that parents should fully cooperate with the health team that has come to your village, neighborhood or go to the nearest vaccination center and get all their children from six months to five years old vaccinated against measles. Using and do your part to save the country from this deadly disease.

BISE chairman hold meeting with education sector stakeholder: A meeting of the representatives of education sector/Board officers was held with the Chairman BISE Mardan while committee members including Inam Toru, Hafiz Zubair, Rashid Gul, Farman Ali present, on Monday.

The Chairman briefed that BISE, Mardan intends to arrange Youth Development Camps for male and female students of Government and Private institutions within the jurisdiction of BISE, Mardan regarding their career counseling. The camp for male students will be held from 23-07-2023 to 27-07-2023 and a separate camp for female students will be held in the month of August, 2023 at Galyat, Hazara Division.

Protest against load shedding held

F.P. Report

PARACHINAR: The tribesmen arranged protest against unscheduled load shedding while demanded to end the load shedding otherwise they will be compelled to arrange protest on larger scale in favor of their demands.

Parachinar city is under the worst load shedding these days, the duration of load shedding in urban areas has reached from 20 hours to 22 hours. Small industry has been severely affected, while load shedding of 23 hours is being done in villages.

Due to the worst load shedding, the citizens are facing a lot of problems, especially the residents of the area are facing a lot of problems of clean drinking

water. Along with this, the domestic consumers and the business community are also very worried because the business in the city has been badly affected due to load shedding.

Against the worst load shedding today, the residents of the area staged a protest in front of the Parachinar Press Club in which dozens of people participated, the protesters raised slogans against WAPDA and demanded that the protests should not be carried out until the duration of electricity is extended.

The series will continue. Even before this, WAPDA officials made promises to us, but it could not be implemented yet. When the SDO was asked about the reason for load shedding,

he did not consider it appropriate to answer and remained silent.

Meanwhile, in a meeting presided over by Azmat Alizai, president of Kurram Union of Journalists District, Kurram, the torture and arrest of journalist Irfan Mehsud was strongly condemned and departmental action was demanded against the SHO, otherwise, the district police department of South Waziristan will be merged. Demonstrations will start at the level of all press clubs.

It should be remembered that journalists are being targeted by terrorists in the terrorist-affected areas in the tribal areas and dozens of journalists have been martyred and are now being abused by the policemen, which is regrettable.

WSCCK launches awareness campaign

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Water and Sanitation Services Company Kohat (WSCCK) has launched an awareness campaign regarding cleanliness ahead of Eidul Azha.

Asma Ali, Manager Media and Communication of the WSCCK told media here on Monday that the preparations for cleanliness during the three-day of Eid ul Azha is underway. She said a comprehensive plan would be chalked out to keep the city clean by properly disposing of the animal wastes and offals at dumping sites during the three day of Eid ul Azha.

In this regard, she

explained social mobilizers of KPCIP and WSCCK have conducted an awareness campaign in urban 1, NC 1, Haji Bahadur Sahib, and NC 2 Mohallah Pir Abdulllah Shah. The company's spokesmen said the mobilizers held meetings with residents and locals.

The senior officer elaborated the social mobilizers urged people to cooperate with WSCCK for retaining the city clean during the three-day of 'Eid ul Azha'. Asma Ali furthermore said the social mobilizers also ask people that instead of littering them in water drainage and scattered places, they should dispose of the sacrificial animal offal



and waste on the WSCCK designated points in order to keep the environment clean. The spokesman said the awareness pamphlets regarding cleanliness during the 'Eid ul Azha' were also distributed among people through social mobilizers.

Pashto literary Festival held in North Waziristan

F.P. Report

MIRAN SHAH: A grand Pashto literary Festival for poets hailing from North Waziristan was held in Tochi Hall, North Waziristan today. The event witnessed an overwhelming participation of more than 51 (15 from Miranshah and Mir Ali, 7 from Spinwam, 5 from

Ghulam Khan, 17 from Datta Khel, 4 from Dossali and 2 from Shewa) esteemed poets, 12 to 75 years, including individuals with special abilities. The diverse representation underscored the rich tapestry of Pashto literature and the vibrant fabric of cultural heritage.

Major General Muhammad Naeem Akhtar

graced the occasion as Chief Guest. Chief Guest gave away prizes to the winners of the events.

The festival received tremendous appreciation from both the participants and the community of the area. Attendees expressed their gratitude towards security forces for organizing such a remarkable event.

JUI-F launches membership drive in Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Jamaat Ulema Islam Fazl launched its membership campaign in Lower Dir here on Monday. The JUI-F district chief Sirajud Din, party senior activist Muhammad Rahim Haqqani, Maulana Muhammad Huzafa and others held meetings with party workers at Darangal, Kambat, Mayar in Jandol. One of the Pakistan Tehreek Insaf activists Hayatullah announced to join the JUI-F on this occasion.

The party workers were informed that over 5000 new members would be included in the party. Speaking on the occasion Rahim Haqqani said the party chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman has given a strong narrative to the nation. He said the party would be strengthened in the district in the light of that

narrative. He said the party would give a surprising result in the upcoming general elections in Dir.

Filling station: The assistant commissioner Samarbagh Suhail Khan on Monday visited various filling stations and checked the Ogra rates and gauge. One of the filling stations at Hanafia was sealed for overcharging customers while the owner of another station at Shalkandi was fined. Similarly the official also sealed a stone crushing plant at Sadbar Kalay for polluting the locality. A hotel at Toor camp was fined for not observing cleanliness. The official checked the records of government middle school Manogay and basic health unit Shalkandi and sent a report to the high ups for missing facilities.

Meanwhile deputy commis-

sioner Iftikhar Ahmad along with additional deputy commissioner finance and planning Jan Muhammad and district administrator Afghan refugees Humayun Khan visited the Afghan refugees' camps to check the ongoing anti-polio vaccination drive to be continued till June 23. The DC vaccinated a child at the Timer camp and launched the drive formally. He directed the vaccinator to achieve the target. He also checked the medicine stock at a BHU Timer camp and directed the staff to ensure timely medical treatment at the facility.

JUI-F demands allocation of funds for irrigation channel: Local leaders of the Jamaat Ulema Islam Fazl has demanded the federal and provincial governments to include the much needed and multi-aspects 'Gopalum Irrigation channel'

project in this year's Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP).

Talking to local journalists at Timergara here the other day, the JUI-F senior leader Qazi Ayazud Din, district emir Sirajud Din and village chairman Maulana Muhammad Nabi Shah said that construction of the Gopalum Irrigation channel was the only solution to agriculture development in Timergara, Talash, Rabat, Paito Dara, Khungi and Adenazi areas. The JUI-F workers alleged the previous government had excluded the project from the PSDP. They pointed out the party workers had sped up their efforts to force the government to allocate funds for it.

The workers said the project would ensure a green revolution in the target areas and would also resolve the lowering tab of underground water. They said

the party workers had met with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa caretaker minister Fazal Ilahi a few days ago and he had promised to raise the issue with the government in the budget. "The JUI-F has planned to convene an all-parties conference soon on the issue in Lower Dir", Qazi Ayaz said, adding the government would be asked to prepare its feasibility report again. He said that most of the natural springs and wells had dried up because of the drought-like situation for so many years. He said the underground water tab would also be raised up and would provide job opportunities once the irrigation channel was constructed and made functional.

Covid-19 booster dose: The health department in collaboration with the Unicef arranged an awareness session for Covid-19 vaccination booster dose at the

DHO office here the other day. Besides doctors, paramedics, EPI technicians and area elders, Dr Noor Hameed of the DHO office, Malik Muhammad Asad of Dewa organization, Unicef representative Habibur Rehman and government contractors' leader Imran Takur were in attendance.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Nor Hameed, Habibur Rehman and others asked the people to get Covid-19 booster dose as it was necessary for human body resistance against Covid-19. The speakers said that all government healthcare facilities had enough stock of Covid-19 vaccines and people should get it free of cost. They asked teachers, journalists, ulama and area elders to play their role in making the people aware of the importance of Covid-19 booster dose.

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US-China ties and a multipolar world

RECENTLY, the US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, and Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang met in Beijing and held candid and constructive talks on their differences from Taiwan to trade but seemed to agree on little beyond keeping the conversation going with an eventual meeting in Washington in the coming months. After hours-long delegation-level talks in the famous Diaoyutai State Guest House in Beijing, Antony Blinken stressed the need to reduce the risk of misperception and miscalculation between the two major superpowers of the world, while the Chinese Foreign Minister termed the Taiwan issue as the core of China's core interests, the most important issue in Sino-US relations, and the most prominent risk. During the joint press stakeout, both leaders emphasized their desire for stable and predictable relations and Foreign Minister Qin expressed readiness to visit Washington in the coming days to carry forward this conversation and make the US-China talks fruitful. During the visit, both sides desire to stabilize their bilateral relations and agreed to facilitate students and common citizens to visit each other country by increasing the number of flights operating between the two nations.

US-China bilateral ties had declined across the board in the past years in various issues ranging from self-governed Taiwan, trade disputes, human rights, and Democracy issues, sanctioning of Chinese tech giants, the war in Ukraine, and others. There had been serious concerns regarding a potential military clash between the two superpowers over the Taiwan dispute that Beijing perceives as its integral part that will finally join mainland China one day. Meanwhile, both superpowers had been at loggerheads at multiple avenues around the globe from South Asia to the Middle East and Africa, and from East Asia to the Solomon Islands in Oceania. Similarly, the trade war brought about by former US President Donald Trump has seriously undermined the economic and trade interest of both nations, fractured the trust of business communities, and deepened the gap between Beijing and Washington over the past years.

