

Cops repulse terror attack
PESHAWAR (INP): Peshawar police have foiled terrorists' attack on its picket in the Sarband area on Wednesday. Terrorists attacked Achini police checkpoint in the limits of PS Sarband in Peshawar. The terrorists who were said to be 5 to 6 in number, attacked the post from both sides. SSP Operations Haroon Al-Rasheed said terrorists were swiftly responded with heavy fire from the policemen at the post.

 @thefrontierpost

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

24 teachers suspended
PESHAWAR (INP): The KP Education Department suspended 24 teachers over participation in violent protests of May 09. According to details, the KP Education Department has started the action against teachers who attended the violent protests against arrest of Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Imran Khan from premises of the Islamabad High Court (IHC).

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ISLAMABAD: ANP leader Aimal Wali Khan called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Rich tribute paid to sacrifices of Shuhadas

Irrefutable evidence present against May 9 attackers, instigators: Pakistan Army



F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: General Syed Asim Munir, COAS presided over the 81st Formation Commanders Conference at GHQ, which was attended by Corps Commanders, Principal Staff Officers and all Formation Commanders of Pakistan Army.

Forum paid rich tribute to the supreme sacrifices of shuhadas including officers and men of the Armed Forces, Law Enforcement Agencies and Shuhada from civil society who laid their lives for the safety, security and dignity of the country. The forum offered Fateha for the shuhadas' departed souls. Forum asserted, "The State of Pakistan and Armed Forces will always keep Shuhadas and their families in highest esteem and will continue to honor them and their sacrifices with utmost respect and dignity".

Participants were briefed on prevalent environment, challenges to security i.e. both internal & external and own operational preparedness in response to evolving threats, both traditional and non-traditional. Forum was also briefed on the structural changes and niche technologies being incorporated to enhance operational preparedness besides up-gradation of essential logistic infrastructure corresponding to emerging security imperatives.

COAS reiterated "Pakistan Army will remain committed towards their national obligations of safeguarding territorial integrity and sovereignty" of the country. He further said, "People of Pakistan and their deep bondage with the Armed Forces is and will remain central to all our undertakings and events of 25th May were a clear manifestation of same".

Forum concluded that "Unfounded and baseless allegations on Law Enforcement Agencies and Security Forces for custodial torture, human rights abuses and stifling of political activities are meant to mislead the people and malign Armed Forces in order to achieve trivial vested political

interests". "Hostile forces and their abettors have been trying hard to create societal division and confusion through fake news and propaganda but all such designs will continue to be defeated with the full support of the nation, InshaAllah." COAS asserted.

The forum while condemning the 9th May Black Day incidents in the strictest sense reiterated their firm resolve that desecrators of Shuhada Monuments, Jinnah House and attackers of military installations would certainly be brought to justice speedily under the Pakistan Army Act and Official Secret Act which are the derivatives of the Constitution of Pakistan. In this regard, efforts to create distortions and attempts to take refuge behind imaginary and mirage Human Rights Violations to create smoke screen for hiding the ugly faces of all involved, are absolutely futile and do not stand the abundantly collected irrefutable evidences. It has been further stressed that, while the legal trials of perpetrators and instigators have commenced, it is time that noose of law is also tightened around the planners and masterminds who mounted the hate ripened and politically driven rebellion against the state and state institutions to achieve their nefarious design of creating chaos in the country. Forum also resolved that endeavours by any quarter to create obstructions and stymie the conclusive defeat of ill design of inimical forces will be dealt with iron hands.

COAS stressed on maintaining high standards of professionalism and motivation during operations and achieving excellence during training of their formations. He commended the commanders for their constant focus on the wellbeing and high state of morale of their soldiers who remain the foundation of Army's operational readiness. Forum concluded by affirming resolve to render all sacrifices necessary for the security and stability of the country with the perpetual support of the proud people of Pakistan.

Court confirms bail of Khurram

ISLAMABAD (INP): A local court here on Wednesday confirmed the bail of former PTI MNA Raja Khurram Nawaz in a case pertaining to the violation of section-144 of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC).

Additional Sessions Judge Muhammad Haroon Raja announced the verdict after hearing arguments from the two sides at length. The court confirmed the bail of Raja Khurram Nawaz against the surety bonds.

Meanwhile, Anti-terrorism Court (ATC) Mardan ordered release of eight Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) workers on bails allegedly involved in 9th May vandalism, on Wednesday.

The police officials told that the PTI activists were taken into custody in connection with May 9 violent incidents and attacks on military installations and government buildings. Police officials told that the arrested activists were booked under different sections of the law.

However, the anti-terrorism court granted bail to the eight PTI wokers and issued ordered of their release after completion of arguments by councils of relevant parties. The arrested workers were identified as Shukat Ali, Ahmad Ali, Sabzi Ali, Owais, Kazim Shah, Hsan-ul-Mulk, Shehzad and Naseer-u-Din. The legal team was led by Riaz Khan Painda Kheil advocate.

May 9 violence suspects granted interim bail: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Lahore on Wednesday granted interim bail to 30 suspects nominated in different cases of violence that took place on May 9 in Kasur until June 15.

ATC Judge Ijaz Ahmad Buttar heard the cases. Earlier, police, which had removed terrorism-related clauses from these cases, revisited its decision following investigation and inserted them again.

As many as 17 suspects, including Sajid Mehmood, Abdur Rehman, Sardar Nabi Ahmad, Khatm Shahzad, Adeel and Muzammil, had filed bail petitions in the cases registered at Kot Radha Kishan while 13 suspects, including Anwar Ali, Hassan Irfan, Ziaur Rehman and Muhammad Nadeem, had filed petitions in the cases registered at Raja Jang.

Nazir elected GB Assembly Speaker

F.P. Report

GILGIT: Nazir Ahmed Advocate has been elected as the speaker of Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly, unopposed, on Wednesday.

Nazir Ahmed hailing from Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf after being elected took the oath as the Speaker of GB Assembly. Earlier today, Amjad Zaidi, belonging to the PTI, was removed from his post by the members of his own party through a no-confidence motion. Interestingly, the assembly members belonging to the opposition did not participate in the no-confidence motion.

The Frontier Post

PM says NMDs to get special uplift projects in budget

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday decided to include special development projects in the upcoming budget for merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Talking to the Members of National Assembly from merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa here, the prime minister said uplift of people of the area was top priority of the government. Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis Sajid Hussain Turi and MNAs Mohsin Dawar and Muhammad Jamaludin were part of the delegation which called on the prime minister, while Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal and other relevant high officials also attended the meeting.

During the meeting, the delegation presented proposals to the prime minister with respect to the development projects and measures to solve the

problems of the merged districts of the province. Welcoming their recommendation, PM Shehbaz Sharif said that after due consultation, the relevant authorities should include the proposals in the budget for the fiscal year 2023-24.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also directed the authorities concerned to formulate a comprehensive development package for the uplift of merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The prime minister, in a meeting with a seven-member delegation of political leadership from the merged districts, headed by former MNA Shah Gul Afridi, assured that he as well as the incumbent government considered the development of merged districts a national priority. Parliament Affairs Minister Murtaza Javed Abbasi, Advisor to PM Engineer Amir Muqam and relevant senior officers attended the meeting.

The delegation members appreciated the Pakistan Muslim League-N

(PML-N) for presenting a strategy for the merger of Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) into KP which was later achieved through legislation. They told the prime minister that during the last four years, the previous government neglected the development of merged districts which also impeded the implementation of the development strategy presented by the PML-N.

The delegation members apprised the prime minister of the issues faced by their respective constituencies, particularly the water shortage in Peshawar. They also emphasised the measures for the promotion of trade activity in the areas bordering Afghanistan. The prime minister assured them to take steps in this regard to uplift the living standard of the people on both sides of the border through trade. The prime minister assured the delegation of full implementation of the comprehensive development strategy for the merged districts.

Imran stands exposed for treachery & enmity towards Pakistan: Marriyum

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Wednesday said Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief now stood exposed for his "treachery and enmity towards Pakistan as he has been persistently pursuing anti-state agenda at the behest of his foreign masters".

"He is least concerned about the national interests, particularly the sensitivity of defence and economic issues," she said while addressing a news conference. The minister said the PTI chief was begging the United States to ban military aid to Pakistan, which manifested his anti-state mindset.

She said he was not pursuing a political agenda rather he was "toeing the line of his foreign masters who wanted to see Pakistan as a failed state". He was hatching conspiracies against the country under a well-planned strategy by brainwashing the youth with the help artificial intelligence using foreign funds. Once the brainwashing of youth was completed, she said, his facilitators resorted to accomplish his anti-state missions by executing the conspiracies and the May 9 tragedy was a case study in that regard.

The entire nation witnessed as how his facilitators had deputed the workers at sensitive installations to set them on fire just for accomplishing his mission, she added. Now, she said, he was fully exposed before the masses and that was why his nefari-

ous designs could not work at all.

She said he might think that he could mislead the world while speaking to foreign media with two flags in the background. "Yet your conspiracies, anti-state activities and treachery have been exposed before the people and you no longer can mislead the nation," she reiterated. His anti-state missions were destined to fail as the country was protected by its 220 million people, she added. Marriyum said like a suicide bomber, the PTI chief had inflicted massive damage to the economy, rendering a large number of people unemployed and halting the country's development process.

The minister said the provision of maximum relief to the people in the budget was the government's topmost priority and in that regard, consultative meetings were underway. She said the economy was in a shamble when the coalition government took charge last year, which had now been put in the right direction. The government's focus was on reducing the prices of flour, cooking oil, wheat and other edible items, she added.

The minister said the government had given the historic Kisaan package last year, which led to record wheat production causing substantial reduction in its price. Now further incentives would be offered for farmers in its next phase in the budget, she added. Moreover, she said, a major uplift programme for the youth would also be announced in the coming budget. She said the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's last government tenure was a journey of development

and prosperity.

During the period from 2013 to 2018, she said, the economy was stabilized, with commencing of work on China Pakistan Economic Corridor, completion of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme, generation of 14,000 MW electricity and rooting out the scourge of terrorism. She recalled that the then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif did pursue the national interests instead of the personal ones by giving an opportunity to parties with majority in the provinces to form the governments there. He very well knew that political stability in the country would eventually lead to economic stability, which was imperative for prosperity and development, Marriyum added.

She said with the PTI chief's installation as prime minister in 2018, a certain mindset was imposed on Pakistan. For four years in power, they ruined the economy and made tens of thousands jobless, besides steep rise in the prices of wheat flour, electricity, gas and medicines, and taking down the GDP growth from 6.2% to negative. She said it was the PTI chairman, who himself had signed the agreement with the IMF and then first violated it and later went for its suspension. In fact, he and his confidants were funded from abroad for destroying and harming the country, the minister claimed.

She said the PTI chief concocted the story of the cipher and then built a narrative that a foreign country had

(Continued on Back Page)

Bilawal's visit to Iraq yields major achievements

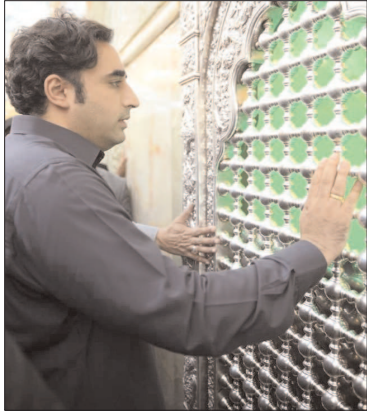
F.P. Report

KARACHI: In a successful diplomatic endeavor, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's visit to Iraq has resulted in significant achievements, strengthening the bilateral relations between Pakistan and Iraq. The visit, marked by fruitful discussions and engagements, has paved the way for enhanced cooperation and mutual benefits in various sectors.

During the visit, several key milestones were reached, showcasing the commitment of both nations to forge closer ties. The signing of three Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) was a notable achievement. One of the MoUs focused on the abolition of visas for diplomatic and official passport holders, streamlining travel procedures for officials from both countries. Another MoU established a partnership between the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) and the Iraqi Chamber, aimed at promoting economic cooperation and fostering trade relations. Additionally, a cultural cooperation MoU was signed, aiming to strengthen cultural ties and promote cultural exchange between Pakistan and Iraq.

In a symbolic gesture, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari participated in the laying of the foundation stone for the Pakistan Embassy Complex in Baghdad. This gesture underscored the commitment to strengthening diplomatic ties and fostering long-term collaboration between the two nations.

The inaugural session of the Pakistan-Iraq Business Forum was a significant highlight of the visit. The forum served as a platform for business leaders from both countries to explore opportunities, boost econom-



During the visit, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari engaged in extensive interactions with Iraqi leadership, including meetings with the President, Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, Speaker of the Parliament, Interior Minister, Head of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, and President of the Al-Hikmet Party. These high-level interactions showcased the mutual desire to strengthen diplomatic ties and foster cooperation in various fields.

An important religious meeting took place between Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Grand Ayatollah Sheikh Bashir Al-Najafi. This meeting emphasized the significance of religious and cultural connections between Pakistan and Iraq, fostering mutual understanding and cooperation.

Both nations have agreed to expand bilateral relations in diverse sectors. Cooperation in water management, agriculture, textiles, climate change, education, health, labor mobility, inclusion of Pakistan in the Iraqi Development Corridor, establishing sister port cities relations between Basra and Karachi and Gwadar, defense production, and the health, textile, and pharmaceutical industries were among the areas identified for potential collaboration. The Foreign Minister expressed Pakistan's commitment to supporting Iraq's reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts, particularly in infrastructure development.

Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's visit to Iraq has successfully solidified diplomatic ties between Pakistan and Iraq. The achievements of the visit lay the foundation for a stronger partnership, increased economic cooperation, and the realization of shared goals for both nations.

Imran nominated in murder FIR of lawyer

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan has been nominated in a murder case of Senior Supreme Court lawyer Abdul Razzaq Shar who was shot dead by armed motorcyclists on Airport Road in Quetta, Balochistan on Tuesday.

A first information report (FIR) was registered on the complaint of the slain lawyer's son advocate Siraj Ahmed in Quetta, police sources said on Wednesday.

The former prime minister and others have been nominated in the FIR registered by Shahid Jamil Kakar police station under the charges of murder, Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) and other provisions, the sources added.

Advocate Shar was gunned down by unidentified people on three motorcyclists while he was on his way to the Balochistan High Court (BHC) earlier this week. "According to eyewitnesses, he was travelling in his relative's vehicle,

Toshakhana fraud case: PTI chief secures protective bail

LAHORE (Agencies): The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Wednesday granted interim protective bail to former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan till June 21 in a case related to alleged fraud in the sale of gifts he retained from the Toshakhana — a repository where presents handed to government officials by foreign officials are kept.

The PTI chairman moved the LHC seeking protective bail in the case. In its plea, the ex-premier pleaded with the court that he was "falsely implicated" in the FIR with "mala fide intention and ulterior motive". The FIR was aimed at harassing, blackmailing and politically victimising him, the ousted prime minister wrote in his petition.

During the course of the proceeding, Barrister Salman Safdar — Khan's counsel — apprised LHC Judge Justice Amjad Rafique that the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) had already carried out an action against his client in the Toshakhana case. He pleaded with the court to grant his client protective bail as the PTI chief has to appear before the Islamabad courts in 11 different cases on June 8. The lawyer revealed in the courtroom that yet another case related to the murder of a lawyer has been filed against his client, who is also already facing over 150 cases. The ousted premier was also present in the courtroom during the proceeding. Subsequently, the court granted protective bail to the PTI chairman till June 21 and directed him to approach the relevant court in the case.

the official said. Shar was immediately rushed to the Quetta Civil Hospital but succumbed to his injuries on the way. He sustained 16 bullets.



Sikh yatrees to arrive Lahore today

LAHORE (APP): Hundreds of Sikh yatrees will reach the city from India on Wednesday through the Wagah border to attend celebrations of Guru Arjun Devji's Martyrdom Day (Jore Mela). Additional Secretary Shrines Rana Shahid Saleem, Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (PSGPC) Pardhan and other Sikh leaders will receive them warmly. On the directions of Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) Chairman Dr Syed Ataul Rehman, all arrangements, including security, food and accommodation, had been completed for the yatrees.

During stay in Pakistan, the pilgrims will visit Gurdwara Punja Sahib Hassanabdal, Gurdwara Janamasthan Nankana Sahib, Gurudwara Sacha Sauda, Gurdwara Dera Sahib Lahore, Gurudwara Rohri Sahib Aimenabad and Kartarpur Narowal. The main ceremony will be held at Gurdwara Dera Sahib Lahore on June 16.

11 dead, 1080 injured in 1057 RTCs in Punjab

LAHORE (APP): At last eleven persons were killed and 1,080 injured in 1,057 road traffic crashes (RTCs) in all 37 districts of Punjab during the last 24 hours.

Out of this 553 people were seriously injured who were shifted to different hospitals. Whereas, 527 minor injured victims were treated at the incident site by rescue medical teams thus reducing the burden of hospitals, said a spokesperson here on Wednesday.

Further, he informed that 542 drivers, 25 underage drivers, 125 pedestrians, and 421 passengers were among the victims of these road traffic crashes. Around 290 accidents were reported in Lahore which affected 310 persons placing the provincial capital at top of the list followed by 66 in Faisalabad with 64 victims and at third Multan 61 with 66 victims, he added. As many as 896 motorbikes, 60 auto-rickshaws, 89 motorcars, 18 vans, 07 passenger buses, 31 trucks and 118 other types of auto vehicles and slow-moving carts were involved in these road traffic accidents, the spokesperson said.

Police conducts search operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police conducted search and combing operations in various areas to ensure law and order in the district. According to a police spokesman on Wednesday the operation was carried out at the direction of City Police Officer Khalid Mehmoood Hamdani.

Search operations were conducted in different areas of Banni, Kalar Sydan police Mandra police and Race Course. He informed that a heavy police contingent, Elite Force, Special Branch, and Ladies Police carried out the operations. A total of 160 houses, collected data of 53 tenants, 47 shops, 03 hotels and 350 suspects were interrogated. The spokesman said search operations to net criminals and proclaimed offenders were regularly being conducted under National Action Plan in different areas of the district particularly to ensure law and order.

‘Karachi set to undergo stunning transformation, embracing its true beauty’

KARACHI (NNI): Welcome Sign “I Love Karachi” on Sohrab Goth under Crescent Art Gallery was inaugurated by Governor Sindh Muhammad Kamran Khan Tessori.

Administrator Karachi Dr. Saifur Rehman, DC Central Talha Saleem, Tariq Mustafa, Director Parks, JDC Founder Zafar Abbas, Samir Nasir, Sidra Nasir and others were also present on this occasion.

On this inauguration, Gover Sindh said that Karachi City to Witness a Breathtaking Transformation. The number of parks and other entertainment places are increasing, the glory of Karachi will be increased. With the support of Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, welcome Karachi sign, I Love Karachi walls will be

made at 100 locations. Engineers will be fully supported along with I.T to provide education, health and employment.

Nasir Javed, Chairman of Crescent Art Gallery, said that they are working hard on the artwork to increase the beauty of Quaid, other new projects will also be worked on soon.

Prominent artist Chitra Pritam said that Crescent has been working hard for the development of art since 15 years. The walls of Karachi are beautified with artwork. Sameer Nasir, CEO of Crescent, Sidra Nasir, founder of Crescent were also present on this occasion.

Later, an art book was also presented to the Chief Guest Governor of Sindh.

Grand Katcha Operation continued on 60th day

LAHORE (APP): Under the direction of Inspector General Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar, the Grand Katcha operation of Punjab Police continued on the 60th day and the brave soldiers of the police continued their intelligence-based operations, thwarting the nefarious intentions of the Katcha dacoits.

The IG Punjab said that the police teams are always ready and willing to maintain law and order in the cleared areas and ensure the protection of life and property of the people along with the destruction of the criminals. He directed that targeted operations and intelligence-based operations of police teams should be expedited to nab criminals and ensure the elimination of robbers as well as their facilitators.

Punjab Police spokesperson said that twelve dangerous dacoits were killed, more than eight were injured, 26 surrendered while 51 dacoits were arrested during the operation. The spokesperson said that around 60,000 acres of land considered as no-go area was cleared while 03 police community schools and 02 dispensaries were established in the cleared areas.

The spokesman of the Punjab Police further said that during the operation, the police destroyed dozens of secret hideouts, ambushes and fronts of the Katcha criminals, while among the weapons recovered from the dacoits were machine

guns (anti-aircraft), rocket launchers, G3s, SMGs, LMGs, Kalashnikovs, Repeaters, hand grenades and hundreds of bullets.

Moreover writ of the state has been established after clearing the areas of Kachi Moro, Kacha Jamal, Kacha Imrani, Chak Kapra, Chak Chirag Shah, Jongo Thandi, Khairpur Bambili, Chak Chandia, Rakhi Shahwali. Head money criminals including Bangiani, Sukhani, Imrani, Lund, Dalani, Pitt and Sadani gangs were forced to flee. Police pickets have also been established in cleared areas. RPO DG Khan and DPO Rajanpur are present along with the jawans on the front line in the Katcha operation.

‘Punjab police training mechanism to be upgraded by utilizing experience of American police’

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General Police Punjab Dr. Usman met with Mr. Ed Preston, Police Advisor of the American Embassy at the Central Police Office here on Wednesday.

Mr. Ed Preston is attached to the International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs Section of the US Embassy. During the meeting, it was agreed to increase mutual cooperation in anti-crime, public safety and infrastructure promotion.

The IG Punjab informed the

American Police Advisor about the Police Station Record Management System, CRO, Women Safety App, Protection Centers and other modern projects on the central dashboard of Punjab Police and said that the all the details of official matters of Punjab Police are available on the police dashboard with just one click. Dr. Usman Anwar also informed the American Police Advisor about the features and working of Human Resource Mobile Application of Punjab Police.

Congratulations to Chairman Farhan Ghani & Dpt Chairman Nadeem Khayali

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan People's Party General Secretary of UC 5 PS 104 Mirza Pervaiz said that who dream of becoming the back-door mayor are destined to fail. Mirza Pervaiz deeply grateful to Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for appointing Farhan Ghani as Chairman and Nadeem Khayali as Deputy Chairman of Chanesar Town.

He added said that Pakistan People's Party does not believe in rigging but in transparent elections and public service and whenever fair, transparent and fair elections have been held in the country,



Pakistan People's Party has won with a large majority.

Mirza Pervaiz further said very sincerely to the Minister of Labor and Human Resources of Sindh Senator Saeed Ghani for works done in UC 5 including; both the tracks of Shaheed Millat

Expressway and service road along with Iqra University are going to be carpeted, Tile Flooring area inside UC's, Junejo Town, Defense View Society, Manzoor Colony Sectors A & B is in progress and on bringing new 16-inch water line in the area.



KARACHI: A delegation of German Company KSB Global called on Governor Sindh Kamran Tessori at Governor House.

Chief of the Naval staff message on the occasion of World Oceans Day



F.P. Report

KARACHI: World Oceans Day (WOD) is observed on 8th of June each year to raise awareness about the impact of human activities on the oceans and to motivate people to use the ocean's resources sustainably. Oceans, a major source of sustenance of life on earth, act as lungs to our planet as they provide more than 50% of the oxygen produced on this planet. Oceans are also key absorbers of green house gases and carbon dioxide.

The WOD aims to highlight challenges in preserving health of world's oceans and measures to maintain an ecological balance in the environment. The theme

selected by UN for WOD-2023 is 'Planet Oceans: Tides are Changing'.

This years' theme reflects that change is occurring around the world for ocean preservation. On the eve of WOD, we acknowledge the challenges that are eroding the integrity of our waters - pollution, marine invasive species, extreme climatic changes and threats to survival of marine life. We depend on our oceans for livelihood; fishing alone, from catch to consumer, produces not only food for billions of people but also creates millions of jobs worldwide. Nearly 15% of animal protein consumed by humans comes from marine fish. As the challenges to the oceans continue to grow, so does the need for novel solutions, to fight these challenges.

To commemorate significance of the WOD, Pakistan Navy plays its due role in promoting safe and sustainable use of ocean resources. Some major PN initiatives include; beach cleaning, construction of harbour debris collection barges, mangroves plantation,

banning use of destructive fishing nets, tackling oil pollution at sea and coordinating with industrial community to reduce waste dumping into the sea. A number of events are held to highlight the spirit of the day and activities planned to demonstrate seriousness about oceans and sustainable use of their resources. An active and forthcoming participation by all under Command can significantly contribute to the objectives set on this occasion.



Terms of Reference for Prequalification of Low / High Pressure Houeline Contractors

Scope

SNGPL intends to pre qualify contractors who are actively involved and have a sound track record in business of low/high pressure (screwed) internal houseline / piping. The scope will include

- Installation of Houseline as per Company's specifications.
- Testing of the fittings at Company's prescribed pressure.
- Issuance of test report to consumers (in case of commercial and industrial houseline fittings).

