

PM to attend SCO summit
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif will participate in the 23rd Meeting of SCO Council of Heads of State (CHS) being held in video conference format on July 4, 2023. The invitation to the prime minister to attend the SCO-CHS was extended by the Prime Minister of India in his capacity as the current Chair of the SCO, according to a PM Office statement.

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PARACHINAR: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif interacting with soldiers on the occasion of Eidul Azha in Kurram.

Pak-India exchange list of prisoners

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Pakistan and India on Saturday exchanged lists of prisoners in each other's custody through diplomatic channels in pursuance of an agreement signed between both countries.

The list was officially handed over to a representative of the Indian High Commission in Islamabad at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Simultaneously, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs also handed over the list of Pakistani prisoners in Indian custody to the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi. "Consistent with the provisions of the 2008 Agreement on Consular Access, the Government of Pakistan today handed over a list of 308 Indian prisoners in Pakistan (42 civilian

prisoners and 266 fishermen) to the High Commission of India in Islamabad," a statement issued in this regard by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs notified.

Moreover, the statement added: "The Government of India handed over the list of Pakistani prisoners in Indian jails to Pakistan High Commission, New Delhi. "According to the list, there are a total of 417 Pakistanis in Indian jails (343 civilian prisoners and 74 fishermen)." The statement further urged India to release Pakistani prisoners who have completed their sentences.

"The Government of India has been urged to release and repatriate all those Pakistani civilian prisoners and fishermen,

who have completed their respective sentence and their national status stands confirmed," the statement said. Both countries also exchanged the list of prisoners in each other's custody in pursuance of the Consular Access Agreement of 2008. The countries share lists twice a year — January 1 and July 1.

Earlier this year, the Pakistan government shared with the Indian High Commission in Islamabad a list of 705 Indian prisoners detained in Pakistan, including 51 civilian prisoners and 654 fishermen. Meanwhile, the Indian government shared a list of 434 Pakistani prisoners in India, including 339 civilian prisoners and 95 fishermen.

Six terrorists killed in operations

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Six terrorists have been sent to hell as a result of successful operations conducted by the security forces in Tank and North Waziristan District on Friday.

"On night 29/30 June 2023, a fire exchange took place between own troops and terrorists in general area Manza, Tank District. Own troops effectively engaged the terrorists' location. Resultantly, 3 terrorists were sent to hell. Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the killed terrorists," said an ISPR press release here.

In another fierce encounter between own troops and terrorists in general area Razmak, North Waziristan District, three more terrorists were sent to hell. The killed terrorists remained actively involved in terrorist activities against security forces as well as killing of innocent citizens. Sanitization of the area is being carried out to eliminate any other terrorists found in the area. Locals of the area appreciated the operation and expressed their full support to eliminate the menace of terrorism.

Govt jacks up levy on petrol

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The government Saturday decided to jack up the petroleum development levy (PDL) on petrol from Rs50 to Rs55 per litre following a \$3 billion staff-level agreement signed with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) a day earlier.

The PDL on petrol has been imposed from the start of the new fiscal year, ie July 1 (today). Moreover, the ministry said there would be no increase in the development levy on high-speed diesel (HSD), which is Rs50 per litre.

A day earlier, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar announced that diesel prices had been increased by Rs7.50 for the next fortnight; however, he said petrol prices would remain the same. "There has been no increase in the price of petrol," said Dar in a late-night press conference. The finance czar also shared that the new diesel price will be effective from July 1.

According to media, the government had sought powers for amendment of the Petroleum Products (Petroleum Levy) Ordinance, 1961 (XXV of 1961) in the Fifth Schedule, in column (1) through the Finance Act 2023-24, which empowers it to hike the petroleum levy. Earlier, it required approval of parliament to fix the maximum limit of petroleum levy.

Execution of Economic Revival Plan Sacrifice by elite inevitable to say goodbye to IMF: PM

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said dedicated efforts by all the state institutions to execute the Economic Revival Plan and sacrifice by the elite class were inevitable to ensure that the latest IMF programme signed by the government was the last one.

"(With the signing of stand-by agreement) The risk of Pakistan's default has been averted... This is not a moment of pride but a moment of thought as nations never progress on the basis of loans... This is not a way to live a life," the prime minister told the media in a press conference. Accompanied by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, Information Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb and Punjab Governor Balighur Rehman, he said the situation necessitated the sacrifice by the elite class, not the common man who had already lost the purchasing power.

"The people should pray that this is the last IMF loan and Pakistan will not have to go back to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) again," he said after he witnessed the signing of the \$3 billion stand-by agreement with the Fund. Citing the success of Turkey and a neighbouring country to get rid of the IMF loans, the prime minister said Pakistan was rich with immense resources, and the potential to progress and overcome economic challenges.

He told the newsmen that the government had recently unveiled an Economic Revival Plan to get rid of loans and stabilize the economy through a "comprehensive" programme of enhancing investment in agriculture, mining and information technology, and boosting exports.

Mentioning the unnecessary impediments in the exploration of Chinio ore and Reko Diq, the prime minister said the Economic Revival Plan would help bring in investment from the Gulf states to make Pakistan progress.

He said formulated by the Federal Government in collaboration with the Chief of Army Staff and provincial governments, the Plan was envisaged to provide around four million jobs. He said the IMF agreement followed months of negotiations which ended with a positive outcome.

Calling the agreement a major step, the prime minister hoped that the country would start receiving money after the IMF Board meeting scheduled for July 12. He thanked IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva and her team for showing seriousness, particularly after his meeting in Paris, besides appreciating Finance Minister Ishaq Dar and his team for their untiring efforts to achieve the objective.

About his talks with the IMF chief last week, PM Shehbaz said he apprised her of the government's success to fulfill all of the Fund's conditions even at the cost of political capital just to save Pakistan from defaulting. The IMF MD raised concerns about the external financing gap of \$2bn, following which he asked the finance minister to make a "final effort" to address the IMF's doubts. He told the media of his subsequent meeting with the Islamic Development Bank head who later committed \$1bn in funds for Pakistan.

The prime minister said he again met the IMF chief who reassured him of moving forward together. He said their meeting in Paris proved to be an

"ice-breaking and turning point". Lambasting the previous government's economic performance, the prime minister said till 2018 under Muhammad Nawaz Sharif's government, Pakistan was progressing which was even recognized by the "worst critics" as the growth rate was at 6.2%.

Besides, he added, the country had joined the fast-developing nations as 20-hour load shedding had come to an end, CPEC (China Pakistan Economic Corridor) was being implemented swiftly, and power and road projects were being executed. Then, he said, Imran Niazi was brought to rule through the "worst rigging" who, brutally breached the IMF agreement to hurt Pakistan's trust and credibility.

He said the previous government had also showed "criminal negligence" by not availing the chance to purchase LNG (liquefied natural gas) at \$3 during the COVID pandemic. The incumbent coalition government, he said, signed an LNG deal with Azerbaijan on easy terms. It also purchased wheat and fertilizers from the lowest bidders and even got further discounts of billions of rupees. Amidst all the efforts, a panic was being created to destabilize and defame the country, and even Pakistan was likened to the defaulted Sri Lanka, he added.

Contrary to that, he said, the Sri Lankan president supported Pakistan before the IMF chief while in Paris. The prime minister also lauded the Chinese role to save Pakistan from default, besides appreciating the support by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the Islamic

(Continued on Back Page)



ABBOTTABAD: KP Caretaker Chief Minister Muhammad Azam Khan offering Eidul Azha prayer.

PM, COAS spend Eid with army officers, jawans

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir Thursday spent the day of Eid with army jawans in Parachinar along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

The prime minister was accompanied by Minister for Finance Ishaq Dar, Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif and Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb. The prime minister and chief of army staff offered the Eid prayer along with army officers and jawans and later exchanged Eid greetings. The PM praised the army for its high resolve, operational preparedness and professional standards.

During the meeting with the officers and jawans, Shehbaz Sharif said he along with the army chief was spending the Eid with them so that he could pay tribute to their efforts and passion for defending the borders of the motherland with bravery and courage. He said the officers and jawans of Pakistan's armed forces leave their personal comfort to perform the sacred obligation of the protection, defence and security of the country.

They bear the hardships of weather and difficult conditions, face all kinds of chal-

lenges and problems and guard the borders of the motherland and for that endeavour the nation saluted them, he added. He said the officers and jawans individually and collectively gave priority to the security of the country whether it was any happy occasion or festival including Eid or an occasion of grief and the nation saluted them for this fervour.

He said today he was paying tribute to the officers and jawans of Pakistan army, air force, and navy for their services as they were fulfilling the sacred duty of security of borders of the country with iron determination despite the immense obstacles. The prime minister felicitated the whole nation including the officers and jawans of armed forces on the occasion of Eid.

He reaffirmed the resolve that there would be no place to hide for those who destroyed peace, perpetrated terrorism, or abetted or facilitated acts of terror. The Pakistani of the Pakistani nation failed the nefarious designs of the forces who were causing chaos and mayhem in the country, he said adding those forces were defeated who wanted to create divisions and fissures in the nation for their evil agenda.

He said martyrs were the pride and precious asset of Pakistan and its nation and

their honour and dignity were above everything else. The prime minister laid a wreath at the monument of the martyrs and offered fateha. Earlier, the chief of army staff received the prime minister. On this occasion, Commander 11 Corps and high-level officers of the provincial government were also present.

PM hopes IMF's SBA to help Pakistan achieve economic stability; reiterates nations aren't built thru loans: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday reiterated that while the International Monetary Fund Stand-by Agreement (SBA) was a much-needed breather, which would help the country achieve economic stability, the nations were not built through loans.

In a lengthy tweet, the prime minister referred to his core argument in today's presser held in Lahore on the occasion of signing of the SBA. The prime minister also played for the new programme to be the last one for Pakistan.

He further said that under a whole-of-the-government approach, they had worked out an Economic Revival Plan, which would focus on unlocking their strategic potential in agriculture, mine and minerals, defence production and information technology.

Sanjrani to withdraw Senate chief perks bill

ISLAMABAD (PPI): After much criticism, Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani has decided to withdraw the Senate chairmen perks bill and directed the concerned senators to take back the legislation, according to a report on Saturday.

The government ministers had announced to oppose the 'controversial' bill moved by over 40 senators, recommending to increase perks and privileges of the former and current Senate chairmen, deputy chairmen and senators.

The bill had also recommended to provide 12-member staff and security even after retirement of the Senate chairman besides getting additional and increased perks and privileges including travel and daily allowances. On June 25, Defense Minister Khawaja Asif had strongly opposed the proposed Senate chairman perks bill, urging his fellow parliamentarians to stand against it, citing the economic realities facing the country. Speaking on the floor of the House, the PML-N lawmaker rejected the bill and urged the other members of the National Assembly not to support this particular legislation. He expressed confidence that the deal will be struck with the IMF in the coming days which will bring back economic stability in the country.

Khawaja Asif also clarified that no member of the parliament had gone for Hajj pilgrimage at the expense of the government.

Meanwhile, Pakistan People's Party has announced to reject the "The Chairman Senate (Salaries, Allowance and Privileges) Act, 2023". PPP leader and cabinet minister Sha-zia Marri issued a statement on Monday, distancing her party from the "controversial legislation". Last week, the Senate adopted bills that increased the privileges enjoyed by former and current Senate chairmen, deputy chairmen, and members of the upper house of parliament. The bills, which were moved by over 40 senators—including former Senate chairmen Farooq Naek and Raza Rabbani—received severe flak after details of the additional perks were revealed.



LAHORE: A police mobile van after an accident on Mall Road resulted two personnel seriously injured.

Goat slaughtered in US Consulate Karachi on Eid

KARACHI (NNI): A goat was slaughtered in the United States (US) Consulate in Karachi on Eid Day. According to the report, the staff of the American Consulate in Karachi extended greetings to all Pakistanis on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha. The staff of the US Consulate, in a show of solidarity, also visited a goat market located 2 km away from the Karachi consulate and also bought a white goat. After slaughtering, the goat was cooked in the US Consulate and the staff enjoyed the meal. The US Consulate office staff said that the goat meat was very juicy and tasty. The US Consulate Karachi also released the video on its official Twitter account on Eid Day. The nation is celebrating Eidul Azha today with religious fervour to commemorate the great sacrifice of Hazrat Ibrahim (AS) and his son Hazrat Ismail (AS). The day dawned with special prayers in mosques for the well-being of the Ummah and the progress, prosperity and security of the country. Eid congregations were held at mosques, Eidgahs and open places in all cities, towns and villages.

No prosperity without real democracy: Siraj

LAHORE (NNI): Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Emir Sirajul Haq has said the prosperity will not come in the country without robust democratic structure.

Speaking to media, Siraj said the nation was experiencing political and constitutional crises and had been driven into a quagmire. "The institutions are at

odds," he asserted.

"The report on the Greece boat tragedy had not yet been presented", Siraj lamented. Last week, on Friday fired a broadside at the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), saying the latter was having a history of doing rigging, corruption and horse-trading.

Addressing a public

gathering, Siraj took a swipe at the PPP, claiming, "The PPP leaders cannot compete us". The electoral watchdog had failed to hold transparent elections, he chided the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). "When it came to holding the elections, the ECP fell short of justice," he added.

Punjab stops private hospitals treating heart ailments on health cards

LAHORE (NNI): Heart operations, including the placement of stents, on health cards at private hospitals have been put on hold indefinitely until it is decided who is eligible and in need in Punjab.

Beginning on July 1, the aforementioned insurance provider has prohibited all private hospitals in Punjab from providing medical care.

A notice states that private institutions in the province will not provide any form of care to heart

patients who have health cards.

The Punjabi government suggests charging all heart patients 30% of the cost of their medical care. Cardiac services on the health card will not be made available to anyone until the deserving residents of Punjab are selected.

Earlier, the health card scheme was reportedly restricted in Punjab with only the people registered under the Punjab Free Flour Scheme will be eligible for

free treatment through the card.

From July 1, gynecological operations will be abolished on the health card and a patient will have to pay 30% for treatment of heart ailments from private hospitals.

After the provincial cabinet's approval, the Punjab Health Company wrote a letter to State Life Insurance which mentioned that only the deserving will be eligible to use the health card at private hospitals.

KTH provides 9194 health facilities to patients

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Health facilities were provided to about 9194 various diseases and accidental patients till the third day of Eid in the accident department of Khyber Teaching Hospital, in which about 643 patients were admitted.

According to the data, a total of 9837 laboratory tests were conducted, 1148 X-rays, 645 ultrasounds, and 1793 ECG and Echo tests were conducted for cardiac patients.

Apart from this, about 424 injured were brought due to the collision of cattle and stabbings, and about 1800 people were brought to the hospital due to overeating. They were sent back home after providing first aid.

The administration of Khyber Teaching Hospital had issued a statement before Eid that all the facilities will be utilized during the Eid holidays and the duties of the administration staff including doctors, nurses, pharmacy and paramedics staff were assigned in all the wards and emergency department of the hospital.

The administration appreciated them and expressed hope that we would leave no stone unturned in the services of the people like before.

Young man kills stepmother, aunt

LAHORE (APP): A young man shot dead his stepmother and aunt at Al-Faisal Town of North Cantonment area, here on Saturday.

No room for extremism in Islam, says Punjab CM

LAHORE (NNI): Punjab Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi has strongly condemned the desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden, saying there is no room for extremism in Islam.

In a statement on Saturday, the chief minister said that the painful incident has deeply hurt the sentiments of billions of Muslims. He said every state must take measures for the prevention of such Islamophobic acts.

Mohsin Naqvi urged the international community to work for promoting inter-faith harmony and dialogue

to create tolerance for each other's religious beliefs and values. He stressed that humanity must move away from acts of senseless hatred towards uniting the world in peace.

CM Naqvi satisfied with cleanliness arrangements on Eid

LAHORE (NNI): Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi expressed satisfaction over cleanliness arrangements during the Eidul Azha days.

In a statement issued on Saturday, the chief minister applauded the solid

waste companies, commissioners, deputy commissioners, local government and other relevant institutions. He also directed WASA staff to remain in the field in case of rain.

Earlier, Naqvi directed the authorities to ensure proper cleanliness arrangements across the province besides timely disposal of offals.

He said that cleanliness arrangements should be better comparing to previous year. The chief minister said that officers of the relevant departments should personally monitor ongoing cleanliness activities.

IGP visits Gurdwara Dera Sahib, meets Sikh yatrees

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr Usman Anwar visited Gurdwara Dera Sahib Lahore on Eidul Azha and met Sikh yatrees from various countries including India, America and Canada and asked them about the security arrangements made by the Punjab Police during their visit.

The Gurdwara administrator, along with other officials, welcomed the IGP Punjab and presented him a bouquet.

The IGO visited different sections of Gurdwara and reviewed security arrangements. The Sikh pilgrims expressed satis-

faction over security arrangements made by the Punjab police and also thanked the IGP Punjab.

Sikh pilgrims wished Eid greetings to IGP and senior police officers on Eidul Azha. They also cut Eid cake along with IGP, who presented the Eid cake pieces to elderly Sikh pilgrims and police personnel.

The IGP said the Punjab Police were providing full security to all minorities including Sikhs, Christians and Hindus. DIG Operations Ali Nasir Rizvi, SSP Operations Soheb Ashraf, senior police officers were present.

IG Punjab seeks police report on murders

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr Usman Anwar has taken notice of an incident of killing of three persons over a land dispute in Gujranwala. He directed the regional police officer (RPO) Gujranwala to submit a report on the incident. He ordered CPO Gujranwala to form a special team to arrest the accused as soon as possible. The IGP said that senior officers should keep in close touch with the families of the victims, and that no effort should be spared to deliver justice at the earliest.



KARACHI: Butchers prepare to sacrifice a Camel during Eid ul Adha celebration. —INP Photo

Man killed in Karachi gas leak explosion

KARACHI (PPI) A man was killed in a gas leak explosion in North Nazimabad area of Karachi on Saturday.

According to rescue sources, the gas blast occurred in a computer equipment office, killing a watchman and damaging the office.

On information, a contingent of Rangers and police along with ambulances of the rescue department rushed to the explosion site. A bomb disposal squad also rushed to the site.

The body was shifted to a local hospital for medico-legal formalities. The police have started a probe into the incident. Panic gripped the area soon after the blast.

WCB lifts 7900-ton waste during Eid days

LAHORE (APP): The Walton Cantt Board (WCB) lifted 7900-ton waste of sacrificial animals from the cantonment area during Eidul Azha days.

In a statement issued here on Saturday, Chief Sanitary Inspector WCB Waris Bhatti said that the WCB had made the best sanitation arrangements in cantonment area and disposed of waste of sacrificial animals at landfill site of Mehmood Booti.

The statement said 1,750 sanitary workers and 367 vehicles were deployed in 10 wards and 13 camps were set up by the Board for sanitary activities.

There is no example of the way PPP protected rights of minorities: Giyanchand

KARACHI (NNI): Provincial Minister for Minorities Affairs Mr Gianchand Esrani has said that there is no example of the way Pakistan People's Party has protected the rights of minorities in the country.

This he said while inaugurating the development schemes for reconstruction, renovation, construction of hall at Baba Srichand Darbar in Thatta and installation of solar system at Guru Nanak Temple at Gharo.

He said that the way

Pakistan People's Party has talked about the rights of minorities and has taken legislative and practical measures for it is unprecedented.

He said that Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, former President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari and now Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari have been prioritizing the affairs of minorities. He said that People's Party has always represented the rights of people of minority communities.

Provincial Minister said that the development work on the places of worship of the minority communities is going on vigorously throughout Sindh while the work has been started on new development schemes including financial assistance in this year as well.

After the inauguration of the projects, Special prayers were also offered for the country's development and prosperity, leadership of the People's Party Asif Ali Zardari, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Faryal Talpur.

Veteran actor Shakeel passes away, laid to rest in DHA Phase-VIII graveyard

KARACHI (NNI): Legendary actor Shakeel Kamal Yousuf has passed away at the age of 85 after a brief illness.

In a statement, the family member said that the legendary actor passed away at CMH hospital, noting that the artist was unwell for several days. The funeral prayers for Yousaf Kamal were offered in Karachi on Friday and he was buried in the city's Defence graveyard.

A large number of people belonging to all walks of life including Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori attended the funeral. Talking

to the media after the funeral prayers, the governor shared that Shakeel was a towering figure of Pakistan's drama industry. "However, unfortunately, he was not accorded the respect and status that he deserve," he lamented.

Shakeel gave a distinct status to the art industry, and expressed his disappointment that people usually showed up when someone died, adding "we should visit them in their lives also". The neighbouring countries give a lot to their stars, he added.

Famous personalities from the showbiz industry including Behroze Sabzwari,

Khalid Nizami, Faysal Qureshi, Rauf Alam and Raju Jamil also attended the funeral. Later on he was laid to rest in the graveyard of DHA Phase-VIII.

He died at the age of 85 in a Karachi hospital on the first day of Eid. He was born on May 29, 1938. Yousuf Kamal, widely recognised by his stage name Shakeel Yousuf, made his name as a prominent figure in the Pakistani entertainment industry. Renowned for his impeccable acting skills, the star attained prominence with his memorable roles in various television dramas.



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PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali meeting with people on first day of Eidul Azha at his personal residence at Warsak Road.

Governor intermingles with people on Eid

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali here on first day of Eidul Azha intermingled with people at his personal residence at Warsak Road. Without protocol, the Governor met with people from 10:00 am to 8:00pm on the first day of Eidul Azha. The children and youth made pictures with the Governor and expressed joy. Elected chairmen of the local bodies, elders, political and social elders besides children in large number were present. IGP KP offered Eid

prayers at Malik Saad Shaheed Police Line Peshawar. Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Akhtar Hayat Khan Gandapur and CCPO Syed Ashfaq Anwar offered Eid prayers at Malik Saad Shaheed Police Line Peshawar. SSP Operations Haroon-ul-Rashid Khan, SSP Investigation Nisar Khan, Director PR Prince Kokab Farooq, Chief Traffic Officer Qamar Hayat, Divisional SPs and SDPOs were also present on the occasion. After the Eid-ul-Adha prayer, IGP Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa Akhtar Hayat Khan Gandapur attended the commemoration of police martyrs, offered flowers and offered special collective prayers for the high status of the martyrs and the safety of the country and nation. Later, the IGP and CCPO while talking to the police officers in the police club said that the protection of the country and the nation and the protection of the lives and property of the people in unfavorable situations is an act of worship. The history of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police is full of sacrifices. Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa Police is a lead wall in the path of terrorists and miscreants. CCPO Syed Ashfaq Anwar visited the Red Zone on the occasion of Eid-ul-Adha, met police officers and personnel and soldiers of Pakistan Army and distributed Eid-ul-Adha among them. On this occasion, the CCPO also issued some necessary instructions to the police personnel regarding duty. Those who stay away from their children on the day of Eid-ul-Adha and protect their homeland are the real heroes, CCPO Syed Ashfaq Anwar in his comments said.

