

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) co-chairperson and former president Asif Ali Zardari has arrived in Islamabad and will stay there for some days. According to the PPP sources, the former president landed in the capital city after an absence of months and will spend time with various circles to discuss the upcoming general elections.

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The federal cabinet has appointed four members of the Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) by approving a summary through circulation, citing sources. The federal cabinet appointed Dr Kabir Ahmed Sidhu, Salman Ameen, Saeed Ahmed Nawaz and Abdul Rasheed Sheikh as the CCP members via circulation summary.

PM pledges to take country on path of prosperity if given an opportunity in upcoming elections

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday said that if given an opportunity in the upcoming general elections, Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and the entire leadership of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz would change the destiny of the country by taking it on the path of progress and prosperity.

Addressing the cheques distribution ceremony under the Prime Minister's Youth Business and Agriculture Loan Scheme, he said they would accept the public mandate in the upcoming polls and urged the people to take their decisions after looking into certain facts and by juxtaposing the performance of the PML-N governments with that of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's four years' saga of destruction.

The prime minister while lauding the statesmanship qualities of his elder brother, regretted that former prime minister and his leader Nawaz Sharif was ousted from power despite the fact that he had ended hours-long crippling load shedding, provided laptops and loans to youth, brought multi-billions China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CEPC) power and road infrastructure projects during 2015.

On the other hand, Imran Khan had a phobia of PML-N leadership and the opposition as day in and day out, he was bent upon putting them in jails with the framing of fake cases, he said, adding the PTI leader could not assimilate the revolutionary steps taken by the

PML-N government.

All the youth programmes, he said were started during the tenure of Nawaz Sharif as alone 50,000 vehicles were provided to the people on merit across Punjab province. The success of the loan scheme could be gauged from the fact that 99 per cent of loans were returned back to banks, he added.

The prime minister maintained that Nawaz Sharif and they had experienced the worst kind of political vendetta, even they were sent into exile after ouster from power, but unlike Imran Niazi, the PML-N Quaid never thought of anything against the country.

The prime minister elaborated that the person (IK) who was brought to power through a fraud election, kept on chanting the corruption charges during his four years tenure but did not prove them, adding that when he was removed from power corridors through a constitutional manner, he used dirty language and tactics against the state institutions. The prime minister mentioned that PTI's tenure was tainted with huge corruption scams including sugar and wheat scams, BRT Peshawar, Malam Jabba, sale of Toshakhana gifts, Rs 60 billion money embezzlement returned by the UK agency, etc, and said that no one could deny these stark facts. The prime minister said during his tenure, about one million laptops were given to the youth and the PTI leadership blamed them for using the scheme as a bribe,

adding that contrary to it, their initiative brought about an IT revolution in the country, enabling the youth to continue their studies, work as freelancers and earn a respectable livelihood for their families. A number of ministers, advisers, parliamentarians, officials and beneficiaries of the loan and families attended the ceremony.

The prime minister stressed that these laptops were given purely on merit, and if proved otherwise, he would be held accountable as these resources belonged to the country.

The prime minister said that allegations, scandals, and the use of foul language were rife during the PTI's government.

About 3 billion dollar loans were given to the powerful families during the PTI's government, he said, and questioned why this huge amount was not spent on the future of youth. Toshakhana gifts for the country were sold in a shabby manner and efforts were made by Imran Niazi to protect his spouse from criminal cases.

"The worst kind of vengeance was unleashed against the opposition and the civil servants. What was the difference between Hitler and Imran Khan?" he regretted.

He observed that nations were harmed by such tactics. "It was a heart-wrenching story but now it has become a part of the past," he added.

He said that Nawaz Sharif had spent 40 years in politics and experienced ordeals for the sake of the

motherland. Nawaz Sharif was accused of Panama papers and given punishment in Iqama charges, he said, adding that PML-N Quaid appeared before courts regularly but on the other hand, Imran Niazi was being granted bail.

The prime minister referring to the minister for finance's announcement regarding the reduction in prices of petroleum products by Rs9 and Rs7.50 per liter said that it was all possible due to appreciation in the value of the rupee against the dollar which provided them an opportunity to pass on the relief to the public. The crude oil price in the international market was still high, he added. The prime minister said that it was also the IMF's programme's positive aspect that brought stability to the value of the rupee. If they had not reached the agreement, the prime minister observed the difference between the value of the rupee and the dollar could have increased leading to a further difficult economic situation.

"Those people who had conspired against the country, with the grace of Allah Almighty, all their machinations have been buried and their links abroad, including a recent statement by Israel against Pakistan, all these were failed," he added. About IMF's agreement, he said it was something of 'sweet meat', and alluded to the economic challenges. But with determination and commitment, they could stabilize the economy with revolutionary and bold steps, he stressed.



SIALKOT: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif distributes laptops among the high achievers of public sector universities under the PM's Youth Laptop Scheme.

Pakistan, Iran vow to counter terrorism in border areas

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir on Sunday concluded his two-day successful visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The military leadership of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan agreed that terrorism was a common threat to the region in general and both countries in particular.

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release, the military commanders on

both sides vowed to eradicate the menace of terrorism in the border areas through intelligence sharing and effective actions against the terrorists' networks, and explore avenues for enhancing cooperation in the security domain.

During his visit, the COAS had detailed meetings with the Military leadership of Iran including Chief of General Staff of Armed Forces, Major General Mohammad Bagheri.

The COAS also called on President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian.

During discussions, the significance of Pakistan-Iran bilateral relations for regional peace and stability was highlighted.

The COAS was presented with the Guard of Honour by a smartly turned-out contingent of Iranian Armed Forces at the Military Headquarters on his arrival.

After PPP, PML-N also decides to join GB govt

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) has also decided to join Gilgit Baltistan government after Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). According to sources, the power-sharing formula regarding the Gilgit Baltistan government has been finalized and the power will be shared on the basis of majority.

Sources said PPP will get three posts in the government, they will be given the office of deputy speaker Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly and two ministries, and PML-N will also get two ministries. PPP has nominated candidates for the ministries including Engineer Ismail and Shehzad Agha. Peoples Party have four, Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz three members in the GB assembly, Haji Gulbar Khan of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) forward bloc was elected new Chief Minister of the GB region recently. He had received the support of 19 lawmakers, also included the PPP and PML-N members. In 32 members house, PTI had 19 members, PPP four, PML-N three, Muttahida Wahdat-i-Muslimeen three, JUI-F one, and two other members. Former CM of the region had nominated Raja Azam Khan for the coveted position with the approval of the PTI chief, which failed to win the majority of the legislature.

People's Party has also been a partner in Azad Kashmir government.

Aseefa Bhutto to contest next general elections

KARACHI (NNI): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has decided to field Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, daughter of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, in the upcoming general elections. According to details, PPP leader Aseefa Bhutto will contest the upcoming general elections as the party's think tank has started considering various constituencies of Sindh.

PPP co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari will make a final decision about the constituency, from which Aseefa will contest the polls. She will also run her election campaign and address rallies in multiple districts. The decision came after Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif announced that the incumbent government will hand over power to the caretaker set-up in August 2023.

PM Shehbaz said that he assumed the prime minister's office in April 2022 and power will be handed over to the caretaker set-up in August 2023.

The premier said that the incumbent government fended off 'landmines' laid by the previous government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) besides ending Pakistan's isolation on the economic and foreign-level fronts.

12 die, 10 injured as bus carrying tourists falls into gorge in Diamer

DIAMER (INP): At least 12 people died and 10 others were reported injured when a bus carrying tourists skidded off road fell into a gorge near the Thalichi area of district Diamer in Gilgit Baltistan on Sunday.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Diamer, Muhammad Ayaz said that the accident took place on Karakoram Highway where a bus heading to Gilgit from Lahore plunged into a ravine.

As a result of accident, 12 people including women and children died while 10 others were reported injured.

The police and local people through joint efforts pulled out the bodies, injured from ravine and shifted them to hospital.

It is worth mentioning here that earlier this

month, five tourists were killed and 13 were injured in two traffic accidents in GB's Hunza when a van fell into a ravine and another crashed into a mountain.

PM Shehbaz, FM Bilawal express grief over loss of lives in tourist bus accident: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday expressed deep grief and sorrow over the loss of precious lives in a tourist bus accident near Thalichi at Karakoram Highway.

In a statement, the premier prayed for the eternal peace of the deceased and expressed condolences with their bereaved families.

PM Shehbaz directed the Gilgit-Baltistan authorities for immediate relief operation and also directed relevant federal departments to assist in relief work. Praying for

speedy recovery of the injured, the premier also directed authorities concerned to provide best medical facilities to them.

PM Shehbaz also ordered an inquiry into the accident to ascertain its cause. Additionally, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari expressed his grief and sorrow over the loss of lives in a Karakoram Highway bus incident.

He said: 'I am saddened to hear the news about the incident of a tourist bus.'

He consoled with the bereaved families of bus passengers, who lost their lives in the incident.

Bhutto-Zardari also prayed for the early recovery of the injured persons and stressed the need for preparing a strategy to avert such incidents in the future.

Raging River Sutlej inundates localities, destroys crops at Arifwala

LAHORE (NNI): Several localities were submerged and crops sown over several acres of land were destroyed after 76,000 cusecs of water passing through River Sutlej at Arifwala burst its banks on Sunday. On the other hand, the water level in the river continues to rise.

Sensing gravity of the situation, several welfare organizations have come forward and are providing ration, clean drinking water and medical treatment to those affected by floods.

On the other hand, Pakistan Army in collaboration with Rangers and the civil administration has set up relief camps at several places in Bahawalnagar, Christian and Sulemanki in view of possible floods in these areas.

Contingents of Bahawalpur Corps will remain ready with additional relief items in case water from River Sutlej spills over into surrounding localities and fields.

Different cities of Punjab, including Lahore, received rain.

While it drizzled in some parts of the provincial capital, areas such as Kalima Chowk, Barkat Market, Iqbal Town and Sabza Zar received rain.

The weather department, on the other hand, forecast there were 40 per cent chances of rain in the city. The air quality index (AQI) was recorded at 88.

Although the weather turned pleasant following downpour in Gujranwala and in its outskirts, still it also caused inconvenience to the people as several areas were inundated.

Meanwhile, several areas of Karachi received heavy and light rain, which brought down the temperature. It rained heavily at several places, including Pan Mandi, Kharadar, Lee Market, Garden, Soldier Bazaar, Gurru Mandir and Lyari.

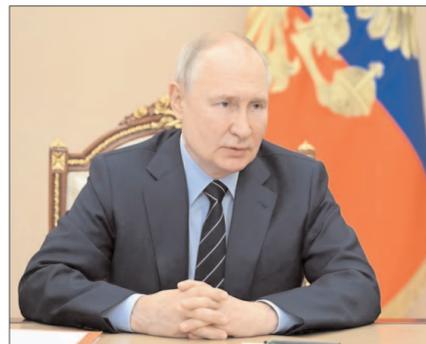
Russia will use cluster bombs in Ukraine if it has to: Putin

MOSCOW (Reuters): President Vladimir Putin said Russia had a "sufficient stockpile" of cluster bombs and reserved the right to use them if such munitions, the use of which he said he regarded as a crime, were deployed against Russian forces in Ukraine.

Ukraine said on Thursday it had received cluster bombs from the United States, its biggest military backer, which says the munitions are needed to compensate for shell shortages faced by Kyiv's forces at a time when they are mounting a counteroffensive.

Cluster munitions are banned in more than 100 countries because they typically release large numbers of smaller bomblets that can kill indiscriminately over a wide area. Some of them inevitably fail to explode and can pose a danger for decades, particularly to children.

Kyiv has said it will use cluster bombs to dislodge concentrations of enemy soldiers when trying to take back its own territory, but will not use them on Russian territory.



Putin told state TV Moscow would respond in kind if necessary.

"I want to note that in the Russian Federation there is a sufficient stockpile of different kinds of cluster bombs. We have not used them yet. But of course if they are used against us, we reserve the right to take reciprocal action."

Putin said he regarded the use of cluster bombs as a crime and that Russia had so far not needed to use them itself despite having suffered its own ammunition issues in the past.

Human Rights Watch

says both Moscow and Kyiv have used cluster munitions.

Russia, Ukraine and the U.S. have not signed up to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which bans the production, stockpiling, use and transfer of the weapons. Putin also told state TV he saw nothing wrong in Russian specialists examining captured Western military equipment and missiles, such as the Storm Shadow missiles Britain supplied to Ukraine, in order to see if there was anything useful that could be used in Russia's own military hardware.

Sunnah, citizens fundamental rights to be part of curriculum: PTI Chairman

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan has said that when PTI gets power again, along with the biography of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), the fundamental rights of the citizens will also be made part of the curriculum.

Talking to Twitter, the former premier further penned, "So that every citizen should realize that true freedom is possible only if citizens are aware of the rights provided by the constitution and are ready to defend them at the cost of their lives.

PTI chairman in another tweet message criticized the government for arresting Haji Nasrullah Wazir father of PTI former MP Naseer Ullah Wazir in Khaybar Pakhtunkhwa last night. He said that Haji Nasrullah Wazir was abducted by KP police along with some unknown people. He lamented that PTI is being subjected to collective punishment where women, children, and even the elders are not spared. "The houses of PTI's workers are being vandalized and robbed, and their businesses are being shut down. Even

their friends and distant relatives are being victimized."

He added that all this is being done in a futile effort to dismantle the party. "What is happening in Pakistan today is not only shameful and condemnable but has no precedence in any civilized society, he said adding that only occupation forces give collective punishment.

The time when a country's security forces subjected their own citizens to collective punishment was during Stalin's Soviet Union and Nazi Germany.

Jirga succeeds in brokering peace agreement in Kurram

PESHAWAR (APP): A 30-member peace jirga succeeded in brokering a peace agreement between the two rival tribes of the tribal district Kurram on Sunday.

After the signing of a one-year peace agreement, the personnel of security forces and police were deployed after clearing the fronts of the parties and normalcy began to be restored.

Talking to APP, the Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC), Kurram, Muazzam Khan Bangash said that a 30-member peace jirga comprising Sunni and Shia elders, Hangu and Kohat after hectic efforts of negotiations with both

parties for a period of last three days succeeded in stopping of clashes in Kurram district and signing of a peace agreement.

In case of violation of the peace treaty during a period of one year, the violator will pay a fine of Rs.120 million.

Commissioner Kohat Division, Muhammad Ali Shah, Brigadier Shahzad Azim, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kurram Syed Saiful Islam Shah, Regional Police Officer (RPO) Kohat and other officials were also present the jirga.

Speaking on the occasion, Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resources, Sajid Hussain Turi termed the

signing of the peace agreement a good omen, which will make reaching to actual culprits easy.

Similarly, he said action will also be taken against those who obstruct the ways.

Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resources, Sajid Hussain Turi said that whatever disputes there are between the parties, they should sit together and cooperate with each other to solve them amicably.

On this occasion, former MPA Riyaz Shaheen said that the secret of the development of Kurram district is in peace and all schools of thought need steps to establish sustainable peace in the district.



Free screening of 500 employees of health dept conducted

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Health Department organized a health screening camp here on Sunday during which the screening of its 500 employees was conducted. Official sources told APP that it was the first-ever camp organised by the health department for the screening of its employees. Screening for diabetes, high blood pressure, hepatitis B and C, AIDS, TB, respiratory diseases and other ailments was conducted in the camp. Likewise, eyes, teeth and ears were also examined, besides provision of a dietary advice and immunizations were also administered in the camp.

In a press statement, Punjab Minister for Primary & Secondary Healthcare Dr Jamal Nasir stressed the need for placing health department official in the best conditions. He said the criterion had been ensured as they provide health facilities to citizens, hence, it was important for them to be healthy and fit themselves. It is necessary to organize such camps annually and conduct health screenings of employees of the department, the minister added.

Arrangements regarding Muharram reviewed

KARACHI (APP): Transition Officer Naveed Khan Kolachi along with Focal Person Tauqeer Abbas and other officers inspected the processions routes and Imambargahs and surrounding areas in connection with arrangements of Muharram-ul-Haram in district East here Sunday. They visited the areas in and around Nishtar Park and the surrounding areas, Mehfil Murtaza PECHS and Mahmoodabad. Under the supervision of Transition Officer, the installation and repair work of roads and street lights was carried out.

On this occasion, Naveed Khan Kolachi said that municipal services were being equipped at Nishtar Park and other places where processions and gatherings were to be held in Muharram-ul-Haram. Encroachments and other problems are being removed from the routes of processions and making the procession routes motorable, he added.

Climate March held

KARACHI (APP): The participants of a 'Climate March' on Sunday stressed the need for a clean environment and highlighted the importance of a clean city. The Climate March started from Frere Hall while passing through the Governor House and culminated at the Karachi Press Club. The participants carrying placards inscribed with slogans 'United against fossil fuel', raised their demand for clean and pure air in the city.

They said that the clean environment played a vital role in the lives of the people. They said that the environment of the country including Karachi had deteriorated. They said that Climate Change had become a problem of the world, which be addressed in a proper manner.

Religious Harmony Pakistani leaders unite in historic interfaith press conference

LAHORE (APP): Muslim and Christian leaders, in a groundbreaking display of religious harmony, came together for a historic press conference on Sunday, where they held the holy scriptures of the Bible, Torah, Psalms, and the Quran.

This momentous event marked the first time in the nation's history that leaders from both communities gathered in unison to address the importance of respect for all four heavenly books.

The notable event took place at the University of the Central Punjab and was organized under the auspices of the International Interfaith Harmony Council and the Pakistan Ulema Council. Among the prominent figures present was Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, who joined hands with the Muslim and Christian leaders to promote interfaith understanding and cooperation. During the conference, the leaders underscored the significance of showing reverence for all heavenly religions and their sacred texts.

They emphatically stated that no individual, group, country, or organization should ever be allowed to disrespect any heavenly book, as well as the prophets and messengers associated with them.

Condemning the recent incident of Quran burning in Sweden, they also stressed that permitting the burning of Torah, Bible, or Psalms would be equally unacceptable. Gratitude was extended to

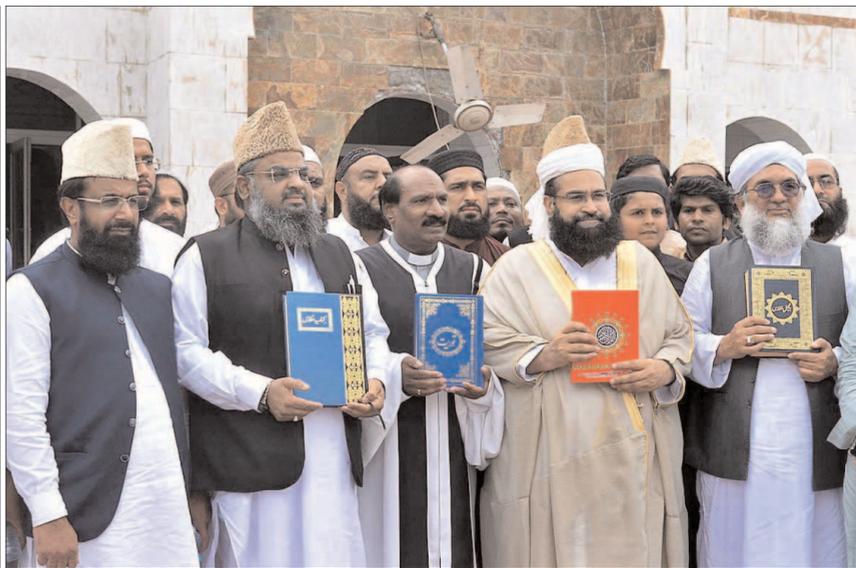
those who respected the sanctity of the Torah. In a collective appeal to the European Union and the United Nations, the leaders urged immediate attention and global legislative action to safeguard the sanctity of all heavenly religions.

Recognizing the universal message of peace, harmony, moderation, and tolerance found in Islam and all other religions, they vehemently clarified that no religion's teachings promote violence or extremism.

Furthermore, they disavowed any individuals or groups who propagate violence, asserting that such actions do not represent any religion's true essence.

The conference placed significant emphasis on fostering interfaith harmony within Pakistan. Working together with the Church of Pakistan, the Pakistan Ulema Council, and the International Interfaith Harmony Council, the leaders pledged to promote unity among different faiths in the country and to ensure the full protection of minority rights.

They reaffirmed that the Constitution of Pakistan already safeguards the rights of minorities and emphasized that no one should infringe upon these rights. In a pointed response to derogatory remarks made against Pakistan by the Israeli delegate at the United Nations, the leaders condemned such behaviour and emphasized their commitment to peace and stability, especially during the sacred month of Muharram.



LAHORE: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Religious Harmony Maulana Tahir Ashrafi expressing solidarity with holy books at Jamia Manzoorul Islamia.

Kashmiris to mark 76th Accession Day on July 19

LAHORE (APP): Kashmiris, residing on both sides of the line of control and around the world will observe the 76th anniversary of Kashmir's accession to Pakistan on July 19. The objective is to strengthening and promoting the ideology of the entire Jammu and Kashmir state acceding to Pakistan, which represents the ultimate aspiration of the people of Jammu Kashmir. Various social, political, and civil society organisations in Jammu & Kashmir have planned to organize programmes to mark Kashmir's accession to Pakistan Day. All bodies will commemorate the day with an aim to renew their pledge to continue efforts for self-determination of Jammu & Kashmir.

Various organisers across the country have expressed their commitment to

ensuring a meaningful and comprehensive observance of IIOJK's accession to Pakistan Day.

They are actively coordinating events and activities in collaboration with social, political, and civil society groups.

The initiatives will be carried out across Azad Jammu Kashmir, Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and other regions where Kashmiris reside.

The major ceremony to commemorate Kashmir's accession to Pakistan Day will be held in the capital city of Muzaffarabad besides all the three divisional and district headquarters in Azad Jammu Kashmir on next Sunday morning, wherein the importance of implementation of this historic resolution would be highlighted by the speakers belonging to various walks of

Green Pakistan initiative to enhance food security, bolster agro-productivity

LAHORE (APP): Experts believe that the coalition government's 'Green Pakistan' initiative will revive country's agricultural economy and help pave the way for prosperity and progress in the country.

The government authorities, on the other hand, say that the initiative would enhance food security, increase exports and reduce agriculture-related imports.

In this connection, the government last week established a Land Information and Management System Centre of Excellence ((LIMS-CoE) to enhance modern farming on over 9 million hectares of uncultivated farmlands, with Saudi Arabia providing an initial investment of \$500 million to improve the country's irrigation system.

The Centre will work in collaboration with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain and China on various agricultural projects to enhance Pakistan's exports.

Agriculture contributes more than 23 per cent to Pakistan's GDP and employs 37.4 per cent of the labour force, but productivity is currently below par, with decreasing cultivation area, a population-production gap, and agricultural imports amounting to \$10 billion annually.

It is a good omen that the Gulf countries have shown willingness to invest in the Green Pakistan initiative as their ambassa-

dors were also briefed last week about the project, and they showed complete willingness to invest in it. Secretary Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) Muhammad Ishaq, while talking to APP, highlighted the salient features of the initiative, that will boost revival of agriculture for economic prosperity of the country. He also shed light on the landmark steps, being undertaken by the government to exploit its full potential in agriculture and other domains under the ambit of the recently launched Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC).

He said around \$50 billion investment in the next five years, primarily from Gulf states, is expected under the green initiative in the agriculture sector. Giving an example, he said that earlier, as a scientific achievement, Pakistan introduced 20 new high-yielding and disease-resistant varieties of wheat and maize.

As a result, more than 211,000 individuals applied for the improved technologies and farming management practices on nearly 367,000 hectares in the country, he said. In this connection, the United States Agency for International Development USAID had constructed 420-km irrigation canals, providing access to irrigation water to nearly 8,000 farming households in the newly-merged districts of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.

Muslim leaders praise Saudi Arabia for successful Hajj season

ISLAMABAD (APP): Leaders of the Muslim world and heads of Islamic organizations have commended Saudi Arabia and its leadership for the successful completion of this year's Hajj pilgrimage.

The Muslim World League (MWL) extended its congratulations to the Kingdom under the guidance of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman, and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, praising the great efforts in serving the Two Holy Mosques and the pilgrims.

MWL Secretary-General, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, emphasized that the success of the Hajj season was a result of meticulous planning, efficient operations, and the dedication of the Saudi government to ensure the best services for the pilgrims.