The interested parties shall be required to have on their roles properly trained skilled Staff and Equipment.

Objective

The objective is to provide applicants for new gas connection, whose cases matured and have been issued formal Demand Notices, with the facility to have House line and appliances installed through Company's approved contractors at standard cost and quality.

Requirement for pre-qualification

The firms/companies having relevant experience in the particular field are invited to submit the following information alongwith supporting documents for prequalification:-

- Name of firm/organization
- Address phone number, fax, web address, email
- Date of establishment
- Nature of ownership
- Income Tax / Sales Tax & Professional Tax Registration.
- Proof of Financial Capability - Bank certificate for minimum balance of Rs.1,000,000/-
- Bid security in shape of Pay Order or DD for Rs. 50,000/- (for one category in one region)
- Details of litigation (if any)
- Name of organization(s) with whom already registered
- Detailed list of staff
- Third Party liability insurance
- Workmen / staff insurance

Work Detail

- Installation of leak proof low/high pressure internal gas piping at industrial / commercial / domestic consumers' premises as per Company's issued Houseline Plan.
- Installation of extension to HP/LP internal gas piping at consumer's premises.
- Testing of pipelines / fittings at Company's prescribed pressure.

Technical Bid

The bidders shall provide the following details/capability in order to carryout the above mentioned scope of work.

- Safety standard to be followed
- Technical specification of the equipment to be used.
- Other technical terms and conditions
- Contractor shall be appointed for SNGPL's sixteen (16) distribution region separately named Abbottabad, Bahawalpur, Gujranwala, Gujrat, Faisalabad, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore-East, Lahore-West, Sahiwal, Sheikhupura, Multan, Peshawar, Sialkot, Sargodha & Mardan.
- Last date for admission of interest is **23.06.2023**
- The EOIs may be sent at the following address:-

General Manager Business Development (Corporate)
Gas House, 3rd Floor, 21 Kashmir Road Lahore.

Note: A Company/ contractor cannot apply for more than two regions.

SAVE GAS - SAVE CASH PID(L) 3537

KHYBER TEACHING HOSPITAL, PESHAWAR

PREQUALIFICATION OF CONSTRUCTION FIRMS / CONTRACTORS FOR 2023-24

Hospital Director MTI Khyber MTI Khyber Teaching Hospital Peshawar, intends to prequalify firms contractors for Maintenance & Repair, Construction / Renovation Works of Hospital including residential Complex.

TERMS & CONDITIONS

1. Firms / Contractors must be enlisted with Communication and Works Department having valid Pakistan Engineering Council in the relevant Category & Field of specialization codes.
2. The firms / contractors are requested to furnish all the information / documents as mentioned in pre-qualification documents / bids solicitation documents.
3. All interested bidders may submit their bids through registered courier service to the office of undersigned on or before 22-06-2023 up to 10:30 AM by hand submission will not be accepted. The bids will be opened on same date at 11:00 AM, in conference room of administration block MTI KTH.
4. The bids received late from the mentioned date & time will not be entertained.
5. Interested bidders are required to obtain pre-qualification documents from office of Manager Engineering & Maintenance on any working day & can also be downloaded from official website of Hospital www.kth.gov.pk.
6. The Competent Authority reserves the right to reject any or all the tenders by assigning the cogent reason under Rule 47 of KPRA.

HOSPITAL DIRECTOR

Medical Teaching Institution, Khyber Teaching Hospital, University Road, Peshawar

INF(P)#1181/23

12/22



PAKISTAN CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY (PCAA)

CORRIGENDUM

I/T NO. HQCAA/1992/198/XXLN

S. No.	Description & IT No.	Bid Fee (PKR)	Fixed Bid Security (PKR)	Bid Submission Date/Time	Bid Opening Date/Time/Place	Last Date for issuance of Bidding Documents	Basis (Prices)
03.	Procurement of X-Ray Generators & Consumables Pilo Scanning Machines installed at IAP Islamabad Airport HQCAA/1992/198/XXLN	1000/-	Rs. 600,000/-	20-06-2023 11:30 Hours	20-06-2023 12:00 Hours (Log. Centre (S) Log. ANS Branch)	19-06-2023	F.O.R.

READ:-
It is notified for the information of all concerned that the bidders shall considered Description & I/T No. as mentioned in Bidding documents.

S. No.	Description & IT No.	Bid Fee (PKR)	Fixed Bid Security (PKR)	Bid Submission Date/Time	Bid Opening Date/Time/Place	Last Date for issuance of Bidding Documents	Basis (Prices)
03.	Procurement of VHF (AM) R/T Desktop Type (09 to 10 Watt) Qty 25 HQCAA/1992/198/XXLN	1000/-	Rs. 600,000/-	20-06-2023 11:30 Hours	20-06-2023 12:00 Hours (Log. Centre (S) Log. ANS Branch)	19-06-2023	F.O.R.

All other clauses would remain the same. This corrigendum is also available on PPRA website www.ppra.org.pk and CAA website www.caapakistan.com.pk

ADDITIONAL DIRECTOR LOGISTICS (ANS)
HQ CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY
 Phone: 021-9907-2265 Fax: 021-9924-2675
 PID(K)# 3507/22
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KARACHI: Senior Adviser and in-charge Federal Ombudsman Secretariat regional Office Karachi, Syed Anwar Hyder hearing the complaint against K.Electric at regional office Karachi.



Provincial Minister visits Hajj Complex, examines facilities

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The caretaker provincial minister for Information, Auqaf, Hajj, Religious and Minority Affairs, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel has said that “Hujjaj karam” are the ambassadors of Pakistan abroad.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

KPBC to observe strike

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar Council (KPBC) to observe strike today (on Thursday) against murder of senior lawyer named Abur Razzaq advocate in Quetta and granting status quo over Supreme Court Procedure Act, on Wednesday.

KPBC vice chairman Zar Badshah and chairman Executive Committee Syed Mubashir Shah said that the strike should be observed as per Pakistan Bar Council (PHC) decision. KPBC directed legal fraternity that no lawyer will appear before courts across KP while competent bodies are informed in this regard.

PBC has announced nationwide strike against murder of senior lawyer in Quetta in bright daylight and suspension of Supreme Court Act to record their grievance on the subjects before competent forums, KPBC stated.

pilgrims going to perform Hajj are being provided with all facilities in the Hajj complex.

This year, 21 thousand pilgrims from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will perform Fareeza -e- Hajj. Next year, passports and visa documents will be provided at Hajj Complex Peshawar.

Caretaker Provincial Minister Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel expressed these views during a visit to Hajj Complex Hayatabad Peshawar. On this occasion, Secretary Hajj, Auqaf, Religious and Minority Affairs Department Dr. Asad Ali was also present.

On reaching the Hajj complex, the Scouts troop welcomed the caretaker provincial minister.

Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel reviewed the facilities provided to “Hujjaj karam” in the Hajj

complex and inspected the vaccination center, dispensary and training centre.

On this occasion, Director Hajj Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Qazi Sami ur Rahman while giving a briefing said that this year 179 thousand pilgrims from all over the country will go to Hajj while a total of 21 thousand pilgrims will go to Hajj from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In the current Hajj season, about 8,000 pilgrims have been vaccinated and trained so far, while 13 flights of pilgrims have also departed.

In the briefing, it was informed that the pilgrims are being provided with vaccination, training and accommodation as well as food facilities.

Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel directed the authorities to provide passport and visa documents to

the pilgrims from the Hajj complex from next year.

Expressing his satisfaction on the facilities provided to the pilgrims, the caretaker minister said that the provincial and federal institutions are providing facilities to the pilgrims in full coordination in the Hajj complex.

The caretaker minister information, Auqaf Hajj Religious and Minority Affairs also met Hujjaj-e-Karam present in the Hajj complex.

While inquiring about the facilities, he said that the provincial government is determined to provide the best facilities to Hujjaj.

Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel said that Hujjaj -e-karam are Pakistan’s real ambassadors abroad. They are promoting peace tranquility and positive image of Pakistan.



PESHAWAR: Local Bodies representatives from Upper Kohistan meeting Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan.

‘Civil servants to adhere highest standards of character, integrity’



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Civil Servants should adhere to the highest standards of character and integrity. They should have a strong belief in Allah and follow the life of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) as the role model. We are all equal citizens of Pakistan and we must rise above all prejudices and narrow thinking. These views were expressed by Lt. Gen. (Rtd) Mumtaz Gul, HI (M) while addressing a joint session of officers of 33rd Senior Management Course, 37th Mid-Career Management Course and 1st Provincial Planning Service, KP as the guest of honor here at National Institute of Management, Peshawar after inaugurating completion of different roads projects

at the NIM/PARD/PPSA Campus. Director General NIM/PARD/PPSA Captain @ Usman Gul was also present on the occasion. Chief Instructors of SMC, MCMC, PPSA and PARD Tariq Bakhtiar, Muhammad Tayyab, Abdul Sattar and Gohar Saeed, faculty members of the three training institutions and 109 officers of SMC, MCMC and Provincial Planning Service attended the joint session.

Lt. Gen. (Rtd) Mumtaz Gul while highlighting the significance of attitude urged the trainee officers to abide by the norms of positive behavior as the core value necessary for public servants. He called upon them to lead simple life and consider themselves accountable to Allah and to

the people. “Life is a learning process till grave, therefore, develop reading habits and take care of your health. Past has gone and will never come back. You have to learn from your past experience. We have future which is uncertain. Prepare yourself for future. Try to remain happy and make best of it what you have at the moment. The most important thing in your life is faith. If you have strong faith, it will put you on right direction,” he added.

Gul insisted that as a nation, we have to forget about all prejudices and rise above all sectional and narrow thinking. We are equal citizens of Pakistan and need to deal with each other equally and rightly and tolerate each other. He said that Allah will decide our fate. Allah through his Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has conveyed everything to us regarding our rights and obligations and we must be aware of those rights and responsibilities. “Your life is guided by Holy Quran and Sunnah of Muhammad (PBUH) in every aspect. The Holy Prophet life is model for all of us to follow,” he stated.

Furthermore, the

esteemed guest speaker emphasized the significance of family and philanthropy. It is essential for us to allocate a portion of our surplus resources towards charitable endeavors, surpassing our own necessities. By engaging in acts of charity, we can alleviate the need for individuals to resort to begging. Throughout our personal journeys, we have encountered diverse experiences. It is crucial that we tend to the needs of our children, exhibit utmost respect for our parents, and extend assistance to the underprivileged within our society. Such actions not only bring immense inner gratification and contentment but also entail the fulfillment of our responsibilities.

Public servants must strive to acquire knowledge, enhance their competence, uphold integrity with a strong character, maintain humility, cultivate positive relationships within their sphere of influence and shoulder responsibility along with accountability. He added that public servants should lead a simple lifestyle, hold steadfast beliefs, prioritize the well-being of their family, refrain from seeking personal favors in matters of posting or transfer, fulfill commitments, adhere to established rules and procedures and demonstrate patience.

Earlier, he inaugurated the completion of different roads projects at the NIM/PARD/PPSA Campus worth Rs. 50 million which were started by the Establishment Division/ NIM Peshawar in November 2020.

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Speakers at a seminar here Wednesday stressed for a comprehensive plan to utilize biowaste for energy and proper disposal of e-waste that would become an environmental hazard in near future.

They asked students to consider cleaning and disposing waste properly as foremost obligation as clean environment is key to healthy society. The seminar titled Clean Campus Drive, a series of awareness activities, organised by Water and Sanitation Servi-



PESHAWAR: A delegation of Gandahar Hindku Board meeting with Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali. Caretaker Minister Mohammad Adnan Jalil also present.

Salma for strong legal action against beggars

PESHAWAR (APP): The Special Assistant to the caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Zakat, Usher, Social Welfare, Special Education and Women Development, Salma Begum on Wednesday said getting rid of beggars in society was much necessary and directed a strong legal action against such elements to discourage the trend of begging.

She directed the officers of Darul Kafala that besides imparting religious and moral education, also teach some technical skills to the children brought to the center so that they may not resort to beggary in future and become useful part of the society.

She was presiding over a meeting of Darul Kafala at her office here. Manager Darul Kafala Hina Arif briefed the Special Assistant in detail regarding the performance of Darul Kafala and presented suggestions on elimination of beggary from the society.

She suggested that fines amounting from Rs 5000 to Rs 10000 be imposed on professional beggars and those coming from other districts for beggary should be sent back to their native areas at their own expense.

The meeting also discussed shortage of facilities at Darul Kafala and deliberated upon other matters of the center.

Salma Begum on the occasion said she would do her best to address the issues of Darul Kafala in the best possible manner and assured that she would raise the issue at the cabinet meeting.

KP govt to establish modern research development centre

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Mohammad Adnan Jalil has said that he is going to establish an independent and modern Research and Development Centre at Industry and Commerce department for the purpose of better utilization of the economic and natural resources of the province to benefit of the province.

He said that the proposed centre would be established under his vision to conduct research for full use of the natural and economic resources of the

province, which would also be adopted in policy formulation

In order to implement the establishment of the proposed facility, the provincial minister of industries, commerce and technical education has intensified his efforts to get technical and financial support from donor agencies.

In this connection, a delegation headed by Dr. Raheel Ahmed Siddiqui, Provincial Team Leader of the Commonwealth funded Project Sub-National Governance Programme also called on the provincial minister and discussed the proposed project of the Research and Development Centre with him here on

Wednesday.

On this occasion, the provincial minister said that potential opportunities are available in our province to promote investment and utilize the natural resources in a better manner. He stressed the need for highlighting the usefulness and investment opportunities in these sectors in a research oriented manner.

He further said that the centre will play a major role in attracting foreign and domestic investors to the province.

Jalil termed the Sub-National Governance Programme of high importance and utility and assured all possible to the province in this regard.

Government desires to promote bilateral relations with Russia: CM’s aide

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Local Government and Rural Development Sawal Nazir Khan Advocate has said that the government wants to further strengthen bilateral relations with Russia and provide deserving and capable students access to educational institutions.

He expressed these views while addressing a ceremony held in honor of Ambassador of the Russian

Federation in Peshawar on Wednesday.

Secretary Local Government Amir Afaq, Special Secretary Local Council Board, Director General Peshawar Development Authority and other officers were present on the occasion.

The ambassador of Russian Federation, Danila Ganich in his address said that steps would be taken to strengthen and stabilize bilateral relations between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and

Moscow.

Speaking on the occasion, the minister said that steps would be taken to learn Russian language and establish a culture center to increase trade relations with Russia.

He said that immediate measures would be taken for promoting trade between the two countries through Afghanistan and experts would be exchanged for development and capacity building of workers.

Pak Russia relations to grow like a fruitful tree: Danila Ganich

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Russian Ambassador Danila Ganich said that Pakistan-Russia Relations will further grow like a fruitful Tree while speaking at Tree Plantation ceremony at Ladies Club University Town Peshawar, on Wednesday.

Russian Ambassador mentioned about strengthening Pakistan Russia Relations in all walks of life. Ambassador Danila Ganich also principally agreed upon KP Minister proposal of sister city relationship, apart for exchange Delegation visit to further enhance understanding.

Danila also express his appreciation for hosting welcome reception and tree plantation and expressing that our peoples to people’s relationship can more benefit in near future. Ambassador also appreciate the idea of Russian Study or culture centre to further enhance the reach of general public and to



improve understanding Russia in Pakistan and Pakistan in Russia.

Earlier KP Minister LGRDD Advocate Sawal Nazir welcome visiting Ambassador and brief him about present Government willingness to enhance cordial relations for the great benefits of the peoples of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

In this in order to take benefits from the rich expe-

riences of Russia like China and other countries social now a days Pakistan China & Russia are agreed on various international issues for the peace and prosperity of the region.

The KP Minister also stressed upon linkages development in Local Government Governance system, Education, Business Commerce Agriculture.

This event was also spe-

cially attended by KP Secretary LGE&RDD Mr. Amir Afaq, Project Director KPCIP Syed Zafar Ali Shah, Secretary LCB Mian Shafiq ur Rehman Senior Consultant Syed Ali Nawaz Gilani Secretary-General PCFA Director General Riaz Ali Khan apart from senior staff of LGE&RDD. Later on courtesy souvenirs were presented to visiting Ambassador.

Driving license issued to 80 PPC’s members

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The city traffic police on Tuesday issued 80 driving licenses to Peshawar Press Club members after a successful driving attempt.

The Peshawar Press Club, under the leadership of President Arshad Aziz Malik and General Secretary Irfan Musazai, has taken the initiative to assist its esteemed mem-

bers in acquiring the necessary documentation. By collaborating with the Traffic Department, the club aims to streamline the process and ensure a hassle-free experience for its members.

President Arshad and General Secretary Irfan Musazai expressed their satisfaction with the ongoing initiative, emphasizing that the Peshawar Press Club remains dedicated to

serving its esteemed members. They highlighted the importance of possessing valid driving licenses, particularly for journalists who often navigate the city while fulfilling their reporting duties. With this collaboration, led by President and General, the club aims to ensure that its members are equipped with the necessary credentials to drive safely and responsibly.

It is anticipated that more esteemed members will benefit from this service. The streamlined process will contribute to a more efficient and accessible approach to obtaining driving licenses, further promoting professionalism and adherence to traffic regulations among journalists.

The Peshawar Press Club, under the leadership of President and General Secretary, sets a commendable example by prioritizing the needs of its members and actively seeking collaborations to facilitate their requirements.



Speakers call for strategy to tackle e-waste in future

F.P. Report

ces Peshawar (WSSP) in collaboration with University of Engineering Technology (UET) Peshawar.

Prominent among the participants were Dean Faculty of Chemical, Mechanical and Industrial Sciences Dr Sahar Noor, Dr Ammad, WSSP Zonal Manager Engr Farman Ali and Manager Community Liaison Cell Muhammad Ismail. A large number of students attended the seminar that aimed at to highlight students’ role in sanitation and water conservation.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Noor asked if there

is any plan devised to tackle e-waste like solar panels, batteries and other electronic gadgets.

“A solar panel has a lifespan not more than 20 years, how long a battery will work, let’s say 20 years, do we have any plan or strategy how would we dispose them when it hit our streets,” he asked.

He urged the masses to reduce dependency on plastic made materials especially shopping bags that was major pollutant of environment across the world.

“Here it clogged our drains, render our sewerage

system dysfunctional, make them overflow that cause damage to streets, roads and affect our health,” he commented and appealed the masses to boycott its use for sake of “our health and wellbeing of our kids.”

Students, as agents of change in the society, can play a greater and better role in waste-free society, Dr Noor said.

Dr Ammadullah Khan of Industrial Engineering Department, in his presentation, stressed on mixing of coal and biowaste to produce environment-friendly energy.

He shed light on quality of coal in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that was equal to the quality of coal produced in South Africa. “If utilized properly, we can produce ample amount of energy from biowaste mixed coal and help us tackle energy crisis,” he said.

Shields and certificates were distributed among the speakers and organisers at the end of the seminar in recognition of their role in WASH. Later, an awareness walk was taken out in the university in which students from different departments participated.



In brief

Training session held at UoS F.P. Report

SWABI: A one-day training session jointly organised by the University of Swabi and Women University Swabi was held at the University of Swabi under the umbrella of Peace Club on Wednesday. The theme of the session was "Threats to Peace, Tolerance and Inclusivity". During the sessions, students were encouraged to share their views on the promotion of peace and tolerance on campuses and in wider society. Faryal Ali, Focal Person, and Fatima Murad, member of the Peace Club, represented Women University Swabi. Emphasising the importance of peace and tolerance for the socio-economic development of the country, the organisers maintained that such sessions would help develop culture peace and tolerance both within and outside the Universities.

Lack of items in Utility stores Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: Utility Stores across Nowshera facing shortage of edible items which has compelled working class for starvation and for purchasing food items in open market expensively, on Wednesday. According to details, Utility stores failed to provide pulses, flour, sugar and ghee along with other edible items on subsidized prices. The residents claimed that poor and working class compelled for starvation and purchasing food items expensive from open market. The resident argued district administration along with other competent authorities to ensure availability of edible items on subsidized prices at utility stores.

Six labourers abducted

QALAT (INP): Unidentified culprits on Wednesday abducted six labourers and set the machinery of the construction site on fire. Levies sources said that unknown abductors kidnapped six labourers from a construction site in teshil Gazg of district Kalat of Balochistan. The abductors also set the machinery on fire. Assistant Commissioner said that additional security contingent has been sent for recovery of the abductees. In November 2022, six coalminers were abducted from Machha who were late rescued safely.

Three killed in road mishap

HYDERABAD (INP): At least three people were killed and three others injured in collided between two trucks here at M9 Motorway near Nooriabad area of Hyderabad on Wednesday. Police said that a Hyderabad bound mini-truck coming from Karachi in attempt to overtake a vehicle rammed into another truck. Three people traveling in the mini-truck were killed on the spot while three another sustained injuries. The bodies and injured started to be hailing from Karachi were shifted to hospital for medico-legal formalities. The police impounded both vehicles and after registering a case into the incident and started an investigation.

Afghan refugee found dead

DALBANDIN (PPI): A young Afghan refugee, who has been missing since two days, was found dead from Girdi Jungle area of Dalbandin in district Chagai on Wednesday. According to rescue sources, the body of refugee, Gul Nurzai, resident of Afghan Refugee Camp, Girdi Jungle was recovered from Girdi Jungle area of Dalbandin.

KUST 107th ASRB meeting held



F.P. Report

KOHAT: The 107th meeting of Advance Studies and Research Board (ASRB) held under the convener ship of Prof. Dr. Sardar Khan, the Vice Chancellor of Kohat University of Science & Technology (KUST).

The main agenda included 03 PhD and 38 MS/MPhil cases for

approval. During the meeting, the ASRB approved 03 Ph. D and 28 MS synopsis while 10 synopsis of MS/MPhil were referred back to the departments/Institutes with observations for correction and resubmission.

Vice Chancellor appreciated the active role of Directorate of Advance Studied and Research in

conduction of frequent meetings of with no compromise on academic quality and in line with HEC Policies. He also appreciated the active role of Departmental Graduate Committees (DGCs) with hope for further improving the quality standard while evaluating synopsis and thesis at par with international standards.

Five dead in mishap on M-2 motorway

Hafiz Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: A high-speed car on the M-2 motorway near Pindi Bhattian went off the road and fell into the ditch due to which the car caught fire, five people in the car died on the spot. The Rescue and motorway police reached the spot and brought the fire under control.

According to the details, the high-speed car going to Lahore on Motorway M2 went out of control and went down into the ditch, due to which the car caught fire. Five persons in the car got burnt and died before any medical aid could be made available to them. Rescue 1122 and Motorway Police reached the spot and brought the fire under control.

However, the identity of the deceased could not be identified. According to Motorway Police sources, the bodies of all the deceased were badly burnt which is difficult to identify. However, the bodies have been shifted to Teshil Hospital Pindi Bhattian.

Anti-encroachment drive demanded: Former District Nazim Hafizabad Col. (R) Ali Ahmad Awan said that all efforts made for beautification of city cannot yield desired results until elimination of encroachments in all bazaars, markets and roads.

In a statement issued here, he said that clumsy shades erected in front of shops and covering rehries and roadsides vendors also be removed for convenes of people while as a substitute, metallic sheets fixed on iron bars having similar design and size be provided where necessary for beautification of the city.

There is need of comprehensive master plan for beautification of the city, to ensure cleanliness and civic discipline in all bazaars and markets of the city, he said. He further said that provi-

sion of relief to the people and beautification of city would not be possible without ruthlessly operation against encroachments.

Pre-flood arrangement reviewed: In order to review pre-flood arrangements made by the district administration, rescue 1122 and other departments, a mock exercise conducted at Head Sagar Canal, on Wednesday. Deputy Commissioner Umar Farooq Warriach inspected mock exercise. ADCR Intiaz Ali Baig, District Emergency Officer Rescue 1122 Engineer Muhammad Adnan Nawaz and officers of different departments were also present on the occasion.

Addressing the participants of the mock exercise, Umar Farooq Warriach said that all arrangements have been finalised to combat likely flood situation in the River Chenab. He said that services of officials of Rescue 1122 was laudable and Rescours help the calamity hit people with commitment and passion of serving the humanity to stake their own lives always. DC expressed his satisfaction over preparation made by the concerned departments including Rescue 1122 Hafizabad.

Medical store sealed: District Health Officer Hafizabad Dr. Zaheer Ahmad sailed medical store on the charges of illegal medical practice in Vanike Tarar and legal action has been instated against owner of Waleed medical store. He warned that zero tolerance policy is being implemented to eliminate menace of quackery.

Roads completed with assistance of WB: With the financial assistant of World Bank, three roads of city Hafizabad with the cost of Rs. 360 million are being constructed for providing better communicational facilities to the citizens.

Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad Umar Farooq Warriach inaugurated the projects at Kassoki Bypass, on Monday. ADCR/Administrator Municipal Committee Intiaz Ali Baig, Deputy Director Development Hafizabad Hafiz Mubashar-ul-Hassan and other officers were also present on the occasion.

DC directed the concerned departments and constrictor to ensure use of quality material and timely completion of the projects so that people could get better communicational facilities at the earliest.

Awami Mahaz demands indiscriminate crackdown: President Awami Mahaz Hafizabad Rana Khalid Mehmood said that performance of district police Hafizabad led by DPO Dr. Fahad Ahmad is laudable and people friendly stops taken by the DPO are yielding positive results.

While addressing the meeting of Awami Mahaz Hafizabad, Rana Khalid Mehmood said that District Police have recovered booty of 100 million rupees from different criminal gangs and return to their owners during short period which was reflecting revolutionary and people friendly policies of the of DPO Dr. Fahad Ahmad.

He said that police was registered 252 cases against accused to carry illegal arms, 225 cases registered against drugs dealers and recovered heavy quantity of narcotics, 8 machineguns, 10 Kalashnikovs, 25 guns, 25 raffles, 200 pistols and one thousand rounds from accused. He also said that recovery of 110 kg chars, 29 kg opium, 10 kg herons, 12000liter liquor and unearthed 11 running distilleries as well as illegal arms was proved that police was committed to eliminate drugs trafficking and to display arms.

Malaria outbreaks, awareness walk held

F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: Due to unusual weather conditions, the Malaria cases are on the rise in Lakki Marwat district, posing a serious threat to the health and lives of citizens", revealed an official.

Speaking at an awareness session held in the district health offices, FPHC district coordinator Azmat Ali Shah said that though dangerous the mosquito-borne Malaria disease was curable and there was the dire need to educate people about its preventions. "There are reports about a surge in Malaria cases in parts of the district, emphasizing the need to sensitise people about the importance of preventive measures", he said.

FPHC Director said that acting upon advice of medical experts and implementation of preventive measures would help to control the epidemic. The Frontier Primary Healthcare (FPHC) and Indus Hospital and Health Network had organized the session with collaboration of the health department.

Additional deputy commissioner Najibullah Khan chaired the session while the speakers included district health officer Dr Abdul Gul, Deputy DHO Dr Azad, district malaria unit in-charge officer Abdul Aziz, Dr Nisar, Jamil Khan, Ihsanullah and Kifayatullah.

Dr Shah said that in June 2001, the United Nations General Assembly had created a global fund to fight Malaria and other diseases including HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis. He said that his organization was running the Malaria control project in nine districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Lakki Marwat.

Declaring the fight against Malaria a biggest public health success, he said that the world had seen 1.5 billion cases averted and around 7.6 million lives saved over the past two decades as global Malaria mortality fell by 60 percent over this period. He said that Frontier Primary Healthcare had made available microscopic and rapid diagnostic tests in the public and private sector health facilities across

the district. He asked the people to visit global fund supported health facilities to avail free diagnostic tests for Malaria and its treatment.

"Along with provision of diagnostic material the FPHC is also assisting the health department to enhance capacity of microscope and RTD technicians, impart training to doctors and medical technicians on Malaria case management and rehabilitation of Malaria control centres by providing furniture and fixtures", he claimed.

DHO Dr Abdugul called for creating awareness about precautionary measures and asked the people to use insecticide nets and mosquito repellants, remove stagnant water and conduct anti-mosquito spray in their houses. "People should dispose of garbage, improve hygiene conditions and keep their houses clean", he added. Later the additional deputy commissioner Najibullah and DHO Dr Abdul Gul led a walk to highlight the hazards of Malaria and importance of precautionary measures.

Awareness drive held on explosive materials F.P. Report

WANA: An awareness campaign organized against explosive material and UXOs at Wacha Khawra area of District South Waziristan by security forces, on Wednesday.

In this regard an interactive session was held at village Janjol Raghazai in which Security Forces informed locals about the hazards and remedial measures to be adopted upon encountering explosive material and UXOs.

Locals were also communicated emergency contact numbers in case of use in emergency situations. Leaflets/ Broucher containing remedial measures in case of UXO discovery were also distributed amongst the participants.

Individuals from different villages including Inzar Kille, Tabai Langar Khel, Janjal Raghazai and Gud Kille participated in awareness session. In the end, notables and Youth of the area appreciated the efforts of the Security Forces for organizing the awareness campaign.

Mahboob Ali defends Ph. D thesis Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: Dr Mahboob Ali correspondent The News and Geo News, has completed his doctoral degree in Media and Communication Studies from International Islamic University Islamabad after successfully defending his research thesis.

The scholar wrote his research dissertation on topic, titled "Impact of Hierarchy of Influence Model: An Assessment of Journalists' perceptions from the conflict zone". His thesis was evaluated by two foreign professors including Jake Lynch (Australia) and Dr. Davis (South Africa).

The external examiners were Professors Dr. Abdul Siraj (Bahria University) and Dr. Bakht Rawan, Associate Professor at Department of Mass Communication, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad and internal examiner were Dr. Inam ur Rahman, head of Department of Mass and Communication department IIU, Islamabad while he accomplished his research work in supervision of Prof. Dr. Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, Dean faculty of Social sciences International Islamic University, Islamabad.

The public defense/ Viva Voce examination, which was held in the conference room of Faculty of Social Science, International Islamic University, Islamabad, was attended by a large number of academicians, who termed the research work as a great contribution in the field of journalism, especially in the specialized area of Conflict Journalism. The scholar also keeps 16 years' experience as working journalist, based in Swat, with different media organizations at national level.

Eye treatment camp held F.P. Report

KHYBER: Al-Shifa Eye Trust, in collaboration with Frontier Corps North, successfully organized a free eye camp in Khyber District with the aim of providing accessible eye care services to the local population.

The eye camp received immense appreciation from the community and proved to be a significant step towards improving eye health in the area. The eye camp, an initiative taken by Frontier Corps North, aimed to address the pressing need for comprehensive eye care services in the Khyber District. During the eye camp, a dedicated team of medical professionals and volunteers worked tirelessly to provide care to those in need.

A total of 1,124 patients, including men, women, and children, were checked up. The services included comprehensive eye examinations, prescription glasses, surgeries, and free medication.

Langove says China will help Pakistan build Gwadar port

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Home Minister Balochistan Ziaullah Langove said Wednesday that the people of Balochistan are looking towards the start of a new era after Henan and Balochistan provinces entered into a bond of sister provinces.

The minister expressed these views while addressing as chief guest at a seminar held under the aegis of Friends of China Forum here on Wednesday to highlight the fruits and contribution of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) for the wellbeing and economic uplift of the people of Balochistan.

Ms Pang, Charge d'affaires, Embassy of People's Republic of China; Mr. Liang Jieyi, Director General of the Foreign Affairs Office of Henan Province; Mr. Jahanzeb Khan, Director General of Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), Senator Danesh Kumar, Mr. Yang Yundong, Chinese Consul General in Karachi; Mr Bayazeed Kasi, Chairman of FOCF also addressed on the occasion. Mr Langove said that the new bond between Henan and Balochistan provinces will help Balochistan develop and economically thrive on the model of Henan Province and Balochistan people can learn from their brethren in China to attain economic and industrial revolution.

"Chinese companies can also benefit from collaboration with the people of Balochistan and a win-win collaboration can be developed further to help build this friendship between the two sister provinces," he added. He also conveyed his deepest gratitude to the people and government of China for its continued support to the people of Balochistan for their generous assistance during last year's floods, saying that both the countries have helped each other despite all odds and the people of both the countries have sacrificed for each other in peace and critical times and challenges.

"We are deeply touched by the generous support from Henan Province during the recent floods as 9000 food packs were despatched which were distributed among deserving families in 25 flood-affected districts of Balochistan," he added. "On this occasion, we also should remember the sacrifices of our valiant armed forces and its martyrs in safeguarding the Chinese nationals working on CPEC projects and the infrastructure of the CPEC," he added.

Addressing the seminar, Ms Pang Chunxue said that last year, Pakistan was hit by unprecedented floods, causing heavy casualties and property losses. More than 30 million people were displaced, fields were flooded, houses were collapsed and roads were destroyed. "The Chinese people felt the pain of the people of Pakistan and responded at the first time to provide relief assistance. The government, enterprises, and the public worked together to help Pakistan with assistance in funds and kinds exceeding 260million dollars," she said.

"Balochistan is an important part of China Pakistan friendly exchanges and cooperation. During State Councilor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang's visit to Pakistan last month, he said that the China-Pakistan community with a shared future is not diplomatic rhetoric but has profound historical roots, solid public support and strong practical needs. The iron-clad friendship between China and Pakistan has been part of the DNA of the

two peoples," she added. "We will never forget that in the wake of the Wenchuan earthquake in 2008, the Pakistani side took out all the tents in reserve to the stricken area in China by military aircraft. Earlier this year, the Chinese navy ship helped to evacuate Pakistani citizens from Sudan to Saudi Arabia. It is through these interactions that the iron-clad friendship between the two countries grows stronger and stronger," she added.

"China will, as always, prioritize China-Pakistan relations in its neighborhood diplomacy, further strengthen policy communication and coordination of development strategies with Pakistan, deepen practical cooperation, jointly build the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor in a safe, smooth and high-quality way, to jointly build a closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era and the progress of human civilization," she said.

"As to Balochistan, we will jointly build the Gwadar port, a hub of regional connectivity, promote agriculture, industrial cooperation, help to improve the livelihood and skills of local people by providing capacity building programs, scholarships, solar panels, building basic health units, create more jobs. The Chinese Embassy in Pakistan will also further promote inter-provincial cooperation between Henan and Balochistan, promote all-round exchanges between the two provinces, continuously expand cooperation areas, and promote the friendship between the two provinces to a higher level," she added.

Mr Yang Yundong, Chinese Consul General of China in Karachi said that the development of sister-province relations between Henan and Balochistan will inject more vitality into the promotion of common prosperity and progress of the two provinces. He said that the Consulate General of China in Karachi will maintain close communications with people of all walks of life in Balochistan, fully support the exchanges and practical cooperation between Henan and Balochistan in various fields, and further enrich the connotation of China-Pakistan relationship.

"China and Pakistan will further strengthen cooperation in the fields of industries, mining, agriculture, and people's livelihood, and promote the development of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to a higher level and with higher quality. It is expected that Balochistan will play a greater role in China-Pakistan cooperation and gain more benefits," he said. He said that his priority strategy would be to work with the Balochistan government to build Gwadar Port into a high-quality port, regional trade center and interconnection hub.

"We would work with Balochistan government to comprehensively expand cooperation in mining, industries and other fields to promote the high-quality development of CPEC. Balochistan has a vast territory, rich resources and great potential. We are willing to encourage more Chinese companies to participate in the development of Balochistan, and make positive contribution to the economic development, infrastructure construction and improvement of people's livelihood in Balochistan," he added. Director General, Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), Jahanzeb Khan and Chairman FOCF Mr Bayazeed Kasi made presentations on the Chinese support items distributed among the victims of floods.

Development of archeological sites stressed

F.P. Report

TAKHT BHAI: Minister of State and Chairman of the Prime Minister's Task Force for Gandhara Tourism, Dr. Ramesh Kumar Vankwani on Wednesday called for promotion of archeological sites especially Gandhara to highlight the positive image of Pakistan at the global level.

Speaking to the media on the occasion of a visit to the historical and archeological sites in Takht Bahi, district Mardan, he said that thousands of years ago, Takht Bahi was an important cradle of education and training during the Gandhara civilization and still this site has many things to teach.

Ambassadors of Indonesia and Thailand, Diplomats of Nepal, China and Bangladesh and students living in China, Pakistan, civil society, foreigners and media representatives also accompanied the Minister of State. He said the federal and provincial governments should have to work together to extend facilities to the foreigners including visa, accommodation and others to promote tourism.

Dr. Ramesh Kumar said that the mention of Gandhara civilization is incomplete without reference to the great Maharaja Ashoka whose territories included present day Pakistan, Afghanistan and India. He said that as chairman of the Prime Minister's task force on Gandhara tourism, he was visiting different sites in the coun-

try to check the missing facilities and coordinate with the line departments to develop these sites according to international standards.

Kumar said that he has great respect for every religion and people should be facilitated to visit the archaeological sites to promote inter-faith harmony besides promoting tourism to strengthen the economy. He said that recently he visited Shah Allah Ditta in Islamabad and on Wednesday he would go to Swat as part of efforts to promote tourism.

Kumar deplored that the past KP government didn't take any pragmatic step to promote the archeological sites, especially religious sites in the province, adding that he was working on different plans to promote tourism. He urged bureaucracy, business community and media to play their imperative role in promotion of these sites and attracting foreign tourists.

Speaking on the occasion, the diplomats expressed their happiness that they had the opportunity to visit the Gandhara-era Takht Bahi holy place, which is the wish of every Buddha in the world to visit. Ambassador of Indonesia Adem M Tugio said that it was a good moment for him that he visited the Gandhara site, adding that measures should be taken to facilitate the foreign tourists to visit these sites in Pakistan without any difficulty.

Thai ambassador Chakkrid said it was an amazing day for him that he

had visited the site and emphasized on special efforts to promote such sites as people of his country wanted to visit these areas. Earlier, Incharge Sub Regional Officer Mian Wahab Shah briefed the delegation about the 2500-year old history of Gandhara civilizations and its remains in the province. He said that approximately 1000 to 1500 tourists including foreigners visit this site on weekends which generates opportunities for local people.

Bread price decreases by Rs10 F.P. Report

MARDAN: In Mardan district, the price of 120 grams of roti naan has been set at Rs20 while violators should be dealt with iron hand to ensure provision of relief to gross root level. According to the details, the district administration, food department and Nanbai Association Mardan issued orders to fix the new price of Nan/Bread in the District Price Review Committee meeting. As per the announcement, the price of 120 grams of roti naan will be 20 rupees across the district.

All non-bai tandoor owners will be bound to comply with the conditions specified in the declaration issued. All Assistant and Additional Assistant Commissioners and officers of the Food Department will ensure the implementation of the issued declaration.



Kuwait holds another election mired in gridlock

DUBAI (AP): Voters in Kuwait cast their ballots for a third time in as many years, with little hope of ending a prolonged gridlock between the ruling family and assertive lawmakers after the judiciary dissolved the legislature earlier this year. Kuwait is alone among Gulf Arab countries in having a democratically elected assembly that exerts some checks on the ruling family. But in recent years, the political system has been paralyzed by infighting and unable to enact even basic reforms.

"People on the ground are not very optimistic right now about change, and that's why you see this frustration and probably a low voter turnout and low number of people running," said Dania Thafer, executive director at the Gulf International Forum, a Washington-based think-tank. The polls closed at 8 p.m. local time and the results were expected Wednesday.

"We need to bridge the gap and people can talk to each other and reach a consensus for the interest of Kuwait," said Badr Al-Turajji, one of the thousands who braved the searing heat to cast his vote. The last election, held a mere eight months ago, delivered a mandate for change, bringing 27 new lawmakers into the 50-member assembly, including conservative Islamists and two women. Some had served in earlier parliaments. But in March, Kuwait's Constitutional Court annulled the decree dissolving the previous parliament, which was elected in 2020, effectively restoring it. A few weeks later, the ruling Al Sabah family dissolved that parliament for a second time, setting up this week's vote.

Kristin Diwan, senior resident scholar at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, says the turmoil partly stems from divisions within the ruling family following the death in 2020 of Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, a veteran diplomat who had ruled the country for nearly 15 years. The 91-year-old was succeeded by his ailing half-brother, Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Sabah, with Crown Prince Sheikh Meshal Al Ahmed Al Jaber Al Sabah assuming day to day rule. Both are in their 80s, and the line of succession after



Sheikh Meshal is unclear. Another member of the royal family, Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al Sabah, the current emir's son, was appointed prime minister in 2022 but has recently emerged as a lightning rod of criticism. "There's a lack of clear direction and energy coming from the top," Diwan said. "There is kind of an overall vacuum where you can see other political institutions and social forces kind of taking advantage and stepping into that gap." The emir appoints the prime minister and the Cabinet, and can dissolve parliament at any time. But lawmakers can approve or block legislation, and can question ministers and call for their removal. There are no political parties. Two former parliamentary speakers are hoping to return to the relatively influential office. Marzouq al-Ghanim, the scion of an influential family and a prominent member of the country's powerful business community, led the assembly elected in 2020. He recently unleashed scathing criticism on the prime minister, calling him a "danger to the country" and further undermining his authority. As speaker, al-Ghanim "was willing to use all the tools that he had within the parliament to really concentrate power ... in a way that was more authoritarian," Diwan said. His harsh criticism of the prime minister, a prominent member of the ruling family, was "really striking," she added. He will likely face

off against Ahmed al-Saadoun, a veteran politician who managed to unite a broad array of opposition lawmakers in the parliament that convened last year. They have pushed for policies that would more widely disperse the country's massive oil wealth, including debt relief for consumer loans, which the government views as fiscally irresponsible. "We need to achieve stability in order to achieve development and it is also required to have a prime minister who is capable of managing the helm," al-Ghanim said after voting in Kuwait City. Kuwait has the sixth largest oil reserves and is among the world's wealthiest countries, with cradle-to-grave welfare for its 1.5 million citizens. But many say the government has not properly invested in education, health care and other services.

Opposition figures have also called for electoral reforms that would bring more women and young people into the assembly, including a return to an earlier system in which people could vote for more than one candidate in their district. "There's a feeling that if people have only one vote, it forces political blocs to make a lot of difficult decisions about who to run," said Courtney Freer, a researcher at the London School of Economics and Political Science. "It also makes it harder for women candidates, who are already disadvantaged," she said.

Army accused of killing Congolese in bombing

KHARTOUM (Agencies): Ten people from the Democratic Republic of Congo have been killed in an army attack on a university campus in Sudan, the Congolese government says. They died in bombardments at Khartoum's International University of Africa, it said.

"What hurts us very much is that it was the regular army that dropped the bombs knowing there were foreigners there," the Congolese foreign minister said. Rival military forces have been battling in Sudan's capital for weeks. Paramilitary fighters of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have bases in many residential areas across the city, which tend to be attacked by the military from the air. It is not clear if those caught up in bombing were university students. It may have been an area within or by the university where various foreign nationals sought refuge. UN refugee chief Filippo Grandi tweeted of his shock that 10 refugees had died in an attack in Khartoum, without giving further details. The RSF, which is in a vicious power struggle with the army, said - in what appears to be a reference to the same attack - that the bombing had happened in an area where African refugees were staying. It put the death toll of Congolese nationals at 25. It tweeted a video that purported to be from the scene. It showed smoke rising in the background from the direction where the International University of Africa is located. People in the video, including a distressed woman who says her husband died in the attack, speak a mixture of Arabic and Lingala, the language spoken mainly in the west of DR Congo. One man says: "We are Congolese... many people here are Congolese. Where is the international community?"

From visual clues in the video, including the minaret of a mosque in the background and what looks like a shipping container, the BBC has pinpointed the site to an area of central Khartoum near the university campus and a sports stadium. Similar shipping containers are visible in a satellite image of this area from April this year. Foreign Minister Christophe Lutundula said DR Congo had demanded an explanation from the Sudanese government and expected the bodies of those killed to be repatriated free of charge. This would ensure "our compatriots are buried with dignity in accordance with our traditions", he told journalists. The Congolese government has also asked the Sudanese authorities to open up a humanitarian corridor so that those wounded in the attack and others still stranded in Sudan can be evacuated.

Tens of thousands at risk from flooding after Ukraine dam collapse

KHERSON, Ukraine (Reuters): About 42,000 people were at risk from flooding in Russian and Ukrainian controlled areas along the Dnipro River after a dam collapsed, as the United Nations aid chief warned of "grave and far-reaching consequences." Ukraine and Russia blame each other for the collapse of the massive dam, which sent floodwaters across a swathe of the war zone and forced thousands to flee.

Ukraine said Russia committed a deliberate war crime in blowing up the Soviet-era Nova Kakhovka dam, which powered a hydroelectric station. The Kremlin blamed Ukraine, saying it was trying to distract from the launch of a major counteroffensive Moscow says is faltering. UN aid chief Martin Griffiths told the Security Council that the dam breach "will have grave and far-reaching consequences for thousands of people in southern Ukraine on both sides of the front line through the loss of homes, food, safe water and livelihoods." "The sheer magnitude of the catastrophe will only become fully realized in the coming days," he said.

No deaths were initially reported, but US spokesman John Kirby said the flooding had probably caused "many deaths". Ukrainian officials estimated about 42,000 people were at risk from the flooding, which is expected to peak on Wednesday. In Kherson city, about 60 kms (37 miles) downstream from the dam, water levels rose by 3.5 meters (11-1/2 feet),

forcing residents to slog through water up to their knees to evacuate, carrying plastic bags full of possessions and small pets in carriers. "Everything is submerged in water, all the furniture, the fridge, food, all flowers, everything is floating. I do not know what to do," Oskana, 53, said when asked about her house. Buses, trains and private vehicles were marshalled to carry people to safety in about 80 communities threatened by flooding. In Kherson, cracks of incoming artillery sent people trying to flee running for cover. In the evening, Reuters reporters heard four incoming artillery blasts near a residential neighborhood where civilians were evacuating. Residents in flooded Nova Kakhovka on the Russian-controlled bank of the Dnipro told Reuters that some had decided to stay despite being ordered out.

"They say they are ready to shoot without warning," said one man, Hlib, describing encounters with Russian troops. The Kazkova Dibrova zoo on the Russian-held riverbank was completely flooded and all 300 animals were dead, a representative said via the zoo's Facebook account. "More and more water is coming every hour. It's very dirty," Yevheniya, a woman in Nova Kakhovka, said by telephone. Washington said it was uncertain who was responsible, but Deputy US Ambassador to the UN Robert Wood told reporters it would not make sense for Ukraine to destroy the dam and harm its own people.

The Geneva Conventions ban targeting dams in war because of the danger to civilians.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a video address that his prosecutors had already approached the International Criminal Court about the dam. Earlier, he claimed on Telegram that Russian forces blew up the power plant from inside. "Residents are sitting on the roofs of their homes waiting to be rescued.... This is a Russian crime against people, nature and life itself," Oleksiy Kuleba, a senior official on Zelenskyy's staff, said on Telegram. The dam supplies water to a wide area of southern Ukrainian farmland, including the Russian-occupied Crimean peninsula, as well as cooling the Russian-held Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant.

The UN nuclear watchdog said Zaporizhzhia, upriver on the reservoir, should have enough water to cool its reactors for "some months" from a separate pond. As Kyiv prepares for a long-awaited counteroffensive, some military analysts said the flooding could benefit Russia by slowing or limiting any potential Ukrainian advance along that part of the front line. Meanwhile, the United States said it was "not certain" who was to blame for a burst dam in Ukraine, but it would not make sense for Ukraine to have done this to its own people and territory, as Kyiv and Moscow blamed each other for the disaster.

Judge rejects attempt to block new state gun curbs

SEATTLE (AP): A federal judge rejected a request to block a new Washington state law banning the sale of certain semi-automatic rifles, one of three measures recently signed by Democratic Gov. Jay Inslee in an effort to reduce gun violence. The law, which took effect immediately when Inslee signed it in April, prohibits the sale, distribution, manufacture and importation of more than 50 types of guns, including AR- and AK-style rifles. The measure does not bar the possession of such weapons by people who already have them.

It drew a quick legal challenge from two gun-rights advocacy groups - the Second Amendment Foundation, based in Bellevue, and the Firearms Policy Coalition, based in Sacramento, California - as well as individual gun owners and a dealer. They sought a court order blocking the law pending a trial on the merits of their claim that it violated their constitutional right to bear arms. "Considering the exceptional dangerousness of these weapons, the public

interest in their regulation by the State outweighs the Plaintiffs' desire to purchase more assault weapons," US District Judge Robert Bryan in Tacoma. "In light of recent mass deaths caused by assailants using assault weapons, it is appropriate for governmental bodies to find ways to protect the public from dangerous weapons, within the limits of the Second Amendment." A US Supreme Court decision last June expanded gun rights, dividing judges and sowing confusion over what restrictions can remain on the books. It made more explicit that gun laws must be consistent with the "historical tradition of firearm regulation."

Bryan found that the state's ban does fit in with the nation's long history of regulating dangerous weapons, including colonial-era bans on "trap guns" that could be fired without the owner present. Other historical targets of regulation have included long-bladed Bowie knives and the Thompson submachine gun, or Tommy gun, popular with gangsters in the years after World War I.