WSSP concludes Eidul Azha operation, collects 11, 000 tons waste

3,259 sanitary staff participated in operation

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar (WSSP) on Saturday concluded three-day Eidul Azha cleanliness operation with tributes and appreciation from all walks of life. The municipal utility collected over 110, 00 tons of waste from the 65 urban union councils of the Peshawar.

Special Assistant to Chief Minister Mahar Ilaahi, acting Deputy Commissioner Saniya Safi and Chief Executive Officer WSSP Dr Hassan Nasir and General Manager Operations Engr Turab Shah inaugurated operation on the first day of Eid. They distributed sweets among the sanitary workers present on the occasion and pay tribute to their dedication and commitment in cleanliness of the city.

The company collected 4561 tons on the first day, 4236 on the second day and 2112 tons on the third day of Eid. The sanitary teams sprayed, fumigated and lined all containers, collection points. The teams would spray and fumigate transfer stations and dumping site to control stench. The successful operation attracted appreciation from all walks of life as social media was flooded with words of appreciations, assistant commissioners, elected representatives of district government and caretaker ministers sent messages acknowledging



efforts of the company.

A total of 3,259 sanitary staff will participate in the operation to collect sacrificial animals waste from the city with help of 683 vehicles of different sizes and transfer it to Shamshato dumping site. The plan was finalised during a meeting chaired by Chief Executive Officer Dr. Hassan Nasir. General Manager Operations Engineer Turab Shah, Zonal Managers of all five zones, solid waste managers, and other officials were also present in the meeting. Leaves of all management and operation staff were cancelled. All required equipment and materials have already been procured including lime, tools, equipment and chemicals for spray and fumigation at transfer stations and dumping site.

An awareness drive has been underway as the community awareness teams have displayed banners on major roads, squares and parks for mass awareness. The teams have also distributed pamphlets for mass awareness how and where to dump offal. WSSP, in collaboration with district government, distributed biodegradable shopping bags among masses to discourage open dumping in streets and roads. Citizen Liaison Cell of WSSP has engaged ulama who delivered special sermons on Friday on importance of cleanliness and proper disposal of waste. According to the plan, a 200-feet long and 90-feet deep pit has been dug at the dumping site for safe disposal of waste. A team of sanitary staff patrolled the city's roads and the road leading to the dumping site and clean waste fallen on roads.

The teams have also distributed pamphlets for mass awareness how and where to dump offal.

WSSP, in collaboration with district government, distributed biodegradable shopping bags among masses to discourage open dumping in streets and roads. Citizen Liaison Cell of WSSP has engaged ulama who delivered special sermons on Friday on importance of cleanliness and proper disposal of waste.

According to the plan, a 200-feet long and 90-feet deep pit has been dug at the dumping site for safe disposal of waste. A team of sanitary staff patrolled the city's roads and the road leading to the dumping site and clean waste fallen on roads.

A total of 2,897 WSSP's own sanitary staff and 362 outsourced staff participated in the operation, of which 1,827 are sanitary workers, 756 Katta Kullis, 168 helpers and 383 drivers, 82 supervisors and 64 municipal inspectors.

Peshawar zoo attracts children, families

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar zoo, which is spread on 29 acres, here Saturday attracted a large number of children and families on third day of Eidul Azha.

At entrance of the zoo, big status of elephant and zarafa installed in front of main gate attract attention of the visitors and children while passing through Rahatabad Road on east of the University of Peshawar.

Falcons' cage remained a centre of attraction of tourists and children where three large sizes brown and black eagles are kept.

On its left and middle sides, zarafas, zebras, camels, dears, ducks, pheasants and others birds draw visitors' attention.

Besides others animals, lions, cobra snakes, bears, dears, cranes, reptiles, birds, parrots and falcons have drawn attention of children and families arrived from different districts.

Following improvement of the weather conditions due to heavy rains in Peshawar before Eid, the people accompanied by the children thronged to the zoo and took keen interest in eagles, cobra snakes, tigers and others wild animals caged there in pleasant environment.

The children accompanied by parents arrived from Khyber, Kohat, Nowshera, Charsadda, Mardan, Mohmand, Swabi, Peshawar and others districts of KP were briefed by the wildlife experts.

Niaz Khan, DFO Wildlife said Peshawar zoo is bigger than all other zoos of Pakistan as it spread on a vast area of over 29 acres of land wherein almost all species of wild animals and birds existing in the country have been caged in natural habitats.

A safari bus is also available for visitors to help them in watching all these wild animals in short time besides a restaurant for food services. Free swings, camel and train ride inside facility doubled the joy of children.

Waris Khan (35), who came to the zoo along with his children from Karak district told APP on Saturday that it was a great gift for people of Peshawar, which has not only enhanced its beauty but also become a symbol of healthy entertainment.

"I had visited Islamabad and Lahore zoos to entertain my children during Eid in the past. This year, I did not go to these cities on Eid because of Peshawar Zoo," said Waris.

He said falcons have always attracted my children and that is why I came from Karak district to see them closely in zoo on my kids demands.

"It is not only a place of entertainment but a great source of education and research for students of wildlife and zoology who otherwise travelled to Islamabad and Lahore for this purpose in the past," said Naveed Farook of Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan.

He underscored the need for proper shelter shades, trees plantations and proper cold watering for animals.

The services of DVM doctors may be hired 24/7 for looking after medical needs of the animals in harsh weather conditions, he added.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali meeting with people on first day of Eidul Azha.

Al-Khidmat Foundation arranges luncheon

— distributes sacrificial meat among transgenders and artists

PESHAWAR (APP): Al-Khidmat Foundation, one of Pakistan's biggest humanitarian organization, here on Saturday arranged a luncheon and also distributed sacrificial meat among the marginalized transgender community and artists.

The objective of the initiative was to involve these neglected segment of transgender into Eid celebrations by arranging a get together for them, said Noor-ul-Wahid Jadoon, Manager Media Al-Khidmat Foundation Peshawar. Talking to newsmen,

Noor-ul-Wahid said that the ceremony was held at the main office of Al-Khidmat Foundation on G.T road Peshawar.

A large number of trans persons and artists from Peshawar attended the luncheon and enjoyed the symptoms feast.

"This is a very welcoming initiative taken by Al-Khidmat Foundation and has won our hearts," commented a transgender.

She said the trans persons are living in seclusion due to rejection by society and even by their own families.

Such behavior is badly impacting the psychological health of transgender who are considering themselves as alien in society, she continued, she added.

The transgenders suggested the approach of Al-Khidmat should be adopted and replicated by all other organizations for bringing the trans persons into the mainstream and helping them in coming out of the mental stress and trauma they are facing due to stigma connected with their gender and rejection by society.



PESHAWAR: Butchers slaughtering sacrificial camel on first day of Eidul Azha in Qissa Khwani.

IMF agreement to strengthen economy, attract foreign investment: Experts

PESHAWAR (APP): Economics and diplomatic experts here Friday welcomed reaching of an agreement between Pakistan and International Monetary Fund (APP) that would significantly help strengthen the national economy and attract foreign investment to the former.

Professor Dr. Muhammad Naeem of the Swabi University told APP that the staff-level nine months stand by agreement (SBA) of around USD 3 billion was a landmark develop-

ment that would give upward positive push to the economy of Pakistan besides tackling an issues of balance of payments and foreign loans burden.

He said the new agreement would not only help in stabilization of the economy from recent external shocks but would also preserve macroeconomic stability and provide a framework for financing from multilateral and bilateral partners.

Dr Naeem said the value of rupee against dollar

would improve and infant industries would grow in Pakistan.

Former Ambassador, Manzoorul Haq also hailed the agreement and declared it significant.

Talking to APP, he said the agreement would encourage international monetary institutions to invest in Pakistan in diversified fields besides creating space for social and development spending through improved domestic revenue mobilization.

Yousaf Sarwar, former

President, Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry termed Pakistan-IMF agreement was a positive development in the wake of economic issues of the former.

He said this would definitely increase the confidence of businessmen, commercial markets and investors besides accelerate pace of economic and industrial development.

He said the bilateral and multilateral donors would now speed up dealings with Pakistan.

He said the agreement will ensure overall stability and bring down inflation and price in the country.

Ikhtair Wali, PMLN KP spokesman said that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Finance Minister Ishaq Dar deserved full credit and appreciation for the agreement.

He said that Nawaz Sharif government has successfully completed the agreement with IMF and PMLN after coming into power would also complete it.

Parks, BBQ parties double people's joy on Eidul Azha

PESHAWAR (APP): The people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have visited parks and dams sites where they enjoyed BBQ and meat parties besides free swings by children on the third day of Eid-ul-Azha celebrations.

Keeping alive the rich traditions of hospitality, the people of KP exchanged meat dishes and invited loved ones on parties besides distributed sacrificial animals meat in poor that doubled their Eid joy.

As per traditions, the people of Peshawar passed the first Eid day at home and spent the second and third day by visiting houses of their loved ones, relatives and friends for exchange of Eid greetings, meat and sweet gifts besides Eidis in children.

"I came from Pabbi tehsil to hand over sacrificial animals meat to my sister in line of Islamic ritu-

als," Jan Ali, a resident of Nowshera told APP.

"I visited the home of grandfather on third day of Eidul Azha and exchanged Eid greetings with him viz a viz his family members. Such joyful event, which comes after a long time, are creating spirit of love, warmth, sacrifice and brotherhood in the society," he said.

"The exchange of Eid greetings and distribution of Eidi meat among students bring people and relatives more closer besides doubled their joys."

"I distributed eight kgs meat among my relatives, poor and has utilized half amount of Eidi by visiting parks and Peshawar zoo for recreational activities and donated the remaining amount among orphans children to include them in Eid-ul-Azha celebrations," he said.

"Helping needy and poor

people double our Eid joys," he said.

"I met with all my friends, cousins and relatives during last two days of Eid and today I came to Peshawar alongwith brother to visit parks and recreational spots for entertainment," said Khayam Khan, a resident of Nowshera at historic Shahi Bagh Peshawar while enjoying free swing said.

He said the Eidi received from relatives and loved ones has greatly helped him pay ticket charges of free swings and transport.

Like Khayam and Jan Ali, thousands of people of Peshawar, Mardan, Kohat, Nowshera and Charsadda districts thronged to parks, picnic and recreational points besides Peshawar Zoo to celebrate Eid-ul-Azha with great enthusiasm. Parks and recreational spots in Peshawar, Kohat, Charssada and Nowshera

were flooded with tourists due to effective security measures made by the government.

Great hustle and bustle was seen at Chacha Younis Park, Shahi Bagh, Tanda dam in Kohat, Kund Park in Nowshera and Sardaryab picnic point in Charsadda where people mostly children and youth enjoyed free swings and meat parties under an open sky amid laughter and funfair.

Sardaryab picnic point on Peshawar-Charsadda Road and Kund Park in Nowshera was jam-packed with visitors on Saturday while spicy items including meat, rice and Bar B Que parties were enjoyed by them on the banks of Shah Alam, Khayali and Indus rivers amid funfair.

The riverside views, colourful boats and fried fish attracted visitors at Sardaryab in Charadda in abundance.

Local musicians and singers have enthralled visitors in Sardaryab and presented local Pashto songs especially during evenings and received warm applause from the tourists.

The brightly painted boats on river bank that offer trips to tourists for Rs200, also attracted tourists in large number at Sardaryab.

Great rush of tourists were seen especially children tried to get place in the boats before enjoying entrance in the rivers.

"Sardaryab is my favorite tourist place because the riverside views always gave me some respite from hot weather," Zeeshan Khan, 26, a resident of Wapda Town, Nowshera told APP.

"The natural beauty of Sardaryab, especially its long river shore and travelling inside the river through colour boats gives me



immense happiness during Eid holidays," he said.

Eid festivities in Kohat also continued on third day of Eid where people enjoyed travelling, swimming, rice and meat dishes at open at Tanda dam.

Built on River Tochi near Kohat city in 1960, the Tanda dam attracted influx

of tourists from Hangu, Karak and Bannu districts.

"Tanda dam double my joy due to its cool breeze here," Salahuddin Khan, a tourist from Kohat told APP.

He said the atmosphere of Tanda dam was very excellent and full of natural beauty and people can

come here to enjoy its natural beauty.

Film lovers also visited cinema houses and enjoyed movies on big screen. Entertainment Gala were also held at all major cities, towns and villages where elaborate entertainment arrangements were made for entertainment of children.



In brief

Roof caved-in, two sisters killed F.P. Report

SWABI: Two young sisters were killed while their parents were injured along with four other children when the roof of the house collapsed in Parmo in the Union Council of Swabi district. A man named Muhammad Wali was sleeping in his room with his family as usual when due to heavy rain and storm, the roof of the house collapsed and fell on them, and everyone was buried under the debris. On receiving the information, the local people and the rescue team reached the spot and started rescue operations to remove the debris. The bodies of two young sisters, four-year-old Sana and two-year-old Annabia, and their father Wali Muhammad, forty-year-old, were recovered from the debris. Wife of Wali Muhammad and their seven-year-old son Bilal, Ten-year-old daughter Reshma, 16-year-old son Khair Mohammad and 14-year-old son Hilal were pulled out from the wreckage in an injured state by the medical team of the Rescue 1122 and after providing immediate medical aid to the injured and transferred them to Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Kalu Khan.

Three cousins die in mishap

TALAGANG (INP): Three youngsters died on Saturday after their car ramed into a roadside tree allegedly due to speeding near Thelian Interchange in Talagang, a tehsil of Potohar region. According to Rescue 1122 officials, on being informed of the incident occurring near Thelian Interchange at the Motorway, a team of emergency service reached the scene and shifted the dead bodies to the nearby hospital. The rescue sources said the deceased were cousins and were going to Murree.

Dacoits loot grid station staff

TANGWANI (INP): Dacoits in Tangwani Tehsil of Sindh made away with motorcycles and other goods after they stormed Ghauspur grid station in the jurisdiction of Jamal police station. Sources said that employees of the grid station, however, managed to flee from the spot. Although later police cordoned off the area and launched hunt for the attackers, still the fact remains that the Force is unable to maintain peace in the area as dacoits and other outlaws roam freely, instilling fear in the minds of people. People's lives and properties nothing is safe from these lawless elements while police, on the other hand, have been held hostage by them.

'No sign of violence found'

G U J R A N W A L A (INP): The preliminary investigation into the discovery of bodies of four youths in a car in Gujranwala the previous day has been completed. According to the health COO, there were no signs of violence on any of the bodies. The station house officer said that when the police reached the spot, they found the windows of the vehicle shut and its engine switched on. The mobiles, wallets and valuables were still on the bodies, and there was no suspicion of any robbery, the police reported. Their cause of death could be the consumption of a poisonous substance or suffocation, they added. The police also said that the families of the victims have not registered a case into the incident, adding that the cause of death would be determined only after a forensic report.



HYDERABAD: Sindh Minister for Information Sharjeel Inam Memon talking to media persons at Rawal House.

Two killed, six injured in road accidents in Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Two persons including a father and his son were killed while three were injured when a car coming from Chitral to Bajaur, plunged into a deep ravine here at Rabat in the jurisdiction of Khall police station on Eid day, residents and police said. They said the victims belonged to the Bajaur district.

The dead identified as Khaista Khan and his son Izzat Khan along with the injured Jabir, Anas Khan and Hayatullah, all residents of Bajaur were shifted by the Rescue 1122 medical team to the district headquarters hospital Timergara. The rescuers also recovered the vehicle. The Khall police registered a case and started investigations.

Similarly three persons were injured when a car and a Suzuki pickup collided head on at Rabat on the second day of Eid. The Rescue 1122 medical team rushed to the site and shifted the injured to a nearby hospital.

The Rescue 1122 divers also recovered the body of one Uzair, 15, a resident of Shalkanai Khall from the Panjkora River at Baron on the Eid second day after 48 hours of hectic efforts. The boy had drowned in the river while taking a bath. The volunteers of the Al-Khidmat Foundation and civil defense also took part in the search and rescue operation.

Hides' collection: The Al-Khidmat Foundation district president Hafeezullah Khaksar on Saturday said that a total of 1100 volunteers took part in hides' collection from different parts of the district during the Eid days.

Talking to local journalists at Timergara Mr Khaksar said the AKF also sacrificed 165 big and small animals and distributed its meat among 5000 deserving families. He said that meat was also distributed among Afghan refugees, jail inmates and Dar ul Aman. The AKF leader thanked the donors and said that a record number of hides

were collected by the Foundation this year due to people's trust and cooperation.

New power feeder inaugurated: The Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz district president Malik Farooq Iqbal along with executive engineer Pesco Mujahid Khan inaugurated a new feeder at the Munda grid station. The prime minister's advisor engineer Ameer Muqam did not attend the event because of his sudden foreign trip. The function was also addressed by the ANP former MPA Haji Bahadar Khan, PML-N district general secretary advocate Sardar Javed Tajik and others.

Malik Farooq said the newly inaugurated feeder would help resolve the issue of power outage and low voltage in the area. He said the PML-N and its allied parties sacrificed their politics for the state and the nation. He said the country was on the verge of collapse but it was the PML-N leadership that made it stable.

The speakers said that they believed in public service and wanted to work for the area development instead of making tall claims and misleading the people with mere slogans. The ANP former lawmaker said the PM's advisor Ameer Muqam should have visited the area as it had been facing several problems related to the federal government. He demanded the government to take notice of the problems faced by the people of Jandol and take appropriate steps for its solution.

Boy drowned: A boy identified as Uzair 15 s/o Bakht Zaman, a resident of Shalkanai village was drowned in the River Panjkora near Toormang in the jurisdiction of Khall police station, residents said. They said the boy was taking a bath when he slept and washed away by the gushing water. The Rescue 1122 divers rushed to the site and started a rescue operation. The operation continued till evening but the body was yet to be

recovered.

EOR visits control room, check security, relief activities in District:

The on-call duty officer of Rescue 1122 Dir Lower Saturday visited the control room and checked the overall security and relief activities, if any, in the District.

It is worth mentioning here that the control room round the clock provided emergency services on-call duty during the Eid-ul-Adha holidays. He remained there in the control room for some time and checked the attendance, uniform, discipline of the Rescue 1122 personnel on duty and appreciated their dedication for serving the people.

On-call duty officer Malik Fawad during his visit to the control room and stations on the instructions of District Emergency Officer Rescue 1122 Dir Lower Abrar Ali. He also checked the equipment and medicines and directed the rescue personnel to be alert 24/7 so that any emergency situation can be dealt with in time.

Firoze offers Eid prayers in Nowshera

Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: Caretaker Provincial Minister for Information and Public Relations, Hajj, Religious and Minority Affairs, Barrister Firoze Jamal Shah Kakakhel, offered Eid-ul-Adha prayers in his native village, later attended the shrine of Kaka Sahib, recited Fatiha and prayed for the safety of the country and the nation.

A special prayer was made for peace and stability. The caretaker Provincial Minister of Information and Religious Affairs also met the people of Kakasaheb area and congratulated them on Eid, got to know about their problems and discussed regional affairs.

Arms, ammunition recovered by Kohat Police

F.P. Report

KOHAT: A large number of arms and ammunition were recovered from a motor car during the operation on Eid-ul-Adha under the supervision of DSP Sadar Circle Yousuf Jan here on Saturday morning.

Two arms smugglers were detained during the Indus Highway checking operation. The arrested smugglers Abdul Majeed and Ehsan Khan, along with a motor car full of arms and ammunition, belong to Lakki Marwat.

The seized arms and ammunition include 1 Kalashnikov, 18 pistols and 18,700 cartridges of different bores. As a result of the successful operation, a case was registered against the detained arms smugglers in the Mohammad Riaz Shaheed Police Station, DPO Kohat Farhan Khan said. He said the operation against anti-state elements continues and the Police have taken immediate action against all the suspects involved in various crimes all across Kohat District. He said no one would be allowed to play with the peace in the district.

DC Kohat visits DHQ hospital: Deputy Commissioner Kohat Dr. Azmatullah Wazir along with District Police Officer Farhan Khan and Assistant Commissioner Kohat Usman Ashraf visited District Headquarters Hospital KDA Kohat and met with patients on eve of Eidul Azha.

Deputy Commissioner Kohat Dr. Azmatullah Wazir visited the patients under treatment in the hospital and congratulated them on Eid. On this occasion, Deputy Commissioner Kohat reviewed the staff attendance, supply of medicines, cleanliness and other facilities in the hospital and issued necessary instructions to the concerned authorities to provide all possible facilities.

IG Prisons visits Central Jail Dera, Tank and Waziristan

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Inspector General Prisons Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Usman Mehsum visited Central Jail Dera Ismail Khan, Sub-Jail Tank and South Waziristan to celebrate Eidul Adha with the prisoners.

On this occasion, IG Prisons Usman Mehsum, toured various sections of the jail, met with the prisoners, and listened to their problems. He also resolved some requests of prisoners on the spot. The IG visited jail hospital, inspected the facilities available for sick prisoners, and checked the medication register, expressing his satisfaction.

He then inspected Langarkhanay (kitchen) and checked the weight and quality of the meals and bread prepared for the prisoners. Usman Mehsum appreciated the efforts of the jail administration.

In the presence of IG Prisons special meals were also prepared for the prisoners, and an animal was sacrificed on the occasion. IG Prisons also visited the new building of the jail and inspected various parts of the new structure. He acknowledged the efforts of the Superintendent of Central Jail Dera Ismail Khan, Samiullah Khan Shinwari, in maintaining good order and discipline in

the old and dilapidated building of the jail.

Earlier, Superintendent of Central Jail Dera, Samiullah Khan Shinwari and Deputy Superintendent Zafarullah Khan Marwat welcomed him, and he was presented with a Guard of Honor upon his arrival and briefed him. Later, IG Usman Mehsum visited Sub-Jail Tank and South Waziristan, where Superintendent Ijaz Mehsum provided him with a detailed briefing and requested for the upgradation of Sub-Jail Tank. The IG Usman Mehsum inspected various chambers of the jail and expressed satisfaction over arrangements made for the prisoners.

Excise conduct operation in Nowshera

F.P. Report

MARDAN: The accused fake Major Iqbal Ali, son of Farman Ali, a resident of Abbottabad, who was dressed in the uniform of the Pakistan Army, was arrested while smuggling large quantities of drugs, Excise spokesman said.

According to him, he said, when the Excise Police Station received information about the accused, the fake major was blocked and stopped,

but the accused ran away. A fake major dressed in army uniform delivered the ticker marker to the Excise Police Station's mobile vehicle, spokesman said.

After chasing by the Excise team, the fake major was intercepted near Risalpur Gate and on search 60 kg hashish worth millions of rupees in five sacks was recovered from inside the vehicle with fake major's official number plate and black

glasses.

A case was registered against the accused and a preliminary investigation was started, he also confessed to smuggling drugs to Punjab ten times earlier as well, the Excise spokesperson said. A case has been registered against the accused for the crime of drug smuggling, damage to government property and defamation of the Pakistan Army under various provisions, the Excise spokesperson said.