The league also applauded the continuous improvements in services and facilities to facilitate the sacred journey. In Cairo, the Grand Imam of Al Azhar, Sheikh Ahmed Al Tayeb,

extended his congratulations to the Saudi leadership and people for the successful Hajj season, emphasizing the vital role played by Saudi Arabia in providing services for pilgrims from around the world.

Kuwait's Emir, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmed Nawaf Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah congratulated King Salman on the outstanding success of the Hajj season. They praised the Kingdom's efforts and modernization of services, aimed at enhancing the pilgrimage experience.

Leaders from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), including President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Vice President Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, and Vice President Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, sent heartfelt cables of congratulations to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, expressing gratitude for the exceptional care and

safety provided to the pilgrims. In Jeddah, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) praised the Kingdom's services and hospitality towards pilgrims from OIC member states and countries with Muslim minorities. OIC Secretary-General Hussein Ibrahim Taha appreciated the dedicated efforts of King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in maintaining the sanctity and importance of the Two Holy Mosques. Arab Parliament Speaker Adel Al-Asoomi commended the intensive efforts of the Saudi government in serving pilgrims and ensuring the success of the Hajj. He highlighted the high-quality services provided and congratulated Saudi Arabia and the Islamic world on the triumph of this year's Hajj season.

Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Jassem Mohamed Al-Budaiwi, acknowledged Saudi Arabia's efforts in serving the pilgrims and providing them with a safe and spiritual experience.

'25 child protection units established in various districts'

LAHORE (APP): Child Protection & Welfare Bureau Chairperson Sarah Ahmad, on Sunday said that 25 child protection units had been established in various districts of Punjab.

Talking to APP, Sarah Ahmad said the Child Protection and Welfare Bureau (CPWB) was committed to further extending the scope of its services to all districts, ensuring effective protection of child rights across the province.

She said the work on the newly inaugurated unit of child protection at Kutchery Road, Kasur was launched

in November 2021 while the child protection office had been functioning since 2019. She expressed her gratitude to the Punjab chief secretary, additional chief secretary (ACS) Home and the line departments for their cooperation in the endeavor.

Sarah Ahmad noted the construction of the child protection unit in Kasur was completed at a cost of Rs 34 million, adding that such like units had already been established in 25 districts. She said the CPWB was committed to extending the scope of its services to all districts, ensuring effective protection

of child rights across the province. It may be mentioned here that Chairperson Child Protection and Welfare Bureau (CPWB) Sarah Ahmed has been honored with the prestigious Global Collaborative Award in Rome, Italy by Dr Jennifer Wortham, CEO of Global Collaborative for her valuable work in the protection of children. The Global Collaborative had acknowledged the services and outstanding work of ten individuals from across the world who are doing meaningful work for the prevention of child abuse.

Quality storage must to avert wheat losses

LAHORE (APP): Being the fifth largest populated country with a population growth rate of around two per cent, Pakistan would be experiencing food security issues in coming decades as experts predict its populace to almost double within the next 30 years if continues to grow at its existing pace.

This situation needs serious consideration for enhancing agricultural produce by introducing modern techniques and bringing more land under cultivation besides ensuring proper storage of edibles and smooth supply to consumers at affordable rates.

A multi-pronged strategy based on short and long-term measures was direly needed to achieve food sufficiency goals with a prime focus on enhancing agricultural produce as well as grain procurement and their proper storage to avoid wastage.

Since wheat is a main staple food for our people with a per capita consumption of around 125kg annually, its cultivation on vast tracts of land with enhanced productivity and procurement had become imperative to feed the people at a bearable cost.

Wheat productivity has stagnated in recent years, with only a 10 per cent increase since the last decade. However, by achieving the 16.48 million acre wheat cultivation target in Punjab in 2022-23, the crop topped 27.5 million metric tons, the highest in the last 10 years.

Although increased yield is equally important, yet keeping in view the challenges of climatic changes, heavy rains and floods as

happened last year, post-harvest management is more a resource-efficient way to improve food availability without additional agricultural inputs.

The wheat supply chain in the country is another important factor and can be safeguarded by an increase in average production as well as reducing post-harvest losses. Currently, the average yield of wheat is around three tonnes per hectare, substantially lower when compared to other countries.

"Wheat harvesting losses in our country are about 10-20pc because of an outdated mode of farming that cost us the loss of around two million tone wheat," remarked Focal Person at the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad Irfan Afzan. "Combine wheat harvester is one of the factors and it is direly needed that Engineering Development Board provides registration and fitness certificates to these harvesters."

Moreover, he noted that additional 10-15 per cent losses occur post-harvesting due to improper storage at granaries or storing crops in the open along with abstemious rainfall during monsoon season and subsequent flooding. "Therefore, around 50-60 per cent wheat is marketed as farmers hold the remaining for their own consumption."

Irfan Afzan suggested, there is vast scope to reduce on-farm and off-farm losses through improved harvesting, bulk handling and storage in modern silos. "Construction and up gradation of storehouses are essential to minimize stor-

age losses."

He said elevated relative humidity, exacerbated by subsequent high temperatures during storage practices, is the primary catalyst for grain degradation, particularly in seeds.

According to experts wheat seed requires about 12 per cent moisture content and 65 per cent relative humidity for safe storage. The seed moisture content of greater than 14pc promotes mould attack resulting in aflatoxin contamination of stored products.

"Presence of aflatoxin in grain poses a major risk for humans, especially children, as it can have immunosuppressive, mutagenic and carcinogenic effects," they believe.

Also arguing about measures to enhance yield, these experts recommend investment in research, use of efficient machinery for sowing, harvesting and threshing, use of certified seed and timely application of irrigation and balanced fertilizer.

"Sowing of recommended seed cultivars in a particular region is crucial because only that cultivar can produce optimum yield, keeping in view the elements of climate," they pleaded.

Climatic shifts in Pakistani terrain have led agricultural think tanks to introduce cost-effective improved storage facilities in the form of hermetic bags and mini-hermetic drums, usually termed 'Anaji drum' developed by the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad (UAF).

One hermetic bag is sufficient to preserve the qual-



LAHORE: People busy in selecting and purchasing old books from roadside stall in Provincial Capital.



JUI-F terms mudslinging drive against Governor reaction of ANP's defeat in LB polls

PESHAWAR (INP): Amir of Jamiat Ullema Islam-F (JUI-F) District Peshawar, Maulana Ahmad Ali and General Secretary, Masood Gul have said the mudslinging campaign of Awami National Party (ANP) leadership including its leader Samar Bilour against Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali and his son, Haji Zubair Ali is the reaction of the defeat of Awami National Party (ANP) by Jamiat Ullema Islam-F (JUI-F) in the local bodies polls.

Ulema Islam-F (JUI-F) said if Awami National Party (ANP) leadership or any other party proved the carrying out of developmental activities as have been taken by Mayor Peshawar, Haji Zubair Ali, they would sent bucket of flowers to them. Similarly, Haji Ghulam Ali in his tenure as Nazim Peshawar had made record development in the provincial metropolis, they added. Both Maulana Ahmad Ali and Masood Gul reminded Samar Bilour that at her time of elections, both Haji Ghulam Ali and Zubair Ali extended full support to her in compli-

ance of the decision taken by Jamiat Ullema Islam-F (JUI-F) leadership. They also asked Samar Bilour to prove any of her allegations of corruption and influence in postings and transfers by Governor Haji Ghulam Ali and Mayor, Zubair Ali. They said Haji Ghulam Ali has great regard for Bilour family and such utterances by Samar Bilour will damage the decades-old relations. In the prevailing circumstances when the country is faced with both economic and political crisis, it is need of the hour to keep political leadership united

and politicians should give national interest more priority over personal interests, the Jamiat Ullema Islam-F (JUI-F) leaders suggested.

WSSP finalizes sanitation plan

PESHAWAR (APP): The Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar (WSSP) on Sunday given the sanitation plan its final shape for the period of Muharram ul Haram.

Over 300 workers will provide sanitation services in Union Council 9, UC 69, Wazir Bagh Zone A, and Union Councils 9, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19, day and night. UC 9 and 69 will operate in two shifts, while the Zone B Union Councils will have services in three shifts.

According to the plan, the sanitation operation will involve 124 sanitary workers, 82 sweepers, 28 helpers, 52 mini-dumpers, 8 compactors, 6 water tankers, and 6 bowzers to collect and dispose of waste.

Cleaning of routes, including spraying lime and using fog sprayers, will be conducted in narrow alleys.

Additional staff and vehicles will be provided on the 9th and 10th of Muharram.

Furthermore, based on the requirements, additional personnel will be appointed. Four focal persons have been designated for the Muharram operation, including Chief Municipal Inspector Mukhtar, Municipal Inspector Sadiqullah, Supervisor Bashir, and Municipal Inspector Shadman.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali presiding over a meeting regarding law and order. SSP Haroon also present in meeting.

Imamia Council organizes Paigham-e-Karbala moot

PESHAWAR (APP): Imamia Council for the Unity of the Muslims (Rejection of Sectarianism) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in collaboration with Qoumi Aman Jirga organized 'Paigham-e-Karbala Conference' here the other day, said a press release issued here on Sunday.

Director General (DG), Iranian Cultural Centre, Peshawar Asghar Khuro Abadi attended the conference as the chief guest.

Addressing the participants of the conference, Asghar Khuro Abadi said that the message of Karbala was offering timely and

early prayers, which could not be forgotten due to engagements relating to customs, traditions and other routine matters.

Chairman, Qoumi Aman Jirga, Iqbal Haidri highlighted the significant events organized in Muharram ul Haram and other holy Islamic months underlining their importance in Islamic history and stressed for highlighting these golden chapters. He further stressed for creation of awareness amongst the youth about Islamic calendar.

Allama Syed Zafar Naqvi highlighted the

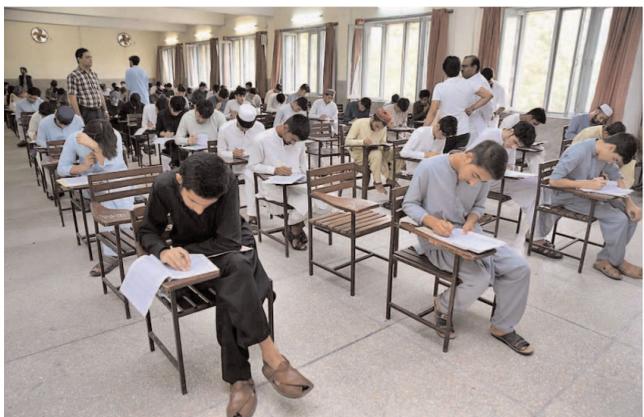
responsibility of masjid and emphasized presentation of the importance of Muharram-ul-Haram in true sense. Allama Abid Hussain Shakri, the Principal of Madrasa Arif Hussain Al-Hussaini Shaheed, shed light on the unwavering commitment of Imam Aali-e-Maqaam, emphasizing the visible and hidden aspects of martyrdom.

Custodians of numerous Imam Bargahs, Taiziadars, founders of Majalis, Salars of Matami Sangats and their representatives from Peshawar turned over to the conference. The unique

event successfully brought together Shia and Sunni Muslims under one roof, promoting unity, understanding, and brotherhood.

The speakers at the conference highlighted commonalities, values, tolerance and brotherhood, with a particular focus on strengthening the bonds of Islamic brotherhood through a deeper understanding of Karbala. By emphasizing shared aspects rather than differences, the aim was to thwart the ambitions of those who perpetuate sectarian tensions and conspiracies against Islam.

Goodwill & CUSIT Talent Scholarship Test held



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar Model Degree Colleges successfully conducted the second and last phase of Goodwill & CUSIT Talent Scholarship Test, which witnessed around more than 1200 Matric students

from both government and private schools across the KPK. Overall, more than 2000 students participated in these tests.

Mardan, showcasing the immense talent and potential among the youth of the region.

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

The test took place in PMDC Dalazak road boys & girls colleges Peshawar and PMDC boys & girls colleges Mohabbatabad

KP takes lead by completing first CPEC originated project

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KP-EZDMC), a public sector company of the KP government, has taken the lead by completing the first phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) flag-bearer Rashakai Special Economic Zone (SEZ), at District Nowshera.

given an edge to the province over other provinces of the country.

So far, an investment to the tune of Rs.85 billion has already been made in the zone and besides, Chinese several domestic big industrial groups are also investing in it, he said.

The investors are going to set up units for manufacturing Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) a raw material for the pharmaceutical industrial units while another investor has also shown interest in establishing a vaccine manufacturing unit in the zone while Pakistan Oxygen, a largest oxygen manufacturing unit has already invested in the Zone.

The current innovative management of company has initiated construction work on 9 new economic zones including two special economic zones of Hattar and Rashakai. 90 percent infrastructure development work at Hattar Special Economic Zone has been completed and now colonization is also in progress

During the current management, the total assets of the company by the end of the year 2022 have increased to Rs.15.8 billion as compared to Rs.13 billion in 2021.

The company has posted a surplus of Rs. 29 million (Rs 35 million in 2021) with total income of Rs.1025 million in 2022 (Rs 926.5 million in 2021).

Javed Iqbal Khattak said the Board of Directors (BoD) has appreciated the financial performance of the company for the period ending June 30, 2022. The company's income and the total assets have also shown a steady increase over the past year, which is a testament to the company's strong management and commitment to excellence.

During 2022, the company had generated funds around Rs 3.1 billion including Rs 541 million received in the shape of the annual development programme (ADP). It has also launched new zones including Special Economic Zone

On completion only, the Rashakai SEZ will generate over 2,50000 direct and indirect employment opportunities for the local population while other ongoing projects will also create over nearly the same number of employment opportunities for industrial workers and the change the socio-economic conditions of the people of the province.

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The Rashakai SEZ is the first completed project initiated under CPEC in Pakistan. This marvelous performance shown by a public sector company of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has

reached 1.970 million and is estimated that it will reach up to 2.80 million by 2030 that would eat up more agriculture land. As a result of shortage of housing units, the price of five marla house in Peshawar has crossed Rs20 million and rent to Rs40,000 that was beyond purchasing capacity of common man and low paid employees.

Ikhair Wali, spokesman of PMLN told APP that PTI government has made tall claims to construct 5 million houses but failed to complete its promises. He said poor housing policies of PTI rulers increased housing problem and property prices in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Muhammad Waqas Anjum, Assistant Director, Provincial Housing Authority (PHA), told APP that under Naya Pakistan Housing Program, a survey regarding shortfall of houses were conducted revealing that five million houses of five marla were required

in Pakistan including 7,50,000 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said 2,62,500 kanal land was needed for construction of these five marla housing units. Peshawar was facing a shortfall of 104, 897 houses while 58,309 houses required in Mardan, 65,749 in Swat, 39,981 in DI Khan, 39,919 in Swabi, 39,712 in Charsadda, 38,244 in Manshera, 37, 313 in Nowshera and 35, 282 in Lower Dir.

About 32,751 were needed in Abbottabad, 28,697 in Bannu, 24,646 in Hariapur, 24,421 in Kohat, 23,255 in Upper Dir, 20,048 in Buner, 21,529 in Lakkhi Marwat, 19,281 in Kohistan, 18,620 in Shangla, 17,699 in Malakand, 17,355 in Karak, 17,748 in Hangu, 11,711 in Batagram, 10,992 in Chitral, 9,629 in Tank and 4,211 in Torghar.

He said only 6,500 kanal land was available in Peshawar, 560 kanal in Swat, 377 kanal in

Charsadda, 300 kanal and 8,300 land in Hangu for construction of affordable houses. Waqas Anjum said that 15 housing projects including Hangu township on 8,400 kanal and Jalozi Phase III at Nowshera was launched to provide affordable houses to low income groups, labourers and general public.

The official said that 10,500 housing units in Hangu would be constructed with an estimated cost of Rs10 billion in next three to five years.

As many as 900 residential flats would be constructed in three high rise buildings at Nishtarabad, Warsak-I and Warsak-II in Peshawar. Consultants were hired for Warsak-I covering 4.14 kanal and Warsak-II of 3.8 kanal costing Rs3,500 million.

A 20 storey high rise building on 36 kanal would be constructed at Nishtarabad in Peshawar City where 300 low-cost residential flats to be built

for the underprivileged and poor families. Similarly, 2,056 residential flats were constructed for industrial workers with an estimated cost of Rs5.93 billion at Shahi Bala. Rehman Baba Complex Peshawar would be constructed on 79 kanal where 2,180 residential flats to be built in three years.

Jalozi housing project in Nowshera is being constructed on 8,400 kanal where about 9,000 housing units would be built besides 1, 300 residential flats for labourers and general public.

Under PHA Foundation and KP government's joint venture project, he said 8, 000 low-cost housing units in first phase would be constructed at Surizai Peshawar.

Danigram project Swat covering 70 kanal is constructed where quota allocated for widows, persons with disabilities and media professionals. Feasibility study and design of new Peshawar

housing project would soon be completed while its preliminary zoning plan had already been prepared. The deputy commissioners Peshawar and Nowshera has completed verification of 6,571 kanal land. Waqas said high rise buildings having 140 residential flats were being constructed at Hayatabad. Residential flats on 331 kanal at Civil Quarters Peshawar were constructed while work on its second phase accelerated.

Besides constructing residential flats in Mardan and Pabbi Nowshera, he said a residential colony at Dheri Zardad in Charsadda is being launched where 53 housing units in first phase would be built.

Mulazai housing project costing Rs 260 million completed in Peshawar where construction of houses started. He said 80pc work on Jerma housing project Kohat having 463 plots completed besides development of 219 residential plots on 218 kanal

at Havalian township Abbottabad. He said 1,320 low-cost flats were being constructed in Jalozi Nowshera benefiting over 40,000 poorer and labourers, adding 300,000 subsidy was being provided to each beneficiary.

The cost of each flat was Rs 2.5 million that would be provided to people on Rs 2.2 million. The Bank of Khyber (BoK) was providing soft loans to beneficiaries for its construction.

Waqas Anjum said that applications from people, government employees, media and special persons were invited for mega housing project at Nowshera with last date July 31, 2023 to be constructed by Provincial Housing Authority (PHA) Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He said these projects was launched as per the government vision to provide affordable houses to all citizens of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Promotion of tourism top govt's priority

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to Caretaker Chief Minister on Tourism, Culture and Archeology Zafar Mehmood has said that the promotion of tourism is among the priorities of the caretaker government.

PPP: Rights of minority's protection part of manifesto

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR (APP): Protection of the rights of minorities is one of the main points of the manifesto of the People's Party, PPP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minority Wing President Naseeb Chan said here Sunday.

Natural and new tourist spots will be introduced in the province. He said that the economic crisis can be overcome through tourism.

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Gohar appointed as CEC PTI

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: PTI nominated Barrieta Gohar as Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) of the party. In this regard PTI general secretary issued notification for the nomination after approval from party chairman. Barrister Gohar Khan is an expert of constitutional affairs while representing PTI and Imran Khan in several cases at different forums.

Storm of inflation continued

PESHAWAR (INP): The relentless wave of inflation continues to wreak havoc in the provincial capital of Peshawar, with ginger prices reaching an all-time high. However, the district administration assures the public that they are diligently monitoring and enforcing the official price list for various food items.

A visit to the bustling vegetables and fruit markets unveiled the ongoing surge in prices. Ginger, in particular, skyrocketed to an astonishing Rs. 1250 per kilogram. Garlic and lemon witnessed a significant increase from Rs. 140 to Rs. 320 per kilogram, while onions are being sold at Rs. 50, tomatoes at Rs. 80, green peppers at Rs. 80, peas at Rs. 250, okra at Rs. 90, and turnips at Rs. 80 per kilogram.

Furthermore, potatoes are priced at Rs. 110, kachalo at Rs. 130, cauliflower at Rs. 120, eggplant at Rs. 30, and zucchini and tinda at Rs. 100 per kilogram. Among fruits, apples have soared to Rs. 450, mangoes to Rs. 350, and peaches to Rs. 220 per kilogram. Cherries are being sold at Rs. 430, potatoes at Rs. 260, and bananas at Rs. 200 per dozen. The price of live chicken has surged by five rupees per kilogram, now reaching Rs. 460 per kilogram. Throughout the week, prices have steadily climbed, as the earlier rate for live chicken stood at Rs. 445 per kilogram.

500 teachers deprived of salaries

PESHAWAR (APP): More than five hundred second shift teachers of Shangla are deprived of their salaries, they could not get their salary for six months. In this connection a meeting of all teachers was held at Govt Centennial Model High School Alpuri on Sunday in which they demanded for immediate payment of all arrears including summer and winter salaries.

In favor of their demands, President of the second shift teachers, Abdali Khan, General Secretary Wajid Ali, Finance Secretary Obduhllah, Hussain Shah, Abed Ali, Sharifullah and others participated in large numbers and demanded the government to resolve their legitimate demands.

The teachers demand from the government that these teachers are teaching the students with great dedication and hard work, but in return, their rights are being violated and neglected continuously, due to

which the motivation of these more than five hundred graduate second shift young teachers is being discouraged. Second shift teachers are no less than other teachers, they teach with more dedication and their demands should be acknowledged, Abdali Khan said.

Affordable houses for all: still a distant dream for people of KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Besides climate change, shabby economy and population bulge, Pakistan was also confronted to the monster challenge of providing affordable housing facility to all its citizens.

As the country's population has crossed the psychological barrier of 240 million mark in May this year, which means that about 10 million housing units including 2.5 million in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would be required by 2040.

"Affordable housing was the fundamental right of all citizens of Pakistan where rapid population growth, migration from rural to urban areas, high construction and land cost factors have largely contributed to houses backlog," said Professor Dr Z.A Malik, former Chairman, Economics Department, University of Pakistan while talking to APP.

He said the current demand for new housing units was growing at the rate of 600,000 houses per

year and if we add five lakh more houses than 1.1 million units per annum would be required to clear the existing backlog of 10 million houses in next 17 years.

He said the housing gap in Punjab was estimated at 2.3 million units in 2017 and is expected to skyrocket to 11.3 million units by 2047.

He said half of all urban households were overcrowded or live in informal settlements with inadequate access to basic infrastructure, civic facilities and services while formal housing was almost out of reach of the people.

Dr Malik said the rapid urbanization of the agricultural land turned the fertile land into unplanned towns and societies in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa especially in Peshawar, Mardan, Abbottabad, Swat, Kohat, DI Khan and Nowshera.

He said housing problems would further aggravate in Peshawar where urban population has

reached 1.970 million and is estimated that it will reach up to 2.80 million by 2030 that would eat up more agriculture land. As a result of shortage of housing units, the price of five marla house in Peshawar has crossed Rs20 million and rent to Rs40,000 that was beyond purchasing capacity of common man and low paid employees.

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In brief

LG by-polls on Aug 27

DIR LOWER (APP): The Local Government by-elections will be held on August 27, 2023 here in Dir Lower, said district Election Officer Iqbal Tanoli here on Sunday. According to details in Tehsil Lal Qila, village council in Lal Qila and village council in Bishgram, one seat each of the general seat has become vacant. Similarly, one seat reserved for women has become vacant in Village Council Sarfo Manzai, on which by-elections will be held on August 27, 2023. In this regard, District Election Officer Iqbal Tanoli has said that women and men who are interested in the above-mentioned seats should submit their documents in the office of Assistant Commissioner Lal Qila accordingly.

Police conduct flag march

DG KHAN (INP): Police conducted a flag march in order to maintain law and order situation in the city during Muharram-ul-Haram. The flag march was made led by DPO Hasan Afzal in which Deputy Commissioner Shahid Zaman Lak and other officers also participated. The flag march was passed through different areas of the city. DPO said that the DG Khan police was using all resources to maintain the atmosphere of peace during Muharram ul-Haram and the purpose of the march was to aware the people that the police is ready to deal with all kinds of situations. He said that apart from the common citizens, we will also request the Ulema to play their role in religious harmony.

Rapist flees from custody

JHELUM (INP): A 'rapist' escaped from police custody in Punjab's Jhelum. According to media reports, the man named Kamran who was accused of raping a woman, was able to dodge the police party after being arrested. Kamran was arrested by Saddar police eight days ago after the rape charges against him were proven in an initial medical report of the rape-victim woman. Kamran raped the woman after forcibly entering the house of the woman. The accused can be seen using a mobile in police custody, obtained footage of the accused's arrest. The hunt for the arrest of the alleged rapist is underway.