Inslee and state Attorney General Bob Ferguson, both Democrats, pushed for the Democratic-controlled Legislature to pass the ban on many semi-automatic weapons this session after years of failed attempts, making Washington the 10th state to enact such a law. "This common-sense gun reform will save lives by restricting access to the preferred weapon of mass shooters," Ferguson said in a news release. The US is setting a record pace for mass killings this year, according to a database maintained by The Associated Press, USA Today and Northeastern University. "We're disappointed with the Court's ruling but remain undeterred in our fight for and defense of the People's natural right to self-defense," Cody J. Wisniewski, an attorney with the Firearms Policy Coalition, said in an emailed statement. The two other laws signed by Inslee imposed a 10-day waiting period for firearms purchases and cleared the way for lawsuits against gun makers or sellers in certain cases.

Indonesian stadium disaster families continue fight for justice

MEDAN (Agencies): When two police officers involved in the Kanjuruhan Stadium crush walked free from a Surabaya courtroom two months ago, Indonesians were outraged. Families of the 135 people who died when police fired tear gas at supporters at the end of a football match in the city of Malang in East Java last October had hoped those on the field would be held accountable for the decisions they made that night, especially after an official report concluded: "Tear gas was the main cause of deaths, injuries and trauma in the Kanjuruhan humanitarian tragedy."

The National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM) report, which was commissioned by the government and released in November, argued there were two ways in which the tear gas probably killed those inside the stadium. Firstly, the gas killed victims directly because it built up in the stairwell and tunnel leading to the exit at Gate 13 where many died as they struggled to escape. It noted this would need to be confirmed by autopsy. Secondly, the gas killed indirectly, because it left people with burning eyes, scalding skin and breathing difficulties that added to the chaos as fans scrambled desperately for the exits and were crushed and trampled in the melee. But as Judge Abu Achmad Sidqi Amsya read his verdict in the Surabaya District Court in April, he said the tear gas had not travelled as far as the seating areas - known as tribunes - where the majority of the spectators had been seated.

"[...] the smoke produced by the tear gas was blown by the wind to the south towards the middle of the

field," he said. "And when the smoke reached the sidelines, the wind blew it upwards and it never reached the south stands," he added. Despite Judge Amsya's verdict and his assertion that no tear gas was fired directly into the tribunes or at spectators, multiple witnesses who were in Kanjuruhan told Al Jazeera that the gas did indeed reach the south stands and suffocated spectators in the 13th and 14th tribunes. Now, with two more civil cases against the police looming in the city of Malang, the debate over whether spectators died after panicking and getting caught in the crush or by direct suffocation has become increasingly important to the legal arguments over who was responsible for the tragedy.

The first scenario would allow for an element of police deniability but if the second were proved, the force could be directly culpable. Factory worker Angel, who preferred not to share her full name, said she usually attended every game. Her husband works for the Indonesian Football Association (PSSI) and Angel would run an informal first aid station at Kanjuruhan, helping those overcome by the heat or calming fans alarmed by the large crowds that could congregate for the games.

On October 1, Angel said she left the stadium at about the 80th minute of the match as the game was about to end and she assumed her services would no longer be required. Outside the stadium, everything was peaceful, she said, until about 20 minutes later. "I just heard, bam, bam, bam. One shot after another, after another, on and on and on," she said. Almost immediately, Angel said she could see clouds of tear gas beginning to

drift outside the stadium. Looking down, she saw that her mobile phone was ringing. It was her 17-year-old son who was still inside the stadium. "Ma help us...help us, we can't get out, the doors are locked," he begged her. Police originally said they were responding to what they thought was a pitch invasion when they started firing tear gas at the end of the match - despite its use being banned inside stadiums under guidelines from the world football body FIFA. Angel told Al Jazeera that she managed to get inside the stadium and climb onto a small stage in front of the VIP area. She hoped that because it was slightly elevated, her son would be able to see her, or she would be able to see him. "People everywhere were screaming," she said. "People were calling for ambulances, someone shouted that there were so many victims still in the stands."

As spectators poured out of the stands and onto the field from the 13th and 14th tribunes where the tear gas was thickest, a young woman staggered up to Angel, struggling to breathe. "I told her 'You can do it' and 'You need to fight this'," she recalled. "I modelled how to breathe in and out and put my hand on my chest to show her. I told her, 'Look at Auntie, breathe this way'." She gave me a little smile and, without even taking a full breath, she died in my arms," she said. Angel said the young girl, who she estimated was about 18 years old, appeared to have died from the gas. "She had difficulty breathing and there were no marks on her body as if she had been trampled. Everyone looked as if they had been poisoned that night. They had foam coming out of their mouths and it smelled like tear gas." Angel

said that everyone who came out of the stands was blue in the face, their eyes reddened and that they were struggling to breathe.

"I am sure that they died because of the gas," she said. "If it wasn't the gas, then what was it?" Devi Athok's daughters, 16-year-old Natasya Debi Ramadhani and 13-year-old Naila Debi Anggraini, regularly attended matches at Kanjuruhan and were in the 13th tribune on the night of the tragedy. Athok had been preparing to pick them up at the end of the match when his phone rang before he left the house. It was a neighbour who had also been at the game. "Sir, Tasya died in the stands," the neighbour told him, he said. "At first, I thought there must have been a fight between rival supporters that she got caught up in," Athok said. "But there were no rival supporters there that night."

When he got to the stadium, Athok found his daughters laid out on the floor of the VIP area, along with the corpses of countless others who had died and been carried down from the stands. "There is no way they were crushed or trampled or they would have been found by the doors. You could smell the gas coming from them," he told Al Jazeera. "My children died in the stands because of the gas. I got to the hospital at midnight that night to accompany my daughters' bodies and there were people there still red and itching from the gas. Why did the police fire so many times? Five shots would have been enough to stop a pitch invasion." According to Komnas HAM's official report, police fired 45 rounds of tear gas inside the stadium. The gas also dated from 2019 and had expired,

the report added. Tear gas is usually made up of chemicals such as toxic air pollutants chloroacetophenone, chlorobenzylidene malononitrile, chloropicrin, bromobenzyl cyanide and dibenzoxazepine, according to the American Lung Association. "Long-term health effects from tear gas are more likely if exposed for a prolonged period or to a high dose while in an enclosed area," according to the association. "In these instances, it can lead to respiratory failure and death."

Komnas HAM's report echoed that statement. "While the main character of tear gas doesn't kill [...] in certain conditions it can cause death," it said. Uli Parulian Sihombing, the commissioner of monitoring and investigations at Komnas HAM who authored the report, told Al Jazeera: "There was tear gas in the tribunes. Those who died were at Gate 13 and there was tear gas at Gate 13. Some people were crushed at Gate 13. The spectators were surprised by the tear gas and panicked and were pushing to get out." When asked directly whether tear gas could have killed any of the spectators, Sihombing said: "The majority of the victims who died at Gate 13 were blue in the face and their eyes were red. Komnas HAM has not conclusively concluded that the tear gas was the reason for the deaths of the Kanjuruhan victims." Yet, Elmiati, whose husband, Rudi Hariyanto, and three-year-old son, Muhammad Virdy Prayoga, died in the crush, told Al Jazeera she had been in the stands and saw victims dying in front of her in the 13th tribune. "I am sure that all the victims who died had foam coming out of their mouths and they were blue

around their eyes. They died because of the tear gas," she said. Dr Abdul Gafar, a forensic pathologist at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara in Medan, who reviewed photographs of the deceased including Tasya and Naila, said it was difficult to ascertain how people died based on external factors alone.

"Logically, tear gas stings the eyes and the nose, so people will do anything to get away from it and many people in the stadium were crushed when they were trying to find a way out," he said. "Crushing happens when people can't get enough oxygen because their lungs are compressed. When the lungs can't inflate and fill with oxygen, people suffer from crush-asphyxia. This causes foam around the nose and mouth because carbon dioxide can't be expelled from the body and is trapped in the lungs, causing foam to form." As a result, Gafar said, the foam seen that night by a number of witnesses was not necessarily caused by the tear gas. Yet, some have questioned whether victims could have been crushed or trampled to death without any other outward injuries being found on their bodies. These include Imam Hidayat, a lawyer who represents some of the families of the victims including Athok, who told Al Jazeera he did not believe all of the victims died as a result of being crushed because "their bodies were intact and their clothes clean". He added that the families wanted new autopsies to be done by an independent forensic pathologist, something other experts Al Jazeera spoke with, including forensic pathologist Gafar, agreed would be the best way forward.

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Pak-Iraq ties, potential, and possibility

FOREIGN Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari called on the Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament, Muhammad Riqan Al-Halbasi on Tuesday during his three-day visit to the Arab nation. Mr. Bhutto held wide-ranging discussions with the top Iraqi lawmaker and expressed his belief that cooperation between the two countries will contribute to the strengthening of fraternal relations between Pakistan and Iraq. He emphasized the importance of fostering high-level parliamentary relations between Pakistan and Iraq, highlighting the potential for both countries to benefit from sharing their respective experiences and expertise. The leaders exchanged views and perspectives on strengthening the ties between the two countries in the political realm.

Pakistan and Iraq are two brotherly Muslim countries that are linked through multiple bonds of religion, history, language, and culture as well as common heritage and Muslim brotherhood. The bilateral relations between the two countries remained at low par under former President Saddam Hussain, however, Pak-Iraqi ties grew rapidly after the democratically elected governments took control over the country in the post-US era. The Republic of Iraq has gone through one of the most challenging times in its history, as the brave Iraqi nation not only got freedom from foreign occupation, but also resolutely defeated ISIS, and eradicated the menace of violent terrorism and extremism from its soil in recent years. Now, a moderate Iraq has emerged on the map of the world that is not only pursuing its economic and political agenda but vigorously working for the integration of the Arab community along with cementing its links with Muslim countries around the globe.

Iraq, a resource-rich Arab nation has a unique importance in the region as well as in the world. Pakistan attaches high importance to its relationship with the Republic of Iraq and continuously endeavors to forge a mutually beneficial long-term strategic partnership that promotes fraternal ties and serves the economic, political, and trade interests of both nations. Pakistan looks to Iraq as a future energy hub to fulfill its oil and gas needs as well as perceives the rich Arab nation as a potential market for its industrial and agricultural goods. At the same time, Iraqi leadership intends to promote its defense and security relations with nuclear-armed Pakistan along with the promotion of trade, economic and cultural ties with the South Asian nation.

During the recent visit of Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, both countries held in-depth discussions to promote their bilateral relations while particular focus had been given to facilitating travel and tourism, increase government to government exchanges, promote people-to-people contact, facilitate businessmen and entrepreneurs to visit each other country, create bonds and expand cooperation in diverse areas including enhancing bilateral trade and investment, collaborating with the Iraqi government in rebuilding and re-construction of its infrastructure and sharing of expertise in water management and agriculture. Both countries had signed two Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) aimed at further enhancing cultural cooperation and extending visa waiver facilities for diplomatic and official passport holders. The Foreign Minister also laid the foundation of the new Embassy building in Bugdad along with opening a Consulate General of Pakistan in Najaf to facilitate religious devotees/ Zaireens of both countries.

Realistically, Pakistan-Iraq bilateral trade is of a trivial nature and it does not commensurate with the historic political and religious bonds between the two countries. As for travel and tourism are concerned, only Pakistani religious devotees/ Zahireen visit Iraqi religious sites, while Pakistani expatriate labor/ workforce has a nominal presence in Iraq, thus opening a Consulate in addition to an already working Embassy in the Iraqi capital is an ostensibly irrational decision amid rapidly worsening economic situations of the country. Apparently, Pakistani policymakers had always been influenced more by their religious sentiments and sectarian belief instead of national paradigms and regional geopolitical conditions. Owing to these reasons, the Pakistani government begs trade from the Gulf nations and China with whom it has strategic alignment while it contradicts Europe and America which are major buyers of its industrial products and natural commodities. Although Mr. Bhutto has fully enjoyed the state hospitality of the Iraqi government and energized his religious devotion, the true impact of his prolonged tour on Pak-Iraq ties would be evident in the future.

In an attempt to salvage his country's waning influence in the Middle East, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is embarking on a three-day visit to Saudi Arabia this week. But advancing "strategic cooperation" with his Saudi and Gulf counterparts may well prove an uphill battle.

In July last year, President Joe Biden attended the Gulf Cooperation Council summit in the kingdom and vowed that the United States "will not walk away and leave a vacuum to be filled by China, Russia, or Iran". But that is precisely what has been happening. Despite US objections, the past year has seen its regional allies go hybrid: they have improved relations with Beijing and Tehran and maintained strong ties with Moscow.

Although the Biden administration has publicly downplayed the importance of the recent Chinese-brokered Saudi-Iranian agreement to re-establish diplomatic relations, it seems frantic about the growing Chinese influence in the oil-rich Gulf region and the greater Middle East. Over the past two decades, the US has ramped up oil and gas production, becoming virtually energy independent. It may no longer need Gulf oil as much, but it

insists on being in charge in the region so it is able to cut China off of vital energy supplies in the event of a conflict, and secure them for its allies. As Blinken warned last month, "China represents the most consequential geopolitical challenge we face today: a country with the intent and, increasingly, the capability to challenge our vision for a free, open, secure, and prosperous international order." But Beijing's autocracy may actually be an easier and better fit for the region's autocrats than Washington's democracy. Russia's sway in the Middle East and beyond has also made the US nervous. Fed up with their ambiguity, even complicity with Russia, the Biden administration has been ramping up pressure on certain Middle Eastern states, making clear that its patience is running out. It has been warning countries in the region against helping Russia evade sanctions and demanding they pick sides - or else face the wrath of the US and G7 nations. But to no avail.

Saudi Arabia has thus far refused the US request to substantially increase oil production to lower its market price and offset the effect of Western sanctions on Russia. It has maintained good relations with Moscow and dragged its feet on supporting Ukraine.

Marwan Bishara

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's "middle finger to Washington" has reportedly made him extremely popular in the region. Last year, in response to Biden's threats to punish Riyadh for its presumed insolence, the kingdom went on to host the Chinese president, Xi Jinping for bilateral talks and the China-GCC and China-Arab summits. Saudi Arabia then normalised relations with Iran under Chinese auspices, just as the West was tightening sanctions against Tehran, and in a clear snub to the US, went on to repair ties with Syria. But this new attitude towards relations with the US is not only evident in Riyadh; it is a regional phenomenon. The United Arab Emirates, another US ally, has also cultivated closer ties with China, improved strategic relations with France, and worked on engaging Iran, Russia and India. This, at times, has been at the expense of its relations with the US.

The region as a whole has been diversifying its global engagement. This is quite apparent in its commercial relations. Between 2000 and 2021, trade between the Middle East and China has grown from \$15.2bn to \$284.3bn; in the same period, trade

with the US has increased only modestly from \$63.4bn to \$98.4bn. Six Middle Eastern countries - among them Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt - have recently requested to join the Chinese-led BRICS group, which also includes Russia, India, Brazil and South Africa. This is despite the West's ever-widening sanctions regime imposed on Russia. Of course, America has been the dominant strategic power in the Middle East the past three decades and remains so today. But will it be in the next three decades? In a region where autocratic regimes and the general public do not agree on much if anything at all, saying no to America is a very popular stance because the majority believes it is a hypocritical imperial power that pays only lip service to human rights and democracy.

This is particularly apparent in US foreign policy on Palestine, which staunchly and unconditionally supports the Palestinians' coloniser and occupier - Israel. On his visit to Riyadh, Secretary Blinken will likely put pressure on Saudi Arabia to normalise relations with Tel Aviv, hoping to lower its asking price, which reportedly includes a

nuclear civilian programme and major security assurances. The UAE, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan have already normalised relations with Israel at the expense of the Palestinians in return for American concessions, such as the sale of US-made F-35s to Abu Dhabi, US recognition of Moroccan claims over Western Sahara, and the lifting of US sanctions on Khartoum. All so that the Israeli government does not have to make any "concessions" of its own and end its decades-long occupation of Palestine. But the Palestinian cause, which is quite close to the heart of ordinary Arabs, is not the only issue that has convinced the Arab public that America is a duplicitous power that should be kept at a distance.

Thanks to satellite television and social media platforms, people of the region saw with their own eyes US crimes in Iraq and its humiliation in Afghanistan, and do not think of it as a guardian of civilisation, let alone an invincible power. The balance sheet of US interventions in the Middle East over the past 20 years since the 9/11 attacks is firmly not in its favour. No wonder that in a 2022 poll conducted by the Doha-based Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies in 14 Arab

countries, 78 percent of respondents believed that the biggest source of threat and instability in the region was the US. By contrast, only 57 percent thought of Iran and Russia in these terms, both of which have had their own share of dirty work in the region - from Syria to Iraq and Yemen. In his aptly titled book, Grand Delusion: The Rise and Fall of American Ambition in the Middle East, former US official Steven Simon estimates the US has wasted some \$5-7 trillion on wars that have resulted in the death of millions of Arabs and Muslims, and the devastation of their communities. In addition, these conflicts have killed thousands of US soldiers, injured tens of thousands and led to some 30,000 suicides of US veterans.

It is no coincidence then, that more Middle Easterners (and Americans) agree that the region's decoupling from America and at least some American disengagement from the region is as desirable as it is inevitable. Such a turn of events would also be terribly consequential with messy long-term implications for both sides and it would be determined by whether and how America chooses to change its foreign policy. But that's another discussion for another day.

Aljazeera

Russia faces a new neighbourhood threat

Bradley Jardine & Edward Lemon

ON May 18, Chinese President Xi Jinping held a lavish ceremony in the ornate Tang Paradise theme park in Xian, the heart of the ancient Silk Road, for five visiting Central Asian presidents who had arrived for the inaugural China-Central Asia summit. Conspicuously, the summit took place at the same time as the G7 meeting of wealthy nations in Hiroshima. Commenting on the two summits, China's state-run Global Times claimed that the "G7 speaks the language of an outmoded Cold War mentality" while the Xian summit focused on the "promotion of cooperation and inclusiveness".

In his welcoming remarks, Xi hailed the summit as signalling "a new era of China-Central Asia relations". Xi said that "China is ready to help Central Asian countries strengthen capacity building on law enforcement, security and defence in an effort to safeguard peace in the region". The summit resulted in a string of economic agreements signalling that China is again open for business after two years of COVID-19 border restrictions.

While China consolidates its hegemony in Eurasia, it is also promoting a viable competitive vision to the current United States-led order. Yet it is presenting itself as an alternative leader not just to the US, but also to Russia, which it aims to gradually displace from Central Asia. China has grown into the largest economic actor in Central Asia. Total Chinese investments in the region

ballooned from \$40bn in 2020, to over \$70bn by the end of 2022. Russia, which accounted for 80 percent of the region's trade in the 1990s, now accounts for less than two-thirds of Beijing's trade.

Lurking beneath these big numbers is a growing asymmetry between China and Central Asia. In 2020, an estimated 45 percent of Kyrgyzstan's external debt, and 52 percent of Tajikistan's was owed to China. Meanwhile, 75 percent of Turkmenistan's exports depend on Chinese consumers. The growing debt burdens have been linked to high-level corruption scandals and have resulted in political instability, also undermining Beijing's credibility. Indeed, Sinophobia has become relatively widespread in Central Asia, particularly in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. According to survey data, 30 percent of Kazakhs and 35 percent of Kyrgyz have a negative view of China. Protests against China's rising role in the region, perceived by some as taking jobs from locals, polluting the environment, and part of a broader strategy to "colonise" the region, have been on the rise. According to our data, 241 protests related to China took place in Kazakhstan from January 1, 2018 to June 30, 2021, although more than half were related to an ongoing protest by relatives of those detained in Xinjiang's camps.

Some of these protests have turned violent. After the Kyrgyz government was ousted in October 2020 following flawed elections, about 300 locals stormed

the Ishtamberdi mine operated by China's Full Gold Mining, chasing off 132 Chinese workers who were forced to spend the night in a snowy forest. A mob of 100 people also barricaded a group of 35 Chinese businessmen within their hotel in Bishkek. Amid the growing backlash to China's extreme policies in Xinjiang towards Uighurs and ethnic Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, and the wider Sinophobia in the region, Beijing has solicited support for its policies from Central Asian governments.

While Kyrgyzstan offered a statement of support in June 2019, it declined, along with Kazakhstan, to sign a letter to the United Nations backing Beijing's position the following month. But in October 2022, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan voted to block a UN investigation into China's human rights abuses in Xinjiang. The issue was also notably absent from the talks in Xian last month. In the first two decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, China opted to primarily interact with Central Asia through the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), which also includes Russia as a member. But the Xi Jinping era has seen China increasingly creating its own mechanisms to work with its western neighbours. The Xian summit, hosted by China + CS, a multilateral framework excluding Russia, is a dramatic example of Beijing's increasingly independent course in the region.

While China and Russia

proclaimed a "no limits" partnership in February 2022 and have pledged to work together to prevent what they call "colour revolutions" and external interference in the affairs of Central Asia, it is clear that Beijing seeks to displace Russia in its former empire. Beginning with Xi's announcement of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in an October 2013 speech in Kazakhstan, Central Asia's engagements with China have in many ways stood at the centre of Beijing's policy of increased global assertiveness that its media refer to as the "New Era".

Over the past year, China has announced a trio of new policies - the Global Security Initiative, Global Civilization Initiative and the Global Development Initiative - which collectively aim to present an alternative model of international relations to Western liberal norms. The Global Security Initiative, for instance, is Beijing's pushback against alliances like NATO, with China arguing that the West is trapped in a "Cold War mentality". While Moscow remains Central Asia's dominant arms provider, accounting for about 50 percent of all transfers, China's share of arms imports to the region has increased from 1.5 percent in 2010 to 13 percent today. Since 2016, China has been quietly building a network of military facilities along the Tajik-Afghan border.

Unrest in Kazakhstan in January 2022 and Russia's invasion of Ukraine have substantially changed the

landscape, too. In response to violent protests in Kazakhstan, China reportedly offered assistance. China's recent declaration of support for Kazakhstan's national independence and territorial integrity, as well as Xi's visit to Kazakhstan in September 2022, suggest deeper Chinese security engagement. The Ukraine crisis has made Kazakhstan's elites more reliant on China, at a time when Russian rhetoric grows increasingly neo-colonial. In August 2022, former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev called Kazakhstan an "artificial state," echoing a speech by Vladimir Putin in 2014 in which he said Kazakhs had "never known statehood," prior to the Soviet collapse. Prominent Russian nationalist commentators have issued similar statements in recent months.

These threats are felt in Kazakhstan, where 16 percent of the population is ethnic Russian. Russians are concentrated in the north of the country, forming a plurality in the Kostanay and North Kazakhstan regions. Russian nationalists claim that these areas are traditionally part of Russia. In Xian, President Xi told his Kazakh counterpart that China supports "ethnic harmony," a subtle critique of Russia's sabre-rattling in northern Kazakhstan. In Hiroshima, G7 leaders talked of the need to "reduce critical dependencies" on China. Europe has also been growing more critical of China, with a recent internal memo calling on European Union member states to "prepare" for a crisis over Taiwan and

"de-risk" its dependence on Beijing.

But meanwhile, the Xian summit helped China shore up political support for the "reunification" of Taiwan with China and for infrastructure development that would diversify Beijing's energy sources away from Western ports and sea routes in case of international conflict. All at Russia's cost, too. Amid its focus on the war in Ukraine, Russia has reportedly weakened its 201st Military Base which as of 2021 had an estimated 7,000 troops stationed at three facilities in Tajikistan. In April, the Ukrainian army claimed it had destroyed a column of the 4th Battalion Tactical Group from this base. Multiple sources have confirmed to us that over 2,000 troops, in addition to at least 30 tanks, have been redeployed to Ukraine. At least 500 soldiers have been redeployed from Russia's base in Kant, Kyrgyzstan. The Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) military alliance has also proved largely ineffective in resolving either violent territorial disputes between member states Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, or in bolstering member Armenia in its tensions with fellow post-Soviet state Azerbaijan. This has seriously undermined Russia's commitments to its allies. Against that backdrop, the gathering in Xian had tremendous symbolic value. It signalled that China is positioning itself as a partner of choice for Central Asia that can offer the region what Russia can't.

US losing pretexts for occupying eastern Syria

Osama Al-Sharif

WHEN the US led an international coalition in mid-2014 to bomb Daesh targets in Syria and Iraq, the terrorist organization had already occupied large swathes of territory spanning the two Arab countries and had the means to send its fighters all the way to Baghdad. A dozen nations carried out coordinated bombing raids but the US was the only country to establish ground bases in war-torn Syria. Allying itself with the Syrian Kurds, fighting under the umbrella of the Syrian Democratic Forces, or SDF, it extended its presence in oil-rich eastern Syria where it remains today.

The alliance with the SDF was instrumental in destroying most of Daesh's fighting power in this vast and highly strategic region, at a time when the Assad regime was fighting for its life against rebel groups in the south and northwest. At present there are thousands of Daesh detainees in SDF detention centers with their families living in scattered camps. Their fate - the majority of them foreign

nationals - is unlikely to be resolved anytime soon since most Western countries refuse to have them back.