Turi distributes sewing machines among women

F.P. Report

PARACINAR: Federal Minister for Manpower and Overseas Pakistanis, Sajid Hussain Turi distributed sewing machines among deserving destitute women of the tribal district Kurram, said a press release issued here on Saturday.

In this connection, a ceremony was organized at Governor Cottage,

Parachinar. Besides, District Social Welfare Officer, Musharraf Hussain, Secretary to Minister, Jalal Hussain Bangash, Hashmat Hussain Bangash, PPP activist Village Chairman, Said Asghar and Secretary Information PPP, district Kurram Tanvir Hussain were also present on the occasion.

Addressing the ceremony, the federal minister

said that the government is determined for the protection of the rights of women and planning for their education and empowerment. He announced that stitching centres for women would be set up in various localities of the district, saying the process of the distribution of sewing machines among the women of Lower and Central Kurram would begin soon.



THARPARKER: Soldiers of Pakistan Army Virawah Camp offering dua after Eidul Azha prayer.

Tourists throng Galiyat to beat sizzling heat during Eid holidays

NATHIAGALI (APP): An influx of tourists and adventure sports enthusiasts from plain districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab provinces have thronged to the scenic Galiyat valleys to beat the sizzling heat during Eid holidays.

Enjoying the mesmerizing beauty of Nathiagali, Ayubia, Khanaspur and Thandiyani of Abbottabad district, the tourists move into state of ecstasy after witnessing the weather heralding melodies, seasonal flowers, fresh cool breeze and waterfalls mostly emanating from the Hamalyia mountains.

Amid hide and seek between the sun and clouds with moderate to erratic rainfalls over snow-clad mountains peaks of Mukeshpuri and Miranjani on western Himalya hills in Abbottabad, Nathiagali and Ayubia draw tourists from width and breadth of Pakistan.

Ayubia-Nathiagali, Donga Gali-Ayubia and Mukshpuri Top are the most frequented sites where local guides and horse riders are seen moving around to make quick buck. A substantial number of tourists along with families have been seen on fast moving swings and Ayubi chairlift amid thrill and excitement.

Unscrupulous business ele-

ments in hotels and restaurants industries are fully exploiting the situation by fleecing tourists due to shortage of accommodation at Nathiagali, Ayubia and adjoining scenic resorts. A private hotel is charging is Rs15,000 to Rs20,000 per room per night from each tourist beyond purchasing power of low income domestic tourists.

"Nathiagali is the prime choice of domestic tourists in hot weather due to its pleasant weather, easy mobility, diverse natural viz-a-viz mountainous beauty and waterfalls, however hotel charges needed to be checked by the government," said Imran Khan, an architect of Nowshera district while talking to APP. He said such high charges by private hotels may negatively impacted in total intake of tourists to Nathiagali, Ayubia, Dongali, Harnoi, Bagnotar and Thandiyani.

To provide affordable accommodations to tourists, the KP government has established camping pods at Sharan Saiful Malook lake, Gabeen Jaba Swat, Mahaband Buner-Swabi, Allai Batagram, Bamburait Chitral, Tandiyani Abbottabad, Bisigram Swat, Yakhtangi Shangla, Saheed e Sir, Malka Swat and Sheikh Badin DI Khan. Shad

Khan, spokesman of KP Culture and Tourism Authority told APP that Bishigram, Shran, Yakhtangi, Shaheed e Sir and Malk camping pods have already been opened for tourists while the remaining pods would be shortly opened after completion of renovation works.

He said each pod has two to four beds for families, a wash room and a small kitchen, adding Rs3500 to Rs5000 per day/night stay was being charged against Rs15,000 to Rs20,000 per room by a private hotels at Khagan, Naran and Galiyat valleys. He said that 10 more camping pods at Jargo and Sulatanr in Swat, Lashkargha Broghal Valley and Surlaspur Shandor valley Upper Chitral, Kumrat valley in Upper Dir, Laram Top and Shahi Bin Shahi in Lower Dir, Lilowani Alpuri in Shangla Samanah Top in Orakzai/Hangu and Kalam Swat were planned.

He said River Kunhar trout fish, river rafting, snowfall and adventure sports features make it unique. He said ecotourism spots are being developed at premises of small dams include Tanda dam Kohat, Chatri dam in Haripur, Naryab Hangu, Kundal Swabi and Chalgoza Abbottabad to promote day-long families

tourism.

He said the PC-1 of Chatri, Naryab and Tanda dams tourism sites were completed and practical work to start soon. Tourism police force have been launched by the KP Government to facilitate tourists, adding tourism police in Hazara and Malakand divisions were already made operational. The tourism police comprises well-trained officers equipped to handle any situation. These officers are fluent in several languages, including english, to make communication with foreign tourists easier. The government has also launched a mobile application called the "Tourist Safety App," which enables tourists to quickly and easily contact the tourist police in case of an emergency. The government has invested heavily in improving the infrastructure in the province, including the road network, transportation, and accommodation facilities in tourism famous destinations.

A road from Maidan to Bishigram lake is being constructed and jeep track at Kandal lake has already built. Waterfalls of Lamchar, Sajkot, Noori, Chajjian Haripur, Jarogo Swat, Lanchar Dir and Umbrella Abbottabad were being developed on modern lines. To

reduce tourists' load at Galiyat, Kaghan, Naran, Kalam, Malam Jabba and Dir, jeepable tracks was being constructed in 15 areas with an estimated cost of Rs500 million. KP government has announced construction of Integrated Tourism Zones (ITZs) at Ghanool Mansehra, Mankiyal Swat, Madaklasht Chitral and Thandiyani Abbottabad with assistance of the World Bank. ITZs of Ghanool Mansehra would be established on 59.6 acres, Mankiyal Swat on 29.5 acres, Madaklasht on 540 Kanals and Thandiyani on 640 Kanal of land respectively.

As a pilot project, the Govt has decided to first develop Ghanool with a proposed cost of Rs5.5 billion and Mankiyal with an estimated cost of Rs2.9 billion. The pre-qualification bids of Mankiyal and Ghanool ITZs would soon be awarded for which rules and regulations were being prepared and to be completed in two years on the patterns of ITZs of Malaysia and Indonesia. These ITZs are expected to create 200,000 direct and indirect job opportunities and USD 2.8 billion investment.

Similarly, tourism spots, jeep tracks and roads to link waterfalls of Abbottabad, Haripure

and Mansehra were being developed with an estimated cost of Rs2200. Feasibility of Cable Car project to be started from Dir Upper to Madaklasht Chitral has been completed and would be financially supported by the World Bank through Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Integrated tourism project (KITE).

About 19 PTDC hotels/motels including at Gharam Chesma, Pir Maflasht, Boni, Kalash in Chitral, Oshu Kalam, Mankiyal, Saidu Sharif, Miandun in Swat, Balakot Mansehra, Ayubia Abbottabad were opened for tourists. The efforts made by the government to promote adventure and mountains tourism have not gone unnoticed. Tourists are now returning to northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in droves, and the province is once again becoming a popular tourist destination during hot summer. The spokesman said the number of tourists visiting Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has increased by more than 100 percent in recent years due to improved roads connectivity and law and order. This increase in tourism has not only boosted the economy of the province but has also helped to change the tourism perception of the region.



Rwanda asylum a risk to UK foreign policy



RAWANDA (BBC): The government's deal to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda risks "downgrading" UK foreign policy, a former cabinet minister has said. A final report by a United Nations Group of Experts, published earlier this month, concluded that the Rwandans were supporting the M23 rebel group which is active in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and is subject to UN and US sanctions.

Justine Greening withdrew £21m in aid funding to the country in 2012 when she was international development secretary after the United Nations first reported that the Rwandans were helping the M23 rebels. While the US and EU have directly told the Rwandan government to cease its support for M23, a UK regional envoy released a more general statement condemning "external" support for rebels without naming Rwanda. Rwanda has consistently denied supporting the rebellion.

Ms Greening told BBC Newsnight: "It's important that UK foreign policy and this country's leadership on important matters of human rights atrocities including violence against women is not downgraded as a result of our domestic policy approaches. "This UN report also underlines the practical complexity and sustainability issues of intertwining the delivery of Britain's asylum policy with any third country, particularly one facing such demonstrable wider regional stability challenges," she said.

The UN report, written for the Security Council, said advances by the M23 group had displaced a million citizens in Kivu province and that in the mineral rich areas where it was active there were "incidents of rape, including gang rape by M23". It also named Rwandan Defence Force generals and advisers to President Kagame as directing some M23 activity. The Rwandan government has said the report is "concocted".

The Court of Appeal ruled that the UK government's Rwanda policy was unlawful. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has vowed to take the matter to the UK Supreme Court. The five-year trial - announced in April 2022 - would see some asylum seekers sent to Rwanda on a one-way ticket, to claim asylum there. They may be granted refugee status to stay in Rwanda. If not, they can apply to settle there on other grounds, or seek asylum in another "safe third country".

The government says the plan will deter people arriving in the UK through "illegal, dangerous or unnecessary methods", such as on small boats which cross the English Channel. A government spokesperson told the BBC: "Our ground-breaking Migration and Economic Development Partnership will see those who make dangerous and illegal journeys to the UK relocated to Rwanda, where they will be supported to build new lives. "Rwanda is a safe and secure country, with a track record of supporting asylum seekers."

Jan. 6 suspect arrested near Obama's home had guns

WASHINGTON (AP): A man arrested near former President Barack Obama's Washington home on charges in the US Capitol riot had two guns, 400 rounds of ammunition as well as a machete in his van, a federal prosecutor said.

Taylor Taranto, 37, was arrested after being spotted a few blocks from the former president's home and chased by US Secret Service agents. Court documents unsealed show Taranto is charged with four misdemeanors related to the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol attack, including disorderly and disruptive conduct in a restricted building or grounds. The Justice Department, during a hearing in Washington's federal court, disclosed the details about the weapons found in the van that the man appeared to be living in, NBC News reported. Taranto was ordered to remain behind bars pending a detention hearing scheduled for next Wednesday.

An email seeking comment was sent to Taranto's attorney. It was not clear whether the Obamas were at their home at the time of his arrest. The explosives team swept Taranto's van and said there were no threats to the public. No one was injured.

Taranto was a US Navy veteran and a webmaster for the Republican Party in Franklin County, in Washington state, according to the Tri-City Herald newspaper. He told the newspaper in an interview last year that he was volunteering for the Republican Party. After attending then-President Donald Trump's "Stop the Steal" rally on Jan. 6, Taranto joined rioters on the Upper West Terrace, where he picked up and threw pieces of metal scaffolding, according to court papers.

Taranto entered the Capitol building and was near another rioter, Ashli Babbitt, when a police officer shot and killed her as she climbed through a glass window leading to the House chambers, the FBI said in a court filing. Before he left the building, Taranto and other rioters scuffled with police officers, the filing says. On a Facebook account authorities say appears to be run by Taranto and his wife, Taranto posted a video in which he proclaimed to be inside the Capitol with the caption: "This is me 'stormin' the Capitol' lol I'm only sharing this so someone will report me to the feds and we can get this party rolling!"

Taranto showed up in court this month for the sentencing hearing of another man who was convicted in the riot, authorities said. He was also interviewed for a video posted online this month in which he identified himself in footage during the riot, saying "That's me screaming." More than 1,000 people have been charged with federal crimes related to the Capitol riot. Over 600 of them have pleaded guilty, while approximately 100 others have been convicted after trials decided by judges or juries. More than 550 riot defendants have been sentenced, with over half receiving terms of imprisonment ranging from six days to 18 years.

Mali and the UN: Why peacekeepers are being told to leave

LONDON (BBC): Mali has told the UN that its 12,000 peacemakers need to leave, after 10 years countering Islamist militants in the country. Last year, France withdrew its forces after military leaders seized control of Mali and brought in mercenaries from Russia's Wagner group.

In 2013, the UN launched a mission after separatist rebels and Islamist fighters banded together and occupied northern Mali. They hoped to create a separate state. The UN peacekeepers arrived after 5,000 French troops, who were sent to try and put down the uprising. The threat from Islamist militants, who have killed several thousand people and forced tens of thousands from their homes, has continued over the years.

While the UN force in Mali has a wider brief to protect civilians and contain the jihadist threat, it is not intended to go on the offensive against militants. In Mali and across the wider region attacks have been carried out by Islamic State in the Greater Sahara and an al-Qaeda affiliate called Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin. Another jihadist group, Ansaroul Islam, is active in Burkina Faso, and Boko Haram is active in countries around Lake Chad.

Despite the presence of UN peacekeepers and French troops, who led counter-terror operations, the number of terror attacks in Mali steadily increased, as did the number of Malians joining insurgent groups. Over the past decade, more than 300 UN peacekeepers have been killed. It has been described as the deadliest peacekeeping mission in the world. Russia and China has criticised the mission at the UN, and countries such as the UK and Sweden have refused to provide troops.

Last year, French President Emmanuel Macron said he would withdraw French forces. He was angry that military leaders - who seized power in 2021 - delayed plans to hold democratic elections. They also invited the Russian mercenary group Wagner to provide an estimated 1,000 fighters to provide security.

At the moment it is unclear whether the recent mutiny by Wagner fighters in Russia will have a bearing on its operations in Mali. The UN's mandate in Mali is due to expire on 30 June. The UN's Secretary General, António Guterres, had recommended extending their stay in Mali for another year.

However, Mali's Foreign Minister, Abdoulaye Diop, rejected this, saying the UN force had failed to respond effectively to security challenges. UN commanders have complained that the Malian government has often interfered with their operations. Mr Diop also accused the UN mission of "making serious allegations which are detrimental to peace, reconciliation and natural cohesion in Mali". In May, the UN released a report alleging that during an anti-jihadist operation in central Mali in March 2022, Malian army troops and foreign mercenaries killed 500 civilians. The United Nations Security Council voted to withdraw the peacekeepers over the next six months.

feel like we've fallen into a ring of fire," the National Weather Service's Sacramento office tweeted. Airline travelers got some relief, with none of the weather-induced restrictions imposed earlier this week on planes landing and taking off at major airports in the Northeast. Still, by mid-day on the East Coast more than 2,000 flights had been delayed and more than 300 others canceled — more than 200 of those on United Airlines, according to FlightAware.

Haze, heat and storms discomfort to many parts of US

INDIANAPOLIS (AP): Smoky haze, hot weather and powerful storms brought dangerous and uncomfortable conditions to parts of the US heading into a long July Fourth week-end that typically draws Americans to outdoor gatherings. From heat waves in the South and West to unhealthy air quality in the Northeast, much of the US was under the threat of extreme weather. In the Midwest, some residents were recovering from a powerful storm that moved through Illinois and Indiana a day earlier packing winds that reached more than 70 miles per hour (112 kilometers per hour).

That storm damaged trees and buildings in the central parts of both states from the Mississippi River to the Indianapolis area. Crews worked to replace electrical lines entangled in downed trees ahead of more expected thunderstorms and temperatures climbing to around 90 degrees Fahrenheit (32 degrees Celsius). Utility companies reported that more than 250,000 homes and businesses were still without electricity. Brian Alexander, 55, swept up debris from the front yard of his Springfield, Illinois, home. Tree limbs that fell on his car left several small dents.

"Very lucky on that," Alexander said. "No power, but we'll manage. We're just waiting for the city to get us hooked up again and we'll get everything cleaned up." The National Weather Service said the storm was a derecho, which is often described as an inland hurricane because of its line of strong winds stretching for hundreds of miles. "We had damage all the way from northeast Kansas, all the way down into Kentucky and across Indiana," said John Bumgardner, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Illinois.

In the South, a dangerous heat wave that has been blamed for the deaths of at least 14 people was expected to last into the weekend in some areas. Parts of Tennessee, Arkansas and Mississippi were under excessive heat warnings as heat indexes rose above 110 degrees Fahrenheit (43 degrees Celsius) in some places. In Memphis, Tennessee, officials said relief efforts were focused on the thousands of people who still had no power after storms Sunday that knocked down trees and power lines. In Nashville, residents and tourists alike tried to keep com-

fortable as temperatures climbed toward the upper 90s.

Leo Bennett, an employee of the county sheriff and at a private traffic control company, said he prepares for long days outside by drinking several bottles of water and packing a cooler. "One of my secrets is the pickle juice," Bennett said. "I bring pickle juice to keep from cramping up or whatever the case might be." At a park just outside downtown, teenage baseball players participated in a tournament and used cold towels between innings to cope with the heat. Coach Jordan Sheffield said he planned to pick up a fan for the dugout.

"You can kind of see it on their face, really. The red face a lot. A lot more of them red faced," said Sheffield. "A lot of hands on their knees, things like that. So I kind of keep an eye on that and just try to keep them as cool as possible." The EPA warned that parts of Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Connecticut could experience "unhealthy" air conditions because of ongoing wildfires in Quebec and northern Ontario. "The primary concern is high concentrations of fine particle air pollution that is unhealthy, especially for sensitive groups such as people with respiratory disease, the elderly, or people with compromised health," the agency said.

The Midwest storm helped clear that smoke from the region's air. The Environmental Protection Agency had listed many cities, including Chicago, Detroit, Indianapolis and Cleveland, Ohio, as having "very unhealthy air" earlier in the week. But the Midwest might only have a brief respite with another storm is poised to move through the region Sunday, meteorologist Bumgardner said. "Behind that our winds will probably switch back to northerly, which theoretically could bring a little more smoke into the area," Bumgardner said. "But that's tough to predict more than a day or two out."

Parts of the West were anticipating extremely hot, dry conditions forecast through the Fourth of July, raising concerns about the danger of fireworks shows and wildfires. Parts of California were under excessive-heat warnings and heat advisories that were expected to last through the weekend. "Looking at our high temperature forecast, we can't help but

Kenya lorry crash: Dozens killed after truck loses control

NAIROBI (BBC): At least 48 people have been killed in a road accident at a busy junction in Kenya, police and witnesses say. It happened after a lorry carrying a shipping container lost control at Londiani Junction, near the western town of Kericho, local media report. Police commander Geoffrey Mayek said 30 others were seriously injured but added the number "could be more".

He also raised concerns that "one or two" people could still be trapped underneath the overturned vehicle. Tom Mboya Odera, another regional police commander, was quoted by AFP news agency as saying the lorry travelling towards Kericho "lost control and rammed into eight vehicles, several motorcycles, people who were by the roadside, vendors, and other people who were on other businesses". Eye witnesses told Kenyan media the driver had been trying to avoid a bus that had broken down on the road.

Kenyan president William Ruto said he had been distressed to hear that some of those killed were "young people with a promising future and business people who were on their daily chores". "We urge motorists to be extra cautious on roads, especially now when we are experiencing heavy rainfall," Mr Ruto added in a tweet. An image circulated online showed what appeared to be a red shipping container lying on its side at the bottom of a small grassy bank, at the side of a road. The town's governor, Dr Erick Mutai, described the incident as a "dark moment" for Kericho.

Climate change keeps making wildfires and smoke worse

NEW YORK (AP): It was a smell that invoked a memory. Both for Emily Kuchlbauer in North Carolina and Ryan Bomba in Chicago. It was smoke from wildfires, the odor of an increasingly hot and occasionally on-fire world.

Kuchlbauer had flashbacks to the surprise of soot coating her car three years ago when she was a recent college graduate in San Diego. Bomba had déjà vu from San Francisco, where the air was so thick with smoke people had to mask up. They figured they left wildfire worries behind in California, but a Canada that's burning from sea to warming sea brought one of the more visceral effects of climate change home to places that once seemed immune.

"It's been very apocalyptic feeling, because in California the dialogue is like, 'Oh, it's normal. This is just what happens on the West Coast,' but it's very much not normal here," Kuchlbauer said. As Earth's climate continues to change from heat-trapping gases spewed into the air, ever fewer people are out of reach from the billowing and deadly fingers of wildfire smoke, scientists say. Already wildfires are consuming three times more of the United States and Canada each year than in the 1980s and studies predict fire and smoke to worsen.

While many people exposed to bad air may be asking themselves if this is a "new normal," several scientists told The Associated Press they specifically reject any such idea because the

phrase makes it sound like the world has changed to a new and steady pattern of extreme events. "Is this a new normal? No, it's a new abnormal," University of Pennsylvania climate scientist Michael Mann said. "It continues to get worse. If we continue to warm the planet, we don't settle into some new state. It's an ever-moving baseline of worse and worse."

It's so bad that perhaps the term "wildfire" also needs to be rethought, suggested Woodwell Climate Research Center senior scientist Jennifer Francis. "We can't really call them wildfires anymore," Francis said. "To some extent they're just not, they're not wild. They're not natural anymore. We are just making them more likely. We're making them more intense."

Several scientists told the AP that the problem of smoke and wildfires will progressively worsen until the world significantly reduces greenhouse gas emissions, which has not happened despite years of international negotiations and lofty goals. Fires in North America are generally getting worse, burning more land. Even before July, traditionally the busiest fire month for the country, Canada has set a record for most area burned with 31,432 square miles (81,409 square kilometers), which is nearly 15% higher than the old record.

"A year like this could happen with or without climate change, but warming temperatures just made it a lot more probable," said A. Park

Williams, a UCLA bioclimatologist who studies fire and water. "We're seeing, especially across the West, big increases in smoke exposure and reduction in air quality that are attributable to increase in fire activity." Numerous studies have linked climate change to increases in North American fires because global warming is increasing extreme weather, especially drought and mostly in the West.

As the atmosphere dries, it sucks moisture out of plants, creating more fuel that burns easier, faster and with greater intensity. Then you add more lightning strikes from more storms, some of which are dry lightning strikes, said Canadian fire scientist Mike Flannigan at Thompson Rivers University in British Columbia. Fire seasons are getting longer, starting earlier and lasting later because of warmer weather, he said. "We have to learn to live with fire and smoke, that's the new reality," Flannigan said.

Ronak Bhatia, who moved from California to Illinois for college in 2018 and now lives in Chicago, said at first it seemed like a joke: wildfire smoke following him and his friends from the West Coast. But if it continues, it will no longer be as funny. "It makes you think about climate change and also how it essentially could affect, you know, anywhere," Bhatia said. "It's not just the California problem or Australia problem. It's kind of an everywhere problem."

Wildfires in the US on average now burn about 12,000 square miles (31,000 square kilometers) yearly, about the size of Maryland. From 1983 to 1987, when the National Interagency Fire Center started keeping statistics, only about 3,300 square miles (8,546 square kilometers) burned annually. During the past five years, including a record low 2020, Canada has averaged 12,279 square miles (31,803 square kilometers) burned, which is three and a half times larger than the 1983 to 1987 average.

The type of fires seen this year in western Canada are in amounts scientists and computer models predicted for the 2030s and 2040s. And eastern Canada, where it rains more often, wasn't supposed to see occasional fire years like this until the mid 21st century, Flannigan said. If the Canadian east is burning, that means eventually, and probably sooner than researchers thought, eastern US states will also, Flannigan said. He and Williams pointed to devastating fires in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, that killed 14 people in 2016 during a brief drought in the East.