AJK issues flood alert

MIRPUR (APP): Alerts have been issued by state authorities on Sunday regarding the possibility of flood in various parts of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir. According to the state authorities, people across AJK have been advised to adopt precautionary measures by staying away from the rivers, water channels, and seasonal nullahs which could overflow their banks because of the impending heavy monsoon rainfall much above the expectations.

Killer arrested from Oman

SIALKOT (APP): An absconder, wanted to the Sialkot police in a murder case, has been arrested from Oman with the help of Interpol. According to Police Spokesperson Khurram Shehzad, accused Muhammad Asif was wanted by Saddar police station in a murder case number 114/22, who had fled abroad. In-charge Extradition Sub-Inspector Naseer Ahmed had got issued a red warrant against the alleged killer, and he brought him back from Oman with the help of Interpol, added the spokesman.

PTI wrong policies weakened national economy: Minister

SIALKOT (APP): Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif said on Sunday the previous Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government weakened national economy by introducing wrong policies. Addressing the workers' convention here at Mohallah Water Works, he said: "We are determined and will soon succeed in bringing the country out of darkness".

He said that Prime Minister Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif had gathered all political parties to support the national economy.

He said that unfortunately, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf was brought into power in 2018 through a rigged election, and those who sup-

ported Imran Khan, the performance of Imran Khan and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was in front of them.

During the planned attacks on 9th May, the memorials of martyrs were insulted, he said, adding "we stand with our martyrs and Ghazis" and those who insulted the memorials of martyrs would be brought to justice under the law.

Khawaja Asif said that during the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government before 2018 election, the country's economy was getting stable, but then the premier Nawaz Sharif was disqualified under a conspiracy. He said that Prime

Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif was working very hard for the stability of the country's economy and he hoped that they would soon be able to put the country on road to development and prosperity.

The Defence Minister said that allied parties of the coalition government had also played a very important role and maintained unity under a spirit for which he salute them.

He further said that elections would be announced in a month after the dissolution of assemblies.

Khawaja Muhammad Asif said that Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) had started its election campaign.

DC imposes Section 144 in Dera for Muharram

D.I.KHAN (APP): Deputy Commissioner Dera Ismail Khan Mansoor Arshad has ordered the imposition of Section 144 in the district during initial 10 days of Muharram to ensure protection of lives and properties of the people and to prevent any untoward incident.

According to a notification issued by the district administration here Sunday, there will be a ban on the display of arms, sale of petroleum products in open bottles and sale of LPG or CNG cylinders on Muharram procession routes, construction work on the processions' routes.

There would also be a ban on the use of sound systems, loudspeakers and wall chalking in streets and public places besides playing audio-video cassettes containing hatred material on sectarianism and printing of such material would also be prohibited. Besides, providing shelter to stran-

gers in hotels or houses on the processions' routes would also be banned.

Moreover, the pillion riding on motorcycles would be banned from Muharram 1st to Muharram 8 while the riding of motorcycles would be completely banned on Muharram 9 and 10.

There will also be a ban on staying on the roofs, attics and doors of the houses at the time of procession. Besides, changing or altering the programs and schedules of Muharram would also be banned.

The use of boats by the people to cross the river during these days is also forbidden. Strict legal action would be taken against those who violate Section 144, the notification added.

7 outlaws arrested; arms, hashish recovered

Dera police arrested seven outlaws during the operation against criminal elements in the limits of

Daraban police station on Sunday.

On the direction of District Police Officer Dera Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani, SHO Daraban police station Abdul Ghaffar Khan, during the search and strike operation checked around 30 houses and 25 vehicles and motorcycles.

During the checking, 03 suspects were arrested, while 525 grams of hashish was recovered from the possession of Naqib Rehman, 01 pistol of 30 bore, and 10 cartridges were recovered from the possession of Shah Bahram. Another accused Haji Dil Khan arrested under a national action plan.

While in the second operation, Fasihuddin son of Ziauddin resident of Daraban arrested with 30-bore pistol from his possession.

Police registered the separate cases against the arrested criminals.

Grid station inaugurated in Bhagtanwala

SARGODHA (APP): Board of Directors Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (Fesco) Chairman Malik Tehsin Awan on Sunday inaugurated 132-KV grid station in Bhagtanwala.

Member National Assembly Mohsin Shah Nawaz Ranjha and Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Gas and Energy Chudhry Hamid Hameed were the chief guests.

Malik Tehsin Awan said a new transformer of MVA 20/26 had also been installed on the grid to expedite capacity and capability. He added that after the new grid six new feeders would be established and 8,000 connections would be given to people.

Mohsin Shah Nawaz Ranjha said the Pakistan

Muslim League-N government had solved the electricity problem on a top priority.

Hamid Hameed, while addressing the ceremony, said the government was striving hard to bring about a revolution in power and agriculture sectors.

General Manager Fesco Rana Ayoub, Director Muhammad Ali Ranjha, SE Abrar Ahmed, and others were also present.

Old enmity claims two lives: Two persons were gunned down over an old enmity in Jaswal area, some 82 km away from here on Sunday.

According to police, Allah Ditta(45) and Allah Yar(58), residents of Jaswal were going to Khushab by a car when their alleged rivals opened fire them.

Both the car riders received bullet injuries and died on the spot.

Katha Sukhraala police station were looking into the matter.

15 criminals held: Police claimed on Sunday to have arrested 15 alleged criminals including four proclaimed offenders and recovered illegal weapons and narcotics from them.

In a crackdown, the police conducted raids and arrested Faisal, Adil, Abid, Kashif, Aziz, Ali, Imtiaz, Dilawar, Hussain, Umair, Hamza, Amir, Aslam, Sultan and Mohsin and recovered 12 pistols, nine guns, 459-litre liquor and 1.08 kg hashish from their possession.

Cases have been registered against the accused.

Fisheries Deptt Bahawalpur initiates campaign

BAHAWALPUR (APP): Fisheries Department, government of Punjab has launched a campaign to control illegal fishing in the district.

According to a press release issued here, the Fisheries Department, Government of Punjab has issued directions to all officials concerned to ensure the stoppage of illegal fishing in canals and lakes in Bahawalpur district.

"The officials concerned

will supervise fish breedings in canals passing through Bahawalpur district besides ensuring action against illegal fishing.

"The suspects found involved in illegal fishing in Bahawal Canal and Lal Suhanra lake will be brought to justice," the press release concluded.

INP adds: Under the auspices of the District Health Authority Bahawalpur, a seminar and walk were

held here to raise awareness about the dengue virus.

The DHA chief executive officer Dr Faiza Kanwal led the walk started from her office and marched on city roads. The employees of the health department and civil society activists participated in the walk.

Later, a seminar was also organized to put light on the importance of precautionary measures to save the people from dengue virus.

Robber gang busted, 2 held

MULTAN (APP): The police busted the 'Babar Gang' and arrested the ring leader Babar along with his accomplice Danish.

Police have recovered looted valuables and cash from their possession by tracing eight cases, however, further investigations were underway for more recoveries, police sources added.

Three held on aerial firing in wedding ceremony: Makhdoom Rasheed police here on Sunday

arrested three outlaws for aerial firing in a wedding ceremony and recovered weapons from their possession.

According to police sources, taking action against the violators of aerial firing, the Makhdoom Rasheed police team led by Station House Officer (SHO) Rashid Nadeem, conducted a raid at a marriage ceremony and arrested Muhammad Ali, Muhammad Sharjeel and Arshad Ali.

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SIALKOT: Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif addressing workers convention of PML-N at Union Council Water Works.

Kohat Police arrested four proclaimed offenders

KOHAT (APP): Four proclaimed offenders wanted in murder, drugs and threats of violence to the general public were arrested along with weapons and drugs.

This was stated by SHO Lachi Shah Duran Khan while talking to media men here on Sunday. He disclosed that the successful operation was carried out by him along with SHO Shakardara Wajid Ali and their Police team under the leadership of DSP Lachi Aqeel Hussain.

The arrested accused including Mir Akbar was wanted by the Lachi Police in the case of murder, who was absconding for 8 years, while the accused Siraj resident of Lachi, was wanted by the Lachi Police in the case of murder and attempted murder, who went underground for 8-years.

Accused Safdar wanted by Lachi Police in the case of threat and accused Siraj wanted by Police in Banda Dawood Shah Police Station in the case of drugs.

The Police team also recovered 250gram of ice from their possession.

The arrested accused have been transferred to Lachi Police Station for further investigation.

One dead, 5 injured in roof collapse incidents

FAISALABAD (INP): One person was killed and five others were injured in rain-related two roof collapse incidents in Faisalabad and Renala Khurd on Sunday, witnesses and rescuers said.

In the first incident, a labourer was killed and two others suffered injuries after the roof of a power looms factory collapsed on Jarawal Road in Faisalabad, witnesses and rescuers said.

Rescue officials said the dilapidated roof caved in apparently due to rain effects, leaving the labourers trapped under the debris. The dead and the injured were shifted to a nearby hospital.

In the second incident, the roof of a house collapsed in a village of Renala Khurd teshil, leaving three children including two girls wounded. The victims were shifted to a hospital by Rescue 1122 ambulances.

Woman killed in firing incident

OKARA (INP): In a distressing incident, a woman fell victim to gun violence when two unidentified attackers unleashed a hail of bullets on a car passing through the Okara bypass on Sunday.

The Saddar police swiftly responded to the scene, ensure the injured woman received immediate medical attention.

A Rescue 1122 ambulance promptly transported her to a nearby hospital. The extent of her injuries remains undisclosed.

As investigations unfold, authorities are diligently working to establish the motive behind this ruthless attack and determine the woman's identity.

Minister inaugurates development projects

ABBOTTABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Murtaza Javed Abbasi Sunday inaugurated a series of completed development projects worth millions of rupees across various areas, including Batangi, Ser Sharqi and Ser Gharbi in Abbottabad.

The projects encompassed significant initiatives such as the expansion of the electricity supply and the construction of roads, demonstrating the government's commitment to progress and growth.

Addressing the public gathering after the inauguration of the projects the federal minister stressed the utmost importance of maintaining quality and transparency in all ongoing development ventures.

He underscored the significance of timely project completion to ensure that the public can promptly benefit from the improvements.

Murtaza Javed Abbasi emphasized the essential role of the youth in propelling Pakistan towards a brighter future.

He called upon all political parties to invest in the younger generation, recognizing them as the nation's most valuable asset. Providing ample opportunities for education and enhancing healthcare services were flagged as top priorities for the government.

Regarding sports facilities in Abbottabad, the federal minister drew attention to the promises made by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government during their previous tenure in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Although the PTI's manifesto had included building sports grounds at the tehsil and union council level, the existing grounds in Abbottabad have been reportedly shut down.

Murtaza Javed Abbasi assured the local population

that the Tanawal interchange project with a cost of 1.82 billion rupees, had been approved and would soon proceed to tender within the next ten days.

Additionally, a substantial fund of 800 million rupees had been allocated for the construction of the Karakoram Highway from Haripur to Mansehra, highlighting the government's commitment to infrastructure development.

Praising the Muslim League-N's tenure, the federal minister emphasized that the most significant progress in the Hazara region had been achieved under their leadership. He accused the PTI government of cutting funds for projects approved for the public's welfare.

However, he commended the past nine months of developmental work, ensuring the effective utilization of funds and the fulfillment of promises made to the public.

Monsoon rains trigger traffic disruptions

ABBOTTABAD (APP): The city of Abbottabad and other areas are coping with the aftermath of heavy monsoon rains, as flooding in rivers and streams of the district has disrupted traffic flow and presented severe challenges for residents.

Continuous rainfall has triggered flash floods and sections of the Karakoram Highway (KKH) to be submerged, resulting in vehicular movement restrictions and creating difficulties for

the people. The situation has been worsened by illegal encroachments carried out by land mafias on natural water channels.

Large portions of the streams have vanished due to land grabbing, while encroachments in other areas have significantly narrowed these waterways.

The land mafias persist in occupying key sections of these natural channels, further aggravating the issues related to water

drainage. The critical matter of water drainage requires immediate attention and corrective measures from relevant authorities to restore the proper functioning of natural streams.

Urgent action is needed to remove encroachments and reinstate the original shape of these channels, facilitating the smooth flow of water and mitigating the adverse effects of heavy rains in the future.

Minister inaugurates AIOU regional campus

SHEIKHUPURA (INP): In a momentous event, the Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Rana Tanveer Hussain, laid the foundation stone of the highly anticipated Allam Iqbal Open University Regional Campus in Sheikhpura. The campus, a remarkable venture in the field of education, is set to be completed at a cost of 250 million rupees.

Addressing the gathering, Minister Hussain emphasized the govern-

ment's commitment to revolutionizing the educational landscape by embracing digital solutions. He proudly announced the commencement of e-schooling nationwide, affirming the permanent integration of online education methods.

Reflecting on the ever-evolving demands of the modern era, the Minister underscored the growing need for technical expertise. He emphasized that the future of the youth lies not solely in traditional education but in acquiring practi-

cal skills. Minister Hussain championed the significance of skilled education as the key to unlocking opportunities for the upcoming generation.

The Allam Iqbal Open University Regional Campus in Sheikhpura is poised to become a center of excellence, nurturing talent and providing cutting-edge education to students. As the project takes shape, it promises to empower young minds, enabling them to thrive in a rapidly advancing world.

DHQ hospital Badin renamed

BADIN (APP): District Headquarters Hospital (DHQ) Badin was renamed after Dr. Sikandar Mandhro civil hospital. In this connection, a simple but impressive ceremony was held in which the President of Indus Hospital and network Dr. Abdul Bari Khan and CEO Indus Network Dr. Zafar Zaidi attended the ceremony.

Addressing the ceremony, Senator Dr. Khalida Sikandar Mandhro said that with the efforts of Dr. Stanadar Mandhro control of the Civil hospital was handed over to Indus Hospital and Health network under public private Partnership with Sindh Government.

She said that dedicating Civil Hospital after Dr. Sikandar Mandhro was a rich tribute to the vision of Dr. Mandhro which put positive effects on the numerous human lives of Dr. Abdul Baari Khan said that Dr. Sikandar Mandhro made it possible to ensure outstanding health provision with a pledge of Indus net work.

The ceremony was attended among others by MNA Mir Ghulam Ali Talpur. Adviser to CM on Rehabilitation haji Rasool Bux Chandio, Special Assistant for IT Tanzeela Ume-e-Habiba, Special Assistant to CM Pir Noor ul-Allah Qureshi, Chairman District Council Badin Ali Asghar Halepoto,

Two dacoits arrested

MULTAN (INP): Police claimed to have arrested two dacoits who were injured due to the firing of their own accomplices during police encounter in Makhdoom Rasheed area on Sunday. Three armed dacoits tried to loot a citizen near Babar chowk but they succeed to escape safely from there.

Upon receiving the information, SHO Makhdoom Rasheed Rashid Nadeem rushed to the spot and armed outlaws opened fire on police party. The official vehicle was damaged badly by the firing.

The police arrested the two dacoits who were injured due to the firing of their own accomplices and shifted them to Nishtar Hospital for treatment.



White House hopeful DeSantis loses steam, struggling with image

WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): Long viewed as the most formidable challenger to Donald Trump in the Republican US presidential nominating contest, Ron DeSantis boasts a record of ultra-conservative legislative wins and a pile of campaign cash.

Yet the self-styled tip of the spear in what he says is the struggle against the creeping imposition of "cultural Marxism" hasn't been looking all that sharp of late.

So where has Florida's pugilistic governor gone wrong?

DeSantis's long-awaited entry into the 2024 presidential campaign in late May descended into a fiasco as the launch event, carried live on Twitter with the platform's billionaire owner Elon Musk, was derailed by glitches.

The conversation repeatedly crashed, and many of the 400,000-plus users who were hoping to listen in missed the 44-year-old conservative throwing down the gauntlet to Trump. DeSantis finally began speaking after almost half an hour of confusion and chaos that thoroughly overshadowed what should have been an exultant launch.

The governor had been targeting a younger, white male "tech bro" demographic that has aligned itself with Trump.

But analysts questioned the judgment of a man willing to trade a more traditional prime-time TV launch that could have netted millions of viewers for cachet at the conservative end of Silicon Valley.

DeSantis has been barnstorming the crucial early-nominating states of Iowa and New Hampshire to boost his flagging challenge and fix his reputation as an awkward customer.

His missteps on the campaign trail are almost too frequent to enumerate but they have combined to give the impression that, in public at least, he is not a charming man.

He often appears rigid and awkward when making small talk, and has lost his cool with journalists more than once, or evaded media scrutiny altogether. There have been complaints that DeSantis looks bored at events and never says "thank you," and footage of him laughing mania-



cally during a stop in Iowa triggered widespread mockery.

"DeSantis has come out of the gates stumbling. He's not connecting with voters. He blames this on the media, but it's really his own fault," said Todd Belt, a politics professor at George Washington University.

"He's not giving voters much to vote for, rather than things to vote against, such as his focus on culture war issues. He's tried to create some policy statements, such as on immigration, but they've mostly fallen flat." DeSantis is trailing Trump in the endorsement derby, with only a handful of the more than 100 sitting Republicans he once served with in the House backing his campaign.

Florida's Republican lawmakers are overwhelmingly in Trump's camp, despite DeSantis being their state's chief executive, and he is a whopping 32 points behind the frontrunner in the RealClearPolitics average of recent major opinion polls.

He has managed to close the gap by just two percentage points since his launch day, seeing none of the polling bounce that major campaigns usually enjoy in the weeks after announcing.

"The more people get to know him, the lower go his polls," Trump quipped recently.

Those who have seen DeSantis up close say it would be foolish to count him out, however.

Trump started slowly in 2015, they caution, before wiping the floor with the competition -- and DeSantis still has six months to make his case before the first primary ballot is cast in Iowa.

There is also no doubt that the DeSantis agenda has defined the contours of the 2024 presidential primary, forcing Trump to focus on "culture war" issues when he could be touting his tax cuts for the rich or his appointment of three ultra-conservative Supreme Court justices.

DeSantis's big opportunity for a reboot comes with the first Republican primary debate in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on August 23.

Trump, who sees little advantage in sharing the national spotlight with primary rivals who are trailing him by double digits, has hinted that he might not show up, for the first debate at least.

Without the frontrunner sucking all the oxygen out of the room, there will be a chance for someone else to emerge as a viable, serious and likeable alternative.

DeSantis will be hoping that, despite the evidence so far and the overwhelming odds, it can be him.

'Risk is high': ship arrives to pump oil from Yemen tanker

HODEIDA (AFP/APP): A UN-owned ship arrived off war-torn Yemen on Sunday for a risky operation to pump more than a million barrels of oil from a decaying tanker and prevent a catastrophic spill.

After years of tense diplomacy between the United Nations, Yemen's Huthi rebels and the internationally recognised government, the Nautica will soon moor alongside the FSO Safer, a rusting super-tanker in the Red Sea.

The delicate operation to transfer 1.14 million barrels of Marib Light crude to the Nautica, bought by the United Nations for the operation, is expected to begin in the coming days.

Despite stringent safety checks, concerns remain about a spill or an explosion. The Safer is carrying four times as much oil as was spilled in the 1989 Exxon Valdez disaster off Alaska. "The risk is high. The risk is very high," said Mohammed Mudawi, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) project manager for the ship Safer. "But we are hoping with the completion of the project that this will be eliminated."

Maintenance operations on the Safer were suspended in 2015 because of Yemen's war, and the UNDP has for years warned it could "explode at any time".

A major spill could result in ecological disaster, devastate Yemeni fishing communities, and close lifeline ports and desalination plants.

The potential spill -- which could cost more than \$20 billion to clean up -- would possibly reach Saudi Arabia, Eritrea, Djibouti and Somalia, the UN has warned.

The Iran-backed Huthis seized the capital Sanaa in 2014 and have been fighting a Saudi-led coalition since March 2015, in a conflict that has cost hundreds of thousands of lives and left most Yemenis dependent on aid.

Scorching summer temperatures, ageing pipes and sea mines lurking in surrounding waters all pose threats to the operation, which has been under preparation since late May by experts from the private company SMIT Salvage.

The team has inspected the vessel, arranged transfer pumps and hoses and pumped inert gas into cargo tanks to lower the risk of an explosion, David Gressly, the UN's resident coordinator for Yemen,

told the Security Council on Monday.

Working at the height of summer, when on-deck temperatures soar above 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit), is an additional hazard, said Nick Quinn, a senior adviser for the project.

"It becomes really hot, really quickly," Quinn said, noting that this increases the odds of "slips, trips and falls" on deck for workers donning heavy personal protective equipment.

The 47-year-old Safer has been moored off Yemen's coast since the 1980s, when it was converted into a floating storage and offloading unit.

The Nautica sailed from Djibouti on Saturday. Out past mangrove stands and other tankers bearing gas and grains, the Safer's position -- around 50 kilometres (30 miles) from the port of Hodeida -- is rich in the type of wildlife that would be devastated by a spill.

When AFP visited the Safer on Saturday, dolphins flashed their fins within sight of the ship, and cormorants could be seen on the rudder, which they have made their home for years. Mudawi said lingering concerns about the Safer's infrastructure

require oil-pumping to start during the day, at least 10 hours before sunset, to ensure all connections are secure and can monitor for leaks.

Once underway, UN officials expect the transfer of oil from the Safer to the Nautica to take about three weeks.

The saga won't end there, however, because the question of who owns the oil will still need to be resolved by the warring Yemeni factions.

The Nautica, once it has taken the Safer's oil, will be renamed Yemen, and will stay in the area as ownership talks continue.

"Once we transfer the oil, we would have to then take care of the new vessel," said Edrees al-Shami, the Huthi-appointed executive general manager of SEPOC, the Yemeni oil and gas company.

Shami's appointment is not acknowledged by the internationally recognised government, which has named its own SEPOC head. "So we move the problem from an older, ageing vessel to a newer vessel," Shami said.

"But the sea conditions are very rough, and if you don't maintain it for a while then you go back to the same problem."

Matus had worked as a journalist for 15 years, specializing in covering violence, Mexico delegate for press freedom organization Reporters Without Borders Babina Flores told AFP.

More than 150 journalists have been killed in Mexico since 2000, according to the group, in attacks that are often linked to the country's powerful drug cartels. The body of fellow journalist Luis Martin Sanchez, a correspondent for La Jornada newspaper, was found this week "with signs of violence," officials said, after he had been reported missing.

French war photographer Marie-Laure de Decker dead at 75

PARIS (AFP/APP): Marie-Laure de Decker, the French model who stepped behind the camera to become an internationally recognised war photographer, has died at the age of 75, her family said Saturday. She died in hospital on Saturday following a long illness, her family said.

Born in Algeria -- when it was still a French colony -- she started her career as a model before deciding to branch out into photography. In the late 1960s, she took memorable shots of the artists Man Ray and Marcel Duchamp and the writer Philippe Soupault.

She covered the Vietnam War early in her career and met with success despite her relative lack of experience. "I said to myself: people are going to see that I'm not a real photographer," she wrote in a 1985 memoir. She only had an old Leica camera with her, she recalled. "In fact, I realised afterwards, this old Leica was a marvel."

She faced particular challenges working as a female war photographer, she said. "If you're a woman, you're never taken seriously." On the other hand, she added: "There is an advantage to being a woman, as was the case in South Africa -- they don't kill you right away, they give you a chance."

Chad's Moussa Faki Mahamat, current chair of the African Union Commission, paid tribute to her on Saturday, speaking of his "great sadness" at the news of her death.

Her images, he wrote on Twitter, "immortalised part of the history of Chad". De Decker spent much of her career at the Gamma photo agency, from 1971 until it closed down in 2009. Their association ended on bad terms. When she asked to get her photos back, she only got the black-and-white shots and not the colour ones.

She lost a subsequent legal bid to recover them and have her copyright recognised for their digital versions of the photos.

De Decker is also known for her photos of celebrities such as actors Catherine Deneuve and Charlotte Rampling, singer Serge Gainsbourg, Caroline of Monaco and France's former president, Valery Giscard d'Estaing.

The money from those photos helped finance her missions in conflict zones, she said. "When you take photos of the poor, no one's interested. You have to take photos of the rich to sell (them)." In 2013, her work in conflict zones was recognised by the Albert Kahn International Planet Prize. She had two sons with lawyer Thierry Levy.

Mexican journalist shot to death

MEXICO CITY (AFP/APP): A Mexican journalist was shot to death in a store parking lot on Saturday in the southern tourist town of Acapulco, regional authorities said, in the country's second journalist killing in a week.