But while the main reason for the US military presence in eastern Syria, which is the fight against Daesh, has become less of a priority, despite the fact that remnants of the terror group remain active in the remote areas between Syria and Iraq, Washington's objections appear to have shifted. In 2015, Russia intervened militarily in Syria to save the Assad regime, a mission which, despite its ruthlessness and high civilian casualties, succeeded. Most of the armed rebel groups have been crushed and those who surrendered were moved to the rebel-controlled Idlib province in the northwest.

Also coming to the regime's aid were thousands of Iran-backed fighters belonging to Shiite militias, which were active in Iraq, Lebanon and Afghanistan. Syria had become a magnet for foreign fighters with conflicting agendas. With pro-Iran militias claiming victory over Daesh in Iraq, the US saw its sway over a country it had invaded and plundered a decade before

quickly being replaced by its rival, Iran. Tehran's hardliners saw an opportunity to extend their influence through Baghdad to Damascus and all the way to Beirut. A geopolitical tug-of-war was unleashed.

To truncate such a plan, the US buffeted up its military garrison at the crucially situated Al-Tanf, overlooking the confluence of the borders of Syria, Jordan and Iraq. According to published figures, there are at least 900 active US troops in eastern Syria, in addition to an undisclosed number of contractors. Making things more complicated, Turkiye, which supported the anti-regime Syrian Free Army as early as 2011, decided to send its troops into northern Syria in 2016 to fight the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units, or YPG, which is associated with the SDF. Ankara claims that the YPG is in cahoots with the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which it considers a terrorist organization.

Plans by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to send his army into northern Syrian territo-

ry to crush the Kurds were foiled by the Americans. With Erdogan and Vladimir Putin working together on Syria, the geopolitical game had become even more precarious for all. Syria and Russia had dubbed the US occupation of eastern Syria illegal and had called for its immediate end. Damascus accused the Americans of stealing Syrian oil, which in reality is happening. President Donald Trump ordered a sudden withdrawal of his troops in 2019 but Turkiye's decision to launch a major military operation there forced the White House to suspend the pull-back.

The presence of US troops in northeastern Syria amid heightening tensions between Washington and Tehran, the face-off between the West and Russia in Ukraine, and the recent political rehabilitation of the Assad regime by the Arab League are raising the stakes in that part of Syria. Iran-backed militias in Iraq have launched a number of drone attacks against US targets there, the most serious of which took

place in March. But now, according to a leaked US intelligence report, Russia, Syria and Iran have adopted a plan to drive American troops out by launching attacks against American assets in the region through a proxy war involving local tribes and militias.

Last week the US acknowledged reports that it has deployed its High Mobility Artillery Rocket System, or HIMARS, in eastern Syria - and not for the first time. The highly advanced system was sent to southern Syria, from Jordan, in 2017, according to CNN. But the Pentagon denied Turkish media reports that the launchers had been transferred to the SDF in northern Syria, adding that they were in the area for "force protection." Initially, the deployment of the HIMARS system was a response to movements by pro-regime forces, who had been deploying their own artillery near the perimeter of the 55 km "de-confliction zone" surrounding Al-Tanf.

But now analysts believe that the recent deployment is a US reaction to intelligence reports that Iranian drones may be used more

extensively against American targets in the area. As to immediate US objectives, there are concerns about the increasing influence of Russia and Iran in the region, and some in the Pentagon believe that maintaining a US presence in Syria is important for keeping these countries in check.

The US continues to reject any contact with the Assad regime and does not support efforts to normalize ties with Damascus, based on the step-by-step approach in the absence of a political settlement and accountability. Still, its military presence in parts of Syria is becoming a liability and difficult to defend. Making things more difficult is the fact that Syria's opposition is now showing signs that it is ready to negotiate directly with Damascus under UN auspices. Syria's Kurds, too, may soon wish to resume talks with Damascus about an autonomy deal. Even a feeble restart of talks will boost Assad's legitimacy and make the US presence in Syria an awkward one.

Arab News

UK govt has no immigration policy but panic attacks

TWO of the leading politicians in the current UK government might be expected to be the poster children for the merits of immigration, for the hospitable and welcoming approach to those who choose to tie their destiny to that of the British Isles, and for the extraordinary social mobility of British society.

After all, one of them, Rishi Sunak, was born to parents of Indian descent who emigrated to Britain from East Africa, and has become no less than the country's prime minister; while the other, Suella Braverman, the Home Secretary, has parents of Indian origin who emigrated from Mauritius and Kenya respectively. Sunak's wife was born in India, and only recently discovered the value of paying UK taxes, and Braverman's husband, although born in the UK, is Jewish, which make me think that there are also immigrants to be found in his not-too-distant lineage. With these respective backgrounds - and forgive my naivety here - even as Tory politicians they might be expected to be more appreciative of migrants and their contribution to the UK, and show more kindness to those seeking refuge and asylum instead of dispatching them to grim Rwanda after they have struggled to escape war, conflict, natural disasters and destitution. It is not only the anti-migrant policies that Sunak and Braverman are carrying out that baffles me, but their toxic diatribes against people seeking to reach our shores who may one day be as successful as them.

Alas, not only do they refer to immigrants with derision, to say nothing of labelling asylum-seekers as "invaders," but they have no sensible or realistic approach to the issue. To be sure, the prime

minister and his home secretary are not the only ones whose attitude to immigration is driven by a xenophobic gut response rather than a thoughtful one based on facts. Hence, when the Office for National Statistics recently published last year's net migration figures, which revealed that net migration to the UK has risen from 488,000 in 2021 to 606,000 in 2022, panic spread among the Conservatives. Yet they have no-one but themselves to blame for the dread spread among them by these figures, because they hold the copyright for creating this xenophobic atmosphere that portrays immigration and immigrants as a threat to the country, and for the past 13 years that they have been in power they have repeatedly promised to reduce the figures drastically while repeatedly failing to do so, and by now it is obvious that they have no clue as to how to achieve this goal.

The past 13 years are littered with the broken pledges of successive Conservative administrations, but few of these have caused such an emotive reaction, not even their breaking of the NHS. The issue is not only about the 24 percent increase in net migration since last year, but that levels of migration have doubled since 2018, the year which saw the origins of their 2019 election manifesto pledge to make "overall numbers come down" during the life of this Parliament. This was a modest commitment compared to that of David Cameron's earlier one, which back in 2010 committed his government to reduce net migration to the "tens of thousands."

There is ample evidence of the important contribution by migrants to every walk of life in the UK, but while I do not support

Yossi Mekelberg

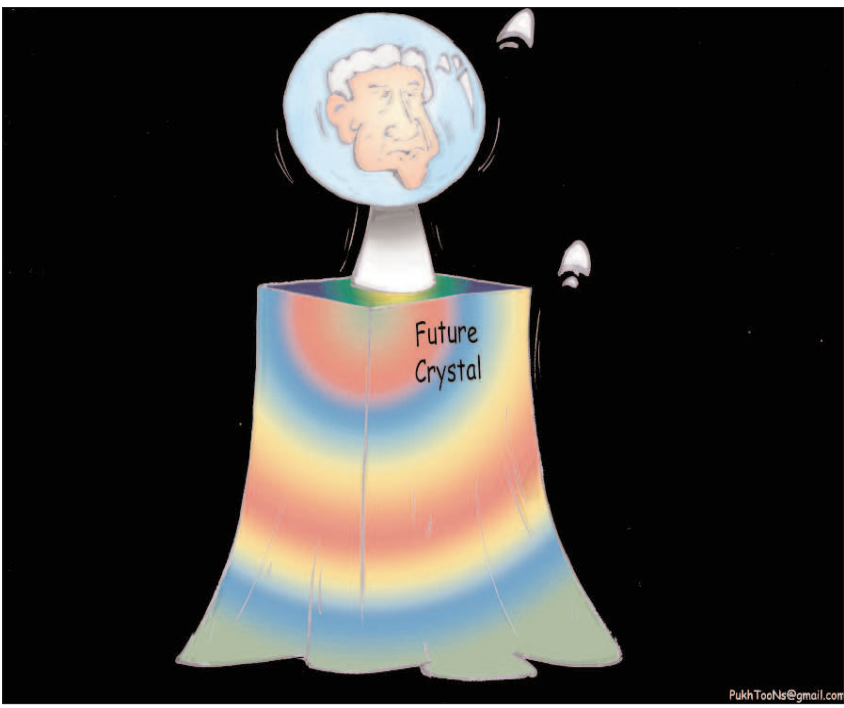
Sunak's and Braverman's approach this is not to say that there is no need for a sensible and considered approach to immigration, not one that suggests completely open borders, and most definitely not one that hermetically seals the border. Most importantly there is a need for a policy that is based on facts, one that discards anti-migrant sentiment for the sake of advancing political careers or placating certain segments in the media. A good place to start is to break down the figures published by the Office for National Statistics to its component parts. To begin with, migration is a global phenomenon that takes place for an array of reasons, including economic, humanitarian, educational and cultural ones. None of them are recent phenomena in human history and none of them, if handled correctly, need endanger the receiving country. Immigration poses challenges, but the benefits to society and the economy far outweigh the costs. As we might expect, some of the recent increase in newcomers is down to humanitarian reasons, mainly as consequence of the war in Ukraine. This is no different to the situation in other countries, and how long these refugees remain in their host country will depend on how the situation in Ukraine shapes up.

Then there are work visas: the increase in numbers of non-EU migrants to the UK is due to Brexit, but much of it is a reflection of structural issues in the British economy, as these are either low-paid jobs that Brits won't do, or positions for highly skilled professionals, of which there is shortage in the UK, including in health, industry and IT, a situation which requires a long-term rethink of how to close this skill

deficit instead of holding the economy back by preventing the necessary workforce from entering the country.

And then there is a highly significant tranche of people arriving on our shores who although classified as migrants come here to study, with a fixed-term permit to stay. This is a population that the UK should be encouraging to come, as they are the bread and butter that sustains a highly rated British academia that is nevertheless deprived of sufficient public funds, and it is estimated that their contribution boosts the UK economy by £41.9 billion annually. In addition, these students, if they stay, contribute to the economy and society, and if they leave they nevertheless remain, through the networks and friendships they forge during their studies, a major source of soft power. Limiting their stay after they finish their studies, or preventing their families from joining them, is unhelpful, bigoted and short-sighted.

British society is still one of the most tolerant in the world and has a tradition of welcoming people from overseas whether for a short or long term; but the evil spirit of Brexit and the xenophobia it encourages has yet to be expelled. Smearing migrants as invaders and exploiters might help to score some cheap points at right-wing gatherings such as the National Conservatism Conference, but survey after survey demonstrates that the UK public harbors very positive attitudes to immigration compared to most countries, and especially in its belief that immigration strengthens cultural diversity. It is for British politicians to listen to the voice of the people and not to what might satisfy some segments in the party or its client media such as the Daily Mail.



States haven't stopped spying on their citizens, post-Snowden

IT'S been 10 years since Edward Snowden holed up in a Hong Kong hotel room and exposed Britain and America's mass surveillance operations to a group of journalists. His bombshell revelations revealed how the US and UK governments were spying on their citizens, intercepting, processing and storing their data, and sharing this information. Since then, although neither state has lost its appetite for hoovering up huge amounts of personal data, new transparency and oversight constraints, together with the growth of encrypted technology, have tilted the balance towards privacy.

Snowden's revelations sparked outrage and anger. Bulk interception was being done without a democratic mandate and with few real safeguards. When the scope of this surveillance came to light, officials claimed most of the information was not "read" and therefore its collection did not violate privacy. This was disingenuous; the data could reveal an intimate picture of someone's life - a fact that was upheld in later legal challenges, which proved the surveillance violated privacy and human rights law.

After the leaks, three reviews took place in the UK. The first was done by parliament's intelligence and security committee (ISC). It did little to interrogate what the spies were actually up to, even while acknowledging that new legislation was required. A review by David Anderson QC, the independent reviewer of terrorism legislation, was more circumspect and suggested a series of improvements. Finally, the Home Office convened a panel (of which I was a part, alongside an ex minister, former security chiefs and Martha Lane Fox) that produced a report and a series of recommendations.

These three reports eventually led to the 2016 passage of the Investigatory Powers Act, which clarified what types of state surveillance were allowed and how these needed to be authorised. The act allowed bulk interception - much to the dismay of many privacy campaigners - but changed the process governing how this interception was authorised. This meant that while a secretary of state could sign off a warrant justifying the most intrusive powers, that warrant must also be approved by an independent judicial commissioner.

The legacy of Snowden's leaks is mixed. Bulk interception and surveillance hasn't stopped, despite there now being greater transparency and more oversight. "There are a few more safeguards, but mostly it continues," Caroline Wilson Palow, the legal director at Privacy International (PI), told me. The greatest legacy of Snowden's leaks are the legal challenges they have made possible. Until these revelations, it was nearly impossible to bring a legal case challenging state surveillance. There have now been several successful lawsuits.

Beginning in 2013, civil rights organisations, including PI, Liberty and Big Brother Watch, began challenging bulk interception and surveillance in the European court of human rights and English courts.

Heather Brooke

The human rights court rulings set a precedent across Europe that such spying requires prior independent or judicial authorisation that must be meaningful, rigorous and check for proper "end-to-end safeguards". Earlier this year, MI5 was found to have acted unlawfully by the investigatory powers tribunal in retaining huge amounts of personal data after a case was brought by PI and Liberty. None of these cases would have been possible if Snowden's information hadn't come to light, and hopefully they put pressure on the intelligence agencies to pay attention to the legal safeguards. As technology evolves, so too does surveillance.

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As technology evolves, so too does surveillance. States have found new ways to spy on citizens, particularly using the mobile phones we all carry around. Intrusive spyware such as Pegasus, sold by the Israeli surveillance company NSO Group, can turn a person's phone into a 24-hour surveillance machine. A 2021 investigation by the Guardian and other media organisations showed how activists, journalists and lawyers had been targeted by malware bought by countries such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Hungary and India. Too often, security services conflate protection of those in power with protection of the public. Politicians have long used their security services and surveillance powers to stifle protest and dissent by targeting anyone who might legitimately challenge (or even question) their hold on power. This is why the interests of the security services so often come at the expense of the public. Even so, the rallying cry of protecting the public is often used to justify such invasive surveillance.

We can see something similar happening with the UK's online safety bill. Discussions about this have conflated the public's legitimate concern about bad online behaviour with the security services' agenda of breaking end-to-end encryption. Gaining a backdoor to encrypted chat has been on spies' wishlist almost since the internet

was invented. But there is no guarantee this will make the internet safer or free from harm. In its current form, the bill would effectively deputise spying activities to technology companies, which could scan users' messages and social media posts for evidence of harms that they could then report to the authorities. Understandably, there's huge demand for more accountability online, where bad and dangerous behaviour often goes unchecked. But the proposed bill will allow intelligence agencies to spy on ordinary citizens via technology platforms.

How far will the thaw in Russia-Georgia relations extend?

Alexander Atasuntsev

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin's surprise move to scrap visa requirements for Georgian nationals and resume direct flights between the two countries puts Tbilisi in a difficult position. The ruling Georgian Dream party needs to respond to Russia's overture to improving relations in a way that will protect it from attacks by the opposition and preserve Georgia's European trajectory.

Georgian Dream representatives have welcomed the Russian proposals, eliciting the ire of not only the opposition, but also a large part of Georgia's political class. President Salome Zourabichvili, who was herself elected with the help of Georgian Dream, called the Kremlin's decision a "provocation." The country's main opposition force, the United National Movement (UNM), held a rally in Tbilisi at which the Georgian government was accused of turning the country into a "province of Russia." Critics insist that the decision on flights and visas is Russia's way of rewarding Georgian Dream for its anti-Western policies, and that it jeopardizes the country's prospects of joining the EU.

The credibility of such claims is somewhat undermined by Georgia's previous actions, however. The flights between the two countries have been suspended for several times over the past decades and previously, they had been restored under none other than the UNM founded, then president Mikheil Saakashvili. It was done in 2010 - less than two years after Russia and Georgia fought a war over Georgia's breakaway territory of South Ossetia. In 2012, Saakashvili also unilaterally abolished visa requirements for Russian nationals, which had been imposed immediately after diplomatic relations between Russia and Georgia were severed in 2008. "We will never close the border for Russian businessmen and tourists because where there is active business, there is no place for tank treads,"

Saakashvili said at the time.

It's true that the international context and Russia itself were very different back then, and Saakashvili's decisions concerned Georgia only. Now relations with Moscow are a far more fundamental issue. This is why President Zourabichvili first cited "aggression against Ukraine" and only then "the occupation of Georgian territories" when explaining why Russia's proposals are "unacceptable" to Georgia. An even greater threat to Georgian Dream - both domestically and internationally - could be posed by Western reactions to Russia's initiative. An overwhelming majority of Georgians support their country's EU journey, and see Russia as a threat. Closer ties to Moscow, therefore, will not earn Georgian Dream any additional votes. In fact, the party may end up losing the 2024 parliamentary elections if the EU declines to grant Georgia candidate status due to its excessive flirting with Moscow.

The Georgian government's initial welcoming of the Russian announcement did not go down well with either the EU or the United States. Brussels and Washington referred to the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine, and reminded Tbilisi of its obligations to its Western partners. Tbilisi, however, apparently hopes to make use of Russia's gestures while also respecting the red lines drawn by the West. Representatives of Georgian Dream have already said that only Russian airlines that are not on sanctions lists will be permitted to fly to the country. Still, Georgian Dream has few practical reasons to keep drifting toward Moscow, even though pragmatic and nonconfrontational relations with Russia have always been one of the party's principles. That goal has already been accomplished, and further pro-Russian steps will only create tension, both in relations with the West

and inside the country. Progress toward EU integration, on the other hand, increases the chances that Georgian Dream could stay in power. But what can Moscow offer Georgia?

What Georgia is really interested in seeing is concessions on its Moscow-backed breakaway regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, but there is no indication that Russia is ready for that. The April round of Geneva discussions - a negotiating format that brings together Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Georgia, as well as Russia, the US, and international organizations - once again failed to yield any results, other than routine recognition that "the parties continue to exercise restraint." In any case, relations between Moscow and Abkhazia have been strained in recent months, and the Kremlin's influence there is not absolute. Abkhazia prohibits the sale of real estate to Russian nationals, but early last year, under pressure from Moscow, Sukhumi agreed to transfer a government dacha in the resort town of Pitsunda to Russia. The decision caused such public uproar that the Abkhazian parliament has still not ratified it, despite Russian threats to cut aid to Abkhazia and close a military base there.

One argument for closer cooperation with Moscow that the Georgian government readily uses is economic benefits. Yet the economic boom Georgia has experienced since last year happened without any intentional assistance from the Russian government, though it is directly linked to Russia. Georgian GDP grew a record 10.1% last year, mostly due to tens of thousands of Russians fleeing to Georgia to escape the war and mobilization. Cash remittances from Russia increased fivefold and, with revenues from tourism and exports to Russia, comprise almost 15% of the country's GDP now, as opposed to 6% in 2021. Georgia has therefore been able to benefit from the situation

in Russia without taking on any additional obligations.

Georgian Dream has unsuccessfully tried to establish stable relations with Russia in the past, most recently in 2019. Back then, the Georgian authorities hosted Russian Duma deputy Sergei Gavrilov, and even seated him in the parliamentary speaker's chair. The Georgian opposition organized street protests in response, prompting Moscow to suspend flights to Georgia once again. All in all, the Georgian Dream's gains from rapprochement with Moscow are quite nebulous, while the risks are very real. But the party itself might see things differently. It has made a number of illogical and unforced errors lately, some of which may have serious consequences. The most obvious example is Georgian Dream's disastrous attempt to pass a draconian law in March that would have made it possible to penalize civil society organizations as "foreign agents," a label that Russia adopted over a decade ago. The controversial bill was withdrawn amid public outrage, and the ruling party gained nothing from its bid, while sustaining major damage to its reputation, both at home and abroad.

A more recent blunder was when Georgian Dream withdrew from the Party of European Socialists, which has the second-largest faction in the European Parliament and nine out of 27 seats in the European Commission, upon whose recommendation Georgia's EU candidate status depends. The withdrawal came in response to the European party's criticism of Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili for making a speech at the Conservative Political Action Conference in Budapest. It cannot be ruled out, therefore, that Georgian Dream may enter into another questionable deal: this time with Moscow. But if it does decide to go down that route, it is unclear how much longer the party will be able to remain in power.

Macron's idiotic appeasement will ruin Nato

Richard Kemp

FOR a man who consistently churns out stupid comments, Emmanuel Macron is not a complete fool. He understands that limitations of range or geography no longer apply in the interconnected 21st-century world, where international threats cannot be compartmentalised by region. Taiwanese semiconductors and Pacific trade passages - and their potential disruption or denial - are just as important to Europe as they are to Japan, Australia, India and the US.

Yet this reality, and Mr Macron's knowledge of it, has not stopped the French president from reportedly seeking to block the implementation of a Nato office in Tokyo - the alliance's first outpost in the Indo-Pacific - on the basis that it is geographically far-flung. Of course, this pathetic justification would not be the real reason for his objection. Rather, it'd be about two matters of pure self-interest. First, Macron hopes to avoid anything that might increase tensions with Beijing, especially after his attempts to cosy up to Xi Jinping in the interests of French business. This has led the French to distance themselves from

American efforts to decouple from China. And it is why, after his recent visit to Beijing, Macron suggested Europe should recoil from the dispute over Taiwan to avoid becoming an American "vassal".

This aversion to the US leads to the second point of self-interest: Macron wants to lead a Europe strategically autonomous from America and "brain dead" Nato, albeit while remaining unable to pick up the price tag that would entail. It beggars belief that he should continue with this unrealistic obsession, driven as it is by hubris rather than realpolitik, even as the fact of European dependency on Washington has yet again been driven home by the war in Ukraine. For some, it will be difficult not to suspect one more, even more parochial motivation for Macron's position. He is still smarting from France's exclusion from Aukus and the loss of its diesel powered submarine deal with Australia in favour of British-American nuclear submarines. Paris's intemperate reaction to that perceived slight, including the recall of its ambassador in Canberra, revealed a similar atti-

tude to what we may be seeing now: commercial and national pride trumping strategic common sense. To make matters worse in Macron's eyes, it looks likely that Japan may soon join Aukus.

Opening a Nato office in Japan does not amount to membership of the alliance; it is a means of increasing liaison and solidifying mutual cooperation, both so important in the face of growing Chinese belligerence across the region, especially towards Taiwan and the South and East China Seas. It also sends an important message to Xi Jinping, who understands that political deterrence (a demonstration of will) is at least as important as military deterrence (a demonstration of capability). In that context, a previous French refusal to cooperate with Nato is instructive. In 2008, Paris rejected a US-backed proposal to put Ukraine on the path to membership of the alliance. Had the process gone ahead it may be that Putin would not have started his war with Ukraine in 2014 or launched a full-scale invasion last year.

The French position then was presumably taken out of fear of

angering Russia; and was just as misguided as Macron's apparent fear now of angering China. Appeasement will not work with Xi today any more than it did with Putin back then. Nevertheless, Macron will get some plaudits from Beijing, as he already has. On Monday, Wang Yi, director of the Chinese Communist Party Foreign Affairs Commission, reportedly waxed lyrical about Macron's trip to Beijing and the "strategic consensus" between the two countries. He also suggested France and China had coordinated their respective positions over Ukraine. Let us hope this was no more than a diplomatic nicety, because everybody knows that China's position on any peace deal will only ever be tilted towards Putin's terms.

Nato's more responsible leaders should remind Mr Macron that China sees matters through a cynical lens. Its actions are weakening the liberal international order from which every Western democracy, including France, benefits. It would be impossible to suppress Putin if we empower Xi Jinping - the two work together, and they must be challenged together.

The Telegraph

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The Guardian



PSX continues with bullish trend, gains 219 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Wednesday, gaining 219.25 points, a positive change of 0.61 per cent, closing at 42,142.71 points against 41,923.46 points the previous day.

A total of 332,534,678 shares were traded during the day as compared to 240,829,334 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 7.148 billion against Rs 7.152 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 344 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 198 of them recorded gains and

120 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 344 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 79,599,537 shares at Rs 1.22 per share; Telecard Limited with 16,584,665 shares at Rs 7.41 per share and Pak Int. Bulk with 15,416,500 shares at Rs 4.39 per share.

Colgate Palm witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 116.92 per share price, closing at Rs 1,675.86, whereas the runner-up was Bhanero Tex with an Rs 84.99 rise in its per share price to Rs 1,289.99.

Sapphire Fiber witnessed a maximum

decrease of Rs 91.01 per share closing at Rs 1,134.00; followed by Philip Morris Pak with Rs 35.22 decline to close at Rs 463.28.