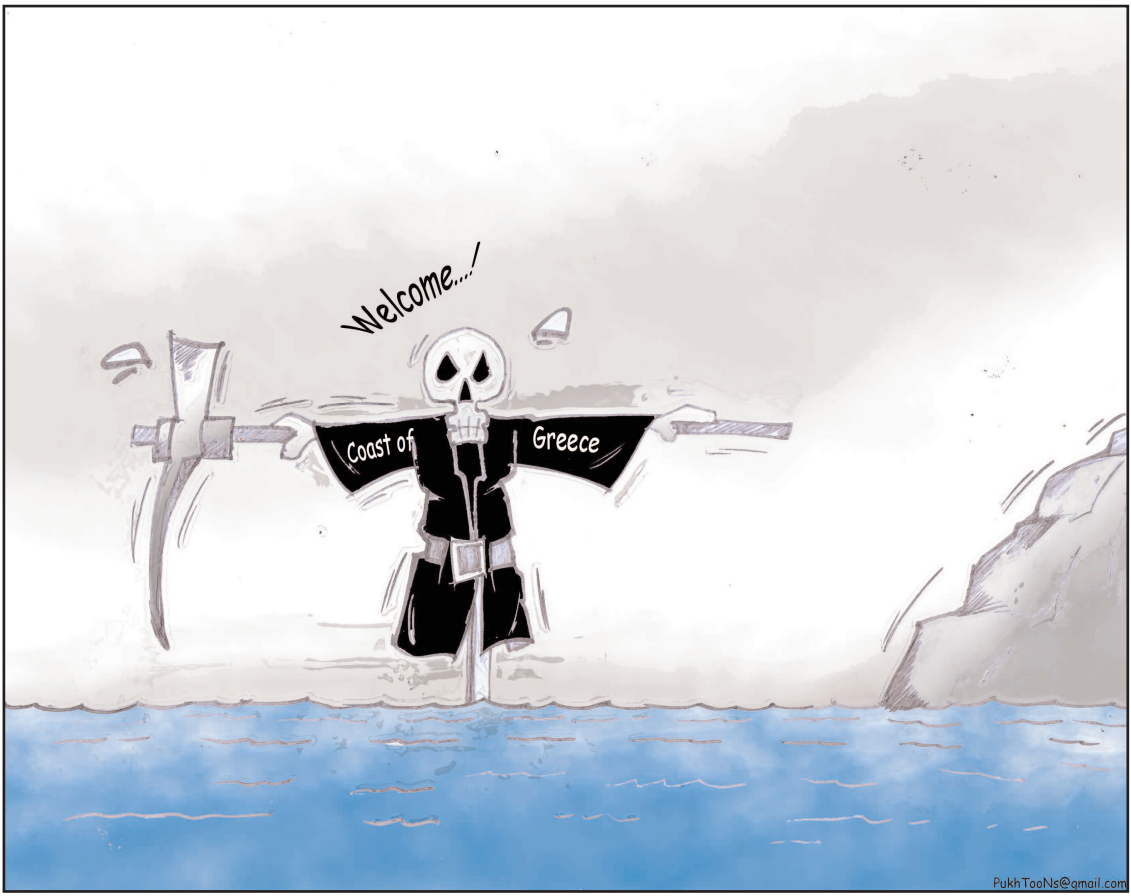
Historically, the bilateral relations between Beijing and Washington deteriorated after US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visit Taiwan in August 2021, followed by a distasteful meeting between Chinese Strongman Xi Jinping and President Joe Biden on the sidelines of a G-20 meeting at Bali in November last year. Meanwhile, multiple cruises of US Naval warships and reconnaissance flights of US aircraft over or near the Chinese territorial waters in the South China Sea had received prompt responses from the PLA and were seriously viewed by Beijing. China termed US military missions in the South China Sea provocative and dangerous and warned of serious repercussions in case of any misadventure by Washington. At the same time, the discovery and shooting down of an alleged Chinese spy balloon over mainland America by the US military was another blow to US-China ties that delayed Blinken's trip to Beijing for months.

Historically, the recurrent incidents of military standoffs in the South China Sea, and the frequent exchange of furious statements between top executives had caused genuine concerns in the global community and American leaders that a military clash can potentially break out between two superpowers due to misjudgment and communication gap that persists between the two capitals. Previously, the CIA Chief visited Beijing in May to meet his counterpart, restore communication, clear doubts, and build confidence between the premier Intelligence Services of the two competitors. Blinken's tour has lit up a ray of hope amid deep distrust and apprehensions regarding each other nation. Both sides held comprehensive talks on a wide range of issues covering the most sensitive Taiwan dispute, Xinjiang, Tibet, Hongkong, Human rights and democracy, trade and tariff disputes, military interventions near each other territories, and war in Ukraine, etc. However, no breakthrough was expected at the initial stage and both sides agreed to carry forward this momentum to make their engagement result oriented and fruitful.

No doubt today's world is a multi-Polar planet and numerous man-made and natural factors are reshaping this globe. COVID-19 dust has not settled down yet, and climate-induced hurricanes, heatwaves, and earthquakes are putting long-lasting effects on victim states, the global economy as well as billions of people living across the globe. Although American strategists perceived the risk of skyrocketing Chinese growth and its ever-increasing stakes in the US economy, however, President Trump initiated a trade war with Beijing during his stay at the White House. Currently, both superpowers are pursuing their manifestos and confronting each other at multiple avenues around the globe. Realistically, both superpowers must respect each other genuine economic, trade, and security interests, keep their wings off territories that are of concern for their contender, and adjust to new realities of the universe. Democracy, religious and media freedoms are the needs of every citizen and no state can ban those civil liberties for a long period of time. Chinese Communist Party must respect and embrace those civil liberties in the greater interest of its nation, which will not only pave the way for a complete assimilation of Hongkong, and Taiwan but also promote pluralism and unity in its society. Today's world demands political wisdom, resilience, and patience from both contesting superpowers. Although there is no limit to hegemonism, however, wisdom must prevail against ambitions, resilience must defeat jingoism, and co-existence should be preferred over championing. So, this world becomes a peaceful and livable place that offers safety, respect, and equal economic opportunities to all nations in the universe.

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The perils of a US leader putting themselves above their country

Dalia Al-Aqidi

NUMEROUS US presidents, including former President Donald Trump, have found themselves embroiled in scandalous controversies. However, it is worth noting that, in the entire expanse of US presidential history, no incumbent president has ever been formally charged with criminal offenses committed during their tenure at the White House. Nevertheless, a handful of presidents have encountered situations that brought them perilously close to such indictments.

In the annals of American history, a mere three US presidents have undergone the solemn and weighty process of impeachment orchestrated by Congress. This exclusive group is made up of Andrew Johnson, Bill Clinton and Trump, with the last of these distinguished by the rare occurrence of being impeached twice during his single term in office. Notwithstanding these proceedings, it is essential to underscore that no American president has ever been removed from power as a result of impeachment.

Among the quartet of Johnson, Clinton, Trump and Richard Nixon, who faced the specter of formal impeachment inquiries in the House of Representatives, it is noteworthy that only Nixon did not reach the point of proper impeachment. Furthermore, various other presidents have been subjected to threats of impeachment from their political adversaries, but these opponents failed to garner significant traction and support within the chambers of Congress. The framers of the Constitution deliberately crafted an arduous path for Congress to traverse when seeking to depose a sitting president. The impeachment process commences within the House of Representatives, where a formal inquiry is initiated. Should the House Judiciary Committee identify sufficient grounds, its members meticulously draft and endorse articles of impeachment, which are subsequently put to a vote in the full House.

Trump stands alone in a distinctive and unprecedented position among former US presidents. Notably, he is the sole former president in history to face a mounting array of criminal charges originating from multiple states. First up is Florida. In early 2022, the Department of Justice investigated Trump's retention of classified documents after his presidential tenure ended. In a significant development in June of the same year, a legal representative for Trump asserted that all classified records had been duly surrendered. However, a subsequent search by the

counts of violating a New York law concerning corporate record-keeping. Trump made an extraordinary appearance, voluntarily surrendering himself to the authorities. He underwent the standard procedures associated with being processed as a criminal defendant, entered a plea of not guilty and was subsequently released without the requirement of posting bail.

This notable episode marked a significant mile-

The legal saga surrounding former President Trump reached a pivotal moment on March 30, when a grand jury in Manhattan favored his indictment. Five days later, local prosecutors publicly disclosed the specific criminal charges leveled against him, comprising an extensive array of 34 felony counts of violating a New York law concerning corporate record-keeping. Trump made an extraordinary appearance, voluntarily surrendering himself to the authorities.

FBI at Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort discovered and seized 102 documents bearing classified markings.

As a result, on June 9, Trump was formally indicted on 37 felony charges, while his longtime aide Walt Nauta faced allegations encompassing six felony charges. Trump's charges included 31 counts of willful retention of national defense information, violating the Espionage Act. Additionally, Trump faces four counts of obstruction and two counts of false statements. The charges reflect severe allegations related to the handling of classified information and potential obstruction of justice. The legal saga surrounding former President Trump reached a pivotal moment on March 30, when a grand jury in Manhattan favored his indictment. Five days later, local prosecutors publicly disclosed the specific criminal charges leveled against him, comprising an extensive array of 34 felony

stone in the legal proceedings against the former president. Meanwhile, there is an ongoing legal situation in Georgia pertaining to the former president. Investigations are being carried out concerning his activities during the 2020 election. While the specific details and possible charges are yet to be determined, the possibility exists that Trump will face legal consequences in the state. In Washington, federal prosecutors have initiated a thorough investigation into the actions of Trump, focusing on his alleged endeavors to undermine and subvert the results of the 2020 presidential election. This comprehensive inquiry also examines his purported involvement in the Capitol insurrection that unfolded on Jan. 6, 2021. The objective is to uncover the full extent of Trump's actions and assess any potential legal consequences arising from his role in these events. Given the mounting criminal charges against him, the

There is a feeling in Türkiye's opposition party circles that a sea change has become necessary. So far, only Imamoglu has come up with a structured report and underlined the specific areas

Yasar Yakis

where the coalition of opposition parties failed. This report highlighted many failures. Firstly, it stated that the main opposition CHP and its allies could not turn the last election into a referendum for or against Erdogan. Secondly, Erdogan transformed the elections into a choice of whether the electorate should vote for stability or chaos - and the opposition parties watched this from a distance as bystanders. Thirdly, the campaign became an effort to make Kilicdaroglu a candidate for the presidential post, rather than winning the elections. Finally, the opposition parties could not explain to the electorate that continuing with Erdogan would mean the further impoverishment of the Turkish people. On Wednesday last week, Kilicdaroglu and Imamoglu held a two-hour meeting on the outskirts of Ankara. People close to Imamoglu emphasized that radical changes are necessary in the

possibility of Trump receiving a presidential pardon becomes a delicate and complex matter. With such an array of legal obstacles to navigate, the prospect of a pardon rests solely on his own ability to maneuver his way through the intricate legal landscape. Having said that, nobody could promise Trump a presidential pardon but Trump himself.