Prosecutors said they have opened an investigation for homicide with a firearm in the killing of Nelson Matus, days after another journalist was found dead in a country considered one of the most dangerous in the world for members of the press.

Matus, the director of news outlet Lo Real de Guerrero, was shot as he was getting into his car in a thrift shop parking lot.

The Guerrero state prosecutor's office said in a statement that it "reiterates its commitment to exhaust every line of investigation" into his death.

Matus had worked as a journalist for 15 years, specializing in covering violence, Mexico delegate for press freedom organization Reporters Without Borders Babina Flores told AFP.

More than 150 journalists have been killed in Mexico since 2000, according to the group, in attacks that are often linked to the country's powerful drug cartels. The body of fellow journalist Luis Martin Sanchez, a correspondent for La Jornada newspaper, was found this week "with signs of violence," officials said, after he had been reported missing.

European right eyes fresh gains with Spain election

MADRID (AFP/APP): Europe's eyes will turn to Spain next Sunday where a widely expected right-wing victory in a snap election would further consolidate the dominance of conservative parties across the bloc.

Called by Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez after the left was routed in May 28 local elections, the vote could see the extreme right taking a share of power for the first time since the country's dictatorship ended in 1975. The polls suggest Spain's next government will be a coalition of the right-wing Popular Party (PP) and the far-right Vox.

If the polls are accurate, it would confirm "an ongoing gradual normalisation of the far-right at a European level," said Steven Forti, a professor at Barcelona's Autonomous University.

For Sanchez, who has been in power since 2018 and heads a left-wing coalition with the hard-left Podemos, the stakes are high. The election also carries consequences for the European left. "It is clear there's an ongoing shift (to the right) and Spain is a very important bastion against this regressive and reactionary current," Ecology Minister Teresa Ribera told La Vanguardia newspaper. Following the PP's triumph on May 28, it appeared Alberto Nunez Feijoo's party was heading for a clear victory in the July 23 snap election.

But then polls suggested that although the PP would win, it would fall short of an absolute majority of 176 within the 350-seat parliament, meaning it would need Vox's support to govern. Ultra-nationalist and europhobic, Vox emerged in 2013 out of a split within the PP, bursting into parliament in 2019 as Spain's third-largest party.

But the right's momentum has slowed as the PP and Vox negotiated deals to govern in several regions they won from the left.

During the talks, Vox has held firm to several of its key principles, refusing to recognise gender violence or to budge on its climate denial. Although such positions are not endorsed by the PP, Vox's stance has overshadowed the campaign of Feijoo, a self-declared moderate.

Sanchez has made the extremist threat his clarion call, warning that a vote for the PP would be tantamount to inviting Vox into government in what he argues would be a major step backwards for Spain. His aim is twofold: to dissuade centrist voters from casting their ballots for the PP while also mobilising the half-a-million left-wing supporters who stayed at home on May 28. But Sanchez's slim hopes for a rebound were dashed following poor results from opinion polls after a July 10 televised debate against Feijoo.

Sanchez has also hampered home his economic record, with 5.5 percent growth last year. Spain last month also became the first major EU economy where

inflation fell below 2.0 percent. The problem for Sanchez is that the public still perceives the economic situation as very negative.

Sanchez has taken the initiative on the media front, giving interviews to Spain's most popular TV programmes to play up his more personable side.

"Sanchez realises that he was wrong not to talk to media outlets that he considered to be hostile," said Cristina Monge, a political scientist at Zaragoza University. But it may be too little, too late given that his personal image is very poor outside of left-wing circles, and has also suffered as a result of several Podemos-led reforms that caused a public backlash.

This has been used to great effect by Feijoo who has focused his campaign on "overthrowing Sanchismo" -- which he has defined as "changing the form and substance" of politics in Spain, and "revoking all those minority-based laws which harm the majority". Sanchez is hoping he will be able to form a coalition with Labour Minister Yolanda Diaz's new leftist alliance Sumar, an unlikely scenario given the polls. It has recently been backed, albeit reluctantly, by Podemos, which has plunged in the polls. Recent polls put Sumar neck-and-neck with Vox for third place. Aside from the large number of undecided voters, another factor is the timing of the election -- at the height of summer when several million holidaymakers will have to vote by post.

Misery deepens for Sudanese civilians, as conflict hits 3-month mark, UN relief chief says

UNITED NATIONS (APP): The U.N. top humanitarian official has called on warring factions in Sudan to respect international law, protect civilians, and stop targeting relief and aid workers, as the conflict reached its three-month mark. "For three months now, the people of Sudan have endured unspeakable suffering amid violence that is tearing their country apart," Martin Griffiths, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, said in a statement released on Saturday. "As the conflict enters its fourth month, the battle lines are hardening, making it ever more difficult to reach the millions of people who need urgent humanitarian assistance," he added.

More than 3 million people have been displaced due to the conflict both within

Sudan and across its borders; the fighting, which reportedly claimed the lives of more than 1,100 people and injured over 12,000, according to the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Health workers and facilities have also been attacked, severely limiting access for those in need, and with the onset of the rainy season, there is an increased risk of outbreaks of water- and vector-borne diseases, compounded by challenges in waste management and shortages of supplies. Children are among the worst affected, with an estimated 13.6 million -- roughly half the number remaining in Sudan -- in urgent need of assistance. Describing Sudan as "one of the world's most difficult places for humanitarian workers to operate," Griffiths emphasized the

collaborative efforts of local organizations and international aid groups in delivering life-saving supplies. However, that work cannot be carried out when relief workers themselves, are at risk.

"But we cannot work under the barrel of a gun. We cannot replenish stores of food, water and medicine if brazen looting of these stocks continues. We cannot deliver if our staff are prevented from reaching people in need."

He underlined that ultimately, the suffering of Sudanese people will end only when the fighting stops, and called on the parties to the conflict to abide by the Declaration of Commitments they signed in Jeddah to protect civilians and respect international humanitarian law.

Each day the fighting continues, the misery deepens for Sudanese civilians

Iraq honey production at the mercy of heat and drought

ALREGHILA (AFP/APP): An oppressive heat beats down on the central Iraqi province of Babylon, where drought and rising temperatures are hitting bees and honey production hard.

Beekeeper Mohamed Aliawi knows it all too well as he checks on dozens of hive boxes placed at the feet of tall palm trees in the fields of Al-Reghila village. "There is no water and therefore no (flowering) plants to keep the bees satisfied," Aliawi, the deputy director of a local apiarist association, told AFP.

The earth is cracked, and growing melons and watermelons proves difficult due to a lingering drought and intense July temperatures often reaching around 50 degrees Celsius (122 Fahrenheit) -- which take their toll on bees too.

A bee needs to constantly forage for the pollen and nectar necessary for honey production. It is in constant movement, usually travelling hundreds of metres (yards) to find its bounty, said Aliawi. But the drought is forcing bees to travel longer -- up to five kilometres (three miles) -- to pollinate. "This impacts the lifespan of the worker bee", the female bee that gathers pollen and nectar, Aliawi explained.

"Under optimal circumstances, the worker bee can live up to 60 days, but in this current situation it only

lives 20 days."

In addition, bees thrive in temperatures of around 30-35 degrees Celsius, not in searing heat, when the thermometer climbs to 50, said Aliawi, the manager of a private honey producer.

He has moved dozens of bee hive boxes from central Iraq to seven sites scattered across the mountains of the northern autonomous Kurdistan region, where the air is cooler and the land greener. "If we don't move the bees they suffer," he said. On a hot July day, Aliawi and his team wore protective headgear before inspecting the bee hive boxes and the honeycombs inside. They wafted smoke over the hives with a bee smoker, a procedure known to calm the insects.

In the early 2000s, each bee hive yielded about 20 to 25 kilograms (44-55 pounds) of honey per year, whereas now the quantity has plunged to merely five kilograms, Aliawi said.

According to the United Nations, Iraq is one of the five countries in the world most impacted by some effects of climate change.

Authorities say Iraq is going through its fourth straight year of drought.

The country has been plagued by scorching summers, declining rainfall and frequent sand storms, while upstream dams have reduced the flow of the

Tigris and Euphrates rivers that run across Iraq. Despite these woes, the head of the apiarist department at the agriculture ministry, Hashem al-Zehiri, remains optimistic. Honey production is "increasing year on year", he said. In 2022, honey produced in parts of Iraq controlled by the Baghdad federal authorities reached 870 tonnes, while in Kurdistan 850 tonnes were produced -- up from about 700 tonnes in each territory the previous year.

Zehiri said he has prepared a study on the benefits of moving bee hives from southern and central Iraq to Kurdistan, and vice-versa "according to needs", in order to improve yields.

The United Nations Development Programme said in a 2020 report that "beekeeping has existed in Iraq... for an estimated 8,000 years", with "recipes that use honey for medicinal purposes" inscribed on ancient Sumerian tablets.

In modern times, beekeeping in Iraq is dominated by men, but that has not stopped Zeinab al-Maamuri. She developed a passion after discovering beekeeping through her late husband, who had taken it up as a hobby. Three decades on and now in her early 50s, Maamuri has 250 bee hives in the province of Babylon, dozens of which she keeps in the courtyard of the family house.

Turkey quake survivors' latest menace -- dust

SAMANDAG (AFP/APP): The excavator tore into the remnants of the damaged building in southeast Turkey, bringing it crashing down into a cloud of dust -- the latest menace facing survivors of the deadly February quake that ravaged the region.

Extending to the horizon, a cocoon of fine grey dust envelops the city of Samandag in the south of Hatay province, devastated by the February 6 earthquake that killed more than 55,000 people and laid waste to parts of Turkey and Syria.

"We survived the earthquake but this dust will kill us," Michel Atik, founder and president of

the Samandag Environmental Protection Association, said with a sigh. "We are going to die of respiratory diseases and lung cancer with all these hazardous materials."

Five months after the quake, the scale of cleanup and reconstruction is enormous, with the government estimating that nearly 2.6 million buildings have been destroyed.

According to the UN Environment Programme, some 210 million tonnes of rubble must be disposed of.

By comparison, some 1.8 million tonnes of rubble had to be hauled away after the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York City that brought down the

World Trade Center skyscrapers.

Environmental activists and local residents worry that in the rush to clean up and rebuild, crucial safety measures are being ignored, with potentially adverse effects on the health of local residents, the environment and the economy.

The landfill near Samandag is one of several that have been set up in this province bordering Syria. It lies next to the Mediterranean and the Milleyha natural bird reserve, which is natural bird reserve, which is a nesting site for endangered green sea turtles.

Another landfill, in the

Antakya region, lies near a valley of olive trees at the foot of the Nur Mountains. With olive oil the primary source of income in the province, there are fears that the dump could harm the trees.

"They don't even hose it down," said Cagdas Can, 33, an environmental activist with the Reconstruct group, as he watched trucks filled with debris leave Samandag toward the huge open-air landfill that lies next to one of Turkey's longest beaches.

"There were other possible sites... But the companies that won the tenders (for clearing) chose here to save fuel," said Can.

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Global de-dollarization and India's betrayal to Washington

India and United Arab Emirates (UAE) have recently signed agreements for the use of local currencies for bilateral trade and to set up a real-time payment link to facilitate easier cross-border money transfers. According to the details, the development came during a visit by India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the UAE wherein the two countries agreed to set up a real-time payment link to facilitate easier cross-border money transfers. As said, the agreement will allow India to settle trade in rupees instead of dollars, boosting New Delhi's efforts to cut transaction costs by eliminating dollar conversions. At the same time, the establishment of a framework for the use of local currencies for transactions between India and the UAE, aims to put in place a Local Currency Settlement System (LCSS) to promote the use of INR and AED bilaterally and foster greater economic cooperation between the two nations.

The trend of dollar disgrace and de-dollarization of bilateral trade and funds transfer is on the rise while Washington close ally India is on the forefront of this campaign that has disastrous and unhealing effects on the US economy. In fact, multiple geopolitical and economic reasons has accelerated the global trend of de-dollarization among the countries from anti-US bloc ranging from Brazil to China and Malaysia to Central African Republics, yet New Delhi was one of the prominent pro-west nation that is actively playing on both sides of the court. Modi regime tactfully enjoying blessings attached with US dollar on one hand and championing the global drive to reduce economic reliance on US greenback by striking deals with several Asian economies including UAE, Malaysia, Iran, Sri Lanka, Russia, China and others to trade in local currencies.

The bilateral trade between the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and India was around \$84.5 billion in the year from April 2022 to March 2023 that will take a big push after recent trade agreement between the two countries. According to the Central Bank of India, the agreement covers all current account transactions and permitted capital account transactions, while the creation of the LCSS would enable exporters and importers to invoice and pay in their respective domestic currencies, which in turn would enable the development of an INR-AED foreign exchange market. This arrangement would be great set back to US dollar monopoly in the real sense.

Currently, the ongoing de-dollarization trend will change global economic dynamics and will benefit local currencies in a number of ways besides cutting reliance on dollar it would balance the trade risks, stabilized the local currencies, lower the costs of payment, reduce settlement time, boost sales and increase revenue along with reducing the risk of assets freeze by the western bloc in case of conflict of interest in the future. Presently, Euro and Japanese yen had moved to settlement in local money while the Association of the South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) policy makers are mulling to setup Asian Monetary Fund as an alternative to IMF and move to trade in local currencies with in the bloc. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia, the world largest producer of black gold has signalled it's openness to trade oil deals in foreign currencies other than US dollar that will further accelerate the de-dollarization trend in the world.

Interestingly, the US dollar suffered a stunning collapse in recent years as reserve currency because of its muscular use by the US government. Multiple countries are rapidly abandoning dollar as trade currency and Chinese Yuan is swiftly replacing US dollar as global trade coin in the world. The traditional US ally India joined China in promoting Indian rupee as an alternative to US dollar. Interestingly, New Delhi not only freeing it's trade from greenback influence but collaborating with Moscow and Beijing to constitute an alternative to the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications (SWIFT) that will enable India to trade unhindered with the Countries facing US sanctions.

Currently, New Delhi enjoys strategic economic and defense partnerships with the United States, it has cardinal relations with Moscow, a souring diplomatic ties and good working trade relations with Beijing. Interestingly, India has no confidence in it's western allies and preparing to join Moscow's SOFS and Beijing's CIPS financial systems to bypass western financial mechanism in case of any awkward situations in the future. Although, India claims close friendship with the US, however, world wonders which kind of alliance Narendra Modi brands which commences with bluff and concludes by stabling friend in the back.

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Unity in the Maghreb is more distant than ever

Hafed Al-Ghwel

During the tumult of the 1980s, a vision for the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) emerged in which the five principal states in the region — Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia — would form a union characterized by fraternity, equality and peace. Now, however, the state of affairs in the subregion stands in stark contrast to the transient pan-African ideals of yesteryear. Two of its most populous countries, Algeria and Morocco, have effectively disconnected from each other, wreaking havoc across the region. Their rivalry is far-reaching, influenced by a deep-rooted distrust and tense geopolitical competition over hegemony in northwestern Africa and beyond.

An improvement in relations between Algeria and Morocco is perhaps the key to unlocking the Maghreb's successful integration into a new era of intraregional cooperation, and also to revive the spirit of the AMU. Unfortunately, an as-yet unresolved question over the Western Sahara, now thrust into the spotlight due to reverberations from normalization agreements elsewhere, is feeding into an all-too-familiar dynamic.

Both countries have become more determined to pursue damaging zero-sum mentalities, whereby one country's fortunes widens rifts and reduces future opportunities for rapprochement. Beyond abysmal trade relationships and the characteristic exchange of barbed comments, the challenges plaguing the Maghreb region are manifest and deep-rooted. The AMU's last intergovernmental summit took place in 1994, yet another indicator of the severe dysfunction consuming the region.

This level of deterioration calls for immediate intervention, not more fruitless discussions of whether the Maghreb can "regionalize" without integrating, which only side-step the issue or demonstrate a remarkable misunderstanding of the Maghreb's political economies.

The failure to act has spawned new risks and revived old threats, leaving the subregion descending further into disarray and instability. A dream of unity, equality and prosperity that once inspired the formation of the AMU is fast fading.

The AMU, with all its unmet aspirations, finds itself in an economic quagmire that also holds back much-needed integration, trade liberalization, and enhanced cooperation. The culprits are many: Excessively stringent trade and investment policies, punishing tariffs, non-tariff barriers, and the subpar infrastructure that links AMU nations.

Export and import border compliance costs, which are among the highest in the world, are other significant contributors. Furthermore, intra-regional trade infrastructure is sorely lacking. Take, for example, the lack of commercial transportation between the ports of AMU nations, despite their coastal locations.

Tellingly, AMU member states consistently look toward Europe, shaping trading policies to mirror European ideals and markets, and becoming living

proof of the saddening reality of how relative trading costs supersede absolute ones.

In other words, trade experts argue that proximity to booming trading hubs, such as the European Common Market, tends to discourage intra-regional trade rather than promoting it. Consequently, the AMU is also missing out on golden opportunities to become a trade and investment intermediary between Europe and a developing Africa. This unforced error plays right into the broader issue at hand: A damning lack of regional integration that is thwarting the Maghreb's place on the global value chain.

The curious case of duplicate trade agreements is another compounding factor. A majority of AMU countries are enmeshed in a web of bilateral and regional economic agreements, all supplemented by their memberships in the World Trade Organization. This convoluted mesh of over-

upheavals in 2011. During the uprisings that toppled seemingly unassailable regimes, both countries recognized a shared threat to the region's status quo and hastily adopted a cooperative stance. During that lull in tensions, they struck a delicate balance between gradual and radical reforms, ultimately becoming role models for other beleaguered Arab states caught in a domino effect of revolutions and forced transitions. For a brief moment, there was at least some hope that a joint pursuit of self-preservation might provide a foundation upon which future cooperation, greater collaboration and, ultimately, renewed prospects for integration could stand. Regrettably, the hopes were short-lived, quickly overtaken by reignited rivalries. Thus, the dream of an integrated and cooperative Maghreb region remains unfulfilled and will, arguably, be much

It is not all doom and gloom, however. The AMU still exists, in some capacity, so the spirit of its creation still survives. Moreover, even the feuding pair, Morocco and Algeria, have had brief periods during which cooperation blossomed, especially at the time of the regional upheavals in 2011. During the uprisings that toppled seemingly unassailable regimes, both countries recognized a shared threat to the region's status quo and hastily adopted a cooperative stance. During that lull in tensions, they struck a delicate balance between gradual and radical reforms, ultimately becoming role models for other beleaguered Arab states caught in a domino effect of revolutions and forced transitions. For a brief moment, there was at least some hope that a joint pursuit of self-preservation might provide a foundation upon which future cooperation, greater collaboration and, ultimately, renewed prospects for integration could stand.

lapping agreements is colloquially termed the "spaghetti bowl" phenomenon, which creates its own share of headaches. Each country must navigate different terms of trade, tariffs, non-tariff measures, and so-called "rules of origin."

Juggling these diverse and often conflicting rules can be incredibly burdensome, particularly for countries with limited institutional capacities or compliance abilities. The irony is that instead of accelerating trade, they slow it down, increase costs, and cause diversions in trade among AMU countries. Rather than greasing the wheels, these overlapping agreements cause everything to grind to a halt, and reveal that the road to integration is filled with economic potholes.

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Coal and Steel Community, which was a driving force behind the formation of the EU. The closure of the pipeline, after a 25-year transit deal that was not renewed, signifies, in grim terms, a premature epitaph for regional prosperity founded on shared interests. The region is now characterized by a number of harsh realities. An important gas pipeline shut down. Land borders sealed. Airspaces closed. Diplomatic relations in tatters. Algeria and Morocco still embroiled in a torrent of tensions, with the slightest spark igniting malevolent accusations against each other. In 2022, Morocco established a new military zone bordering Algeria, sparking alarm. This year, Algeria went further, all but declaring the end of its diplomatic relationship with Morocco. Their dispute is punctuated by live ammo military exercises near the border. It is a tragic drama that has unfolded over three years, during which both nations have endlessly pointed the finger of blame at each other for their broken relationship.

It is as though we have reached a point of no return but can a resolution be found even in such tumultuous times? Simply put, no.

The mounting tensions in the Maghreb remind us of a crucial truth: Events in this part of the world tend to ripple far beyond its borders, stirring up waves of instability in their wake. To date, members of the AMU seem to contribute more to destabilizing the subregion than shoring up its security, stability, sustainable development and resilience.

Of course, the simmering undercurrent of this strange dynamic comes from the quasi-cold war between Algeria and Morocco. However, Tunisia is also battling a socioeconomic crisis that has been escalating since President Kais Saied's takeover of the country in July 2021. And Libya remains shackled by decades of instability, plus the scars of armed conflict, and thwarted attempts to mend deep-seated divisions and build credible state institutions.

The situation in the Maghreb is precariously balanced. It would take nothing more than a spark, accidental or deliberate, to set off this powder keg, spewing chaos to Mediterranean neighbors in the north and an already volatile Sahel region to the south. As such, calls for regional integration in the Maghreb sound like a broken record. They echo a fantasy that is increasingly out of touch with a grim and, frankly, disappointing reality.

Yet, ironically, there has never been a more pivotal time for signs of unity among these long-standing AMU member states, given the bleak outlook should they persist in their own isolation. Indeed, it is very difficult not to feel despondent about the Maghreb's future, given the magnitude and complexity of the hurdles facing each individual country and the region as a whole.

But even when there is friction, there can still be a potential, albeit slim, for future betterment and advocating for a revival of intra-regional cooperation in the face of adversity.

NATO's defining moment in Vilnius?

Yossi Mekeberg

It was somewhat symbolic that this week's NATO summit took place in Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, a country with a long history of domination by Russia and the Soviet Union. It served as a stark reminder of what is at stake for the members of the Western collective security organization.

This was one of the most consequential NATO gatherings for many years, one that no doubt helped the alliance to redefine itself, not only in the face of a common enemy, Russia, but also as it basked in the unexpected success of playing a crucial role in preventing the Russian army from instantly taking over Ukraine — and doing so without having to send any of its own troops onto the battlefield.

There is a sense of déjà vu in NATO's return to prominence in terms of protecting the security of its members and partners from external aggression. In 1949, when the 12 founding countries signed the North Atlantic Treaty, the aim was to contain the ambitions of Moscow, and that was high on the agenda once again this week in Vilnius.

Back then, ironically, quite a few of the current member states of this intergovernmental military alliance were either part of the Soviet Union or within its sphere of influence, mainly as a result of Russian coercion, while today they are looking for protection from Putin's Russia.

Only last month, NATO conducted a massive military exercise in which more than 3,500 troops equipped with drones and armored vehicles were deployed to test the capabilities of the Lithuanian army's Iron Wolf Brigade — in other words to prepare for any future Russian invasion.

In the period immediately after the Cold War ended, NATO suffered from a mixture of partial hibernation and a prolonged victorious hang-over, with only occasional reminders of why it was still necessary for ensuring and protecting the security and values of its members.

However, Putin's Russia, and above all its war on Ukraine, has revitalized the organization and given it a clear, renewed sense of purpose, even though neither of the warring sides are NATO members.

For nearly a decade, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg has been the glue that kept it together and the driving force behind the necessity for it to adapt to a fast-changing security environment; as a result, he seems almost irreplaceable.

He said, while observing the military exercise in Lithuania: "This exercise sends a clear message: NATO is ready to defend every inch of Allied territory." He added, "We are demonstrating that we can also reinforce quickly, whenever needed."

The task of the two-day NATO summit this week was to demonstrate the commitment of member states to a strong alliance, which is not only essential for the security of all of them and the preservation of liberal democracies, but also for global stability and the prevention of wars.

Much of the talk leading up to the summit was about the prospect of Ukraine's future membership of the organization, while in the background America's controversial decision to supply cluster munitions to Ukraine in support of its counteroffensive against Russian troops was causing some unease among European members.

To be sure, President Volodymyr Zelensky's demand that his country be allowed to become a member of NATO is, in principle, understandable and justified. But the decision not to begin any formal discussions about this until the war is over is equally logical.

Kyiv knows that public

opinion across the West is very sympathetic, and rightly so, toward the heroics of the Ukrainian people, not least Zelensky's leadership. But had the summit decided to establish a process and a time frame for Ukraine's membership of NATO, it would only have angered Russia further and raised fears among many people in member states that it would result in NATO troops being deployed to fight in the war.

