

PM took notice
ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday took notice of the eruption of fire in an oil refinery in Ali Pur Chatta and directed for immediate and swift measures for the safeguard of public and the staff deputed there. The prime minister also ordered an inquiry into the incident, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

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PM denounces media campaign against Army Chief

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday vehemently condemned social media campaign about threats of an assassination attempt on Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir and expressed the resolve to crush every conspiracy against Pakistan and the state institutions.

The prime minister, in a press statement shared by PM Office Media Wing, said that on May 9 (Black Day) similar minds were involved in the conspiracy.

The prime minister directed the relevant authorities to take legal action against those involved in such media campaigns inside the country and abroad.

"It is a clear message to 9th May planners, facilitators and handlers that conspiracy against Pakistan and its institutions will be crushed", he added.

He further termed the vile, malevolent and malicious media campaigns a result of the planning of miscreants, adding the conspirators had again become active against the political and economic stability in the country.

The new media campaign was a part and parcel of that abhorrent campaign, which was launched against Shuhada, he maintained.

The prime minister observed that the media drive against armed forces and its chief did

PM pays tribute to Fatima Jinnah on her 56th death anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday paid tribute to Mad-e-Millat Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah on her 56th death anniversary.

The prime minister said that she was a benefactor of the nation and had been a source of courage for Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. "Despite her senility, she stood firm against dictatorship and played a historic role for the nation, democracy and the country," he added.

not fall within the domain of freedom of expression, but it was only a conspiracy, and it was a legal responsibility to eradicate such tendency with full strength.

He said the nation would foil such attempts in such a manner as it had frustrated the attempt on May 9 to stir violence and vandalism in the country.

The entire nation was standing behind its armed forces and its chief and resolved not to allow the disappointed and panicked elements to create new crises in the country.

Separately, on his

The prime minister said Fatima Jinnah also played an unprecedented role during Pakistan Movement and for the motherland and offered sacrifices.

He said that the personality of Fatima Jinnah was still a beacon of light for the young ladies and women of the country. The entire nation paid tribute to her contributions and would always stand indebted to her services, he added. The prime minister prayed for the high ranks of the departed soul and appealed to the nation to pray for her soul.

Twitter handle, the prime minister said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chief Imran Khan continued to engage in a vile, sinister and malicious campaign against COAS General Syed Asim Munir.

"His trick of using the proxies to threaten the Army Chief of an assassination attempt has been badly exposed.

After his methodically planned attack on the State symbols failed, he is clearly desperate & wants to coerce his way back into power, little knowing that the time of his politics of intimidation, violence &

hatred is over," he added.

Through such highly condemnable antics, the prime minister said he (IK) was only exposing himself, the core of which was defined by putting his personal interest (power grab) over everything else.

The people of Pakistan and the political parties stood behind their Army Chief and the armed forces like a rock and would thwart any attempt and conspiracy at undermining their prestige, honour and integrity, he added.

PM lauds late Prof. Mir for his integrity, steadfastness: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday said that late Professor Waris Mir was a true patriot and a holder of truthfulness even in the face of oppression.

Paying tribute to late Prof. Waris Mir, a renowned journalist, teacher and intellectual, on his death anniversary, the prime minister said that late Mir was a part of that caravan that neither compromised on their principles nor budge from speaking the truth.

The prime minister further observed that his legacy was being carried by his brave sons, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

He prayed for the high ranks of the departed soul and for the bereaved family to bear the loss with equanimity.



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Ms. Marriyum Aurangzeb Inaugurating the foundation stone for the construction of cinema building of projects at Radio Pakistan Station building.

India releases 185,000 cusecs of water into River Ravi: NDMA

ISLAMABAD (PPI): India released 185,000 cusecs of water into River Ravi, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) said Sunday, as it warned that the main deluge would start affecting the area in the next 20 to 24 hours.

Moreover, the NDMA also asked the administration and the relevant departments in the vulnerable area to enhance preparedness. Last year, the Indian authorities had released 173 cusecs of water into the river – which was handed over to India under the Indus Waters Treaty along with Sutlej and Beas in 1960.

On the other hand, Gujrat deputy commissioner said high flood in Gujrat could affect 59 villages – a seasonal phenomenon after monsoon downpour in the river's catchment area.

The Chenab is flowing at 122,000 cusecs at Marala with low level flood and there is possibility that 170,000 cusecs of water will flow in coming 24 hours. Similarly water was flowing at 63,000 cusecs near Nowshera.

Earlier, the NDMA said a total of 76 people had so far lost their lives since June 25

Nine killed, 8 injured in monsoon rains in 24 hours

ISLAMABAD (INP): Nine more people have died, and eight others were injured due to the monsoon rains in the last 24 hours, as per the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). Since June 25, the number of deaths from monsoon rains across the country has reached 76.

According to the NDMA, 31 children, 30 men and 15 women are among those who have died due to rains in the last fortnight.

The highest number of deaths, 48, has been reported

ed in Punjab.

Rains have also claimed 20 lives in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, five in Balochistan and three in Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

Moreover, among the more than 130 people injured in rain-related incidents are 49 men, 38 women and 48 children, the authority says in a report. So far, 78 houses have been damaged by the rains across the country, while there is a fear of urban flooding in different cities of the country due to torrential rains.

– the start of monsoon season – across Pakistan, said. It added that nine more deaths and injuries to another eight were reported during the last 24 hours. Five of these victims were from Punjab, bringing the death toll in the province to 48 which is highest in the country. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is second the list with 20 deaths followed by five in Balochistan and three in Azad Kashmir.

Out of the 76 dead people,

30 were men, 15 women and 31 children, the NDMA said, adding that 78 houses had also been damaged. As far as the injured people are concerned, the total stands at 133 – men (48), women (38) and children (48). During the last 24 hours, the highest amount of rain 111 mm was recorded in Nagarparkar (Sindh). In Punjab, Narowal received the heaviest rain with 36mm while it was Kakul 21mm in the case of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Six die as gas cylinder blast causes building to collapse in Jhelum

JHELUM (NNI): At least six people were killed and 10 others were injured on Sunday when a three-storey building collapsed due to a gas cylinder explosion in Punjab's Jhelum.

According to details, a three-storey building located on the Grand Trunk Road in Jhelum collapsed after a gas cylinder exploded in the kitchen.

Samuillah Farooq, Deputy Commissioner of Jhelum, confirmed the death of six people and said almost 10 others were recovered from the rubble and shifted to the District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital. Two of the injured – who were in critical condition – have been transported to Rawalpindi, he added.

"There are reports that four to five people could be underneath the rubble," the deputy commissioner said, adding that the rescue operation would continue till the last trapped person was reached and the whole site was cleared. Taking to Twitter, the Jhelum police said that all available resources were being utilised to rescue the lives of the people trapped under the debris of the building. Sharing a video of the rescue operation, the police said that the building debris was being removed with the help of heavy machinery.

Assemblies to dissolve in August: Khawaja Asif

SIALKOT (NNI): Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said that assemblies will dissolve in August after the completion of their tenure.

While addressing a worker's convention in Sialkot, PML-N leader Khawaja Asif said that the preparation for the elections have been commenced and the assemblies will dissolve in August.

He stated PDM led government had the choice to dissolve assemblies immediately but it would have deepened the economic crisis and Pakistan would have defaulted 14 months ago. The defense minister

revealed that the reason behind the ouster of the former prime minister and PTI chief through no-confidence motion was their attitude toward allies, they turned their back to their allies. He lambasted the PTI chairman saying that he dissolved the KP and Punjab assemblies despite disagreement by his party members. The PTI chief planned the May 9 violence and it will be a black day in the history of Pakistan.

Earlier, Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) unveiled its strategy for upcoming general elections and political alliance.

PML-N leader and Federal Education Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain said in a statement that his political party would not get into an alliance with any political party for the upcoming general elections.

It is pertinent to mention that Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) leader and former federal minister Muhammad Zubair said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is not in a position to contest elections. He said that PTI is not in a position to contest elections irrespective of its chairman's disqualification.

PTI chief appears before Islamabad police JIT in terror probe

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman appeared before the Joint Investigation Team and recorded his statement in terrorism cases. The former PM reached DIG office Islamabad to appear before JIT who was probing cases of attacks on police stations Khanna, Shehzad Town, Bahara Kaho, Secretariat, Margalla, Ramna, Tarnool, while he was also summoned in terrorism case registered in the Karachi company and Kohsar police stations. The JIT includes officers from SSP CTD, SSP Investigation and it questioned PTI chairman for two hours regarding the cases.

Greece boat disaster FIA arrests ringleader of human trafficking

GUJRAT (PPI): Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Sunday claimed to have arrested the ringleader of a human trafficking gang from Gujrat.

According to details, the FIA has arrested suspect Muhammad Saleem Sunyara, involved in a Greece boat tragedy that took several lives including of Pakistanis. The suspect used to send money to his brother Muhammad Asif Sunyara through hundi and hawala for sending Pakistanis abroad illegally.

As many as nine cases have been registered in the FIA Gujrat anti-human trafficking circle. It is pertinent to mention here that an Italy-bound fishing trawler reportedly carrying at least 800 people – including hundreds of Pakistanis – capsized off Greece. Only 104 people are known to have survived and the chance of finding more survivors was seen as virtually nil.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had directed authorities concerned to hold an inquiry into the human trafficking that led to the tragic incident of migrants shipwreck near Greece with several Pakistani nationals onboard.

War in Ukraine: Biden flies to UK amid concern over cluster bombs

LONDON (Agencies): US President Joe Biden is heading to Europe ahead of a Nato summit after several allies questioned his decision to send cluster bombs to Ukraine.

The UK and Canada are among those who voiced concern about supplying the bombs, which are widely banned because of the danger they pose to civilians. The US says they are needed because Ukraine's weapon stocks are dwindling. Mr Biden will arrive first in the UK, on Sunday evening, before heading to Lithuania for this week's Nato summit.

On Monday, he will meet British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to discuss various issues, including the war in Ukraine. He will also meet King Charles for the first time since the King was crowned. Members of Nato – a military alliance of 31 Western nations – will then meet in Vilnius on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Finland will attend its first summit since joining in April. Plans from Sweden to follow suit have been blocked by Turkey, which accuses it of harbouring terrorists.

Mr Biden is expected to seek further support from Mr Sunak to help broker a

deal with Turkey.

The matter is also expected to be on Nato's agenda in Lithuania – along with boosting ammunition stockpiles and reviewing defence plans.

Ukraine harbours its own ambitions of joining Nato. But speaking to CNN before his trip, Mr Biden said this could not happen until the war was over – in line with the alliance's long-standing policy. Citing Nato's mutual defence pact, Mr Biden pointed out that members undertake to protect "every inch" of each other's territory – meaning that "if the war is going on, then we're all in war".

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has previously accepted this position, while requesting a "signal" that his country will be able to join the alliance when the war is over. He is expected to attend this week's summit.

On Friday, the US confirmed it was complying with a Ukrainian request to send cluster bombs – and was doing so as part of a military aid package worth \$800m (£626m).

Mr Biden told CNN it had been a "very difficult decision" but that he had eventually acted because "the Ukrainians are running

out of ammunition".

But a number of Nato allies quickly distanced themselves from the decision. Mr Sunak did not directly criticise his US counterpart. But he made clear that the UK was one of 123 countries that had signed up to the Convention on Cluster Munitions – an international treaty which bans the production or use of the weapons. Canada and Spain – Nato members, like the US and UK – also stated their opposition to the weapons, as did New Zealand, a Nato partner. "No to cluster bombs and yes to the legitimate defence of Ukraine, which we understand should not be carried out with cluster bombs," Spain's Defence Minister Margarita Robles said. But Germany, another signatory of the treaty and Nato member, said that while it would not provide such weapons to Ukraine, it understood the American position. Cluster bombs typically release lots of smaller bomblets that can kill indiscriminately over a wide area. One of the concerns surrounding their supply is their failure – or dud – rate. Unexploded bomblets can linger on the ground for years and then indiscriminately detonate.

Two die in accident on Ring Road

LAHORE (INP): Two people perished in deadly road accident on the Lahore Ring Road near Mehmoor Booti on Sunday, rescuers and police said.

A car collided with a truck when truck driver suddenly applied brakes in middle of the road.

Two people including the car driver were killed on the spot. Rescue teams also reached the spot and handed over the dead bodies to police.

PU syndicate approves 16.619bn budget

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab University syndicate body has approved Rs 16.619 billion budget and sent it for approval of the Senate for the financial year 2023-24.

The PU syndicate, in its 1751st meeting, chaired by Vice Chancellor Prof Dr. Khalid Mahmood, approved the budget on Saturday, a budget document of the PU said.

Meanwhile, official sources said that on the direction of the vice-chancellor to increase further the international ranking of the PU and socioeconomic impact research, the university administration allocated Rs 264 million, with an increase of Rs 38 million, as compared to last year's amount, as per its policy to promote research culture. According to the budget document, other salient features included free education for special students, along with boarding facilities, while students taking admission on a sports basis will be provided with free education.

The university will continue to waive off the tuition fee of Hafiz-e-Quran. The Punjab University will provide Rs 247 million in scholarships to students. Moreover, the HEC scholarships worth Rs 122 million and Punjab Educational Endowment Fund (PEEF) scholarships will also be provided to students. The deficit of Rs 2 billion would be managed by introducing new market-based programmes, reducing expenditures, and adopting austerity measures.

PAF cinema at Lahore Cantt closed down

LAHORE (APP): The administration on Sunday announced closing the PAF cinema located in the Lahore Cantt area and converting it into an auditorium after completion of 10-year contract, sources told APP.

The Lahore Cantt cinema was fully renovated and upgraded after it had been leased out to a private operator for 10 years. It had a capacity of 500 people in the auditorium, and all seats were sofa sittings. The cinema was launched in December 2010 in which many Pakistani celebrities participated. Former owner of the cinema Nadir Latif told APP that the story of closing down of film and cinema industry was not a secret now, but the downturn in the industry had led to collapse of sectors associated with it, such as cinemas. After revival of the film industry in Pakistan, people once again had started visiting cinemas in the past decade. Movies with good content, good actors, story and new technology had compelled viewers to visit cinemas. Lahore had always been the centre of cinemas where people used to wait in lines to get a ticket. PTV senior producer Agha Qaiser told APP that in the era of digitalization, the trend of going to the cinema had been waned, adding many cinema owners launched new businesses and converted their cinemas into petrol stations, showrooms, plazas, wedding halls and hostels. According to details, in Lahore, there are more than 20 cinemas that are providing quality entertainment to people. These cinemas display 2D and 3D movies at a reasonable price. People still have some options when they want to go out for recreation or watching their favourite movies.

No threat of flood anywhere in Punjab so far: CM Naqvi

LAHORE (PPI): Punjab caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi said Sunday while talking to the media that there was no threat of flood anywhere in the province so far. During a visit to the bank of Ravi River to inspect preparations against the possible flooding, the chief minister said that India had released the same amount of water the previous year too which gradually reduced to 13,000 cusecs.

He said that rescue officials were present at all points of the river, adding that all safety measures were in place in view of the possible flooding.

He said that the population in the course of the river would have to be evacuated, adding that steps would be taken to save the lives of humans as well as animals in

possible floods.

"The district and local administrations are keeping a close eye on the situation. There is a forecast for rain for the next two months too. An operation will be launched against the constructions in the course of the river," he stated.

Lahore Commissioner Muhammad Ali Randhawa, Deputy Commissioner Rafia Haider and provincial ministers including Aamir Mir and Azfar Ali Nasir accompanied the chief minister. According to rescue sources, a 14,000 cusecs water current is currently passing at the point of Shahdara. The rescue and civil defence teams are present at Ravi River to deal with any emergency situation. The joint operation will continue for 24 hours.

Governor inaugurates 1293rd Urs of Hazrat Abdullah Shah Ghazi

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori inaugurated the 1293rd Urs of Sufi saint Hazrat Abdullah Shah Ghazi by laying a floral wreath.

The Governor also offered Fateha and prayed for the development, stability and prosperity of the country including Sindh province and nation.

On the occasion, he said that it was necessary to follow the footprints of the Sufi saints for the promotion of religious harmony.

Kamran Tessori said that the religion of Islam spread due to their character. The Sufi saints always taught love, tolerance and brotherhood, he added.

Governor, Swiss FM discuss bilateral relations:

The Foreign Minister of the Swiss Federation Ignazio Cassis called on the Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori at Governor House here on Sunday. They discussed strengthening Pak-Swiss bilateral relations and other mutual interests. Later, the Governor saw off Ignazio Cassis at the Jinnah International Airport.

Another May 9 violence miscreant arrested

LAHORE (INP): The agencies have managed to get hold of yet another person who was involved in May 9 riots, reported on Sunday. Brother of Ashiq, the miscreant, on the other hand, has denounced the incidents of violence. He has said that his brother had nothing to do with politics.

"The narrative that a political party built during the last one year poisoned him against the Pakistan Army," he has said, adding, "He was a sportsman."

But sadly he fell victim to anti-state propaganda."

He is of the view that violence in politics does not pay off. "This only ruins our future," he has said, adding, "I want to give a message to the youth that Pakistan is our country and Pakistan Army is our army that always remains on its toes to defend us."

Ashiq's brother has said destroying

properties and setting them on fire is of no use. Visitors say shocked over Jinnah House's vandalism

On the other hand, while expressing deep sorrow over the vandalism of Jinnah House in Lahore, people belonging to different walks of life, in their joint declaration, have demanded stern action against the perpetrators of these crimes.

The declaration reads that today during their visit to the Jinnah House, they were shocked to see that some miscreants had set their own Quid's home on fire.

They have further said that defiling of memorials of army's martyrs is not acceptable at any cost. The visitors have expressed the resolve to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the armed forces of Pakistan all their lives. "What could be more tragic than that the miscreants, during their attack on the Jinnah House, even burnt the national flag," reads the declaration.

Experts stresses awareness to address myths associated with 'Donating Blood' in backward areas

ISLAMABAD (APP): Health experts on Sunday encouraged youngsters to play their active role for a noble cause of 'Blood Donation' awareness drives with social media platforms to overcome the common myths in backward areas of the country and urged stakeholders to invest in upgrading the existing infrastructure.

Talking to PTV news channel, District Health Officer Dr. Zaem stressed that there was a need to educate the public and eliminate unfounded myths in order to encourage volunteer blood donation, adding, people only donate blood when there is an emergency-like situation.

He said that the availability of screened fresh blood in a hospital was essential part and is required every day for critical patients, especially when there was a major operation or child birth.

We, the whole society should join hands and encourage our people living in rural areas and youngsters to embrace the noble act of blood donation, for it is through our collective efforts that we can save lives, he added. Another Senior Medical officer Dr

Amina said that it was a fact that donating blood was a simple and safe procedure, adding, the donated blood can save the lives of people in need and it also benefit the donor's overall health.

"Everyone who can donate blood should consider making regular donations", she added.

"In Pakistan, people usually come out and donate blood when an unfortunate incident occurs. But sometimes these contributions are too late to save a life", she regretted. Replying to a query, she said the body normally replaces the donated blood cells with new cells within 6 to 8 weeks, adding, blood can be donated every six months by males and every eight months by females. To another question, she told a common misconception is that donating blood leads to weakness or health problems. In reality, the human body is capable of replenishing the donated blood within a short period, usually within 24-48 hours. She advised the donors to take rest, hydrate and eat nutritious meals after donation.

'There will be bloodshed if transparent polls not held'

RAWALPINDI (PPI) Awami Muslim League (AML) chief and former interior minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed warned on Sunday that there would be bloodshed if transparent elections were not held in the country.

"Transparent elections are the only solution to all problems faced by the country," he said on his Twitter handle.

Rashid said the masses should bear one more month of inflation and difficulties. "The day the assemblies will be dissolved, the new politics will dawn in the country," he said. The former interior minister said those who were proud of enjoying authority and power and violating sanctity of the home would be held accountable. "The innocent people will get free-

dom from prisons," added the AML chief.

He said the IMF had no trust in the incumbent government and its finance minister that's why they [IMF officials] were visiting other people's home [PTI chief] to seek guarantees. Criticising the current government, Rashid said that 100 million people had fallen below the poverty line and at least 20 million people had become jobless. "Lenders also need a loan repayment guarantee, otherwise, the default sword is hanging on Pakistan," he maintained.

"This is the achievement of 15-month-old [PML-N] government. Parties in the PDM will be at daggers drawn in a month. There will be a tug-of-war, there will be

judo-karate (fight) within the alliance," he said.

The AML chief further said that economic stability could not be achieved without political stability. "Elections will be held in the country. Zardari and Bilawal are absent from the political scene. It isn't clear whether they support the IMF agreement or not," he said. He said the laws passed in the parliament without a two-third majority had no status, adding restrictions imposed on media freedom gave rise to rumours.

"Pakistan is already isolated in the international community. They are demanding the government to ensure political stability but in these circumstances the EU may withdraw the GSP Plus status," said Rashid warned.



LAHORE: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Religious Harmony Maulana Tahir Ashrafi addressing a seminar on Hazrat Usman Ghani (R.A) at Press Club.

PTI had breached IMF pact to get cheap fame: Kiyani

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister's Coordinator for Economy and Energy Bilal Azhar Kiyani said on Sunday that PTI government had breached the IMF agreement to catch up cheap fame, and propagated a false cipher when the PDM's no-confidence motion was passed in National Assembly.

Addressing a press conference here, he added that after ousting from power, the PTI Chairman had tried hard to spread chaos in the country by raising hollow slogan of imported government. Bilal Azhar Kiyani said, the person who had launched cipher drama, hatched conspiracies and used to say that his government was ousted through America's conspiracy but today, the same person is seen begging America. "And they are calling us an imported government despite the fact that PTI itself is imported and its chairman speaks what for others, actually he himself involved in it."

Kiyani said that present coalition government corrected the wrong decisions of the previous government; the staff level agreement signed with the IMF was the link of the last year's hard work, while the PTI government had breached the IMF agreement to get cheap fame. The present government brought the IMF to the table and completed its seventh, eighth review. He

said that instead of celebrating the meeting of IMF delegation with PTI chairman a few days ago, PTI people should apologize to the whole nation that he had abrogated the agreement he with IMF. He asserted that bad deeds of PTI were being exposed to the public, and PTI government had spoiled the money, it had received from IMF, citing that all the four PTI's incompetent finance ministers had failed to get the country's economy on its feet rather pushed it further into debt mire. PTI government had deviated from its promise with IMF regarding the prices of petroleum products, he said and explained that when the PTI chairman realized that his government was about to collapse, he planned to break the IMF agreement so that the country would go into default because at that time Pakistan did not have the money to repay the loans.

The PTI could go to any extent to push the country into default. He claimed that PTI had tried its best not to restore the IMF agreement with Pakistan, asserting that PTI should apologize to the nation for conspiring against the country and the nation.