As citizens diligently engage in the democratic process of evaluating the policies and plans put forth by political leaders, there is a notable faction within the Republican Party that is unwaveringly committed to defending Trump. While voters conscientiously assess the proposals and visions presented to them, this particular group finds itself immersed in vigorous advocacy on Trump's behalf. Drawing from my personal experience of living under oppressive regimes and autocratic rule, one crucial lesson that resonates profoundly is the importance of never prioritizing the interests of a single leader over those of the country and its people. History has shown that, when blind loyalty and unwavering allegiance are bestowed upon a leader, it can have severe ramifications for the nation as a whole. The essence of a democratic system lies in the ability of citizens to critically analyze and weigh up the merits of the different policies and approaches put forth by political leaders. By assessing their plans and evaluating their potential impact on the welfare of the people, voters can make informed decisions that align with their values and aspirations.

However, the phenomenon of prioritizing a leader above country and party is not unique to any specific political ideology or nation. It can occur in various contexts, often driven by a combination of personal loyalty, ideological alignment and a deep-seated belief in the leader's abilities or promises. In a robust and healthy democratic system, citizens must maintain a critical mindset and hold leaders accountable for their actions. The country's welfare and progress should always take precedence over personal allegiances or party affiliations.

Arab News

Refugees should be seen as an opportunity

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

THIS year's Refugee Week, which aims to celebrate and honor refugees across the world, runs from June 19-25. World Refugee Day also takes place every year on June 20. This is a good time to raise awareness about refugees and examine the important issues that impact refugee diasporas across the world. Countries often choose a different theme for Refugee Week every year. In the UK, the theme for this year is "Compassion," while "Finding Freedom" is the theme assigned to this year's Refugee Week in Australia.

First of all, it is important to point out the courage and strength that it takes to flee one's home and attempt to find a safe and secure place for one's family, particularly children and the elderly. Being forced to abandon the place where one has lived, studied and grown up, being forced to leave friends and relatives behind and to start a new life in a foreign place is traumatic; to survive and thrive in a new home needs extraordinary courage, faith and strength. If refugees are successfully resettled in a new country, they then face other significant challenges, including language barriers and difficulties accessing medicine and healthcare services, finding suitable housing, adjusting to a new culture, rules and norms, and finding work, as well as prejudice and racism.

Unfortunately, only a fraction of the world's refugees are able to settle in a new country. As one refugee from Iraq, Ahmed Badr, who is now interim director of the Patricelli Center for Social Entrepreneurship and adjunct assistant professor of public policy at Wesleyan University, said: "My family and I became refugees in 2006, leaving Baghdad and moving to Syria, which was taking in refugees at the time. After over a year of interviews, we received a phone call: We had four one-way tickets to Sioux Falls, South Dakota. We were incredibly lucky. Only 2 percent of all refugees are resettled to a new country, and the average time an individual spends in the refugee camp is over a decade." It is worth noting that half of the refugees around the world are children. In total, a staggering number - 108.4 million individuals - were displaced across the world at the end of 2022, according to a report released this month by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. This is the highest number since the Second World War.

There are several reasons why refugees decide to flee their homes. The most important factors are violence, conflict, war and fear of persecution, which can take different forms, such as religious, racial or political, as well as prejudice against certain social groups. For example, many refugees currently come from Syria. Since 2011, Syria has witnessed the second-deadliest conflict of the 21st century - after the Second Congo War - and the worst humanitarian crisis in a generation. The Syrian civil war has resulted in an estimated 600,000 deaths, while almost 14 million people, equivalent to more than half of the Syrian population, have been displaced by the conflict. Other countries from where many refugees originate include Ukraine, Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen and Sudan. The current conflict in Sudan has caused a massive displacement, with more than 1 million people having fled their homes to seek safety, mostly elsewhere within Sudan, but a significant number have also left the country as refugees.

Some other reasons behind people leaving their homes and crossing borders include natural disasters, starvation and a lack of water and food. One of the issues to address is that the overwhelming majority of refugees (about 85 percent) are hosted in developing countries. Refugees can have a significant impact on the social, economic, political and even environmental landscapes of host countries. The hosts tend to face political and economic strain if they are not prepared for the situation. Problems arise when host countries do not have the resources or are not economically and socially prepared to deal with a huge influx of refugees.

As a result, it is important that developed nations offer assistance. With effective investments and integration, refugees can be a great asset that stimulate their host country's economy and promote productivity.

As Amnesty International stated: "Wealthier countries aren't doing nearly enough to share the cost of protecting people who have left everything behind. Appeals for humanitarian assistance for refugees are consistently - and often severely - underfunded. In short, the world urgently needs a new, global plan based on genuine international cooperation and a meaningful and fair sharing of responsibilities." Finally, as we mark this important week, let us conclude with the words of Warsan Shire, a poet who was born in Kenya to Somali parents and now lives in London. She was named the inaugural Young Poet Laureate for London in 2013. In "Home," she wrote: "No one leaves home unless, home is the mouth of a shark; you only run for the border, when you see the whole city running as well ... You have to understand, that no one puts their children in a boat, unless the water is safer than the land; no one burns their palms, under trains, beneath carriages; no one spends days and nights in the stomach of a truck, feeding on newspaper unless the miles traveled, means something more than journey. No one crawls under fences, no one wants to be beaten, pitied. No one chooses refugee camps, or strip searches where, your body is left aching, or prison."

In a nutshell, refugees around the world face many challenges to find a new and safe home. It is essential for developed countries to do more to address the refugee crisis. Refugees should not be viewed as a burden, but an opportunity.

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Turkish opposition eyes local elections after loss to Erdogan

AS after almost every failure, the opposition parties in Türkiye have already started to blame each other for the defeat they suffered during last month's general elections. Kemal Kilicdaroglu, the leader of a coalition of opposition parties, has said "it is my duty to lead the ship to a safe harbor," but he did not say why he could not do this in the last elections. In fact, he has lost all 10 elections that he has participated in. Political analysts underline that, in a country where democracy is properly digested, political leaders should step aside if they fail in one or two successive elections. Despite this and despite pressure coming from his party's hierarchy, Kilicdaroglu seems to be intent on continuing his fight.

In the first round of the presidential election on May 14, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was the leading candidate, but by less than half a percent of the

votes. In the second round, Erdogan, of the ruling Justice and Development Party, obtained 52.14 percent of the votes versus opposition leader Kilicdaroglu's 47.86. For now, there are three candidates for the chairmanship of the main opposition party, the Republican People's Party, which is known as the CHP. One is Kilicdaroglu. The second is Ekrem Imamoglu, the mayor of Istanbul, who won this position by digging the ground with his fingers. The third is Ozgur Ozel, a young and ambitious member of the party. He has publicly announced that he would not avoid taking on responsibility, adding that he would not hold back from sacrifice either, which means that he will run for the presidency only if Kilicdaroglu supports him.

There is a feeling in Türkiye's opposition party circles that a sea change has become necessary. So far, only Imamoglu has come up with a structured report and underlined the specific areas

where the coalition of opposition parties failed. This report highlighted many failures. Firstly, it stated that the main opposition CHP and its allies could not turn the last election into a referendum for or against Erdogan. Secondly, Erdogan transformed the elections into a choice of whether the electorate should vote for stability or chaos - and the opposition parties watched this from a distance as bystanders. Thirdly, the campaign became an effort to make Kilicdaroglu a candidate for the presidential post, rather than winning the elections. Finally, the opposition parties could not explain to the electorate that continuing with Erdogan would mean the further impoverishment of the Turkish people. On Wednesday last week, Kilicdaroglu and Imamoglu held a two-hour meeting on the outskirts of Ankara. People close to Imamoglu emphasized that radical changes are necessary in the

party, while Kilicdaroglu thought that the election of a new chairman had to be postponed until after the local elections that will be held next year. This means Kilicdaroglu is not prepared to leave the leadership of the party until after then at least. The other participants commented that a positive atmosphere dominated the meeting.

There are two opportunities that the willing members of the CHP would like to use to take command of the party. One of them is the party's general congress. The regular biennial general congress of the CHP was due to be held last year, but it was postponed to this year. The preparatory meetings have to be held at the village - or neighborhood - level, to be followed by the district and then provincial levels. The second is the local elections. This requires at least three months to organize. The municipal elections are expected to be held on March

31, 2024, if there is no decision made to change the date. Therefore, the parties will have to hold their intra-party elections months before so that the new administrations can launch their campaigns.

Opinions are divided as to whether the general congress of the CHP should be held before or after the local elections. If it is held beforehand, Kilicdaroglu may not be reelected, meaning his dream "to lead the ship to a safe harbor" may not materialize. Kilicdaroglu is on the record as saying that he is not opposed to the candidacy of any member of the party, but that the wrong choice should not allow the CHP to lose a major metropolis like Istanbul. The most important thing is to avoid a fight within the party, because such a division may cause a split.

Ozel, the chairman of the CHP's parliamentary group, clarified his position by emphasizing that he would definitely support any candidate who is designated by Kilicdaroglu. Kilicdaroglu

would not want to take a decision that might harm the political party he has been leading for 13 years. However, human beings have their choices. In a democratic environment, people also make mistakes. Therefore, the right way will again be found by intensifying the dialogue.