At the root of Ukraine's success in the war so far has been the admirable leadership of its government, its president first and foremost, the courage of its people, the improvisational skills and adaptability of its military, and the foreign support it has received without soldiers from other countries helping to fight and die for the cause. Any attempt to tamper with this would have done more harm than good.

For NATO to maintain its support for Ukraine, it is imperative that its members avoid taking unilateral decisions, such as the one by the Biden administration to supply the Ukrainian military with cluster bombs which was controversial among the international community and has also divided opinion among NATO members.

By failing to coordinate with other members over the decision, Washington's rush to send cluster bombs to Ukraine is bound to leave a long-term legacy of innocent people being further harmed. It was also a sign of weakness in terms of unity and the need to supply Ukraine with alternative weapons that do not flout an international convention signed by more than 100 countries, including many NATO members.

Mutual respect is essential for the preservation of this complex transatlantic alliance, and the summit's participants left Vilnius sufficiently reassured that the US commitment to Europe's security is solid, at least until the next presidential election, and that Europe is ready to shoulder more of the responsibility in this regard.

The expansion of NATO, first with the accession of Finland followed by that of Sweden, and then possibly by Ukraine in the aftermath of the war, means that the organization's commitments will increase, and with this the risk that at some point it will be obliged to defend one of its members against external aggression.

Just imagine a scenario in which Ukraine's membership had not been vetoed in 2008. This might have resulted in Russia not daring to annex any Ukrainian territory in 2014, or not attacking it in 2022. Or, if Moscow had gone ahead and done so anyway, it would have instigated a war between NATO and Russia — which is not far from being the case now, albeit that currently there is much more room for maneuver to avoid a full-blown, possibly even nuclear, conflict between the two.

As expected, then, Ukraine took center stage at this year's summit. But other issues were strongly outlined as areas of concern, including rising tensions with Russia over its nuclear proliferation; China's "stated ambitions and coercive policies (that) challenge our interests, security, and values;" and terrorism and instability in the Middle East, North Africa and the Sahel regions.

This is a cluster of challenges that, for now, the summit managed to navigate without any cracks appearing within the organization, while also avoiding ruffling any feathers among NATO's rivals.

However, while Ukraine remains a common cause for unity, some of these other issues will have to be navigated with great diplomatic skill, especially as the organization expands.

Golden age of EU-Japan relations offers a shining example of global leadership

The EU and Japan have long been close, post-war allies. However, there are growing signs that their relationship is entering a "golden age" that could have significant geopolitical and economic ramifications well beyond their bilateral partnership.

Grand terminology such as "golden age" is, of course, highly subjective and can be prone to reversals. The UK and China, for instance, declared a "golden era" in their relationship when David Cameron became prime minister after the 2010 general election. However, this was soon jettisoned given the range of bilateral challenges that quickly arose.

Yet there do appear to be some strong reasons, including bilateral ties that seem to be at what might be an all-time high, why the "golden age" terminology is highly appropriate to EU-Japan relations, especially since the start of the war in Ukraine.

While the specific term has not yet been used extensively by politicians on either side, it has been voiced by a growing number of key thinkers, including leading diplomats such as Jean De Ruyt, the former Belgian permanent representative to the EU, NATO, and the UN.

One of the reasons for the growing use of the term is the wide range of important agreements between the two sides in recent years. These include the Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement; the EU-Japan Strategic Partnership Agreement; a bilateral Green Alliance; and a Partnership on Sustainable Connectivity and Quality Infrastructure.

Moreover, a joint declaration signed during the EU-Japan Summit in May 2022 underlined the growing common ground. This is underpinned not only by long-standing cooperation but also shared values and principles such as democracy, the rule of law, human rights, good governance, multilateralism, and open market economies.

What is particularly striking about the evolution of the bilateral relationship in recent years is the way in which what traditionally had been a partnership founded on economic cooperation has evolved into a deeper

security relationship too. This has become particularly evident during the war in Ukraine but is not limited to the European theater.

Within Europe there has been a significant growth of interest in, and understanding of, the Asia Pacific region. This was showcased when the EU published its new strategy for cooperation with the region, which clearly demonstrated in a

The growing depth and breadth of bilateral relations was clear during the important EU-Japan annual summit that took place on Thursday, during which the agenda included the next steps in the implementation of blossoming strategic, economic and connectivity partnerships. Inevitably, Ukraine topped the agenda, especially in the context of the NATO summit in Vilnius on Tuesday and Wednesday of last week. Japan, which last year was invited to the military alliance's annual leadership conference for the first time, has been steadfast in its support for Ukraine since Russia's invasion, including the clear international leadership it showed when it chaired the G7 in 2023. It has sought to draw a parallel between the security threat Russia poses to Ukraine, and to Europe more widely, and the threat posed by China in the Asia Pacific. The warming of the EU-Japan defense relationship therefore comes amid growing mutual concerns about the ambitions of Moscow and Beijing. Meanwhile, the Trump presidency showed that the US might not always be the very dependable ally it once was. For example, France, the only nuclear power in the EU, and Japan are strengthening their security ties, and Paris intends to make the Asia Pacific a priority axis of its diplomacy. France, which is already active in Japan's civil nuclear industry, also wants to strengthen its presence in the nation's military sector, given Tokyo recently announced a significant increase in spending on its armed forces.

number of ways that Brussels views Japan as a key partner there, from fresh economic cooperation in key sectors such as rail-ways to wider security activities such as joint naval exercises.

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The warming of the EU-Japan defense relationship

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Beyond Ukraine, there is a rich agenda of ideas to help move the EU-Japan partnership into ever-more positive territory. This

includes enhanced maritime security cooperation; greater infrastructure development; better alignment of the EU's Global Gateway foreign agenda; and the Japan-EU Partnership on Sustainable Connectivity and Quality Infrastructure.

There is also significant scope to build on the bilateral Green Alliance and enhance the partnership in energy security, decarbonization, and green supply chains, including critical minerals. This is especially the case given mutual concerns about the implications of the US Inflation Reduction Act.

Taken together, what all these things reveal are the growing opportunities for the EU and Japan to make a much bigger global impact across a wide range of issues, against the backdrop of a fast-changing international geopolitical and economic landscape. A model for what could be achieved is illustrated by the leadership qualities both sides have shown on the international trade and rules-based economic order agenda in recent years.

This bilateral push shifted up several gears when, during Trump's presidency, the US de-emphasized this agenda amid his administration's focus on "America First."

Around the same time, the EU-Japan trade agreement, which covers about a third of global gross domestic product and a combined population of almost 650 million people, showed the world a different path forward by promoting a commitment to multilateralism and trade liberalization.

This deal was not only important in and of itself, it also helped shape the wider diplomacy of trade negotiations at key forums such as the G20 summit hosted by Japan in 2019 and various G7 leadership meetings.

Therefore, the EU-Japan summit provided another illustration of why their bilateral ties are at a historic high. The two powers have become global leaders on issues such as the multilateral trade system, the rules-based economic order, and even liberal democracy itself. This could extend in coming years to wider agendas such as energy security and green growth.

Russia-Turkiye ties to the fore as Moscow vetoes Syria aid renewal

Russia on Tuesday once again used its veto power at the UN Security Council to block the proposed authorization renewal of a cross-border operation that delivers aid from Turkiye to millions of people in northwest Syria.

The aid is not only the last lifeline for Syrians; for Ankara, it is highly critical to preserve the fragile conditions there. Increased suffering due to the aid cut-off might pose disquieting risks to Turkiye and might even affect the delicate Turkish-Russian cooperation in Syria.

The Assad regime in Damascus has unilaterally offered to keep the Bab Al-Hawa crossing from Turkiye open for the next six months to continue the flow of aid, but it remains to be seen how that offer will be received.

Syria has been a topic that the five permanent members of the UNSC — the US, Russia, China, the UK and France — have long been divided over. While most members wanted a full-year extension of the aid authorization, they supported a compromise on a nine-month extension. However, Russia insisted on only a six-month extension. This Russian move also threw into doubt the future of the additional two border crossings from Turkiye that were opened after Syrian President Bashar Assad allowed the UN to dispatch aid to victims of the earthquake that hit Syria and Turkiye in early February. That approval expires in mid-August.

The other UNSC permanent members — with the exception of China — have condemned Russia's move to block the proposed extension of the cross-border operation. Despite being part of the operation, Ankara refrained from commenting.

The Russian veto came as Turkiye made a positive move at the NATO Summit held in Vilnius, Lithuania. The Turkish position at the summit raised eyebrows in Moscow and led to a sharp reaction from Russian officials. A Russian defense official said Turkiye was turning into an "unfriendly country" after a series of "provocative" decisions. He was referring to the recent visit of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to Turkiye.

Ankara's endorsement of Ukraine's NATO bid and it also opening the way for Sweden to be part of the alliance. Moscow even stressed that Turkiye should be under no illusion that it might one day be allowed to join the EU, even after its Sweden approval, while saying that Russia desires strong relations with Ankara despite the existing disagreements between them.

Following Moscow's

proposal to remove the veto power of the permanent members, saying it would turn the body into a "debate club."

Russia's latest veto has been interpreted as its politicization of a humanitarian cause to impose pressure in pursuit of political goals, whether in the context of the Syrian war or other international issues, most likely related to Ukraine. Also, the move came less than three weeks after an attempted mutiny in Russia by Yevgeny Prigozhin, the boss of the mercenary group Wagner, which exposed cracks in Moscow's military leadership and Putin's power in Syria.

However, the cross-border mandate is not only related to Russia's opposition to the West or its alliance with the Syrian regime. It is also related to Turkish-Russian ties in the context of Syria. Through the Astana peace process, launched in 2017, Ankara and Moscow established a delicate cooperation on Syria. Despite their having opposing visions of the war, the process eventually built closer ties among them. Most importantly, their cooperation on Syria started after the Turkish-Russian tensions of 2015-2016 and ultimately allowed Turkiye to carry out several military operations in northern Syria with Russia's explicit approval.

The original UN mandate of 2014 granted humanitarian access through four border crossings. However, since 2020, Russia has used the threat of a veto to limit it to one Turkish border crossing with the need for renewal every six months. Although it is hard to interpret the latest Russian veto, there is still optimism that members of the UNSC might find common ground to break the stalemate. A positive move by Russia regarding the aid operation would definitely be welcomed by Ankara, which has sought to maintain cordial ties with both Moscow and the West, even during the war in Ukraine. Erdogan has refused to join in with the Western sanctions against Russia and has even invited Putin to visit Turkiye in August.

Thus, regarding the cross-border aid mandate, the most critical point for Moscow is to maintain its cooperation with Turkiye on the Syrian file, while considering the delicate balance the two states have achieved over the past few years thanks to the personal bond between Putin and Erdogan. Despite the recent pro-Western moves by Ankara, it is likely that Turkish-Russian relations will remain significant, but their delicate cooperation in Syria is tied to several factors, one of them being the aid issue.

ously been critical of the veto power of the permanent members of the UNSC. He even coined the phrase "the world is bigger than five," in reference to the need for reform of the UNSC and the fact that the fate of international issues should not be left in the hands of only these five countries.

Turkiye has raised its concerns that the great powers are in competition with one another and that they exploit third countries' problems, such as in the case of the Syrian humanitarian aid issue. When Erdogan called for reform of the UNSC back in 2021, his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin rejected his

Turkiye and Erdogan on the rise after NATO summit

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization's leaders gathered this week for a major summit in Vilnius, Lithuania. Of course, the main focus was on Ukraine, and a new NATO-Ukraine Council was established to help boost cooperation.

The alliance also agreed that Ukraine will someday join the club. To the disappointment of many, however, it fell short of issuing an immediate formal invitation.

One aspect of the summit that is not getting as much attention as it deserves, though, is the role of Turkiye. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, fresh from his recent election victory, seemed to be everywhere and meeting everyone at the gathering. His new foreign policy team has also hit the ground running. He set the right tone from the beginning of the summit, when it was announced that Turkiye would finally support Sweden's entry into NATO.

For the first time since entering the White House, US President Joe Biden also met his Turkish counterpart. It is no secret that leading up to the meeting, relations between the two heads of state were somewhat frosty. It is hoped that their meeting might pave the way for improved bilateral relations between their nations.

They certainly greeted each other warmly and had positive things to say about the future of US-Turkiye relations. Erdogan even described his American counterpart as "my dear friend" when speaking to the media.

There was also a major breakthrough in their relationship when, after months of uncertainty, it was finally agreed that the US would sell F-16 fighter jets to Turkiye.

Erdogan also had a positive meeting with Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis during the summit. Both sides agreed to arrange a meeting of the Turkiye-Greece High-

Level Cooperation Council in Thessaloniki, Greece, this autumn. Considering how tense relations have been in recent months, this is a very good development for regional stability. The fact that the meeting was possible because both countries are NATO members serves as a reminder of how significant the alliance is on the diplomatic front.

While Erdogan has made an effort to improve his relationships with his

In the run-up to his reelection, Erdogan was presiding over a stagnant economy made worse by the devastating earthquakes in February. For better or worse, this was the main motivation for Turkiye maintaining its economic ties with Russia at a time when Western nations were imposing sanctions on Moscow. Considering that Turkiye is a member of NATO, this was viewed by many as being particularly problematic. When one looks more closely at the current situation, it is clear that Ankara is not aligning with Moscow. Because of its history, Turkiye enjoys a privileged geopolitical position in the Black Sea region. This has meant that Turkiye and Russia have been competitors, and at times adversaries, in the region on numerous occasions. By some counts, the countries have fought at least 12 major wars since the 1500s. The current situation with Ukraine offers a good example of the geopolitical tensions that exist between Ankara and Moscow.

American, Greek and Swedish counterparts, he will, not unreasonably, expect this warmer engagement to be a two-way street. For example, in return for Turkish support for Sweden becoming a member of NATO, it is likely Ankara expects some degree of reciprocity when it comes to restarting negotiations for its membership of the EU. Erdogan will also expect progress to be made on a visa liberalization agreement with the EU. After he won the presidential election in May,

international

observers wondered which path Turkish foreign policy would take as a result. There were also concerns that Ankara was getting too cozy with Moscow.

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include armed drones, laser-guided multiple-launch rocket systems, dozens of armored vehicles, and self-propelled artillery systems.

It was also reported that Turkiye gave Ukraine cluster munitions last year, months before the US finally agreed to do so. In addition, Turkiye is building two corvettes for the Ukrainian Navy, and Ukrainian-built engines will be used in the latest generation of Turkish drones.

On numerous occasions. By some counts, the countries have fought at least 12 major wars since the 1500s.

The current situation with Ukraine offers a good example of the geopolitical tensions that exist between Ankara and Moscow. Even though there have been no public announcements by Turkish authorities, there is plenty of social media evidence suggesting that Turkiye has provided Ukraine with a number of weapons systems. These

Turkiye closed the straits connecting the Black Sea to the Mediterranean to foreign warships. This affected Russia more than any other country.

These are hardly the policies of a "pro-Russian" government. They are the policies of a country acutely aware of its special and historical role in the Black Sea region. Even so, Turkiye has shown itself to be the only international actor that can speak to both sides in the conflict. It was, for example, able to lead the negotiations for a deal between Ukraine and Russia over the much-needed export of Ukrainian grain to North Africa and the Middle East.

Turkiye has also orchestrated multiple, high-level prisoner swaps between Kyiv and Moscow. And it is the only country that has been able to get the Ukrainian and Russian foreign ministers to sit at the same negotiating table since hostilities began.

Given that this is Erdogan's last term in office, he is acutely aware it is his final opportunity to create a long-lasting legacy as part of the history of the Turkish republic. With the outcome of last week's NATO summit, he is off to a good start in terms of international affairs.

He was praised by the Western media for finally giving the green light to Sweden's entry into the alliance and for supporting Ukraine's bid to join NATO. One major German newspaper even described him as "Superman" and wrote that "nothing works without him." Coming from a German press that is normally very critical of Erdogan, this was high praise indeed.

The summit was therefore a clear example of the ascendancy of Turkish diplomacy on the international stage. During the remainder of Erdogan's final term in office, expect even more Turkish diplomacy in global affairs. This can only be a good thing.

A new step forward in deepening Saudi-Japan relations

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's visit to Saudi Arabia is the first by a Japanese prime minister since former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe traveled to the Kingdom in 2020, and as the ambassador of Japan to Saudi Arabia, I am truly honored to be present to witness this visit.

There is no better opportunity to deepen people-to-people — and, by extension, country-to-country relationships — than through actual face-to-face, knee-to-knee conversations, even though many events and meetings have been conducted online in recent years.

In this regard, I am confident that this visit will amount to a new step forward in further developing Japan-Saudi relations.

Our bilateral relations are not limited to the energy sector, but continue to diversify in various areas. As for the diplomatic arena, Saudi Arabia has been mediating dialogue between parties, and providing generous humanitarian aid and development assistance for the sake of peace and stability in the Middle East region.

The partnership between Saudi Arabia and Japan is essential for Japan to promote its vision of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific that achieves regional and glob-

al stability and prosperity.

As for the economic field, bilateral cooperation between the public and private sectors has been expanding. The entire nation of Saudi Arabia is working together on economic and social reforms under the Saudi Vision 2030 program, and I am impressed every day with their enthusiasm.

Our two countries launched the Japan-Saudi Vision 2030 in 2017 as a framework of bilateral collaboration to actively cooperate in achieving Saudi Arabia's reform efforts.

Under this framework, Khalid Al-Falih, minister of investment of Saudi Arabia, visited Japan to attend the 6th Saudi-Japan Vision 2030 ministerial meeting in 2022.

Prince Faisal bin Farhan, the Saudi foreign minister, visited Japan twice in the same year to discuss with his Japanese counterpart Hayashi Yoshimasa the development of friendly relations between the two countries in various fields.

In addition, Saudi Minister of Housing Majid Al-Hogail visited Japan and signed a memorandum of cooperation in the field of housing and also visited a number of "smart cities."

During the visit to Saudi

Arabia by Nishimura Yasutoshi, Japan's minister of economy, trade and industry, last December, the First Japan-Saudi Energy Ministerial Dialogue was held in Riyadh to discuss stable energy supply, realization of a carbon-neutral society, and cooperation in the green growth strategy with Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman.

The exchange of visits demonstrates that both countries are moving forward together, envisioning the same future.

Despite Japan and Saudi Arabia being seemingly far apart in language, culture and geography, we hope to build a relationship symbolized by deep trust and friendship, in which we can compensate for each other's shortcomings.

To this end, I sincerely hope that more opportunities will be created for cultural and social exchanges that will enable us to understand more deeply.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to Arab News for giving me an opportunity to deliver my message to the people of Saudi Arabia on the occasion of Prime Minister Kishida's visit, and sincerely wish the government and the people of Saudi Arabia continued success and prosperity.



Pakistan seeks Chinese investment: Ahsan Iqbal

— to upgrade agriculture, IT, mining and housing sectors

BEIJING (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal has said that Special Economic Zones (SEZs) will provide an opportunity for Chinese investments to take advantage of incentives that Pakistan offers to foreign investment with concessions.

“We are working on nine special economic zones. The first Rashakai Special Economic Zone will be inaugurated later this month. Similarly, the other economic zones are also in the advanced stages, in Sindh, Punjab, and Baluchistan,” he told APP during his recent visit to China.

Pakistan, he said, also has a great advantage in low cost of labour. As in China, many industries are experiencing high costs of production due to increased levels of cost and are now moving to Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. Pakistan also has a great advantage in terms of low cost of production.

Pakistan has a very good infrastructure and then it has the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) framework. So, it becomes a very attractive destination for Chinese enterprises to relocate to these economic zones in Pakistan.

About specific Chinese companies who are looking forward to cooperating in this regard, he said, there are many Chinese companies which are coming. Many have invested in Gwadar free zone.

“But, we are now really looking forward to developing our agriculture sector based on new technologies. We are seeking cooperation to upgrade the quality of our seeds so those companies which have research and seed development can help us,” he added.

Ahsan Iqbal said Pakistan is also looking for new irrigation technologies to conserve water and bring efficiency to agriculture, adding, “We are also looking for a food processing industry that has a great opportunity.”

Regarding great opportunity in the mining sector, he said, Pakistan has huge marble deposits, which can be tapped with new technology and similarly, Pakistan has other mines like lithium and other material which is used in electric vehicles. “So, we can develop that.”

He said Pakistan is also looking for joint cooperation and technology, particularly information technology. Pakistan has a young population with very good IT skills.

“Many Chinese technology companies are shifting to Pakistan to take advantage of the low cost of human resources and high skills that our young population has. So, I think agriculture, industry, mining, IT, energy sector all these areas are very promising for Chinese enterprises to invest in Pakistan,” he added.

The minister said big Chinese real estate companies can come and invest in the housing sector and added, “We have a huge shortage of housing so they

can come and address urban housing issues with investments. We are offering very attractive terms for public-private partnership.”

Responding to a question about the security of CPEC projects, he said, the government of Pakistan is taking extra precautions for the security of the Chinese. We have provided four layers of security to CPEC projects. But, the CPEC is a very strategic project, and the enemies of China and Pakistan don't want to see it succeed.

Therefore, it is very important that both Pakistan and China show their strong desire that they will not be deterred and they will not be stopped by any unpleasant incident, he added.

He stressed the need to work together and the only way to defeat such evil designs is to be not stopped by any unpleasant incident.

About the kind of measures that have been taken to protect the Chinese enterprise, he said, a special force of 10,000 personnel has been created which is totally dedicated to the security of CPEC projects.

“And, then we have integrated this force with our police, para-military forces and local security. These security personnel are deployed to provide the highest level of security,” he added.

To a question, he said, all the negative propaganda against CPEC has a political element and it has no reality. CPEC has actually done great service to Pakistan by helping it overcome the energy crisis, develop modern infrastructure and restore the country's image as an investment destination.

After China invested \$25 billion of investment in different projects under the CPEC framework, everyone started looking at Pakistan as an investment destination. Actually, CPEC became a global brand for Pakistan, he added.

Sharing his personal feelings about the CPEC project, he said, the beauty of CPEC is that this project was between those two countries, which enjoy a very unique relationship.



ISLAMABAD: People taking keen interest in Mango Festival.

‘Celebrating The Heritage Of Karachi’ started

F.P. Report

KARACHI: A one of its kind exhibition titled: An Exhibition of Watercolour on Paper “Celebrating The Heritage Of Karachi” by the versatile artist Hamir Soomro started at the Art Council of Pakistan Karachi from the 15th-18th July 2023.

The exhibition displayed paintings featuring iconic and heritage sites in Karachi such as the Mohatta Palace, Frere Street Station, Empress Market, and many more.



The country attended the exhibition, and were in absolute awe of Soomro's exquisite watercolour paintings inspired by Karachi's rich cultural heritage.

‘GPI to attract investment, mitigate soil erosion, boost agricultural productivity’

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Rice Research and Development Board Punjab Shahzad Ali Malik on Sunday said that the Green Pakistan Initiative (GPI) launched by the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif aimed to address environmental challenges, promote sustainable development and boost agricultural production to meet ever increasing food staple needs of the growing population.

Talking to a delegation of industrialists led by Shaukat Hussain Khan Dahar from Rahim Yar

Khan, Shahzad Ali Malik said that the initiative would attract domestic and foreign investment in renewable energy, afforestation, and other environmentally friendly projects, said a news release.

This influx of capital can stimulate economic growth, improve infrastructure, and create a conducive environment for sustainable business practices.

He said the initiative's focus on tree planting and watershed management can help mitigate soil erosion, improve water availability, and enhance the overall ecological balance.

This, in turn, can have positive effects on agricultural productivity by providing a more favorable environment for crop growth and reducing water scarcity.

He said the GPI could also generate employment opportunities in various sectors such as forestry, horticulture, and environmental conservation.

He said such new jobs can have a positive impact on the overall economy by

reducing unemployment rates and boosting income levels, said adding that by focusing on preserving and enhancing natural resources, the initiative may attract tourists interested in eco-friendly destinations.

This can lead to increased revenue from tourism, benefiting local communities and contributing to the overall economy.

Shahzad Ali Malik said a diverse ecosystem supports natural pest control, enhances crop pollination, and promotes sustainable agriculture, leading to increased yields and improved income for farmers.

He said it may include promoting the adoption of climate-smart techniques, improving irrigation systems, and introducing drought-resistant crops.

Need stressed to unlock potential of regional economic cooperation, says Iftikhar Malik

ISLAMABAD (APP): SAARC Chambers of Commerce and Industry's former President Iftikhar Ali Malik on Sunday stressed the urgent need of unlocking the potential of regional economic cooperation and integration to boost trade among SAARC member countries, especially with Afghanistan at this critical juncture.