America burned much more in the past, but that's because people didn't try to stop fires and they were less of a threat. The West used to have larger and regular fires until the mid-19th century, with more land settlement and then the US government trying to douse every fire after the great 1910 Yellowstone fire, Williams said. Since about the 1950s, America pret-

ty much got wildfires down to a minimum, but that hasn't been the case since about 2000.

"We thought we had it under control, but we don't," Williams said. "The climate changed so much that we lost control of it." The warmer the Arctic gets and the more snow and ice melt there — the Arctic is warming three times faster than the rest of Earth — the differences in the summer between Arctic and mid-latitudes get smaller. That allows the jet stream of air high above the ground to meander and get stuck, prolonging bouts of bad weather, Mann and Francis said. Other scientists say they are waiting for more evidence on the impact of bouts of stuck weather.

A new study published on June 23 links a stuck weather pattern to reduced North American snow cover in the spring. For people exposed to nasty air from wildfire smoke, increasing threats to health are part of the new reality. Wildfires expose about 44 million people per year worldwide to unhealthy air, causing about 677,000 deaths annually with almost 39% of them children, according to a 2021 study out of the United Kingdom.

One study that looked at a dozen years of wildfire smoke exposure in Washington state showed a 1% all-ages increase in the odds of non-traumatic death the same day as the smoke hit the area and 2% for the day after. Risk of respiratory deaths jumped 14% and even more, 35%, for adults ages 45 to 64. Based on peer-

reviewed studies, the Health Effects Institute estimated that smoke's chief pollutant caused 4 million deaths worldwide and nearly 48,000 deaths in the US in 2019.

The tiny particles making up a main pollutant of wildfire smoke, called PM2.5, are just the right size to embed deep in the lungs and absorb into the blood. But while their size has garnered attention, their composition also matters, said Kris Ebi, a University of Washington climate and health scientist. "There is emerging evidence that the toxicity of wildfire smoke PM2.5 is more toxic than what comes out of tailpipes," Ebi said.

A cascade of health effects may become a growing problem in the wake of wildfires, including downwind from the source, said Ed Avol, professor emeritus at the Keck School of Medicine at University of Southern California. Beyond irritated eyes and scratchy throats, breathing in wildfire smoke also can create long-term issues all over the body. Avol said those include respiratory effects including asthma and COPD, as well as impacts on heart, brain and kidney function.

"In the longer term, climate change and unfortunately wildfire smoke is not going away because we really haven't done that much quick enough to make a difference," Avol said, adding that while people can take steps like masking up or using air filters to try to protect themselves, we are ultimately "behind the curve here in terms of responding to it."

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JALIL AFRIDI
Managing Editor

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Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town,
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Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

“USA and Canada Toll Free Number 1-800-5905747

Rising Islamophobia and prospects for containment

PAKISTAN has strongly condemned the despicable act of public burning of the Holy Quran outside a mosque in Sweden on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha. According to the spokesperson, such wilful incitement to discrimination, hatred, and violence cannot be justified under the pretext of freedom of expression and protest. The Spokesperson noted that the right to freedom of expression and opinion does not provide a license to stoke hatred and sabotage inter-faith harmony.

There had been a continuous up trend in the rise of Islamophobia in so-called Western democracies that recurrent incidents of hate crimes, religious bigotry and desecration of the holy Quran and Islamic verses became customary in certain nations in Europe and North America. Similarly, Muslims have been subject to violence and discrimination in Hindu majority India, however the situation became worst since the Modi led BJP regime took control of the country years ago. There had been a sharp spike in anti-Muslim slur where Hindu extremists hold regular rallies in show up of Hindu supremacy, to wage war against minorities, specifically attack Muslims and their properties for the stated purpose of vanishing Muslim from India. There is an endless series of anti-Muslim incidents including the profanation of poise personality, desecration of the Holy Quran, physical attacks on Mosques, Muslims and their properties across India in recent years under the BJP regime.

Ironically, the western nations and drummers for human and religious rights displayed extreme religious bigotry and tried to reduce the sensitivity of such grave crime by linking it with freedom of expression and civil liberties. Meanwhile the world so-called largest democracy is blatantly involved in ethnic cleansing of over 220 million Muslims in its country to transform itself a pure Hindu nation state. Historically, hate speech and racial crimes had been increased in recent years after the rise of Nationalism and far-right politics in nations across the world because far-right politicians and religious clerics use hate speech and racism to boost their politics and public rating in the country. Islamophobia is a manifestation of hate speech and religiously motivated crimes against Muslims due to their beliefs, religious attire, physical appearance, culture, and traditions had been shaped into a grave challenge worldwide.

Previously, the Muslim nations particularly Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey through the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) have raised the issue of Islamophobia at the United Nations. The global forum condemned Islamophobia in all its forms and manifestation and designated March 15 as a global day to combat Islamophobia to create awareness against hateful acts, racism, and religious bigotry against Islam and Muslims in the world. However, despite acknowledgment of the seriousness and scope of the issue at the UN, the Islamophobic incidents in European nations and other countries particularly India, are still happening unceasingly. Presently, Muslims residing in non-Muslim nations feel themselves insecure and deprived of their basic rights and religious freedoms while those provocative actions hurt over 1.5 billion Muslims across the world. The western nations, who usually claimed to be the so-called advocate of human rights and religious freedom around the globe, unashamedly, adopted a policy of utter denial of religious bigotry regarding rising Islamophobic incidents in their homelands, such biased approach not only led to an increase in crimes against humanity but also restricts global efforts to curb anti-Muslim sentiment worldwide.

In fact, a mere recognition of an issue, it's condemnation and adoption of a symbolic resolution against Islamophobia by the global community was not sufficient to curb a menace that exist worldwide. Because, the 21st century and the world, still have multiple rulers and political groups, who are such cruel to use anti-Muslim bias, hatred and racism to hurt billions of Muslims across the globe in a bid to flourish their politics in the contemporary world. Unfortunately, in this era of literary, development and innovations, the world has no scarcity of extremist leaders like Narendra Modi, Donald Trump, Viktor Orban and Georgia Melony who feel proud in inciting hate and ultra-nationalism against weak segment of society, other religions, ethnicities and immigrants.

According to international law, States are duty-bound to prohibit any advocacy of religious hatred, leading to incitement of violence. The recurrence of such Islamophobic incidents in the west during the past few years calls into serious question the legal framework which permits such hate-driven actions in those nations. The international community and the national governments across the world must undertake credible and concrete measures to prevent the rising incidents of xenophobia, Islamophobia, and anti-Muslim hatred. At the same time, it is the duty of the United Nations to play its role of a regulator to ensure that member states sufficiently employ it's decisions and no state, individual or a specific group violate global rules, UN decisions and attack other religion, group or community in any garb. The Muslim countries also take up the case at the state level with the concerned nations and launch a fresh campaign at the UN to approve Islamophobic acts as prosecutable crimes so the wrongdoers resist discrimination against Muslims due to the fear of reprisal and punishment.

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Who was Prigozhin counting on to back his failed mutiny?

Mikhail Komin

ONE of the most shocking aspects of the weekend's mutiny by Yevgeny Prigozhin's Wagner private military company is that the Russian Armed Forces appear to have done next to nothing to stop the Wagner troops as they moved first from field camps in Ukraine to the southern Russian city of Rostov-on-Don, where they seized key military headquarters, and then on almost to Moscow.

In theory, those headquarters — as the main command center for Russia's operations in Ukraine — should have been one of the most high-security sites in the country. Yet Prigozhin was able to breeze in with his gang of mercenaries in tow and effectively take two senior generals hostage: First Deputy Head of the General Staff Main Directorate Vladimir Alekseyev and Deputy Defense Minister Yunos-bek Yevkurov.

Even after a criminal case was initiated against Prigozhin on suspicion of inciting armed insurrection and Putin addressed the nation, calling Prigozhin's actions a “stab in the back,” there was still no resistance. It seems that the maverick Wagner boss may not be mistaken in his belief that there are plenty of people within the Armed Forces and security services who secretly sympathize with his cause.

In his voice notes explaining the mutiny, Prigozhin clearly stated that he was going to “have it out with [Defense Minister Sergei] Shoigu,” not taking a stand against the Armed Forces. On the contrary, he said that his “march for justice” was also being carried out in their name.

The Russian Armed Forces are not monolithic, but consist of a multitude of rival groups competing for positions and sources of income. Far from everyone within the military leadership is loyal to Shoigu and General Staff Chief Valery Gerasimov personally: as a rule, that's only those who have been promoted through the ranks with their help, or who have been awarded lucrative Defense Ministry-linked contracts. In recent months, Prigozhin has been trying to win over another group of generals: those whose careers took off under the reformist

respective predecessors of Shoigu and Gerasimov — Anatoly Serdyukov and Nikolai Makarov — and stalled after their departure.

Long before the mutiny, Prigozhin had said openly that he would like to see Shoigu replaced with Mikhail Mizintsev, and Gerasimov with Sergei Surovikin. Mizintsev, dubbed the “Butcher of Mariupol” by Western media for his supervision of the devastating siege of the Ukrainian city, was one of the most promising generals during the Serdyukov-Makarov military reforms in 2008-2012. In 2012, he was made head of the Central Command Post of the General Staff, an office that had just been established in order to streamline the archaic chain of command in the Russian Armed Forces.

Shoigu, who was appointed defense minister soon after, preserved the new institution and Mizintsev at its head, but never favored the general. After taking Mariupol, Mizintsev was first demoted and then apparently discharged from the army, after which he became a deputy commander of Wagner. There is no doubt that Mizintsev has retained his influence among those officers who rose up through the ranks under his command, and it's possible that Mizintsev's reputation among those officers played a role in Wagner's ability to occupy the Rostov military headquarters without any bloodshed.

Surovikin also prospered under the Serdyukov-Makarov leadership. Back then, he was appointed head of another newly created institution: the military police. As in Mizintsev's case, Shoigu confirmed the appointment, but limited the powers of the new establishment. Still, Surovikin managed to build a strong reputation — first in Syria and then as the commander of operations in Ukraine last October — before being replaced with Gerasimov in January.

Prigozhin and his war blogger followers have frequently praised Surovikin, who remains a key figure within the top brass who is not part of Shoigu and Gerasimov's inner circle. Of all those in the military leadership, Surovikin enjoys the most authority

among rank-and-file officers.

The examples of Mizintsev and Surovikin confirm that the main group that Prigozhin was counting on to remain neutral or offer silent support was senior officers who made their careers under the reforms enacted by Serdyukov and Makarov. Interestingly, the establishment of Wagner and Prigozhin's appointment as its head also date back to this time.

Under those reforms, 80% of colonels and 70% of majors were discharged from the Armed Forces, creating plenty of opportunities for more junior officers to rise up through the ranks. These (now senior) officers do not owe their careers to Shoigu or Gerasimov, and may be more inclined to agree with Prigozhin's criticism of the military leadership in the belief that if Shoigu had continued those reforms, the Russian Armed Forces would be performing better in Ukraine. While the officers are not prepared to express their frustration openly, when speaking anonymously they are vocal in their criticism of both the Defense Ministry and Putin.

Following the failure of his mutiny, it's unlikely Prigozhin will get his wish of Mizintsev being appointed defense minister. But he may be satisfied with Alexei Dyumin, a former military intelligence officer, Putin bodyguard, and deputy defense minister who was put in charge of the Defense Ministry's Special Operations Forces in 2014.

This is the elite division credited in Russia for the successful annexation of Crimea in the spring of 2014. Since 2016, Dyumin has been the governor of the Tula region, home to key defense industry enterprises. His name frequently features in discussions about potential successors to Putin.

In interviews, Prigozhin has been effusive in his praise of Dyumin's command of the annexation operation. The Insider has reported that the two men share some business interests, and last fall Meduza cited sources as saying that Dyumin had his own reasons to criticize the Defense Ministry under his

former boss Shoigu, since the two men had apparently not gotten on, resulting in Dyumin being posted to Tula. Dyumin did not join the many other regional governors rallying around the Kremlin on June 24 with public expressions of support for the president and condemnation of Prigozhin. Then, shortly after the news broke that Prigozhin had agreed to stand down, apparently under the terms of a deal brokered by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, it was reported that it was in fact Dyumin who had negotiated terms with Prigozhin. The governor's press service was quick to deny the reports, but Putin's spokesman declined to comment on the rumor.

Taking all of the above into account, it's entirely possible that by the start of his “march for justice,” Prigozhin believed he would find solidarity among many officers in the Armed Forces, and that if his uprising was successful, they would be joined by certain groups within the ruling elite, such as generals with no direct ties to Shoigu, or former members of Putin's security detail seeking to boost their status within the system.

Prigozhin wasn't wrong on the first count, and most of the Armed Forces made no attempt to stop him advancing on Moscow. But his hopes for support from elite groups who would also like to see a Defense Ministry reshuffle appear to have been dashed. Putin threw his unequivocal backing behind the Armed Forces, cutting off any ways for other bodies of authority to express solidarity with Wagner.

Still, Prigozhin's mutiny revealed the scale of the crisis within the Russian Armed Forces, which are disillusioned by constant failures and tired of war, and within the military and security elites more broadly. When senior and mid-ranking officers effectively respond to an armed mutiny with a “go slow” strike, there can be little doubt that the Wagner boss will not be the last challenger to square off against Shoigu and his allies and seek to capitalize on the unspoken but growing resentment within the Russian Armed Forces.

The Moscow times

Britain is now a poor country

Camilla Tominey

IT'S hard to decide which is most offensive: former Bank of England governor Mark Carney blaming Britain's world-leading rate of inflation on Brexit or his successor Andrew Bailey suggesting that it has been caused by “unsustainable” wage increases. In a typically egotistical bout of told-you-so-ing, Carney opined this week: “We [the Bank] laid out in advance of Brexit that this will be a negative supply shock for a period of time and the consequence of that will be a weaker pound, higher inflation and weaker growth. And the central bank will need to lean against that.”

“Now that's exactly what's happened. It's happened in coincidence with other factors, but it is a unique aspect of the economic adjustment that's going on here.” While Brexit may have played a small part in our stubbornly high inflation, does Carney seriously think we are going to overlook the fact that he was a governor who presided over the ultra low interest rates that helped to precipitate this crisis, along with the Bank's reckless quantitative easing (QE) programme? And what is Bailey's excuse for not only failing to heed multiple warnings that inflation was going to surge rapidly post-pandemic, but also for taking the catastrophic decision to continue QE beyond even Carney's Monopoly-style levels of money printing?

You do not have to be an economist to work out that the Bank's completely cavalier approach to monetary policy, combined with keeping interest rates too low for too long, has contributed to this mess on arguably a far greater scale than the war in Ukraine or other international factors. That's why Britain's inflation rate is stuck at 8.7 per cent and why core inflation continues to rise here but not in other parts of the world. What we learned this week is that we're increasingly isolated. Other countries are taming inflation, but not us. The Bank clearly thinks we're stuffed, and for good reason: we're fast becoming the West's inflation monster.

Theresa May joked about Jeremy Corbyn's “magic money tree” — seemingly oblivious to the fact there was a whole forest of them planted on Threadneedle Street. Want a £500,000 mortgage on a £1million house at low interest? Here you go, said commercial banks, taking their lead from the central bank. Fancy a low interest business loan? Knock yourself out! And when interest rates go in the only direction they possibly can when they've been stuck near zero for more than a decade? Ah, we'll cross that bridge when it comes to it.

Little wonder, then, that successive governments have sought to so liberally splash taxpayers' cash. Since the 2008 global financial crash, a mindset appears to have set in that the solution to all our economic woes is “free” money — when actually that has been the root cause of many of our economic ills.

The great myth that the Government can pay for whatever it wants has finally been destroyed, and as is ever the case when arrogant “institutions” that claim to know best cock things up, it is the people who pay their wages who truly suffer. What makes matters even worse, however, is that we've now been conditioned into thinking these same institutions will bail us out. In this, we are arguably as much to blame as the Bank. Just as Carney and

co have profligately printed money and willingly financed our cheap debt, so too have we developed a dangerous dependency on the state stepping in when the economy hits the buffers.

After having our pockets stuffed with furlough cash during lockdown, we deluded ourselves that we are living in a rich country that can afford to cover our losses. We doubled down on this fantasy when our energy bills were subsidised. What's another £70?billion on an energy support package when you've already spent the same amount paying a million people's wages for months on end?

Few thought to question at the time whether paying people to sit at home and do nothing was actually a colossal waste of money guaranteed to have catastrophic economic consequences. Billions were thrown around like confetti, with those making the decisions seemingly losing sight of the fact that, for the same amount of money, we could have reduced crime or enjoyed massive tax cuts.

And to think some people still complained that the furlough money wasn't enough, or that it wasn't sufficient for the Treasury to increase child benefits and pensions in line with inflation, at 10 per cent. Wages rose, even though more people were working from home, but it was all an illusion. All the time we were sitting on a debt mountain that is now on the verge of an avalanche. Again, shouldn't we all have known better? If we were really honest with ourselves, we would admit that some of us have been reckless with our mortgages in the misguided belief that interest rates would stay low and that house prices would keep on going up, forever. True, the Bank did little to disabuse us of that fallacy by lulling us into a false sense of security, but deep down, we all knew it was a ticking time bomb, waiting to explode.

This week we also learned that government debt has risen above 100 per cent of GDP for the first time since 1961. How on earth can that really be a surprise to anyone when, at every turn, the expectation has been for the Government to stomp up money it doesn't even have?

We have also shown a casual disregard for the concept of living within our means, taking out huge loans to finance shiny new cars every three years and putting all our online spending on buy-now-pay-later schemes. This, too, has fooled us into thinking we are richer than we are. The harsh truth is that we are a poor country now, not just with rising core inflation and interest rates, but also the soon-to-be highest tax burden since the Second World War.

Such is our addiction to having everything we want, when we want it, that some now expect to be helped with their spiralling mortgage costs. The fiscally incontinent Liberal Democrats are talking about mortgage bailouts, as if it is the role of the state to underwrite or directly compensate anyone who is disadvantaged by events. Meanwhile we've got the Left criticising “cuts” and calling for public sector pay rises, seemingly oblivious to the fact that even this supposedly Right-wing Government has managed to blow the budget. Any rescue package would result in renters having to subsidise the very people whose booming house prices have prevented them from getting on the ladder in the first place. It would leave us in a perverse situation of the have-nots propping up the haves.

The Telegraph

UK government seeking to shut down debate on Israel

Alistair Burt

have agreed that such actions are justifiable and are in line with government policy. Except for Israel. Israel is the only state singled out by the UK government as not being eligible for such an exemption, which means that a future government would have to change the law to bring Israel inside a measure that otherwise encompasses everyone else.

The debate surrounding the measure will thus focus on two main issues. Firstly, the degree of freedom which it is appropriate for public bodies to exercise in matters within their control. And secondly, the degree to which Israel should be treated differently to anyone else. I suspect it is the latter that will have the greater impact — and such a debate could not come at a more awkward time for the state of Israel in the UK.

Support for the existence of the state of Israel is

unmovable in the UK, among people and politicians, as is revulsion for terrorist attacks upon it. No questioning of Israel should be unfairly turned as undermining such fundamentals. But there has been a perceptible and growing unease about events in Israel and the Occupied Territories and the actions of its government. This has gradually found widening expression, within the Jewish community here and beyond, as the political taboo surrounding any criticism of Israel has been broken not by meeting extremism with extremism, but by measured concern from credible and powerful voices.

The historian Simon Schama wrote in March that the UK community should join with Jews “all over the world” in speaking out against Israel's drift toward becoming a “nationalist theocracy,” not as a “betrayal of Israel” but a “passion-

ate declaration of support for the enormous number of people who feel as anguished as we do.” The acceleration of an aggressive nationalism in Israel, including attacks upon the Christian community in Jerusalem, has been condemned by the archbishop of Canterbury. The increase in extreme settler violence, accompanied by a lack of appropriate policing, visible at Huwara and elsewhere, can no longer be ignored. The growing number of innocent casualties of Israeli army actions against terrorists causes deep concern from the UK government and many others.

Actions by, and the composition of, the Israeli government elected in November last year have perhaps done more than anything else to break the previous silence. The admission of ministers with extreme views on Palestine, the Palestinian community in Israel and the annexation of occupied territory is

rejected by many in the Jewish community here. And public demonstrations in London by them against the efforts of the Netanyahu government to “reform” the legal system are unprecedented. Many groups have already spoken out against the bill to be debated in the UK Parliament next week.

There are many who believe that what looks like impunity for Israel's breaches of international law over many years has encouraged those who advocate this aggressive nationalism. The opportunities for greater stability and justice presented by a changing Middle East risk being lost by many things, and this is one of them. It is a difficult time, therefore, for a measure that singles out Israel and shuts down arguments when, in fact, we need to talk about Israel more, such as about how it intends to live up to its international responsibilities and, more seriously, what to do if it does not.

Arab News

Russia and Israel both kill children. Shame both, Mr Guterres

Andrew Mitrovica

LITTLE Mohammad al-Tamimi must have been excited. Twilight on June 2 was slowly slipping into night when the two-and-a-half-year-old toddler, with a shock of light brown hair, got into his father's car parked outside their home in Nabi Saleh, a village northwest of Ramallah in the occupied West Bank.

Haitham al-Tamimi and his son were headed to a niece's birthday party. Sweet treats, family and fun were on the menu. Moments later, the car was engulfed by bullets fired by Israeli soldiers stationed at a nearby checkpoint. Mohammad's mother, Marwa, rushed out of the house. "My husband was trying to drive the car to move it away from the direction of the shooting," she said. All the frantic while, a wounded Haitham cried out for his badly injured son: "Hamoudi, Hamoudi." Mohammad had been shot in the head. "I was sure he was killed. It was clear because I saw his head was bleeding," Marwa remembered. Mohammad was airlifted to a Tel Aviv hospital. Four days later – strapped to a tangle of tubes and monitors – he was dead. His father survived. At first, predictably, Israeli officials blamed "Palestinian cross-fire" for the shooting of two innocents. Then, their story shifted. Now, it was "unclear" who was responsible. An "investigation" was opened. Finally, an admission: an Israeli soldier had shot the pair. Mohammad al-Tamimi's killing was a "mistake", an Israeli official said. Another lethal "mistake" in a catalogue of lethal "mistakes" Israeli soldiers have made again and again that have claimed the lives of Palestinian after Palestinian – young and old.