Another major factor that has to be taken into account is the case of Meral Aksener's IYI Parti. In last month's parliamentary elections, this party obtained 9.69 percent of the votes and 44 seats in the parliament. The party made a mistake by withdrawing - for three days - from the six-party opposition coalition. This unwise move caused unease within the party and must have produced a substantive loss of support among the electorate. Erdogan has repeatedly said that, in Turkish elections, the one who gets Istanbul will also get Türkiye. We may presume that he will do everything he can to ensure he does not lose Istanbul in next year's local elections.



Pak's economy to touch \$1 trillion by year 2035

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal on Monday said that the size of Pakistan's economy would be expected to touch \$1 trillion by the year 2035 as the country's economy would become one of the largest in the world.

Addressing 'Master Card Funded Care Ignite Project' ceremony' held here, the minister said that the country's economy had the potential to become a major economy in the world by 2035.

Ahsan Iqbal hoped that domestic exports could reach \$100 billion in the next five years and current domestic exports stood at \$30 billion, which was much less than its potential.

He said that the current government was following short-term, medium and long-term plans to improve the economy, for which the Economic Council had been formed.

Ahsan Iqbal said that the economy of the country had deteriorated due to the wrong planning of the previous Tehreek-e-Insaf gov-

ernment.

He said that in the previous government of Muslim League-Nawaz, international economic think tanks were counting the Pakistani economy among the next top 20 economies in the world.

Foundation of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was laid by the PML-N previous government and huge investment came into the country for it, he pointed out.

The minister said that the PML-N government had done a lot of work on

other sectors including energy due to which the country's economy was on the path of development.

Ahsan Iqbal said that at that time there was a huge economic turnaround in the country and the economy of the country was developing rapidly.

He said that Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), regional trade and foreign investment were very important in the development of the country's economy, on which the present government was working with a comprehensive plan.

100-index of Pakistan Stock Exchange loses 680 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange shed 680.08 points on Monday, a negative change of 1.65 per cent, closing at 40,621.22 points against 41,301.30 points the previous day.

A total of 179,780,375 shares were traded during the day as compared to 156,023,085 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs5.624 billion against Rs3.746 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 320 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 540f

them recorded gains and 224 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 320 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 27,671,924 shares at Rs1.12 per share; K-Electric Ltd with 11,375,247 shares at Rs.1.58 per share and Energycio PK with 9,338,326 shares at Rs2.91 per share.

Colgate PalmXDXB witnessed a maximum increase of Rs76.72 per share price, closing at Rs1,287.05, whereas the runner-up was Mehmood

Tex with an Rs74.33 rise in its per share price to Rs1,065.33.

Bhanero Tex witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs80.00 per share closing at Rs955.00; followed by Bata (Pak) with Rs64.00 decline to close at Rs1,736.00.

Gold prices decline by Rs1,000 to Rs220,700 per tola
The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs1,000 and was sold at Rs220,700 on Monday against its sale at Rs221,700 the previous day.

The price of 10 grams of

24 karat gold also decreased by Rs858 to Rs189,214 from Rs.190,072 whereas the price of 10 grams 22 karat gold went down to Rs173,447 from Rs174,232. All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs2,650 and Rs2,271.94 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market decreased by US\$7 to \$1951 against its sale at \$1958, the association reported.



MULTAN: Vendor arranging and displaying fruit mango to attract customers at his roadside setup.

Banks to observe normal banking hours on June 24

KARACHI (PPI): To facilitate the collection of government duties and taxes, bank branches on June 24 (Saturday) will observe normal banking hours until 5:30 pm while online payment facilities will also be ensured around the clock.

The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), through a statement issued here on Monday, informed that all those branches of banks that remain open on Saturday shall observe normal banking hours until 5:30 p.m. on June 24, 2023, to facilitate the collection of taxes through Alternate Delivery Channels (ADC's) over-the-counter (OTC) facility.

The measure has been taken in order to facilitate the taxpayers in payment of government duties and taxes on the request of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), the statement read.

It is pertinent to mention that the Eidul Azha holidays were falling on the last days of the current financial year.

As per routine practices, all the banks and financial institutions would likely observe gazetted holidays of Eidul Azha and the closure of banks on those days would require the taxpayers to submit their taxes and duties before the holidays.

The central further advised all banks to ensure round-the-clock (24/7) availability of their online payment facilities i.e. internet banking, Mobile Apps, ATMs etc. to facilitate the taxpayers in online payment of government duties and taxes.

Seafood exports increased

ISLAMABAD (APP): The exports of fish and fish preparations increased by 17.13 percent during the first eleven months of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding period of last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

The country earned \$456.668 million from seafood exports during July-May (2022-23) against the exports of US \$389.873 million in July-May (2021-22), showing growth of 17.13 percent, PBS reported.

In terms of quantity, the exports of fish and fish preparations increased by 32.65 percent going up from 148,354 metric tons last year to 196,785 metric tons in the first eleven months of last year.

On a year-on-year basis, seafood exports increased by 25.06 percent to \$50,578 million in May 2023 as compared to exports of \$40,444 million during April 2022.

In terms of quantity, the exports witnessed a 32.20 percent increase going up from 16,578 metric tons last year to 22,081 metric tons this year.

On a month-on-month basis, the seafood exports declined by 0.93 percent when compared to the exports of \$51,052 million in April 2023, according to PBS data. In terms of quantity, fish exports went down by 6.76 percent in May 2023 compared to the exports of 23,681 metric tons in April 2023.

Ishaq Dar chairs CCoIGCT meeting

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar chaired the meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Inter-Governmental Commercial Transactions (CCoIGCT) here on Monday.

According to a press statement issued by the finance ministry, the cabinet committee considered a summary of the Ministry of Maritime Affairs about the management of operations of Pakistan International

Container Terminal (PCT).

The committee was informed that Abu Dhabi Ports (ADP) owned by the government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has shown interest in operating the Container Terminal.

The CCoIGT after deliberation decided to constitute a committee to negotiate the draft

Framework Agreement between the governments of UAE and Pakistan under Inter-Governmental Commercial Transaction Act 2022, to

further strengthen the relations between the two countries in the Maritime sector.

Among others, the meeting was attended by Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Syed Faisal Ali Subzwari, Federal Minister for Power, Khurram Dastagir Khan; Federal Minister for Commerce, Syed Naveed Qamar; SAPM on Revenue, Tariq Pasha; Attorney General for Pakistan, Secretaries of Finance, Maritime Affairs and Law & Justice.

PCJCCI keen to boost dairy sector with China's help

LAHORE (APP): Co-operation between China and Pakistan on dairy industry and multifarious demands for high-quality dairy products in China would provide a contemporary path of development for Pakistan's domestic dairy sector.

Pakistan-China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCJCCI) President Moazzam Ghurki stated this in a think-tank session, held here at PCJCCI Secretariat on Monday. He said that Pakistan was among the world's top five largest milk producers with over 60 million tonnes of milk production each year. Such ventures and exports could definitely add value to Pakistan's economy.

He added that China learned that Pakistan was the most important exporter and producer of dairy products in South Asia. "Chinese technologies are low-priced, and if we adopt the techniques and technol-

ogy, used by China, the country can flourish in this industry," he suggested.

PCJCCI Senior Vice President Fang Yulong shared his views by saying, "We are willing to explore more about Pakistani dairy industry to see if we have the opportunity to be part of it." From 2011 to 2023, China's dairy imports rose at a compound annual growth of 12.3 per cent, and the demand was still expanding. Milk powder, liquid milk, high value-added dairy products such as whey, cheese, butter and cream were also in high demand in the Chinese market, he added.

PCJCCI Vice President Hamza Khalid said that currently China's dairy imports mainly come from New Zealand (40.44 per cent), the Netherlands (17.15pc) and Australia (7.38pc). "Our government should support this industry to boost export and domes-

tic production, especially to control the adulteration of loose milk." He asserted that local farmers were facing many problems such as a lack of education, latest storage facilities, transfer of milk and cold storage, and to get rid of these, the government should come forward to train and educate farmers about modern technology.

Joint chamber's Secretary General Salahuddin Hanif added that animal husbandry was one of the pillar industries in Pakistan, specifically Balochistan where Gwadar Port under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was located. Balochistan had the unique advantages of breeding beef cattle and dairy cows and if the industrial chain of China could be extended to Pakistan, it was expected to achieve win-win outcomes for the dairy industry of both countries, he concluded.

Yousaf Shah dismissed from LCCI Executive Committee

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry has dismissed Muhammad Yousaf Shah from the Executive Committee for not renewing the membership within the time stipulated by law, according to the LCCI spokesman here on Monday.

He explained that Muhammad Yousaf Shah failed to renew the membership of his company Al Yousaf Enterprises within the stipulated time period due to which he was no longer a member of the Lahore Chamber and at the same time, his eligibility as a member of the Executive Committee also ended. The

decision would be applicable from March 31, 2023.

It should be noted that in the LCCI, the registration and membership is obtained by a company or business concern, not by any individual man.

On the basis of that company, etc., any individual becomes a member of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry and accordingly he is elected as Executive Committee Member, President, Senior Vice President or Vice President through the election process. If a person does not complete the first basic task i.e. renewal of the company, etc. on the

basis of which, he is a member of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry, then he ceases to be a member of LCCI.

He added that President LCCI Kashif Anwar, who is also Chairman of the LCCI Executive Committee Implemented the Rules 11 (3), (4) and (5) of the Trade Organisations Rules, 2013. According to Article 13 and 22 (xv) (e) of the Articles of Association, Muhammad Yousuf Shah has also ceased to be a member of the Executive Committee of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry automatically.

LCCI Secretary General

Shahid Khalil has issued a formal notification in this regard. In the context of this decision, Muhammad Yousaf Shah is not even eligible to vote in the next year's election because if a company does not renew its membership by March 31, the company or the business concern is debarred from exercising the right of vote for the next year. Moreover, the Lahore Chamber has requested the Director General Trade Organization (DGTO) to provide directives regarding any other possible disqualifications in consequence of non-renewal of the membership, the spokesman added.

Pakistani specialties shine at int'l economic and trade fair in China

BEIJING (INP): The enchantment of Made-in-Pakistan specialties including but not limited to wood carving, bronze carving, carpets- firmly holds the gaze of visitors by its unique appearance and deep-rooted cultural foundation at the 32nd China (Harbin) International Economic and Trade Fair (HTF).