Talking to a delegation of traders led by Muslim Khan Buner, he said inter-regional trade in South Asia is less than one-third of its

potential which indicates 67 percent of trade is not being fully exploited, said. News release.

He said the role of Afghanistan as a connector and as a land bridge between Central Asia, the Middle East and South Asia needs to be reviewed in the prevailing scenario to primarily focus on the promotion of trade and investment.

He said even today, Afghanistan is seen as a viable doorway to South Asian countries for direct

access to oil and gas from the republics of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and others.

He said better trade ties will help promote economic growth and to do away with abject poverty in the region especially in Afghanistan thus enhancing its cross-border and transit trade with neighbouring countries.

He said poor trade facilitation at borders and the prevalence of a variety of non-tariff barriers are major

hurdles in further enhancing mutual trade manifolds with Afghanistan.

Iftikhar Ali Malik said at the moment what we need is total up gradation and strengthening of existing facilitation, handling and clearance of transport and trade at the Pak-Afghan land borders besides consolidation of initiatives taken by the new regime of Taliban.

He said Pakistan after Iran and China is the third largest trading partner of Afghanistan which exports

cement, pharmaceuticals products, sulphur, stone, plaster, peel of citrus fruit, melon, vegetable fats, edible fruits and oil etc.

He said Afghanistan's main exports are carpets and rugs 45 percent of the total exports dried fruits constitute 31 per cent, and medicinal plants 12 per cent.

He said the main export partner is Pakistan 48 per cent, India 19 percent and Russia 9 percent other including Iran, Iraq and Turkey.

Court Notice

In the Court of Muhammad Adil Civil Judge XII Kohat, Suit No. 188/1 Date of hearing 24-07-2023, Titled:- Said Rasool Vs Gul zada(etc) Notice against:- (1) Jahan Zib Bibi widow (2) Abdul Rahim (3) Farooq (4) Shabana Bibi (5) Shami Bibi (6) Shakilla Bibi (7) Balthora Bibi (8) Masooda Bibi Daughters of Gul Zada (9) Bas Noor Bibi widow (10) Shah Fahad (11) Shah Faisal (12) Abubakar Muhammad Sons of Gul Zada (5/2) Muhammad (13) Sayed Hussain Husband (14) Hassan Hussain (15) Sajjid Hussain (16) Shahid Hussain Sons of Masooda Bibi (Late) R/o Shirake Dara Adam Khel District Kohat presently R/o (Defendants No. 2-10-11-12 now in Abroad Dubai (UAE) (Defendants) Whereas the above plaintiff has instituted a civil suit against you defendants in which date of hearing 24-07-2023 is fixed for your appearance Since your intimation/service is not possible through ordinary means/mode therefore you defendants is intimated through this publication to appear before this court by person or by pleader on date fixed 24-07-2023 otherwise court shall be proceeded in accordance with law. Order Issued on 21-06-2023 (Court of C.J.XII Kohat).

Court Notice

In the Court of Shadab Civil Judge IX Kohat, Suit No. 132/1 Date of hearing 12-09-2023 Titled:- Nazir Muhammad Vs Moeen Akbar Notice against:- (4) Walistan (5) Mughal Shah Sons of Dad Shah (10) Sangeen Shah Son of Yaqbali Shah R/o Sayab District Kohat presently R/o (Now in Abroad) (Defendants) Whereas the above plaintiff has instituted a civil suit against you Defendants in which date of hearing 12-09-2023 is fixed for your appearance. Since your intimation/service is not possible through ordinary means/mode therefore you defendants is intimated through this publication to appear before this court by person or by pleader on date fixed 12-09-2023 otherwise court shall be proceeded in accordance with law. Order issued on 12-07-2023 (Court of CJ-IX Kohat).

ISLAMABAD: As the government has increased electricity tariff by almost Rs5, taking base tariff up to Rs29.78 under the IMF condition, the Businessmen Panel (BMP) of the FPCCI has condemned the move, stating the burden of power theft, mismanagement, and inefficiencies should not be shifted to the trade and industry consumers, as it would prove to be dangerous for overall economy.

FPCCI former president and BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar said that in 2022, the previous government raised base tariff by almost Rs8 per unit in three phases due to which base tariff jumped to around Rs25 per unit from Rs17 per unit. After the IMF Board approval of the US 3 billion stand-by arrangement, it asked the Pakistan authorities to strengthen energy sector viability by aligning tariffs with costs, reforming the sectors cost base, and better-targeting power subsidies.

While describing the government's decision to increase electricity tariffs by Rs5 per unit as a shameful decision, he urged the government to reverse the increase. The government's decision to increase the electricity tariff is anti-industry, and the BMP strongly condemns the government's decision and calls on it to rescind it. He urged the power ministry to identify system constraints and communicate targets to all concerned departments in order to launch a

wartime effort to upgrade the transmission system. He said that the government is ignoring the fact that the gap between the generation and consumer cost is chiefly because of power theft and inefficiency of the heads of power distribution companies who are well protected by their political masters. It is a disastrous decision, which will encourage electricity theft. He said that the increase should have been linked with a reduction in line losses. He said that the government should give a target to all electricity distribution companies to reduce their line losses by 3 to 5 percentage points or their heads should be sacked. The line losses in case of five distribution companies are as high as 40 per cent. One per cent line loss means Rs 6 billion in lost revenue. The government give a target to all companies to reduce the losses by two percentage points.

The BMP Chairman observed that the government's inability, ill planning and financial woes had multiplied the miseries of businesses which were facing unscheduled power outages across the country. At the same time, they were already paying heavy electricity bills of up to Rs50 per unit, including surcharges and other taxes, he added.

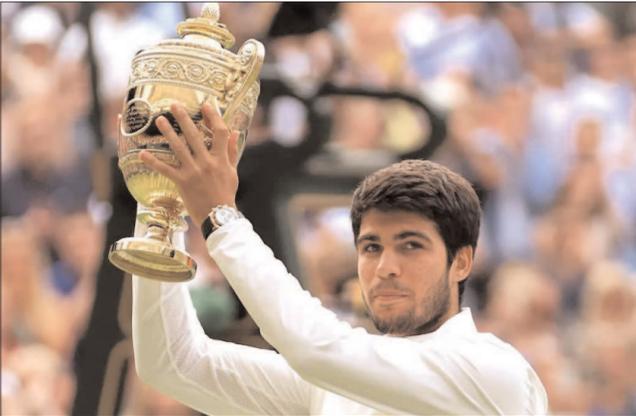
He said all the major industrial cities of the country were facing unannounced electricity load shedding and stressed the need to rectify technical faults immediately.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that the high cost of doing business has proved to be dangerous for Pakistan's industry, discouraging investment both in capacity and capability, calling for lessening the burden of heavy taxes on the power sector.

He urged the government to shut down all costly oil-fired power plants in order to ensure consumers had access to cheaper energy. He lamented that the previous administration did not prioritise the rehabilitation and maintenance of



Alcaraz beats Djokovic in five sets to win first Wimbledon title



The Serb, who was on a 34-match winning streak at Wimbledon, went into the final not having lost on Centre Court since his 2013 defeat to Andy Murray in the title match.

Alcaraz, who had been crippled by body cramping in his loss to Djokovic in the French Open semi-final in June, was unable to settle in the first set and let a break point slip away in the seven-minute opening game.

- Golden chance - Djokovic took advantage and raced into a 5-0 lead on the back of a double break before the Spaniard got on the board. It was too little, too late as Djokovic claimed the opening set with a smash. But Alcaraz finally freed himself of his shackles and broke for 2-1 in the second set.

Djokovic hit straight back in the third game before saving a break point in the fourth, coming out on top of a 29-shot rally. The Serb was hit with a time violation in the tie-break before seeing a set point saved. Alcaraz needed no second invitation when he carved out and converted a set point to level the contest with a backhand winner.

The marathon set had taken 85 minutes as Djokovic's run of 15 tie-breaks won in a row at the majors ended. Alcaraz broke in the opening game of the third set and again after an exhausting 26-minute fifth game, which went to 13 deuces and saw Djokovic save six break points before he cracked on the seventh.

LONDON (Agencies): Carlos Alcaraz defeated seven-time champion Novak Djokovic to claim his first Wimbledon title on Sunday, shattering the Serb's dream of a record-equaling 24th Grand Slam crown.

World number one Alcaraz recovered from dropping the first set and saving a set point in the second to win 1-6, 7-6 (8/6), 6-1, 3-6, 6-4 after four hours and 42 minutes on Centre Court. It was a second major for the 20-year-old Spaniard following his US Open title last year as he became Wimbledon's third youngest men's champion.

The result will also spark feverish speculation over the start of a generational shift, with 36-year-old Djokovic carrying the torch of the 'Big Three' now that Roger Federer is retired and Rafael Nadal is sidelined, perhaps

permanently. Australian Open and French Open champion Djokovic had been bidding to equal Federer's record of eight Wimbledon titles, match Margaret Court's all-time mark of 24 Slams and become the All England Club's oldest men's champion. When he won his first major at the Australian Open in 2008, Alcaraz was still three months shy of his fifth birthday.

"You inspire me a lot," Alcaraz told Djokovic after becoming the third Spanish winner of the title, following in the footsteps of Manuel Santana in 1966 and Nadal in 2008 and 2010.

"I started playing tennis watching you. Since I was born you were already winning tournaments. It is amazing," he added with a smile after firing 66 winners past the Serb, off-setting his

45 unforced errors. Djokovic was playing in his ninth final at Wimbledon and 35th at the majors, while for Alcaraz it was just a second in the Slams following his US Open triumph.

"What a quality at the end of the match when you had to serve it out," said Djokovic, who had been chasing a fifth successive Wimbledon crown.

"You deserve it" - "You came up with some big plays in the big situation and you absolutely deserve it. Amazing." As for me, you never like to lose matches like these but I guess when all the emotions are settled I'll have to be very grateful.

"I won many tight and close matches in the past here, to name a few, 2019 against Roger. Maybe I should have lost a few finals that I won so maybe this is Even Stevens."

Japan's Oda, 17, wins Wimbledon wheelchair title



LONDON (Agencies): Japanese teenager Tokito Oda made history by winning the Wimbledon wheelchair title with a commanding 6-4, 6-2 victory against Alfie Hewett on Sunday.

Aged 17 years and 69 days, Oda is the youngest man to win a Wimbledon singles title in any discipline. He is also the youngest player to win a Wimbledon singles title since 16-year-old Martina Hingis lifted the women's trophy in 1997.

"This is so amazing. I didn't expect this amazing support on this court. I am feeling like I'm living in a dream. I'm so happy," Oda said. "I want to thank Alfie and his support team. It was not easy playing in this situation against a country's home player."

"He is one of the strongest players and I have played

him many times. It's really tough playing with him." Oda's Wimbledon victory brought him a second Grand Slam title after he won last month's French Open.

That success made him the youngest man to win a Grand Slam tournament in any discipline and also the youngest world number one in the history of wheelchair tennis. Oda is too young to drink alcohol legally so he had to settle for toasting his celebration with a glass of water instead of the champagne he would have preferred.

"I am still 17. I wanted to open the champagne but I couldn't so maybe I will have sparkling water with my team," he said. Britain's Hewett won the Wimbledon wheelchair doubles title with Gordon Reid on Saturday.

But the 25-year-old lost the singles final for a second successive year as 11 double faults among his 19 unforced errors gifted the title to Oda. "First of all congrats to Tokito and your team. What a performance out there today and I hope you enjoy yourselves later on," Hewett said.

Wheelchair Cricket Asia Cup 2023 in Sept

ISLAMABAD (APP): The second edition of the Wheelchair Cricket Asia Cup 2023 has been pushed to September due to the expected heavy rains in Nepal during the ongoing month, Pakistan Wheelchair Cricket Council (PWCC) said.

The event, being hosted by Pakistan at the neutral venue of Kathmandu, Nepal was earlier scheduled to take place during the ongoing month. "The month of July is considered a rainy season in Kathmandu. Hence, we have decided to move the tournament to September," the President of PWCC Rookhsana Rajpoot told APP on Thursday.

Earlier, the PWCC had said that it was all set to host the event in Pakistan but due to some issues, it was decided to shift it to Nepal. Rookhsana said that every effort would be made to make the event a real success. "We will try to ensure fans enjoy exciting contests during the event," she said. The matches will be played at the two grounds in Kathmandu. Teams from Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan will participate in the Asia Cup.

Meanwhile, a PWCC delegation met Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori at the Governor's House. Member of National Assembly Kishwar Zahra of Muttahida Quami Movement was also present on the occasion, said a press release. The PWCC delegation was comprised of captain Muhammad Zeeshan, vice-captain Syed Arslan Ahmed, Sajid Ali Abbasi, Imran Amin and Warsameuddin Sheikh.

Promotion of wheelchair cricket, holding of tournaments at the regional level, encouragement of wheelchair cricketers and other issues were discussed in the meeting.

Governor Sindh said that PWCC's efforts for the promotion of wheelchair cricket were commendable.

He assured all possible support for the development of wheelchair cricket. He said that the preparation of world-class players was the need of the hour. Rookhsana told him that Pakistan was the reigning Asian champion as it won the inaugural edition of the tournament in 2019. "We are confident our team will repeat their past feat to retain the title," she added.

Wapda retains title in National Men, Women Ju-Jitsu Championship trophy

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan Wapda retained the title for third consecutive times after securing 17 gold medals, Pakistan Navy with seven gold claimed the runners-up trophy and Pakistan Army took third position with four gold medals in the 14th edition of the National Men and Women Ju-Jitsu Championship played at the indoor hall of the Postgraduate College Abbottabad No. 1 on Sunday.

Regional sports Officer Hazara Ahmad Zaman, former DG Sports Tariq Mehmood, Chairman Pakistan Ju-Jitsu Federation Khalil Ahmad Khan, Secretary Tariq Ali, Secretary KP Ju-Jitsu Association and Organizing Secretary Tehseen Ullah, District Sports Officer Saqib Jadoon (Haripur), Bashir Ahmad (Abbottabad) and a large number of spectators, players and officials were also present.

Surprisingly, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa claimed four silver and 14 bronze medals by taking the overall in the provinces. A brilliant performance, winning four silvers and twelve browns, on the occasion Regional Sports Officer Ahmed Zaman and Khalil Ahmad Khan of Pakistan Jujitsu Federation distributed the prizes

among the players along with Secretary Tariq Ali, Organizing Secretary Tahsinullah Khan, South Asian Gold Medalist and Secretary Provincial Karate Association Khalid Noor and other important personalities were present.

The Championship is jointly being organized by Regional Sports Officer Hazara, District Administration Hazara and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ju-Jitsu Association under the supervision of Pakistan Ju-Jitsu Association.

Pakistan WAPDA won 17 gold medals, five in the Women categories including -63kg, -48kg, -52kg, -57kg and -63kg, seven gold medals in Men fighting comprising -52kg, -56kg, -63kg, -85kg, -50kg, -56kg-62kg, and five gold medals in Nawzaza. Pakistan Navy won 7 gold medals and the Army took the second position by bagging four gold medals while Sindh remained at fourth with one gold medal.

Teams from all four provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan, Islamabad, WAPDA, Army, Navy and Police participated in the competition. In the women's 57kg weight category played on the last day, Arwa of Pakistan WAPDA won gold, Arzoo of Navy won silver medal, Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa Alina and Ayesha of Army got brown medals respectively, Shamaila of WAPDA won gold in -63kg weight category, Fazilat of Navy won silver medal, Adan Khan, hailing from Charsadda, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Asma Rani of Army got brown medals, Vijay Sulaiman of WAPDA won gold medal in Men's -50kg weight category, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Jibran won silver medal, Balochistan's Muhammad Hussain and Nauman Habib won browns, in the Open weight category Police's Abid won gold, Army's Fayaz Hussain won silver medal, Punjab's Hashim Ali and Navy's Hamid Ali browns medals respectively.

In -56kg, Owais of WAPDA won gold medal, Saleem of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa silver medal, Asif Ali of Pakistan Navy and Rashid of Islamabad won the third position. In the -77kg category, Ali Hamza of Pakistan Navy won gold, Hamza of WAPDA won silver, Fahad of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Waqas of Army won brown medals. The Championship lasted for three days in which more than 300 players and officials from 10 different teams across the country participated. Results: Women Nawzaza -57kg

Arwa Wapda Arzoo Navy Alina Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ayesha Army -63kg Shamaila Wapda Fazilat Navy Asma Rani Army Adan Khan Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Men Nawzaza -50kg Vijay Sulaiman Wapda Jadrana Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Hassan Balochistan Nouman Habib Islamabad -56kg Awais Wapda Muhammad Asif Balochistan Asim Khan Sindh Asif Ali Pakistan Navy -77kg Shahzeb Sindh Maahsan Wapda Ameer Hamza Army Danish Ahmad Navy Open Category Abid Police Fayyaz Hussain Army Hashim Ali Punjab Hamid Ali Navy -62kg Men Adil Munir Navy Majeed Ur Rehman Gilgit-Baltistan Salman Khan Wapda Muhammad. Munawar Army -67kg Khawjah Usman Wapda Salman Khan Punjab Sulaiman Shah Punjab Riasat Mehmood Islamabad -85kg Arshad Khan Wapda Ali Zia Punjab Muhammad Azeem Army Muhammad Nadeem Navy Women Fighting -44kg Nayab Navy Husna Army Kosar Wapda Mehrab Punjab -48kg Minahil Army Bano Butt Wapda Nighar Ali KP Anam Navy -52kg Mehak Navy Humaira Wapda Muqadas Ijaz Army Nargis Khan Punjab.



Shaheen Afridi struck again after the rain break.

West Ham interested in Man Utd captain Harry Maguire

LONDON (Agencies): West Ham are interested in signing Manchester United captain Harry Maguire.

The 30-year-old England defender has an uncertain future at Old Trafford as Raphael Varane and Lisandro Martinez have emerged as Erik ten Hag's first-choice centre-backs.



United also need to sell players to boost Ten Hag's chances of reshaping his squad in the current transfer window as he closes in on Inter Milan goalkeeper Andre Onana.

Maguire's contract runs to 2025.

The centre-back arrived at United from Leicester City for £80m in 2019, but is known to be among the players Ten Hag would now sell if a suitable offer came in.

Maguire is mindful of needing to play regularly next season before Euro 2024 in Germany next summer. However, he is known to be happy at Old Trafford and is proud of his status as captain.

In addition, after overcoming a number of injury issues last term, Maguire feels he will play a full part in United's season.

West Ham manager David Moyes is keen to make additions to his squad following the sale of skipper Declan Rice, which could generate £105m.

Moyes is interested in Ajax's Mexican midfielder Edson Alvarez as a possible replacement for Rice, but Maguire would be a useful addition at the back, where both members of West Ham's first-choice pairing - Kurt Zouma and Nayed Aguerd - suffered injury issues last season.

De Silva leads Sri Lanka's fight against Pakistan in Galle Test

GALE (Agencies): Dhananjaya de Silva hit an unbeaten 94 as Sri Lanka recovered from an early collapse to reach 242-6 at stumps on a rain-hit day one of the first Test against Pakistan on Sunday.

The fifth-wicket pair of de Silva and Angelo Mathews (64) put on 131 after Sri Lanka had slipped to 54-4 in the opening session, with Shaheen Shah Afridi taking three wickets on his Test return.

De Silva stood firm in an extended final session in Galle despite losing his partner Sadeera Samarawickrama, who made 36, after a 57-run stand.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Samarawickrama fell to Agha Salman's spin and play, which had witnessed two rain interruptions at a cost of 24.2 overs lost, was called off for the day.

De Silva batted elegantly with deft cuts, drives and pulls, and amassed 10 fours and three sixes - one of them to reach his fifty.

But he slowed down in the final hour of play as he awaits his 10th Test century in his 50th match. Mathews, playing his 105th Test, raised his 39th half-century in the five-day format.

The pair seemed comfortable and de Silva started to take on the bowlers with boundaries, but leg-spinner Abrar Ahmed got a former captain Mathews caught behind at the stroke of tea.

Sri Lanka had looked in trouble at lunch, which was put back by an hour after officials adjusted the session timings to make up for a first rain delay of nearly 90 minutes.

Shaheen, a left-arm

quick playing his 26th Test, moved from 99 to a century of wickets on his return from injury when he sent back Nishan Madushka caught behind for four in his second over.

The 23-year-old Pakistani star injured his knee at the same venue a year ago. Rain soon arrived in Galle to interrupt proceedings but Shaheen took another wicket when action resumed as he got Kusal Mendis out for 12.

Skipper Dimuth Karunaratne hit back with a few boundaries before Shaheen got him out for 29, caught behind attempting a glance down the leg side.

Fast bowler Naseem Shah soon joined in to get Dinesh Chandimal out for one with a quick delivery as skipper Babar Azam pulled off a tough catch at third slip.

Two Pak cyclists, one coach to attend training camp in Korea

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's two promising cyclists Syed Aqib Ali Shah and Mohsin Khan will proceed to South Korea along with national coach Sarmad Shahab to attend a one-month training camp at the World Cycling Centre (WCC), Pakistan Cycling Federation (PCF) told here Sunday.

"The camp being funded by International Cycling Federation (UCI) and the Korea Cycling Federation will be held from July 23 to August 24. The camp is aimed at educating the potential riders from Asian countries about the basics of cycling," the PCF President Syed Azhar Ali Shah told APP. "The WCC Korea is one of the world's best cycling training centre wherein top quality UCI instructors give professional coaching lectures and

effort to promote cycling in the country and every year sends two to three riders and coaches for training in Korea. "Recently our young woman cyclist Sumaira has returned after attending the training camp at WCC. "We only send those riders and coaches, who are well educated and efficient in English as lectures at WCC are given in it (English)," he informed. He said due to the PCF efforts the country could hold any level of cycling event as there were a number of UCI qualified coaches and commissaries. "We also have over dozen level 1 coaches, including women coaches now, who can impart training, enabling our cyclists to excel at the national and international stage. "We are determined to nurture talent and elevate the sport to new heights in the country," he added.

According to him, the PCF is making an all-out

1st President PGA Open Golf C'ship concludes

LAHORE (APP): The 1st President PGA Open Golf Championship fully endorsed by Punjab Golf Association (PGA) concluded here on Sunday and Muhammad Shahzad topped in the Professionals Category and Damil Atallah in the Amateur Section and Hamna Amjad in the Ladies event at the par 72 PAF Skyview Golf Course.

A few other Names also deserved a mention and they are Muhammad Akram (Senior Professional Winner), Rehan Babar (Junior Professional Winner) and Lt Col Mohammad Ayub (Senior Amateur Winner). The golfing champions participating in this event found the competition rather brutal and only the most skillful ones ended up winning titles.

As for these high achievers in the six day premier golfing activity Muhammad Shahzad of Lahore Garrison had the honor of prevailing over the otherwise unbeatable 200 titles winner, Muhammad Shabbir Iqbal in a contest of excellence and this hard working champion now finds himself as the new hero of pro-

;Senior Professionals: Muhammad Akram, Winner; Nisar Hussain, Second; Muhammad Tariq, third; Junior Professionals: Rehan Babar, Winner; Ashass Amjad, runner up; Abid Iqbal, third; Amateur: Damil Atallah, Winner; Shahzaib, runner up; Qasim Ali Khan, third; Amateur Net; Nouman Ilyas, first net; Sharaan Ali, 2nd net; Hussain Hamid, 3rd net; Senior Amateur: Lt Col Mohammad Ayub, first gross; Tariq Mehmood, second gross; Col Raja Asif Mehdi, 3rd gross; Senior Amateur Net; Dr Hameed Awan, first net; Saadullah Tiwana, Second net; Col Ikram ul Haq, third net; Ladies: Amateur: Hamna Amjad, Winner; Abeeha Syed, runner up; Prize arka Ijaz, third; The prize distribution ceremony at the PAF Skyview Golf Course was grand indeed and in attendance were Brig Ayyaz Masood, Secretary PGA, Kashif Bhatti, GM of PGA, Imran Pervez, Vice President, PAF Skyview, Mian Safdar, CEO Coppergat Cables and Wires, golf professionals and golf players.