He said that in 2018, fast developing Pakistan was handed over to an incompetent person, who brought the country's economy to the brink of collapse. He said that in 2018, PTI

had got a stable Pakistan and stable economy of the era of Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, in which there had been no inflation and no 14-hour power load-shedding, but the country had been developing fast in every sector including economy, energy and defense, while terrorism was eliminated; the rate of inflation was only 3.8 percent; more than 12000 MW power plants were built; and unemployment was eliminated. He said that entire state machinery was used to remove Nawaz Sharif contrary to the fact he had made country's defense impregnable by conducting nuclear tests. "If there has been any development in Pakistan, it has happened during the time of Muhammad Nawaz Sharif," he observed.

PM's Coordinator said that Nawaz Sharif had provided all the basic facilities to the people despite the economic difficulties during his regime, while the country's economy was sunk by making wrong decisions during 2018 to 2022. He said that Nawaz Sharif could get the country out of the prevailing difficult situation. He mentioned that charges which the PTI government had leveled against Nawaz Sharif were now being proved false thus exposing the real face of PTI leadership.

Rescue-1122 on high alert to cope with possible flood in Nullah Lai

RAWALPINDI (APP): The emergency service, Rescue-1122, which is fully equipped to cope with the possible flood in Nullah Lai, has been put on high alert to cope with emergencies. According to a Rescue-1122 spokesman, the rescuers deployed in low-lying areas, particularly in Katarian, Gawalmandi, Sowan and other low-lying areas would remain on high alert round the clock to provide timely emergency response, medical treatment and transportation facilities to possible flood victims. The Rescue-1122 has also requested people not to stand on the banks in low-lying areas along Nullah Lai during flood and follow instructions given by the departments concerned. However, the administration had also completed all the arrangements to cope with the flood situation, he added.

According to a district administration spokesman, Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) on the directives of the Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Liaquat Ali Chatha and Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi Hasan Waqar Cheema during a visit to different areas had also inspected the cleaning work of the sewage lines.

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

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

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Ashrafi terms interfaith dialogue essential in current times

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Ulema Council Chairman and Prime Minister's Special Representative on Interfaith Harmony and Middle East, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, on Sunday strongly condemned the recent incident of Quran burning in Sweden.

Addressing a seminar, held here in Lahore Press Club in honor of the martyrdom of Hazrat Usman Ghani (RA), he emphasized the urgent need for interfaith dialogue and global legislation against blasphemy or desecration of any celestial religion or scripture. The event was attended by distinguished scholars including Allama Abdul Haq Mujahid, Maulana Muhammad Rafiq Jami, Maulana Asad Zakaria Qasmi, Maulana Nauman Hashir, Maulana Muhammad Shafi Qasmi, Maulana Assadullah Farooq, Allama Zubair Abid, Maulana Islam Siddiqui, Qari Abdul Hakeem Athar, Allama Tahir Hassan, Maulana Muhammad Ashfaq Pitafi, Maulana Aziz Akbar Qasmi, Mufti Falk Sher, Mufti Syed Naseem-ul-Islam, Mufti Rehmat Din, Qari Abdul Majid Haqqani, Qari Kifayatullah, Maulana Abdul Jabar, Qari Muhammad Islam Qadri, Maulana Qari Mubashir Rahimi, Maulana Abdul Ghaffar Farooqi, and Maulana Nasir Haqqani.

Ashrafi highlighted that the teachings of the Holy Quran and the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) promote interfaith dialogue. He expressed gratitude towards Pope Francis, Christian

leaders, and leaders of other non-Muslim faiths in Sweden for their condemnation of the Quran burning incidents. He further affirmed the Pakistan Ulema Council's full support for the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and its agreements under the leadership of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

He urged the government to take immediate action against individuals involved in promoting campaigns against the armed forces and the nation. He demanded swift justice for the perpetrators of the May 9 incidents and the release of innocent individuals who have been detained without evidence.

He emphasized that extremist and foreign ideologies had caused the most damage to Islam and Muslims.

The seminar, chaired by Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, also deliberated on the necessity of global legislation to protect the sanctity of holy sites.

The scholars highlighted the exemplary rights granted to non-Muslims during the era of the Rashidun Caliphs. The non-Muslim community in Pakistan expressed strong condemnation of the events in Sweden, they added.

They said Hazrat Usman Ghani (RA), revered for his sacrifices for peace in the City of the Prophet (Madina), played a vital role in the compilation and preservation of the Quran, ensuring its safety until the Day of Judgment.

The scholars emphasized the

responsibility of Muslims to follow in his footsteps and propagate the message of Islam and the teachings of the Quran, which promote peace, love, and righteousness.

The Pakistan Ulema Council, in collaboration with the International Interfaith Harmony Council, has announced the upcoming World Interfaith Conference scheduled to take place in Islamabad during the final week of November. The conference aims to gather global leaders of all faiths, including Pope Francis, the Sheikh of Al-Azhar, and the Imam of

the Kaaba, along with other prominent Muslim and non-Muslim leaders. During the seminar, they called for immediate action against those propagating against the Pakistan Army and the Chief of Army Staff.

"It has been two months since the May 9 incidents, and the nation continues to mourn. The martyrs, who hold the highest status in Islam, are being targeted at their memorial sites across the country," they lamented.

The scholars emphasized the urgency for the judiciary to expedite decisions on matters like the May 9 incidents, considering their impact on future cases.

The seminar concluded with a unanimous call for immediate action against elements involved in promoting campaigns against the Pakistan Army and the Chief of Army Staff, as well as justice for the innocent.



Governor visits MMC, inquires after injured DSP and CTD personnel

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali on Sunday visited Maradan Medical Complex and inquired after the injured DSP Farooq Zaman and CTD personnel who were injured in a terrorist attack.

The Governor was accompanied by Provincial Minister for Irrigation Fazle Elahi, former members of the Provincial Assembly Amanat Shah, Taj-ul-Amin Jabal, Maulana Israr-ul-Haq, and President of Maradan Chamber of Commerce Zahir Shah.

The Governor was informed about the facilities and treatment being provided to the injured in the hospital.

He directed the hospital administration to ensure the provision of all possible medical facilities to the

injured police officers and CTD personnel.

The Governor asked if there is a shortage of medical facilities here, the injured can be shifted to another hospital for better treatment. The hospital administration assured the Governor that the best possible treatment is being provided to the injured and they will recover soon.

During the visit, the Governor also toured various wards of the hospital and inquired about the treatment of patients suffering from different ailments.

The Governor was informed by the hospital administration about the difficulties they are facing in providing treatment due to the lack of necessary machinery.

The Governor assured the hospital administration

that the lack of required machinery will be addressed on priority basis.

Talking to the media representatives on this occasion, the Governor said that terrorism is a sore that federal and provincial governments are continuously trying to eradicate. However, he urged the public to play their role as responsible citizens in establishing peace and eliminating terrorism.

He said that the entire nation looks at the sacrifices of security forces and police in the fight against terrorism with great respect. The situation of peace and security in the province is deteriorating once again, and incidents of terrorism are on the rise. But with the cooperation of the public, our security forces and police are determined to completely elimi-

nate terrorism.

Later, during his visit to Maradan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Governor Ghulam Ali visited the residence of Chamber's President, Zahir Shah, where he congratulated him on performing Hajj and also held meetings with the business community.

They discussed the promotion of trade activities in the country and addressed the issues and problems faced by the business community in the current economic situation.

Furthermore, Governor visited Sheikh Malton Town, the residence of Naeem Khan, where he also met with other dignitaries from the area, including Orangzeb Khan, and learned about the public issues and problems.



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali inquires about health of DSP and CTD personnel injured in terrorist attack.

Police traced out missing women

PESHAWAR (APP): The drop scene of the mysterious disappearance of Christian women and a girl traced out by the Police and recovered them from Rawalpindi from their relative house, an official of the Police said here Sunday.

He said two Christian women traced out from a house of their relative in Rawalpindi as both of them, deaf and dumb, went to their relative's house due to the violence of one of the husband. Police traced Christian women on tip-off.

The official said that a few days ago women went missing from Zargarabad and both the women are deprived of hearing and speech. After the report of missing the women, the Police started an investigation on modern lines and traced out both the Women from Rawalpindi from one of the relative's houses.

The report of disappearance was filed in Yeka Tut Police Station and since then the Police started search operation through modern lines and succeeded in tracing them at Rawalpindi.

Storm of inflation continues

PESHAWAR (APP): The storm of inflation continued in the provincial capital Peshawar as the price of ginger touched the Rs1000 mark while the district administration claimed to control the rates according to the official price list of various food items.

A visit to the vegetables and fruits markets revealed that the storm of inflation in the markets continued with ginger touches all time high marks of Rs1050 per kilogram, garlic 300 and lemon 140 per kg remained unchanged. Onion 50, tomato 80, green pepper 80, peas 250, okra 90 and turnip 80 rupees sold per kg while Potato 110, Kachalo 130, Cauliflower 120, Eggplant 30, Zucchini and Tenda 100 rupees per sale.

Among fruits, apple reached Rs400, mango Rs250 and peach Rs220 per kg while Cher 430, potato 260 and banana 200 per dozen sold. The price of live chicken increased by five rupees per kg and now the price jumped to Rs445 per kg. In the week it has increased with every passing day as earlier the price of live chicken was Rs405.

33-year-old dispute of Regi Model Town to be resolved

PESHAWAR (APP): Commissioner Peshawar Division Muhammad Zubair Sunday visited the disputed zones 1, 2, and zone 5 of Regi Model Town to get information regarding the disputes.

In order to resolve the disputes, on the weekly holiday, Commissioner Peshawar Muhammad Zubair along with Peshawar Development Authority Additional Director General Regi Model Town Nasir Khan, Assistant Commissioner Revenue Ifthikharuddin and other officers of PDA administration visited Regi

Model Town. The delegation made a detailed visit to the disputed zones 1, 2 and zone 5 of Regi Model Town besides paid visits to other zones of the Regi Model Town and obtained information from the plot owners about the facilities provided by PDA while issuing instructions to the PDA administration to provide the best facilities to the plot owners.

It should be noted that Commissioner Peshawar Division Muhammad Zubair appealed on behalf of the victims of Regi Model Town to play a role

in solving the 33-year-old dispute, on which Commissioner Peshawar Division Muhammad Zubair called a meeting of the victims on Saturday, last, while on Sunday details of the disputed zones were discussed.

The visiting Commissioner Peshawar Division once again expressed his determination to find a lasting solution to the Regi Model Town dispute, which has been pending for 33 years and for this all stakeholders would be taken on board in order to take a viable solution of the dispute.

DG Info for bringing pleasant changes



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Baseer Ali Rehman, Director General Information Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sunday emphasized on bringing about pleasant changes in the programs and structure of Pakhtunkhwa Radio Peshawar.

He said this while addressing the certificate awarding ceremony to the guest producers and duty officers of the Pakhtunkhwa Radio Peshawar who performed their duties on special marathon broadcast of Eid-ul-Adha.

He said the provincial government wants to stabilize its only radio network and in this struggle for improvement. The entire government machinery including the Information Secretary, would fully support the new Radio administration, he added. It is the provincial government's own brand radio while providing quality infotainment to the listeners and viewers is one of the primary duties of this Radio, he said.

He also paid visits to different sections of the Pakhtunkhwa Radio FM 92.2 Peshawar station and later chairing the briefing in this regard.

DG Information maintained that it was the need of the hour for media organizations to continuously improve with passage of the time and assured that all needed resources will be provided to Pakhtunkhwa Radio for this purpose. He asked that the new administration should expedite the cases related to radio improvement so that they can be dealt with in time.

On the issues raised by Station Director Ghulam Hussain Ghazi, the Director General Information clarified that Information Minister Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhel in his recent visit to Pakhtunkhwa Radio, in principle has agreed to the demands for installation of new long-range transmitter and opening PLA account.

He said these two issues will be permanently resolved with the approval

of the caretaker Chief Minister Muhammad Azam Khan. Wherein he said, this only broadcasting house of the provincial government will be able to devote its resources for the improvement of radio transmissions.

He also appreciated the initiative of lice streaming the radio broadcasts through social media and hoped that this step would tantamount the radio listening expand beyond Peshawar to the whole world.

However, he also directed that the popularity graph of various programs should also be visible in the live streams so that there is an atmosphere of competition between the producers.

Earlier, on the arrival at the Radio station, Baseer Ali Rehman inspected various sections of the broadcasting house and gave instructions on the spot for some changes.

The station director and radio staff also presented a shield to the Director General Information as a memento of the visit.

Mayor hold open court in NC-106, 109 of Tehkal



PESHAWAR (APP): Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali Sunday held an opening court (Koli Katchery) and listened to the problems of the people at their doorsteps.

Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali on this occasion said that for the past nine years, the former rulers kept the people of Tehkal

on promises and declarations only and did not take any practical steps for addressing the problem being faced by them.

The problems of Tahkal will be solved on priority basis and want to ensure all facilities to the people at their doorsteps. Former provincial minister Amanullah Haqqani, officers of

Capital Metropolitan, Department of Sui Gas, WAPDA and other departments were also present.

On the occasion, Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali issued directives on the spot to solve the electricity and gas load shedding problems for the residents of Tahkal Upper.

He also announced a

relief of two hours in load shedding while announcing solarization of two masjids, funeral place.

He also delivered solarization on the spot for the convenience of the people. He said street lights were also provided for convenience of the Peshawar of NC 106 and 109, while issuing instructions for the pavement of many streets. He said the pavement of all streets will be made as soon as possible.

In addition, the school approved after providing a piece of land for the school. Malik Kashmir Khan thanked the Mayor of Peshawar after seeing the initiatives and said that for the last nine years neither our MNAs nor MPAs kept the people of Tehkal on promises and announcements by not taking any practical steps.

Former Minister Maulana Amanullah Haqqani, NC 109 Chairman Shahid Khalil, NC 107 Chairman Azmat Afridi, PK 74 General Secretary Attaullah Momin, Malik Saleem, Malik Masal Khan and other leaders were present.

Goodwill and CUSIT talent scholarship test held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar

Model Degree Colleges on Sunday conducted Goodwill and CUSIT

Talent Scholarship Test, which witnessed a significant turnout of matric stu-



dents from both government and private schools across the province.

The event took place in PMDC Dalazak road boys and girls colleges Peshawar and PMDC boys and girls colleges Mohabbatabad Railway crossing Mardan, showcasing the immense talent and potential among the youth of the region.

The Goodwill and CUSIT Talent Scholarship Test aims to recognize and reward the academic achievements and abilities of deserving students.

The next Goodwill and CUSIT Talent Scholarship Test is scheduled to take place on Sunday, July 16, 2023, at Peshawar Model Degree Colleges in Peshawar and Mardan.

Govt takes measures to avert floods during monsoon in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan has been faced with twin monster challenges of climate change and global warming that had kept on increasing temperatures and melting of glaciers besides erratic rainfall with high chances of flash floods in Rivers Swat and Kabul during the monsoon season in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The rise of global temperature, excessive discharge of greenhouse gas emissions and high combustion of fossil fuels including coal, oil and natural gases by developed countries had put Pakistan in extreme danger of climate change-induced disasters including flash floods, heat waves, droughts and fast melting of glaciers at Upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit Baltistan.

Despite having less than

one percent global greenhouse gas emissions, Pakistan is left with no option but forced to pay the heavy price of man-made climate change injustices in terms of over USD 40 billion in economic, agricultural, and financial losses due to the last year's flood devastation.

The weather unpredictability and climate change injustices have made over 7,253 glaciers including 2,253 mighty and medium glaciers in Gilgit Baltistan and around 500 in Chitral under heightening dangers to melt fast with increased chances of flash floods in Rivers Indus, Kabul, Punojora and Kunhar.

Niaz Ali Khan, former Chief Conservator of KP Forest Department told APP that glaciers in low alpine pastures areas in upper

Pakhtunkhwa including Chitral were melting fast due to global warming and the down districts of Nowshera, Charsadda and Peshawar were at high risk of flash floods in Rivers Swat, Chitral and Kabul during the monsoon season, adding that most of these glaciers were located at Trichmir mountains range in Chitral.

With glaciers retreat, he said glacial lakes would form like that of Atabad Lake in Gilgit Baltistan and chances of Glacial Lake Outbursts Floods (GLOF) would also increase, especially in northern Pakistan.

Citing the 2018 National Water Policy report, Niaz Ali said the per capita surface water availability has declined from 5260 cubic meters per annum in 1951 to around 1000 cubic meters in 2016.

More rains likely in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): More rains are likely in all districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including Peshawar, Meteorological Department officials said here Sunday.

The official said that with the chance of heavy rains in Hazara, Malakand, Mardan and Peshawar divisions the minimum temperature of Peshawar city is 24 centigrade recorded and during the last 20 hours, Abbottabad recorded the highest rainfall of 21 mm.

Saidu Sharif, Swat 15 mm rain, 11 mm in Mansehra, Mardan and Balakot, 9 mm rain in Kalam, 5 mm in Kohistan recorded, the official of the Meteorological Department said. The spell of rains in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is likely to continue till July 10, the official of the Meteorological Department said.

Students, academia informed about land registration in merged areas

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The US Agency for International Development (USAID)-supported Land Registration in Merged Areas (LRMA) Activity completed its awareness drive on "Land Settlement and Registration in the Merged Areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)" that started June 12 for over 600 students, researchers, and senior academics across various KP universities with its final session at the University of Peshawar.

"Empowering the youth through education and awareness is essential for building a better future. By investing in students, we are nurturing the future agents of change who can lead the way in advocating for important causes such as land registration and record system," said Mr. Muhammad Shoaib, Chief of Party USAID's LRMA Activity. "The USAID-LRMA's mission is to work in collaboration with the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and provide the citizens of the Merged



Areas with easy access to precise and up-to-date information on their land holder rights, paving the way for a more prosperous and equitable society."

USAID's LRMA is a Four-year activity that is supporting the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to

establish a land record system across KP's Merged Areas. A proper digital land registration and records system will improve land governance, strengthen property rights, boost economic growth, and promote peace and stability. The activity aligns with the

Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's recently approved "Tribal Decade Strategy" that will extend the socio-economic benefits of land registration to women and marginalized communities and safeguard their land tenure and property rights.



In brief

Police arrested 2 drug peddlers

KOHAT (APP): The Kohat Police in the jurisdiction of the Billy Tang Police Station have arrested two wanted drug peddlers in an operation to continue against anti-state elements and drug traffickers in the district. This was stated by SHO SHO Billy Tang Police Station, Kohat Waqar Afridi while talking to media men here on Sunday. A total of 3610 kilograms of hashish and 500 grams of ice were recovered from the possession of the arrested drug dealers. A case has been registered against the detained drug dealers in Billy Tang Police Station.

Two factory workers burnt

FAISALABAD (APP): Two workers received severe burn injuries due to boiler blast in a local factory in the area of Sadar Jaranwala police station. Police spokesman said here on Sunday that boiler in a local factory situated at Chak No. 69-GB blew up due to some technical faults. As a result, two workers including Farman Ali (19) and Muhammad Asghar (18) received serious burn injuries and Rescue 1122 shifted them to Burn Unit of Allied Hospital where doctors were striving to save their lives while further investigation was under progress, he added.

Costly gold of Rs15m robbed

KASUR (INP): The bandits robbed a jewellery shop in the main bazaar of Khudian district Kasur, police confirmed on Sunday. According to media reports, some unknown robbers took away gold worth over 15 million and cash amounting to Rs0.5 million before fleeing, the reports said. The robbers tortured the watchmen and barged into the jewellery shop of Shahid after breaking its doors. The robbers were seen taking away the cabinet full of gold while fleeing from the scene. There was around 1 kilogram gold and 0.5 million cash in the shop which was robbed by the bandits. The police started the investigation from all aspects.

Body retrieved from river

HYDERABAD (INP): Dead body of one the two drowned brothers was retrieved from River Indus on Sunday, rescue sources said. According to details, three young brothers drowned in River Indus on Saturday while taking bath near Mehran Bridge. The divers of Rescue-1122 initiated an operation soon after the incident and managed to save one youth. Dead body of Hasnain 14 was retrieved on Sunday and divers were engaged in operation to retrieve the body of missing youth. The dead body was shifted to hospital for medico-legal formalities.

Motorcyclist crushed to death

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): A motorcyclist was crushed to death in a collision between a motorcycle and a speeding passenger van near Allama Iqbal Town. Resultantly, he sustained serious injuries and was shifted to the hospital when he succumbed to injuries on the way to the hospital, he said. Police have also started the investigations into the incident, the spokesman added.

SACM directs to provide basic facilities to prisoners

F.P. Report

SWAT: Special Assistant to Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Prison Hidayat Uallah Khan Afridi issued directives to jail authorities on Sunday to provide basic human rights along with other facilities to prisoners in lock ups.

He said that it is need of the hour to bring positive reforms in jail system aimed at tackling crimes and making the prisoners responsible citizens of the

society.

The Special Assistant issued these directives on the occasion of his surprised visit to District Jail Swat.

He visited various sections of the jail while the jail superintendent Riaz Khan Mohmand gave a detail presentation on the administrative system of the prison.

The caretaker special assistant urged the jail staff to keep special focus on the cleanliness of the goal, adding that strict steps

should be taken for jail security and no excuse will be tolerated in this regard.

Hidayat Ullah Khan said that caretaker provincial government is taking tangible steps for bringing reforms in KP jails.

He said that solid steps are also taking for providing basic human rights along with other facilities to detainees in jails.

He maintained that provision of standard meal in jails and cleanliness of lockups are included in our priorities.

Eight held; drugs, arms and ammunition recovered

D.I.KHAN (APP): The district police on Sunday claimed to have arrested eight accused during search and strike operations in different areas of the district.

According to a police spokesman, following the instructions of District Police Officer (DPO) Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani the police conducted search and strike operations in different areas in the limits of Gomal University and Band Korai police stations.

During the operations, a team of Band Korai police station led by SHO Anwar Khan Khattak checked 20 houses and arrested five suspected persons and recovered three 30-bore pistols, one 9mm pistol, 18 cartridges and 96 gram hashish from their possession.

Similarly, Gomal

University Police station team led by SHO Malik Sajid checked 15 houses, 10 vehicles and three hotels during the operation. The police arrested three accused including Muhammad Tariq, Kifayat Ullah and Muhammad Zafar recovering a 12-bore rifle along with six cartridges and two 30-bore pistols along with 12 cartridges from their possession.

The police registered separate cases against the arrested accused and started further investigation.

4 gamblers held; stake money, gambling tools recovered

The district police on Sunday claimed to have arrested four gamblers recovering stake money and gambling tools from their possession during a

raid here in the limits of Shaheed Nawab Police Station.