Kicked off in Harbin, Heilongjiang, Northeast China on June 15, nearly 300 companies from 38 countries and regions gathered here with new projects, new technologies and new products, showing their glamour at this 5-day fair, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Monday.

Made-in-Pakistan spe-

cialties, especially furniture, carpet, jewelry, cashmere and the like, are internationally popular because of their elegant textures and superior workmanship.

"Pakistan handicrafts products have been very much liked by Chinese people even in Pakistan. Besides, as far as gems and jewelry is concerned, it is evident to all over the world that Pakistan is blessed with precious and semi-precious stones and China is big market of it, which are opportunities that motivated us to start business in China since 2013," Hasan, head of Pakistan Hassn Impex, who participated in the HTF for the first time, mentioned in an exclusive

interview with China Economic Net, "and we have been participating in Harbin Fair since 2014. This year we brought handicrafts like brass and jewelries."

"Chinese customers came to my booth for these handicraft products, enquiring about its making procedure. Obviously, they appreciated it a lot," Hasan noted that they are regular participants and will continue the participation next year because of the HTF as a golden opportunity that make increasing Chinese consumers to be fascinated by products from their fraternal country.

Furthermore, his team is planning to bring more Pakistani gemstones next

year along with other products. "If possible, we request the organizer to give us booths or customized booths at prominent location, thus we may make more effective display of our goods."

The 2023 HTF is expected to attract more than 7,000 professional buyers and over 200,000 professional visitors in five days.

It will serve China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative and will help other countries share in the fruits of China's high-level opening-up.

First held in 1990, the trade fair had seen nearly 3 trillion yuan (about 420 billion US dollars) worth of deals inked over the decades.

Alfanar to inject \$2.7b to develop residential communities in NEOM

RIYADH (Agencies): In a bid to reshape the residential landscape in Saudi Arabia, Alfanar Global Development has announced that it will inject SR10 billion (\$2.7 billion) to develop five residential communities in NEOM, the smart city currently under construction in the Kingdom.

The announcement from Alfanar comes following an array of agreements inked by NEOM with investors for the first-phase construction of its residential communities to accommodate the growing workforce in the region.

Earlier this month, NEOM revealed that it had finalized contracts worth SR21 billion to develop these residential communities, and Alfanar was

one of the preferred bidders.

Alfanar Global Development, a part of Alfanar Group, said it had achieved financial closure with three major commercial banks in the Kingdom — Riyad Bank, Saudi Awwal Bank and Alinma Bank.

The company revealed that the scope of the contract includes the development, construction and operation of these residential communities within NEOM.

The five residential communities will cover 4 million sq. meters and accommodate 50,000 occupants upon completion.

"The region of NEOM is born from the ambition of Saudi Arabia's Vision

2030 to transform industries. We are excited about the opportunity to contribute to this transformation and to deliver solutions that will redefine the future of smart communities," said Sabah Al-Mutlaq, vice chairman of Alfanar.

He added: "Our fully integrated engineering teams bring a wealth of experience and are dedicated to delivering quality and maintaining safety while successfully fulfilling all requirements for these communities."

These temporary residential projects, used by the workforce during the construction period of the futuristic city, will be built sustainably as relocatable modular units which can be repurposed once the

communities are no longer needed.

They will include many lifestyle facilities, such as multi-purpose sports fields, cricket ovals, tennis courts, volleyball courts, basketball courts, swimming pools and entertainment venues.

NEOM is widely considered Saudi Arabia's most ambitious project, as the Kingdom is eyeing to diversify its economy aligned with the goals outlined in Vision 2030.

The \$500 billion mega-project construction is progressing steadily in the Tabuk Province in north-western Saudi Arabia. Upon completion, it is expected to become one of the most popular tourist destinations in the Kingdom.



UN to finally adopt high seas treaty

NEW YORK (AFP): The world's first international treaty to protect the high seas is due to be adopted Monday at the United Nations, a historic environmental accord designed to protect remote ecosystems vital to mankind. "It will be a huge accomplishment, one that we've already celebrated with the finalization of the text in March. But the adoption formalizes that, and really sets the pathway for the next steps," Liz Karan, of the NGO Pew Charitable Trusts, told AFP.

The landmark treaty will establish a legal framework to extend swathes of environmental protections to international waters, which make up more than 60 percent of the world's oceans. Following more than 15 years of discussions, including four years of formal negotiations, UN member states finally agreed on the text for the treaty in March after a flurry of final, marathon talks.

The text, since frozen, has been pored over by the UN's lawyers and translators to make sure it matches in the body's six official languages. "Healthy oceans, from coastal waters to remote high seas and deep seabed areas, are integral to human health, wellbeing, and survival," a group of scientists noted in The Lancet journal. Scientists have increasingly come to realize the importance of oceans, which produce most of the oxygen we breathe, limit climate change by absorb-

ing CO2, and host rich areas of biodiversity, often at the microscopic level. But with so much of the world's oceans lying outside of individual countries' exclusive economic zones, and thus the jurisdiction of any single state, providing protection for the so-called "high seas" requires international cooperation. - Marine reserves -

The result is that they've been long ignored in many environmental fights, as the spotlight has been on coastal areas and a few emblematic species. A key tool in the treaty will be the ability to create protected marine areas in international waters. Currently, only about one percent of the high seas are protected by any sort of conservation measures.

The treaty is seen as crucial to countries protecting 30 percent of the world's oceans and lands by 2030, as agreed by world governments in a separate historic accord reached in Montreal in December. If the treaty is adopted "then the race to ratification will begin" and the 30 percent target "will remain within reach," said Chris Thorne of Greenpeace. The treaty, officially known as the treaty on "Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction" or BBNJ, also introduces requirements to carry out environmental impact studies for proposed activities to be carried out in international waters. Such activities, while not listed in the text, would include any-

thing from fishing and maritime transport to more controversial pursuits, like deep-sea mining or even geo-engineering programs aimed at fighting global warming.

The treaty also establishes principles for sharing the benefits of "marine genetic resources" (MGR) collected by scientific research in international waters -- a sticking point that almost derailed last-minute negotiations in March. Developing countries, which often don't have the money to finance such expeditions, fought for benefit-sharing rights, hoping to not get left behind by what many see as a huge future market in the commercialization of MGR, especially by pharmaceutical and cosmetic companies searching for "miracle molecules." Once the text it adopted, it remains to be seen how many countries will decide to come on board.

NGOs believe that the threshold of 60 ratifications required for it to enter into force should be reachable since the High Ambition Coalition for the BBNJ -- which pushed for the treaty -- counts some 50 or so countries as members, including those of the European Union, as well as Chile, Mexico, India and Japan. But 60 is far from the universal adoption -- the UN has 193 member states -- that defenders of the ocean are pushing for. "After adoption, swift ratification and implementation are crucial!" the High Seas Alliance said on Twitter.

NK: Botched satellite launch was gravest failure

SEOUL (Reuters): North Korea has said its botched military satellite launch last month was the "gravest failure" at the ruling party's latest key meeting, state media KCNA reported on Monday. The enlarged plenary meeting was held, ordering workers and researchers to analyze the failed military satellite launch and prepare for another in the near future.

Those in charge of the satellite launch were "heavily criticized," the report said. It marked the eight enlarged plenary meeting of the 8th Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK), the country's ruling party. The North Korean rocket plunged into the sea "after losing thrust due to the abnormal starting of the second-stage engine," Pyongyang said after the launch failure in an unusually candid admission of a technical problem. North Korea also vowed it will continue to develop its nuclear capability and strengthen solidarity with other countries that oppose what it called the "US strategy for world supremacy." The meeting also discussed ensuring self-sufficiency in food supply by increasing the country's agricultural output and meeting the annual grain production target. Earlier this year, South Korea's Unification Ministry said the food situation in the North "seemed to have deteriorated". The island country is under strict international sanctions over its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs and its economy has been further strained by strict self-imposed border lockdowns aimed at stopping COVID-19 outbreaks.

South African taps run dry after power shortages

JOHANNESBURG (BBC): The peace of a normally tranquil suburban road near South Africa's capital, Pretoria, is being shattered by the sound of drilling. These are not prospectors looking for a new source of the country's mineral wealth, but workers digging for an arguably more precious resource: water.

Private boreholes - like this one being excavated in Garsfontein - are springing up across the wealthier neighbourhoods in the country's economic heartland, where taps have been running dry. "I am tired of not knowing when we will have water and when we won't," the frustrated homeowner says. "Having a borehole means we won't have to depend on the government so much, it's what's best for my family." Much of the domestic water supply here depends on electricity to pump it from the source to the vast high plain on which the cities of Johannesburg and Pretoria sit. South Africa's recent electricity woes - with regular lengthy scheduled blackouts - have had a knock-on effect on the supply of water. "All of our stations, they need electricity, they need power. You have to pump water everywhere where it is needed," says Sipho Mosai, the head of state-owned Rand Water, one of the country's main water providers.

"Electricity is really at the heartbeat of what we do and if we don't have it externally, at least for now, it becomes a problem." "Some days I don't have both water and electricity, and this can be for days at a time. It makes daily life insufferable," says Zizi Dlanga, a 35-year-old private wealth manager. She lives in a two-bedroom apartment in an affluent suburb in the north of Johannesburg with her sister who is a trainee doctor. She now stocks up on water when it is available and goes to a gym to take a shower. "My water bill stays the same even with all the cuts. I feel frustrated, I don't have access to water alternatives [like a borehole] that would make this bearable for me," she adds. There are, of course, millions of South Africans who have lived without having water piped into their homes for years. But the intermittent domestic supply is just one aspect of a multi-pronged problem facing the water industry. "We are in a state of systemic failure, the water sector is collapsing," expert Prof Anthony Turton tells the BBC.