Amateur: Hamna Amjad, Winner; Abeeha Syed, runner up; Prize arka Ijaz, third; The prize distribution ceremony at the PAF Skyview Golf Course was grand indeed and in attendance were Brig Ayyaz Masood, Secretary PGA, Kashif Bhatti, GM of PGA, Imran Pervez, Vice President, PAF Skyview, Mian Safdar, CEO Coppergat Cables and Wires, golf professionals and golf players.



In brief

Rwp Safe City Project

RAWALPINDI (APP): Secretary, Housing and Urban Development Punjab, (HUDP) Sajid Zafar Dall has said that Safe City Project would prove to be highly effective in combating crime in Rawalpindi City. According to a district administration spokesman, the secretary along with Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chatta and Regional Police Officer (RPO) Rawalpindi Syed Khurram Ali here the other day visited different city areas including Kutchery Chowk, Peshawar Road, IGP Road, Pirwadhai and Liaquat Bagh and reviewed Safe City project. The Secretary was briefed that the security situation of Rawalpindi city would be improved further through Safe City project. The project would increase the sense of security among the citizens, he added. The use of technology to improve security had become indispensable, the Commissioner said adding, the Safe City project was being launched in Rawalpindi and Murree. The project would improve the law and order situation as it was a project to ensure public safety, the Commissioner said. The administration was fully mobilized regarding the Safe City project and all available resources would be utilized for the safety and protection of the citizens, the Commissioner added.

Foolproof security for Muharram

RAWALPINDI (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rawalpindi Hasan Waqar Cheema has directed the authorities concerned to ensure foolproof security for Muharram ul Haram processions and Majalis. According to a district administration spokesman, the DC had ordered foolproof arrangements for the security of Muharram processions and Majalis. Encroachments should be removed besides completing patchwork of the routes of the processions, he ordered. A special traffic plan should also be prepared regarding Muharram so that people do not face any difficulties, Hasan Waqar Cheema said adding, CCTV cameras should also be installed to monitor the processions. The DC directed the officers to make special arrangements for electricity and other wires to clear obstructions if any on the routes of the processions. Rescue-1122 had also been directed to complete all arrangements for Muharram, he said and added, no one, except license holders, would be allowed to organize 'Sabils' at the routes of the processions and Majalis. He instructed the authorities to ensure the implementation of timings of the processions and Majalis.

NHMP traces lost diamond ring

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Highways and Motorway Police on Sunday returned a diamond ring to its owner. The Motorway Police found the missing diamond ring and returned it to the owner. While traveling from Swat to Peshawar along with his family on the Swat Expressway, a precious ring of a commuter Luqman fell in tunnel number one near Pulai. The value of the ring is said to be Rs 120,000. The family started searching for the ring, after some time the Motorway Police also reached the spot and started helping in the search but the ring could not be found. After leaving his contact number, Luqman left along with his family.



ISLAMABAD: Youngsters jumping and bathing in water channel of Rawal Dam to get some relief from hot weather in Federal Capital.

MD PBM commits to fighting poverty

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM), a national social welfare organization, led by Managing Director Amir Fida Paracha, is dedicated to combating poverty and uplifting marginalized communities in Pakistan. The MD PBM in a statement highlighted the establishment of 46 Sweet Homes across the country, providing care for orphaned children. Additionally, PBM has set up 163 Women Empowerment Centers, promoting skill-based education for women, and 159 Child Labor Welfare Schools.

Furthermore, 18 Shelter Homes have been established, and the "Roti Sab Kay Liye" program has been introduced, which offers meals through 20 food trucks. The organization has successfully implemented the Orphan and Widows Support Program (OWSP) in ten districts, extending financial assistance to widows and orphans. He appreciated the support provided to individuals

with disabilities, senior citizens, and the needy, through medical treatments and educational opportunities. These programs have had a positive impact on the lives of deserving citizens. He expressed the organization's commitment to enhancing the effectiveness of its programs by fostering public-private partnerships. By engaging local and international donors, PBM has gained increased resources and efficiency.

In the past years, PBM has allocated Rs. 24.7 million for the care and sponsorship of 4,408 children in Sweet Homes. Additionally, Rs. 40.28 million was spent on shelter and meals for 891,375 individuals in Shelter Homes, and 5,070,614 people were provided meals through the Roti Sab Kay Liye program. Through the Orphan and Widows Support Program, Rs. 162.4 million was disbursed among 857 families in ten districts. Women attending the Women Empowerment Centers not only receive

free vocational training but also receive a daily allowance of Rs. 50. Vocational training has been provided to approximately 14,490 women at a cost of Rs. 4.6 million in the past year.

The education of 18,787 students in Child Labor Rehabilitation Schools has been supported with Rs. 4.5 million. These schools offer free books, stationery, uniforms, and monthly stipends to enrolled children. Elderly residents in Old Homes in Lahore have been allocated Rs. 16.29 million for their well-being. PBM has allocated Rs. 7.21 billion for medical assistance, including treatment for various medical cases such as cancer, heart diseases, general medicine, surgeries, eye surgeries, and dialysis. Additionally, 1,996 wheelchairs have been distributed through the Special Friends program, and over ten million deserving individuals have received artificial limbs, with an expenditure of over Rs. 10 billion.

Unsung heroes of Religious Ministry overcome odds to deliver flawless Hajj arrangements

ISLAMABAD (APP): The unsung heroes of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony deserve accolades for accomplishing a remarkable and enchanting feat in successfully organizing the Hajj arrangements, despite facing personal challenges, time limitations, and inadequate support from the local Pak Hajj mission.

Under the guidance of Director Moavineen Sajid Haider Yaldram, a team of over 1,800 Seasonal Duty Staff (SDS), Moavineen diligently fulfilled their responsibilities in different departments such as transportation, accommodation, lost and found, wheelchair assistance, help centre, and monitoring at the main control office in Makkah and Madinah. Additionally, the ministry ensured that the pilgrims received extensive medical support throughout their journey. Over 50 accomplished

Pakistani women, with diverse professional backgrounds, diligently supported and served Pakistani hajj pilgrims in Saudi Arabia as part of the contingent of Moavineen. Their efforts showcased the increasing empowerment and recognition of Pakistani women in significant roles, contributing to a stronger representation of the nation in Hajj affairs.

A committed team of more than 137 doctors and paramedics provided quality medical services to pilgrims. The Ministry staff collaborated closely with Saudi authorities and hotel establishments to allocate accommodations that effectively meet the diverse requirements and preferences of the pilgrims. Their unwavering commitment, supported by personnel from departments like the Pakistan Army, police, and high-ranking government officers, played a crucial role in providing

comfort to pilgrims. Serving as Moavineen and Haram guides, they navigated the challenges of scorching heat, efficiently managing transportation, meals, and accommodation while offering comprehensive support to Pakistani pilgrims. Through their endeavours, pilgrims were able to embark on a profoundly significant pilgrimage journey. An impressive 63 per cent of the pilgrims experienced the advantages of the streamlined shuttle train service, while the remaining 37 per cent were transported to Mina, Muzdalifah, and Arafat using buses. This year, they efficiently handled transportation services for Pakistani pilgrims using a fleet of 360 buses. These buses provided uninterrupted and direct transportation to and from Masjid Al-Haram, allowing Hajj pilgrims to completely focus on fulfilling their sacred obligations.

Tourists urged to follow traffic rules in Murree

RAWALPINDI (APP): The tourists visiting Murree have been urged to strictly abide by the traffic rules to avoid traffic congestion and road mishaps at the hill station. According to a City Traffic Police (CTP) spokesperson, the department had finalised all the arrangements for the summer season to ensure the security of the visitors. He informed that the Rawalpindi City Traffic Officer Taimoor Khan had requested the tourists to observe traffic rules on the roads of Murree to avoid traffic mess and any untoward incidents during the summer season.

Special teams had been formed to facilitate the tourists and resolve their problems if any in Murree, he said adding that parking vehicles outside parking areas was prohibited. "There was a complete ban on illegal parking on the roads in Murree particularly at exit and entry points besides restrictions on cooking at the roadside."

The spokesperson informed that single and double parking was not being allowed on roads except at designated parking places. Motorcyclists without safety helmets were not being allowed to enter Murree, he added.

Several roads including Bank Road, GPO Chowk to Kashmir Point, Hall Road, Lalazar to Kashmir Point, View Fourth Road, View Fourth Road to GPO Chowk, Guldana Road, GPO Chowk to Guldana Chowk, Dilkusha Road, Imtiaz Shaheed Road to Lari Adda via Dilkusha Hotel, Cecil Road, Imtiaz Shaheed Road to Cart Road via Cecil Apartments, and Pindi Point had been declared one-way roads to facilitate the motorists, he said.

According to a district administration spokesperson, a main control room had been set up at Jinnah Hall to monitor the provision of facilities to tourists.

He urged the tourists to cooperate with traffic police so that the traffic mess could be avoided.

Motorists should avoid wrong parking on roads which would help ensure the smooth flow of traffic, he said.

The beautiful climate of Murree during summer attracts a large number of tourists so motorists face severe traffic congestion, he said adding that traffic moves even slower due to heavy traffic load.

He said the DC had advised the tourists to avoid wrong parking, speeding, and taking selfies in the middle of the roads.

World Hepatitis Day to be marked on July 28

ISLAMABAD (APP): World Hepatitis Day will be marked on July 28(Friday) across the globe including Pakistan to promote awareness of hepatitis, a disease that affects the liver. One way of preventing hepatitis is to get a vaccine against the disease before travelling. Organizations such as the United Nations and the World Hepatitis Alliance work with individuals and community groups to promote awareness raising campaigns worldwide about hepatitis. Information about World Hepatitis Day is usually distributed via social media, newspapers, posters, and through the WHO website.

Cabinet approves CERTs Rule 2023, says Amin

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for IT and Telecom Syed Amin ul Haque has said that move to strengthen the country's cybersecurity posture, the Federal Cabinet of Pakistan has given its approval to the Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) Rule 2023.

In a statement, the minister said that the decision comes after a thorough consultation process that involved various stakeholders, with the Ministry of IT and Telecommunication (MoITT) taking the lead in formulating the CERT Rules.

According to an official statement, under section 51, read with section 49 of the Prevention of Electronic Crime Act (PECA), 2016, and in compliance with the National Cyber Security Policy (NCSP), 2021, the Ministry of IT and Telecommunication (MoITT) as a designated organization of the Federal Government to deal with Cyber Security has formulated the CERT Rules in consultation with the concerned stakeholders.

The consultation session with the government bodies and regulatory authorities was started in August 2021. Subsequently, sector regulators carried out extensive consultations with their respective private entities.

IT Minister further said that CERT Rules - 2023 provides a legislative umbrella to handle ever-emerging cyber-security risks and vulnerabilities at the National, Sectoral, and Organizational levels by laying out a working mechanism in the form of technical support, operational facilities, and capacity-building services. "These Rules further provide a state-of-the-art proactive and integrated risk management process for identifying and prioritizing protective measures regarding cyber-security".

Federal Minister for IT and Telecom Syed Amin ul Haque said that a CERT

council will be established as a forum for a consultative and coordinating process to advise CERTs for the effective implementation of its functions and services.

The definitions and constituencies of National CERT, Government CERT, Critical Information Infrastructure CERT, Sectoral CERT, Federal CERT, and Provincial CERT are discussed separately, he added. The specific responsibilities, functions, and services of the National CERTs and Sectoral CERTs are also outlined in the rules.

Federal IT Minister said that as far as the impact on Cyber Security Landscape is concerned, CERTs at National and Sectoral Levels will enhance the overall cybersecurity posture and resilience at the national level.

CERTs are responsible for the protection against, detection of, and response to cybersecurity incidents, and will enhance a country's ability to manage cybersecurity incidents.

Talking about the function of the CERTs, Amin ul Haque further stated that National CERT will serve to build a knowledge base that supports the implementation of National Cyber Security Policy/strategy, as well as an approach for the protection of critical information infrastructures; supporting the building of national culture and ecosystem of cybersecurity, and related awareness raising initiatives for all segments of societies including children, youth, elders and women; supporting the development of related national cybersecurity platforms, such as Security Operation Centers, secure e-government services, national identity and access management frameworks; and further enabling Pakistan to develop and enhance its threat intelligence analysis, incident response and coordination capabilities at national as well as international level.

Water scarcity - another cartel in the making

ISLAMABAD (APP): The growing population and subsequent growth of residential settlement had put the capital's natural resources under severe stress with its wetlands, cleaner environment and water resource depleting gradually.

Once known for its serene evenings, open spaces, less congested population areas and healthy lifestyle, Islamabad in recent years, has gone through several transformations from road infrastructure to taller buildings and a large number of private housing societies developed in the suburbs. Due to the ill planning of the city masters, the Islamabad Capital Territory witnessed a massive population influx during the last two decades or so showing a 150 per cent increase in its population during the period 2008-2018.

This phenomenon not only polluted Capital's air and natural clean water streams but also exerted extreme pressure on groundwater with its table gone down from 80 to 100 feet two decades back to 250 to 300 feet presently.

As residents come across severe water shortages during summer, they are compelled to buy water from private operators through water tankers and these operators are now emerging as a cartel fleecing the citizens in the name of water provision in the absence of any declared tankers rates mechanism. "It is an apathy that we regularly pay water bills to our societies but they fail to meet our water needs. Therefore, we have to buy it from tanker owners who charge us as per their desire," said Adil Mahmood, a resident of Doctor's Town.

"We fail to understand why the authorities do not gauge this situation while according to approval to the owners for developing a housing society," he said. "It is unjust that on one side they charge for routine water supply and on the other sell us water in tankers."

The tube wells installed to pump out groundwater are often choked due to depleting water tables leaving the residents particularly in summer leaving at the mercy of the water tanker mafia who charge Rs 2000 to 4000 for each tanker and sometimes more if water is required urgently. Although the housing societies also provide cheaper water tankers yet they take 24 to 48 hours to reach one's residence. "Forget about society water tankers as they will arrive when you don't need them anymore," said Irshad Ahmed, a resident of the PWD colony. "The management of these societies should seriously think about a mechanism for water supply otherwise the situation would worsen with each passing year."

Many housing societies developed along Islamabad Expressway to cater for the needs of the populace migrating to the capital from other cities are facing serious challenges of water supply.

"We regularly supply water to our residents. Daily the water channels are opened in all sectors for a specific time," said an official of the Pakistan Town Housing Society. "But, since underground water resource is depleting, water supply could not be ensured for the whole day. Therefore, the residents have to use it prudently instead of wasting it in cars and floor washing," he said.

He said even during summer when water consumption increases, "we try to meet the needs of our residents. As far as delay in tankers supply, it occurs only when demand rises."

He further informed that at the time of developing society, the provision of all amenities is assessed as per the number of plots and future houses to be constructed. "But, once houses are constructed on all plots, almost 70 to 80 per cent of owners rent out a portion of their houses meaning

thereby that it doubles the number of families. This tendency exerts extra pressure on the amenities provision system."

There are multiple characters in this story. The District administration issues permission for hiring land to pump out water, and the owners install pumping stations and sell water to tanker owners who ferry it to residents. But what is lacking in this whole process is the pricing mechanism.

"We earn a nominal profit as we have to pay for water to the pumping station owner and for fuel and repair of our vehicles. If the fuel, vehicle parts and water price would increase, we would be helpless to charge more," said Zahid Mahmood, a tanker owner.

"Blaming us as an emerging cartel is unjust. Why we are into this business only because that societies and city managers fell short of meeting residents' water needs," he said. "As far as rate is concerned, it is market-based as if prices of all commodities will go up, so would the price of water."

The water pumping station owners have their own argument for increasing prices in view of rising power and fuel prices as well as every year's revision of land rent.

Now whatever the arguments of the parties, the situation demands from the city masters to devise a comprehensive strategy for meeting the future water needs of the Islamabad Capital Territory residents.

If the water resource continues to deplete at the present pace, the days are not far off that capital residents are made to face a Karachi-like situation.

Therefore, the residents have demanded to ensure that in future no housing society is issued NOC until it submits alternate water provision plans like the construction of reservoirs and rainwater harvesting instead of pumping out more and more water.



ISLAMABAD: CDA gardeners busy in work on greenbelt area at Rawal Dam Chowk in Federal Capital.

Children to be received vaccine

URUZGAN (Agencies): Public Health officials of Uruzgan said that anti-polio vaccination campaign kickoff in 6 districts of the province. The provincial head of Public Health Department of Uruzgan Dr. Bakht Mohammad Mustafa said that 202,000 children under the age of 5 will be vaccinated in the center and 6 districts of the province. This must be noted that some time back, 37 thousand people were received anti-coronavirus vaccine in this province.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Zil-Hajj 28, 1444 — Sunday, July 17, 2023

Traffic accident kills 2

SAMANGAN (Agencies): In a traffic accident, two people were killed and 13 others were injured in the Zoher Abi area, at the center of Samangan province. The provincial head of traffic of Samangan Police Command told BNA reporter: At around 6:30 p.m. On Saturday, a 580-passenger bus, which was moving towards Kabul, collided with a motorcycle and due to high speed turned off the road and hit a garden.

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

Kabul delegates meet with envoys of several countries in Indonesia

KABUL (TOLOnews): A delegation of the Islamic Emirate led by Maghfurullah Shahab, Deputy Director of the First Political Directorate of the Foreign Ministry, met with chargé d'affaires and ambassadors of several countries during a trip to Indonesia. Hafiz Zia Ahmad Takal, the deputy spokesman for the Foreign Ministry, said the ambassadors of Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Singapore highlighted the importance of strengthening ties with the Islamic Emirate at the meeting. "The representatives of the mentioned countries praised the achievements of the Islamic Emirate in the last two years and emphasized bilateral relations and called for their strengthening for the benefit of the two peoples of the two

countries," Takal added. "The trips of the delegation of the Islamic Emirate are useful, even if they are to Indonesia or anywhere in the world, especially in this situation where Afghanistan is having economic difficulties and is isolated internationally and travel bans are imposed on the Taliban," said Aziz Marij, a political analyst. According to some analysts, maintaining good ties with nations all over the world is a positive step for the Islamic Emirate's interactions with the international community. "The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan must strengthen its political and diplomatic ties with the countries in the region in order for the political interaction between the Islamic Emirate and the interna-

tional community to occur," said Ahmad Khan Andar, an international relations expert. "The effect of establishing good relations between the Islamic Emirate and the countries of the region will not only be positive on Afghanistan, but it will have a positive effect on the entire region," said Wahid Faqiri, another international relations expert. The officials of the Islamic Emirate have always said that they want official and diplomatic relations with all countries, including neighboring countries. Following the re-establishment of the Islamic Emirate in Afghanistan, this is the first time a delegation of Islamic Emirate officials is visiting Indonesia.

Kunduz: Rival tribes end 15-year enmity

KUNDUZ CITY (Pajhwok): Two rival tribes have reconciled, ending their 15 years old enmity as a result of mediation by tribal elders in northern Kunduz province. Maulvi Ehsanullah Saqib, director of borders and tribal affairs, told Pajhwok Afghan News the feud had surfaced between the two tribes in the Aliabad district of the province. "Four people had been killed from both sides, but, Alhamdulillah, the hostilities ended with mediation from elders and religious scholars," he commented. According to Saqib, they plan to set up a council in compliance with directives from the Ministry of Borders and Tribal Affairs to end such feuds. Meanwhile, tribal elders and influential figures who mediated between the two sides say they are expanding their reconciliation efforts.

They want the government to help them in resolving disputes and putting an end to enmities. Agha Mir Naseri, a tribal elder, said: "If the government cooperates with us, we will expand our work to deal with similar cases in other provinces. "We have been working to promote reconciliation without any privileges. Our demand is the creation of a committee by the government to resolve people's disputes."

The reconciling parties say they had been living in constant fear and facing different challenges in addition to losing family members over the past 15 years. Syed Mohammad, one of the parties to this conflict, says: "Now we have come to realize the benefits of living in peace. Our feud lasted 15 years. Alhamdulillah, now we will live in a safe environment." Najmuddin, another person involved in the enmity, also expressed his happiness over reconciliation between the tribes. The Border and Tribal Affairs Department said dozens of enmities, legal and criminal cases had been resolved through jirgas after the Islamic Emirate's takeover.

Russia invites Acting FM to upcoming Moscow format on Afghanistan



KABUL (Khaama Press): Ambassador Zhirnov invited Afghanistan's acting Foreign Minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, to participate in the upcoming meeting of the Moscow format on Afghanistan. According to a statement from the Ministry, the Russian envoy in Kabul briefed Muttaqi on the upcoming Moscow format meeting on Afghanistan. The Moscow format is one of many forums on

Afghanistan, which started before the Taliban took control of Kabul, and the next meeting is scheduled to be held in October. For his part, Muttaqi thanked Russian Ambassador for the invitation and asked facilitation of Russian visas for Afghanistan nationals so that business people could travel to the country without any concerns. The Moscow Format Consultation is a regional platform in Afghanistan; it

was established in 2017 and brought together the special envoys of Russia, Afghanistan, India, Iran, China, and Pakistan. Its duties include establishing peace, ensuring regional security, and assisting in political reconciliation between the Taliban and the Kabul administration, which was later supported by the international community. Due to its national interests and concerns in Afghanistan, particularly concerning two crucial problems, Moscow assumed the initiative in this process.

The first concern was the possible dangers posed by the escalating unrest, violence, and extremism in Afghanistan and the rest of Central Asia. Critics also say that Afghan representatives of human rights and women's rights advocates have been included in this meeting to express the people's aspirations.

36 areas identified as being contaminated with mines



KABUL (Agencies): The CEO of UK-based HALO Trust, which works to clear landmines around the world, met with Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) officials in Kabul on Saturday to discuss the issue of clearing the deadly debris of war. The NGO has over 8,500 staff in 24 countries and has worked in Afghanistan since 1988. Mohammad Abbas Akhund, the Minister of State for Disaster Management of the Islamic Emirate

of Afghanistan (IEA), met with HALO's CEO James Cowan and called for the organization to help clear the country of mines. Cowan in turn said the organization was involved in clearing mines without any security issues. The ministry said in a statement that according to Nuruddin Rustamkhail, the head of mine clearance coordination of the ministry, 36 areas in Kabul have been identified as being contaminated with mines and unexploded ord-

nance. The statement noted that given Kabul's high population, clearing these areas was "urgent" and needs to be given priority. In the "National Survey, Vulnerable and Mine Contaminated Areas" project, which is being conducted across the country, the first and second phases have been completed, and the third phase has remained half-finished due to the lack of funds. The IEA has however asked HALO for help in this respect.

Five people killed, four injured in Afghanistan last week

KABUL (Pajhwok): Islamabad last week said it would continue interacting with Kabul to address 'common concerns' and Uzbekistan expressed its desire to establish positive relations with Afghanistan. Also last week, a US lawmaker accused the Islamic Emirate of selling weapons the US military left behind while leaving the country to US adversaries, a claim rejected by Islamic Emirate spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid as untrue.

Casualties Last week, five people were killed and four others were injured in separate incidents of violence across the country. According to reports, two children were killed and four others were injured when unexploded ordnances went off in Kapisa and Nangarhar provinces. A 13-year-old girl's body was found in Jawzjan and a tribal leader shot his son dead in Baghlan. A notorious robber was killed in a shootout in Kabul city. In the previous week, 16 people were killed and 10 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.

Interaction with Afghanistan Last week, Islamabad urged Kabul to honor its promise that its soil will not be used for terrorism against Pakistan. The Afghan caretaker government, on the other

hand, has repeatedly said it would not allow the use of Afghan soil against anyone. Foreign Office spokeswoman Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said on Thursday that Pakistan was committed to engage with Afghanistan on all aspects of cooperation and concern, including issues relating to terror threats. Meanwhile, the Pakistan Army chief expressed serious concerns over "the safe havens and liberty of action available" to TTP in Afghanistan. But the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has repeatedly said it will not allow the use of Afghan soil against anyone. On Friday, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Gen. Syed Asim Munir visited the Quetta Garrison, where he was briefed on recent terrorist attacks in Zhob and Sui. "The Armed Forces of Pakistan have serious concerns on the safe havens and liberty of action available to Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan in Afghanistan," the military's media wing said.