According to a police spokesman, Shaheed Nawab Police Station SHO Khanzada Khan taking action on a tip off raided at a gathering of gamblers in forests near Wanda Jani area.

The police four gamblers recovering stake money Rs 35,000 and gambling tools from their possession.

The arrested gamblers were identified as Mir Ahmad son of Syed Ahmad resident of Paniala, Ehsan son of Gul Aziz resident of Pezu, Irfan son of Soorat Khan resident of Tank and Fasih Uddin son of Qutb Uddin resident of Paniala.

The police registered a case against them and started further investigation.

No doctor in 10 out of 12 jails of Balochistan

— Jail Dept writes for provision of Rs15m

QUETTA (INP): There is lack of health facilities in jails of Balochistan and there is no doctor in 10 out of 12 jails including Machh, the largest jail of the province.

According to details, a lady doctor was deployed at District Jail Quetta and a doctor at Central Jail Gaddani while in other jails

of province, compounder were serving as doctors for treatment of the prisoners.

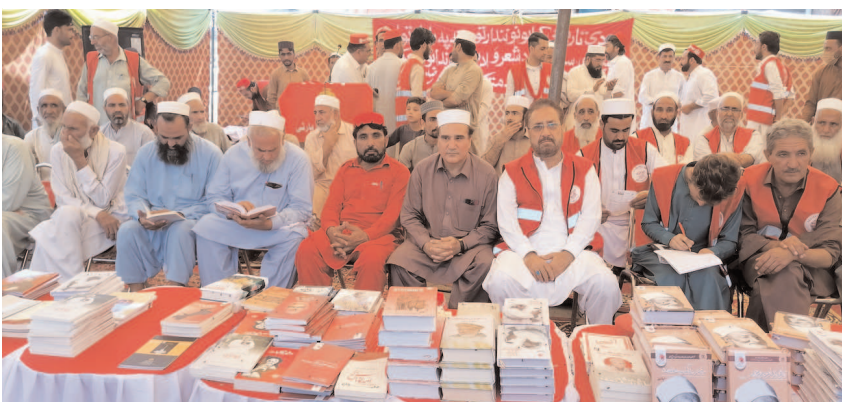
On the other hand, the provincial government has reduced the six million rupees funds allocated for jail department to three million despite increase prices of drugs and number of prisoners. Only one million rupees were released by

provincial government for the purpose this year.

The Balochistan Jail Department has dispatched a summary to Home Department for provision of 15 million rupees.

Earlier, Chief Justice Balochistan High Court had also expressed his annoyance for not deploying doctor in Machh Jail.

Books lovers throng book stall set up in Landi Kotal



Ahmad Nabi

LANDI KOTAL: A day long book fair was opened here in Bacha Khan Squarer, main Landi Kotal Bazaar on Sunday.

Established under the banner of Khudai Khedmatgar movement district Khyber and large number of books lovers, students, teachers, local political elites visited the stalls and took keen interest in the books displayed there.

This was the first time that a books fair was initiated at the public place where books written on the struggle of the Pakhtun leaders were exhibited.

Awami National Party Khyber President Shah Hussain Shinwari formally kicked off the books fair.

In his message on the occasion the ANP leader said that the history was deliberately forged and manipulated to conceal facts and to misguide the coming generation therefore through such kind of doings they could provide opportunity to the people especially the youth community to be aware of the great efforts of their political leaders.

Highlighting aims and purposes of setting up books stall district salaar of Khudai Khedmatgar move-

ment Haji Fazal Rehman said that they conducted the literary activity to create awareness among the young generation of the tribal society about the struggle, carried out by the leaders of the Pakhtun to win rights for them.

He thanked the visitors and valued their participation in the activity that encouraged them to set up it further in the future.

The academic figures in the area appreciated the efforts of the organization and said it would certainly enhance books reading habits among the youth who always engaged in social media.

7 dacoits held, 6 bikes, illegal weapons recovered

FAISALABAD (APP): The police claimed on Sunday to bust out two dacoit gangs by arresting their seven active members and recovered six motorcycles, illegal weapons and other items from their possession.

Police spokesman said here that SHO Khurarianwala police station Faisal Razzaq on a tip-off conducted raid in Chak

No.211-RB and nabbed five dacoits including Nauman Shahid, Hassan Bashir, Abdul Basit, Zeeshan Sultan and Ahmad Faissal.

The police recovered four motorcycles, illegal pistols, cash and mobile phones from their possession while further investigation was under progress.

Similarly, ASI Ghulam

Mustafa of Kotwali police also arrested two outlaws Adeel and Shehzad from Chiniot Bazaar who were wanted to the police in a number of dacoity and other cases.

The police recovered two motorcycles, illicit weapons and other items from their possession and started investigation by locking them behind bars, he added.



SWAT: Special Assistant to Caretaker Chief Minister for Prison Hidayat Uallah Khan Afridi visiting District Jail Swat.

Dacoits loot Rs32m from money dealers

MARDAN (INP): In one of the biggest heists in Pakistan, four armed robbers looted Rs32 million from the money changers in Singao Katling area of Mardan and drove off with the booty in the car they also snatched from the money dealers on Sunday.

According to police, four armed robbers in the vicinity of Baizai police station intercepted a car in which some money dealers were traveling.

The money changers were going to Buner after collecting more than Rs32 million from Peshawar and other areas.

The armed dacoits intercepted their car at gunpoint and got into their vehicle. They beat up the dealers and left them in a deserted place. Then they fled away in the same car. Police have registered the case and started an investigation.

Three killed as oil tanker catches fire

MAKRAN (INP): In a tragic incident, a truck carrying diesel turned upside down on Makran Coastal Highway on Sunday, leaving three people burned to death.

According to rescue sources, the truck caught fire after it overturned near Bisol on the Makran Coastal Highway, resulting in the death of three people.

Soon after the incident, firefighters rushed to the scene and took part in fire extinguishing exercise.

According to the police, the traffic flow was disrupted on the main highway following the incident.

Meanwhile, police are investigating the factors behind the accident.

Two die from electrocution, three injured

KANDHKOT (INP): Two members of a family were electrocuted, while three others suffer injuries in Kandhkot city of Kashmir district on Saturday night.

The incident happened in the native village Badani when a family was migrating from Badani to Mangra railtrack. The family members received electric shocks from a 1,000Kv power line.

The incident reportedly occurred due to the tractor-trolley's collision with the high power line. The deceased victims were identified as Naveed and Saeed, however the injured includes a minor. Police said the bodies and the injured were shifted to a hospital.

Two die after lightning strikes them

THARPARKAR (INP): Two people were killed when they were struck by lightning at village Bhotaro of Tharparkar on Saturday night. According to reports, 40-year-old Chetan and his wife Radho Bai were sleeping in their home when the incident occurred.

On the other hand, intermittent rain continued in Tharparkar throughout the night, while the weather department has forecast more rains for the area during the next 24 hours.

JI to ensure basic necessities of citizens if comes into power: Siraj

D.I.KHAN (APP): Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) chief Siraj ul Haq on Sunday claimed that if his party comes into power it would ensure the provision of basic necessities of citizens in the country.

He stated this while addressing a 'workers convention' of his party as a chief guest which was organized here at a local marriage hall.

He said if his party would be given a mandate by the people it would ensure the provision of edu-

cation to the children, allowance to the elder citizens and health facilities for all citizens.

He strongly condemned the incident of desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden and demanded the government expel the Swedish ambassador from the country.

On this occasion, General Secretary (GS) of Jamaat-e-Islami Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Abdul Wasi said that Jamaat-e-Islami was an organization of brotherhood and love

and always stands firm in front of oppressors.

District Ameer Manzar Masood Khattak thanked all the guests including party's chief Siraj ul Haq, saying, the large number of people participating in the 'Workers Convention' proved that the people were turning towards Jamaat-e-Islami.

He said the Al-Khidmat Foundation working under his party served the flood victims with Rs 40 million during the devastating floods of last year.

JUI-F organizes 'Azmat-e-Quran' rally

D.I.KHAN (APP): Jamiat Ulema Islam Fazl (JUI-F) in DI Khan on Sunday held 'Azmat-e-Quran rally here to lodge protest against the desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden.

The rally, led by JUI-F District General Secretary Advocate Chaudhry Ashfaq, was started from Dera Press Club and culminated outside of the TB Hospital.

A large number of people participated in the rally and expressed their anger against such a vile incident and holding banners and placards inscribed with slo-

gans expressing the sanctity of the Quran and against Sweden.

Sheikh-ul-Hadees Maulana Ashraf Ali, Qari Abdul Haleem, Qari Khalid Gangui, Ahmad Khan Kamrani, Qari Ejaz Farooqui and Malik Majid Dhap were also present.

While addressing the rally, Maulana Ashraf Ali termed the Quran as soul of the universe, saying it would exist in this world and hereafter.

He commended the statement of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in

Parliament against the desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden.

He demanded of the government to close the Swedish embassy in Pakistan and expel its ambassador.

Ashraf Ali said that following the teachings of the Quran was also the sanctity of the Quran.

He said whoever was involved in the desecration of the Quran should be punished.

On the occasion, the Swedish flag was also put on fire as a protest.

Fire erupts at oil refining unit

GUJRANWALA (INP): An oil refinery unit at Alipur Chattha has caught fire and a firefighting operation has been underway, sources said on Sunday.

Rescue teams rushed to the spot and initiated firefighting operation, sources said. According to preliminary reports five fire tenders of Rescue 1122 have been engaged in firefighting operation.

According to rescue sources, the fire ignited at the boiler and heating

chamber of the oil refining unit. "Around 25,000 litres of the crude stock has been present at the oil chamber of the refining unit," sources said.

Rescue sources said that the cause of the blaze could not be ascertained so far.

A fire broke out in an oil tanker near a plastic factory located in Gujranwala last month, severely injuring five individuals.

The incident occurred near the Mafi Wala Chowk – Gujranwala, where five

employees of a plastic factory sustained injuries as a result of a fire that broke out in an oil tanker.

Sources said that the rescue teams controlled the fire with the assistance of six fire tenders. The injured factory workers were identified as Akram, Zeeshan, Shaikat, Sajjad, and Shakir.

Rescue officials stated that due to the unavailability of a burn centre in Gujranwala, injured factory workers were shifted to Lahore in critical condition.

CTP issues 5000 challans on helmet violations

MULTAN (APP): City Traffic Police (CTP) has launched a special crackdown against violators of helmets and issued 5000 challans to violators during the last three days besides various other actions on traffic rules violations in the city.

Talking to APP here on Sunday, Spokesman to CTP Muhammad Adnan said that following the instructions of the provincial government, the CTP taking all possible measures to control road accidents and ensure uninterrupted traffic flow in the city.

He said, "The department has launched a special crackdown against motorcyclists without wearing helmets as it has been observed that most of the casualties in road mishaps are caused by head injuries due to missing helmets."

Adnan maintained that the Chief Traffic Officer Muhammad Naeem Shahid has directed the force to launch a comprehensive

crackdown against motorcyclists without helmets.

He urged officials to ensure the implementation of instructions in which the use of helmets had been made compulsory to prevent mishaps. He informed, "CTP officials have issued 5000 challans to violators

and collected a fine of Rs one million from them during the last three days." He said, "Keeping in view the intensity of the issue, the district government has also imposed a ban on petrol pumps and directed them not to provide petrol to motorcyclists without helmets."

Excise Dept foils smuggling of fake cigarettes, two held

MULTAN (APP): Excise, Taxation and Narcotics department, in an operation on Sunday foiled the bid to smuggle fake cigarettes worth over Rs 10 million by apprehending two outlaws near Bahawalpur bypass. The Excise team led by Excise Inspector Malik Hassan Abbas checked a vehicle near Bahawalpur bypass and found fake cigarettes by arresting two outlaws. The high officials were informed about it. FBA intelligence team reached the office and took the outlaws and the vehicle along with cigarettes into custody. The Excise Inspector told media persons that fake cigarettes were being smuggled from Mardan to Bahawalpur and Chowk Munda areas. Director Excise Iftikhar Ahmad Bhali told APP that the Excise teams handed over the smuggled items to the Customs department. He said that the Excise department was going to launch crackdown against narcotics and all Excise and Taxation Officers were directed to take action.



Voting underway in Uzbekistan's Presidential Elections

TASHKENT (APP): The voting process of the Presidential Elections of Uzbekistan is underway as polling began at 10,784 polling stations at 8:00 a.m. and will end at 8:00 p.m. local time across the country.

According to the Central Election Commission of Uzbekistan, the polling stations opened at 8 o'clock in all constituencies for elections of the President.

In addition, 56 polling stations established at the Representation of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 39 foreign countries have started working, in particular the polling stations in the eastern countries.

Early voting, which took place from June 28 to July 5 this year, was used by 815,313 voters, of whom 180,729 voted abroad and 634,584 - inside the country.

The list of voters includes more than 19.5 million citizens (19 593 838) citizens which include 53 percent women and 47 men as per data available from the Central Election Commission. Four candidates are taking part in the election and contesting for President of Uzbekistan which include Ulugbek Inoyatov from the People's Democratic Party, Shavkat Mirziyoyev from UzLiDeP Party, Robakhon Mahmudova from "Adolat" Social Democratic Party and Abdushukur Hmazayev from the Ecological Party of Uzbekistan.



It is pertinent to mention here that fifteen international organizations and a total of about eight hundred international observers from 47 countries are directly observing the elections. More than 53,000 local observers from political parties that have nominated presidential candidates and from citizens' self-governing bodies are directly observing the elections. A total of 1,400 local and foreign media representatives are covering the elections.

The Central Election Commission has no information on violations of electoral legislation during the voting process so far.

According to the updated Constitution, the candidate who wins the election will hold office for the next 7 years. The Central Election Commission would announce the decision on the results of the presidential election on its official website and other sources no later than 10 days after the election.

France protesters defy bans to rally against police violence

PARIS (AFP/APP): Around 2,000 people defied a ban to join a memorial rally in central Paris Saturday for a young black man who died in police custody, while marches took place throughout France to denounce police brutality, as tensions run high after days of rioting engulfed the country.

Nationwide, around 5,900 people took to the streets, according to the interior ministry.

Seven years after the death of Adama Traore, his sister had planned to lead an annual commemorative march north of Paris in Persan and Beaumont-sur-Oise. But fearful of reigniting recent unrest sparked by the police killing of 17-year-old Nahel M. at a traffic stop near Paris, a court ruled the chance of public disturbance was too high to allow the march to proceed.

In a video posted on Twitter, Assa Traore, Adama's older sister, denounced the decision.

"The government has decided to add fuel to the fire" and "not to respect the death of my little brother", she said.

She instead attended a rally in central Paris's Place de la Republique.

"We are marching for the

youth to denounce police violence. They want to hide our deaths," she said at the rally, also attended by several lawmakers.

"They authorise marches by neo-Nazis but they don't allow us to march. France cannot give us moral lessons. Its police is racist and violent," she said.

Worried about a resurgence of rioting as France celebrates Bastille Day on July 14, Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne told the daily Le Parisien that the government would deploy "massive means to protect the French" during the national holiday.

While she said Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin would give specifics, Borne announced a ban on the sale of fireworks, which had been used by rioters to target police. The Paris rally for Traore had also been banned on the grounds that it could disrupt public order and a legal case has been opened against Assa Traore for organising the event, police said.

Youssef Traore, another of Assa Traore's brothers, was arrested and taken into custody on suspicion of violence against a person holding public authority, public prosecutors told

AFP. "The march went off peacefully, it was a success, we don't understand his arrest," Assa Traore said.

Jean-Luc Melnchon, leader of the hard-left France Unbowed party, castigated the government.

"From prohibition to repression... the leader is taking France to a regime we have already seen. Danger. Danger," he tweeted, referring to the World War II regime of Vichy leader Philippe Petain who collaborated with the Nazis.

Many at the rally shouted "Justice for Nahel" before calmly dispersing later in the afternoon.

Around 30 demonstrations against police violence also took place across France, including in the southern port city of Marseille and Strasbourg in the east. Authorities in Lille banned a gathering.

Several trade unions, political parties and associations had called on supporters to join the march for Traore as France reels from allegations of institutionalised racism in its police ranks following Nahel M.'s shooting on June 27.

Traore, who was 24 years old, died shortly after his arrest in 2016, sparking

several nights of unrest that played out similarly to the week-long rioting that erupted across the country in the wake of the point-blank shooting of Nahel.

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) -- 18 independent experts -- on Friday asked France to pass legislation defining and banning racial profiling and questioned "excessive use of force by law enforcement".

The foreign ministry on Saturday disputed what it called "excessive" and "unfounded" remarks by the panel.

"Any ethnic profiling by law enforcement is banned in France," the ministry responded, adding that "the struggle against excesses in racial profiling has intensified". Far-right parties have linked the most intense and widespread riots France has seen since 2005 to mass migration and have demanded curbs on new arrivals.

More than 3,700 people have been taken into police custody in connection with the protests since Nahel's death, including at least 1,160 minors, according to official figures.

18 killed in West Bengal panchayat elections violence

WEST BENGAL (INP): At least 18 people were killed in eight districts of West Bengal on Saturday during three-tier panchayat elections in 20 districts amid reports of widespread violence, snatching of ballot papers and rigging.

According to Indian media, overall death toll in elections violence rose to 37 after Saturday's killings.

However, polling was peaceful in Darjeeling and Kalimpong, the two hilly districts that have two-tier panchayats. The election commission was criticised for violence as it opposed the idea of deploying additional forces for smooth conduct of polling. In a state where violence at the booth level is deeply seeped in the political culture, the election watchdog ought to have been much more competent and serious about its responsibility.

In the 2018 panchayat polls, 23 people died across Bengal, with 12 of them losing their lives on the day of polling. The results are scheduled to be announced on July 11 but the Opposition, including the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the CPI (M) and the Congress, demanded a repoll at a large number of polling booths. The Congress moved the Calcutta high court seeking action against state election commissioner (SEC) Rajiva Sinha who was earlier pulled up by the court for not taking enough steps to stop pre-poll violence that claimed 19 lives between June 8 and July 7.

"The TMC (Trinamool Congress) has killed democracy today. They have looted votes everywhere. The TMC has already won the panchayat election," state Congress president Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, who is the Lok Sabha parliamentarian from Berhampore, said. In 2013, two years after the TMC came to power for the first time, 15 people died during a multi-phase panchayat election.

Although the high court, while acting on a petition filed by BJP leader

Suvendu Adhikari, ordered on June 15 that the SEC must deploy 822 companies of central armed police forces (CAPF) across all 22 districts, only 649 companies reached the state on time, state police officials said.

Voters and opposition parties alleged that the CAPF were not deployed in sensitive areas on Saturday. A Punjab Police contingent reached Kolkata after the elections were over since trains were running late, a state police officer said on condition of anonymity.

Among those who died on Saturday, at least 11 were supporters of the ruling TMC, even as officials indicated that some of those casualties were a result of internecine battles between Trinamool workers while in several instances clashes were reported between TMC men and those from other parties. Cooch Behar district in north Bengal — where the BJP performed well in the 2019 Lok Sabha and the 2021 assembly polls — witnessed the deaths of two BJP workers and a TMC supporter. In south Bengal's Malda district, two TMC supporters and an unidentified man were killed. The adjoining Murshidabad district, which has the state's highest Muslim population, saw the deaths of three TMC workers, a CPI(M) supporter and a voter.

Calling the election "a farce", BJP's Adhikari said, "Only imposition of Article 366 of the Constitution can protect people's right to franchise in West Bengal." TMC state general secretary Kunal Ghosh and minister Sashi Panja claimed that elections in 14 districts were peaceful, and the violence was restricted to areas around just 60 of the state's 61,636 polling booths.

"Violence took place in only 60 polling booth areas and the big incidents were restricted to only 8-9 booths. These were part of a conspiracy against Bengal and the TMC. Will

TMC kill its own men? Those who want to impose President's rule in Bengal should immediately visit Manipur where hundreds have died in ethnic clashes since May but the Centre has done nothing," said Ghosh. Rajiva Sinha did not make any statement on the deaths and the alleged rigging till Saturday evening. The state police, too, did not officially comment on the violence.

The spate of violence on Saturday showed that opposition workers tried to violently counter the TMC before the crucial Lok Sabha polls next year.

At least five people died and as many as 40 people sustained bullet and bomb injuries between late Friday night and Saturday afternoon in Murshidabad district. Most of the injured were rushed to Murshidabad Medical College and Hospital in Berhampore town. The first victim of Saturday's violence in the state was TMC worker Babar Ali, 45, who died in the Beldanga area of Murshidabad. Police said he was talking to fellow party workers in front of his house on Friday night when he was attacked by some armed men. He died in hospital in the early hours of Saturday. The TMC alleged that the Congress was behind the incident, a charge the latter denied. Parties circulated videos of violent incidents from polling day on social media and blamed each other for the clashes. The polls were held for 63,229 gram panchayat seats, 9,730 panchayat samiti seats and 928 zilla parishad seats. The number of eligible voters was 56.7 million. More than 9.5% of the panchayat seats across all three tiers were won uncontested, mostly by the TMC, data released by the SEC after the withdrawal of nomination papers showed last month. This indicated a huge dip since 2018 when the ruling party drew flak for winning 90% seats, of which 34% were uncontested.

Murder of Sikh leader sparks dueling protests in Toronto

TORONTO (INP): A few hundred members of Canada's Sikh community demonstrated outside the Indian consulate in Toronto on Saturday to protest the unsolved murder of one of their leaders last month in the Vancouver area.

They accused the Indian government of being responsible for the gunning down of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, president of a Sikh temple and campaigner for the creation of an independent Sikh state that supporters hope to call Khalistan.

"When an Indian agency and system commit a crime, they have to be held accountable," Kuljeet Singh, spokesperson for Sikhs for Justice, a US-based organization behind the rally, told media.

Nijjar, whom India had declared a wanted terrorist, was gunned down on June 18 in Surrey, a suburb of Vancouver that is home to one of the largest Sikh populations in Canada. Another protestor, Hakirt Singh, a lawyer, told media that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) "should investigate this murder" as a political assassination.

"When there is vandalism against a member of Parliament you see tweets and reactions from politicians. Here it is an assassination of a Canadian citizen on Canadian soil. That is foreign interference."

Nijjar advocated for the creation of an independent Sikh state to be carved out of parts of northern India and perhaps part of

Pakistan. India accused Nijjar of carrying out terrorist attacks in India, a charge he denied. The demonstrators, almost exclusively men, carried yellow flags with blue logos representing their separatist movement, and shouted "Khalistan! Khalistan!" Setting off from the Toronto suburbs, they arrived in front of the Indian consulate, where they were greeted by around 50 members of the diaspora in support of the Indian government.