The lack of electricity has exacerbated issues created by poorly maintained infrastructure, which has led to vast leaks as well as sewage problems, and a supply of water that cannot meet demand. Seventy million litres of treated, clean, drinkable



water are lost every single day because of leaks that are endemic in the crumbling water system. Most of the water wastage identified has been linked to badly run municipalities that are not investing in maintenance, partly because of corruption and theft. This has also meant that sewage plants are not cleaning the water in the way that they should. And this has had public health consequences.

In just a few weeks in Hammanskraal, a township outside Pretoria, 29 people were killed by cholera that had been found in the water supply there. The outbreak has been linked to substandard water purification practices. Lawrence Malope sells bottled water at the roadside in the township. It is a new business born out of desperate times. "Most people buy from me because they want safe water to drink, because the water that comes out of the taps is dirty," he says. At home, he collects rainwater and then boils it before use. "Many people are getting sick here because of the water coming out of our taps and some just don't know how to clean it. We have young children in this community, I'm really worried about our safety," he says. But not having clean drinking water is not unique to Hammanskraal - a recent report by the department of water affairs and sanitation found that of the 155 treatment systems sampled, 41% came back showing bad microbial water quality compliance.

The problem can be found across the country. In the Eastern Cape's quaint arts town of Makhanda, formerly known as Grahamstown, residents have for years been forced to contend with unsafe drinking water, with recurring bouts of E.coli contamination. In the Free State province, government investigations found that the majority of wastewater treatment plants are deemed to be "in critical condition", putting residents at risk of contaminated water. For

Prof Turton, the combination of problems with water and electricity supplies is creating a perfect storm. "People living all across the country are becoming increasingly concerned and increasingly angry. Part of it is because people are sitting in darkness sometimes. "With the interrupted water supply... we now have a situation where people are literally dying from disease." On the part of the water suppliers, Mr Mosai from Rand Water agrees that more needs to be done. He says that his company is investing in solar power rather than relying on the national grid. When it comes to solutions, drilling private boreholes is only an option for the very wealthy, as they come with a price tag of \$7,000 (£5,000).

It also serves to highlight the huge inequalities in South Africa. "What it's doing is widening the gap between those that have and those that don't have. It creates social injustice," argues Dr Ferrial Adam from advocacy group WaterCAN. There are also questions about the environmental impact of boreholes and whether the groundwater is safe to drink. In some parts of the country, harmful metals and dangerous bacteria can be found in the water. But experts say there are some things that can be done to benefit everyone and help arrest the deterioration of the water supply. "There are some very quick fixes," according to Dr Adam. "One is fix the leaks, spend actual money on infrastructure and maintenance, and test water regularly, so you monitor what people are being made to drink." She adds that the national government needs to be better at keeping municipalities in line. The government acknowledges the problem and says it has taken some municipalities to court over allegations of negligence. But Dr Adam feels that is not enough. "A lot of these are failing. That failure places lives at risk."

Blinken may meet Xi during final day of talks

BEIJING (AFP): US Secretary of State Antony Blinken opened talks with China's top envoy Monday and could potentially meet President Xi Jinping, on the final day of a trip to Beijing aimed at improving severely strained ties. The top US diplomat met for seven and a half hours with Foreign Minister Qin Gang, more than expected, with the two sides agreeing to keep up communication as they look to avoid all-out conflict.

Neither side has confirmed a meeting between Blinken and Xi, China's most powerful leader in decades, whose meeting with President Joe Biden in November in Bali raised cautious hopes for a thaw in the relationship. But diplomats see a meeting likely with Xi. Blinken opened the day by meeting China's top diplomat, Wang Yi, whose position in the Communist Party ranks above the foreign minister.

Returning to the ornate state guesthouse in the ancient Diaoyutai gardens where talks took place, Blinken and Wang offered polite smiles before the cameras and exchanged pleasantries before heading into a meeting with

their aides, who unlike their bosses wear masks in line with Covid-19 protocols. Tensions have soared between the world's two largest economies in recent years on issues ranging from trade to technology to Taiwan. US officials say that they do not expect major breakthroughs from Blinken's talks but they hope to reopen regular lines of communication to prevent mishaps from escalating into conflict. Both countries said that Xi accepted an offer to pay a return visit to Washington at a later date.

The talks were "candid, substantive and constructive", State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said. Blinken stressed "the importance of diplomacy and maintaining open channels of communication across the full range of issues to reduce the risk of miscalculation", Miller said. Behind closed doors, Qin told Blinken that relations between the United States and China "are at the lowest point since the establishment of diplomatic relations", according to state-run broadcaster CCTV. "This does not conform to the fundamental interests of the two

peoples, nor does it meet the common expectations of the international community," Qin said during the talks at the ancient gardens. But he issued a warning on Taiwan, the self-ruling democracy claimed by Beijing, which has launched live-fire military drills twice near the island since August in anger over actions by top US lawmakers. "The Taiwan issue is the core of China's core interests, the most important issue in China-US relations and the most prominent risk," Qin said. A senior US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the discussions went beyond the usual talking points, including on Taiwan. "This was a real conversation," he said. Xi last week struck a conciliatory note as he met another prominent American, software tycoon turned philanthropist Bill Gates. "You are the first American friend I have met in Beijing this year," Xi told Gates in Beijing, according to the state-run People's Daily. "We have always placed our hopes on the American people, and hoped for continued friendship between the peoples of the two countries," he added.

UN says Russia refuses to allow help

NEW YORK (Reuters): The United Nations said that Moscow had declined requests to help residents of Russian-controlled areas of southern Ukraine affected by the breach of the Kakhovka dam and vowed to press on with humanitarian efforts. The bursting of the dam on a hydroelectric station has flooded vast areas and created difficult conditions for thousands made homeless or without vital services.

Ukrainian Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko, writing on Facebook, put at 17 the death toll from the dam's destruction, with 31 still missing. He said nearly 900 homes remained under water and more than 3,600 people had been evacuated. The UN statement, issued by its humanitarian coordinator for Ukraine, Denise Brown, said the world body "will continue to engage to seek the necessary access." "We urge the Russian authorities to act in accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law. Aid cannot be denied to people who need it." Ukraine and Russia blame each other for the breach. Parts of Ukraine's Kherson region, seized by Russian troops in the first days of the February 2022 invasion, remain under Russian control. Ukrainian officials have repeatedly accused Russia of failing to evacuate or provide for the elementary needs of those in Moscow-controlled areas. Kyiv reported at least one incident of Russian shelling of residents being evacuated in which three people were killed. Andrei Alekseyenko, chairman of the Russian-installed administration in the Moscow-occupied parts of Kherson region, said on the Telegram messaging app the death toll had risen to 29 people. A team of international legal experts assisting Ukraine's prosecutors in their investigation said in preliminary findings it was "highly likely" the destruction of the dam was caused by explosives planted by Russians. The Kremlin accuses Kyiv of sabotaging the hydroelectric dam, which held a reservoir the size of the US Great Salt Lake, to cut off a key source of water for Crimea and distract attention from a "faltering" counter-offensive against Russian forces.

Protesters demand release of 'political prisoners'

TUNIS (Agencies): Hundreds of supporters of Tunisia's main opposition coalition have rallied to demand freedom for about 20 imprisoned opponents of President Kais Saied.

Amidst a heavy security deployment, the opposition coalition under the name of the National Salvation Front organised a vigil in front of the municipal theatre in the centre of the capital, Tunis.

Up to 300 protesters, many carrying photographs of people they called "political prisoners", gathered in defence of the former ministers, business figures and others held since February. They also raised slogans accusing Saied of tyranny and sabotaging the country and the economy, and challenged the campaign of arrests and trials among the opposition. "Freedom! Freedom!" they chanted, as they demanded an election ahead of the scheduled October 2024 date.

In March, the European Parliament, in a nonbinding resolution, decried the "authoritarian drift" of Saied, who says those arrested were "terrorists" involved in a "conspiracy against state security". Tunisia was the only democracy to emerge from the Arab Spring uprisings in the region more than a decade ago, but Saied in July 2021 suspended, then later dissolved, parliament as part of a power grab allowing him to rule by decree. Among those detained is Rached Ghannouchi, head of the Islamist-inspired Ennahdha party, which was the largest in parliament before Saied took control. "They are imprisoned because they exercised their legitimate right to dissent," Ahmed Nejib Chebbi, who heads the National Salvation Front, told the protesters. Counterterrorism officers questioned Ghannouchi for three hours as part of an

investigation into claims of a "plot against state security".

Abdul Latif al-Makki, a former health minister, told Al Jazeera that the authorities have arrested opposition figureheads with the aim of "throwing them in prisons and silencing their voices rejecting tyranny". "The Salvation Front will continue its moves to resist the coup's authority and put pressure on it to release the prisoners," al-Makki said. Al-Makki expressed his rejection of the continuous "systematic targeting of opponents through political trials that are not based on any evidence of guilt". He also said that Saied has only succeeded since the emergency measures imposed about two years ago in suppressing the opposition, striking the independence of the judiciary, sabotaging democracy, and establishing tyranny and injustice.

Sudan crisis: 17 killed in air strikes

KHARTOUM (BBC): Seventeen people - five children - have been killed in an air strike in Sudan's capital, Khartoum, officials say. Twenty-five homes were destroyed in strike in the densely populated Yarmouk district. It came a day after a top army general threatened to step up attacks against the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.

Fighting between the Sudanese army and the RSF broke out mid-April as a result of a vicious power struggle within the country's military leadership. In early June, the RSF claimed full control of Yarmouk, an area of the capital which houses an arms manufacturing facility. Later on the warring factions agreed a 72-hour ceasefire starting at 06:00 (04:00 GMT). It was announced by Saudi and US mediators. Similar ceasefires in the past have not been observed. Precise figures on the number of people killed in the fighting are difficult to establish, but it is believed to be well over 1,000, including many civilians caught in the crossfire. Roughly 2.2 million people have been displaced within the country and more than half a million are sheltering in neighbouring countries, according to the UN.