Rupee sheds 32 paisas against US Dollar

Pakistani Rupee on Wednesday witnessed 32 paisas devaluation against the US Dollar (USD) in the interbank trading as it closed at Rs 286.88 against the previous day's closing of Rs 286.56.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollars in the open market stood at Rs 298.5 and Rs 301 respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by 09 paisas to close at Rs 306.50 against the last day's closing of Rs 306.59, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs 2.05, whereas an increase of 07 paisas was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs 355.99 as compared to its last day's closing of Rs 355.92.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 09 paisas and 08 paisas to close at Rs 78.10 and Rs 76.49 respectively.



FAISALABAD: Group photo of FCCI members with Consul General of the Islamic Republic of Iran Mehran Movahhedfar during their visit to Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

PBF endorses NEC's energy conservation plan

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) backs the decision of National Economic Council (NEC) to close markets and commercial centers by 8pm from July 1 to save energy, terming it a step toward a more civilized society.

Talking to media here on Wednesday, PBF Vice President and Chief Organiser, Chaudhry Ahmad Jawad said that steps for energy conservation recommended under this plan, such as the closure of shops and commercial centres by 8pm, switching to LED lights and upgrading geysers to make them more energy efficient, could help the country save up to \$1 billion annually.

He stated that neither Europe nor the United States could even afford the luxury of keeping commercial areas open until 12 in the night. "No country has a lifestyle as inappropriate as here," he added.

Ahmad Jawad said that circular debt was eating up the country's revenue and the recent decisions of the government would save electricity and that the provinces had agreed to implement these decisions as well which was appreciated.

The PBF also suggested that the district administration made it a point to ensure that the shops open at 10 am, giving traders enough time to do their daily business.

Ahmad Jawad said that many countries had achieved the goal of self-reliance in a few years, with less resources than Pakistan, because in these countries, distribution of resources and awarding of influential people in the name of reforms was stopped for the sake of national development.

He said that people had since long been suffering from inflation, unemployment and economic crisis but now their patience was waning, therefore steps to improve the situation should be started without delay.

Tokyo shares close lower on profit-taking

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo shares closed lower on Wednesday as investors locked in profits after the benchmark Nikkei index hit three-decade highs in recent days.

The Nikkei 225 tanked 1.82 percent, or 593.04 points, to end at 31,913.74, while the broader Topix index lost 1.34 percent, or 29.98 points, to 2,206.30.

The market had opened higher following modest gains on Wall Street as investor sentiment broadly improved after US lawmakers averted a debt default.

Financial shares in New York have also stabilised following the failure of four regional banks.

But the Japanese market was weighed down later "amid widespread caution over sharp rises in share prices".

IwaiCosmo Securities said.

The dollar fetched 139.18 yen, against 139.65 yen in New York late Tuesday.

Uniqlo operator Fast Retailing lost 2.12 percent to 34,010 yen while SoftBank Group was down 1.33 percent at 6,000 yen.

Semiconductor-related shares were lower, with Tokyo Electron plunging 4.18 percent to 18,815 yen and Advantest dropping 3.79 percent to 17,250 yen.

Sony Group fell 1.95 percent to 13,605 yen.

SCCI opposes plan for early closure of markets and shops

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry rejected the federal government's decision regarding early closure of markets and business premises under the energy conservation plan.

Ejaz Khan Afridi, an acting president of the chamber in a statement issued here on Wednesday, strongly objected to the decision of National Economic Council (NEC), calling for closure of markets and shops by 8:00 PM by following the government's energy conservation plan.

He said the business community generally in the country particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa which had been affected by terrorism is currently in difficult situations under the prevailing circumstances.

Keeping in view the

prevalent economic conditions, Mr Afridi said that the country's economy and businesses couldn't afford such business-hostile decisions of the incumbent coalition government.

The SCCI acting chief said the NEC's decision was tantamount economic murder of traders' community and venomous for businesses and the national economy.

He was of the view that the government's decision created unrest among the business community.

He, therefore, urged the federal government to review its decision in the best interest of the national economy and businesses and not implement it.

Let business and commercial activities flourish in the country, he demanded. Afridi said the government should take initiatives for providing relief to the

business community rather than elevate their miseries by such anti-businesses decisions.

Commercial and trade activities are reeling under the prevailing scenario, the SCCI acting chief said.

He added traders' community has been compelling on starvation owing to implementation of government's flawed economic policies. The SCCI acting president made it clear that anti-traders policies were unacceptable to them.

He warned the government for agitation if the government didn't scrap its decision regarding closure of markets and shops by 8:00 PM.

Afridi urged the federal and provincial governments to keep opening markets, shops and bazaars till late night to flourish business and economic activities in the country.

Pak Cables pledges to support AKCS-P heritage conservation efforts

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Cables pledged to support the Aga Khan Cultural Service - Pakistan's upcoming project on conservation of historical sites in Pakistan.

As part of the project, internship opportunities are being offered by AKCSP to young graduates and students from the related fields of architecture, traditional engineering and construction techniques, material sciences, etc.

The students will be provided onsite and hand-on learning opportunities at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Lahore Fort and the Walled City of

Lahore, where AKCS-P is currently working to restore Mughal era Wazir Khan Mosque.

Pakistan Cables' support will help AKCS-P contribute effectively towards capacity building and transfer of knowledge by offering among the youth of Pakistan. The Company has a track record of successfully supporting and developing activities and platforms to empower the youth through sharing knowledge.

About Pakistan Cables Ltd. Founded in 1953, Pakistan Cables is the premiere and most reputable cable manufacturer in Pakistan. Being the only wire and cable manufactur-

er listed on the PSX since 1955, it is also a member company of the Amir S. Chinoy group. The company has the largest geographical footprint in Pakistan with presence in over 200 cities.

AKCS-P is the cultural agency of the larger Aga Khan Development Network that is working with an aim to improve the socio-economic conditions in rural and urban communities through heritage conservation. AKCS-P has an exemplary history of working on the restoration of historical monuments employing best practice methods under supervision of professional experts of international repute.

China leads the world in integrating 5G into economy: Experts

ISLAMABAD (APP): Four years after China issued 5G commercial licenses to domestic companies, 5G applications have emerged in nearly 60 percent of the nation's economic categories, with a wide coverage of 5G networks and application of 5G solutions in major industries, media reports said. Experts noted that China leads the world in integrating 5G into the real economy.

According to a CCTV report China has built the world's largest 5G network with the most advanced technologies. As of the end of April, the nation had more than 2.73 million 5G base stations, with 5G networks covering all prefecture-level cities and county-level urban areas. More than 600 million households had used 5G mobile phones.

"So far, 5G applications have been integrated into about 60 of the 97 national economic categories, with more than 50,000 applications launched. China's telecom industry has invested nearly 600 billion yuan (\$84 billion) to construct the 5G network, directly driving total economic output of about 3.8 trillion yuan and indirectly generating output

of about 9.4 trillion yuan," the report noted. Huge efforts have been made to apply 5G to industries, and 5G application solutions in key industries such as mining, ports and power were "widely copied" to help companies conduct their digital transformations.

In 2019, China issued 5G licenses to the three major telecom operators and China Broadcasting Network Corp.

Experts praised authorities' efforts in pushing 5G applications, saying that China's 5G layout tops other countries.

"No matter whether in terms of base station scale, user scale or the business-to-business sector, Chinese operators are the global leaders and have met market expectations in general," Yuan Bo, a senior telecom engineer, said in an interview with Global Times.

Another highlight of China's 5G application is in industry, where the technology has brought revolutionary changes, such as remote control in mining and engineering companies, automatic operation in ports and automated inspection of core facilities and sites, Ma Jihua, a veteran industry

analyst, said. Moreover, a number of 5G industrial parks have been set up in cities such as Shanghai and Dalian in Northeast China's Liaoning Province. The first 5G Internet of Things industrial park project in Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region is expected to be completed next month, according to media reports.

Experts stressed that China's 5G application still has room for development and progress. Yuan said that 5G's value needs to be further explored in the business-to-customer sector.

Officials revealed that the country has planned to further push forward 5G development. Industry and Information Technology Minister Jin Zhuanglong said during a recent exhibition that China will speed up the construction of virtual private networks in the 5G industry and enrich the country's 5G application scenarios.

He also said that China will improve the coverage of high-quality networks such as 5G and gigabit optical networks by continuously optimizing the infrastructure and building 5G factories.

Services' trade deficit shrinks by 91.44 per cent

ISLAMABAD (APP): The services trade deficit narrowed by 91.44 per cent as exports witnessed a growth of 1.46 per cent during the first ten months of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding period of last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

According to PBS data, the exports from the country during July-April (2022-23) were recorded at \$6,009.87 million against the exports of \$5,923.19 million in July-April (2021-22), showing growth of 1.46 per cent.

On the other hand, the services' imports declined by 39.70 per cent from US\$ 10,635.72 million last year to US\$6,413.32 million during the period under review.

Based on the figures, the services trade deficit was recorded at US \$403.45 million this year against a deficit of US \$4,712.53 million during the last fiscal year, showing a decline of 91.44 per cent.

On a year-on-year basis, the services exports during the month of April 2023 went down by 24.65 per cent to US\$ 486.09 million against the exports of US \$645.10 million during April 2022.

On the other hand, the imports decreased by 38.85 per cent from US\$1,090.83 million last April to US\$ 667.04 million in April 2023, according to the data.

On a month-on-month basis, the services exports from the country decreased by 20.30 per cent as compared to the exports of US\$ 609.88 million in March 2023.

The imports went up by 5.01 per cent as compared to the imports of US \$635.20 million in March 2023, the data revealed.

Govt urged to formulate policy

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari Wednesday urged the government to formulate a viable policy in consultation with all the stakeholders to protect consumer interests, besides ensuring their access to safe and healthy food.

Addressing a rally, which was jointly organized by ICCI, Islamabad Administration and Food Authority on the occasion of World Food Safety Day, he said that clean and healthy food was the basic right of every citizen and the day drew our attention to provide healthy food to every citizen.

Nutrition and food security were closely related, he said adding that unsafe food was a major obstacle in creating a healthy society, said a press release.

Pakistan was one among the largest countries in the

world in terms of population and providing clean and healthy food to such a large population was a challenge that could be tackled together, he added.

Speaking on the occasion, Director Islamabad Food Authority Dr Tahira Siddique said that food authority was actively working to provide safe food in different areas of the federal capital and it was priority to ensure the supply of clean and hygienic products to the citizens.

The authority was trying to implement the international standards regarding food, she said adding that the purpose of this rally was also to provide awareness among the citizens.

She also thanked ICCI for organizing the event and said that the Islamabad Food Authority would work together with the Chamber regarding rising awareness about safe food in masses.

Fatima Fertilizer's marketing lead wins globally acclaimed Chief Marketer Award

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Rabel Sadozai, Director Marketing and Sales, Fatima Fertilizer, has won the Chief Marketer Award in the business category by Campaign Asia-Pacific's prestigious Women Leading Change Awards 2023 announced this week. Now in its seventh year, the Women Leading Change Awards celebrate outstanding women who question, challenge, innovate, lead, inspire, and champion change across all industries. The award is also an avenue for Campaign's own commitment to promoting the advancement of diversity, inclusion, and equality in the industry by spotlighting the region's most inspiring women business leaders, change makers, trailblazers and rising stars standing tall despite the bias and stereotypes.

This global accolade is a testament of Rabel and her team's professional acumen, leadership and focus on innovation, driving the success of Fatima Fertilizer in the agriculture sector. The Chief Marketer category was introduced for the first time this year, attracting several entries from around Asia Pacific. Rabel is widely recognized as the first female within the Agriculture sector to hold a high-ranking position, breaking barriers and paving the way for other women leaders to follow. Her visionary stew-

ardship has propelled her through numerous significant milestones, including the proposal and successful implementation of Pakistan's first-ever Farmer's Day, an event that is officially recognized by the Government of Pakistan.

Furthermore, Rabel and her team have also been actively engaged in empowering and celebrating women in the agriculture sector highlighting their inspirational stories through initiatives like Jugnu Mohsin's Khaki Desan quest to revive a rare breed of Pakistani cotton, Nazo Dharejo's story of bravery and resilience through the Sarsabz Kahani web series, and Rabia Sultan's achievements as a progressive farmer through a testimonial style campaign. The team has also launched programs like Sarsabz Taber to ensure the education and empowerment of female farmers across Pakistan. The team's pioneering work centered around real-life farmers, their hopes, challenges, and aspirations has also garnered local and international acclaim.

Speaking about this remarkable achievement, Rabel expressed her gratitude, saying, "I am truly honoured to receive the Chief Marketer Award by Campaign Asia. This is a win for Fatima Fertilizer and for Pakistan. This recognition is also a testament to the hard work and dedication of the entire team at Fatima



Fertilizer. I am proud to be part of such an organization that values innovation and supports groundbreaking initiatives. I would also like to extend my appreciation to Campaign Asia for providing a global platform that recognizes excellence in business and marketing."

Campaign Asia Pacific, based in Hong Kong and launched in the early 1970s as a media magazine, is today a part of Haymarket Publishing - UK's largest independently owned publishing group. Campaign is a premium online-only publishing platform that provides insights and intelligence into ideas, work and personalities shaping the region's marketing and communications industry. The platform is globally acclaimed while focusing more closely on the US, UK, and Asia-Pacific markets.

Stocks subdued on weak Chinese economic data

LONDON (AFP/APP): European and US stocks edged higher Wednesday as investors weighed data showing weakness in China's economy and hopes that the US Federal Reserve would skip an interest rate hike this month.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development slightly raised its growth outlook for the world economy to 2.7 percent as inflation eases and after China dropped Covid restrictions, but it warned the recovery faced a "long road".

A World Bank warning on the global economic outlook released Tuesday gave some food for thought as it lowered its growth expectations for next year.

Reports that US Secretary of State Antony Blinken would visit China provided optimism for a thawing of relations between the superpowers.

In foreign exchange, the Turkish lira sank to an all-time low against the dollar, with the currency continuing to struggle after the re-election of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the end of May.

The greenback, which hit a peak at 23.17 lira, was down against the euro, pound and yen.

Traders are keeping tabs on China, with reports saying authorities have asked the country's biggest banks to lower their deposit rates to boost the economy as it struggles to recover from years of zero-Covid lockdowns.

Analysts said such a move could indicate China's central bank was considering an interest rate cut as soon as this month.

The need for fresh help was highlighted Wednesday by data showing Chinese exports tumbled more than seven percent in May, far more than expected and the first drop since February.

The reading was "yet another disappointing data which will raise growth concerns and intensify expectations of more policy support", said Khoon Goh, at Australia and New Zealand Banking Group.

The trade figures follow data showing shrinking factory activity and showed the uphill task officials have in kickstarting the economy.

Along with weak Chinese data, markets reacted also to news of subdued industrial production in Europe's biggest economy, Germany.

US trade data for April also caused concerns about the global economic outlook as exports fell by 3.6 percent from March, a drop of \$9.2 billion.

Next week's Fed policy decision was also in focus, with investors hoping officials will decide not to lift borrowing costs for an 11th meeting in a row, in light of data indicating more than a year of tightening is beginning to kick in.

A mixed jobs report last week, which showed a pick up in hiring but slower wage growth, suggested the US economy remained healthy and gave the central bank room to skip a hike this month, even as inflation remains sticky.

Elsewhere, oil prices gained in more volatile trading for the commodity as traders weigh Saudi output cuts against potential slowing demand as the global economy continues to battle elevated inflation.



Pakistan informs ICC of inability to play World Cup matches in Ahmedabad

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Management Committee's Chairman Najam Sethi has communicated to International Cricket Council (ICC) Chairman Greg Barclay and Chief Executive Officer Geoff Allardice that the Green Shirts will not play their World Cup matches in Ahmedabad, reported Indian media.

The Press Trust of India, while citing a PCB source, reported that Sethi has made it clear to the ICC that Pakistan will not play in Ahmedabad during World Cup unless it's the final.

"Sethi has conveyed to Barclay and Allardice that Pakistan doesn't want its matches to be scheduled in Ahmedabad unless it is a knock-out game like final," the Indian media outlet quoted a source.

"He requested ICC to schedule their games in Chennai, Bengaluru and Kolkata if national team gets clearance from the Pakistan government to travel to India for the glob-

al event scheduled in October and November," the source told the agency.

The Board of Control for

Sethi briefs PM on PCB's steps for revival of domestic cricket

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman of Management Committee of Pakistan Cricket Board Najam Sethi on Wednesday called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here and briefed him about the matters pertaining to the Board.

Sethi apprised the prime minister of the steps being taken by the PCB regarding the revival of domestic cricket in Pakistan.

They also discussed the participation of Pakistan in the international tourna-

Cricket in India (BCCI) wants to schedule Pakistan vs India match at Narendra Modi Stadium, Ahmedabad. However, PCB has reservations about the venue.

The ICC heads travelled to Lahore earlier last week to meet Sethi. On their return, they declared Pakistan a peaceful country for sports and expressed their satisfaction with the country's capability to host the 2025 Champions Trophy.

Furthermore, the ICC delegation hinted at playing a mediating role between the PCB and the BCCI while seeking assurance from Pakistan regarding their participation in the upcoming World Cup, scheduled in October-November in India this year.

After India refused to travel to Pakistan for Asia Cup, there are chances that Pakistan might also not go to the neighbouring country for playing the 50-over format mega event. The decision on Asia Cup is expected at the end of this month.

Messi to join Inter Miami after leaving PSG

PARIS (Agencies): Argentina legend Lionel Messi will join American side Inter Miami after his exit from French champions Paris St-Germain.

The former Barcelona forward is set to reject a more lucrative offer from Saudi Arabian side Al-Hilal.

The Miami deal includes collaboration from brands like Adidas and Apple.

Messi, 35, won the Ballon d'Or award for the world's best player seven times and is expected to win it later this year after World Cup success.

This is the first time Barcelona icon Messi has played outside Europe.

He wanted to remain in Europe for another season but, after no satisfactory offers were received, he had the straight choice between Inter Miami or Al-Hilal.

He was heavily tipped to be favouring a move to Saudi Arabia, where he would have joined Cristiano Ronaldo and Karim Benzema in the league in a deal that could not be matched financially.

But Messi was ultimately tempted to Major League Soccer (MLS) side Inter Miami for a variety of reasons including lifestyle, and a deal with big brands that extends beyond football.



He already owns a house in Miami, which he rents out. He was keen on a return to Barcelona this summer but the Financial Fair Play (FFP) limitations that will be in place for next season in La Liga made any ambitious plan to bring him back an impossibility.

Paris St-Germain won Ligue 1 in both his seasons at the club but went out in the Champions League last 16, which means his time in France was not seen as a huge success. He netted 32 goals in 75 games for the club - and ended this season with 16 goals and 16 assists in Ligue 1. Messi's two-year contract comes to an end this summer and both parties agreed to go their separate ways, with the forward suspended for two weeks in May for an unauthorised trip to Saudi Arabia.

His legacy comes from his time at Barcelona and winning the World Cup with Argentina in December. He left Barca in 2021, after 21 years with the club, because of the club's financial problems. Messi is Barcelona's record scorer with 672 goals and won 10 La Liga titles, four Champions Leagues and seven Spanish Cups.

Kusal Mendis was unbeaten on 11 as Sri Lanka reached the target in just 16 overs to end the game early. Afghanistan won the first game comprehensively by six wickets, but Sri Lanka bounced back to take the second game by 132 runs.

Sri Lanka will head to Zimbabwe for World Cup qualifiers in a bid to secure one of the two remaining slots for the format's showcase event. Afghanistan is already through to the World Cup, to be held in India in October.



PARIS: Tunisia's Ons Jabeur, left, congratulates Brazil's Beatriz Haddad Maia with winning the quarterfinal match of the French Open tennis tournament.

French Open 2023

Swiatek beats Gauff, Jabeur loses to Haddad Maia

PARIS (Agencies): Defending champion Iga Swiatek maintained her dominance over American teenager Coco Gauff to set up a French Open semi-final against Brazilian 14th seed Beatriz Haddad Maia.

World number one Swiatek, who beat Gauff in the 2022 final, won 6-4 6-2.

The contest was much closer than last year but Swiatek's quality showed in a seventh straight win over Gauff.

Haddad Maia reached her first Grand Slam semi-final by fighting back to stun Tunisia's Ons Jabeur.

Haddad Maia, who had never previously reached the third round of a major, recovered to win 3-6 7-6 (7-5) 6-1. The 27-year-old is the first Brazilian woman to reach a Grand Slam semi-final since Maria Bueno in 1968.

Swiatek 'happy' to spend more time on court

Swiatek has been the standout player on the women's tour over the past 15 months, winning some of the sport's biggest prizes and proving particularly difficult to beat on clay.

However the form of

Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka and Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina this year, plus a thigh injury suffered by the Pole in the build-up to Roland Garros, meant there had been greater debate over Swiatek's chances of defending her title.

But she has quickly reasserted herself as the overwhelming favourite with a series of dominant performances. The straight-set victory over sixth seed Gauff means she has not lost a set this fortnight, dropping just 15 games in her five matches so far.

Facing the American was her biggest test yet and, although Gauff played smartly to try and disrupt her rhythm, the gulf between the pair was ultimately still too great.

The first set was a proper contest, the pair exchanging breaks midway through, before Swiatek increased the pressure towards the end and took advantage of some loose shots at key moments from her opponent.

Swiatek fended off three break points to hold for 2-1 in the second set, with

Gauff quickly paying the price for not taking advantage of the rare chances afforded by the top seed.

While Gauff held to love in the next game for 2-2, Swiatek moved up another gear and quickly took the final four games to move into her third Roland Garros semi-final in five years. "I didn't really spend too much time on court so I'm actually happy today was a tighter match," Swiatek said. "I will be ready [for the semi-finals] no matter what."

Tennis is a marathon not a 100m' for Haddad Maia

Haddad Maia has become known for her ability to come through long tests, including in the Roland Garros fourth round when she outlasted Spain's Sara Sorribes Tormo in an epic lasting almost four hours. That was the longest women's match of the season and, while the encounter against Jabeur was nowhere near as long, she again demonstrated her physical and mental endurance.

"I think a tennis match is like a marathon. It's not a 100m race," she said.

"I think one of my quali-

ties is that I wait and I'm very patient and I never give up. "Even if I'm not playing well, or I'm missing a few shots, the tennis will appear and I'll have my opportunity." Haddad Maia, who served a 10-month doping suspension which ended in 2020, was broken three times in the first set as Jabeur took control.

Break opportunities were scarce in the second set until Jabeur could not convert two chances at 5-5 - and this proved a pivotal moment in the match.

The Brazilian, who had showed the importance of hanging in as Jabeur rattled through service games, eventually took a fourth set point to send the match into a decider. Galvanised, the left-hander's heavy forehand returns caused more problems for Jabeur and, able to hear the support of singing Brazilian fans, surged ahead. Jabeur, now becoming increasingly demoralised, spanked a forehand long on the second match point, leaving Haddad Maia looking flummoxed at what she had just achieved.

Schedule of National Women's Basketball C'ship announced

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF) on Wednesday officially announced the schedule of National Women's Basketball Championship being participated by top 12 teams from around the country.

According to the schedule, the National Women's Basketball Championship will start from June 13th at Siddique Memon Sports Complex, Karachi.

Associated Secretary Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF) Ouj-e-Zahoor said that all arrangements have been completed for the successful five-day championship under the supervision of Karachi Basketball Association (KBBA) President Ghulam Muhammad Khan as KBBA is hosting the national championship where top 12 teams taking part in the event have been divided into four pools.

He said that Pakistan Basketball Federation also

thankful to Commissioner Karachi Muhammad Iqbal Memon for giving full support and cooperation for holding such a high-profile national women's basketball championship in Karachi.

Ouj said that Pool "A" comprises defending champion Pakistan Wapda, Karachi Blue, Hazara while Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Quetta are included in Pool "B". Pool "C" comprises Karachi Green, Multan, Peshawar while Lahore, Hyderabad, Karachi Yellow includes Pool "D".

The Secretary PBBF said that eight matches will be played on the first day while four matches will be held on the second of the pool round in the championship. The opening match of the championship starting from June 13th will be played between the teams of Karachi Blue and Hazara, while Rawalpindi and Quetta, Multan and Peshawar, Hyderabad and

Karachi Yellow, defending champion Wapda and Hazara, Islamabad and Quetta, Karachi Green and Peshawar, Lahore and Karachi Yellow will compete on the first day.

The quarter-final and semi-final round of the championship will be played on June 15th and 16th while the final will be played on June 17th.

Schedule: June 13 (Day-1): Karachi Blue vs Hazara; Rawalpindi vs Quetta; Multan vs Peshawar; Hyderabad vs Karachi Yellow; Wapda vs Karachi Green vs Peshawar; Lahore vs Karachi Yellow.

June 14 (Day-2): Wapda vs Karachi Blue; Islamabad vs Rawalpindi; Karachi Green vs Multan; Lahore vs Hyderabad.