The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) statement comes two days after 12 soldiers lost their lives in militant attacks in Zhob and Sui. "It is expected the interim Afghan government would not allow the use of its soil to perpetrate terror against any country, in the real sense and in line with its commitments made in the Doha Agreement," it said. Sohail Shaheen, the caretaker government's political office head in Doha, exchanged views with British charge d'aff-

aires Robert C Dickson on the prevailing situation in Afghanistan. Dickson said Doha served as an important center of interaction with Afghanistan. Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi met with Norwegian Chargé d'Affaires to Afghanistan Paul Bakken. Muttaqi said despite many achievements, the international community was yet to come forward for proper interaction with Afghanistan. Conversely, he said, the world was mounting pressure on the Islamic Emirate, harming the environment of trust building. Uzbekistan's special representative for Afghanistan Ismatulla Ergashov held a meeting Balkh governor Mohammad Yusuf Wafa, saying his country desired positive bilateral relations with Afghanistan.

Mujahid: US weapons sale untrue US House of Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaul had accused the Islamic Emirate of selling weapons and equipment the US forces left behind in Afghanistan to Washington's adversaries like Iran and the Palestinians against Israel. However, Mujahid said the "allegations" were untrue and they had stored all weapons and equipment left behind by the foreign forces at the country's warehouses. He said such propaganda was being carried out by those who could not tolerate the ongoing stability in Afghanistan.

Girls' education Nobel prize winner Malala Yousafzai has said she never expected "complete reversal" of education and rights for women in Afghanistan under the new rulers. "Ten years ago, millions of Afghan girls were going to school," she told an audience at the United Nations House in Abuja, Nigeria. "One in three young women were enrolled in university. And now? Afghanistan is the only country in the world to ban girls and women from seeking education." "Even as a teenager, I understood that progress could be slow - but I never expected to witness a complete reversal, an entire country of girls locked out of school, trapped in their homes and losing hope." Referring to her speech, Thomas West, the US special representative for Afghanistan, said the women and girls in Afghanistan deserve full access to education to realize their potential. "On #MalalaDay, we recognize advocacy for education rights. Afghan women and girls are a tremendous asset to the future of Afghanistan and deserve full access to education to realize their potential," he said in a tweet. The Islamic Emirate has suspended girls' higher and university education, but has said the decision is not permanent and efforts are underway to find a solution.

Continuity of aid The European Union donated 100 tons of medical supplies and medicines to Afghanistan and the Netherlands contributed more than 5.7 million euros to help poor families in remote areas of Afghanistan.

On eve of Muharram, residents complain of restrictions

KABUL (TOLOnews): On the eve of the month of Muharram, several mourners in Kabul expressed concerns with the Islamic Emirate's restrictions on some of their activities. The Islamic Emirate's security agencies have verbally ordered that raising flags, placing refreshment stands by the side of the road, and touring the city in convoys are all banned, according to the mourners. They asked the Islamic Emirate officials to remove these restrictions. "We ask the government of the Islamic Emirate to join us in mourning the great-grandson of the Messenger of Allah," said Abdullah, a resident of Kabul. "They said that in the west of Kabul out of the 20 Takiakhanas, they should

hold the mourning ceremony in two Takiakhanas in order to ensure security and that everyone should come to these two Takiakhanas," said Sayed Hashem, a resident of Kabul. However, the Kabul Security Command's spokesperson, Khalid Zadran, said that in order to ensure the mourners' safety, they're required to mourn in the Takiakhana (the place where mourning ceremony is held). Zadran announced the

creation of a joint committee of security institutions to ensure the security of the Muharram mourners. "Nothing has been talked about with us so far about lowering the number of Takiakhanas. If something happens, we'll let you know about it. There are some limitations, such as keeping their ceremonies in the Takiakhanas and not going to the market," Zadran noted. The Ministry of Vice and Virtue said that these

restrictions have nothing to do with religious issues. "There is now religious freedom in Afghanistan. There are Sikhs and Hindus who are non-Muslims and have religious freedom. Those who are Muslim, whether Shiite or Sunni, there is no problem for them," said Akif Mahajir, the spokesman. This comes as the Ashura ceremony is held every year with special security measures in Kabul and some provinces of the country.

Govt urges to allow Swedish operations

KABUL (TOLOnews): Disabled people in Balkh called for a review of the decision of the interim government to halt activities of the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan. Sayed M. Yazdan, a disabled person, told TOLOnews that the suspension of the Swedish Committee activities will affect disabled people in the country. "The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan helps 7 categories of people with disabilities. Closing it (Swedish Committee for Afghanistan) will affect all aspects of the society," he said. "These organizations have launched beneficial programs to help disabled people over the past four decades," said Alif Khan, a member of the disability rights network.

The Islamic Emirate on Tuesday suspended all Swedish activities in Afghanistan in reaction to a Swedish citizen burning the Quran. Meanwhile, the head of the department of Martyrs and Disabled Affairs in Balkh, Jan Mohammad Hekmat, said that they will adhere to the decision of the Islamic Emirate. "We ensure all the disabled people and say not to worry. We will follow up everything which is ordered," he said. Earlier, an Iraq-born Swedish citizen tore a copy of the Quran and lit it on fire outside the Stockholm Central Mosque.

Herat's historical sites attract over 4,000 tourists



HERAT (Agencies): Local officials in Herat say that in the last three months, more than 4,000 tourists have visited historical sites and places of interest in the province. According to officials, during this period, almost two hundred foreign tourists have visited Herat - mostly from Europe, America and from Asia. The most recent was a group of 14 people from Europe. They said they were excited to visit Afghanistan and hoped to see other provinces. They said Herat's historical sites were of particular interest. "Afghanistan is really a wonderful country, I really like the people of this country and each of them is very kind, we see excitement on the roads and life is going on. We have already visited Bamiyan, Mazar-e-Sharif and Kabul," said Andrea, a Serbian. "I have heard many things about Afghanistan, especially about the nature, culture and people of this country, but I search a lot to know more about Afghanistan, here in Herat I have the Grand Mosque, I

saw this historical castle and the traditional tile making industry and I am very excited to see the remaining parts of this city as well," said Yavana, another Serbian. Local officials say tourism is on the rise in the country, by both domestic and foreign tourists. "Over the last three months, there have been 4,102 tourists, including domestic and foreign tourists, of which 159 were foreign tourists who came from different countries to Herat," said Rahmatullah Mohammadi, head of tourism in Herat. The Citadel of Herat or Qal'a-ye Ikhtiyar al-Din, Herat's Grand Mosque, traditional tile making industry and dozens of other places of interest are the main attractions in Herat. "We are fortunate that we had tourists from neighboring countries and Europe, Asia and America who visited different areas. You saw that even from Serbia, Slovenia, Austria, Croatia and some other countries," said Abdul Jabar Noorzai, General Manager of Herat Museum.

In Herat, there are more than 700 historical sites, in addition traditional industries found throughout the city - which are key drawcards among foreign visitors. Domestic tourism to Nangarhar has meanwhile also increased substantially as people flock to the historic palace of Siraj Al-Amart in Jalalabad. Visitors have described this palace as a good place for recreation and tourism, but say the authorities need to complete the work on a museum in the gardens as soon as possible so as to attract more tourists. The gardens, which have a long history, have attracted the attention of tourists from different provinces of the country. Nangarhar Department of Information and Culture officials say that almost 80 percent of work on the museum has been completed and that it will open soon. The palace is an ancient structure that was built during the reign of Shah Amanullah Khan. It has great cultural and historical significance for the people of Afghanistan.

SC to review FSC's decision on Transgender Act

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The decision of the Federal Sharia Court to invalidate the Transgender Act made to protect the rights of transgender women was challenged in the Supreme Court.

The transgender community and civil society has challenged the decision of the Federal Sharia Court about the rights of transgenders in the Supreme Court.

The Federal Sharia Court declared the provisions related to gender identity and inheritance rights to be in conflict with Sharia law.

Earlier, the Federal Shariah Court had declared the Transgender Act to as null

and void. The court declared some provisions of the Act against Sharia.

Director of Transgender Rights Nayab Ali and Saram Imran have moved an application in the Supreme Court in this regard. The petition pleaded the Federal Shariah Court denied the identity rights of an entire community and the Supreme Court should terminate the decision of the Federal Shariah Court.

The petitioner argued that the legislation represented the consensus of the community, that the law was enacted by elected representatives, that the Federal Sharia Court exceeded its jurisdiction.

Khattak priority is forming own party

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Former federal minister Pervaiz Khattak has stressed that he has parted ways with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf.

After being ousted from the party, the former chief minister appears to have prepared a plan for his political future.

During an informal conversation with the media, Khattak said he could not continue his political career under the banner of the PTI anymore. He also announced that his first priority was the establishment of his own political party.

For this purpose, he claimed, consultations were underway with political associates as was work on the documentation. Khattak has claimed that he has the support of 35 MPAs and 10 MNAs. "If the formation of a new political party is not possible, then I can announce joining any party," the former defence minister stated.

Furthermore, Khattak distanced himself from any negative statements regarding PTI Chairman Imran Khan that have allegedly been attributed to him. "I have nothing to do with the statements attributed to me against Imran Khan," he stressed. Khattak insisted that he respected the former premier yesterday, and did so today as well.

PTI terminates basic membership of 6 more members

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf has terminated the basic membership of six more members. The PTI terminated the basic membership of Haji Shaukat Ali, Mujahid Maitla, Nadia Aziz, Salim Briar, Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah and Usman Tarakai from the party.

An official notification was issued with the signature of PTI Secretary General Omar Ayub Khan.

According to the notification, the members were informed that their press conferences were circulated and widely broadcasted on various media forums in which they announced to quit the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf. "Therefore, the PTI hereby terminates your basic membership of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf with immediate effect. You are directed to refrain from using the party's name, designation and/or membership in any manner whatsoever. In case of violation, the party will take legal action against you," the notice concluded.

Meanwhile, a show-cause notice was issued to the PTI representatives for deviating from the party policy during the Gilgit-Baltistan election. Show cause notices were issued to GB MLA Fateh Ullah Khan and Hashmat Ullah Khan.

The party has notified to them that they voted against the decision of the party and found involved in the conspiracy against the PTI during the election in Gilgit-Baltistan. The party asked them to submit an explanation in writing within three days. If the notice is not answered or is unsatisfactory, further action will be taken as per the party policy and rules, the notice warned them. Separately, Barrister Gohar Ali Khan has been appointed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chief Election Commissioner.



TEHRAN: COAS General Syed Asim Munir called on President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahain.

PM urges women to ramp up role in economic progress

SIALKOT (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday urged women to come forward and ramp up their vital roles in different fields of life and make contributions to the progress of the economy. Addressing a ceremony to distribute laptops under PM's Youth Laptop Scheme 2023 at Government College Women University here, he said Rs 5 billion were allocated for projects related to the empowerment of women. "No nation can make progress if women are not made productive part of society."

He said in the past his government had spent a substantial amount on the medical education of female students and the investment in women's education would continue. He said next month his government would complete its tenure and a caretaker government would be formed.

If people would give chance to them in the next election, our government would bring revolution in the field of education and a large number of students would be given laptops, he remarked.

He said the laptops were given as recognition of the hard work and talent of the students. The laptops were distributed on the basis of merit in the past as well, he added.

As Khadim e Aala Punjab, he said he always wanted to share the resources with other provinces as the progress and prosperity of the country depended upon shared development. He said 100,000 laptops had already been distributed while in the current year, another 100,000 laptops would be awarded.

The people should decide in the general elections after evaluating what had happened in the country in the last five years, he asserted.

He thanked Finance Minister Ishaq Dar for ensuring the allocation of funds for the import of laptops for students. He said students would be given more laptops and scholarships and laboratories and research institutes would be set up in educational institutions. Shehbaz Sharif said Muslims were left behind in different fields of education while the West moved ahead and it was time for reflection and action in the right direction. He called on students to work hard and show humbleness and Allah will help them in their efforts.

He said after the financial assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the government had a cushion and it decreased petrol prices on Saturday.

Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif said that the dynamic and active role of the prime minister during the past fifteen months was extraordinary. Chairman Higher Education Commission, Dr Mukhtar Ahmed, in his remarks, said that HEC had actively played its part in the distribution of about one million laptops among the students on merit.

He said the females' enrollment in universities had increased by more than 48 per cent and the prime minister's laptop scheme was the most encouraging initiative. Earlier, Punjab police personnel presented a guard of honour to the students and teachers as a token of respect.

Govt to resolve issues of exporters: PM: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday directed the formulation of a policy for the establishment of one-window facilitation centers for resolving issues of exporters. He was talking to a delegation comprising members of Parliament and office bearers of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) here.

The delegation paid tribute to the prime minister on the final approval of the agreement with the International Monetary Fund and the revival of the country's economy.

The prime minister thanked members of the delegation for standing shoulder to shoulder during the hard decisions taken in the interest of the country. The PM was briefed about the issues faced by the chamber.

He directed the administration in Sialkot for the construction of highways and their maintenance and restoration. Minister for Defence Khawaja Asif, Advisor to Prime Minister Ahd Cheema, Special Assistants Jehanzeb Khan, Tariq Bajwa, Rana Shameem Ahmed Khan, former member National Assembly Nielson Azeem, former members provincial assembly Arshad Warraich, Rana Liaquat, Arif Iqbal, Rana Afzaal, Abdul Sattar, Chaudhry Ikram Mansha But, Mrs Shehbaz Gulnar, Zeeshan Rafiq, President Pakistan Muslim League (N) Sialkot Muhammad Rafique Mughal, and former chairman Sialkot Airport Khawaja Maqsood Akhtar attended the meeting.

Pakistan urges unified action to assist Asian-Pacific nations deal with climate-induced disasters

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Pakistan has called for a coordinated effort to help the vulnerable nations of the Asia-Pacific region confront many climate change-related challenges like floods, heat waves, water shortages and melting glaciers.

"Together, we can build a world where climate action and sustainable development go hand in hand, leaving no one behind," Romina Khurshid Alam, Special Assistant to the prime minister, told a U.N. conference on Sunday. Speaking at the 4th Global Conference on Strengthening Synergies Between the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, she underscored the need for knowledge sharing and utilization of collective experiences and expertise to chart a path toward a consortium that focuses on disaster risk reduction strategies for the Asia-Pacific region.

Ms. Alam, who is and convener of the National Parliamentary Taskforce on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), introduced herself as "representing the Parliament of Pakistan" at the conference which is a part of the UN Economic

and Social Council (ECOSOC)'s High-Level Political Forum.

"I bring your attention to the Resolution I recently presented in the National Assembly to appreciate the contributions of the UN and its agencies that use their expertise and resources to help Pakistan in its fight against climate change. The Resolution was passed unanimously by the members of the August Forum on 23rd June 2023," the Pakistani delegate told the conference.

Pakistan, she said, recognizes the critical importance of aligning its efforts with the Paris Agreement to the temperatures limited to 1.5 degrees and the 2030 UN Development Agenda. The country, she said, faces many challenges as 1/3rd of its land found itself underwater as a result of the floods of 2022 which were a wake-up call to the world on the threats of climate change. The floods affected 33 million people, while more than 1,700 lives were lost, Ms. Alam said adding that damages and losses have been calculated at more than Rs. 6.4 trillion. Pakistan, she pointed out, contributes less than 1% of the global greenhouse

gases, "Even though these challenges threaten the economic prosperity of our country, the well-being of our people, and the security of our future generations, Pakistan is committed to the SDGs," the Pakistan delegate said.

"Our government has implemented policies and strategies, focusing on renewable energy. We have also placed great emphasis on reducing poverty, promoting quality education, gender equality, and inclusive economic growth."

Pakistan, she said, firmly believes that empowering local governments, engaging civil society, and mobilizing private sector partnerships are essential in driving transformative change. "Our task force has been working tirelessly to improve legislation and enhance accountability. We are committed to ensuring that Pakistan plays an active role in the global discourse on climate change and sustainable development." In conclusion, Ms. Alam said, "let us leave here with a renewed determination to strengthen the synergies between the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda, knowing that our actions today will shape the future we leave for generations to come."

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Iran relaunches police patrols against veil violations

TEHRAN (Agencies): Iranian police on Sunday relaunch patrols to catch the increasing number of women leaving their hair uncovered in public in defiance of a strict dress code, state media reported.

The report comes exactly 10 months after the September 16 death in custody of Mahsa Amini, 22, triggered nationwide protests and saw morality police largely disappear from the streets, while more and more women flouted the law.

Amini, an Iranian-Kurd, had been arrested by morality police for allegedly violating the dress code, which requires women to cover their head and neck in public. While the morality police withdrew, authorities have taken other measures to enforce the law. These included the closure of businesses whose staff do not conform to the rules, and installing cameras in

public places to track down offenders. But beginning on Sunday, the traditional approach is being tried again, state media said.

"The police will launch car and foot patrols to warn, take legal measures, and refer to the judiciary those who disobey police orders and disregard consequences of dressing against the norms," the official IRNA news agency quoted police spokesman Saeed Montazer Alamehdi as saying. Online images have shown female police officers, clad in all-black chadors, berating and arresting women whose heads were uncovered.

AFP could not independently verify the authenticity of the images. The dress code has been in place since the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Offenders face fines or prison terms of up to two months. But Iran's reformist newspaper

Shargh reported on Sunday that four women have received additional punishment including attending "psychological classes", and driving bans.

During the months of protest, which Tehran generally labelled as foreign-instigated "riots", thousands of Iranians were arrested and hundreds killed including dozens of security personnel.

Iran's conservatives, who dominate the country's parliament and leadership, have passionately defended the dress code but, with many Iranians demanding change, in May the judiciary and the government proposed a "Support for the Culture of Hijab and Chastity" bill, which sparked heated debate within the country. The text proposes increased fines for "any person removing their veil in public places or on the internet" but withdraws the threat of a prison sentence.

Heavy rains, flooding leave 37 dead in South Korea

CHEONGJU (AFP/APP): Rescuers battled on Sunday to reach people trapped in a flooded tunnel in South Korea, where at least 37 people have died and nine are missing after heavy rains caused flooding and landslides.

South Korea is at the peak of its summer monsoon season, and there has been heavy rainfall for the last four days, causing a major dam to overflow. The interior ministry reported that 37 people were killed and another nine were missing nationwide in the heavy downpours, mostly buried by landslides or after falling into a flooded reservoir.

Hundreds of rescue workers were still struggling to reach more than 10 cars and an unknown number of people trapped in a 430-metre (1,410-foot) underground tunnel in Cheongju, North Chungcheong province, the ministry said.

When AFP arrived at the site Sunday, rescue workers were trying to drain the tunnel to reach victims, but the water still appeared to be too deep, hampering search efforts.

The tunnel was inundated on Saturday morning after floodwaters swept in too quickly for the vehicles

inside to escape, according to the Yonhap news agency.

Five people were rescued from a bus in the tunnel Saturday, and nine bodies have so far been pulled from the site, with divers working around the clock searching for more victims, the interior ministry said.

The police have received missing person reports for 11 people believed to be in the tunnel, but a final official toll has not yet been provided, as it is unclear how many people were in each car, Yonhap reported.

"I have no hope but I can't leave," a parent of one of those missing in the tunnel told Yonhap.

"My heart wrenches thinking how painful it must have been for my son in the cold water."

Images broadcast on local television showed a torrential stream of water from a nearby river that had burst its banks flooding into the tunnel, as rescue workers struggled to use boats to get to people inside. South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, who is currently on an overseas trip, held an emergency meeting with his aides on the government's response, his office said.

Earlier, he ordered Prime Minister Han Duck-soo to mobilise all available resources to minimise casualties.

The majority of the casualties -- including 19 of the dead and eight of the missing -- were from North Gyeongsang province, and were largely due to massive landslides in the mountainous area that engulfed houses with people inside. Some of the people who have been reported missing were swept away when a river overflowed in the province, the interior ministry said, and more than 1,500 people have been unable to return after evacuating from their homes.

The Korea Meteorological Administration forecast more heavy rain through Wednesday, and urged the public to "refrain from going out". South Korea is regularly hit by flooding during the summer monsoon period, but the country is typically well-prepared and the death toll is usually relatively low. Scientists say climate change has made weather events around the world more extreme and more frequent. South Korea endured record-breaking rains and flooding last year, which left more than 11 people dead.

China, Russia to start joint air and sea drill in Sea of Japan

BEIJING (Reuters): A Chinese naval flotilla set off on Sunday to join Russian naval and air forces in the Sea of Japan in an exercise aimed at "safeguarding the security of strategic waterways", according to China's defence ministry. Codenamed "Northern/Interaction-2023", the drill marks enhanced military cooperation between China and Russia since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine and is taking place as Beijing continues to rebuff U.S. calls to resume military communication.

The Chinese flotilla comprised of five warships and four ship-borne helicopters, left the eastern port of Qingdao and will rendezvous with Russian forces in a "predetermined area", the ministry said on its official

WeChat account on Sunday.

On Saturday, the ministry said Russian naval and air forces would participate in the drill taking place in the Sea of Japan.

This would be the first time both Russian forces take part in the drill, state newspaper Global Times cited military observers as saying.

Gromkiy and Soversheniy, two Russian warships taking part in the Sea of Japan drill, had earlier this month conducted separate training with the Chinese navy in Shanghai on formation movements, communication and sea rescues.

Before making port at the financial hub of Shanghai, the same ships had sailed passed Taiwan and Japan, prompting both Taipei and Tokyo to

monitor the Russian warships.

Days before Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping declared a "no limits" partnership they said was aimed at countering the influence of the United States. One notable area of the partnership is military cooperation.

When China's Defence Minister Li Shangfu met with the head of the Russian navy, Admiral Nikolai Yevmenov, in Beijing this month, both sides reiterated pledges to strengthen military ties. Chinese military Chief of Joint Staff Liu Zhenli and Russia's top soldier, Chief of General Staff Valery Gerasimov made the same pledge during a video call in June.

Record heatwaves sweep the world, from US to Japan via Europe

ROME (AFP/APP): Tens of millions were battling dangerously high temperatures in the United States on Saturday as record heat forecasts hung over Europe and Japan, in the latest example of the threat from global warming.

A powerful heatwave stretching from California to Texas was expected to peak as the US National Weather Service warned of an "extremely hot and dangerous weekend".

Daytime highs were forecast to range between 10 and 20 degrees Fahrenheit above normal in the west. In Arizona, one of the hardest-hit states, residents face a daily endurance marathon against the sun.

State capital Phoenix recorded 16 straight days above 109F (43 degrees Celsius), with temperatures hitting 111F on Saturday en route to an expected 115F.

California's Death Valley, one of the hottest places on Earth, is also likely to register new peaks on Sunday, with the mercury possibly rising to 130F (54C).

Temperatures had already reached 48C by midday on Saturday and even overnight lows could exceed 38C.

Authorities have been sounding the alarm, advising people to avoid outdoor activities in the daytime and to be wary of dehydration.

At a construction site outside

Houston, Texas, a 28-year-old worker who gave his name only as Juan helped complete a wall in the blazing heat.

"Just when I take a drink of water, I get dizzy. I want to vomit because of the heat," he told AFP.

The Las Vegas weather service warned that assuming high temperatures naturally come with the area's desert climate was "a DANGEROUS mindset! This heatwave is NOT typical desert heat". Southern California is fighting numerous wildfires, including one in Riverside County that has burned more than 3,000 acres (1,214 hectares) and prompted evacuation orders. Further north, the Canadian government reported that wildfires had burned a record-breaking 10 million hectares this year, with more damage expected as the summer drags on.

In Europe, Italy faces weekend predictions of historic highs with the health ministry issuing a red alert for 16 cities including Rome, Bologna and Florence.

The weather centre warned Italians to prepare for "the most intense heatwave of the summer and also one of the most intense of all time".

The thermometer is likely to hit 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) in Rome by Monday and even 43C on Tuesday, smashing the record of 40.5C set in August 2007.

The islands of Sicily and Sardinia could wilt under temperatures as high as 48C, the European Space Agency warned -- "potentially the hottest temperatures ever recorded in Europe".

The Athens Acropolis, one of Greece's top tourist attractions, will on Sunday close during the hottest hours for the third day running.

In France, high temperatures and resulting drought are posing a threat to the farming industry, earning Agriculture Minister Marc Fesneau criticism from climatologists on Saturday for having brushed aside conditions as "normal enough for summer". This June was the second-hottest on record in France, according to the national weather agency, and several areas of the country have been under a heatwave alert since Tuesday. There is little reprieve ahead for Spain, as its meteorological agency warned Saturday that a new heatwave Monday through Wednesday will bring temperatures above 40C to the Canary Islands and the southern Andalusia region.

Parts of eastern Japan are also expected to reach 38 to 39C on Sunday and Monday, with the meteorological agency warning temperatures could hit previous records.

Relentless monsoon rains have reportedly killed at least 90 people in northern India, after burning heat.