Several ceasefires have been announced to allow people to escape the fighting but these have not been observed. The recent attack targeted civilians in Mayo, Yarmouk, and Mandela areas, according to the RSF. The army has not commented. Since the hostilities began, tens of thousands of civilians have fled across the border into neighbouring Chad. Doctors and hospitals there have been overstretched and struggling to cope. The violence has also resurrected a two-decade-old conflict in Sudan's western Darfur region.

Mali counts votes

BAMAKO (Reuters): Mali started counting votes from a constitutional referendum that the ruling military junta and regional powers have said will pave the way to elections and a return to civilian rule. The junta, which seized power in coups in 2020 and 2021, promised to hold the plebiscite as part of a transition to democracy, under pressure from West African regional bloc the Economic Community Of West Africa States. Provisional results are expected by Tuesday.

Some of the proposed clauses in the new constitution drafted by the transitional council are contentious, with proponents saying they would strengthen fragile political institutions and opponents saying they would give too much power to the president. But regional bodies and the United Nations see the referendum itself as an important test of the junta's willingness to stick to the transition and hold a nationwide democratic process, particularly at a time when Islamist militants are stepping up attacks. "With this

project, we are betting on the future of our state, the restoration of its authority, and the regained trust between institutions and citizens," interim president Colonel Assimi Goita said in a televised speech. The draft includes updates that have been proposed in past failed efforts to revise the constitution, including the creation of a second parliamentary chamber to boost representation from across Mali.

The proposed establishment of a separate court of auditors for state spending will bring Mali in line with a directive from the West African Economic and Monetary Union from 2000. But some opposition parties, pro-democracy groups and campaigners for the 'No' vote say non-elected authorities such as the junta have no right to oversee such a substantial constitutional overhaul. "I am for a revision of the constitution but not this referendum. The legitimacy of the actors, the process... I think we could have done better," lawyer Fousseini Ag Yehia said in

the capital Bamako. Northern Mali armed groups that signed a 2015 peace deal, which has been shaky since the junta took power, had called for a boycott of the referendum saying the process was "not sufficiently inclusive". Ahmoudane Ag Ikmasse a former member of parliament for the northern town of Kidal, told Reuters that no voting took place there. Ould Mohamed Ramadan, a spokesman for the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA), the northern Tuareg-led rebel alliance, said voting only took place in a few places with a high concentration of Malian armed forces, such as Timbuktu, Gao and Menaka.

Large areas of northern Mali are controlled by militants linked to al Qaeda and Islamic State as the Sahel nation struggles to find stability since a 2012 Tuareg rebellion. Mali demanded the departure of UN peacekeepers who have been in the country since 2013, saying the mission was fuelling tensions between communities.

Germany resists Malian junta demand

BERLIN (Reuters): Germany said a request by Mali's military junta for the United Nations peacekeeping force to leave the country "without delay" is politically motivated and Berlin still aims for an orderly withdrawal of its troops by May 2024. Mali's interim military authorities made the request, citing a "crisis of confidence" between Malian authorities and the decade-long UN mission known as MINUSMA, which has struggled to protect civilians and its own troops.

The unexpected demand sparked immediate fears of further chaos in Mali, which voted in a referendum on changing the constitution intended to pave the way to elections and a return to civilian rule. Berlin has deployed some 1,000 troops to Mali, most near the northern town of

Gao where their main task is to gather reconnaissance for the 13,000-strong MINUSMA. The withdrawal demand marked a major turning point for the West African country, which has struggled to stem an Islamist insurgency that took root following an uprising in 2012. MINUSMA was deployed by the UN Security Council in 2013 to support foreign and local efforts to restore stability. Frustrations over the growing insecurity spurred two coups in 2020 and 2021 and the ruling junta has been increasingly at loggerheads with MINUSMA and other international allies including France.

Security Council members must adopt a resolution to extend MINUSMA's mandate by June 30. A resolution requires at least nine votes in favour and no vetoes by

Russia, China, the United States, Britain or France to pass. The junta has burnt bridges with traditional Western allies and turned to Russia for help boosting its military capabilities. Western governments are worried about the presence of Russian private military contractor Wagner.

"That the Malian transition government and Russia would use the upcoming extension of the UN Mandate to derive political capital from that does not surprise us," a spokeswoman for the defence ministry said. "Our interest remains a structured exit. In this regard, we support the UN negotiations." Germany said late last year it would start to pull out its troops from Mali from the middle of next year after a decade-long mission, with the withdrawal to be completed by May 2024.

Sharjeel asks PM to fulfill promises made to Sindh

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Minister of Information, Transport, and Mass Transit of Sindh, Sharjeel Inam Memon, said that the municipal elections in Sindh will conclude on Monday with the swearing-in ceremony of the Mayor of Karachi, following this, the municipal administration of Karachi will become operational.

Addressing a press conference at the Archives Complex in Clifton, Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that the leadership of the Pakistan People's Party, including former President Asif Ali Zardari and Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, have been provided with clear instructions to serve the public.

He emphasized that Jamaat-e-Islami, is opposing their party without any valid reason, and turmoil have been historically associated with them. Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon urged Jamaat-e-Islami to accept their defeat and collaborate in the progress. He clarified that the instructions from our party's leadership are to foster unity and work collectively with all stakeholders. He stated that Jamaat-e-Islami benefited from the boycott of the MQM in Karachi, as it allowed them to secure seats that otherwise Jamaat-e-Islami would have lost very badly.

Speaking about the polio campaign, he emphasized the importance of administering polio drops to safeguard children against disease. He appealed to the media to wholeheartedly support the government in its efforts by informing the public about the effectiveness of polio vaccination. He further requested the media to accelerate talk shows and awareness campaigns regarding polio, urging them to increase program coverage on this topic. The aim is to encourage maximum public engagement and participation in the polio campaign.

Sharjeel Inam Memon mentioned that he came across a news report stating that the Prime Minister has allocated 25 billion rupees in special funds for the flood victims in Sindh. If this news is verified as accurate, then he expressed his appreciation for the initiative. He highlighted that both Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah have consis-



tently advocated for support to the flood victims at various platforms. He urged the Prime Minister to fulfill the promises made to Sindh during his visits to the region.

He mentioned that Ahsan Iqbal's statements were taken into consideration, we hold respect for him. However, expressing matters that should remain within the confines of a meeting outside of it is deemed inappropriate. Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that the Sindh government highly appreciates the visits of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to Sindh, particularly during the challenging time of floods.

Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon acknowledged the significance of Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visits to Sindh, during the floods, and expressed the Sindh government's appreciation for them. Regarding the period of the PTI government, he stated that Sindh experienced significant injustices during that time. However, when the PDM government assumed power, they made a request to the Prime Minister of Pakistan to rectify those injustices. The specific request was to reinstate the irrigation and road schemes in Sindh that had been cancelled. The Prime Minister gave assurances to include these projects as promised.

He highlighted that Sindh contributes significantly in terms of tax revenue and natural gas production. Additionally, he mentioned that the electricity generation from Thar Coal in Sindh is also a notable achievement. However, he expressed concern

over the failure to fulfill the promises made to Sindh, stating that it is not aligned with principles of justice. Specifically, he emphasized the importance of retaining irrigation and road development schemes in Sindh as per their demands. Despite assurances, the necessary funding for these projects was not provided.

Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that if the reports regarding the relief funds received by the media are accurate, the Sindh government expresses gratitude to the Prime Minister and the federal government. However, he also mentioned that it would have been more preferable if such information had been communicated to Sindh government earlier. He emphasized the importance of maintaining a strong alliance but criticized the tendency of lower-tier leaders to make provocative statements, which he considered inappropriate.

Answering the questions Provincial Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that their goal is to foster collaboration within the alliance. However, he clarified that if there are any grievances or complaints, we will address them through proper channels and within the established rules and procedures.

Regarding relationships with other political parties, he responded to a question by stating that they maintain friendly relations with various parties, including MQM and Muslim League. Furthermore, he emphasized that they have no conflicts or disputes with Jamaat-e-Islami.

In response to a question, he acknowledged Sirajul Haq as a respected elder and stated that the People's Party does not endorse any form of coercion. He mentioned that the Sindh government is committed to empowering all towns and ensuring equal opportunities for serving the people. He emphasized the importance of collective efforts in serving the city.

He further noted that Jamaat-e-Islami has not held power during any democratic era. He pointed out that JI Chief Sirajul Haq served as a finance minister in a province during Musharraf's era, which was not considered a democratic period. In response to another question, he clarified that the opposition leader would be brought to the assembly session in accordance with the law.

Greece tragedy: FIA registers cases against human traffickers

GUJRANWALA (INP): Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Monday registered four separate cases against human traffickers involved in the Greece shipwreck tragedy. As many as 78 Pakistani nationals drowned when the ill-fated boat with reportedly 400 to 750 people onboard sank in the Mediterranean Sea near the Greek coast.

According to media reports, some 104 people were rescued and sent to Kalamata, Greece. Cases were registered against the human traffickers in Gujrat and Gujranwala on the complaints of the people rescued in the boat wreckage tragedy. The FIA named 12 human traffickers including Asif Sanyara, Riyasat, Rana Naqash, Nadeem Aslam and Muhammad Aslam and others in three cases registered in Gujrat.

On announcement of PM Shehbaz Sharif, Pakistan observed a day of mourning over the tragic deaths of its national in the ship sinking incident near the coast of Greece on June 14, 2023. The national flag flew at half-mast and special prayers were offered for the deceased of the Greece ship tragedy.

Court sends Khadija Shah to jail

LAHORE (PPI): An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Lahore rejected the police's request for the physical remand of PTI leader Khadija Shah in the Askari Tower attack case and sent her to jail on a 14-day judicial remand.

ATC judge Abhar Gul Khan conducted the hearing. "Khadija Shah was present at the scene of the attack on Askari Tower," the prosecutor told the court. "Tell about the presence of Khadija Shah. Was she present in the Liberty Market," the court said. "There are statements of Khadija Shah on social media," the prosecutor further told the court. "How can Khadija Shah be present in two places at a time?" Khadija's lawyer said. "I was arrested at Jinnah House, I did not go to the Liberty Market on May 9 the whole day," Khadija Shah said.