"They have a poster here calling to kill Indian diplomats. We are concerned because these groups have committed terrorist acts in the past and politicians are not taking actions," one of the counterdemonstrators, Vijay Jain, an IT consultant, told media. A line of 20 policemen intervened to separate the two groups, and one Sikh protester was taken away after forcing down a barrier and running to the other side.

Since the murder of the Sikh leader, tensions have risen between Canada and India. New Delhi regularly accuses Ottawa of laxity in its handling of Sikh protesters in Canada. "We have asked the Canadian government to take all necessary measures to ensure the safety of our diplomats," Arindam Bagchi, spokesman for India's foreign minister, said on Thursday. Canada is home to the largest number of Sikhs outside their home state of Punjab, India.

Luis Sánchez: Mexico finds murdered journalist's body in Nayarit

NAYARIT (BBC): The body of a correspondent for one of Mexico's leading newspapers has been found in the western state of Nayarit, days after he was reported missing.

Luis Martín Sánchez Íñiguez, 59, worked for La Jornada and had been missing since Wednesday.

His death is being treated as murder linked to his work, in one of the most dangerous countries for journalists.

Mr Sánchez is one of three journalists to have been abducted in the state in recent days.

His body was found on Saturday in the village of El Ahuacate near the city of Tepic, the public prosecutor's office said - a day after his wife filed a missing person's report.

Two messages were attached to his chest, but the authorities have not revealed what they said.

It is thought Mr Sánchez was killed between 24 and 48 hours before his body was found.

His disappearance came a day after a teacher and former reporter went missing on his way to work. The whereabouts of the man, named as Osiris, remain unknown.

The third person to go missing was a man named Jonathan, who the authorities said was abducted on Friday but was later found

alive and "in a good state of health". Mr Sánchez's death has sparked outrage both in Mexico and internationally. The Mexican Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights has called for the authorities to clarify what happened.

"We demand justice for the Mexican journalists!" the group wrote on social media.

The Americas branch of the Committee to Protect Journalists is among the other rights groups that have also condemned the killing. Mr Sánchez is not the first journalist to be targeted in Mexico this year.

José Ramiro Araujo, a

news photographer, was killed in the northern state of Baja California in February. La Jornada said at least four other people have also been murdered.

Press freedom organisations have consistently ranked Mexico as one of the most dangerous countries for journalists to work.

Many of those targeted covered corruption or powerful drug cartels and campaigners say the killings are rarely fully investigated.

Nearly 150 journalists have been murdered there since 2000, according to the international advocacy group Reporters Without Borders.

ANKARA (AA/APP): More than a dozen people were killed in northern India over the last two days, as heavy rains continued to lash parts of the country, officials said on Sunday.

Authorities in the northern Himalayan state of Himachal Pradesh said on Sunday that three people died in a landslide in the Shimla district of the state.

Police said that various roads have been blocked for traffic after heavy rains caused landslides in the state and that there is "danger due to the increase in

the water level of rivers and drains."

India Meteorological Department said on Sunday that stations reported "heavy to very heavy rainfall during the last 24 hours."

The department records showed on Sunday that New Delhi recorded the highest single-day rainfall for July since 1982.

Delhi's Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Sunday people were very "upset" due to water logging and officers of all departments have been instructed "to cancel the Sunday holiday and get on

the ground."

Delhi's local fire and emergency officials said they attended 15 "house collapse calls" in the capital in which one woman died.

On Saturday, several parts of the capital were waterlogged also causing long traffic jams in the capital.

Mahesh Palawat, the vice president of Skymet, a private weather forecasting agency, told Anadolu that the intensity of the monsoon rains is more in northern India.

"There are heavy rains taking place in parts of

Has Janet Yellen's trip to Beijing improved US-China relations?

BEIJING (BBC): US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has just concluded a four-day trip to China, aimed at rebuilding bridges between the two countries. Was the trip to Beijing a success? Well, by one very basic metric, yes.

The US and China are once again talking to each other, face to face, politely and respectfully, if not warmly. It's a stark contrast to trans-Pacific communication during the Donald Trump administration, which was done largely via the megaphone of social media. The tone and the content from both sides is more positive and more measured. Ms Yellen said her trip would help to build a "resilient and productive channel of communication with China's new economic team". That should not be discounted. In March this

year, much of the top tier of China's government was replaced with men whose primary qualification is loyalty to leader Xi Jinping. Key among them is the country's new economic chief, He Lifeng. On Saturday Janet Yellen spent much of the day with Mr He. She said their talks had been "direct, substantive and productive", while admitting that the two sides had "significant disagreements".

Throughout her visit Ms Yellen sought to persuade her Chinese hosts that under President Joe Biden, America is not fundamentally hostile to China. "We do not see our relationship in terms of great power conflict", she said, and "we do not seek to decouple" our economies from each other. It appears the Biden administration is

trying to demonstrate that its China policy is not simply a continuation of the Trump administration's open hostility to Beijing. We are still waiting to hear from the Chinese side.

But as the saying goes, actions speak louder than words. And from Beijing's perspective, some recent actions of the Biden administration are anything but friendly. Key among them is the imposition of export controls on certain US microchips that are used in the development of artificial intelligence.

Far from being eased, the US is now moving to widen those restrictions to other high-tech exports to China, while leaning hard on its allies, from Japan to Germany, to the Netherlands, not to supply China with the means to make the most cutting-edge

microchips. America's motivation is simple: It doesn't want China to have easy access to American technologies that could give it an edge in things like AI, and in military technologies that could one day be used against the US in a future conflict over, for example, Taiwan. All of this means that while dialogue has reopened, and looks set to accelerate in the coming months, the process is delicate. Progress made in the last few days could very easily be knocked back by another "spy balloon" incident, or a close call between US and Chinese naval ships or aircraft. Even the most optimistic experts believe this is now a very difficult relationship that will require careful, long-term management by both sides in order to keep it stable.

Climate change challenges hydropower-dependent Austria

KAPRUN, AUSTRIA (AFP/APP): High in the Austrian Alps, hundreds of construction workers toil in a huge underground project aimed at storing hydropower as climate change has reduced the country's water-dependent electricity production.

Austria draws more than 60 percent of its electricity output from the renewable energy source, compared to a global average of 16 percent, with more than 3,100 dams spread across its rivers. But the amount of electricity generated through hydropower in the European Union country is down -- from some 45 ter-

awatt hours (TWh) in 2020 to 42 TWh in 2021 -- as water levels are falling.

For the first time last year, Austria -- which also still relies heavily on Russian gas -- had to import electricity, ringing alarm bells.

Inside the snow-capped mountain range, above the Austrian village of Kaprun in the Salzburg region, trucks thunder in and out of the vast subterranean construction site, which is dotted with statues of Saint Barbara, patron of miners and others playing dangerous trades.

Excavation work for the Limberg 3 pumped storage

power plant is wrapping up. The plant is to be operational by 2025 to store power in order to cater to peaks in electricity consumption and mitigate a change in weather patterns, including increasingly capricious and irregular rainfall. "We want to be prepared well," said Klaus Hebenstreit, an executive of main electricity producer Verbund.

"The distribution (of water) over the year will change: we will have less water in summer (due to drought) and more in winter" due to snow melt, he added. Two years of drought have hit Austria, like the rest of Europe, according to Roman Neunteufel, a senior researcher at Vienna's University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences. "If there are several dry years in a row, then this becomes very noticeable..." Water levels have never been lower since records began" some 100 years ago, he said.

Europe should brace for more deadly heatwaves driven by climate change, said a report last month by the World Meteorological Organization and the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service.

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Ukraine on world scene

The United Nations has strongly condemned the conflict in Ukraine which has marked 500 days and cast more than 9,000 civilians, including 500 children since Russia launched its so-called special military operation against Ukraine on February 24, 2022. According to the UN's Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU), the actual toll is likely to be far higher than the number of officially confirmed deaths. Russia regularly bombards Ukraine with air attacks, including indiscriminate artillery and missile fire that has been especially deadly for civilians. Russia has also attacked civilian infrastructure and supply lines, depriving civilians of power and water.

The war in Ukraine has marked another grim milestone by reaching the 500th day of Moscow's invasion against Kyiv which continues to exert a horrific toll on Ukraine's civilians, government infrastructure as well as the global economy, and overall human life in most parts of the world. The Russians' indiscriminate use of power including air and drone attacks, missile strikes and artillery shelling has turned the highrise building, and civilians' infrastructure into rubble, while reports and images of Ukrainian cities shocked the world and prompted allegations of war crimes and genocide. The population centers and industrial complexes portray scenes of ruins, while the electricity and communication networks have completely collapsed in a majority of the cities in Eastern Ukraine. Currently, Millions of Ukrainians are displaced from their homes and most of them living in their country have no access to food, water, electricity, healthcare, and other necessities of life.

The year-long unpaused war has exhausted both countries and fear of a nuclear disaster becoming most imminent with every passing movement, as both belligerent nations had accused each other of planning to attack/ sabotage the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, which is one of the world's largest atomic power plants located near Zaporizhzhia, Ukrainian but occupied by the Russian forces since early days of the war. Historically, no dialogue window had ever been opened by the warring nations to give a chance for peace and diplomacy, however, both sides look to improve their grip over the war and for that purpose, Russians have increased the frequency and lethality of their attacks while Ukraine and its allies are preparing to launch a fresh counteroffensive to recapture the Kyiv's landmass from Russian control. An attempted mutiny by the Russian mercenary Chief exposed the cracks in the Russian line of defense and the rift between the top Russian military Commanders and Moscow's most lethal arm the Wagner group, which prompted Western allies to avail the opportunity to their advantage. Amid such war scenarios and geopolitical dynamics in Eastern Europe, the Biden administration announced sending cluster munitions to Kyiv to support Ukraine's war efforts against Moscow.

Interestingly, Putin's so-called Special Military operation could not denazify Kyiv but caused the worst economic effect on Russian and Ukrainian economics over the past 500 days. Russia bombed Ukraine's civil, military, and industrial infrastructure to destroy its enemy and blocked Kyiv grain exports by imposing a blockade of Ukrainian seaports in the Blacksea. According to the reports, Ukraine's economy shrunk by 29.1% in 2022, while poverty has sharply increased from 5.5% to 24.2% during this time, which pushed 7.1 million Ukrainians below the poverty line. On the other hand, western allies slapped a heavy economic and monetary cost on Kremlin by leveling economic sanctions and other punitive measures against Russian businesses, government entities, and individuals. According to the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Russian military expenditures had been increased many times, and its economy has narrowed by over 2% because of the freezing of billions of dollars in assets in Western banks, trade embargos, decrease in exports, and economic sanctions by the United States and allies. This negative trend in both competing economies is most likely to continue in the coming months as no pause is seemingly visible in the conflict in Ukraine.

In fact, the Ukraine war has taught several lessons to the world nations, particularly the hegemony who have most proud of their power and often coerce their neighbors on one or other pretext. To those who interfere in the domestic affairs of other nations in the garb of human rights and democracy and those who illegally occupied weak societies by force and coercion. That poking nose in other nations does not give favorable results all the time, while this habit sometimes costs your self-respect and autonomy as happened in the distasteful US withdrawal from Afghanistan and Russia's recurrent setbacks in the war in Ukraine. Although the war has brought unprecedented suffering and misery to the people of Ukraine, their sacrifices would not go in vain. Putin's fall has begun with the recent revolt by the Russian mercenary group and surely this internal discontentment, and frustration will lead to the cessation of Putin's long-held rule in Russia. As nature has a proven rule, there is a downfall after a rise and no one has an exception from it. Therefore, belligerent nations must restrict their hegemonism, and respect others' sovereignty if they need peace and prosperity for their people and the region.

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France should stop and think before stop and search

Yossi Mekelberg

France appears to be calming down after nearly a week of violent protests in response to a police officer fatally shooting a 17-year-old known only as Nahel M., of north African descent, in the Paris suburb of Nanterre, during a botched traffic stop.

This tragic incident and the riots that followed have all the hallmarks of the broken relations between minority groups and not only the police, but to a large extent the rest of French society and its other sources of authority. And this is far from being a phenomenon confined to France. Nothing better represents what members of minority groups, mainly young men, resent about the police, than being stopped and often searched in numbers disproportionate to their presence in society.

We may never know the full details of what happened in the fateful moments between Nahel's car being stopped by two police officers, the exchange of words, the decision by Nahel to drive off — maybe because he did not have a valid driving license — and the subsequent shooting that led to his death. One can only hope that a thorough investigation will be conducted which will allow us to understand what exactly took place, and that justice will be done. But nothing so far suggests that there was any good reason for a police officer to open fire on Nahel, let alone shoot to kill.

However, the slaying of a 17-year-old and the looting and vandalism that followed should not distract France, and other countries with large ethnic minorities, from the fact that at the heart of what took place is the absence of any genuine integration of minority groups into the wider society, and that these communi-

ties remain marginalized and discriminated against. The practice of stop and search symbolizes more than almost anything else the suspicion in which ethnic minorities are held. This is because stop and search is more than a mere crime prevention exercise; it is also a form of harassment and sometimes of police brutality against minority communities.

A spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ravina Shamdasani, expressed her hope that “(t)his is a moment for (France) to seriously address the deep issues of racism and discrimination in law enforcement.” This is a statement that strongly resonates with similar feelings expressed by the Black Lives Matter movement in the US, and the Macpherson report in the UK which, following the racist murder of a black teenager, Stephen Lawrence, by a group of white thugs in London in 1993, called the police response to the teenager's killing “institutionally racist.”

Both remarks, almost a quarter century apart, encapsulate something way deeper than the presence of a few rotten apples within the police force; as Macpherson concluded, it was a collective failure of the police “to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their color, culture or ethnic origin.” Such things happen because different aspects of policing, whether they be processes, attitudes or behavior, are tainted by deliberate or unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness or racial stereotyping.

Denial also exacerbates the situation, as it does not create the necessary space for the police force to change. Thus, in response to Shamdasani's criticism

the French Foreign Ministry released a statement rejecting the UN's accusation of racism among the ranks of its police, and claimed: “Any accusation of racism or systemic discrimination in the police force in France is totally unfounded.” However, there is mounting evidence that minorities are stopped by police disproportionately more than white people, and they are also treated as being a priori guilty of involvement in lawbreaking merely because of the color of their skin.

The findings of a recent EU Agency for Fundamental Rights paper clearly demonstrate this prejudice. It found that in some countries police stopped as much as 50 percent of people from certain minorities, and searched or asked 34 percent of ethnic minorities for their identity papers, compared to 14 percent of people generally. Government statistics in the UK suggest that black people are seven times more likely to be stopped and searched than white people. Those are staggering figures, which leave minority groups, especially the young, feeling that the police are not there to ensure their safety and security, but instead to surveil them and protect those with the “right” color from those with the “wrong” color.

The UK Home Secretary Suella Braverman, who ticks all the wrong boxes when it comes to making minorities feel at home, recently called on all police forces in England and Wales to increase the use of stop and search, despite knowing full well that this is bound to create tension and make members of minority groups less likely to cooperate with the police.

But as with most of her actions, she is hoping to

appeal to the far right in her constituency and her party in her ambition to become leader of the Conservative Party.

It is not simply a matter of using or avoiding these methods in curbing crime, but as much about educating police officers in how to put them into practice with the necessary sensitivity and awareness of how it affects those who are stopped. There can be no justification for the riots that followed the death of Nahel, but they have sent a clear message about the challenges that multicultural societies face. After all, being part of a minority involves being constantly reminded by the majority that you are different, you are not necessarily welcome, and you should feel fortunate to be here. This is even if you were born here, or your ancestors were forced to come to the country. And to suffer disparaging comments about yourself, your culture, and your family's country of origin, while on average you are poorer, might live in a slum, and struggle to find opportunities for social mobility.

The eruption of violence we witnessed in France last week might be the actions of a small minority, but the resentment is widespread, derived from a very real feeling that they are condemned to suffer throughout their lives because they belong to an ethnic minority. For this to improve it is not only for the police to change, but it is also for all of society to look itself in the mirror, and question the embedded nature of its racism.

The legacy of the sad, unnecessary killing of Nahel should be a complete reassessment of the treatment of people from minority groups, one that aims to give everyone a sense of equal belonging in their societies, which is currently far from being the case.

What to expect from Erdogan's tour of three Gulf countries

Sinem Cengiz

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan will soon embark on a tour of Gulf states that will include visits to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE. Türkiye has a different relationship with each of these countries, sharing economic interests and political concerns.

The first visit is likely to be to the UAE, following last month's visit by Turkish Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek and Vice President Cevdet Yilmaz. The UAE was the first country they visited after Erdogan formed a new Cabinet. A high-ranking Emirati delegation reciprocated the visit to set the ground for the president's upcoming trip, which is likely to result in the signing of several deals between Ankara and Abu Dhabi, particularly on investment cooperation. Erdogan's last trip to the UAE was in February last year, after a rapprochement between two countries.

The focus of the two-day talks between the Turkish and Emirati delegations was on renewable energy, transport, defense and trade. The UAE may be interested in investing in the Istanbul metro project and the high-speed train between Istanbul and Ankara.

In March, Ankara signed an agreement to double its trade volume with the UAE, underlining the growing economic ties between the two countries. After the Turkish elections in May, Türkiye and the UAE ratified a free trade deal signed in March to increase trade between two countries to \$40 billion in the next five years. The UAE may invest up to \$30 billion in Türkiye, and a target of doubling Türkiye's exports to the UAE from \$5 billion to \$10 billion was also set.

The Turkish government has set a goal of attracting \$25 billion in investments from Gulf states using methods such as privatization and acquisitions. Transport and Infrastructure Minister Abdulkadir Uraloglu said Türkiye was negotiating with Gulf Arab countries to sell the operating rights for Alsancaik Port in the Aegean city of Izmir, in what would be the first major deal in Türkiye's push for foreign investment under its new economic team. Uraloglu did not disclose any Gulf country that could be a potential buyer.

However, the Gulf states have emerged as potential candidates to fill the investment gap in Türkiye, prompting the president's visit. It is likely to take place after the NATO summit in Lithuania on July 11-12. Simsek said would bring some investment deals between two countries, without providing further details. His visit to the UAE was described as “productive,” and the topics dis-

cussed then will be finalized on Erdogan's visit.

Simsek's ministerial appointment was welcomed by the Gulf investors, who considered it a market-friendly move five years after he resigned from a similar role. He has played a key role in devising the implementation of what he's called “rational” policies and he promises to restore “predictability” to the Turkish economy, which is what the Gulf countries seek. A few weeks before his appointment, I ran into Simsek in a mall in Qatar and we had a brief chat about his visit. He was on a working trip to Doha, following his visits to Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Simsek has strong business connections in the Gulf countries, which is now helping Türkiye to find a way out of its troubling economic condition. As a positive outcome, Qatar, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia are providing much-needed foreign currency to the Turkish central bank through swap agreements and direct deposits.

Türkiye considers the Gulf countries key partners in fields such as trade, economics, energy and defense. However, economic stability and trade opportunities are not the sole driving force behind Turkish policy to strengthen its ties: regional security concerns and the diplomatic normalization climate have also pushed Ankara to bring relations back on track.

Despite being on opposite pages for a decade on some regional issues, Türkiye and the Gulf states still share concerns about instability in Syria, Yemen, Libya and Iraq. Although Iran is pursuing a fresh diplomatic outreach to the Gulf countries, marking a new era in regional politics, its proxies still pose threats to Turkish and Gulf interests across the region. Most importantly, the diplomatic normalization climate allowed Türkiye to get rid of its image as the odd man out in the region as it opened the door for re-establishing relations with its former regional foes, in particular Egypt. This week, Ankara and Cairo exchanged ambassadors for the first time in a decade to restore normal diplomatic relations. The move was welcomed by both Saudi Arabia and the UAE as being important for regional stability.

Mutual economic interests and political concerns are likely to strengthen Türkiye's ties with Gulf countries as it seeks to diversify its economic partners, counter security threats and enhance its position in the region. However, it is not bed of roses, Ankara will have to walk a thin line with diverse actors while pursuing both regional ambitions and domestic economic goals.

Climate change cooperation could curb chill in China-EU ties

Andrew Hammond

The conventional wisdom about the ongoing chill in China-EU ties, which dates back to at least the COVID-19 pandemic, is that it may now be irreversible. However, not all of the bilateral relationship is in the deep freeze.

For at least a decade, Beijing and Brussels have had very fruitful bilateral conversations on global warming issues. So much so, in fact, that the EU Emissions Trading System was very influential in China's design of its own carbon markets.

European Commission Vice President Frans Timmermans, who heads up green policy for the EU, highlighted this warmth in 2021 when referring to the “good partnership” in this area. In recent days, during his latest visit to Beijing for the EU-China High-level Environment and Climate Dialogue, it is therefore perhaps unsurprising that Timmermans said he is “convinced that China is willing to go in the right direction” in tackling climate change, despite growing concerns to the contrary. Its critics have included

nongovernmental organizations such as Greenpeace, which highlighted this week that Beijing has approved a major surge in coal power this year, with the fear that it is prioritizing energy supply over reducing greenhouse gas emissions. China relied on coal for nearly 60 percent of its electricity in 2022 (official plans have called for boosting coal production capacity by 300 million tons), at least the third consecutive year of growth. And the further increase in approvals for coal-fired power plants has added to worries that China might backtrack on its ambitions to peak emissions between 2026 and 2030 before achieving carbon neutrality by 2060.

EU decision-makers such as Timmermans are acutely aware of China's challenge here. They appear to have concluded that the best way to incentivize their counterparts in Beijing on this agenda is encouragement, rather than condemnation.

The European assumption is that Beijing needs to be in the tent on climate issues rather than left out-

side. China is by a long way the largest national emitter of greenhouse gases (accounting for about a third of global emissions) and international action to tackle climate change is greatly weakened without Beijing on board.

Many EU officials have long believed that, fundamentally, Chinese policymakers share a vision with Europe of a prosperous, energy-secure future in a stable climate and recognize the need for bilateral collaboration. After all, global warming poses a massive environmental threat to China, from record-setting heat waves to flooding.

In recent days, China's main climate center announced that the first half of 2023 has seen a record number of high-temperature days. Beijing last month recorded its hottest June day ever and much of northern China endured temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius. Meanwhile, sustained heavy rainfall in central and southern areas has caused

severe flooding in recent days, with more than 14,000 people forced to evacuate their homes in Hunan Province alone.

The centerpiece of EU-China cooperation on this agenda is the 2015 EU-China climate change declaration, which was one of the key drivers of the global warming deal agreed in Paris in December of that year. Under this declaration, both parties agreed to cooperate on developing a cost-effective low-carbon economy, including intensifying cooperation on domestic mitigation policies, carbon markets, low-carbon cities, greenhouse gas emissions from the aviation and maritime industries, and hydrofluorocarbons.