June 15 (Day-3): Quarter Finals

June 16 (Day-4): Semi Finals

June 17 (Day-5): Final.

Sri Lanka thrash Afghanistan by nine wickets for 2-1 ODI series win

H A M B A N T O T A (AFP/APP): Easy half-centuries from Sri Lanka openers Dimuth Karunaratne and Pathum Nissanka made short work of Afghanistan on Wednesday in a nine-wicket drubbing that clinched a 2-1 ODI series win for the hosts.

Sri Lanka strode to 120 with 34 overs to spare in Hambantota, striding past the 117 set by the tourists after a fast-bowling attack led by Dushmantha Chameera that demolished the hapless Afghan top order. Nissanka did not waste time when the chase

began, racing to his seventh ODI half-century in 32 balls with eight fours and two sixes.

He left on 51 after being trapped leg before wicket by Gulbadin Naib to end an 84-run stand for the opening wicket. Fellow opener Karunaratne, featuring in his first ODI series in more than two years, made 56 not out to ensure that Sri Lanka reached the target without another wicket falling.

His 56 came off 45 balls with seven boundaries, making his eighth half-ton in the format.

Fast-bowling spearhead Chameera established Sri Lanka's dominance early with two fiery spells at the crease that left the tourists unable to post a decent partnership.

Chameera, playing his first series after ankle surgery that sidelined him for seven months, earned man of the match honours with his 4-63.

Leg-spinner Wanindu Hasaranga polished off the Afghan tail with 3-7 while quick Lahiru Kumara claimed two wickets, leaving the tourists flailing on 116.

Govt likely to support 180 sports contingents in Asian Games

ISLAMABAD (INP): The federal government is likely to support 180 sports contingents and officials for the upcoming 19th edition of the Asian Games scheduled to be played in Hangzhou (China) this year in September.

Director General Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) Shoaib Khoso chaired the high-level meeting attended by Pakistan Olympic Association (POA) secretary Mohammad Khalid Mehmood, PSB Deputy Director General Muhammad Ibrar, Saeed Akhtar and representatives of different sports federations.

During the meeting suggestions from sports federations as well as Pakistan Olympic Association were taken to finalize the Pakistan contingent participation and preparation of 19th Asian Games to be played in Hangzhou (China) from

September 23 to October 8.

According to sources, due to financial difficulties, the Pakistan Sports Board is considering supporting Pakistan's contingent of around 180 players and officials in the Asian Games, while the participants of the meeting have suggested that the Pakistan Sports Board should fully support those sports in the Asian Games in which medals can be won.

In this regard, Director General of Pakistan Sports Board Shoaib Khoso said that PSB will consider the proposals of POA and sports federations regarding the Asian Games and we will try to provide all possible support to the federation that wins medals in the mega event.

He said that Pakistan Sports Board will also fully support the

talented players so that they can shine the name of the country in the Asian Games

"We are at initial stages of gathering information and making adjustments where these are required. Once we gather all information from participating federations, we will be in a better position to see how best we can accommodate different federations," Shoaib Khoso said.

On the other hand the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) Normalization Committee has not only failed to meet the accreditation deadline, but it has also communicated it had no plan to participate in the Asian Games owing to financial constraints. The decision means that the largest 26-member contingent of the football team will not participate in the Games.

India allows Pakistan football team's participation in SAFF Cup

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): A major hurdle in the Pakistan football team's participation in this month's South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) Cup was cleared on Wednesday when the All India Football Federation (AIFF) got clearance from the Indian government to host the Pakistan football team.

Reliable sources in both India and Pakistan football have confirmed to this correspondent that India's sports, interior, and foreign ministers have provided all required clearances for Pakistan's participation in the tournament.

The regional football tournament will be played in Bangalore from June 21 to July 4, and for the event, Pakistan will be in India from June 18 to July 5.

Sources told Geo News that AIFF has sent an email to the PFF providing them with all necessary documents along with the official invitation letter.

The documents are also forwarded to the Indian embassies in Islamabad and Mauritius for issuance of visas to Pakistan football team members.

A source in PFF confirmed that Pakistan is planning to apply for Indian visas from Mauritius as the team is flying there to participate in a four-nation tournament.

Sources also confirmed that while Pakistan's for-

eign office has issued clearance for the team to travel to Mauritius, a decision on the team's visit to India is yet to be made by the foreign office.

Football is not the only sport affected due to strained relations between Pakistan and India, since there is also uncertainty around Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) hosting cricket's Asia Cup this year.

It must be noted that the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has refused to send their team to Pakistan for the Asia Cup and is keen on ensuring that the event is held at a neutral venue.

However, the PCB is not keen on hosting the

event outside Pakistan since it would affect its efforts with regards to the return of international cricket in the country.

Although, Pakistan Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari urged that sports should be kept away from politics during his trip to Goa, last month, where he attended the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Council of Foreign Ministers' meeting.

"I believe we shouldn't hold sport hostage to politics or foreign policy — sports inherently should be kept away from politics. It would be very petty of India if it were to hold sport hostage to politics," Bilawal said at a press conference.

OGDCL empowers athletes for Special Olympics World Games to showcase talent on global stage

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) continues its commitment to inclusivity and support for unique talent by sponsoring 20 exceptional athletes to represent Pakistan in the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023.

This initiative, in collaboration with Special Olympics Pakistan, highlights OGDCL's dedication to social responsibility and provides a platform for these athletes to showcase their skills on a global stage.

At a heartwarming farewell event held at the OGDCL Head Office in Islamabad on Wednesday, Ahmed Hayat Lak, MD/CEO of OGDCL, delivered an inspiring speech to motivate the special athletes.

He emphasized the company's belief in the inherent abilities and potential of every individual, irrespective of their physical or intellectual challenges. OGDCL is committed to unlocking untapped potential and positively contributing to society. The company has continuously launched initiatives to explore and support young talent, contributing to



both the country and society.

Under its corporate social responsibility (CSR) program, the company has partnered with the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC) to provide quality skills to young students. The company also has a long-standing strategic partnership with IBA Karachi, making quality education accessible to underserved communities.

The Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023, scheduled to be held in Berlin, Germany, from 17th

June 2023, will witness the participation of extraordinary athletes from around the world.

OGDCL's sponsorship not only helps these athletes break barriers and pursue their dreams but also inspires millions worldwide with their determination and resilience.

The company's support for special athletes and exploration of young talent serves as an inspiration, encouraging other corporations to recognize and uplift the unique capabilities of individuals with special needs.



In brief

IRSA releases 165,600 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 165,600 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 173,100 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1426.13 feet and was 28.13 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 61,500 cusecs each. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1133.85 feet, which was 83.85 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded at 47,500 cusecs and 40,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 72,900, 82,000, 60,100 and 22,900 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 35,800 cusecs of water were released at Nowshera and 9,300 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

Police arrest 12 gamblers

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi district Police arrested 12 gamblers and recovered Rs 51,400 stake money, nine mobile phones and valuables from their possession, said a police spokesman here on Wednesday. He informed that Rattaamral police conducted a raid and arrested 12 gamblers namely Kamran, Niaz, Raz Muhammad, Bilal, Mustafa, Amjad, Imran, Fazal, Numan, Irfan, Saeed and Muhammad Tahir, who were allegedly involved in betting while playing cards. Police also recovered Rs 51,400 cash stake money, nine mobile phones and other items from the possession of the arrested accused. A case has been registered against the accused while further investigation is under process. Superintendent of Police, Rawal Faisal Saleem appreciated the police parties and said that gambling is the root cause of other evils and those involved in such crimes do not deserve any concession.

280 challan tickets issued

RAWALPINDI (APP): The City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi expressed concerns over the violation of the one-way rule and issued 280 challan tickets to the commuters here on Wednesday. According to the CTP spokesman, the CTP also impounded 25 vehicles in police stations due to the lack of documentation. Following the orders of Chief Traffic Officer Rawalpindi Taimoor Khan CTP issued 280 challan tickets while 25 were confiscated in the police station for lack of documents. Chief Traffic Officer Rawalpindi Taimoor Khan said that the purpose of city traffic police was not to issue challan but to provide better travel facilities to the citizens to make their lives safe.

Power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Wednesday issued a power suspension programme for Thursday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 09:00 AM to 14:00 PM Islamabad Circle, Wahidabad, Tramri, Anguri, NCP, Mangyal, Shadara, Shahwapur, Iqbal Street.

Ashrafi stands firm in defense of blasphemy law

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Ulema Council Chairman and Prime Minister's Special Representative on Interfaith Harmony and Middle East, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi Wednesday addressed concerns regarding the propagation of false information against the blasphemy law and Namooos-e-Risalat. In a conference held at the National Press Club, he emphasized that these laws had been instrumental in maintaining peace and tranquillity within the country.

During the 'Conference on Stability of Pakistan' organized by Jamiat Islamiya Pakistan, Ashrafi reaffirmed that the Ulema and Maskaykh (religious scholars) stood united in their defence of these sacred laws. He emphasized that the blasphemy law had never been misused in history and would continue to be protected at all costs in the future. Regarding the unfortunate incidents of violence on May 9, Ashrafi denounced the perpetrators as terrorists engaged in anti-state activities.

He urged that they must be brought to justice through military courts.

Expressing disappointment with the current judiciary system, Ashrafi highlighted the large number of pending cases that were not receiving adequate attention, particularly those affecting the underprivileged segments of society.

Ashrafi also drew attention to certain individuals with dual nationalities who were conspiring against Pakistan and calling for international sanctions based on alleged human rights violations.

He condemned the attacks on the residence of the core commander in Lahore, the Radio Pakistan building in Peshawar,

and the General Headquarters in Rawalpindi. He emphasized that such actions disrespected the sacrifices made by national heroes who laid down their lives for the country's security and sovereignty.

Furthermore, Ashrafi expressed his dismay at the torching of a mosque, located in the core commander's house during the May 9 unrest. He called upon the government and judiciary to expedite the trials of those responsible and ensure that they would face exemplary punishment, aiming to prevent the recurrence of such heinous acts in the future.

Ashrafi shared that the Pakistan Ulema Council would host a grand gathering at Al-Hamra Hall in Lahore on Sunday, June 11. This convention aimed to foster inter-faith harmony, address human rights concerns, and develop strategies to prevent the misuse of the blasphemy law in relation to the desecration of religion and Namooos-e-Risalat, he added. In solidarity with the national security institutions, Chief Allama Akbar Saqi and Secretary General Allama Sibtain Sherazi of Jamiat Islamiya Pakistan also spoke at the conference. The upcoming gathering organized by the Pakistan Ulema Council would hold great significance as it would bring together a thousand Ulema, Mashaykh, religious scholars, and representatives from various segments of society to address critical issues and promote harmony. The event would serve as a platform to reaffirm the commitment to protect the nation's honor, combat human rights violations, and ensure responsible use of the blasphemy law while safeguarding the sanctity of religion and Namooos-e-Risalat.

Parents, teachers urged to stay watchful of kids' online ventures

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Internet has revolutionized the way children explore and learn, but it has also exposed them to various risks associated with the digital world to address these issues, parents and teachers must be vigilant about their children's online activities, particularly excessive screen time that can lead to aggression, loneliness, and anxiety.

Everyone talks about the benefits of the internet but it's a fact that very few know of its dark side as well. Online risk is a global phenomenon however, from Pakistan's perspective we face additional challenges said Director P a k i s t a n T e l e c o m m u n i c a t i o n s Authority Muhammad Farooq in his article "Children@ Online Risk".

The matter is so sensitive in nature that even a small incident can trigger a

law and order situation and can cause real-world harm, he added.

Keeping in view the gravity of the matter, he said it is imperative to sensitize our social media users including youngsters, parents, teachers, and other key stakeholders not only to be well aware of its associated risks but should timely adopt proper measures to save our youngsters from further harm.

In order to have effective results, serious and collective efforts at all levels are indispensable he noted.

Youngsters are vulnerable in the online world but parents and guardians supervising them are not fully aware of online risks, community guidelines of Social Media platforms, and punishments mentioned in local laws (i.e. PECA, PPC, etc.).

Kids and students at this stage require proper coun-

selling by their parents, teachers from time to time along with the adoption of proven measures such as: avoiding giving them handheld devices and allowing them to use PCs placed in a common area visible to all, and replacing online gaming facilities with physical activities. He said parents must spare time for their children, be friendly and educate them about online risks and allow them to discuss their issues without judgment otherwise, they may confide in strangers/online predators.

He called upon educational institutions to raise awareness by organizing seminars/webinars, workshops, etc. In addition, using parental control software and built-in safety features of SM applications is effective in filtering inappropriate content/apps, limiting screen time, observing online activities, etc.

DC visits drug facilitation centre, inaugurates screening camp

RAWALPINDI (APP): Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi Hassan Waqar Cheema on Wednesday visited Wah General Hospital and inspected the facilities provided to drug addicts at the newly set up Potohar Rehab Centre.

He also inaugurated the screening camp set up by the District Health Authority at Industrial Estates Taxila. The DC directed the officials of the Drug centre to provide the best kind of facilities to the

drug addicts in the center.

Hassan said that counseling of drug patients must be ensured besides treatment. Meanwhile, inaugurating the health screening camp for stone-crushing workers, he said that free-of-cost diabetes, blood pressure, TB, hepatitis B, and C, HIV, and respiratory diseases tests are available at the screening camp.

Hassan said that early treatment is possible with a timely diagnosis of the disease and added that "If

the disease is diagnosed after the screening, free medicines will be provided for treatment." Furthermore, he directed the officials of the town municipal administration Taxila to plant trees on both sides of the road. He directed the Assistant Commissioner Taxila to cover all manholes on the footpaths on the sides of the roads and ensure the cleanliness of drains and nullahs to avoid rainwater accumulation.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Secretary Health Dr. Ifikhar Shallwani chaired a meeting of officers.

CDA takes steps for fulfilling the religious needs of minorities

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has taken significant steps in fulfilling the religious needs of minority communities here.

The CDA has allocated two cremation grounds, measuring 0.49 acres and 0.50 acres, for the Hindu and Buddhist communities respectively in Sector H-9.

Moreover, graveyards have been provided for Christians (9.01 acres), Bhais (1.70 acres), and Qadianis (3.424 acres) in Sector H-9 and Sector H-8.

This move aims to ensure that all communities have access to appropriate facilities for their burial rites. CDA has also addressed the issue of sewage treatment and water recycling, highlighting its commitment to environmental sustainability.

ANF recovers over 519 kg drugs; arrests 5

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in six operations conducted in different areas of the country, managed to recover over 519 kg of drugs and arrested five accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday.

He informed that in a raid conducted near Yaro Railway Crossing in Pishin, 400 kg charras was recovered from a truck. ANF also arrested three accused residents of Quetta who were trying to smuggle drugs from Balochistan to Sindh. On the plantation of the arrested accused, another raid was conducted at a flat on Mir Ahmed Road in Quetta and 40 kg charras were seized. Another accused resident of Quetta was netted from the flat. In a raid near Pak-Afghan Border in Chaman, 2290 grams of suspected material was recovered from the possession of an accused resident of Chaman who was trying to go to Afghanistan.

In other raids conducted in Chaman, Panjgur and Nokundi areas, 68 litres of hydrochloric acid, 17 kg of charras and 60 kg of opium were recovered which were stored in deserted areas to smuggle abroad. Separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process.

BISP achieves several milestones during FY 2022-23

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) has achieved several milestones during the Fiscal Year 2022-23 to provide relief to those living below the poverty line through increasing its budgetary allocations and expanding the scope of different schemes including Benazir Kafalat, Benazir Nashonuma and Benazir Undergraduate.

According to the performance report of BISP from FY April 2022-April 2023, the BISP budget was increased from Rs. 235 billion to Rs 400 billion during the current Fiscal Year 2022-23, registering a 70 per cent increase.

The number of Benazir Kafalat program beneficiaries has increased from 7.6 million to nine million during this year. While the

amount of Kafalat stipend has been increased from Rs 7000 per quarter to Rs. 8750 per quarter, registering a 25 per cent increase.

The present government has also included Transgender persons in the program without the conditions of poverty score.

Under the Benazir Taleemi Wazaif program which aims at cash transferring to incentivize enrolment of children in schools,

the number of enrolled children has been increased from 2.6 million to 7.1 million. The Benazir Nashonuma Program has been expanded from 15 pilot districts to 149 districts across the country while increasing the number of Facilitation Centers up to 487 during the period.

Benazir Nashonuma is an initiative of cash transfer to prevent stunting and mal-

nutrition among children. Under this initiative, 0.52 million beneficiaries have been enrolled. The number of Benazir Scholarships for Undergraduates has been increased from 82,000 to 92,003 during the period. To mitigate the sufferings of flood-affected people, a total of Rs. 70 billion has been disbursed among 2.8 million beneficiaries (Rs. 25,000 per family).

Under the Fuel Subsidy initiative, Rs. 16.9 billion has been disbursed among 8.6 million families through giving Rs 2000 per family. The program has also achieved the goal of transition from static to dynamic National Socio Economic Registry (NSER) through establishing 600 registration centers. The NSER aims at real-time update of changes in socio-economic status of households.

Govt to unveil Rs1100bln historic budget, pledging relief to masses: Muqam

ISLAMABAD (APP): Adviser to Prime Minister on Political and Public Affairs, National Heritage and Culture Division Amir Muqam on Wednesday said the federal government will unveil an Rs1100 billion historic budget aimed at providing maximum relief to the masses.

"We will leave no stone unturned for charting the country on the path of development and steer the country out of economic crises," he said while addressing the convention of Muslim League (N) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa flanked by Ahsan Iqbal, Murtaza Javed Abbasi, and other prominent political figures.

The PM Advisor said that had the incumbent, not ouster the previous prime minister out of office through a vote of no

confidence, he would have ruined the economy completely due to his incompetence. "The ouster of the PTI chief from power was a good omen for the country," he added. Recalling the riots of May 9, he said that the nefarious designs of the PTI chief and his company had been badly exposed before the nation and the public had no sympathy for him and his party.

He said that the looming threat of bankruptcy had been averted despite the conspiracies of the Jewish lobby, whose PTI chief was also a part.

PML-N is a political party of the common man and did not feel insecure facing the public, therefore, it [party] was ready to participate in elections any time, said Muqam.

NA body proposes maximum budgetary allocations for Climate Change Division: Shahida

ISLAMABAD (APP): Parliamentary Secretary for Industries and Production, Shahida Rehmani on Wednesday said the National Assembly Standing Committee on Climate Change had proposed the federal government to make maximum budgetary allocations to the Climate Change Division in the upcoming budget due to the country's growing vulnerability owing to environmental degradation.

She was addressing the consultative workshop in connection with World Environment Day celebrations titled "Pakistan's Climate Budget 2022-2023" organized by the Center for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI).

MNA Rehmani said that the climate budget of the country demanded a holistic approach that endeavoured for a nexus of government, policy makers, academia, civil society and local communities for a unified efforts towards addressing environmental degradation and its associated risks. She said there was lack of intention and individual will among the stakeholders to act against climate change and threats of natural calamities derived by the human activities.

The Parliamentary Secretary underlined that in order to curb the menace of plastic pollution and ecosystem degradation it was imperative for the society as a whole to return to the abandoned practices of eco-friendly solutions like reusable cotton bags and other material. She noted that the country after an all-inclusive process had approved its Electric Vehicles Policy but it had no mechanism to manage e-waste to be produced due to the lithium batteries being used in the charge-based vehicles.

In his welcome remarks, Executive

Director, CPDI, Mukhtar Ahmed Ali informed about the participants about the Institute and its latest initiative to start dialogue on environment and climate change which was a new concept for it due to its background of governance, democracy, the right to information and economic issues. He demanded that the risk of climate change demanded an extensive effort which was not limited to the government but rather a multi-stakeholder stride to address overlapping issues caused after anthropogenic activities spearheading global warming.

Mukhtar Ali added that there was need of global and local level leadership for taking lead role in reducing carbon-intensive consumption footprint.

A thought-provoking poem titled "Oh My Children Save Me" in which the planet earth personified as a mother calling her children to protect her from growing environmental degradation putting her existence into perils. Programme Lead-Climate Action, CPDI, Saima Williams briefed the participants on the Institute's motivation and realization behind opting environment as a special topic for its study and discussions. The session proceeded further with the commencement of the first panel discussion moderated by Technical Adviser for Parliamentary Committees on Climate Change Waqar Ul Shams.

Development Expert and former Executive Director CPDI, Amir Ejaz said the climate change division and environment had never been the cup of tea of any government in the budget as for the past five years from 2019 to 2023 on average less than one percent of the total development budget was earmarked for the environment.



ISLAMABAD: Secretary for National Heritage and Culture of Federal Government of Pakistan Farina Mazhar viewing photos during an exhibition titled "Bulgarian Sites on the UNESCO World Heritage List".

Hundreds took exam

KABUL (Agencies): At least 5,000 people took a voluntary exam to join the Ministry of National Defense's "Special Forces" said the Ministry. The exam was held in a completely transparent manner with the presence of Mawlawi Mohammad Ismail "Mustafa", the head of "Special Unit" forces and Officials, the Ministry said in a statement. The qualified one will be recruited after passing the exam successfully into the ranks of "special unit" forces of the Ministry of National Defense.

Zil-Qadah 18, 1444 — Thursday, June 08, 2023

9 children referred to Kabul

KABUL (Agencies): The Afghan Red Crescent Society referred nine children with heart defects to hospitals in the Afghan Capital City, Kabul for treatment. These nine children, who are suffering from heart infections referred for treatment to hospitals here in Afghan Capital City, Kabul, said ARCS in a statement. This must be noted that in the past 10 months, 1,212 children have been referred to various hospitals in Kabul to find treatment.

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

MoU signed for simplification of administrative processes in Agriculture Ministry



KABUL (Agencies): A memorandum of understanding (MoU) on simplifying administrative processes was on Wednesday signed between the Department of Administrative Reform and Civil Services of the General Directorate of Administrative Affairs and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock.

Officials from the Department of Administrative Reforms and Civil

Services said at the signing ceremony that the MoU aims to simplify complicated processes and eliminate corruption.

According to the officials, they managed to simplify more than 360 processes last year.

Abdulhanan Arifullah, head of the Administrative Reforms and Civil Services Department, said: "From 1401 to 1402 solar years, 304 processes have been

simplified... I assure the esteemed elders that these employees are honest."

The Minister of Agriculture and Livestock said that by signing the MoU, they seek to avoid wasting time in the offices and address people's problems quickly.

"It is the responsibility of the relevant institutions and authorities to solve problems between the institutions and the people, and

bring administrative reforms. If there are no administrative reforms, there will surely be administrative corruption," Attaullah Omari, Minister of Agriculture and Livestock, said.

"Certainly, this is a good message for the institutions, the government and the people, and it makes the people more hopeful," Noorulhaq Anwar, General Director of Administrative Affairs, said.

Officials in the General Directorate of Administrative Affairs say that it cooperates with all institutions in the areas of capacity building, counseling, handling complaints and taking electronic exams.

Previously, for the purpose of simplifying administrative processes and ensuring transparency in the offices, MoUs were signed between the Department of Administrative Reform and Civil Services of the General Directorate of Administrative Affairs, the Ministry of Martyrs and the Disabled and Kabul Municipality.

IEA pledges to serve people, says Hanaif

KABUL (Agencies): The Deputy Prime Minister, for administrative affairs, during a meeting with the chief police commander of Ghanzi, said that the Islamic Emirate is pledged to serve the people and the Mujahidin.

Speaking at the meeting Makhdoom Alam reminded of the sacrifices of the people of Ghanzi in the last twenty years against foreign invaders and said that the people and Mujahideen of this province deserve more attention in the sectors of job creation, education, and health.

For his part, Deputy PM Hanaifi, welcoming the chief Police Commander of Ghanzi and the Mujahideen of that province, praised the sacrifices of the people of Ghanzi in the time of Jihad and the fight against the invaders.

The people of Afghanistan fulfilled their religious and patriotic duty during the Jihad, and now it is the turn of the Islamic Emirate to fulfill its responsibility in serving the people and the Mujahidin, adding that the Islamic Emirate will address the problems and needs of all to the best of its ability.

Commerce Minister visits Spin Boldak Port

KABUL (Agencies): The Acting Industry and Commerce Minister, visiting Spin Boldak port, said: The Islamic Emirate is pledged addressing the problems of businessmen in the country.

Acting Industry and Commerce Minister, Nooruddin Azizi, met with a number of businessmen in Spin Boldak port during his visit to Kandahar, said the Ministry in a statement.

The Kandahar businessmen shared their problems and proposals with Commerce Minister Azizi and asked for the support of the Ministry, statement said. Meanwhile, Minister reminded that the Islamic Emirate is committed to addressing the problems of the country's businessmen and asked them to apply business licenses to ensure the transparency of the supply, to prevent corruption. Spin Boldak one biggest commercial port in the southern province of the country, the port linked by a highway with the city of Kandahar to the north, and with Chaman and Quetta in Pakistan to the officials have visited the facilities of Spin Boldak port and the export route of that port.