And like the litany of "mistake"-prone Israeli soldiers, the gunman who blasted a bullet into Mohammad al-Tamimi's skull will not be punished for killing a child. Twenty-seven Palestinian children in Gaza and the West Bank have already been

killed by Israeli forces this year. Mohammad al-Tamimi was the youngest. In 2022, 42 Palestinian children were killed and 933 injured by the Israeli military. In 2021, Israeli forces killed 78 Palestinian children and injured another 982. Among the living, four out of five Palestinian children in the Gaza Strip suffer from chronic depression, sadness and fear caused by the 16-year Israeli blockade of the besieged territory. By any humane measure, those figures are a breathtaking reflection of Israel's long, shameful record of killing and maiming Palestinian children in body, mind and spirit.

Although accurate, "shameful" is not the word United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is eager to use to describe the horror of what happened to Mohammad al-Tamimi and other Palestinian kids. Israeli soldiers have disfigured and killed year after year. That hypocrisy was made plain last week when, despite the entreaties of a slew of human rights organisations, Guterres chose, once more, not to include Israel in its "list of shame" – a black-list of "parties to armed conflict who commit grave violations against children". Russia made it onto this year's ledger. Guterres was moved to add Russia's regular forces and mercenaries after he was "shocked" and "appalled by the high number of grave violations against children in Ukraine" in 2022. It marked the first time one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council joined the blacklist. Vladimir Putin's Russia deserves it. Three teenagers were among at least 11 people killed by a Russian missile strike on a popular pizzeria in eastern Ukraine on Tuesday evening. That outrage, alone, confirmed Russia's place on the UN's roster of shame.

Yet, apparently, Guterres was not "shocked" or "appalled" enough to break with precedent further and

finally acknowledge that Israel's soldiers are as guilty as Russia's soldiers in "committing grave violations against children". Rather than admit the truth, the UN chief preferred instead to reach for the diplomatic corps's reliable handbook of stock, limp bromides.

"I remain deeply concerned by the number of children killed and maimed by Israeli forces during hostilities and through the use of live ammunition," Guterres wrote on June 5. The secretary general repeated that he was "deeply concerned" by Israel's "excessive use of force against children" three times over two meandering, euphemism-filled paragraphs. Guterres compounded his blatant double-standard by suggesting, obscenely, that Israel had earned some consideration for having killed and maimed fewer Palestinian children in 2022 than it did the year before. I can imagine the scene as Guterres huddled with his advisers to help prepare his latest report, carefully calibrated not to offend Israel.

Guterres: What the terrible Russians and their proxies are doing to Ukrainian children is shameful and appalling. Agreed? Adviser 1: Agreed. Adviser 2: Mr secretary general, just playing devil's advocate here. But what about the deep and lasting damage the terrible Israelis and their proxies have done and continue to do to so many Palestinian children? Guterres: Yes that's terrible but it's also a tricky one, isn't it? Advisers 1 and 2: Yes, it's tricky all right. Guterres: Well, "appalled" and "shameful" are definitely out. Otherwise, the White House or worse, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen will make my life miserable. Advisers 1 and 2: Good point. Guterres: So, "deeply concerned" it is. It's meaningless but it's the best we can do. Anyway, it's not the first meaningless

thing I've had to say, right? Advisers 1 and 2: Noted. Russia – bad, very bad. Israel – "deeply concerned." Sounds about right.

Still, I wonder, in the UN's calculus, when does the killing and maiming of children by soldiers tip from "deeply concerning" into "appalling" and "shameful"? What is the mysterious threshold? Is it a round number? Is it a question of intent? What is the precise nature and scope of the killing and maiming of Palestinian children that must occur before the UN secretary general determines that Israel's fatal actions warrant being denounced as "appalling" and "shameful"? Or could it be that the nationality of the soldiers doing the maiming and killing is the deciding factor?

Whatever the litmus test, even Human Rights Watch (HRW) – the darling of most Western news organisations and capitals – has concluded that Guterres should have put Israel on the "list of shame" years ago. Israel "belongs on the list", HRW wrote. Its "omission" not only "sends a mixed message about the UN's willingness to hold powerful governments accountable" but "does a grave disservice to Palestinian children". Palestine's ambassador to the UN, Riyad Mansour, called Guterres's decision to leave Israel off the shame list a "big mistake".

Beyond being a "big mistake" and a "grave disservice to Palestinian children", this cowardice may be the sad, inevitable price the UN's top diplomats are willing to pay to keep their important jobs, and the perks and privileges that go with them. After all, diplomats, like the rest of us, have to pick their battles. Does anyone believe that Guterres, or any UN secretary general for that matter, would volunteer to fall on their cushy petard in defence of the fast-fading memory of Mohammad al-Tamimi or the many other Palestinian children killed – by "mistake," of course – by Israel?

French police killed Nahel because racism enabled it

Crystal M. Fleming

THIS week, French police brutally killed a 17-year-old in broad daylight during a traffic stop. Police initially lied and accused the youth of trying to run over an officer. And, as is often the case, national media reported police fabrications as facts – until cell phone video from a bystander showed the devastating truth.

By now, people across the globe have seen the horrific images of French police brandishing rifles and menacing the occupants of a yellow vehicle in the Parisian suburb of Nanterre before summarily executing the teenage driver with a bullet to the head as he pulled away. Contrary to false claims by the police, no officer was standing in front of the car or physically threatened by the youth driving away.

Images of the shooting have produced what the classical French sociologist Emile Durkheim would call a "shock to the collective conscience". Protests have erupted across the country, only to be met with the deployment of thousands of police officers, tear gas and promises to restore "public order". Unfortunately, it comes as no surprise that Nahel, the French teen whose life was cut tragically short by police, was of Algerian ancestry.

France has a long and sordid history of colonial racism and violence against people racialised as "non-white", stretching from Haiti, Guadeloupe and Martinique in the Caribbean to Réunion Island in the Indian Ocean, North and West Africa as well as Vietnam, among many other populations. France has ruthlessly oppressed Algerian people in particular – including those who are French citizens.

Indeed, French colonisation of Algeria dates back to the early 1800s and involved the widespread use of brutal violence and mass killings to establish French rule. During the Algerian war for independence (1954-1962), hundreds of thousands and possibly more than 1 million Algerian people were slaughtered and systematically tortured by the French regime in a desperate attempt to maintain their colonial empire in the name of "liberté, égalité et fraternité" – freedom, equality and brotherhood.

Police violence has also been put on hold while the military commissions courts grind on well into the second decade of pretrial litigation with no clear end in sight. Meanwhile, the health of my client and others continues to worsen. Over the past year, defence teams for al Baluchi and the four co-defendants in the 9/11 case raised torture treatment with the administration as part of plea negotiations. But those negotiations have now stalled with reports that the judge plans to resume hearings in the fall. As the military commissions drag on, the government must not wait to address the health effects of torture. Improvements in medical care at Guantanamo do not require court intervention. The administration could commit the necessary resources, likely at a fraction of the cost of the extensive (and expensive) litigation. As Aolain has written in her report, "The US Government's failure to provide torture rehabilitation squarely contravenes its obligations under the Convention against Torture."

If the Biden administration means what it says about supporting torture survivors, it must act now to improve medical conditions at Guantanamo, regardless of the status of the military commissions. To have any credibility, it must acknowledge the harm the US government has inflicted and commit to a comprehensive care and rehabilitation programme for Guantanamo detainees.

historically targeted Arab and Black people in France. In 1961, French police killed more than 100 French Arabs who were peacefully protesting in Paris. Tens of thousands of people had been marching in support of Algerian independence and in protest against a curfew that had been imposed to quell dissent. In response, police killed French Algerians in the streets, even drowning protesters in the river Seine. The youngest documented death was that of another teenager – 15-year-old Fatima Beda. In an era well before smart phones, French authorities engaged in a brazen and largely successful cover-up that lasted for decades. It took more than 50 years for a French president to even acknowledge what happened. Even now, there's been no official apology.

The historical context of colonial racism and policing that led to the killing of Nahel in Nanterre is largely absent from dominant accounts from white French politicians and media pundits alike. Despite the fact that police killings in France are on the rise with the majority of victims being Black or Arab, the reality of systemic racism in France is routinely and aggressively denied by French authorities under the twin veils of colorblindness and cultural arrogance.

White French people in particular are more comfortable interpreting the execution of a French North African youth in 2023 as resulting from intractable problems of immigration and poverty in the suburbs (known as the "banlieues") or the consequence of one poorly trained police officer pulling the trigger – the proverbial "bad apple". In the wake of massive protests, French President Emmanuel Macron called the killing "inexplicable". But this, too, is yet another French fabrication and a form of persistent denial. Nahel's death is not an unsolvable mystery – it was the result of systemic racism.

Studies have long demonstrated extensive racial bias in French policing targeting Arab and Black people in particular. In 2020, France's own human rights ombudsperson found that young men who are racialised as Arab or Black are 20 times more

likely to be profiled and stopped by police. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance has long warned of racial discrimination perpetrated by French police, and communities on the ground frequently acknowledge the heavy toll of being demonised and harassed as a result of racist ideology. The names of racialised minorities who have fallen victim to police violence in France over the past two decades— Zayed and Bouna, Adama Traoré, Théo, among others—have left an anguished record of police impunity.

When these kinds of police killings happen in the United States, as they so frequently do, there is often generally acknowledgement in the media and among liberals and leftists that racism is a fundamental cause. In France, liberals and leftists often join forces with right-wing extremists to deny the existence of French racism. In fact, as I argue in my book Resurrecting Slavery: Racial Legacies and White Supremacy in France, the global reputation of the United States as an especially racist society is a key factor that enables France and other European nations to minimize and deny their own racial bigotry and discrimination.

Many prominent African American writers and intellectuals who moved to France during the early to mid-20th century also fuelled the myth of French colorblindness. James Baldwin was a notable exception to the rule. Reflecting on his experience in France, he wrote: "I lived mainly among les misérables — and, in Paris, les misérables [were] Algerian." Today, the miserable ones, those who find themselves targeted by racism, Islamophobia and police rifles, are still Algerian.

The time has come for France to move beyond the familiar cycle of state violence and denial to an honest acknowledgement of systemic racism as well as a commitment to implementing policies to address widespread discrimination and biases in policing, employment, education and politics. The real violence at stake isn't merely the burning of buildings and destruction of property — it's the very real human cost of victims like Nahel adding to the body count produced by centuries of French oppression.

Aljazeera

The US government must provide care to its torture victims

Sarah Gannett

ON June 26, to commemorate the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, President Joe Biden issued a statement emphasising the United States government's commitment to "eliminating torture" and "supporting its victims".

While he named various countries and entities that have engaged in torture, he failed to name his own country. He did not acknowledge the use of torture against hundreds of people US forces had taken to black sites around the world, dozens of whom remain imprisoned at Guantanamo Bay. On the same day that Biden released his statement, UN Special Rapporteur Fionnuala Ni Aolain released a new report on the Guantanamo detainees. The document calls on the US government not only to apologise for its use of torture and provide redress for the victims but also to make sure they have proper access to healthcare and rehabilitation, which at the moment they do not. These men, including my client, Ammar al Baluchi, are still suffering from serious physical and mental health problems as a result of torture. There can be no doubt about the brutality of US torture techniques and the grave harm they cause.

In an unclassified declaration, al Baluchi described one incident: "I wasn't just being suspended to the ceiling. I was naked, starved, dehydrated, cold, hooded, verbally threatened, in pain from the beat-

ing and water-drowning [sic], as my head was smashed against the wall for dozen[s] and dozen[s] of times." This technique is called "walling" and was repeatedly used on him. In fact, an architect of the torture programme has admitted to using al Baluchi as a live prop on which to train new torturers.

Al Baluchi suffered a traumatic brain injury from walling, which has caused headaches, dizziness, extreme sensitivity to light and sound and has impaired his ability to think and perform everyday tasks. Doctors say these symptoms will worsen over time and require long-term, intensive therapy. The sleep deprivation he was subjected to has caused a serious sleep disorder that prevents al Baluchi from ever getting more than an hour or two of sustained sleep. He has harrowing nightmares and flashbacks that can be triggered by the slightest reminder of the torture, making it difficult for him to work with his lawyers. His muscles and joints still scream with the agony of being forced into unnatural positions.

Al Baluchi was also recently diagnosed with a tumour on his spine, which could affect his nervous system and motor function and require surgery. The government claims it provides prisoners with the same level of care it provides members of the military, but it refuses to convene a panel of experts to evaluate al Baluchi's

health and recommend a treatment plan as it would for any service member under its care. It does not even have a consistently functioning MRI machine at the Guantanamo Bay military base to monitor the tumour.

These serious medical issues cannot currently be addressed at Guantanamo, where – as the United Nations and International Committee of the Red Cross have recently documented – there is neither a proper hospital nor dedicated, independent medical staff. Medical records of detainees do not even acknowledge their torture. This is despite the fact that the US government does not deny torturing them. In 2014, the Senate Intelligence Committee found that the government committed horrific abuses against al Baluchi and other prisoners. The CIA even gave information about them to Hollywood producers who chillingly depicted al Baluchi's torture in the film Zero Dark Thirty.

In 2021, military jurors deciding the fate of another torture survivor, Majid Khan, called the torture programme "an affront to ... the concept of justice" and "a stain on the moral fiber of America". But the courts have provided no remedy. Since 2008, lawyers have laboured in federal court in habeas corpus proceedings to apply constitutional protections – including safe, healthy conditions of confinement – to al Baluchi. We have not pre-

viously. Our demands for justice have been put on hold while the military commissions courts grind on well into the second decade of pretrial litigation with no clear end in sight. Meanwhile, the health of my client and others continues to worsen. Over the past year, defence teams for al Baluchi and the four co-defendants in the 9/11 case raised torture treatment with the administration as part of plea negotiations. But those negotiations have now stalled with reports that the judge plans to resume hearings in the fall. As the military commissions drag on, the government must not wait to address the health effects of torture. Improvements in medical care at Guantanamo do not require court intervention. The administration could commit the necessary resources, likely at a fraction of the cost of the extensive (and expensive) litigation. As Aolain has written in her report, "The US Government's failure to provide torture rehabilitation squarely contravenes its obligations under the Convention against Torture."

If the Biden administration means what it says about supporting torture survivors, it must act now to improve medical conditions at Guantanamo, regardless of the status of the military commissions. To have any credibility, it must acknowledge the harm the US government has inflicted and commit to a comprehensive care and rehabilitation programme for Guantanamo detainees.

What US presidential hopefuls will be talking about ... and what they won't

Luke Coffey

CAMPAIGNING for the next US presidential election in November 2024, has started. Already, several declared candidates seeking their party's nomination are crisscrossing the country to seek support. Townhall meetings and rallies are becoming a regular feature in Iowa and New Hampshire, states that play an important role in the early stages of the election process.

The toxic political environment in recent years has left the US divided. High inflation, concerns over healthcare, the increasing cost of higher education, and the incessant culture wars, focus the electorate's mind on domestic issues. When American voters go to the polls, they're voting on the "bread-and-butter" issues: jobs, the economy, education, and healthcare. They are not voting on foreign policy issues.

This view is backed up by regular polling that shows the top election issues Americans care about rarely include international affairs, unless America is at war. Also, when Americans show interest in foreign policy related matters, it is usually on issues such as climate change and immigration that have a major domestic policy component to them.

However, when foreign policy is debated in the coming months, expect three top issues to dominate the agenda. The first is Ukraine. Under normal circumstances, the idea of the US supporting Ukraine's self-defense against a Russian invasion would not be divisive. But in the current climate, some on America's political far rightwing have made support for Ukraine a needlessly

contentious issue. Those candidates who are against more US military assistance to Ukraine should tread carefully with their opposition. Polling shows that the mood of the American public, including Republicans, tells a different story. More than two-thirds of Americans support arming Ukraine, including most Republicans. Also, there remains very strong bipartisan and bicameral support for Ukraine in the US Congress.

Another issue that will gain a lot of attention in the presidential campaign is Iran. This is because there is such a contrast between Biden and his Republican challengers when it comes to how to best deal with Tehran. With US support for Ukraine remaining a divisive issue among the top Republican contenders, the issue of Iran is one where there is near unity. While Biden has pursued a policy of rapprochement with Iran, still hoping to someday finalize a new nuclear deal, the main Republican candidates want to return to the Trump era "maximum pressure" campaign. Since this is a policy area of such contrast, expect Iran to feature in any foreign policy debate in the coming months.

Finally, there will be a big focus on China. Although there is a diverse set of opinions among the different candidates regarding Beijing, there is general agreement that China remains a top strategic competitor, if not adversary, to the US. Republicans will criticize Biden for being too weak on China. Among Republican candidates, each

is trying to look tougher than the others when it comes to dealing with China. For example, some top Republicans have called for the US to recognize Taiwan's independence. Others have suggested that all military support for Ukraine should end and instead focus should shift 100 percent on to the defense of Taiwan. The issue of China will also be the one foreign policy issue that resonates the best with your average American. After years of declining US manufacturing (often, rightly or wrongly, blamed on China), and after the turmoil that the COVID-19 pandemic had on everyday life, Americans take more of an interest in US-China relations than most other foreign policy issues.

There are two more issues that warrant more attention in the American political debate, but probably won't receive it. The first issue is Afghanistan. Biden's withdrawal from Afghanistan the summer of 2021 was a geopolitical disaster. It was a catastrophe for the Afghans and emboldened transnational terrorist organizations now roaming freely across Afghanistan. Furthermore, tens of thousands of Afghans who the US promised to bring out remain stranded in the country. Even though it was Biden who decided to execute the withdrawal from the country, it was Trump who laid the groundwork for the process with his dubious deal with the Taliban in early 2021. Neither political side wanted to remain in Afghanistan and neither wants to raise the issue today. It was truly a bipartisan disaster and both

sides would like to forget this sad episode in US foreign policy.

The second issue that should be discussed more during the presidential campaign but will not be free trade. Starting with Trump, and continuing with Biden, there has been a lack of any meaningful free trade policy coming from the White House. Both sides have pursued populist and protectionist trade agendas that ultimately harm the American economy and impact America's partners. The steel and aluminum tariffs applied to some Gulf states, started by Trump and continued by his successor, are a good example. It would be beneficial to have a genuine debate in the US about the importance of free trade to America's prosperity and economy, but this is unlikely to happen during the upcoming presidential campaign.

As with most US elections, whether the midterm elections for Congress or the presidential election, don't expect too much time devoted on foreign policy issues. America is a large country. Most people have difficulty keeping up with what is happening in Los Angeles and New York City much less London or Riyadh. Americans living in the heartland, in states such as Kansas or Missouri, are more than 1,000km away from their nearest international border. This does not excuse the lack of foreign affairs interest by most Americans, but it might help others understand why this is the case. It is simply a fact that most Americans do not vote for their preferred candidate purely based on their foreign policy position. Do not expect this to change.

Don't fear a confrontation over illegal migration

David Frost

PLEDGE 5. Stop the Boats. It's as difficult as everyone warned. According to YouGov, only 6 per cent of Brits think the Government is handling this policy well. The Appeal Court decision won't have helped.

The issue of illegal arrivals on small boats is so frustrating and so salient because most of us intuitively feel it ought to be an advantage to have a sea border. It has, after all, protected us for most of our history. But now it's a problem. If you have a land border you can just put a fence up – as the Poles have with Belarus. But a sea border is easy to sail over, and once someone is in British waters they are our problem. If we can't return illegal arrivals back to France – and France refuses this – then either they must stay or be sent somewhere else.

It's true, arrivals this year are 12 per cent down on the same point last year, thanks principally to the Prime Minister's deal with Albania. But the basic shape of the problem remains. At the moment the UK is, in practice, open to anyone who can, somehow, get here. It's costing the country billions and undermining confidence in the Government.

Hence the Rwanda policy – to deter arrivals by sending to Rwanda those arriving illegally by small boat. Voters support this, but are doubtful it can actually be delivered. It's not hard to see why. The Appeal Court has just ruled that it is not safe to send people to Rwanda. It isn't a total defeat: the judges ruled the policy does not break the UN Refugee Convention, and the overall verdict was only by majority, the Lord Chief Justice dissenting. It will now go to

the Supreme Court, which could yet take a different view. If so, we might see some Rwanda flights by the end of the year. If not, the policy will be blocked in the courts.

So, enter the Illegal Migration Bill, the second string to the Government's bow. The Lords debated it on Wednesday. You would certainly not have thought the policy was supported in the country if you had heard peers from all sides, including some Tories, queue up in quivering self-righteousness to denounce it as inhumane, illegal, and counter to our international obligations. Key parts of the Bill have already been voted down and more will certainly go next week.

A major Commons/Lords clash is coming. Unless Labour decides not to block the elected House, the Government will have to use the Parliament Act or acquiesce in Lords amendments, at least some of which are so damaging that it might be better not to have the Bill at all. This will be a real test of nerve and determination. Or will it? As far as I can see, the upcoming Supreme Court ruling is in practice decisive. If it decides the Rwanda policy is legal, then the Bill provides important extra powers, for example on closing the loophole of Theresa May's Modern Slavery Act, but is not essential to deliver deportations. If on the other hand the Court says the policy is illegal because Rwanda is not safe, the Bill will not help: there will just be further court challenges when it's passed, with the same result.

The problem is that the Government pulled its punches with the Bill. It doesn't want to breach or leave the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). So the Bill doesn't do that. But as a result it doesn't have all the powers it needs. If the Supreme Court doubles down, the government will have three choices. First, reformulate the policy, for example sending arrivals to an Overseas Territory instead. Second, bring forward a new Bill which explicitly requires illegal arrivals to be sent to Rwanda, notwithstanding any other international or domestic law commitments or legal proceedings. This is probably what Suella Braverman would have preferred in the first place. But it is a potential breach, at the very least, of the ECHR. Third, leave the ECHR. The first is difficult in practice. There may well be no Commons majority for the second or the third.

This situation is all too reminiscent of that facing Boris Johnson in autumn 2019. The Supreme Court under Lady Hale and parliamentary Remainers blocked his central policy, Brexit. The only way through was an election. He won it because he'd shown, in the months before, he was willing to do whatever it took to deliver – and voters backed him. Rishi Sunak might yet get luckier with the Supreme Court. If he doesn't, he will have to face up to the looming prospect of a confrontation with government lawyers, the Lords, and maybe with Strasbourg – but with voters on his side. He should start preparing for it. Get it right, as in 2019, and it might swing voters back behind the Conservatives as the only party doing what needs to be done. Fail, and it will surely definitely destroy the Government's credibility.

IMF bailout package to stabilize economy, says Iftikhar Malik

ISLAMABAD (APP): SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry former President Iftikhar Ali Malik on Saturday said much needed International Monetary Fund (IMF) bail-out package will help implement structural reforms, reduce fiscal deficits, control inflation, and facilitate the balance of payments besides stabilizing the economy and improve its long-term prospects.

In a news statement issued here, he congratulated Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Finance Minister Ishaq Dar for making the best possible efforts to secure the much-delayed IMF program aims to address economic imbalances, strengthen the fragile economy, and restore

investors' confidence. He said increased foreign exchange reserves provide a boost to Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves which he added can help restore confidence in the country's ability to meet its international obligations and provide a buffer against external shocks.