Amid all the challenges around climate change, both Chinese and EU policymakers still see — with the appropriate vision and commitment — the potential for massive win-win opportunities on the horizon as a result of accelerating the transition to a low-carbon future. And this col-

laboration looks set to deepen, including on emissions trading, with Beijing's rollout of a nationwide emissions trading system.

China's planned investment in the green economy is staggering — a fact that the EU is increasingly recognizing. For instance, China is the world's biggest and fastest-growing producer of renewable energy and it aims to make a third of its total power supply renewable by 2025. This investment is buttressed by Beijing's policy commitments on the climate, clean air and energy agendas.

Europe has clear strengths in this area that China needs. As the latter continues on a trajectory to potentially become the world's largest economy, there are thus substantial commercial opportunities for European-based players.

European technology and science firms are leaders on much of this clean technology agenda. For instance, as the UK renews its own energy infrastructure, the opportunities for its companies in China are

enormous.

Importantly, this collaboration will not just be one-way traffic. Indeed, China is already the world's largest manufacturer and user of solar panels and the largest investor in renewable energy, and it is increasingly possible that the technology transfer will be a two-way process.

There is still a long way to go before China has a full-fledged carbon market and both parties have yet to lock in new low-carbon standards in key industrial sectors. However, the direction of travel is clear: Cooperation could build low-carbon industries in a range of sectors and also align Europe more closely to the world's future largest economy.

Taken together, it is therefore clear that both the EU and China have much to gain from a deep partnership on this agenda, but the window of opportunity to collaborate may not remain open indefinitely. So, now is the time to intensify cooperation and help define the landscape of the 21st century's clean energy economy.

The future of our planet depends on the success of COP28

In November and December, Dubai will host COP28, a major event bringing together the representatives of 199 parties (198 countries plus the EU) with the shared objective of accelerating the energy transition and the fight against global warming by ambitiously raising the targets set by the Paris Agreement in 2015.

From mountain peaks to ocean depths, climate change continued its progression in 2022. The environmental issue is becoming a global concern and, above all, is anxiety-provoking because it is all about the survival of humanity.

Antarctic sea ice has reached its lowest level on record and the melting of some European glaciers has surpassed records. Droughts, floods and heat waves have affected communities on every continent and cost billions of dollars.

In March, the World Meteorological Organization published an alarming report. It stated that a disaster of meteorological, climatic or hydrological origin had been recorded on average once a day over the past 50 years, leading to the deaths of 115 people every day and damage amounting to \$202 million.

According to the organization's Atlas of Mortality and Economic Losses from Extreme Weather, Climate and Water Events (1970-2019), more than 11,000 disasters attributed to these events were reported during these five decades around the world. These caused a total of just over 2 million deaths and property damage amounting to \$3.64 trillion.

In 2017, the US experienced three natural disasters that between them accounted for 35 percent of all economic losses attributable to the 10 worst disasters in the world between 1970 and 2019.

We cannot address the question of the survival of humanity without addressing the issue of water. Water consumption is expected to increase further, and already half the planet already lacks drinking water. Today, no less than 900 million people have no access to safe drinking water, 2.5 billion have little access to sanitation and 1.2 billion have no access to water sanitation.

Unfortunately, the problem of water shortage is not linked to global warming alone. Other factors contributing to water scarcity include conflicts, particularly in Syria, Yemen and Sudan. The humanitarian and environmental disaster caused by the destruction last month of the Kakhovka Dam in the Kherson region of Ukraine is a sad illustration of this.

Other factors include the migration of populations from rural to urban areas, population growth, poor water management, the deterioration of water infrastructure and very intensive agriculture.

This dysfunctional water cycle is already taking its toll. On every continent, families, farms, factories and businesses are affected.

Nathalie Goulet

tural region in southern Spain where the level of water reserves is already worryingly low.

Finally, when water is not scarce, it is often polluted. The pollution of water resources is characterized by the presence of microorganisms, chemical substances and even industrial

rather than “phase out,” the use of coal power, making that meeting a resounding failure.

The preparations ahead of this year's COP28 offer a chance to reflect on the ambitious objectives of the Paris Agreement and to take stock of the support provided by rich countries to developing countries. Indeed, seven COPs on

In the Spanish region of Andalusia in May, 26 people were arrested for stealing water to irrigate avocado and mango trees. Nearly 26 million cubic meters of water have been stolen from some 250 illegal wells in the Axarquia, an agricultural region in southern Spain where the level of water reserves is already worryingly low. Finally, when water is not scarce, it is often polluted. The pollution of water resources is characterized by the presence of microorganisms, chemical substances and even industrial waste. It can concern rivers, water tables and brackish water, but also rainwater, dew, snow and polar ice. It is in this context of climate tension and environmental emergency that the 28th UN Climate Change Conference will take place in Dubai — and the future of our planet depends on its success. We all have in mind the painful memory of Alok Sharma, the president of COP26 in Glasgow, in tears following two weeks of negotiations that ended with a watered-down pledge to “phase down,” rather than “phase out,” the use of coal power, making that meeting a resounding failure. The preparations ahead of this year's COP28 offer a chance to reflect on the ambitious objectives of the Paris Agreement and to take stock of the support provided by rich countries to developing countries. Indeed, seven COPs on from the Paris Agreement and with seven years remaining until 2030, the time for the first global stocktake has come. In other words, the following three questions should be answered: Where are we, where do we want to go and how do we get there?

Every year, millions of people are displaced.

The scarcity of water is also a cause of the increase in delinquency. Indeed, its rarity, which earned it the name “blue gold,” began to generate the first offenses of fraudulent embezzlement of other people's property in Europe.

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waste. It can concern rivers, water tables and brackish water, but also rainwater, dew, snow and polar ice.

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It should be borne in mind that the first World Climate Conference was held in 1979 in Geneva, Switzerland. Nine years later, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was created to carry out regular assessments of the state of knowledge on the

planet's climatic changes.

Its first report in 1990 recognized human responsibility for climate change and it is in this context that the report served as support for the development of the 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The latter has been adopted by 198 signatory parties.

It was in 2015, on the occasion of COP21 in the French capital, that a legally binding international treaty on climate change was enshrined — the famous Paris Agreement. In its preamble, it states that the parties acknowledge that “climate change is a common concern of humankind (and) should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights.”

Article 2 of the agreement states the target of “holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change.” Finally, the Paris Agreement highlights a principle: “This agreement will be implemented to reflect equity and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances.”

What are the priorities of the Emirati presidency for COP 28? It aims to make the conference more inclusive and accessible; support mitigation solutions to increase ambitions; focus on the conditions of the Global Goal on Adaptation and improve adaptation financing; progress on the operationalization of the fund for loss and damage created at COP27; and ensure more equitable access to climate finance.

On May 23, in a letter addressed to US President Joe Biden, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, 130 members of the US Congress and the European Parliament demanded the withdrawal of the nomination of Sultan Al-Jaber to chair COP28 due to his role in the oil industry.

Critics of the choice of location for COP28 and the appointment of Al-Jaber see it as a provocation, insofar as entrusting the presidency of such an event to a representative of the oil lobby, one of the sectors responsible for the increase in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, is nonsensical. Shouldn't we, on the contrary, see it as a major positive development?

An unseen barrier to Arab prosperity

Hafed Al-Ghwell

Parts of the Arab world have — for a long time — grappled with myriad recurring challenges arising from protracted low economic growth and the intensifying social unrest that typically follows. A number of these issues were already well-known prior to the global pandemic that has since amplified these woes and made the prospect of sustained, long-term recovery extremely complicated. Each new challenge has only shrunk the political, fiscal, and governance capacities required to solve them, increasing the likelihood of runaway convergent crises that today's Arab societies are frankly ill-equipped to handle.

In a bid to chart a path forward, more priority is given to addressing the most destructive threats, but this comes at the expense of ignoring their amplifiers, such as unfettered access to reliable data. Transparent data aids not only in fashioning effective policies but also in nurturing trust between governments and their citizenry. In essence, closing data gaps and countries improving their statistical capacities are serious non-negotiables in the pursuit of economic expansion, sustainable development, and societal resilience throughout the Arab world.

It also makes monitoring progress and holding gov-

resilience to the complex threats inherent in an increasingly interconnected global economy. Statistical gaps hamper the ability to accurately measure and analyze economic performance, as well as to gain crucial feedback from top-down interventions. The end result is misguided policies running rampant at the risk of stagnation and, in the worst case, an implosion, at a time when informed decision-making is absolutely critical. For instance, Egypt's GDP growth rate had to be significantly revised downward in 2014 due to statistical discrepancies, which raised concerns about the reliability of its economic data.

Similarly, the decline in statistical capacity undermines societal resilience. Without timely and accurate data, it compounds the challenges of pinpointing social vulnerabilities and designing effective interventions to address them. For instance, without accurate data on unemployment rates, policymakers may underestimate or overlook the severity of joblessness, leading to inadequate job creation strategies. Similarly, without transparent data on poverty rates, efforts to alleviate poverty may be misguided or insufficient.

It also makes monitoring progress and holding gov-

Addressing the data transparency crisis in the Middle East and North Africa requires a nuanced yet multipronged approach that focuses on capacity-building and robust data-sharing agreements. Of course, such approaches are a significant departure from standard practice, but given the current climate it is now crucial for the region to bridge existing gaps, improve statistical capacities, and develop more accurate modeling. It is also important to note that the effectiveness of policies and the progress of economies are intrinsically tied to the quality and reliability of the data that is available. A region's ability to generate quality data can enable policymakers to make informed decisions, thereby fostering social and economic growth. Furthermore, the region's youth bulge, the explosion of digital skills, and the promotion of entrepreneurship present ripe opportunities for data-driven innovation. By enhancing the digital skills of the population, the innovative capacity of technology can be maximized, leading to more effective use of data for, and in, sustainable development, which is critical for resilience-building in a fast-changing world. In addition, data-sharing agreements are pivotal in promoting transparency as well as attitudes around it across the region beyond just data. These agreements can establish a culture of openness and collaboration, allowing for cross-validation, which can further enhance the reliability and credibility of information.

state of data transparency in the Arab world leaves much to be desired. Statistical capacities in several countries have significantly declined over the past few decades, impeding growth, undermining development, and threatening social stability. According to the World Bank's Statistical Capacity Indicator, for instance, many countries in the Middle East and North Africa region showed a downward trend in their statistical capacity, particularly between 2005 and 2018. And, according to the Open Data Inventory, which measures the coverage and openness of official statistics, Arab countries rank lower than their counterparts around the world.

This decline is largely attributable to underinvestment in statistical systems, political instability, and a lack of rigorous data-sharing protocols. It precipitated an estimated 7-14 percent loss in GDP per capita for the region over a 13-year period, which is roughly equivalent to a \$165 billion loss at minimum. While some countries have witnessed improvements to date, those marred by conflict or wrestling significant economic headwinds have not been as lucky.

If these disparities linger, they will continue to obstruct Arab governments from making informed decisions, thereby stunting economic growth and societal resilience. The implications of this decline are far-reaching, impacting everything from GDP growth to fostering

difficult, which can fuel an undercurrent of public angst, and lead to social unrest. The upheavals in 2011 and the chaotic decade that followed after, remain a case in point. In the absence of reliable socioeconomic data, grievances about inequality and corruption did not just escalate into widespread protests. They also destabilized several countries in the region and introduced new maladies that require even more quality data and greater access to it.

So, how does a region beset by numerous challenges address this costly invisible barrier? Addressing the data transparency crisis in the Middle East and North Africa requires a nuanced yet multipronged approach that focuses on capacity-building and robust data-sharing agreements. Of course, such approaches are a significant departure from standard practice, but given the current climate it is now crucial for the region to bridge existing gaps, improve statistical capacities, and develop more accurate modeling. It is also important to note that the effectiveness of policies and the progress of economies are intrinsically tied to the quality and reliability of the data that is available. A region's ability to generate quality data can enable policymakers to make informed decisions, thereby fostering social and economic growth.

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They will also facilitate better policy-making by ensuring that decisions are based on data that is accurate, comprehensive, and timely. Comparing performance with historical data and data from peer economies, for instance, enables producers to better assess risks, allocate resources optimally, and secure investments. Accessible data for civil society, moreover, paves the way for a more open and informed policy debate, ensuring only the most well-grounded ideas prevail, facilitating superior policy development and implementation in increas-

ingly sophisticated economies. Conversely, the absence of transparent data can broaden the perceived chasm between the public and the government. It breeds mistrust and skepticism when new reforms are announced, leading to societies resisting much-needed transformations, making them more susceptible to shocks both at home or abroad. By providing a clear and honest view of the situation at hand, accessibility to data not only allows policymakers to understand the nuances of the issues they are addressing. It also helps to create policies that are more responsive to the actual needs and conditions of the society, enhancing citizen participation and societal harmony. When citizens have access to transparent data, they are better equipped to engage in meaningful discussions about policies and issues that directly affect them. Engaging in more open dialogue between the government and its citizens fosters a sense of trust and mutual understanding. It also helps to create a more informed citizenry, which is essential for society to function, even when faced with unforeseen shocks. While the road to achieving full data transparency and accessibility might be challenging, the rewards it can bring in terms of effective policy-making and social cohesion are indeed promising. With concerted efforts, the vision of a transparent and inclusive society can surely be realized.

Why NATO must not forget about the Middle East

The leaders of the 31 NATO member states will meet in Vilnius, Lithuania, this coming week for the alliance's 2023 summit. The summit comes at an important time in terms of transatlantic security. Russia's invasion of Ukraine is well into its second year and Ukraine's counteroffensive has recently begun. The decisions taken at the summit could have a long-term impact on the overall stability of the transatlantic region and beyond.

Without a doubt, the primary focus of the summit will be Ukraine. In this context, expect two big issues to be discussed: future NATO membership and continued military support for Ukraine. Fifteen years ago, at the Bucharest NATO Summit in 2008, Ukraine was promised eventual membership in the alliance. Over the years, little progress has been made — mainly due to the reluctance of some countries, like Germany and France. In retrospect, leaving Ukraine in this geopolitical limbo was probably one of the factors that enticed Russia to invade. Had Ukraine been in NATO, Russia would unlikely have dared to attack.

Nobody should expect an invitation to be extended at the summit for Ukraine to join NATO. It would be impossible to find consensus among all 31 members to invite any country to join the alliance while it is fighting a war. Instead, expect

NATO to establish a roadmap that leads to eventual membership for Ukraine. Kyiv wants to join NATO immediately, so it remains to be seen if the alliance can provide a roadmap to membership that meets its reasonably high expectations.

Another issue that NATO members will discuss at the summit is the ongoing and long-term military support for Ukraine. Over the past 18 months, NATO members have been increasing the amount and types of weapons provided for Ukraine's self-defense. In February 2022, the debate was about sending Ukraine anti-tank weapons. Today, NATO members are sending Ukraine some of the most advanced tanks in the world. However, more contentious items, such as fighter jets and long-range rockets, have remained elusive for Kyiv. It is likely that NATO members will use the summit to discuss the possibility of providing Ukraine these more advanced weapons.

The issue of defense spending will also feature at the summit. Defense spending across Europe, or the lack thereof, is a perennial issue for the alliance. In 2006, NATO agreed that each member should meet the target of spending 2 percent of their gross domestic product on defense. However, in the subsequent years, very few members ever met this goal.

After Russia's annexa-

Luke Coffey

tion of Crimea in 2014, NATO set itself a new deadline of 2024 for its members to comply. Although defense spending across NATO has increased year on year since 2014, the overall situation remains dire. Last year, only seven members met the 2 percent benchmark for defense spending. While a few more members might reach the benchmark before next year's NATO summit in Washington, the vast majority will not. This will have long-term consequences for the overall health of the alliance.

Keep an eye on Sweden, too. Soon after Russia invaded Ukraine last year, both Finland and Sweden submitted applications to join NATO. For centuries, both countries maintained a position of military non-alignment — meaning neither would join military organizations like NATO. Russia's invasion of Ukraine changed this. In April, Finland was formally admitted into the alliance. However, Sweden's application has been held up over concerns Turkiye has over the Kurdistan Workers' Party's presence in the country. Behind the scenes, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg has been working closely with Turkish and Swedish leaders, trying to find a resolution to this impasse. Many will be watching to see if Sweden gets into the alliance at the upcoming

summit.

Readers of Arab News will naturally wonder if the Middle East and North Africa region will get any attention at the upcoming summit. Unfortunately, it probably will not. This is shortsighted on NATO's part. Whether it is regional terrorism emanating from extremist groups or the threat of nuclear proliferation in Iran, NATO members share many of the same security concerns as the countries of the MENA region. Furthermore, many of the countries in this region have demonstrated a willingness to cooperate with NATO and have even contributed troops to NATO-led missions in the past.

The alliance should be finding ways to build on these relationships. So far this year, there have been some positive developments regarding NATO-MENA engagement. Just last week, a senior delegation from Mauritania visited NATO headquarters in Brussels for talks about security developments in the Sahel. Last month, a senior NATO delegation traveled to Bahrain to discuss enhancing military cooperation. Meanwhile, other senior-level engagements with the region this year include Egypt, Tunisia and Jordan.

While the focus of the alliance must remain on the threats in Eastern Europe, there are a few easy things that NATO can do to enhance its engagement in the MENA region. These

Urban Unit, Competition Commission of Pakistan ink MoU to enhance cooperation

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Urban Unit and the Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance the professional expertise of both institutions by undertaking exchange and joint activities in the fields of training, research, data sharing and capacity building.

The MoU was signed by Muhammad Omar Masud, CEO of the Urban Unit and Ms. Rahat Kaunain Hassan, Chairperson of CCP. Senior officials from Urban Unit and CCP were in attendance, said a press release issued here on Sunday.

The Urban Unit provides policy advice, services, and expertise in urban planning, transport, waste management, water and sanitation, economic development, finance, capacity building, service delivery improvement, as well as consultancy services in specific areas of mutual interest. Through this partnership, the Urban Unit will extend its support to the Commission by granting access to its data resources for research studies, competition assessment reports, and inquiries.

Expressing his views on the collaboration, Omar Masud said that the MoU would help the Urban Unit to collaborate in conducting joint training, consultancies and capacity-building programs in defined areas of interest.

The collaboration aims to support access to data established and maintained by the Urban Unit for research studies, competition reports and inquiries. The Urban Unit will provide technical support to the Commission in the establishment and maintenance of the Data Resource Centre, databases, and related applications, he expressed.

Ms. Rahat Kaunain Hassan highlighted the importance of joint training, consultancies and capacity-building programs in defined areas of interest, which would be conducted collaboratively between the two institutions to enhance their professional expertise. She expressed her confidence that the MoU would lead to greater collaboration and a more effective working relationship between the CCP and the Urban Unit.

This collaboration sets the stage for a productive partnership, allowing both organizations to harness their collective strengths and achieve their respective objectives effectively.

IMF loan alone won't put economy back on track, as liquidity risks still high: APBF

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF) has termed the IMF deal with Pakistan as a positive development for the economy but warned that Pakistan's liquidity risks remain high in spite of the staff-level agreement with the International Monetary Fund for a Stand-by Arrangement of \$ 3 billion for a nine-month period, as this bailout alone can't put economy back on track.

APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood said that the multilateral donors financing might not bring any significant impact on struggling economy, as the sustainable solution to Pakistan's economic issues lies in the structural reforms and consistent policies.

He said that the obvious reason: 4,069 million dollar foreign exchange reserves are simply not enough to meet even one month of imports, 3.68 billion dollar estimated decline in remittance inflows, clocking at 24.8 billion dollars July-May 2023 compared to 28.48 billion dollars during the comparable period the year before. Besides this decline in exports, home remittances by the Pakistanis abroad, the other desired form of foreign exchange earnings, also fell from 31,782 million dollars during July-June 2022 to 27,744 million dollars in 2023.

APBF chairman Ibrahim Qureshi said that the deal would end speculation of a possible default, but the country's debt troubles won't end there, as the more IMF aid will be needed in 2024, he added.

He said that the rupee will strengthen which will reduce inflation, so, the IMF agreement is overall a good development.

Ibrahim Qureshi expressed his opinion on the agreement with the International Monetary Fund and said that there is positive news at the beginning of the new fiscal year, as it was not expected but the agreement was reached. Now the rupee will strengthen, which will reduce inflation.

Maaz Mahmood said that there is a 9-month agreement which is very positive, as the caretaker government will remain in the facility, however, the IMF conditions have increased the cost of production. He said that government will make payments to exporters when fiscal space is created. He said that Pakistan is likely to avert default this year, as the country managed to secure a last-minute Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout.

Syed Maaz Mahmood said The funding from IMF would also unlock another \$3 billion in loans pledged by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, he said. Together, the loans should allow the country to repay its debts through April 2024, assuming that the current account deficit for the fiscal year comes in below \$4 billion as the central bank projects, he said.

He projected that Pakistan dollar funds could rise up to \$9.5 billion on account of inflows from the IMF and friendly nations. However, this won't be enough to repay \$8.7 billion in loans (net of rollovers) in the year starting July and also pay the country's import bills for the full fiscal year. This means whoever is in power after elections in October will have to negotiate a new deal with the IMF. The upcoming government would need to adhere to measures agreed with the IMF to secure another program next year, said the report.

He said the decision to take more loans will keep complicating the problems in longer term, as the government needs \$23 billion in foreign debt repayments for this fiscal year, which is the direct result of such decisions of taking loans from foreign nations.

Tax regime must be reliable, transparent to protect investors

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Association Front (PIAF) has said that that the tax regime for businesses must be reliable and consistent with a transparent regulatory framework for the protection of investors to provide a level-playing field in the country.

PIAF Chairman Faheemur Rehman Saigol said the businesses simply cannot thrive, or even survive, without an empowered, effective and transparent justice system. This is where the country's legal machinery simply fails them, because it's much easier, feasible and also sensible to pack up and set up shop elsewhere than wait for years. The PIAF chairman maintained that the failure to reform the tax system and increase revenue collection is a major factor behind heavy domestic and foreign borrowings by the government.

Expressing serious concern over the high jump in country's budget deficit, PIAF Chairman said the revision has been made in light of recent talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which exposed the massive under-reporting of expenditures. This is a highly unsustainable level and has already pushed the country into a situation where debt restructuring seems to be the only viable option. He said that the federal government will book the highest-ever budget deficit despite putting an extra burden on industry on account of higher gas and electricity tariffs and additional taxes.

He advised the government to avoid hard restructuring, which is painful. Instead, it urged Pakistan to go for debt re-profiling with the official and commercial creditors under the G20 Common Framework. He stated that debt stabilization was unlikely in the short term given the need to address the flood consequences and finance the current account deficit.

At the same time, international rating agencies have continued to downgrade Pakistan in the CCC category and the sovereign USD yield curve is now inverted, reflecting market expectations of default and ensuing restructuring by Pakistan.