Ministry welcomed IDB assist for Afghanistan

KABUL (Agencies): The Ministry of Finance has welcomed the assistance of the Islamic Development Bank for people of Afghanistan.

The Islamic Development Bank, through the humanitarian aid fund for Afghanistan worth 8.1 million US dollars, signed cooperation agreements with six international organizations in the sectors of food security, providing potable water, health, and agriculture in different provinces of the country.

The Ministry of Finance welcomes this action of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Islamic Development Bank, the King Salman Charity Foundation, the Saudi Monetary Fund, and the member countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Ministry has appreciated their humanitarian and generous assistance with the people of Afghanistan, in a statement.

Meanwhile, the Ministry has asked the organizations to work in the sector of humanitarian aid to plan their projects in coordination with the Ministry of Finance, keeping in mind the realities and priorities of the society, so that the problems in Afghanistan could be fully addressed.

Environmental projects: Foreign organizations urged to resume work

KABUL (Khaama Press): The National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) of Afghanistan said that it had urged international organizations to resume work on 32 small and large environmental projects.

"The international community should not politicize environmental issues. Foreign institutions should resume work on the projects in the field of an environmental improvement costing nearly 824 million US dollars, which have now been suspended," Hafiz

Aziz Rahman, the agency director, said in a statement. The National Environmental Protection Agency observed that several concerns, including deforestation, drought, flooding, and climate change, have contributed to environmental problems in the country.

"Last year, the National Environmental Protection Agency, in collaboration with the offices of various ministries, was able to reduce air pollution in Kabul and other areas," Aziz Rahman noted.

The environmental protection agency also called on the people and companies to fight against plastic pollution and reduce their production and use.

The report shows more than 430 million tons of plastic are produced worldwide yearly.

Decades of war and conflict have been one of the factors that created several environmental issues in Afghanistan. These issues include water pollution, air and weather pollution in the country.

Turkmenistan ready to assist IEA



KABUL (Agencies): The Turkmenistan ambassador in Kabul, in a meeting with Deputy Minister for Counter-Narcotics said, his country is ready to assist the Counter-narcotics department in the treatment of drug addicts and other issues."

Lieutenant Colonel Abd-

ulhaq Akhund, Deputy Minister of Counter-Narcotics, met with the Ambassador of Turkmenistan in Kabul, the Interior Ministry said in a statement.

Deputy Minister of Interior for Counter-Narcotics, Abdul Haq Akhund, shared details about plans with the

Turkmen ambassador to Afghanistan, the statement added.

Turkmenistan ambassador, Hoja Ovezov hailed the efforts of counter-narcotics of Afghanistan said: Turkmenistan is ready to assist with the treatment of drug addicts and other issues.

Shopkeepers flouting municipality pricelists

QALA-I-NAW (Pajhwok): Residents of western Badghis province say the municipality has distributed pricelists, but its officials are not monitoring their implementation and shopkeepers are overcharging customers.

The municipality of Qala-i-Naw has recently prepared and distributed pricelists of essential food commodities to control price-hike, but residents complain the pricelists are not being implemented.

Mirwais, a resident, told Pajhwok Afghan News municipality officials were never seen monitoring the pricelists.

He claimed to have witnessed several times shop-

keepers selling commodities at higher rates than the prices fixed by the municipality.

Mirwais added: "Qala-i-Naw municipality officials have distributed pricelists, but they do not monitor their implementation. The municipality has fixed meat price 350 afs a kilogram, but butchers sell it for 400 afs".

Burhanuddin Fayezi, a civil society activist, said, the prices of most of food and non-food times had skyrocketed and people could not afford them.

Fayezi said municipality supervisors should keep an eye on shopkeeper not to flout the prices fixed by the authority.

However, acting Qala-i-

Naw mayor Mohammad TahirGhafari denied they did not monitor prices, but admitted some possible violations in parts of the city.

He said after the price lists were issued, they were always monitored by officials and the violators were dealt with legally.

He asked people to cooperate with the municipality in better implementation of the pricelists. "People must report us any violation of the pricelists so that municipality officials take action in accordance with the law."

The prices of most food and non-food items have increased in the country, especially in Badghis province.

Foundation stone of new minaret laid at Pul-e-Sorkh Square



KABUL (Agencies): The foundation stone for a new minaret was laid at the Pul-e-Sorkh Square in Kabul city, in line with Kabul Municipality's ongoing campaign to beautify the capital.

The minaret, which is being funded by Afghanistan's leading telecommu-

nications company, AWCC, will be built to mimic a historical structure.

Welcoming the support of AWCC, the municipality's head of cultural affairs Wali Gul Jawad said: "We sincerely thank the Afghan Wireless Communication Company for cooperating

with Kabul Municipality in urban services, they [AWCC] think of a common city, and Inshallah they go shoulder to shoulder with us in urban services."

This 13-meter-high minaret will replicate the historical Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi's minaret in

Ghazni province.

AWCC officials meanwhile said they will continue their support for the purpose of construction with government institutions.

"This project is not our first and last project and you will see better projects, we would like to thank the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Kabul Municipality, for their serious cooperation with us in this field and for agreeing to our request," said Mohammad Suleiman Khorram, AWCC's director for the central zone.

During the last two decades, AWCC has cooperated with government institutions in various sectors and implemented many projects throughout the country. The company is also rolling out telecommunication and internet services to large swathes of the country, specifically in remote districts, that were previously under-served.

Doctors warn pregnant women against self-medication

KABUL (Pajhwok): Health experts consider arbitrary use of medicines by pregnant women harmful and say taking un-prescribed drugs can cause abortion, premature birth and malformations in babies.

According to doctors, the pregnancy period is nine months, the first trimester (three months) is sensitive and important due to the formation of the skeleton of the fetus, and the mother must be under special care.

Dr. Malalai Rahim Faizi, head of Malalai Maternity Hospital, told Pajhwok Afghan News that in the first three months the fetus develops distinct facial features, limbs, organs, bones and muscles so the mother should have a good diet.

She suggested that expecting mothers should avoid use of drugs arbitrar-

ily and maintain their mental and emotional peace during pregnancy.

In response to a question about problems caused by arbitrary use of medicines during pregnancy, she replied: "During pregnancy, mothers who have gout, headache, pain in stomach, or any other problem, take drugs arbitrarily and use them, they are wronging themselves and it has a bad impact on their fetus."

According to her, self-medication is dangerous for everyone, especially pregnant women, which can cause respiratory and heart diseases in mothers and malformations in newborns. She urged mothers to never use drugs arbitrarily during pregnancy without the prescription of a gynecologist and obstetrician.

At the same time, Dr. Nadia Roin, in charge in

Nazo Ana hospital located in 10th police district of Shahr-i-Naw said, the pregnancy period, which lasts for nine months, is divided into three stages.

She emphasized: "A woman should visit her doctor at least once or twice a month during pregnancy to avoid self-medication that causes premature births, malformations (cleft palate and cleft lip), and bleeding to prevent the loss of child."

He added that pregnant woman should take medicines according to doctor's advice and perform laboratory tests. Because some microbes cause abortion and to prevent abortion and blood deficiency, mothers should use folic acid medicine according to the doctor's advice.

Meanwhile, Dr. Sunita Bahram, obstetrician-gyne-

cologist at "Shafajo Health Center" in Wazir Akbar Khan area of Kabul, said that pregnancy period lasted nine months and was divided into three stages that included 37 weeks.

Calling this period as important, she advised mothers to refrain from arbitrarily taking drugs, do regular walk during pregnancy, and in addition to drinking fluids, they should also consume enough fruits, vegetables and nutritious foods.

She added: "During pregnancy, mothers can suffer from back pain, abdominal pain and pollen pain and drinking 12 glasses of water a day solves these problems to a large extent."

She confirmed that patients had come to their hospital facing problems of abortion and bleeding due to arbitrary use of drugs.

Students says they lack modern tools at institute



KHOST (TOLONews): Students of the Khost Mechanical Institute said that the technical tools of Sardar Mohammad Dawood Khan's time are still used in this institute.

These students called on relevant officials to provide modern machines for them. "We need those machines that are used today," said Shakerullah, a student. "We made a robot that remains incomplete, and we call on the government and businesspeople to help

us," said Abdullah Sargand, a student.

According to the students, these devices are unusable in the current situation, and they cannot find work in workshops after their graduation.

Meanwhile, local officials in Khost acknowledge these challenges but spoke of efforts to equip professional educational institutions with advanced equipment.

"The machines that we have are very old and we

asked the government to provide us with modern technology and new tools for workshops," said Sayf Rahman Mazlom, head of the Khost Mechanical Institute.

"We have good programs for this institute, if we provide new tools," said Shabeer Ahmad Usmani, head of culture and information in Khost.

The mechanical institute of Khost was established in 1337 and currently has near to one thousand students.



MOSCOW: Chairman Senate, Sadiq Sanjrani addressing the plenary session of Federation Council of the Russian Federation.

PHC orders release of Ali Muhammad Khan

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice SM Attique Shah declared arrest of former Federal State's Minister for Parliamentary Affair Ali Muhammad Khan under Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) null and void while ordered his release, on Wednesday.

During hearing Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Amir Javeed and counsel for petitioner Ali Zaman Advocate appeared before the court. The counsel for petitioner argued that Ali Muhammad Khan was arrested by Islamabad while following his release he was hand over to Pakhtunkhwa police, who has kept behind bar under section 3 MPO.

However, Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Amir Javeed argued that Ali Muhammad Khan has arrested under 3MPO while added that administration has jurisdiction to put behind bar any-

one who may distribute law and order situation.

In the meantime, Justice Anwar remarked that how can such serious allegation vanishing after one press conference because who hold press conference leave to free while whom didn't held press talk then facing re-arrest.

PHC divisional bench comprised of Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice SM Attique Shah ordered release of former Federal State's Minister for Parliamentary Affairs along with other activists while directed to submit surety as well as oath with competent officer in the concerned district for avoiding participation in activities which may cause disturbance in law and order situation.

Meanwhile, another PHC's divisional comprised of Justice Muhammad Naeem Anwar and Justice Shahid Khan has suspended arrest warrant of PTI's workers issued by Deputy Commissioner (DC) Bajaur under 3MPO. The counsel

Muhammad Adil Khan Advocate argued that DC Bajaur has issued arrest's warrant of PTI's worker including Muhammad Mehran and others after protests held against arrest of former Prime Minister Imran Khan in corruption charges by National Accountability Bureau (NAB).

The counsel added that DC Bajaur has issued arrest's warrant under 3MPO of persons who were neither present in the premises nor involved in the protests held in Bajaur district. He further argued that district administration is harassing PTI's workers and may admin put them behind bars under MPO regulations.

The counsel requested for provision of record regarding cases registered against petitioners and argued to declare arrest's warrant under MPO issued by DC Bajaur null and void. PHC has declared arrest's warrant of Muhammad Mehran and others after conclusion of arguments null and void.

ECC okays Rs 14,802.32m for Ministry of Housing and Works F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) Wednesday approved the Technical Supplementary grant of Rs. Rs. 14, 802.32 million in favor of Ministry of Housing and Works for development schemes of CFY 2022-23.

Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar chaired the meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet, said a press release. Federal Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar, Federal Minister for Power Khuram Dastagir Khan, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi MNA/Ex-PM, Minister of State for Finance and Revenue Dr. Aisha Ghous Pasha, Minister of State for Petroleum Musadik Masood Malik, SAPM on Finance Tariq Bajwa, SAPM on Revenue Tariq Mehmood Pasha, Federal Secretaries and other senior officers attended the meeting.

The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) approved technical supplementary grant of Rs. 1000 million as in favour of Ministry of Housing and Works for development schemes in Punjab Province under (SAP) during CFY 2022-23. The ECC also approved Rs. 1209.450 Million in favor of Ministry of Housing and Works for the execution of 15 development schemes of CFY 2022-23.

The ECC approved Rs. 5 billion in favor of Cabinet Division for Sustainable Development Goals Achievement Programme (SAP) during CFY 2022-23. The committee approved Rs. 1773 million in favour of Ministry of Energy (Power Division) for the execution of development schemes of Punjab and KP provinces under PSDP during CFY 2022-23.

The ECC also considered and approved Rs. 3.96 billion in favour of Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training under WB Project Higher Education Development in Pakistan for 2022-23. The committee approved Rs. 130 million in favour of Ministry of Narcotics Control as TSG for CFY 2022-23. The ECC approved Rs. 8 million in favour of Ministry of Narcotics Control for Operational Cost of Anti-Narcotics Force for the CFY 2022-23. The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) approved Rs. 6 million in favor of Revenue Division to meet the shortfall of Budget grant of CFY 2022-23.

SC clubs ECP's election case, petitions challenging judgment review law

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Supreme Court (SC) on Wednesday adjourned the hearing of the Punjab election review case and the Supreme Court Review of Judgments and Orders Act 2023 — which mandates the establishment of a larger bench for reviewing a suo motu judgment — till June 13.

A three-member bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial had clubbed the Punjab election review case and the Review Order Act case earlier in the day. The bench headed by the top judge also includes Justice Ijaz ul Ahsan and Justice Munib Akhtar.

During the hearing, CJP Bandial remarked that the court will try to make a decision on the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) plea for reviewing the verdict on the Punjab elections at the earliest. "We have received some petitions. The matter of the Review Order Act has to be seen at this stage," CJP Bandial said.

He said that the court would issue notice to the AGP, after which the bench will hear the ECP's review plea under the Review Order Act. The CJP then asked PTI lawyer Barrister Ali Zafar to give his views on the Review Order Act. At this, Barrister Zafar maintained that the SC Review Order Act was against the Constitution.

"The same matter was raised in the SC Practice and Procedure Act, on which the Supreme Court has given a stay," the lawyer contended, claiming that the same stay applied to the Review Order Act as well. He contended that the SC had the authority to hear the ECP's review plea as the Review Order Act did not yet apply to the court due to the stay. The court can hold back the decision on the Punjab election review case till the decision on Review Order Act, the barrister said while urging the court to decide on the election case soon.

At this, Justice Akhtar remarked that the ECP's lawyer would have to give arguments before a larger bench

if the Review Order Act is enforced. "How could the court hear the Punjab election case if the SC Review Order Act has been enforced," he asked. He also asked the lawyer to tell him how did the Review Order Act not apply to the SC.

Meanwhile, CJP Bandial remarked that everyone wanted a decision on the Punjab election review case. "There are certain limits for [filing] an appeal," the top judge remarked, adding that the ECP's lawyer had contended that they had extensive authorities. "The matter of elections is a national issue. Implementation on the May 14 orders is not possible but this has become a historical verdict," he added.

Meanwhile, petitioners Zaman Khan Wardag and Ghulam Mohiuddin adopted the arguments of Barrister Zafar. The court remarked that the petitioners maintained in the pleas that the act was illegal and a constitutional amendment was required to extend the jurisdiction of reviews. A stay had already been issued on the implementation of the SC Practice and Procedure Act by the larger bench, the court stated while ordering to fix both cases for hearing together on June 13.

CJP Bandial remarked that the SC would conduct hearing on the cases daily after the said date. The court, while issuing notices to AGP, President Arif Alvi, the federal government, Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, ordered fixing the hearing of both cases together on June 13. The petitioner Advocate Riaz Hanif Rahi in his plea against the Review of Judgments and Orders Act 2023 requested the court to "set aside [the Act] as unconstitutional being [Ultra Vires, void ab-initio and issued without jurisdiction [and] of no legal effect."

The petition filed by Rahi made the government a respondent through the Ministry of Law and Justice Secretary and Senate Secretariat Secretary Muhammad Qasim Samad

Khan. Citing Articles 188 and 191 of the Constitution, it contended that the law is "unconstitutional" and has been passed by the government for "its personal advantage to avoid the regime of present CJP without taking into consideration the public interest".

Rahi further submitted that the respondents had no jurisdiction to go beyond their constitutional limits under "extraneous considerations and ulterior motives". The law came into effect on May 5, 2023. Referring to the Act, Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar alluded to Article 188 of the Constitution and said it [the law] empowers the SC subject to the provision of any Act of Majlis-e-Shoora and any rules made by the top court, to review any judgment pronounced or any order made by it. He said the latest legislation is procedural in nature.

The law minister said the bill was formulated under the spirit of Article 188 of the Constitution. In the previous hearing of the ECP's petition challenging the SC's right to announce a date for holding elections in the province of Punjab, CJP Bandial had indefinitely adjourned the hearing after Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Usman Awan cited the review of judgment order. The brief hearing came to an end after the AGP had informed the bench that the review order had come into effect.

The electoral watchdog in its petition had earlier submitted that, under the Constitution, the power of the announcement of the date for the general elections is vested in bodies other than any judicial institution; therefore, the impugned order under review had "breached the salient principle of the trichotomy of powers and thus is not sustainable". Moreover, the ECP had submitted that in the presence of an elected government in Punjab, the general elections to the National Assembly cannot be conducted fairly.

Sanjrani stresses enhancing Pak-Russia ties, bilateral coop

MOSCOW (Agencies): Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani while addressing the members of the Russian Federation Council during the Plenary Session on Wednesday emphasized the need for enhancing historical ties and bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

According to a press release received here, the Chairman Senate while expressing his gratitude for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to the Pakistani delegation, acknowledged the pride and honor he felt to be present in the culturally diverse nation of Russia. He commended the symbolism of the Russian flag's colors and the inspiring national anthem, which reflect freedom, justice, valour, patriotism, power, and national integration.

Highlighting the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Russia, he recognized the strong bond shared by the peoples of both nations over an extended period. He expressed confidence that the evolving global landscape would further strengthen bilateral ties and open new avenues of cooperation. The Pakistani business community has shown significant interest in expanding trade relations with Russia.

Sadiq Sanjrani paid tribute to the heroic struggle of the Soviet Union during World War II and the role played by the people of the Indus Valley, now Pakistan, in the defeat of Nazism. He regarded Leningrad as a symbol of patriotism and courage and

paid special homage to the Red Army and the Russian people. The chairman also mentioned the prestigious Lenin Peace Prize awarded to Faiz Ahmed Faiz, a renowned Pakistani poet, dedicating his work to the brave soldiers who sacrificed their lives in the historic Battle of Leningrad.

Acknowledging the significance of parliamentary friendship groups in both Pakistan and Russia, he appreciated the personal role of Madam Valentina Matviyenko, the Speaker of the Council of the Russian Federation, in revitalizing Pakistan-Russia relations. He emphasized the vital role of parliamentary cooperation and effective diplomacy in strengthening bilateral relations and resolving regional and international issues.

Chairman Senate emphasized the proactive role of the Pakistani parliament in finding innovative solutions to global challenges such as economic recession, pandemics, climate change, Islamophobia, extremism, and transnational terrorism. He called for regular, open, and constructive dialogue between parliaments worldwide to foster a deeper understanding among nations.

Stressing the importance of Pakistan-Russia relations, he highlighted the infinite opportunities that lie ahead. He expressed Pakistan's commitment to resolving disputes diplomatically and urged the global community to work together for lasting peace and stability. The chairman underscored the positive momentum

in Pakistan-Russia relations and the mutual desire to expand cooperation in various fields, including trade, economy, security, defense, culture, education, and people-to-people contacts.

Sanjrani expressed gratitude for President Putin's support in developing Pakistan-Russia relations and acknowledged his mention of Pakistan in the context of trade connectivity. He highlighted the recent inauguration of a commercial shipping service between Pakistan and Russia, which signifies the potential for bilateral investment, economic growth, job creation, and technological advancement. The chairman regarded Russia's focus on Asia as an opportunity for further bilateral economic cooperation.

As staunch believers in multilateralism, he emphasized the shared world view between Pakistan and Russia, emphasizing the UN Charter and adherence to international law as the basis for contemporary international relations. He appreciated President Putin's stance against the desecration of holy personalities and burning of holy books, applauding Russia's commitment to an inclusive society that respects diversity and embraces its cultural and historical heritage, including its significant Muslim community. In conclusion, Chairman Senate called for a new era of collaboration, understanding, and shared prosperity between Pakistan and Russia.

Tareen's new party to be named 'Istehkam-e-Pakistan'

LAHORE (Agencies): Adviser to the Prime Minister on Sports and Tourism Awn Chaudhry said on Wednesday that Jahangir Tareen's new party would be called "Istehkam-e-Pakistan".

Chaudhry, who is a close ally of Tareen, confirmed that the former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) senior leader had finalised the name for his party.

It is expected that Tareen would unveil the name of his party in a press conference on Friday. Tareen, who has been disqualified for life from the Supreme Court and was in oblivion, has become active following the May 9

mayhem and the fallout from it.

On May 9, PTI Chairman Imran Khan was arrested from the premises of the Islamabad High Court. Following Khan's detention, his supporters took to the streets and attacked important military installations including the General Headquarters in Rawalpindi and the Lahore Corps Commander's House, commonly known as the Jinnah House. Multiple PTI leaders were arrested under Maintenance of Public Order laws and jailed which led to a mass exodus of PTI leaders.

In a bid to take advantage of the mass

exodus, it was reported that Tareen is likely to announce his new party, mostly comprising the former ruling party's defectors. The development was first reported after a luncheon was hosted in honour of Tareen and his aides at the residence of former PTI leader Aleem Khan.

Tareen was the secretary general of the PTI before he was ousted from politics in 2017 after the Supreme Court disqualified him for being "dishonest" on a petition filed by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Hanif Abbasi.

Imran stands exposed for treachery & enmity towards Pakistan: Marriyum

(Continued from Page 1)

ousted him from the power. However, the narrative eventually relegated to interim Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi. "Whenever the staff level agreement with the IMF was about to reach, this person resorted to arson and chaos," she said while recalling the time when his provincial governments' finance ministers wrote letters to the Fund for sabotaging the programme. Marriyum said now he was making a hue and cry over "human rights violations" but in fact those people who were being tried under the law were miscreants involved in attacks on sensitive installations.

On May 9, they burnt government property, set the building of Radio Pakistan on fire, attacked sensitive

buildings, which was no politics, she said, adding "if the economy is not getting stable today, it is this mission and mindset that is working against the country, which is responsible for it." This person, she said, did not want end to inflation and terrorism in the country. She said that in Karachi, a PTI activist Imran Mehboob was identified as the person instigating people to damage national property, but the PTI chief had called him Colonel Tanveer to mislead the people.

Marriyum said the PTI chief stooped too low that he claimed his party female workers were raped in police custody, but the latter themselves contradicted his claim. She said that PTI office bearers met dignitaries in the US to get signatures on an anti-Pakistan resolution. To a

question, the minister said the economy had been stabilized with the implementation of prudent policies in line with the vision of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

"Last year, we presented the best budget and despite the suspension of IMF programme, we provided incentives and relief to every strata of the society, including women, youth, farmers and artists," the minister remarked. She resolved that the government would again present the best budget this year. The minister said the economic experts fully knew that the economic stability required end of the political instability, unrest and violence.

She said the PTI chief would not rest until the country faced isolations and economic sanctions. He wanted all the friendly countries to stay away

from Pakistan so that the Kashmir cause could be compromised. "His unfinished agenda is yet to be finished and his mission to destroy the country is reflection of the mindset working against the country," she added. She recalled that the PTI chief used women and children as human shield to protect himself and save himself from his accountability in corruption cases.

Marriyum said May 9 tragedy reinforced the fact that he wanted blood and dead bodies on the roads of Pakistan for the achievement of his ulterior motives. She said the international organizations had rejected his claims of human rights violations in Pakistan as they fully knew his reality that he was a liar and pretended to be an innocent person. "His actions contradicted what he

said," the minister said while citing his assertions of being peaceful which negated the reality.

It was he on whose orders graves were dug in the Federal Capital, and important buildings and sensitive installations were attacked, she said, adding the country had never witnessed a person like the PTI chairman who asked his workers to pelt stones on the graves of martyrs and pictures. She ruled out negotiations with such people having a mindset to set the country on fire. The minister recalled the previous tenure of Nawaz Sharif government when the PTI leader was abusing the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz leaders. On the other hand, Nawaz Sharif was focused on projects which produced electricity for the country, provided road infrastructure to the nation, cre-

ated massive job opportunities for youth and curbed the inflation.

She said the PTI chief was on a mission to create unrest in the country by spreading chaos and anarchy. It was evident from actions and words of him who built narrative on cipher and instigated his workers for vandalism and arson.

He prioritizes his own interests over the country's interests, she added. "Whosever facilitated him in achieving his mission should be held accountable and dealt in accordance with the law," she said while responding to another query. "No consultation on caretaker prime minister so far," she said, adding it would held before the nation. "We do not believe in offering life-time extensions behind closed doors," she remarked.