He said IMF programs will help implement structural reforms in areas such as taxation, public expenditure, the financial sector, and governance. These reforms aim to address deep-rooted economic issues and can have long-term benefits for the economy, he added.

An octogenarian trade leader of South Asia Iftikhar Ali Malik also expressed his highest degree of gratitude to our

time-tested friends of all seasons China, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and the Islamic Development Fund help steer Pakistan out of turmoil at the time of massive economic challenges.

He said Prime Minister's visionary approach and wisdom played a key role in mustering the support from friendly countries to get through the IMF deal.

He said now it's high time the "PM Economic Revival Plan" must focus on unlocking their strategic potential in agriculture, mine and minerals, defence production and information technology in addition to attracting foreign investments of billions of dollars and creating job opportunities for millions of people.

Eidul Azha generates economic activity of Rs500b

ISLAMABAD (INP): Despite higher prices of the sacrificial animals Eid-ul-Adha generated a staggering economic activity of around Rs 500 billion this year. According to Agha Saiddain, the President of Pakistan Tanners Association (PTA), the country has witnessed significant business growth during this auspicious occasion.

President Agha expressed his satisfaction with the performance of the leather industry during Eid-ul-Adha.

"We have witnessed tremendous success this year, with more than 500 billion worth of business conducted during the festival," he stated.

Despite several challenges, the Indian market still relies on Pakistani leather, he added.

Mr. Agha highlighted the potential for financial growth, emphasizing that around 6 billion in funds would be collected on Eid alone.

A total of 5.5 to 6.5 million sacrificial animals — including 2 to 2.5 million cows, 3.5 to 4 million goats, up to 1 million sheep, and 100,000 camels.

Globally, Pakistan is the second-largest leather producer.

The leather industry plays a vital role in Pakistan's economy, and the substantial revenue generated during Eid-ul-Adha further highlights its significance.

Many people in rural areas dedicate significant time and resources to nurturing animals, which are later sold in cities, allowing them to earn a substantial income. As a result, a considerable amount is transferred from urban centers to the rural economy, creating a positive impact on local livelihoods.

The economic impact of Eid-ul-Adha extends beyond the sale of animals and the leather industry. The festival also drives increased consumer spending, particularly on clothing, food, and gifts.

China's software industry expanded

BEIJING (APP): China's software and information technology service industry reported double-digit growth in revenue and profits in the first five months of the year, data from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology showed.

Profits of the sector expanded 12.2 percent year on year to 492.2 billion yuan (about 68.55 billion US dollars) in the period, while revenue grew by 13.3 percent from a year ago to 4.32 trillion yuan.

The export of software business went down 3.7 percent year on year to 18.9 billion US dollars in the first five months, but the export of software outsourcing services rose 5 percent year on year.

Mercedes-Benz to further invest in China: Chairman

FRANKFURT (Xinhua): Mercedes-Benz is planning further investments in China, thus contributing to Sino-German cooperation, Ola Kaellenius, the German carmaker's chairman of the board of management, said recently in an interview with Xinhua.

Kaellenius was speaking with appreciation for the opportunity to participate in the China-Germany inter-governmental consultation and to meet Chinese Premier Li Qiang last week.

During Li's visit, Mercedes-Benz signed a letter of intent with China's National Development and Reform Commission

(NDRC) in Berlin to promote corporate and industrial cooperation.

The move "creates a basis for joint support for further projects to develop new energy vehicles (NEV) in China and foster existing partnerships," Kaellenius said.

Noting that China is the world's largest car market and the most dynamic NEV market, Mercedes-Benz remains committed to its business activities in China and plans to actively contribute to the growth of China's auto industry and to boosting the Sino-German economic partnership, according to the com-

pany.

The company also intends to enhance its R&D activities such as car software development in China, with its local team projected to double in size by the end of 2023 compared with three years ago.

The introduction of intelligent technologies further demonstrates the company's commitment to innovation and customer experience, said the company.

With its dynamic economy and a clear focus on innovation, "China is and will remain an important pillar of our long-term global strategy," Kaellenius said.

18th China International SME: CG Guangzhou openend Pakistan's Pavilion

BEIJING (INP): Acting Pakistani Consul General, Sardar Muhammad, inaugurated the Pakistan Pavilion at the 18th China International Small and Medium Enterprises Fair on June 26.

He also represented Pakistan at the opening ceremony of the Fair and the 2nd SME International Cooperation Summit main forum, both held in Guangzhou.

Talking to China Economic Net (CEN), Sardar revealed that Pakistan has been allocated a significant area at the Fair where eight Pakistani companies are showcasing a variety of products including jewelry, handicrafts, and food items.

The Consul General and He Bing, the Deputy Director General of the Department of Industry and Information Technology of Guangdong, toured all the stalls and praised the exhibitors for their impressive display of Pakistani products.

"We highly appreciate the People's Government of

Guangdong Province and others involved in organizing CISMEEF for providing this great platform for SME promotion, which is the real engine of global inclusive sustainable economic development," he stated.

Sardar noted that CISMEEF offers valuable opportunities for SMEs, both from China and globally, to learn from each other and strengthen exchanges and cooperation. He is confident the Fair will meet its set objectives.

"As per the 2022 estimates from the Small & Medium Enterprise Development Authority (SMEDA), there are over five million SMEs in Pakistan. They contribute 40% to Pakistan's GDP and account for 25% of overall exports.

After agriculture, the SME sector employs the highest percentage of the working population in the country," he pointed out.

He emphasized that SMEs play a crucial role in shaping national growth strategies, generating

employment, and fostering social cohesion by improving the standard of living for vulnerable segments of society. He acknowledged that Pakistan's SME sector is still developing and has much to learn from China's mature and well-developed SME sector.

"There has been cooperation in many areas between the SMEs of China and Pakistan, but there's much more that can be achieved together. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) provides a tremendous opportunity for SMEs to develop and grow.

There's ample scope for joint ventures between Pakistani and Chinese SMEs, especially in the fields of logistics, trucking, training, warehousing, fisheries, horticulture, minerals, food processing, construction, dairy and livestock, ICT and related services, light engineering, apparel, and cold storage and supply chain businesses," the Consul General added.

Bussiness summit held to add strong impetus to regional economic prosperity

CHENGDU (INP): The 12th China (Sichuan) - South Asia & Southeast Asia Business Leaders Summit, the main event of the 19th West China International Expo, was held on June 28 with the theme of "Share the Opportunities of the Era, Create Prosperity of the Region."

"The China-ASEAN Business Council Sichuan Liaison Office was unveiled at the event, according to China Economic Net.

Sponsored by the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT), Sichuan Provincial People's Government, SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and ASEAN-China Centre, the summit discussed the potential of bilateral and multilateral economic and trade cooperation, focusing on major opportunities such as the Belt and Road Initiative, the Chengdu-Chongqing Twin City Economic Circle, the RCEP Agreement, and the New Western Land-sea Corridor construction.

Mrs. Lei Xuejie, Vice President of CCPIT Sichuan Council, moderated the session.

In recent years, practical cooperation across various fields between China and South and Southeast Asian countries has deepened, maintaining a sound momentum of economic and trade exchanges.

China and ASEAN have been each other's largest trading partner for three consecutive years. Two-way trade reached RMB6.52 trillion last year, marking a 15% year-on-year increase. Meanwhile, the RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership) has come into full force for 15 signatories, injecting a strong impetus to regional development and prosperity, according to Yu Jianlong, Vice Chairman of CCPIT.

He mentioned that cooperation on major projects between China and South and Southeast Asian countries has also yielded fruitful results. He underlined that "the China-Laos

Railway, the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed railway in Indonesia, Gwadar Port operation in Pakistan and other projects have been successfully launched. These projects have helped deepen cooperation in relevant projects and brought tangible benefits to the people of relevant countries."

Highlighting that Sichuan is a strategic link and core hinterland supporting the construction of the "Belt and Road Initiative" and the development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt, Yang Xingping, Vice Governor of Sichuan Provincial People's Government, noted that in 2022, the total import and export volume between Sichuan and South and Southeast Asian countries exceeded RMB 215.8 billion, accounting for about one-fifth of the province's total import and export volume that year.

In his keynote address, Additional Secretary to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan, Muhammad Mudassir Tipu, affirmed

China's leading role in regional economic cooperation and highlighted the significant development opportunities brought to Pakistan by CPEC. "In the future, China, South Asia, and Southeast Asia as a whole will surely play a more important role in the world, and we are working together to translate today's ideas and insights into reality," he added.

The summit was attended by high-level government officials, business associations, and corporate representatives from South and Southeast Asia, including Secretary-General of the ASEAN-China Centre, Chandri Raj Dhakal, and Acting President of the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Malaithong Kommasith. Various offline interaction activities, such as symposiums, business opportunity promotions, and business docking, were held to build a practical exchange cooperation platform for industrial and commercial institutions in the region.



PESHAWAR: A vendor selling ice lolly on 3rd day of Eidul Azha.

Stocks rise as Apple tops \$3 tn mark, inflation eases

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): Stocks jumped on Friday as Apple ended a session above \$3 trillion in market value for the first time and data showed inflation cooling in the United States and Europe.

Friday's buoyant round of trading in New York concluded a winning quarter for US stocks amid greater hopes the US economy can avoid a recession and that the Federal Reserve will soon end its interest rate hikes.

The S&P 500 piled on nearly 16 percent in the first six months of 2023.

European markets, meanwhile, finished the first half of the year with similar gains, with Paris up 14 percent and Frankfurt adding 16 percent since January 1.

Apple shares rose 2.3 percent, bringing the tech titan's market value back above \$3 trillion. Apple had briefly breached the level in

January 2022 during a trading session, but had closed below the benchmark.

The US inflation measure most closely watched by the Federal Reserve -- the personal consumption expenditures -- declined in May to 3.8 percent year-on-year from 4.3 percent in April, official data showed.

In Europe, figures showed that eurozone consumer prices rose 5.5 percent in June, down from 6.1 percent in May.

The Fed and the ECB have warned that more interest rate hikes are likely at their next meetings, but the latest inflation figures raised hopes that the central banks could soon wind down their monetary tightening.

"European stocks are ending the week on a high, buoyed by another encouraging inflation report that will soon support the end of the ECB's tightening cycle," said Craig Erlam, senior market analyst at the

OANDA trading group.

The Fed kept its rate unchanged earlier this month after 10 straight increases, but chairman Jerome Powell warned this week that two more increases were probably necessary by the end of the year.

US Treasury bond yields eased following the latest inflation data.

"The inference, we suppose, is that this data point might not persuade the Fed from raising rates in July, but the disinflation trend could put a clamp on the willingness to raise rates again in September," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare.

Strong US economic data this week, including an upgrade of first-quarter growth to 2.0%, gave room for the Fed to maintain its hawkish stance for now.

ECB President Christine Lagarde has pledged another rate increase at the Frankfurt-based central

bank's next meeting in July.

In Hong Kong and Shanghai, traders trod with caution Friday after fresh data on China's economy showed further slowing, with factory activity contracting for the third straight month while growth in the services and construction industries slowed.

A string of similar data in recent months has fanned speculation that authorities will unveil measures to kickstart the economy.

But aside from some small interest rate cuts, officials have unveiled very little of substance to reassure investors, which has kept equities subdued.

China's cabinet on Friday said it would "take effective measures to enhance the momentum of development, optimize the economic structure, and promote the sustained recovery of the economy... in a timely manner".

Leading solar provider commits to optimizing PV market in Pakistan

SHANGHAI (INP): China's leading solar solutions provider LONGi and three certification and testing institutions, including SGS (Shanghai), SGS (Qingdao), and Intertek, held here a strategic cooperation signing ceremony in Shanghai.

This will enable the four parties to strengthen cooperation in the fields of PSI+COC certification and testing necessary for photovoltaic modules to enter the Pakistani market. Ali Majid, General Manager, Pakistan, LONGi Solar, attended to sign the agreement, according to Gwadar Pro.

According to the agreement, the institutions will carry out standardized management of module certification and testing with LONGi.

The three certification and testing institutions are consistent with the LONGi agreement, and when certifying LONGi modules

whose destination country is Pakistan, the three certification and testing institutions need to obtain written testing authorization from LONGi before they can carry out product testing and certification.

The four parties will crack down on counterfeit LONGi products from the source, protecting the rights and interests of customers and ensuring the sustainable development of LONGi's panels business, and working together to build a healthy business environment for Pakistan's PV market.

Photovoltaic power generation, as the best choice to solve Pakistan's power shortage and optimize its energy structure to a great extent based on fossil fuels, while saving foreign exchange required for energy imports, has vast potential for future development.

From 2012 to 2022, LONGi produced a total of 290GW of photovoltaic products, with the cumulative output of clean electricity exceeding 1,148,287 GWh.

According to the International Energy Agency's global power grid average emission factor, it is equivalent to avoiding 536 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions.

As for Pakistani market, both distributed and centralized PV products have market segment demand, distributed PV systems, such as rooftop solar installations on residential, commercial, and industrial buildings, have been gaining popularity in Pakistan.

Majid mentioned that net metering policies and incentives have been introduced to promote distributed generation and allow

consumers to offset their electricity bills by exporting excess power back to the grid.

In recent years, the Pakistani government has successively formulated a number of related policies, thus the country's photovoltaic industry has shown good development potential.

According to Pakistan's long-term power plan - the Indicative Generation Capacity Expansion Plan (IGCEP), the cumulative installed capacity of photovoltaics will reach 12%, or 13.2GW, by 2030, and the government will continue to provide maximum support for renewable energy projects. "The global photovoltaic industry is developing in full swing. China-Pakistan cooperation in related industries can make due contributions to the global response to climate change," Majid added.

Chinese county eyeing exchange of products with Pakistan

HANZHONG (INP): Officials of Mian County, an agriculture-based county in Shaanxi Province in northwestern China, is discussing with Pakistani counterparts about the exchange of agricultural products.

According to China Economic Net (CEN), the exchange will be based on the local specialties of the two sides, such as Chinese medicine and black tea and Pakistani mango and rice.

Apart from the barter trade of agricultural products, the exchange of high-yield crop varieties shall also be included in the cooperation.

"The cooperation is expected to start from the southern areas of Pakistan, especially Sindh", Abdul Ghaffar Shar, a postdoc research fellow of Northwest A&F University who has been facilitating the cooperation told CEN. "For example, Sukkur or Khair pur is suitable for the cultivation of Chinese medicine, and Larkana provides fertile soil for rice", he added.

Saudia's unemployment rate falls to 5.1 per cent

RIYADH (Agencies): Saudi Arabia's jobs targets outlined in Vision 2023 have borne results, with its overall unemployment rate falling 0.9 percentage points to 5.1 percent in the first quarter of 2023 compared to the same period a year ago, official data showed.

According to the latest report by the General Authority for Statistics, the labor force participation of Saudis increased annually by 2.3 percentage points in the first quarter. The employment-to-population ratio also increased by 2.9 percentage points.

The Vision 2030 blueprint sought to reduce the overall unemployment rate from 11.6 percent in 2016 to 7 percent in 2030.

Job creation, especially for Saudi nationals — over 60 percent of whom are under 35 — is a vital part of the ambitious economic agenda spearheaded by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to cut the Kingdom's reliance on oil.

According to the GASTAT report, workforce participation among female

citizens is also rising.

Labor force participation among Saudi females rose by 2.4 percentage points year on year in the first quarter of 2023 to 36 percent, remaining unchanged compared to the last quarter of 2022.

However, the unemployment rate among Saudi males increased to 4.6 percent, up 0.4 percentage points from last quarter and down to 0.5 percentage points compared to the same period a year ago.

The labor force participation rate and the employment-to-population ratio of Saudi males decreased respectively by 0.2 percentage points and 0.5 percentage points to 68.3 percent and 65.2 percent.

The GASTAT report noted that the employment rate among Saudis declined by 1.6 percentage points in the first quarter of 2023 compared to the same period a year ago.

The overall unemployment rate in the Kingdom, including Saudis and non-Saudis, increased by 0.3 percentage points in the

first quarter of 2023 compared to the year-ago period.

The Kingdom's unemployment rate had fallen to an all-time low of 8 percent in the fourth quarter of 2022.

Compared to the fourth quarter of 2022, the unemployment rate of Saudis rose by 0.5 percentage points to 8.5 percent in the first quarter of 2023, while the labor force participation of Saudis decreased to 52.4 percent during the same period.

The non-oil private sector expansion is a crucial pillar of Vision 2030 aimed at diversifying the Kingdom's economy.

The report further revealed that 94.1 percent of unemployed Saudis would accept jobs in the private sector. Historically, the public sector has been the principal employer of Saudi citizens.

The report added that 55.5 percent of unemployed Saudi females and 45 percent of unemployed Saudi males would accept a maximum commuting time to work of one hour.



In brief

Pakistan to play friendly football matches

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Pakistan women's football team will play friendly matches against Singapore between July 13 and 19 next. According to the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF), matters have been settled between the PFF and the Football Association of Singapore for matches in the FIFA Women's International Window next month. The women teams of Pakistan and Singapore will play two matches between July 13 and 19 next. The PFF normalisation committee will officially announce the matches between Pakistan and Singapore after the Eid holidays. The PFF had talked to Kyrgyzstan and Mauritius before Singapore, but matters were not settled with them. The training camp of the national team has been set up in Karachi to prepare for the friendly matches. Aqsa Mushtaq, who plays football in Britain, is likely to join the Pakistani team.

Trials for National Throwball on July 3

PESHAWAR (APP): A trial to select Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Men and Women Team for the forthcoming National Throwball Championship on July 3, 2023, at 9:00 am. This was stated by Secretary KP Throwball Association Arshad Hussain while talking to APP here on Saturday. He said both Men and Women's teams of KP would take part in the forthcoming National Throwball Men and Women Championship at Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) commencing from July 13-16. "All the players, both men and women, are advised to reach for the trials at the respective venues on the above-mentioned date in time. The women's trials will be held in City Gulbahar Girls College on July 3 at 9:00 am while the Men team trials will be held at Governor College Peshawar on July 03 at 9:00 a.m.," he added. Arshad Hussain said, "The selection committee for the male team are Arshad Hussain, Deputy Director Sports Higher Education Department of KP Zafar Iqbal, Hassan Khan, Ijaz Ahmad, Sohrab Hussain and Bilal Ahmad Khan. For the selection of the Women's team, the selection committee was headed by Arshad Hussain, with other members including Najma Qazi, Miss Afsheen, Sohrab Hussain, Ijaz Ahmed and Bilal Ahmed. He said Syed Jaffar Hussain and Abid Ali, the two coaches, would represent Director General (DG) Sports of KP.

Djokovic eyes Wimbledon title

LONDON (AFP/APP): Novak Djokovic has Roger Federer's record of eight Wimbledon titles and a 24th major in his sights as he closes in on a first calendar Grand Slam in 54 years. Fresh from breaking out of a tie with Rafael Nadal for 23 Slams at the French Open, the 36-year-old Djokovic will comfortably be the overwhelming favourite at the All England Club when he starts his title defence on Monday. With a 10th Australian Open and third Roland Garros already wrapped up this season, an eighth Wimbledon triumph would leave Djokovic needing just the US Open in September to emulate Rod Laver's sweep of all four majors in 1969. "He takes your legs, then he takes your soul, then he digs your grave and you have a funeral and you're dead. Bye-bye. Thank you for coming," said coach Goran Ivanisevic when asked to caption the Serb's Grand Slam mindset.

Pakistani players excel in squash in Kuwait

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistani squash players living in Kuwait Saturday expressed their determination that they would get the honor of representing Pakistan in the future and achieve success for the country and the nation.

The U17 Qadeer Rehman Gul, U15 Talal Rehman Gul and U11 Fahad Faheem Gul were talking to media here at Qamar Zaman Squash Complex Peshawar said that they are trying their best to win back more tournaments and keep their ranking high both at the national and international levels.

Qadeer Rehman Gul have won the U-17 Hashim Khan Squash Championship after performing brilliantly. Qadeer Gul Rehman, who is the son of Pakistan's former national squash player, Rehman Gul and nephew of international squash player and coach Ahmed Gul, said that he is ranked first among players of his age in Kuwait as well.

He has started a streak of success at the age of 11 which is still going on. He won several tournaments in Kuwait and also participated in a camp held in Houston USA. Qadeer Rahman Gul said that he was supported a lot by the international squash player and coach Jahanzeb

Masood in the camp organized in Houston and that is the reason that this year also he will participate in the camp so that he can get the international experience.

He said that Peshawar is his hometown and he enjoyed playing here. He wishes to represent Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the future and if given a chance, he will also play for Pakistan so that the country and the nation can benefit from it.

He paid great tribute to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Squash Association Chairman Qamar Zaman and Munawar Zaman for the steps taken for the development of the game. Under-15 Np. 1 player of Kuwait Talal Rehman Gul defeated Abdullah Abdullah in the Hashim Khan Squash Championship. He won the title against Abdullah Zaman.

Talking to the media he said that he also wants to play for his province and country. He won a tournament in Peshawar last year as well, while he was the runner-up in one tournament.

Talal Rehman Gul said that he has also won many tournaments held in Kuwait. Talal added that the game of squash in Peshawar is progressing and many players are very talented and if they get a chance in the future, they will represent Pakistan and

win victories for the country. Younger Fahad Faheem Gul who is top in the U11 ranking in Kuwait is also passionate about playing for Pakistan, he said that he also wants to make the name of Pakistan like other players in his family.

Rehmat Gul, who is the coach in Kuwait, said in an interview with the media that he is coaching in Kuwait with his three brothers. Many players from Peshawar are currently coaching in Kuwait. His elder brother Ahmad Gul has been a prominent player of Pakistan and now a day coach of Kuwait National Team, many Kuwaiti players are performing brilliantly at the international level due to his coaching in Kuwait.

Rehmat Gul said that Pakistani players can't represent Kuwait that's why the talented players aspire to represent their province and Pakistan and if they are given the opportunity, they can win honors for the country and the nation.

Rehmat Gul also paid tribute to the former world champion Qamar Zaman for the development of the squash game in the province and the welfare of the players and expressed his belief that soon the players of Peshawar will once again perform brilliantly at the international level.

24 nations confirmed for 2023 WSF Men's Squash C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): A total of 24 teams have been confirmed for the World Squash Federation (WSF) Men's World Team Championship to be held in Tauranga, New Zealand from December 11-17.

The biennial tournament, would see four-man squads from national federations battle it out for the title of World Squash Champions, said a press release on Saturday.

The tournament would feature around 100 of the world's best squash athletes. This year's event marks a welcome return for the championship, which has not been played since 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Joining hosts New Zealand, were countries from every corner of the globe, including defending champions Egypt, eight-time champions Australia and five-time champions England.

This year's event would also see the Philippines make their debut, while Brazil returns for the first time since 1997, with Japan and the Netherlands competing for the first time since 2013.

Tauranga has emerged in recent years as a hotbed of top-class squash, with last year's 'Festival of Squash' well received by squash fans around the world.