There is much talk about a so-called charter of economy among the country's top political parties these days. No doubt such a step is necessary, considering the economic emergency that the country finds itself in, but even this initiative will not do the job unless all of them agree to implement corrective policies for the long-term. It will do no good to businesses, the economy, or the people if their representatives just sign on the dotted line, agree to hammer out solutions, but then go right back to the old way of playing politics when in power. We need to provide certainty, fair taxation, and transparent regulation for business growth, he said.

Faheemur Rehman Saigol said that tax regime needs to be consistent because the last thing businesses and investors need is the uncertainty of successive administrations dismantling and toggling tax policies already in place. Considering, especially, that skewed tax policies, mostly stemming from political considerations of pleasing allies and targeting opponents, have compromised the revenue collection machinery and practically brought the economy to its knees, the country's very survival now mandates a thorough revision of all existing policies, identification of all sectors whose tax benefits have not been tapped properly, and a very strict implementation of a new regime spread equitably across all sectors.

It cannot be stressed and repeated enough times that investors that commit serious money to businesses hate nothing more than uncertainty. And nothing frustrates them more than the prospect of one administration undoing all the work of the previous one; again for purely political considerations.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor selling fruits on his stall at weekly Sunday bazaar Peshawar Morr.

Access to modern farming techniques challenges Iftikhar highlights potential for growth

ISLAMABAD (APP): SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry former president Iftikhar Ali Malik on Sunday said economic integration in South Asia holds immense potential to drive economic growth, reduce poverty, enhance regional cooperation, and contribute to peace and stability.

Chairing a round table conference on "Economic Integration in South Asia", he said economic integration attracts foreign direct investment (FDI), as it offers a more unified and attractive market for investors, said a press release.

"Increased FDI inflows bring capital, technology, and expertise, boosting productivity and employment, and economic growth in the region. Integration fosters cross-border infrastructure development, including transportation networks, power grids, and telecommunications systems. Improved infrastructure connectivity reduces transportation costs, enhances regional connectivity, and promotes trade and investment", he added.

Malik said that integration is of significant importance for the region's development and overall well-being. He said it promotes trade facilitation by reducing trade barriers of tariffs, customs procedures, and non-tariff barriers. This enables the smooth flow of goods and services across borders, leading to increased trade volumes and economic growth, he added.

Iftikhar Malik said Integrating economies create a larger market with increased purchasing power. This expanded market provides businesses with access to a broader consumer base, which encourages investment and stimulates economic activity. It allows businesses to exploit economies of scale and specialization, enhancing productivity and competitiveness.

He said integration facilitates the exchange of knowledge, technology, and best practices among countries as well as this transfer of knowledge promotes innovation, improves productivity, and helps countries upgrade their industries and enhance their competitiveness.

He said integration can help foster political stability and peace in the region. When countries engage in mutually beneficial economic cooperation, they have a stake in maintaining peaceful relations and resolving disputes through dialogue and negotiation rather than conflict.

Iftikhar Malik said by leveraging the collective strength of the region, South Asian countries can achieve greater prosperity and improve the quality of life for their citizens.

He said integration promotes cultural exchange, tourism, and people-to-people connectivity. It enables greater interaction among the people of different countries in the region, fostering understanding, tolerance, and cooperation.

FTO Coordinator identifies De-dollarisation signs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman Meher Kashif Younis on Sunday said that the payment of oil imported from Russia in "Yuan" is continuation signs of de-dollarisation surfacing in the global economy.

Speaking at a seminar on "Impact of de-dollarisation on the health of the economy" organized under the aegis of Gold Ring Economic Forum, a strategic think tank, he said the sanctions that have frozen Russia out of the global banking system have seen a fresh push since March by the "BRICS" nations, Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, to challenge the dollar's hegemony, said a press release.

He said "some signs of de-dollarization are emerging," adding the trend was likely to persist even as the dollar maintains its "large footprint". Efforts by BRICS countries and other major commodity exporters to loosen the dollar's stranglehold on global commerce have ramped up since the start of the war in Ukraine, which saw the US freeze a large chunk of Russia's foreign reserves.

Since then Saudi Arabia and China have begun talks to settle Chinese oil sales with the yuan, Brazil and China have announced the phase-in of a yuan clearing arrangement for some trade between the two countries while China and Russia are also now doing a significant portion of their trade in yuan.

Shahzad Ali Malik said that high poverty rates remain a major contributor to food insecurity in South Asia as many people in the region lack the financial resources to access an adequate and nutritious diet consistently. He said this region is too vulnerable to climate change impacts, including erratic monsoon patterns, droughts, floods, and cyclones. These factors are resulting in crop failures, livestock losses, and disruptions in food production and distribution systems, exacerbating food insecurity, he added.



LAHORE: Al-Jalil Developers' Managing Director Fraz Hassan Warraich accompanied by Commercial Director of Al-Jalil Developers Sardar Aslam Warraich cutting a ribbon to open new DHA Corporate Office at Defence Raya Fairways Commercial DHA, Phase 6.

'High production cost real threat to SMEs, large-scale businesses'

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The ever-increasing cost of production in the country is the real threat to both large-scale manufacturing (LSM) and small-scale businesses (SMEs), as frequent upward revisions in policy rate and continuous fluctuations in rupee against dollar are posing further challenges in spite of optimism about foreign reserves, reaching over \$14 billion by the end of August 2023.

This was stated by FPCCI former president and Businessmen Panel (BMP) Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar, observing that the aggressive economic measures, high borrowing rates, inflation, oppressive taxation and unstable currency have been negatively affecting running businesses, many of which have closed their operations, while the remaining are struggling for survival.

With a view to deal with fiscal challenges Mian Anjum asked the government to work on the three-way strategy by implementing short-term goals that will help to keep generating resources for smooth fiscal operations, medium-term goals where the government should focus on financial inclusion, documenting the economy by designing a system where all businesses can be registered and properly document their income including collection of sales tax, initiating the process of privatization as well as improving governance by introducing reforms in each sector. As a long-term goal, the country must focus on improving its human capital, and revamping IT sectors by extending facilities and providing all the requisite supports. In the same way, we also need to work on designing a comprehensive and proactive strategy to tackle challenges related to strengthening border security and implementing effective and comprehensive Anti-Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing measures holding accountable and taking to task all those who are involved in illegitimate activities, undermining both our economy and national interests.

The BMP Chief said that the government does not have any pragmatic plan to address this liability, apart from asking for more loans to repay existing debt. Likewise, the target for current financial year's exports is too low to meet the country's revenue.

The conventional approach of focusing solely on improving exports while pursuing a passive and imprudent foreign policy towards neighboring countries, poses a significant challenge in meeting export targets. Despite strained relations, the United States remains the largest importer of Pakistani products. Still, there are no efforts to tap into the vast markets of neighboring countries or negotiate trade agreements with them. Even though Pakistan and China enjoy close relations yet the volume of exports to China is significantly lower compared to USA.

Furthermore, the existing Pakistan China Free Trade Agreement (PCFTA) tends to benefit Chinese origin corporations more than Pakistani businesses, giving them greater market access at the expense of Pakistani products.

Nisar said that the government is neglecting two important factors, namely, Information Technology and export of human capital that together can contribute towards generating foreign exchange and mobilizing revenue. It is essential to concentrate on nurturing a skilled workforce and assisting them in securing international employment opportunities.

This approach would have a positive impact on our foreign policy and help in building foreign exchange reserves. Given the era of the fourth industrial revolution, Pakistan should prioritize facilitating IT businesses, enabling their access to international markets. By doing so, we can assert our fair share in the international market for IT-related exports.

It is good that State Bank of Pakistan has outlined the central bank's vision for the future, with a strong focus on price stability.

According to him, SBP has set a medium-term inflation target of 5% to 7% and is determined to achieve this goal within the next two years. In addition, efforts are being made to enhance efficiency, effectiveness, and stability in the financial sector. To this end, 'Strategic Plan SBP Vision 2028' has been developed, aiming to improve centre bank's credibility, independence, and inclusiveness.

The SBP further emphasised the need to expand access to financial services for a larger segment of population and revealed that under Vision 2028, efforts would be made to bring more people into formal financial system.

Furthermore, SBP is planning to connect Pakistan's remittance system with Arab Monetary Funds (AMF) Bana, a cross-border payment system. This integration is expected to significantly improve speed and reduce cost of remittance transactions.

Although above measures would improve our financial system, yet the government should reconsider its approach to expanding the tax base, as it currently burdens existing taxpayers instead of including new sectors. The recent decision to collect Rs215 billion by taxing salaried individuals is a regressive approach. It would adversely affect middle-income earners. However, no initiatives are being taken to bring traders into the tax net, nor is the government showing interest in establishing a system that can accurately track their actual incomes and combat the problem of fake invoicing.

The government's passive approach in addressing these significant issues not only encourages trade-based money laundering (TBML) but also weakens border controls, enabling criminal syndicates to smuggle various products, including currency, without any fear of being arrested. This rampant smuggling is depleting our resources, and the burden of this incompetence falls solely on the shoulders of diligent taxpayers.



In brief

Ehsan, Hammad announce retirements

PESHAWAR (APP): The Pakistan Cricket Board Sunday

announced the retirements of fast bowler Ehsan Adil and all-rounder Hammad Azam. Ehsan made his Test debut in February 2013 in Centurion against South Africa and played two more Tests and six One-Day Internationals till 2015, taking five and four wickets in the two formats, respectively. Before breaking into the national men's side, Ehsan was a member of Pakistan's side in the ICC Men's U19 Cricket World Cup in Australia in 2012. He played 67 first-class (245 wickets), 67 List A (98 wickets) and 68 T20 (86 wickets) matches from March 2012 till October 2021.

All-rounder Hammad Azam featured for Pakistan in the ICC Men's U19 Cricket World Cup 2010 in New Zealand. He played 11 ODIs (80 runs and two wickets) and five T20s (34 runs) from 2011 till 2015. His domestic career spanned from December 2008 till June 2021 in which he played 107 first-class (4,953 runs and 186), 114 List A (2,362 runs and 91) and 98 T20s (1,361 runs and 75) wickets. The PCB congratulated the two for their services to cricket and wished them well for their future endeavours.

Kamran Lions Club wins

A B B O T T A B A D ,

(APP): Divisional Challenge Hockey Cup Final Kamran Lions Hockey Club won the event trophy by defeating Fazal Hockey Club at Hockey Stadium, Sunday. The special guest of the final match was District Accounts Officer Sardar Saleem Ahmed, former DG sports Tariq Mehmood, Regional Sports Officer Ahmed Zaman, Azam Khan Mansehra, Dr. Aslam Chaudhry, Olympian Naeem Akhtar, Sardar Riast, international hockey player and large number of hockey spectators were also present. In the ongoing Hazara Region Hockey final at Hockey Stadium Abbottabad Kamran Lions Hockey Club Abbottabad beat Fazal Hockey Club by 3-0. In the first two quarters, the competition was tied without any goals. In the last two quarters, Kamran Lions improved their game and scored two more goals and managed to win the final trophy. Hamza, Inamur Rahman, Shehryar, Sajid Zaman on behalf of Fazal Club presented the best game. On this occasion, Sardar Saleem Ahmed, DSO congratulated both the teams for playing the best game and said, "Fitness improves in hockey." He said more attention would be paid to promoting the national game of hockey after the completion of work on the Astro-Turf at Hockey Stadium. On this occasion, Regional Sports Officer Ahmed Zaman welcomed the guests and awarded Rs 20,000 cash to the winning team and Rs 10,000 to the runners-up. Medals and trophies were also awarded.

Verstappen continues charge to third title

SILVERSTONE

(Agencies): Max Verstappen continued his relentless charge to a third Formula One world title on Sunday when he claimed his first British Grand Prix victory to deliver a record-equalling 11th consecutive win for his Red Bull team. It was his sixth win in succession, his eighth in 10 races and the 43rd of his career as Red Bull matched the feat of McLaren who won 11 races in 1988. The double world champion increased his lead ahead of teammate Sergio Perez in the drivers' championship to 99 points.

England win thriller to keep Ashes series alive

HEADINGLEY (Agencies): England kept their Ashes hopes alive by beating Australia by three wickets in the third Test in another nerve-shredding Headingley finale.

Harry Brook hit a superb 75 but it was left to bowlers Chris Woakes and Mark Wood to drag the hosts over the line in pursuit of 251. Brook's mature knock took them to within 21 of victory, after talisman Ben Stokes fell for 13 following lunch on day four with 90 still needed.

Brook put on 59 with Woakes before top-edging a cut off Mitchell Starc, who almost won the series for Australia with a vicious 5-78.

That wicket brought Wood to the crease amid gripping tension and he hit Pat Cummins for six and thrashed Starc for four to spark jubilation in the stands.

With four needed, Wood was dropped by Australia wicket-keeper Alex Carey and Woakes, who finished unbeaten on 32, slashed the winning runs.

England's win makes the series 2-1 to Australia with two Tests to play, setting up a grandstand finale that could yet match the iconic contest in 2005. There is a nine-day break before the fourth Test at Old Trafford starts on Wednesday, 19 July.

England keep the show rumbling on

After 1981 and 2019, 2023 can now be added to the list of Headingley Ashes epics. It may not have reached the ultimate climax of Stokes and Jack Leach's 10th-wicket partnership four years ago but it was still another day of almost tortuous tension.

Every run was cheered and wickets were met with silence - apart from in the pockets of Australian green and gold in the stands. Joe Root's departure shortly before lunch and, crucially, Stokes soon afterwards threatened to give Australia the win that would seal their first Ashes series in England for 22 years.

But Brook, batting on his home ground in his first Ashes series, played the situation perfectly, only to fall with the finish line in sight. He found a gritty partner in Woakes, who battled through the short-ball attack and played the anchor to Wood at the end.

The scenes of celebration were reminiscent of those four years ago - England getting their first win on the board after two tight Tests that could have gone either way. They have to do what they have never done before - come from 2-0 down to win the Ashes - but, after three gripping Test matches, they have ensured the show rumbles on with the series getting the ending it deserves.



Brook, Woakes & Wood deliver

Brook's knock came after he was dropped back down to number five in the order, having taken the injured Ollie Pope's position at number three in the first innings.

He came in at 93-3 and started shakily in a stand of 38 with Root before driving Scott Boland twice through the covers

to get him on his way.

Brook held his nerve after the losses of Root, Stokes and Jonny Bairstow - the latter playing on from a wild drive with the target 80 runs away, at which stage Australia were favourites.

Brook, 24, has made his name as an attacking batter in his first 10 Tests - here becoming the quickest batter to 1,000 Test runs in terms of balls

faced - but restrained himself while putting away the bad balls with the field spread. At the other end Woakes was more aggressive. He managed to slash the ball through the off side, although was fortunate to fend the short ball three times into empty spaces.

When Brook top-edged a bouncer Australia still had a sniff but Wood, who took seven wickets

in the match bowling at extreme pace, hooked Cummins over fine leg en route to 16 not out. It was fitting, however, that Woakes, who also contributed a crucial six wickets, hit the winning runs after 15 months out of the side.

Starc almost wins it for Australia

After starting on 27-0, England had added 15 runs relatively calmly amid the tension, before Ben Duckett was pinned lbw by Starc's left-arm pace for 23. The hosts promoted Moeen Ali in Brook's place but he only made five before a Starc inswinger crashed into his leg stump.

Zak Crawley batted well for 44 but, in a dismissal that sums up his Test career, edged a big drive to Mitchell Marsh through to the wicketkeeper a ball after hitting the same shot through the covers. Root attempted to pull a wayward ball from Cummins and gloved it down the leg side.

Starc, though, was the major threat and was rewarded by having Stokes taken down the leg side before Bairstow's wild swish. Australia missed the control of spinner Nathan Lyon, ruled out of the series with a calf injury last week, but have more than a week to regroup before seeking a series-clinching victory again.

Sri Lanka crush Netherlands to win CWC Qualifier

HARARE (Agencies): Dilshan Madushanka-led Sri Lankan bowling attack decimated Netherlands' batting lineup and led their side to CWC Qualifier glory with a crushing 128-run victory.

Put into bat first, Sri Lanka could only pile up a modest 233-run total before being bundled out in the 48th over despite Sahan Arachchige's half-century.

Sri Lankan openers Pathum Nissanka (23) and Sadeera Samarawickrama (19) scripted a decent start before both fell in quick successions to leave Sri Lanka reeling at 44/2 in the

11th over.

Kusal Mendis and Sahan Arachchige then anchored the innings with a subtle third-wicket partnership and added 72 runs to the total before the former perished in the 24th over. Arachchige then put on another vital partnership for Sri Lanka when he put on a 64-run stand with Charith Asalanka.

The pair put Sri Lanka in complete before both set batters fell in the 36th over. Arachchige top-scored with a brilliant 57 off 71 deliveries, hitting four boundaries while Mendis scored 43

from 52 balls.

Their back-to-back dismissals triggered a collapse in the Sri Lankan batting lineup and resulted in the former champions to slip from 181/5 to 233 all out.

Logan van Beek, Ryan Klein, Vikramjit Singh and Saqib Zulfiqar bagged two wickets each for the Netherlands while Aryan Dutt made one scalp.

Set to chase a modest 234, the Netherlands batting lineup faltered and could only raise 105 before being bundled out in the 24th over.

Dutch opener Max

O'Dowd waged a lone battle with a cautious 33 from 63 deliveries while Logan van Beek remained the other notable run-getter with an unbeaten 20.

Maheesh Theekshana led the bowling attack for Sri Lanka with 4/31 followed by Dilshan Madushanka's 3/18 while Wanindu Hasaranga bagged two wickets.

It is pertinent to mention that both Sri Lanka and the Netherlands had already booked their spots in the ICC Men's World Cup 2023, scheduled to commence on October 5.

UAE beat Pakistan to win Asia Rugby C'ship Division 1 in Lahore

ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): The United Arab Emirates (UAE) rugby team on Saturday defeated Pakistan 93-03 to win the second and final match of the Asia Rugby Championship Division 1 at Punjab Football Stadium in the eastern Pakistani city of Lahore.

The final game, which was part of a two-match series, kicked off at 7:30 p.m. Pakistan time. The UAE team seamlessly stole the game from Pakistan from the outset and scored 50 points against the hosts by the half-time.

Pakistan tried to vigorously fight in the second half of the 80-minute match, but the more experienced Middle Eastern side continued to dominate the field, restricting Pakistan to three points while scoring 93 by the end of the game.

"UAE's national team wins against Pakistan at the [Asia Rugby] Men's Division 1 with a score of 93-3," the UAE Rugby Federation announced in a Twitter post.

In the first match between the two teams, which was played on July 5, Pakistan could not score a single point while the UAE bagged a whopping 95, a feat that paved the way for it to smoothly win the series and lift the golden trophy on Saturday.

Rugby is a close-contact team sport in which players have to run with the ball in their hands. In its most common form, a game is played between two teams of 15 players each, using an oval-shaped ball on a rectangular field called a pitch. The field has H-shaped goalposts at both ends.

Pakistan's national rugby team made its international debut in a match against Sri Lanka in 2003, while the UAE, which had been part of the Arabian Gulf Rugby Football Union since 1974, became a full member of Asia Rugby in 2012.

Pakistan and the UAE regularly have cultural, educational, and business exchanges as well as sports events, which provide a platform for people of both countries to know more about each other and strengthen bilateral ties.

President PGA Open Golf C'ship from Monday

LAHORE (APP): The Inaugural President PGA Open Golf Championship endorsed by Punjab Golf Association will swing into action here from tomorrow, Monday at the PAF Skyview Golf Course. This event stretches over six days from 10th to 15th July, with first three days reserved for competitive golfing activity amongst golf professionals while from 13th to 15th July it will be a race for success between amateur golf players, men amateurs, senior amateurs and ladies.

Noticeable is a change in the format of the Open Championship and henceforth all open championships held as per PGF Annual Golf Calendar will have separate segments for professionals exclusively and the amateur category golfers will be in action on other days.

Over the first three days, from 10th to 12th July, the golf professionals are expected to beam in terms of golfing excellence and reap cash rewards. A revealing and purposeful characteristic of this Open Golf Event is that eligibility for participation is restrictive and open only to the top hundred ranked golf professionals of Pakistan, top 30 senior professionals who are aged 50 years and

above and top 15 junior golf professionals falling in the age bracket 21 years and below.

That makes this competition an all professional entanglement between dexterous, skillful and masterly golf playing torch bearers of the national golf scene, who have time and again proved their competence and artistry.

As a result of the introduction of this format the top golf professionals feel admired and acclaimed and hope that with this facilitation the flow of the golf game during the three rounds of golfing hostilities will become high spirited and lively.

And in the past when there was a mix of professionals and amateurs competing together the more prominent leading players would yearn for an unruffled flow of game which yields assured shot making and other elements like perfectly timed fairway shots, accurate chipping to the greens from short distances and above all sublime putting on the greens.

To make the event appealing and gripping, Kashif Bhatti of Punjab Golf Association shared that this championship represents a lucrative source of livelihood for the golf professionals of the country.

Wimbledon 2023

Pegula beats Tsurenko to reach quarter-final

LONDON (Agencies): American fourth seed Jessica Pegula reached her first Wimbledon quarter-final with a dominant display against Ukrainian Lesia Tsurenko. Pegula won the first five games on her way to a 6-1 6-3 victory over the world number 60. Tsurenko had spent nearly three hours longer than Pegula on court over the past week and that seemed to take its toll in an error-prone display.

Pegula will face 2019 French Open finalist Marketa Vondrousova next.

Vondrousova beat fellow Czech Marie Bouzkova 2-6 6-4 6-3 earlier on Sunday.

With Wimbledon still playing catch-up with the schedule after a rain-disrupted week, Russian 16-year-old Mirra Andreeva won her third-round encounter against compatriot Anastasia Potapova to advance to a last-16 meeting with American 25th seed Madison Keys.

The roof was open on Court One for Pegula's match against Tsurenko as dry weather and sunshine returned to the All England Club. Instead it was Pegula's powerful shots that were raining on the court, and Tsurenko could simply not deal with what kept coming her way.

It was one-way traffic until Tsurenko finally held serve - and saved a set point - for 5-1 in the opening set, earning the loudest cheers of the match from a crowd keen to see more of a contest. But Pegula wrapped up the set on her serve in the



next game with an emphatic overhead with just 28 minutes on the clock.

It was a similar pattern in the second set as Pegula broke at the start before a brief wobble when she was broken while serving for victory at 5-2. She set up two match points in the next game, but sent first a backhand then a forehand long. Tsurenko called a medical timeout at deuce for what looked like a blister on her foot but Pegula kept her focus despite the interruption to set up another match point.

She celebrated a backhand winner that was then called out but her challenge to the call showed it had indeed been in, enabling her to carry on celebrating and complete the full set of Grand Slam singles quarter-finals. "I'm glad I challenged it," she said in her on-court interview. "I was just glad I was able to keep up the momentum."