"The whole crowd was at Siddique Centre when the call to protest was made. I was at home when the corps commander house was attacked," Khadija Shah said. The court, however, rejected the police's request for physical remand of Khadija Shah and sent her to jail on a 14-day judicial remand.

IMF meetings schedule set sans Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The International Monetary Fund (IMF) Executive Board has issued meetings scheduled till June 29 without Pakistan as the ninth review under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) programme still remains pending.

Pakistan has barely enough currency reserves to cover one month's imports. It had hoped to have \$1.1 billion of the funds released in November — but the IMF has insisted on a number of conditions before it makes any more disbursements. Sources privy to the development said the IMF had to meet for the release of \$1.1 billion tranche under the 9th review of the EFF programme which is expiring on June 30.

Pakistani authorities are optimistic that the fund will complete the ninth review before the deadline and the meeting for the release of the tranche to Pakistan can be summoned at any time. It may be noted that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in his telephonic conversation with the IMF chief requesting for the early completion of the 9th review for the release of the loan. Last week, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) expressed dissatisfaction with Pakistan's recently presented budget.

Policy talks are underway with Pakistan. However, the draft FY24 Budget 'misses' an opportunity to broaden the tax base in a more progressive way, Esther Perez Ruiz, the International Monetary Fund's resident representative for Pakistan said.



BEIJING: US State Secretary Antony Blinken shaking hands with Chinese Communist Party's central committee member Wang Yi prior to a meeting.

Xi says China, US 'made progress' in Blinken visit

BEIJING (Agencies): Chinese President Xi Jinping said the United States and China had "made progress" on a number of issues on Monday as he hosted US State Secretary Antony Blinken for talks in Beijing.

Blinken's visit is the highest-level trip by a US official to China in nearly five years with ties severely strained between the world's two largest economies. Xi, China's most powerful leader in decades, met Blinken at the capital's Great Hall of the People just after 4:30pm (0830 GMT), Chinese state media and US officials said.

"The Chinese side has made our position clear and the two sides have agreed to follow through the common understandings US President Joe Biden and I had reached in Bali," Xi told the top US diplomat. "Two sides have also made progress and reached agreement on some specific issues", he added, without elaborating.

"I hope that Secretary Blinken, through this visit, can make positive contributions to stabilising China-US relations," he added. The meeting, which lasted just over half an hour, came after Blinken held more than 10 hours of talks over two days with other top officials. At the ornate

Diaoyutai State Guesthouse earlier on Monday, Blinken and China's foreign policy supreme Wang Yi offered polite smiles before talks with their aides, who unlike their bosses wore masks in line with lingering Covid-19 protocols.

Away from the cameras, Wang told Blinken that his trip "comes at a critical juncture in China-US relations", according to state broadcaster CCTV. "It is necessary to make a choice between dialogue and confrontation, cooperation or conflict," he said. "We must reverse the downward spiral of China-US relations, push for a return to a healthy and stable track, and work together to find a correct way for China and the United States to get along," Wang added.

He also issued a warning on Taiwan, the self-ruling democracy claimed by Beijing. In the past year, China has launched live-fire military drills twice near the island in anger over meetings between top US lawmakers and Taiwanese leaders. "On this issue, China has no room to compromise or concede," Wang told Blinken, according to CCTV.

US State Department spokesman Matthew Miller called the discussion with Wang "candid and productive". Blinken "underscored the importance of

responsibly managing the competition between the United States and the PRC through open channels of communication to ensure competition does not veer into conflict", Miller said, referring to the People's Republic of China.

US officials have voiced fears that China in the coming years will try to seize Taiwan and insist that Washington's sales of weapons to the island are meant only to preserve the status quo. Blinken will address reporters before leaving China later on Monday.

Tensions between China and the United States have soared in recent years over a host of issues including trade, technology and Taiwan, with both Biden and his predecessor Donald Trump calling Beijing the most serious threat to long-term US global primacy. US officials have said they hope Blinken's visit will bring more stability, if not breakthroughs, between Washington and Beijing. On the streets of the Chinese capital, Sun Yi, 26, said she hoped Blinken's trip would improve the relationship and that she hoped to visit the United States. "I think the two countries right now are like quarrelling lovers. Both sides have their own personalities and interests and are not willing to compromise," she said.

NAB probe: PHC reserves verdict

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Waqar Ahmad reserved decision on conversion of National Accountability Bureau (NAB) inquiry into investigation against Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) project's contractors in the premises of erstwhile Fata, on Monday.

The counsel argued that NAB will probe into embezzlement above Rs500 million after the new amendments in the respective accountability laws. The counsel added that NAB has initiated inquiries on SDG's projects at Bajaur, Khyber and Mohmand district while three Inquiry Officers appointed for the probe but now it is turning to investigation by combining all three inquiries.

NAB didn't properly heard to contractors during inquiries while the projects are under progress and still completed, the counsel informed PHC.

However, Deputy Prosecutor General Azeem Dad argued that the projects should be completed within 4 four or six months but it is still incomplete at Bajaur, Khyber and Mohmand districts. The inquiry initiated due to time bar exceeded from four and six months while turned it into investigation, but PHC inquired regarding status Reference in this regard.

The Reference has been finalized while be file following signature from competent authority, DPG NAB informed. PHC's divisional bench comprised of Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Waqar Ahmad reserved judgement in this regarding after conclusion of arguments.

Shujaat meets Pervaiz Elahi

LAHORE (Agencies): Chaudhry Shujaat, the head of the PML-Q, in a jail visit to Pervaiz Elahi, President of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), urged him to return back to his previous party. Shujaat along with his son, Salik, held a special meeting with Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi in Camp Jail, Lahore, which was reportedly lasted for an hour.

During the meeting, Chaudhry Shujaat and his son expressed their concern for Pervaiz Elahi's well-being and inquired about his health and asked him to return to his previous party for the improvement of political matters in the country.

Reviews of Orders and Judgments Act Apex court reserves judgment on petitions

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court (SC) on Monday reserved its judgment on petitions pertaining to SC Reviews of Orders and Judgments Act 2023.

A three-member bench of the top court headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial and comprising Justice Ijaz ul Ahsan and Justice Munib Akhtar heard the case. At the outset of the hearing, Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Usman Awan argued that there were different judgments of the apex court regarding the powers of the Parliament for legislation. A separate scope had been set for the review of the judgments in cases of Article 184/3, he said.

The AGP said before introduction of the act which had not affected the right of anybody, there was no method for review in the cases of Article 184/3. It did not limit the scope of review. He said as per the act it was the court's

authority to choose members of the bench for a review case, and that bench should be larger than the bench, which had heard the main case.

CJP Bandial remarked that the government could introduce legislation but giving right of appeal in the review cases did not seem appropriate. The government should take a decision on the matter after thorough consideration. He noted that there was also no right of review appeal in India in cases like those of Article 184/3.

Justice Munib Akhtar questioned whether the power of review could be compared with civil laws and whether civil laws fell in the jurisdiction of provinces. The act did not mention provincial laws, he said, asking the AGP to give arguments on section-II of the act. He further questioned whether the SC could raise any new legal points in the review appeal. To this, the AGP answered in affirmative.

The chief justice remarked that everyone was agreed on the point that the Parliament was authorized to extend the scope of reviews. He said the government had converted the review into an appeal but it also had to give solid reasons for that. The government should do legislation but it should not leave anything unclear in the law.

He asked why the government did not interpret public interest and review. The AGP prayed the court to terminate the petitions against the act as the petitioners were not directly affected with the legislation. The petitioners could challenge the legislation in high courts under Article 199 of the Constitution. The current legislation would not affect the provision of the justice and decisions in review cases, he added. The court subsequently reserved its judgment after the AGP concluded his arguments in the case.

Imran gets interim bail in eight cases

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Courts in Islamabad on Monday extended interim bail of former prime minister and PTI Chairman Imran Khan in eight different cases till July 4. Anti-Corruption Court Judge Muhammad Bashir conducted proceedings on an application filed by Imran Khan seeking bail in £190 million corruption case. The court granted Khan interim bail till July 4.

The PTI chairman appeared before the court along with his lawyer Khawaja Haris, Prosecutor Sardar Muzaffar Abbasi also appeared before the court. In another case, an anti-terrorism court accepted bail of the PTI chairman till July 4 in a case related to attack on Islamabad's Judicial Complex. The case has been registered against Imran in Margallah police station.

ATC Judge Sikandar Khan had given time to the PTI chief till July 4 for joining the investigation, warning that the latter would be responsible in case he did not comply with the court order. The court also extended bail of Asad Umar and Raja Khurram Nawaz. The prosecutor told the court that Imran had not

joined the investigation so far. He suggested that he could join the inquiry right now as the DIG office was adjacent to the court. Separately, the former prime minister also got bail in another six cases till July 4 by an anti-terrorism court.

The hearing on applications filed by PTI chief seeking bail in cases registered against him in the Karachi Company, Secretariat, Ramna and Tarnol police stations was started in the Judicial Complex, Islamabad. The cases were heard by Additional Judge Tahir Abbas Sipra. At the outset of the hearing, the prosecutor told the court that the PTI chief joined the investigation in only one case registered in Ramna police station so far, but he did not join any other investigation.

PTI chief's lawyer Salman Safdar told the court that due to security reasons, his client could not join the investigation. He said that his client was ready to join the inquiry right now, in this very building. But the prosecutor said that it was not possible as the senior officers should also be available

NAB ordered to submit reference report

LAHORE (Agencies): The Lahore High Court has given two more days to the NAB chairman to submit report about the reference against PTI Chairman Imran Khan's wife Bushra Bibi.

LHC's Justice Muhammad Amjad Rafiq on Monday conducted proceeding on the petition filed by Bushra Bibi seeking detail of cases registered against her. In compliance with the court order, the inspectors general of police of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan submitted their reports.

during the investigation. At this juncture, the judge ordered the investigation officer to present the record of Tarnol police station. But the prosecutor failed to do so. The judge expressed his annoyance telling off the prosecutor for failing to bring the IO and police record before the court. Saying this, the court accepted the interim bail of Imran Khan in six cases till July 4.