Squash New Zealand Chief Executive Martin Dowson said he was thrilled to have a great array of high-quality teams confirmed for the event. "We're expecting fantastic competition featuring the best men's players in the world and we're really looking forward to bringing this prestigious event back to New Zealand for the first time since 1983."

WSF President Zena Wooldridge, OBE, said, "On behalf of World Squash I'm delighted to see such a strong entry for the Men's World Team Championship after a four-year gap. The atmosphere and experience of a team championship, with players representing their nations, is very special for participants and fans."

Tourism Bay of Plenty General Manager Oscar Nathan said, "The world championship offers a fantastic incentive for players and their supporters to travel to the Coastal Bay of Plenty. "We know that they'll enjoy the outstanding competition venue and I'm sure they'll want to make the most of what our region has to offer whenever they take a break away from the courts."

2023 WSF Men's World Team Championship entries include Australia, Brazil, Canada, Czech Republic, Egypt, England, France, Germany, Hong Kong, China, India, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Kuwait, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Philippines, Scotland, South Africa, Switzerland, USA and Wales.



HARARE: Players of West Indies react as they make their way off following the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Qualifier Zimbabwe 2023 Super 6 match.

Scotland knock out West Indies at World Cup Qualifier with seven-wicket win

HARARE (Agencies): Scotland ended two-time winners West Indies' World Cup hopes and boosted their own chances of reaching this year's finals with a seven-wicket win.

It is the first time Scotland have beaten West Indies in a one-day international, at the fourth attempt.

Brandon McMullen took three wickets as West Indies were all out for 181 and his 69 runs and Matthew Cross' 74 not out saw Scotland win on 185-3.

Scotland must beat hosts Zimbabwe and the Netherlands to progress.

They face Zimbabwe on Tuesday, with their final game against the Dutch, also in Bulawayo, taking place on Thursday.

Meanwhile, West Indies are now unable to qualify for the World Cup - a competition they have never failed to appear at before. Scotland skipper Richie Berrington won the toss and opted to bowl first. His decision was vindicated with McMullen picking up a wicket in each of his first three overs.

West Indian captain Shai Hope came in, looking to offer them exactly that - hope. He was joined at the crease by Nicholas Pooran - one of the top run-scorers at this tournament. But that partnership was only able to put on 30 before Hope edged behind.

They had already lost Brandon King - caught and bowled off McMullen - and Kyle Mayers by that point, who had his off-stump

taken out the ground via a rip-snorter from Chris Sole.

Reduced to 81-6, Jason Holder (45) and Romario Shepherd (36) put on a solid counter-punch, but both fell in the space of three balls and the tail collapsed.

They were offered a sniff. Chris McBride went on the first ball of Scotland's innings, clipping a leg-side delivery from Holder straight to Kevin Sinclair.

However, McMullen and Matthew Cross formed a fantastic partnership to give Scotland a fantastic base from which to build.

McMullen was the flashier - driving a brilliant six over the head of Alzarri Joseph - while Cross quietly chuntered on to his own top score of the tournament.

The former was eventually caught on the boundary rope by Joseph, but George Munsey - returning from illness - was able to add 18 before Cross put the finishing touches to the game, scoring the winning runs with a fantastic boundary.

The win helps soothe Scotland's pain of five years ago, when they lost to West Indies by just five runs. After bowling them out for 198 in Hobart, the Scots scored 125-5 before weather stopped play and DLS decreed they were five runs short.

"We let ourselves down" - West Indies captain

Afterwards, McMullen told Sky Sports: "It was going my way, so we had to make use of it. I enjoyed all three [wickets], they were

all pretty good. "Matthew [Cross] was phenomenal today and took a lot of pressure of both of us. It was awesome to see him back in form."

And, on his six, McMullen commented: "I was chuffed with that one. It's part of my game, playing nice, straight shots so it was good that it came off today. I have no words, really."

Reflecting on defeat, Hope told Sky Sports: "There's not one thing to put my finger on. We've certainly let ourselves down here in the entire tournament. We need to look at the way we start our innings."

"Fielding is well and truly an attitude, in my opinion. We need to make more effort, especially with our attitude. Catches will drop, mis-fields will happen, it's all part of the game. The effort needs to remain, regardless. I don't think we gave 100% effort every time."

"It starts with foundation. The preparation needs to be better, from back home. We can't come here and expect to be an elite team without the backing and preparation."

"We can't expect to wake up one morning and be a great team. There's a lot we need to focus on, we have to control what we can control."

"Scotland played really well, credit to them. I could see discipline, especially in the bowling attack. That's something we can take from them."

Birmingham book home quarter-final despite Afridi's four-wicket over

NOTTINGHAM

(Agencies): Birmingham Bears booked themselves a home quarter-final in the Vitality Blast with a two-wicket victory over North Group rivals Notts Outlaws at a damp Trent Bridge despite losing four wickets to Pakistan ace Shaheen Shah Afridi in the first over of their innings as they chased 169 to win.

The Bears, already sure of a place in the knock-out stages after five straight wins before this, found themselves reeling at seven for four as Shaheen, at 23 already regarded as among the best bowlers in the world in this format, gave away five wides with his first ball but then took wickets with his first, second, fifth and sixth legal deliveries.

But, after the Outlaws lost their England quick Olly Stone after bowling just three balls on his comeback from injury, opener Rob Yates put together a calm 65 from 46 balls with five sixes that ultimately proved to be the foundation for a victory completed with five balls to spare with vital runs from Jacob Bethell (27) and Jake Lintott (27 not out) in the middle and later stages of the innings.

Despite Tom Moores hitting 73 from 42 balls, the Outlaws always looked to be under par with 168 from their 20 overs, Hasan Ali taking 3 for 25 and Lintott 3 for 27. Afridi's 4 for 29 and Jake Ball's 3 for 33 proved in vain and Outlaws need to beat Leicestershire Foxes at Trent Bridge in their final game to join the Bears in the

knock-out stages.

Asked to bat first after struggling for runs in their last three matches, the Outlaws suffered an early blow as Alex Hales continued his own poor run by chopping on to Henry Brookes for four but Joe Clarke and Lyndon James found some late momentum in the powerplay, James clearing the Larwood and Voce Stand with an enormous six over midwicket off Brookes.

Yet from 61 for 1 after six overs they were checked again by the Bears spinners, with both Clarke (26) and Matt Montgomery bowled by Lintott in consecutive overs as the Outlaws reached halfway at 86 for 3.

Lintott, the left-arm wrist spinner, picked up his third wicket when James, in his most productive Blast innings to date, cut straight to backward point for 37, but gave Moores a life on 21 when he spilled what should have been an easy boundary catch off Olly Hannon-Dalby.

It turned out to be an expensive miss in the context of the innings as the wicket-keeper made the most of that and another slice of luck on 28 when a steeper off Glenn Maxwell dropped safe by hammering sixes off Maxwell, Lintott and Hannon-Dalby twice as 45 were added in the last six overs.

But that was against the loss of six wickets as Pakistan international Ali signed off his Bears stint by having Steven Mullaney caught on the fence, trapping Matt Carter leg before and

bowling Moores with the last ball of the innings after Maxwell had removed Imad Wasim, leg before, and Afridi via a catch at long-on before Stone was run out as the last three balls of the innings all brought wickets.

Any hopes of straightforward night for the Bears seemed to be obliterated in Afridi's extraordinary first over, which began with five wides but then saw Alex Davies yorked and Chris Benjamin bowled attempting a scoop off the first two legal deliveries, followed by two singles and another two wickets off the final two balls, Dan Mousley falling victim to a stunning one-handed catch by Stone at short cover and Ed Barnard castled first ball by another stunning yorker.

More drama followed as Stone, playing in his first Blast match of the season after a long absence with a hamstring injury, had to leave the field after bowling just three balls. Yates began to assert himself with sixes off Carter and Ball but Maxwell bottom-edged into his stumps off Ball and the Bears were 60 for 5.

Thanks to Afridi's heroics, the Bears were three runs behind where they needed to be on the DLS chart when rain brought an interruption with the visitors 76 for 5 after seven, but the break, which in the end cost no overs, gave the Bears time to gather their senses and at 101 for 5 after 10, with Yates having completed a 27-ball fifty that included four sixes, they were beginning to look favourites.

Eastbourne International Madison Keys beats Daria Kasatkina to win title



EASTBOURNE (Agencies): Madison Keys produced a dominant display as she beat Daria Kasatkina in straight sets to win the Eastbourne International for a second time.

The American, 28, triumphed 6-2 7-6 (15-13) as she lifted her seventh WTA title in one hour and 42 minutes. Keys breezed through the first set and, although she missed championship points in a second set tie-break, she eventually closed out the contest.

It was Keys' first WTA title success since the Adelaide 250 in January 2022. Keys was quickly out of the blocks as she backed up a confident opening service game with an emphatic break to love.

World number 11 Kasatkina, ranked 14 places above Keys, was risk averse for the remainder of the set and the Russian had no answer to Keys' powerful ground strokes.

Keys took a 4-1 lead in the second after an early break but Kasatkina sparked into life and even missed a chance to serve for the set at 6-5 before it went to a thrilling tie-break.

Keys squandered three championship points on serve during the topsy-turvy tie-break, while Kasatkina missed a chance of her own to square the match.

At the fourth opportunity Keys settled the contest, as she won a marathon rally with a powerful cross-court forehand. "To win here again gives me really good memories of Eastbourne, it feels like home," Keys said. "It was a really stressful tie-breaker and sorry to Daria about all the lets - I kept hitting the top of the net today!"

History repeats for Keys as Keys beat Angelique Kerber in three sets as a 19-year-old to win the 2014 tournament at Eastbourne - her first WTA title.

Nine years later, Keys delivered a commanding all-round performance as she showed her maturity, and the ability to raise her game, to see off Kasatkina's spirited fightback.

Nobody has won Eastbourne and Wimbledon in the same year since Jana Novotna in 1998. Based on this impressive display - Keys did not drop a set at Eastbourne - she will be among the players to watch at the All England Club, having never gone further than the quarter-finals previously.

"If you told me two weeks ago this where I would be, I wouldn't have believed you," added Keys, who has never won a Grand Slam but reached the final of the US Open in 2017.

"After a tough year, being able to hold this trophy is absolutely amazing." Argentina's Francisco Cerundolo beat Tommy Paul of the United States in three sets to win the men's singles title at Eastbourne.

Cerundolo, who is 19th in the world rankings, quickly secured the one game he needed to complete victory in his rain-affected semi-final against Mackenzie McDonald, before beating Paul 6-4 1-6 6-4 in the final. Paul had beaten France's Gregoire Barrere 6-4 6-3 in his semi-final, which was played in full earlier on Saturday.



SPIELBERG: Max Verstappen of the Netherlands driving the (1) Oracle Red Bull Racing RB19 leads Nico Hulkenberg of Germany driving the (27) Haas F1 VF-23 Ferrari and Sergio Perez of Mexico driving the (11) Oracle Red Bull Racing RB19 on track during the Sprint ahead of the F1 Grand Prix of Austria at Red Bull Ring on July 01, 2023 in Spielberg, Austria.



In brief

Drug peddler held

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad capital police Sumbal police station team arrested a notorious drug peddler and recovered a huge cache of drugs from his possession, a police public relations officer said. He said that, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad capital police had started a massive crackdown against drug suppliers to save the precious lives and future of the young generation. Following these directives, the Incharge of police station Sumbal and his team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending a drug peddler red handed. Police team also recovered 1190 gram of heroin and 1200 gram hashish from his possession. The accused was identified as Muhammad Islam. Cases have been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway. CPO/DIG Operations have appreciated the performance of the Sumbal police team and announced commendation certificates and cash rewards. Islamabad Capital City Police officer (ICCP) emphasized that Islamabad Capital Police will not leave any stone unturned to curb the menace of drugs. "No one would be allowed to play with the precious lives of our young generation" he added.

Three cousins die in car crash

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Three cousins breathed their last after the car they were travelling in hit a tree on Motorway in Talagang on Saturday. According to family sources, the three cousins were going to Murree to spend Eid holidays. The driver lost control of the vehicle near Thalliyan Interchange and hit a tree, resulting in the death of three. The deceased were identified as Majid Ghauri, Shahid Ghauri and Imran Ghauri.

Member of a thief gang held

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad capital police Phulgran police team apprehended a wanted member of a thief gang involved in numerous theft activities and recovered stolen mobile phone from his possession, a police public relations officer said. He said that, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad capital police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city. Following these directives, the Phulgran police team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending a wanted member of a thief gang involved in numerous theft incidents. Police team also recovered a stolen mobile from his possession. The accused was identified as Muhammad Hussain. Case has already been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway. During the preliminary investigation the accused confessed to being involved in numerous theft incidents in the jurisdiction of the phulgran police station. CPO/ DIG Operations Islamabad appreciated the police team's efforts and directed all senior officials for effective crackdown against the accused involved in such theft activities.



ISLAMABAD: A large number of people offering Eid ul Adha prayer at Faisal Masjid. —INP Photo

Sheikh Rashid blasts govt for celebrating IMF loan deal

RAWALPINDI (NNI): Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rashid Ahmed on Saturday came hard on the government for celebrating the loan agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

In a series of tweets, the former interior minister said it was not a matter of pride but downfall as the loan deal would put additional burden of Rs300 billion on inflation-bitten people.

He said some problems being faced by poor could be addressed if they brought their assets

stashed in abroad to Pakistan, adding that the government was lacked ability and capacity. Calling the members of the government slaves, he said the ruling coalition was walking on "crutches".

Mr Ahmed said they had also removed their corruption cases involved Rs2,400 billion without the signatures of the president. He said flatterers and sycophants were brought into power so they surrender to every rightful and wrongful decision.

He said the situation being faced by poor could be addressed if they brought their assets

did not give two hoots, adding that those who were hated by public had been imposed on the country.

The former minister said no one was thinking about those who are facing inflation, unemployment and shortage of flour. He said the 13-party coalition was skating on thin ice, adding that agriculture and industry have defaulted. "Only rulers are happy," he slammed, adding that mills of the god grinded slowly.

Innocent poor had been put in jail where ruling partners should have been detained, he lamented.

Eid cleanliness operation: RCB removes over 3300 tons entrails

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB) under grand operation launched to clean Cantt areas, removed over 3300 tons entrails of sacrificial animals on Eid ul Azha.

According to a RCB spokesman, Cantonment Executive Officer, RCB, Imran Gulzar also visited different cantt areas and the control room set up in RCB office to check arrangements finalized under grand cleanliness operation.

He also appreciated performance of the staff concerned and their response given to address complaints of the residents.

The officers concerned on the directives of the CEO also visited different areas and appreciated the performance of the sanitary staff and RCB teams.

The spokesman informed that nearly 650 complaints were received during three days of Eid ul Azha which were addressed immediately.

RCB had formulated a comprehensive plan to remove entrails of sacrificial animals during Eid ul

Azha holidays.

The spokesman said that the board on the directives of the CEO RCB had finalized all the arrangements for Eid ul Azha.

Leaves of the field staff had been cancelled, he said adding, all available resources were utilized to complete the cleanliness task and remove entrails of the sacrificial animals during Eid ul Azha holidays.

An awareness campaign was also run to apprise the public about garbage collection points and other arrangements.

He informed that a special central complaint cell was established in RCB office which was working round the clock to attend complaints of the residents.

10 complaints centers were also set up in all wards of cantonment board, he said adding, thousands biodegradable garbage bags were distributed among the residents.

The citizens were advised to use the garbage bags to dump offal and entrails at the dumping points. Grand eid cleanliness operation which started

on first day of Eid at 6 AM continued till third day of Eid ul Azha and no cantt area was left unattended, he added.

As many as 750 sanitary workers, 22 sanitary supervisors, three Sanitary Inspector and a public health officer were performing duties to supervise the cleanliness operation.

Nearly 118 vehicles including mini dumpers, dumpers, tractor trolleys, Suzuki pick-ups, compactors, trucks, excavators, jack trolleys were used to complete the cleanliness operation.

The banners were also displayed in different areas of all the wards with phone numbers of the supervisors, he added.

A special monitoring team was also formed besides developing a system to monitor the performance of the officials from the control room.

The spokesman informed that rain emergency cell was also working round the clock during Eid ul Azha holidays.

77 one wheelers held during Eid holidays

RAWALPINDI (APP): City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi held 77 one-wheelers and juvenile drivers during the Eid-ul-Azha holidays.

Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Taimoor Khan on Saturday said a special drive was launched to curb the activity, especially on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha.

"To prevent one-wheeling and overspeeding, six special squads were constituted and 35 check posts were established," Khan said. He said, "Stern action will be continued against the violators besides heavy fine will also be imposed."

He urged the parents to play an imperative role to prevent bloody games like one-wheeling.

"One-wheelers can be seen performing dangerous antics on the roads near Ayub Park, Peshawar Road, Saddar, Murree Road and other areas and usually succeeded to dodge the police deployed on the roads," he added. "Despite all efforts of the police to eliminate the activity, the trend of one-wheeling is increasing and is growing at a very fast pace instead," the CTO concluded.

NA speaker condemns desecration of Holy Quran in Sweden

ISLAMABAD (PPI): National Assembly (NA) speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf has strongly condemned the desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden.

In his message, the NA speaker said the painful incident has deeply hurt the sentiments of billions of Muslims.

Mr. Ashraf said every state must take measures for the prevention of such Islamophobic acts. He urged the international

community to work for promoting inter-faith harmony and dialogue to create tolerance for each other's religious beliefs and values.

NA speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf stressed that humanity must move away from acts of senseless hatred towards uniting the world in peace.

Earlier this week, Pakistan strongly condemned the despicable act of public burning of the Holy Quran outside a

mosque in Sweden.

The statement of Foreign Office said that the recurrence of such Islamophobic incidents during the last few months in the West calls into serious question the legal framework which permits such hate-driven actions.

"We reiterate that the right to freedom of expression and opinion does not provide a licence to stoke hatred and sabotage inter-faith harmony," it added.

Sadiq Sanjrani decides to withdraw Senate chairman perks bill

ISLAMABAD (INP): After much criticism, Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani has decided to withdraw the Senate chairman perks bill and directed the concerned senators to take back the legislation.

The government ministers had announced to oppose the 'controversial' bill moved by over 40 senators, recommending to increase perks and privileges of the former and current Senate chairmen, deputy chairmen and senators.

The bill had also recommended to provide 12-member staff and security even after retirement of the

Senate chairman besides getting additional and increased perks and privileges including travel and daily allowances.

On June 25, Defense Minister Khawaja Asif had strongly opposed the proposed Senate chairman perks bill, urging his fellow parliamentarians to stand against it, citing the economic realities facing the country.

Speaking on the floor of the House, the PML-N lawmaker rejected the bill and urged the other members of the National Assembly not to support this particular legislation. He expressed confidence that the deal

will be struck with the IMF in the coming days which will bring back economic stability in the country.

Khawaja Asif also clarified that no member of the parliament had gone for Hajj pilgrimage at the expense of the government.

Meanwhile, Pakistan People's Party has announced to reject the "The Chairman Senate (Salaries, Allowance and Privileges) Act, 2023".

PPP leader and cabinet minister Sha-zia Marri issued a statement on Monday, distancing her party from the "controversial legislation".

Saudi Ministry to gift 2m copies of Holy Quran to departing Hajj pilgrims

ISLAMABAD (APP): Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Dawa and Guidance, started distributing two million copies of the Holy Quran as a gift from the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, was published by the King Fahd Complex for Publishing the Holy Quran in different sizes and 76 international languages catering to the many nationalities of pilgrims,

employees who worked in this year's Hajj season.

The ministry said that the gift, which comes as an implementation of the directives of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, was published by the King Fahd Complex for Publishing the Holy Quran in different sizes and 76 international languages catering to the many nationalities of pilgrims,

Saudi Press Agency reported on Saturday.

The Minister of Islamic Affairs, Dawa and Guidance, Sheikh Dr Abdulatif bin Abdulaziz Al Al-Sheikh extended his thanks to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and HRH Crown Prince, for the great support and special attention they pay to serve Islam and Muslims and the pilgrims globally.



ISLAMABAD: A large number of people visiting Lake view Park during celebrating the 2nd day of Eid ul Adha. —INP Photo

Thousands throng Murree to enjoy Eid holidays

RAWALPINDI (NNI): The 'Queen of the Mountains' Murree which is the most famous hill station of Punjab attracted a large number of tourists during Eidul Azha holidays particularly on Friday and Saturday as the citizens reached Murree from different areas to enjoy the pleasant weather.

This year, three Eid holidays (June 28 to 30) were announced by the government on the eve of Eid-ul-Azha with two weekly offs, Saturday and Sunday, which provided a great recreational opportunity for the citizens.

On the first day of Eid, people remained busy in greeting relatives, friends and near and dear ones, and rushed to different parks, Murree, Ayubia, Nathigali and Patriata Chair Lift on second and third day of Eid to enjoy the Eid festivity.

Murree Road on Friday and Saturday remained jam packed with the stream of vehicles

after tourists particularly from twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad and other adjoining areas thronged the Murree, Ayubia and Nathia Gali hill stations to beat the heat and enjoy the Eid vacations.

From Dhokri Chowk to Bhara Kahu and Chatter Park, the road was jam-packed with vehicles moving at snails' pace.

Rawalpindi district administration had finalized all the arrangements to ensure the security of the visitors and facilitate them particularly during Eid ul Azha holidays.

According to a police administration spokesman, City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani urged the tourists to observe traffic rules on the roads of Murree to avoid traffic mess and any untoward incidents during Eid-ul-Azha holidays.

The spokesman informed that special teams had been

formed to facilitate the tourists, adding, parking of the vehicles was not allowed outside the parking areas. There was a complete ban on illegal parking in Murree.

"The beautiful climate of Murree during summer attracts a large number of tourists so motorists face traffic congestion," he said adding that traffic moves slower due to heavy traffic load as compared to the normal days.

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

He said, a special plan had been formulated for Murree under which over 1000 personnel including over 700 cops and over 285 CTP officials were performing their duties to facilitate the visitors.

The Jawans of Murree Tourism Police were also present at different points for the convenience and protection of

the tourists, he added.

Rawalpindi district administration, district police and CTP on the directives of Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi had taken solid steps to ease traffic flow and facilitate tourists in Murree.

The officers of the district administration, district police and CTP were present in the field to monitor the situation. All possible steps were being taken to ease traffic flow and ensure smooth flow of traffic on the roads of Murree, he added.

Senior police officers including SSP Operations, Rawalpindi, SP Saddar, SDPO Murree, DSP Traffic Murree remained present in Murree and reviewed all the arrangements. SSP Operations Muhammad Amir Khan Niazi visited different areas and checked all the arrangements.

Due to solid steps taken by the authorities concerned, traffic flow was totally under con-

trol in Murree, he added.