On Saturday, Pegula had pulled out of the mixed doubles with a back injury but she did not seem to be troubled by that in a confident display that suggested she has the belief she will need if she is to claim a maiden Grand Slam singles title.

Djokovic joins Wimbledon 100 club as Swiatek eyes first quarter: Novak Djokovic contests his 100th Wimbledon match on Sunday as he continues his push for a record-equalling eighth title while Iga Swiatek aims to make the quarter-finals for the first time. Djokovic tackles Poland's Hubert Hurkacz on Centre Court, where he has not lost in 10 years.

However, if he is to continue his bid for a third major of 2023, and match Margaret Court's all-time record of 24 Slams, he needs to find a way of battering through the seemingly impenetrable Hurkacz defence. The Pole has not dropped serve at the tournament, saving all 11 break points he has faced and winning all 46 service games. "I don't see too many holes in his game," said Djokovic who has a 5-0 record against the 18th-ranked Hurkacz, including at Wimbledon in 2019.

"He serves extremely powerful, covers the court very well. He has very long arms and a very good feeling at the net." Hurkacz made the semi-finals in 2021, having become the last man to defeat Roger Federer at Wimbledon in the quarter-finals. Twelve months ago, however, he crashed out in the first round. After being banned from Wimbledon in 2022 over the war in Ukraine, seven players from Russia and Belarus have made it to the last 16 in men's and women's singles.



In brief

IRSA releases 329,500 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 329,500 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 429,700 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1517.66 feet and was 119.66 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 173,500 cusecs and 161,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1194.30 feet, which was 144.30 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 97,700 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 225,300, 189,000, 152,500 and 84,700 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 65,300 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 73,500 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

AIOU to provide free SSC education

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) will provide free education of Secondary School Certificate (SSC) to the students of Balochistan, merged districts and Gilgit Baltistan during the upcoming admissions. According to the AIOU's communicate issued on Sunday, admissions are commencing from July 15th for the semester Autumn 2023 in matriculation to PhD programs. Vice Chancellor AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood has instructed the concerned regional directors to spread this message of the University door to door, in their regions so that not a single student in these regions is deprived of this facility of AIOU. Dr. Nasir Mahmood said that the AIOU was trying hard to bring every citizen of Pakistan into the educational network. Education is a fundamental right and no one should be deprived of high and quality education due to lack of financial resources, he said and added the University provides financial assistance to poor and deserving students to complete their studies. Students can contact the concerned Regional Office for these scholarships and financial assistance schemes. It is pertinent to mention here that AIOU was providing free education to the jail inmates to make them useful citizens for the society. Workshops, tutorial meetings and final exams for the prisoners are also held within the jail premises.

Population week to be observed

RAWALPINDI (APP): In connection with "World Population Day", the Department of Population Welfare, Rawalpindi would celebrate Population Week from July 10 to July 15 by organizing competitions, demonstrating walks and other activities to promote the spirit of family planning. District Population Welfare Officer Ms Shireen Sukhan said here on Sunday. Giving details of the events, she informed that a seminar would be held on July 10 at District Council Hall in which Ulema will highlight the proper upbringing of kids and ensuring the health of couples. Shireen added that rallies and walks would be taken out across the district on July 11 while speech competitions would be held on July 12. She added that TV and Radio would broadcast programs on July 13 while a baby show would be organised at Welfare centres across the district on the same day.



ISLAMABAD: People from different walks of life making Quran Chain organize by the Muslim Talba Mahaz Pakistan at Abpara against the desecration of Holy Quran in Sweden.

Nation honors Fatima Jinnah on 56th death anniversary



ISLAMABAD (APP): The 56th death anniversary of Madar-e-Millat Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah was observed with great respect and reverence where the nation paid rich tribute to

her outstanding efforts in the fight for Pakistan's founding father Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Fatima Jinnah is still remembered for her passionate support for civil rights and devoted struggle in Pakistan Movement.

Fatima Jinnah is referred to as the Madar-e-Millat or Mother of the Nation for her dynamic role in the Pakistan freedom movement.

Fatima Jinnah was born on July 31, 1893, and was a dental surgeon, biographer stateswoman and one of the leading founding mothers of modern state of Pakistan and was also the younger sister of Muhammad Ali

Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan. After obtaining a dental degree from Kolkata Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah taking active participation in politics. During the transfer of power in 1947, Jinnah formed the Women Relief Committee, which later formed the nucleus for the All Pakistan Women's Association (APWA).

She played an active role in national politics in 1965 after announcing her presidential candidacy, running against Ayub Khan in the 1965 elections and traveling West Pakistan and East Pakistan during the election campaign. She conceded

her defeat in the elections with many experts believing that the ballots were forcefully rigged by Ayub Khan and his son. After the death of her brother, she continued to work for the welfare of people through charities and institutions. She also played a significant role in the settlement of Muhajirs in the new state of Pakistan.

The Lady of Pakistan died on July 9, 1967, due to a heart attack and was buried beside her brother's grave in his impressive mausoleum in Karachi. Her funeral prayers were attended by nearly half a million people in Karachi.

Soon Valley becomes center of attraction for researchers, news seekers

ISLAMABAD (APP): The unique patch of daunting mountains in the Salt Range of the Pothohar region of Pakistan, the Soon Valley has become a centre of attraction for researchers and news seekers to unearth different modern scientific and nature-based solutions adopted to preserve rainwater and treat wastewater in the country. The cup-shaped valley is famous for mining silica sand, crush and coal for the past many decades. Soon Valley becomes a wetland complex based on different lakes of Khabhekhi, Jhalar and Uchali that are part of the Ramsar Convention and collectively known as the Uchali Complex.

Interestingly, the area temperature of the Valley is 3-4°C less than that of the federal capital and makes it ideal for off-season crop cultivation like cauliflower, potatoes and green chilies. The Institute of Urbanism organized an exposure visit for journalists to unearth the various modern strategies adopted by the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF-Pakistan) to cope with growing water demand and shortage spiking up side by side.

The Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Division also conducted a study to gauge the potential of the area for introducing low-cost earning schemes through the cultivation of off-season crops. Khabhekhi Lake, a saltwater reservoir on average receives 2,200 millimetres (mm) of rainfall a year. It is a bowl-like structure surrounded by mighty mountains sprawling across the lake. The lake has gained much attraction due to its terrain and stopover location of migratory birds.

The WWF-Pakistan has established its office at the lake to monitor and guide actions to ensure the protection and preservation of natural reserves and explore more areas to improve groundwater storage and availability. The rooftop of the WWF-Pakistan office at Khabhekhi Lake has been especially prepared for bird-

watching. Umar Bin Khalid, an environmental expert at WWF-Pakistan Khabhekhi Lake office said, "The purpose of focusing Soon Valley in practising wastewater or greywater treatment initiatives was its cultivatable land potential."

Due to the off-season cultivation, the local farmers were eagerly pursuing vegetable cultivation that had increased the agriculture-based water demands, he said.

As a result, the groundwater had plummeted below 400 feet due to excessive water drilling in the area.

"The Tourism Development Corporation Punjab has also taken many serious steps to promote and develop tourism in the Uchali Complex, he added.

Khalid informed that under the Ramsar Convention of 1974, it was intended to protect migratory birds' sites by declaring them as protected lands. "The WWF is working on freshwater replenishment and preservation efforts in the Soon Valley. Khabhekhi Lake due to its bowl-like structure easily collects rainwater from its catchment areas. The WWF has started installing rainwater harvesting systems at the household level, particularly in the areas lacking any water supply as it is a low-cost solution and its cost varies due to the size of a house." "It comprises of water tanks storing the filtered water of recharge structures collected from catchment points through conveyance systems, filters and recharge structures."

"A rainwater harvesting infrastructure on average conserves 60m³ through the system installed at the rooftop of a five Marla house," he said. At the initial stage, Khalid said, "Some 16 units have been installed whereas the target has been to take the number to 40."

Among a few interesting facts about Khabhekhi Lake, Dr Ejaz Ahmed from the Institute of Urbanism shared that the white-headed duck used to arrive at the Lake in

large flocks from Siberia during winter and then leave for India.

The Punjab Fisheries Department introduced Tilapia fish in the Khabhekhi Lake to turn into a multi-purpose ecotourism site.

"But the Tilapia's omnivorous nature put a dent in it as it used to bite the pads of the white-headed ducks which caused a decline in the arrival of the ducks," Ejaz Ahmed said.

"The adjoining areas of Khishab mainly Mianwali, Chakwal, and Talagang as per the literature have an average rainfall of 600-800 mm whereas the recent calculations recorded 570mm annual rainfall in the region," he added. The WWF-Pakistan officials also led the journalists to visit Ablution Water Reuse System.

The system has been designed keeping in view the fact that ablution water quality is better than the wastewater and could be easily reused after treatment. Ablution Water Reuse System is designed primarily for mosques so that the treated water can be utilised for irrigation, horticulture, lawn washing and for making up for non-portable water needs. The treatment plant consists of three chambers comprising of a settler, filter tank and storage tank. It has a total capacity of 12m³ of water treatment a day. As per the estimates, on average some 2.5m³ treated ablution water is reused in a mosque having around 500 worshippers per day.

Since the ablution water contains fewer biological and other chemical pollutants, the settler collects ablution water to allow heavy solids to settle to its bottom, the sand and gravel in the filter tank remove smaller particles and decontaminates the water and then the treated water is stored in the storage tank to be used for irrigation and cleaning purposes. The third initiative has been of a unique and very scientific nature called Floating Treatment Wetland (FTW) which was installed in Mardwal Village a few kilometres away from the Khabhekhi Lake.

PTI's conspiracies against Nawaz Sharif unmasked before public: Ahsan Iqbal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal Sunday criticized that Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf's leadership who was busy in the conspiracy behind Nawaz Sharif, misled the people and pushed the country years behind have been unmasked before the public. PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif was disqualified under a conspiracy when the "Panama verdict was changed to Iqama", he said while talking to a private news channel.

PML-N supreme leader and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif will return to

the country soon before the election campaign, he added.

"Chairman PTI's time has come to an end, he said, adding, he himself stuck under the burden of his own poor performance", he added.

Replying to a question, he said that in the light of the Supreme Court verdict, Nawaz Sharif should have been given the same relief that was given to other accused. He said that Nawaz Sharif will return to power, and the journey of progress, which was disrupted by conspiracies, will resume from where it left off.

All departments directed to remain alert during Monsoon

RAWALPINDI (APP): Secretary Housing and Urban Development Punjab, Sajid Zafar Dall has directed all the departments concerned to remain alert during Monsoon. According to a district administration spokesman, the Secretary during a visit reviewed the preparations finalized by Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) for Monsoon.

He informed that the Secretary also inspected the cleaning work of Nullah Lai at Gwalmandi bridge.

After the forecast of the Meteorological Department, all the departments concerned need to be alert, said Sajid Zafar Dall. He said that WASA Rawalpindi had made extensive preparations for Monsoon, including timely cleaning of major drains and sewage lines of the city along with Nulla Lai. While giving instructions to Managing Director (MD) WASA, the Secretary said that next two months are very important during which there is a need to be alert all the time and work in full coordination with the Meteorological Department. All possible precautionary measures should be adopted particularly in low lying areas, he said adding, machinery and staff should also be deployed so that in case of urban flooding, relief and rescue operation could be kicked off within shortest possible time frame.

The Secretary further said that the Punjab government had provided timely funds for the annual cleanliness operation, due to which WASA had completed the clean-up measures in Rawalpindi on time and it is hoped that the citizens would not face any difficulty during Monsoon season. He said that Commissioner Rawalpindi Liaquat Ali Chatta is personally monitoring the entire process and all institutions are working with the district administration under a comprehensive strategy. He informed that caretaker Minister for Housing and Urban Development and Chief Secretary Punjab

had also visited Rawalpindi and expressed satisfaction over the arrangements for Monsoon. Earlier, MD, WASA Muhammad Tanveer while giving a briefing informed the Secretary that the agency had completed all preparations before Monsoon. The Punjab government had released funds for cleanliness work of Nullah Lai and 11 other drains of the town.

The cleaning work of Nulla Lai had been completed from Katarian Bridge to Murree Road, but machinery is working to remove the obstructions from Nullah Lai after the heavy rains of the past few days and this process would continue during Monsoon, he said.

Similarly, the process of cleaning the major drains across the city was also completed before Eid-ul-Azha, he added.

WASA had used modern winch machines for the first time for cleaning the sewage lines and this work was also completed on time, he said and informed that Section-144 had been imposed to control dumping of solid waste in Nullah Lai.

Several cases had been registered against those found dumping solid waste in Nullah Lai. The violators of Section-144 had also been sent behind the bars.

MD WASA further informed that during monsoon rains emergency is enforced under which leaves of all the field staff are canceled and the staff remain present in the field round the clock.

Five flood response units had been set up in the city at Liaquat Bagh, Moti Mahal, Commercial Market, Bagh Sardaran and Khayaban-e-Sir Syed.

Heavy machinery and field staff had also been deployed at the flood response units. WASA has heavy machinery including jetting and sucker machines, de-watering sets, winch machines and water bowsers. The MD WASA informed the Secretary that all machinery of WASA was operational and training of the staff had been completed before Monsoon.

‘Divisional admin of Rwp focusing on urban flooding’

RAWALPINDI (APP): The current focus of the divisional administration of Rawalpindi is on urban flooding, action against hoarders, environmental issues, providing all possible facilities to the tourists in Murree and the upcoming elections said Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Liaquat Ali Chatta.

He informed that 105 new schemes were started under Annual Development Program (ADP) 2022-23 in Rawalpindi Division.

He said, total 711 schemes worth Rs 595.297 billion under the ADP 2022-23 were launched in the division. The Commissioner informed that Rawalpindi is a division of four districts covering 22,991 square kilometers and informed that total population of Rawalpindi is 10.884 million. 606 schemes were ongoing and 157 projects had been completed, he said.

37.544 percent budget released by the government had been utilized on the schemes, he added.

The Mother and Child Care Hospital worth Rs 5.32 billion is among the prominent schemes of the Health Department in Rawalpindi Division, he said.

Institute of Urology worth Rs 5.166 billion is another important project launched in the division with a 60 bed hospital being constructed on Chakri Road, Rawalpindi, he informed.

Two other projects, a 50-bed Trauma center in Jhelum district and a Trauma center in Tehsil Pind Dadan Khan were also being completed, he said adding, a university of Chakwal worth Rs 1.5 billion is among the prominent schemes of the Education Department.

Educational Complex in District Attock, Center of Excellence in District Chakwal and Educational

Complex in District Rawalpindi were also being completed in the division.

Divisional Public Schools had also been started in all the districts of the division, he said.

The most prominent project in the roads sector is the construction of 138 km tourism highway from Lower Topa Murree to Chowk Pandori for which Rs 4187 million had been allocated, the Commissioner added. Four bypasses were also being constructed to resolve the traffic congestion problem towards Murree, he said. Practical steps were being taken to construct parking plazas in Rawalpindi and Murree, he added. In the recent anti-polio campaign, more than one million children were vaccinated in Rawalpindi Division, he said adding, 57 small dams in the Division had been completed and made fully operational.

Frozen meat, grilled barbecues can increase chances of cancer risk

ISLAMABAD (APP): Health experts on Sunday urged the public to continue following the recommendations of meat consumption to three portions a week and avoid too many barbecues as consuming too much-processed meat can increase the risk of bowel cancer in humans.

"There is seen a jump in the number of cases of gastric infections and diarrhea due to binge eating at restaurants and improper handling of foods after Eid-ul-Azha," a senior Specialist of Liver diseases & gastroenterologist Dr. Rabia Tariq said while talking to a private news channel.

"Avoiding foods that are too oily and spicy prevent abdominal burning and decrease heartburn issues. Having smaller quantities of meals and avoiding binge eating should be an ideal situation," she mentioned. "Prolonged frozen meat damages gums and increases the risk of cancer," she said, adding, meat is a blessing, eat it, but with caution."

Cooking meat at high temperatures

produces cancer-causing chemicals, she said, thus one should avoid the prolonged cooking time, especially at high temperatures. It is better to follow the teachings of Islam and one should consume a moderate quantity of food including meat and the best option certainly is to follow the true philosophy of sacrifice and distribute meat among deserving persons, she added.

She said the chronic patients of hepatitis B and C are medically advised not to eat greater quantities of meat.

The patients suffering from complaints of peptic or duodenal ulcers should also consume a limited quantity of meat on Eid days to avoid serious complications, she advised.

The use of frozen meat can be harmful as it may affect kidneys and cause cardiac problems adding that overeating could cause gastric irritation, high cholesterol, acidity, abdominal contraction, nausea, diarrhea, heart problems, and constipation, she added.



ISLAMABAD: A large number of people enjoying picnic at Shahdara valley near outskirts of the Federal Capital.

Stones trafficking foiled

KABUL (Agencies): Smugglers have strived to transfer 35 tons of chromite stones through Torkham gate, while stopped by intelligence forces. The trafficking of 35 tons of chromite stones in a truck was stopped late on Friday said Mohammad Iqbal Takal, the Director of Torkham Intelligence. The stones were being transferred out of the country by using fake documents by traffickers, he added. A person arrested on charge who is currently under investigation, Takal added.

Oil Extraction began

SAR-E-PUL (Agencies): Acting Mines and Petroleum Minister, Sheikh Shahabuddin Delawar, during his visit to Sar-e-pul, attend the Qashqari oil extraction launch. Sheikh termed the mines an important economic source, adding that Afghan should take maximum advantage of the source of the mines. "Priority will be given to the employment of technical and non-technical staff and the reconstruction of the mine from the revenues of Sar-e-pul," Minister Delawar added.

IEA urges int'l community to remove sanctions

KABUL (TOLONews): The Islamic Emirate has once again called on the international community to remove sanctions, saying that it is needed to facilitate engagement between the Islamic Emirate and the international community.

With the Islamic Emirate taking over Afghanistan on August 15th, 2021, the Afghan assets in foreign reserves were frozen.

In August 2022, the UN Security Council failed to reach an agreement on whether to extend travel exemptions for 13 Taliban officials. According to TOLONews findings:

- More than \$9 billion in assets were frozen by the US and European countries.
- Restrictions were placed on the banking system and transferring money abroad.
- Travel bans were placed on 15 Islamic Emirate officials.

IEA's spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said that restrictions on traveling by Islamic Emirate's leaders does not benefit any side. "About 14 to 15 officials



have issues with traveling. It (travel ban) existed previously but it has been extended. This doesn't benefit any side as the travels of the leaders are necessary for engagement with the world and development of Afghanistan," he said.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Economy (MoE) said that the imposed sanctions by the international community are affecting the life of the people of Afghanistan.

"The imposition of pressure policy and sanctions by some of the countries has affected our countrymen," said Abdul Latif Nazari, deputy Minister of

Economy.

But political analysts gave various opinions about the sanctions on the Islamic Emirate's leaders.

"If the Taliban wants, they can bring reform as an independent government and accept the conditions to get out of the blacklist and travel bans," said Aziz Maarij, a political analyst.

"The Afghan currency is in a good position due to the strategic deposits of Afghanistan's assets which guarantees the international value of the Afghan currency, although it is frozen," said Azeraksh Hafizi, an economist.

Ministry of mines opens gas transmission pipeline

MAZAR-E-SHARIF (Agencies): The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum (MoMP) has announced the inauguration of a gas transmission pipeline from the city of Sheberghan, the center of Jawzjan, to the city of Mazar-e-Sharif in Balkh province.

The pipeline was opened in the presence of Shahabuddin Delawar, acting minister of mines and petroleum, and a number of other officials in Sheberghan city.

Officials said the pipeline is 94.5 kilometers long and its construction cost an estimated 609 million afghanis, officials said.

The ministry also said the gas transferred by this pipeline will be used in the fertilizer and electricity industry, for glass making and for IPP Ghaznafar company to produce electricity.

Gas from this pipeline will be connected and distributed to residential houses in the near future as well, officials said. This pipeline will transfer 1,700 cubic meters of gas in a 24-hour period, said Akhtar Mohammad Mansour, the head of Afghan Gas Company in Jawzjan.

100 refugee families returned

KABUL (Agencies): Local officials at the Refugees and Repatriation of Kandahar Department say that 99 Afghan Refugee families returned to the country from Pakistan through Spin Boldak port.

99 Afghan refugee families, totaling 672 people, have returned to the country in the last few days, Mawlawi Naqibullah Momeen Agha a Kandahar local official. The repatriates have been introduced to the International Organization Migration IOM and UNHCR to receive aid, Mr. Momeen added.

This must be noted that about 45 of these people were prisoners in Pakistan, who returned to the country after being freed.

Afghan authorities travel to Uzbekistan



KABUL (Khaama Press): A delegation from the Ministry of Border and Tribal Affairs of Afghanistan traveled to Uzbekistan and discussed border security issues with Uzbek authorities. Taliban's Ministry of Border and Tribal Affairs in a statement said that border issues were thoroughly discussed between the two sides.

Mawlawi Ghulam Nabi Sameem, the head of border and tribal affairs department of Taliban for northern Jawzjan province spoke about the challenges local residents faced along the border. The Taliban authorities promised their Uzbek counterparts that they will not allow insurgent groups to use Afghan soil against Uzbekistan.

Taliban officials did not provide further details on what they meant by "border issues", however, several rockets were launched to Uzbekistan over the past two years. The Islamic State fighters claimed responsibility for the attacks.

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has repeatedly warned that thousands of ISIS fighters

are stationed in Afghanistan's northern borders, which can pose serious threats to the security of Central Asian states.

On the contrary, Afghanistan's de facto authorities have rejected such claims and termed them as propaganda and baseless allegations aimed at tarnishing Afghanistan's relations with its neighbors.

Access restricted to timely information from govt

KABUL (TOLONews): Journalists complained about the lack of access to information, saying that the Islamic Emirate's spokespersons are not providing information to them on time.

"When we want to contact the spokesperson, they first do not answer and if they answer they say that they are not aware about it. Thus, they don't provide information," said Toba, a journalist. "We say to the Islamic Emirate that we face serious problems when we don't have access to information to convey it to the people," said Samiha, a journalist. This comes as the head of the ANJU, Masroor Lutfi, confirmed the challenges faced by journalists seeking access to information.

"If there is no serious attention paid to this, providing information to the people will be face serious



problems," he said.

However, the Ministry of Information and Culture said that the Islamic Emirate is committed to providing information to journalists.

"All of the governmental institutions and spokespersons are obliged to provide information on time and if there is any issue, if the spokespersons don't provide information to the offi-

cials, the journalists can refer to the Ministry of Information and Culture," said Mahajar Farahi, deputy Minister of Publication of the Ministry of Information and Culture.

Earlier, the Ministry of Information and Culture said that the mass media law and issue of access to information have been sent to the leadership of the Islamic Emirate for approval.

Herat residents welcomes activation of traffic signals

HERAT CITY (Pajhwok): Some drivers and residents of western Herat province are happy with the installation and repairs of traffic signals.

Abdul Rahman, a taxi driver in Herat City, told Pajhwok Afghan News traffic lights had been activated in the provincial capital more than a month ago. The move has facilitated inhabitants, especially drivers.

He acknowledged the fixing of lights by the

municipality and the traffic management had brought order to the city and prevented congestion and accidents. He said: "Installing signals is a very good step.

As a result, traffic congestion and accidents have decreased, because everyone waits for one's turn to cross the road."

At the same time, some citizens also welcomed the work of the municipality and traffic management, saying traffic signals should be activated at all squares.

Syed Hujat, a resident of the city, called on drivers to cooperate with government departments and observe traffic rules and regulations.

According to him, all people and drivers should respect traffic rules and respect social and urban ethics to help ease congestion on roads.

Ghulam Nabi Rorokh, traffic director, underlined the need for installing signals at the 25 intersections across the province. Currently, these lights are

being installed at nine intersections. The installation of traffic lights at six intersections has been completed.

He believed the installation of traffic lights had created convenience for drivers, passers-by and traffic staff. In turn, this has directly helped in enforcing the urban order.

Nasser Armal, spokesman for the municipality, explained traffic signals had been activated at Customs, Maref, Cinema, Chowk Gulha and Shahr-i-Naw intersections.

Fuel market takes fire

KANDAHAR (Agencies): A fire has broken out in the main fuel market late on Saturday in the country's southern province of Kandahar and inflicted heavy financial losses.

"Firefighters personnel of the 205th Al-Badr Army Corps have dispatched to the area to extinguish the fire and prevent further human and financial losses," a statement said.

Mohammad Wali, a fuel dealer said that the blaze lasted about an hour. It was extinguished by firefighters before a lot of stocks were saved.

According to him, three people were burnt and injured in the fire but their health condition is stable.

The Kandahar fuel market, having ample reserves, receives dozens of tankers full of fuel daily.

In addition to the storage and transportation of oil to other provinces from the area, low-quality fuel is also refined in the market.

Japan aid \$10m to edu sector



KABUL (Agencies): UNICEF announced saying that Japan has assisted 10 million dollars to the education sector in Afghanistan. The aid was provided through the Japan JICA International Cooperation Department, said UNICEF in a statement published on its website.

The aids are supposed to

be used in children's education departments and provide the basis for the education of 71500 children in the country. The donations will enable UNICEF to build educational centers for thousands of children in the central and eastern regions of Afghanistan.

Lately, the Japanese ambassador in Kabul,

Takashi Okada said that his country will continue to support Afghanistan, in a separate meeting with officials of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, the Embassy of Japan in Kabul announced earlier that its country will grant scholarships to Afghan students in different stages of master and Ph.D.

MoPH pledge to deliver standard health services for all: Dr. Ebad

KABUL (Agencies): Acting Public Health Minister Dr.

Qalandar Ebad in his trip to

Marzak health center in Sar



Dr. Ebad while appreciating the efforts and health services delivered by the workers of the center, he visited various wards of the center including orthopedic, maternity, lab, and pharmacy, according to the statement.

Meanwhile, Dr. Ebad visited the hospitalized patients in the center. The 20-bed center has been constructed by the Islamic Emirate through the domestic budget in the past year.

The minister according to the statement, went on as saying that the Islamic Emirate was always committed to providing the people with standard health services across the country.

16 people killed, 10 injured in Afghanistan last week

KABUL (Pajhwok): UNAMA officials last week said Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) representatives will be invited to an upcoming UN-organized meeting similar to May meeting in Doha before the end of 2023.

Also last week, US president Joe Biden said Al-Qaeda was no longer operating in Afghanistan, but another top official said Biden's remarks were completely divorced from reality.

Casualties

Last week, 16 people were killed and 10 others were injured in various incidents of violence across the country.

Security forces killed four armed robbers in Balkh and Badakhshan provinces. Five Afghan youths, who wanted to cross into Iran from Nimroz province, were shot dead by Iranian border guards. A

sixth youth was wounded. Unidentified gunmen killed a religious scholar in Kapisa, a military officer in Balkh and a woman in the same province.

Three children were killed and as many injured when an old rocket shell exploded in Faryab province. Six people were injured after two families clashed in Kapisa and a man killed his brother in Parwan.

In the previous week, seven people were killed and three others were injured in various incidents across the country.

Before the regime change in August 2021, hundreds of civilians, insurgents and security forces would get killed and wounded every week.

Shanghai Cooperation Organization meeting

India hosted the 23rd summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

in virtual format on Tuesday. The participants called for establishment of an inclusive government in Afghanistan and continued humanitarian assistance to Afghans.

They advocated building Afghanistan as an independent, neutral, united, democratic and peaceful state free from terrorism, war and drugs.

Iran Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian told participants of the Coordinating Bureau meeting of Non-Aligned Movement in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, on Wednesday that an inclusive government, including all ethnic groups, could solve Afghanistan's current crisis.

However, Islamic Emirate spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid, responding to Abdollahian's comments, said that the caretaker government of Afghanistan

represented all tribes.

He said it was the work of Afghans to form their government and system and other countries had nothing to do with it.

Interaction with Kabul

Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi during a meeting with British Chargé d'Affaires for Afghanistan, Robert Chatterton Dickson, asked the United Kingdom to interact confidently with Kabul.

Acting Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani had said refusal to accept the 'orders' of the international community was the main reason behind non-recognition of the Islamic Emirate government.

UN to convene meeting similar to Doha huddle

UNAMA's political office in Kabul, headed by Scott Smith, has announced plans to hold a significant meeting similar to the Doha gathering, organized by the

United Nations, before the end of 2023. The announcement was made during a meeting between Smith and Mawlawi Zakir, head of the political deputy prime minister's office.

During the meeting, UNAMA officials stated that the UN chief would invite Islamic Emirate officials to participate at the upcoming meeting, which will be hosted by UN chief Antonio Guterres in a format similar to the special envoys meeting held in Doha in May.

Smith affirmed the continuation of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, highlighting that security has improved in the country.

During the previous meeting held in Doha in May, special envoys from various countries expressed their concerns regarding the human rights situation in Afghanistan.

Biden's Al Qaeda com-

ments

US President Joe Biden said: "Do you remember what I said about Afghanistan? I said Al Qaeda would not be there. I said it wouldn't be there. I said we'd get help from the Taliban. What's happening now? What's going on? Read your press. I was right."

Some opponents of the caretaker government said Biden's comments revealed the US and the Islamic Emirate had good relations since past.

But Zabihullah Mujahid said Biden's remarks proved the Islamic Emirate was committed to its promises and that Afghanistan was independent in all decisions.

However, House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaul in a statement reacted to US President Biden's remarks, saying that "it is

completely divorced from reality for President Biden to claim that al Qaeda is no longer operating in Afghanistan."

McCaul said that Biden's words could only be interpreted as an attempt to whitewash the Islamic Emirate and al Qaeda's longstanding ties, and "may even be an attempt to get Washington on the path of recognizing the Taliban as the government of Afghanistan."

Girls' education and world's interaction with Afghanistan

UN deputy special representative for Afghanistan Markus Potzel had said women had the right to work in society and the world's interaction with Afghanistan would increase if the girls' education problem was resolved.

Amnesty International once again said banning women and girls from work

and education was violating their social and economic rights and the Islamic Emirate should be held accountable for such actions.

However, Zabihullah Mujahid said it was a domestic issue and the Afghans should resolve it.

UK charge d'affaires Robert Shatterton Dickson and Japanese ambassador Takashi Okada had discussed the importance of girls' education and women's work in separate meetings with Acting Foreign Affairs Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi.

Humanitarian aid

India donated 10,000 tons of wheat to Afghanistan last week while Switzerland announced 1.5 million francs to Afghanistan in aid and Japan announced 10 million dollars for education of more than 70,000 children in Afghanistan.

Sindh govt taking measures to provide optimal travel facilities to citizens

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Minister of Information, Transport, and Mass Transit of Sindh, Sharjeel Inam Memon, along with Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Sindh for Investment and Public-Private Partnership, Syed Qasim Naveed Qamar, addressed a press conference at Archives Complex Clifton on Sunday. They announced that the chargers for electric buses have arrived, and starting from tomorrow, these buses will once again operate on the roads of Karachi. The Sindh government is consistently taking measures to provide optimal travel facilities to its citizens, and in this regard, another fleet of buses will arrive in Karachi tomorrow.

Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that, as per the instructions of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah, the Sindh government is committed to expanding the number of buses in order to enhance urban travel facilities. Furthermore, he mentioned that the new buses will be replacing the older ones.

He mentioned that the bus monitoring app has been launched, which has made people's lives easier in this era of inflation. He highlighted that the Sindh

government has undertaken significant work in mega projects. The government hospitals in Sindh offer excellent health facilities, with even individuals from Afghanistan and Iran utilizing Sindh hospitals for medical treatment.

He stated that the Dhabji Special Economic Zone is commencing operations, which will create numerous investment and employment opportunities. Investors are being facilitated through a streamlined one-window operation process; there is a high likelihood of establishing an electric bus plant in Sindh.

During the press conference, Syed Qasim Naveed Qamar, the Special Assistant to the Chief Minister Sindh for Investment and Public-Private Partnership Unit, emphasized the importance of creating a business-friendly environment for investors and businesspeople. He mentioned that the Sindh Government has dedicated significant effort to develop the Dhabji Special Economic Zone, underscoring their commitment to this endeavor over an extended period.

He announced that the development work of the Dhabji Economic Zone will commence on July 15, marking a significant milestone that has been

achieved. He also mentioned that the Dhabji Special Economic Zone offers a tax holiday for a period of 10 years. The establishment of the Dhabji Economic Zone is expected to generate increased employment opportunities and contribute to economic growth.

Syed Qasim Naveed Qamar stated that the Dhabji Special Economic Zone is a part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project and is being constructed under a Public-Private Partnership model. He mentioned that the Sindh government has a track record of successfully completing significant projects through public-private partnerships. In the case of the Dhabji Special Economic Zone, the Sindh government has provided the land, while the responsibility of its development lies with the designated developer.

He mentioned that the Dhabji Special Economic Zone spans an extensive area of 1500 acres and is strategically located in close proximity to Port Qasim, Karachi Airport, and the main railway track. Considering its advantageous location and promising prospects, he expressed confidence that the Dhabji Special Economic Zone will emerge as the most suc-

cessful economic zone in the country.

Sindh Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon, during the press conference, expressed that the Pakistan People's Party government is excelling in all sectors. He emphasized that the Sindh government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, is tirelessly striving for the development of the province.

He mentioned that the Sindh government's efforts in preserving mangroves have been acknowledged and recognized by the Guinness Book of World Records, the Sindh government has undertaken substantial initiatives in the realm of urban forests.

He said that the Sindh government has exclusively provided the best treatment in government hospitals. The quality of health-care services in Sindh government hospitals is of such high standards that individuals do not require a health card. He mentioned that the government hospitals in Sindh offer free-of-cost treatment for the world's most expensive cyber knife and transplant procedures. Sindh Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon announced that the Sindh government is planning to organize an investment conference in the province in the near future.



DOVER: U.S. President Joe Biden waves as he is escorted to Air Force One, before departing for Britain from Dover, Delaware.

EU mulls extending Pakistan's GSP+ status

ISLAMABAD (INP): European Union (EU) mulling over extending Pakistan's Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) Plus status.

In a video statement, European Union Ambassador to Pakistan Dr Riina Kionka said that Pakistan will continue enjoying the preference in access to the European markets as no changes have been made in the planned extension of GSP regulation. She said that the

report will be presented in the European parliament and the member states and the EU will keep an eye on the proceeding regarding the GSP plus status.

The ambassador highlighted the areas where the EU wants improvement from Pakistan, which include freedom of expression, media freedom, women's rights, minority rights, and gender equality.

Dr. Riina Kionka maintained

that EU and international experts are keeping an eye on the crack-downs after May 9 and the trials in the military courts and anti-terrorism courts. Pakistan is a party to International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which states that every citizen has the right to a fair and public trial.

The charter also states that the trial must be held in court which is free and unbiased.

PM, FM to address inaugural session of Gandhara symposium

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will address the inaugural session of a three-day Gandhara symposium, being held here from July 11 to July 13. The symposium titled "Cultural Diplomacy: Reviving Gandhara Civilization and Buddhist Heritage in Pakistan", is being held under the prime minister's vision of interfaith harmony, aiming to raise global awareness about the historical and cultural significance of the Gandhara civilization and Buddhist heritage in Pakistan.

Chairman, Prime Minister's Task Force on Gandhara Tourism Dr. Ramesh Kumar Vankwani and Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Senator Talha Mehmood will also address its different sessions, besides keynotes by different foreign and local dignitaries,

said a press release issued here Sunday. The delegates will also call on President Dr Arif Alvi.

The symposium is jointly organized by PM's Task Force on Gandhara Tourism, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC), the National Heritage and Culture Division and Archeology Departments of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The objective of the conference is to promote and preserve the rich historical and cultural Buddhist heritage in Pakistan.

By leveraging the power of cultural diplomacy, the conference further aims to strengthen international relationships, foster mutual understanding, and enhance cultural exchange.

The conference will feature speeches and panel discussions coupled with a field visit to sites of reli-

gious significance to the Buddhist community while providing a platform for networking, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas and best practices. A number of Buddhist monks from Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, Nepal, South Korea and Sri Lanka would attend the symposium.

The sessions would be attended by different foreign panelists including Prof. Ruth Young Professor of Archaeology, University of Leicester, UK, Yi Yun-Jung Member of Korea Cultural Foundation, Nsihantha Pushpa Kumara Dir Min. of Buddhasana Religious and Cultural Affairs, Sri Lanka, Prof. Xiang Debao Prof, School of International Journalism & Communication Studies, China, Prof. Dr. Hridaya Ratna former vice chancellor, Lumbini Buddhist University, Nepal, Kim Yu Tae Dir Multi Culture Museum Seoul, South Korea and others.

President directs SLICP to improve policy on pre-insurance medical tests

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi has directed the State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan (SLICP) to improve its policy on medical tests before the issuance of Life Insurance policies to prospecting policyholders.

He asked SLICP to constitute a panel of doctors which should suggest as to what were the most prevalent and common diseases in Pakistan and what tests should be conducted before the issuance of the policy.

The president gave these orders in view of the fact that a number of representations were being filed with him by the insurance companies as well as citizens in cases where insurance companies were denying the payment of death insurance claims to family members of the insured policyholders on the ground that they had fully hidden ailments at the time of obtaining the policy, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release on Sunday.

The payments were being refused despite the fact that the policies had been issued after the policyholders had been declared medically fit by the authorized medical officers as well as the field officers of the insurance companies. The president issued direc-

tives while rejecting two separate representations filed by SLICP against the decisions of the Wafaqi Mohtasib (WM) directing it to pay Rs 3.68 million to the family members of two policyholders to whom SLICP had denied payment on account of them hiding pre-insurance ailments.

As per details, Muhammad Yousaf and Abida Bibi had obtained life insurance policies from SLICP for the sums assured of Rs 3,485,000 and Rs 200,000 respectively.

After their deaths, their family members approached SLICP for the payment of insurance claims but SLICP refused to pay them the respective amounts on the ground that they were patients of diseases, such as Hepatitis C, chronic kidney disease, heart condition and hypertension and they did not disclose the existence of these ailments before SLICP. Feeling aggrieved, the family members separately filed complaints with the Wafaqi Mohtasib, that passed the orders in their favour. SLICP, then filed representations with the President, which were rejected. The president in his decision observed that the two policyholders were declared medically fit by the concerned medical officers as well as the field officers

of SLICP who stated that they knew the policyholders for a number of years. He noted that pre-insurance ailments could easily be diagnosed and detected by the medical officers as the services of these officers were arranged to examine policyholders prior to the issuance of policies.

He maintained that SLICP could not take the plea of pre-insurance ailments to deny payments as under Contracts Acts 1872, where the consent was caused by misrepresentation or fraudulent means, the contract was not voidable if the party whose consent was so caused had the means of discovering the truth with ordinary diligence. He said that SLICP had all the means of discovering the alleged ailments by exercising due diligence through its authorized medical officers.

The president held that SLICP had committed maladministration by repudiating the insurance claims on such flimsy grounds, adding that it could not produce any evidence establishing the existence of pre-insurance ailments.

He, therefore, directed SLICP to pay Rs 3.68 million to the family members with the direction to improve its policy regarding medical tests.

PTI supporter found guilty of damaging Pakistan HC's building

ISLAMABAD (NNI): A 51-year-old man of Pakistani origin has been found guilty of damaging Pakistan's high commission (HC) building in London. 51-year-old Amir Wasim Chaudhry, a resident of East London, had damaged the high commission's building during protest against the arrest of former prime minister and PTI Chairman Imran Khan on May 18.

Chaudhry, initially, raised slogans of 'Haqeeqi Azadi', against the government as well as against the state institutions in front of the building. And then he entered the building and shouted abuses at the staff. British Crown Prosecution Service had indicted Chaudhry. Initially, at Westminster Magistrates' Court, he had pleaded not guilty. But later, on seeing proof against him, he confessed to having committed the offence.

The court ordered Chaudhry to compensate the HC for the damage done to its building.

The high commission had reported the incident not only to the police but also to the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office.

Yemen's Houthi authorities ban Swedish imports over Quran burning

CAIRO (INP): Yemen's Houthi movement, which controls the country's north, has banned Swedish imports in protest against the burning of the Quran in Stockholm. "Yemen is the first Islamic country to ban imports of Swedish goods after its violations and desecration of Muslims' holiest," Al Masirah quoted the Houthi trade minister as saying. The minister described Swedish imports as "limited" but said the decision has a symbolic value and that the ban was the least the Houthis could do. He also called on fellow Islamic countries to follow suit. A man tore up and burned a Quran outside Stockholm's central mosque late last month, on the first day of the Muslim Eid al-Adha holidays.

The action sparked an outcry in Islamic countries, several of which summoned Swedish envoys to voice their condemnation. Sweden has said it could not ban the demonstration because of freedom of speech rules. Justice Minister Gunnar Strommer said last week the Swedish government was examining whether it could make setting the Quran or other holy books on fire illegal, as Quran burnings had damaged Sweden's security.

Chairman NDMA discusses disaster management cooperation with Swiss Foreign Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Lieutenant General Inam Malik on Sunday held an interactive meeting with Swiss Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis to discuss key points related to disaster management and resilience upon his visit here to NDMA headquarters.

The meeting focused on various aspects of disaster preparedness and collaboration between the two countries in the field of disaster management, a news release said.

The Chairman National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) emphasized the significance of local community engagement in order to enable disaster resilience.

He highlighted the unprecedented Floods 2022 emphasizing the need for an efficient Early Warning System (EWS) in place to mitigate the adverse impacts of such disasters.

He stressed the crucial role of disaster preparedness in Pakistan, stating that managing two simultaneous disasters can be a daunting task and have severe consequences.

He apprised the Swiss delegation of inclusive and people-centric disaster preparedness system, mentioning three National Simulation Exercises (SimExs) conducted by NDMA to enhance disaster preparedness in Pakistan.

The Chairman NDMA informed about the establishment of NEOC to generate National Common Operating Picture (NCOP) for all relevant stakeholders to mitigate likely impacts of disasters and setting up NDMA's Think Tank, NDMA to collaborate with think tanks, NGOs, INGOs, academia, and industry stakeholders both domestically and globally to develop effective policy recommendations and reduce disaster risk. He underlined the importance of reaching out to regional universities

for knowledge sharing and capacity building.

Swiss Foreign Minister, Ignazio Cassis, expressed his gratitude for MoU on disaster management cooperation between Switzerland and Pakistan. He highlighted the similarity in topography and challenges faced by both countries, and emphasized the importance of technological knowledge in dealing with complex disaster management challenges and risk management. Minister Cassis expressed his interest in exploring common solutions and collaboration opportunities.

Swiss Minister lauded the development and achievements in disaster management in Pakistan and expressed his anticipation for future cooperation based on the MoU. The meeting concluded with an agreement to continue to work closely together to enhance disaster management capabilities and share best practices in the field.

UN warns Sudan faces 'full-scale civil war' as air raid kills 22

UNITED NATION (INP): Conflict-ridden Sudan is on the brink of a "full-scale civil war" that could destabilise the entire region, the United Nations warned Sunday, after an air strike on a residential area killed around two dozen civilians.

The Ministry of Health reported "22 dead and a large number of wounded among the civilians" from the strike on Khartoum's sister city Omdurman, in the district of Dar al-Salam, which means "House of Peace" in Arabic.

After nearly three months of war between Sudan's rival generals, the air strike is the latest incident to provoke outrage.

Around 3,000 people have been killed in the conflict, survivors have reported a wave of sexual violence and witnesses have spoken of ethnically targeted killings. There has been widespread looting, and the UN warned of possible crimes against humanity in the Darfur region.

A video posted by the health ministry on Facebook showed apparently lifeless bodies after the airstrike, including several women. The narrator says that residents

"counted 22 dead". The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), fighting the regular army, claimed that the strike killed 31. Since the war began, paramilitaries have established bases in residential areas, and they have been accused of forcing civilians from their homes.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Sunday condemned the air strike in Omdurman, which he said "reportedly killed at least 22 people" and wounded dozens, his deputy spokesperson Farhan Haq said in a statement.

Guterres "remains deeply concerned that the ongoing war between the armed forces has pushed Sudan to the brink of a full-scale civil war, potentially destabilising the entire region", Haq said.

Some of the more than 2.2 million people internally displaced by Sudan's war are staying at a university, turned into a makeshift shelter, in al-Hasaheisa south of Khartoum. Some of the more than 2.2 million people internally displaced by Sudan's war are staying at a university, turned into a makeshift shelter, in al-Hasaheisa south of Khartoum,

he added: "There is an utter disregard for humanitarian and human rights law that is dangerous and disturbing."

Nearly three million people have been uprooted by Sudan's fighting, among them almost 700,000 who have fled to neighbouring countries according to the International Organization for Migration.

The UN and African blocs have warned of an "ethnic dimension" to the conflict in the western region of Darfur, where the United States, Norway and Britain have blamed the RSF and allied militia for most of the widespread violations.

Haq expressed support for efforts by the African Union and East African bloc IGAD to end Sudan's crisis. On Monday leaders of Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and South Sudan – IGAD members handling the Sudan file – are to meet in Addis Ababa.

Sudan's army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Daglo have been invited but neither side has confirmed they will attend.

Numerous ceasefires in the war have been announced and ignored.