He said that Murree has parking space for only 3500 vehicles and urged the tourists to observe traffic rules to avoid traffic mess or any untoward incident during Eid-ul-Azha holidays.

The spokesman said that Rawalpindi district police, City Traffic Police and Murree tourism police were working round the clock to facilitate the tourists, adding, the visitors in case of any emergency could contact Police Helpline 15 or Murree Tourism Police Helpline 1757.

Round the clock monitoring of all the arrangements was being ensured through a modern system at Police Headquarters Command and Control Center besides keeping an eye on all the areas through a control room set up at Murree, he added.

Inspector General of Police Punjab had also directed the officers to ensure foolproof

security arrangements utilizing all available resources besides, taking all possible steps to ease traffic flow for facilitating the tourists in Murree.

The IGP had instructed the CPO and CTO to supervise all the arrangements and ensure the best possible security arrangements.

Seven facilitation centres had been established for tourists in Murree while a control room was also set up for monitoring.

He said that representatives of all administrative institutions, including Murree administration, police, Rescue 1122, tourism department, health department, civil defence, remained present at the centres to help and assist the tourists.

The facilitation centres were established at GPO Chowk, Kashmir Point, Jhika Gali, Barian, Lower Topa, Guldna and Satra Mail, he added.

Over hundreds injured

KABUL (Agencies): One hundred and sixty-eight people were injured and two people lost their lives in many traffic incidents in Nangarhar during Eid days. The traffic incidents took place in the city and several districts over three days. Meanwhile, Nangarhar health sources confirm that two people died and 168 others were injured in these traffic incidents. Medics in Nangarhar say that the health condition of a number of the injured in these traffic incidents has been alarming.

Flood destroyed Parwan

KABUL (Agencies): Flash floods surge after heavy rain and covered parts of Parwan. The districts of Surkh Parsa and Kohi Safi were the most vulnerable regions of these floods. The floods have caused the destruction of dozens of houses and hundreds of acres of farmland. The governor of Koh Safi Parwan district, Mawlawi Abdul Mateen, said that 165 houses, 600 acres of farmland and public facilities were destroyed and 300 livestock were lost.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Zil-Hajj 13, 1444 — Friday, July 02, 2023

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 urges Central Asian neighbors to return aircraft

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Defense (MoD) reiterated its call to Central Asian neighbors Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to return Afghan aircraft that were flown out by former Afghan military personnel during the collapse of the republica government.

The MoD spokesman Enayatullah Khwarizmi, said that the aircraft are the property of the people of Afghanistan.

"Uzbekistan or Tajikistan are our neighboring countries. We want good relations with them and we call on them to return these (aircrafts) to us for the sake of neighborly and diplomatic manners, and we will reclaim them whenever it is possible," Khwarizmi said.

In April 2022, the VOA reported from US defense

officials that both Uzbekistan and Tajikistan had no plans to give the aircraft to the Islamic Emirate.

"The aircraft continue to be the subject of regional security engagement with the governments of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan," a US Defense Department spokesperson, Army Major Rob Lodewick, said when asked about the fate of the planes and helicopters, a VOA report said.

However, reports were leaked to the media then that the US was secretly negotiating about the return of the aircraft from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to Afghanistan.

Military analysts said that the interim Afghan government should engage with the US officials about the return of the aircrafts to

Afghanistan.

"If the Taliban government wants to have this military equipment and helicopters back, it is better that it engages in negotiation with Americans. There is no other side but the Americans in this key issue," said Asadullah Nadim, a military veteran.

"The light and heavy weapons and helicopters of Afghanistan which were taken to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan belong to the National Afghan Defense Forces... and should return. But these countries are not taking actions to conform to the Americans," said Zalmai Afghanyar, a military analyst. Based on unconfirmed reports, nearly 60 aircraft were flown by former Afghan forces to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

State Deptt criticizes handling of 2021 evacuation

NEW YORK (Reuters): A US State Department report on Friday criticized the handling of the 2021 evacuation from Afghanistan, saying decisions by President Joe Biden and his predecessor Donald Trump to withdraw troops had "serious consequences for the viability" and security of the former US-backed government.

Adverse findings in the report also reflected badly on Secretary of State Antony Blinken, without naming him. They included the department's failure to expand its crisis-management task force as the Taliban advanced on Kabul in August 2021 and the lack of a senior diplomat "to oversee all elements of the crisis response."

"Naming a 7th floor principal... would have improved coordination across different lines of effort," said the report, referring to the State Department's top floor where Blinken and senior diplomats have offices.

The review, and a similar Pentagon study, contributed to a report released by the White House in April. But the State Department review's critical findings were not reflected in the White House report.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre defended Biden's handling of the Afghan pullout.

"He had to make a decision," she told reporters on Friday. The United States had poured "billions of dollars into a war with no end in sight" and that "he wanted to stop that, he wanted to end that," she said.

Steven Cheung, a spokesman for Trump, wrote in an email: "There's only one person responsible for the disastrous pull-out of Afghanistan — Joe Biden,"

The White House report effectively blamed the chaotic US pullout and evacuation operation on a lack of planning and troop reduction rounds by Trump following a 2020 deal with the Taliban to withdraw US forces.

Afghan Defense Minister meets Saudi Crown Prince

RYADH (Khaama Press): Afghanistan acting Minister of Defense met with Saudi Arabia's Crown prince during a banquet for officials and foreign guests participating in this year's Hajj.

The meeting between Mohammad Yaqub Mujahid and Mohammad bin Salman reportedly took place, according to a tweet from Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid.

Mohammad bin Salman also entertained the presidents of Pakistan, Senegal, Bangladesh, and the King of Malaysia, among other high-ranking international dignitaries.



Islamic Emirate called IEP's findings on Afghanistan unjust

KABUL (TOLONews): The Islamic Emirates reacted to the recent "Global Peace Index 2022" of the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), saying that the findings regarding Afghanistan are "unjust".

The IEP said in the "Global Peace Index 2022" that Afghanistan is the "least peaceful country in the world for the fifth consecutive year, followed by Yemen, Syria, Russia and South Sudan."

All of these countries have been among the ten least peaceful countries for the last three years, according to the IEP.

The IEP said that Afghanistan recorded the largest reduction in deaths from armed conflict in 2022 with conflict-related deaths falling 90.6 per cent, from almost 43,000 to just over 4,000.

"Afghanistan recorded the fifth largest improvement in peacefulness in the 2023 GPI, however it remains the least peaceful country in the world. Although violence is still widespread throughout the country, the level of conflict has dropped considerably since the withdrawal of US troops in August 2021, and the subsequent Taliban takeover of the government," the Index cited.

According to the IEP, the perceptions of criminality of Afghan civilians improved slightly, with the number of people who say they felt unsafe walking alone falling from 84 per cent to 77 percent.

The intensity of internal conflict improved, owing to fewer reported instances of hostilities between the Taliban and the National Resistance Front over the

past year, the Index reads.

"Terrorist incidents in Afghanistan fell by 75 per cent in 2022, with deaths from terrorism falling 58 per cent, leading to improvements on the terrorism impact and internal conflicts fought indicators," the Index said.

The Islamic Emirate's spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid said that the terrorist incidents have dropped over "99 percent" compared to "what is stated in the report".

"They said that the number of casualties went up. They still say 4,000 civilian casualties -- it is untrue. We may have casualties up to 1,000. There have been some Daesh attacks in the past years or one last year, but (Daesh) is controlled."

"There is insecurity in Afghanistan at the moment, but Afghanistan is not the most insecure country in

the world. We should observe between security and safety," said Sarwar Niaza, a political analyst.

The IEP said that the security situation in Afghanistan remains uncertain, "with an escalation in conflict between ISK and the Taliban remaining a strong possibility."

"Various terrorist groups can take advantage of the poverty and misery of people and can bring back the proxy war of the world's power to our soil and can make Afghanistan insecure," said Andar Khan Ahmad, political analyst.

According to the IEP, while the conflict in Ukraine has had wide media coverage, a number of other internal conflicts around the world have recorded substantial declines in deaths, such as in Afghanistan, Syria, Nigeria and Somali.

People asked cooperation with security organs



KABUL (Agencies): Acting Prime Minister, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, met with several local officials of the Islamic Emirate, religious scholars, influential figures, and Mujahideen separately during the days of Eid.

Local officials assured that the assigned duties will be carried out well, and the religious scholars, tribal elders, and the visiting guests praised the overall

security in the country in a meeting with Acting Prime Minister, a statement said.

They welcomed the economic plans of the Islamic Emirate, adding that the government should pay more attention to the reconstruction of the country.

For his part, Mawlawi Kabir said overall security is maintained in the country, which shows a strong well of the system, and the sovereign peaceful atmos-

phere in Afghanistan has been created with the cooperation of the nation.

The security bodies are working day and night for ensuring security and the efforts of the officials and employees of this department are commendable and full of pride, he added.

In the end, acting PM Kabir asked for the continued cooperation of the people with the security departments.

36 cases of Congo fever in Herat province in two months

HERAT (Khaama Press): In the past two months, 36 instances of Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever have been reported by doctors in the western province of Herat, Afghanistan, including five deaths.

The number of cases increased this year, according to Mohammad Asif Kabir, Deputy Public Health of Herat which has led to authorities' concern about the spread of diseases, especially throughout Eid-ul-Adha.

People have been urged to take the required precau-

tions before slaughtering animals the medical staff at the infectious disease department of the provincial hospital in Herat. Earlier in Takhar province, three cases of Congo fever were reported, one of which resulted in patient death.

Officials said that 91 persons in Afghanistan had been infected with the disease the previous week, and seven people have passed away this summer.

"We are fully prepared because this disease is not new, and we have better

measures in Takhar provincial hospital than in the past," said Hayatullah Emami, director of Takhar Provincial Hospital.

A viral disease called Congo fever is frequently transmitted from animals to humans via ticks, especially during slaughter.

The disease's primary symptoms are fever, heartburn, diarrhoea, internal and external bleeding, neck discomfort, and eye pain.

The virus can create epidemics, has a high case fatality rate (10-40%), can cause outbreaks in hospitals and

other healthcare institutions, and is challenging to treat and prevent, making outbreaks of Congo fever a risk to public health services.

The US Centers for Disease Control advise people to butcher animals while wearing gloves and other protective equipment. The blood and bodily fluids of animals or people who exhibit illness symptoms should not be shared by individuals.

Healthcare professionals must take the correct infection control procedures to avoid occupational exposure.

MoFA sees Biden remarks as acknowledgment of reality

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a statement in reaction to US President Biden's remarks on al-Qaeda in Afghanistan said Islamic Emirate considers the remarks about "the non-existence of armed groups in Afghanistan as acknowledgment of reality."

In response to a question about "mistakes in Afghanistan withdrawal", Biden said: "Remember what I said about Afghanistan? I said al-Qaida would not be there. I said it wouldn't be there. I said we'd get help from the Taliban. What's happening now? What's going on? Read your press. I was right."

MoFA spokesman Abdul Qahar Balkhi said Biden's remarks "refute the recent report by the UN Sanctions Monitoring Team alleging the presence and operation of over 20 armed groups in Afghanistan."

The international community and the UN have often expressed their concerns over threats posed by insurgent groups in Afghanistan, but the Islamic Emirate has assured that such threats have been prevented.

25 political figures, officials returned last month: Commission

KABUL (TOLONews): The "Commission for the Return and Communications with Former Afghan Officials and Political Figures" said that at least 25 Afghans including political figures, former government officials and parliament members have returned to Afghanistan within the past month.

The commission's spokesman, Ahmadullah Wassiq, said these individuals had left Afghanistan after the former government collapsed but returned through the mediation of the commission.

"Senior officials such as ministers, directors, deputy ministers, provincial governors and provincial security chiefs were among these officials," Wassiq said.

According to the commission, hundreds of political figures and former officials have received forms to return to Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, the Islamic Emirate's spokesman, Zabiullah Mujahid, said



that many figures who are abroad are seeking to return to the country.

"For those who left (the country) and feel threatened, the main goal of the commission is to eliminate their concerns about risks. I assure you that we will welcome them," Mujahid said.

An Afghan figure who lives abroad said that the political figures, former officials and professional figures who return to Afghanistan should be

given jobs in government institutions.

"The wishes of the Afghan people should be fulfilled and also plans should be implemented to solve the current challenges that engulf Afghanistan," said Mohammad Hakim Torsan, a political figure.

Based on the statistics of the commission, more than 520 political figures and former officials have returned to Afghanistan since the establishment of the commission.

Residents criticize lack of schools in Qala-e-Zal's remote areas



KUNDUZ (TOLONews): Residents of Qala-e-Zal district in Kunduz province have voiced their criticism over the absence of schools in remote areas of the district, calling on the government to address this challenge.

According to the residents, security has now been established in the district, leaving no excuse for the

government to neglect development projects.

They continue to emphasize that the shortage of teachers and other educational resources has hindered children and teenagers in the district from receiving a proper education.

"We want the education sector to receive attention as well. We lack

teachers and are requesting the construction of more schools in this area," stated Noor Mohammad, a resident of Qala-e-Zal.

"Schools are facing numerous problems, such as lack of infrastructure and necessary repairs. There is a shortage of books, and the government has not provided any assistance," added Saifullah, another resident of Qala-e-Zal.

In response, the education department of Kunduz acknowledged the issues in the district and stated that they have shared these concerns with relevant organizations. Efforts are being made to address this problem.

"It's not just the Zal district; many districts are facing similar issues. After 20 years of war in our country, a significant number of schools require reconstruction," explained Ismayil Abu Ahmad, head of the education department in Kunduz.

According to the residents of Qala-e-Zal, little attention has been given to the implementation of development projects in recent years. As a result, many residents lack access to basic services necessary for daily life.

WFP set to run out of money for food assistance to Afghans in Oct

KABUL (Reuters): Food assistance to Afghanistan will shrink to nothing by the end of October under current funding projections, the World Food Programme's country director told Reuters, as United Nations officials continue to warn against funding reductions amid Taliban restrictions on women.

The WFP has already slashed rations and cash assistance from 8 million Afghans this year, underscoring the severity of financial challenges aid agencies face in Afghanistan, home to what the United Nations considers the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

"It's five million people we are able to serve for another couple of months but then beyond that we don't have the resources," WFP Afghanistan Country

Director Hsiao-Wei Lee told Reuters. "That I think conveys the urgency of where we stand."

The reductions would start in August, fall further in September and halt in October, according to the WFP's estimates of current funds and financial assistance promised by donor countries in coming months.

The United Nations has already had to slash its humanitarian plan funding request as donors hold back. International officials say the stall is in part due to competing global crises and strained government budgets, but also exacerbated by the Taliban administration's restrictions on women that advocates say contributes to the funding decline.

Since December, Afghan female humanitarian staff are largely barred from

work unless organisations gain exemptions from local officials.

Around 15 million Afghans in danger from lack of food are in need of assistance, according to WFP.

WFP needs \$1 billion in funding to provide food aid and carry out planned projects between now until March, Lee said.

WFP would stay in Afghanistan and carry out its other work such as nutrition projects, Lee said, even if the projected cuts took place.

Lee said the restrictions on women were a "valid concern" from donors, but added that around half of WFP's beneficiaries were women and girls and they were still able to reach women.

Lee added that the positioning of food for the country's harsh winter must

be complete by October to prepare for the colder months, and needed just over \$100 million to carry out. Parts of mountainous Afghanistan get cut off by snow in colder months.

Currently the agency had no funds for the operation and was forced to decide soon whether to reduce rations earlier than otherwise projected as time ran out in order to get food in place.

"They're very difficult conversations and very emotional ones.... our field staff in particular are constantly having to face conversations around why this assistance needs to be reduced," she said.

"For someone who has a hungry child it's really hard to understand why their hungry child is not selected for assistance but another family's hungry child may be hungrier."



ABBOTTABAD: Vehicles stuck on Karakoram Highway, due to arrival of large number of tourists during Eid holidays.

Survivors reveal why migrant boat capsized

ATHENS (Agencies): Survivors of a boat disaster that likely killed hundreds of migrants near Greece have shared how traffickers in North Africa crammed them into a dilapidated fishing trawler as they described the appalling conditions — without food or water — above and below deck. Others asserted that the Greek coast-guard's actions caused the tragic outcome when it occurred.

Legal authorities have been informed of a failed towing attempt by the overloaded trawler that resulted in the capsizing of the ship in the early hours of June 14. According to documentation reviewed by Reuters, six out of the nine survivor statements provided to Greek judicial officials looking into the causes of the tragedy detailed a disastrous coastguard towing attempt.

One of the Syrian survivors claimed that he and other migrants on board the Adriana, which had broken down while trying to reach Italy, yelled "Stop!" after a Greek coastguard vessel fastened a rope to the trawler's bow and started to pull it while gaining speed. The migrant boat tipped left and right before flipping over, he continued. Three more witnesses claimed they were unaware of the circumstances leading to the boat's capsizing. The nine survivors' names have not been made public, nor have their accounts been published by Reuters.

In contrast to the Greek coastguard's and government's public statements, which claim that no attempt was made to tow the boat and that it capsized when they were about 70 metres away, the statements of the six witnesses are in conflict with those claims. The shipping ministry, which is in charge of the coastguard, said that it was unable to comment on matters that were being looked into by prosecutors in a private capacity. It is against the law for Greek prosecutors to comment on ongoing investigations. On June 17-18, the nine survivors provided the disaster investigators with their testimonies as part of a preliminary investigation.

On June 15, a group of suspected traffickers were detained on charges of manslaughter, smuggling migrants, and causing a shipwreck. They are currently being held in jail while a thorough investigation takes place, which could lead to a trial. They reject any wrongdoing. Two more survivors who were interviewed separately and requested anonymity out of concern for retaliation from the Greek government also described the towing incident. One of them, who only gave his name as Mohamed, described the harrowing moments when the Adriana turned over, which he claimed occurred when the coast guard began towing the boat.

"They quickly pulled us, and the boat

capsized. It moved to the right, to the left, to the right, and it capsized. People started to fall on each other," he said. "People were on top of each other; people were screaming; people were drowning each other. It was nighttime, and there were waves. It was scary," he added. On June 15, local media cited survivors claiming that the Adriana had been towed, but a coastguard spokesperson denied the claims of the boat being roped to a coastguard vessel.

However, the coastguard later changed its story, claiming that a boat attached a rope to help approach and communicate, but insisted that it had kept its distance and denied that it had later attempted to tow the trawler. Former Greek coastguard admiral Nikos Spanos said that it was unlikely a coastguard vessel would have attempted such a risky manoeuvre as towing the capsized trawler. "Its (the coast-guard's) aim was to establish a better contact to help the vessel and assess the situation. This is my understanding. Because if they had tried to tow it or anything else, it would have been too risky, and this wouldn't have been the right way to do it," he said.

The claims come after the Adriana, carrying 400-750 migrants from Syria, Egypt, and Pakistan, capsized in Greek waters southwest of Pylos. Rescuers found 104 survivors, but it's unlikely anyone else will be recovered in the deepest part of the Mediterranean. The coastguard ship's log shows two instances of approaching the Adriana two hours apart. At 11:40pm, the coastguard vessel tied a rope to the trawler, which had a malfunctioning engine, to allow it to draw closer and talk to those on board to assess the situation and if they needed help, the log said.

The log states that after yelling "No help" and "Go Italy" and untying the rope, Adriana resumed her engine and proceeded west. At 1:40am, the coastguard vessel returned to inspect the trawler, and within seven minutes, the trawler capsized. The Adriana boat set off from Tobruk, Libya, on June 10, according to survivor Mohamed, and traffickers took away belongings and bottles of water to accommodate more people.

All 11 survivors paid between \$4,500 and \$6,000 for the journey, with smugglers promising they would reach Italy in three days. The boat was among thousands of migrants attempting to reach southern Europe this year. Furthermore, according to EU border agency data, over 50,000 irregular border crossings were detected in the first five months of 2023, up 160% from a year ago. Additionally, a week after the tragedy near Greece, more than 30 migrants were feared dead after a dinghy headed for Spain's Canary Islands sank.

Hundreds more arrested in France unrest

PARIS (Agencies): France deployed 45,000 officers backed by light armoured vehicles, while crack police units and other security forces fanned out across the country to quell violence over the death of 17-year-old Nahel, killed during a traffic stop in a Paris suburb on Tuesday.

Buildings and vehicles have been torched and stores looted, and the violence has plunged President Emmanuel Macron into the gravest crisis of his leadership since the Yellow Vest protests that started in 2018. Despite the security presence, looting took place on Friday night in the cities of Marseille, Lyon and Grenoble, with bands of often-hooded rioters pillaging shops. Protesters also set fire to cars and trash bins.

But during a visit to Mantes-la-Jolie west of Paris, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said early on Saturday morning that the night's violence had been of "much less intensity", with 471 arrests nationwide and pockets of tension in Marseille and Lyon in particular. He said 270 people had been arrested on Friday night, bringing the total to more than 1,100 since unrest ignited, according to rescuers. However, interior ministry sources put the number at 994.

Darmanin had announced an "exceptional" mobilization of police and gendarmes

to avoid a fourth consecutive night of riots over the death of Nahel, who will be buried on Saturday in the Paris suburb of Nanterre where he lived and was killed. His death, caught on video, has reignited longstanding complaints by poor and racially mixed urban communities of police violence and racism.

Dozens of police vans were positioned not far from the entrance to the Vieux Pont district of Nanterre, which was the epicenter of the unrest. The French national football team joined calls for an end to the violence. "The time of violence must give way to that of mourning, dialogue and reconstruction," the team said in a statement posted on social media by captain and Paris Saint-Germain superstar Kylian Mbappe.

Les Bleus said they were "shocked by the brutal death of young Nahel" but asked that violence give way to "other peaceful and constructive ways of expressing oneself". The southern port city of Marseille was again the scene of clashes and looting from the center and further north in the long-neglected working-class neighborhoods that President Emmanuel Macron visited at the start of the week.

Friday night's arrests included 80 people in the southern city of Marseille, France's second-largest and home to many people of

North African descent. Around 2am, Marseille police said they had made 88 arrests overnight of often masked and "very mobile" young people accused of looting or trying to. A major fire "linked to the riots" broke out in a supermarket, according to a police source.

Rioters in central Marseille looted a gun store and stole some hunting rifles but no ammunition, police said. One individual was arrested with a rifle likely from the store, police said. The store was now being guarded by police. "In Marseille, the scenes of looting and rioting are unacceptable," city mayor Benoit Payan tweeted, calling on the state to send additional law enforcement. Social media images showed an explosion rocking Marseille's old port area. City authorities said they were investigating the cause but did not believe there were any casualties.

Three police officers were slightly wounded early on Saturday. A police helicopter flew overhead. Darmanin shortly afterwards announced on Twitter that "significant reinforcements are arriving at the moment". Looting and clashes between hooded protesters and police also occurred in parts of Grenoble, Saint-Etienne and Lyon, while in Angers and Tours in the country's west, there were only a few groups facing the police.

General polls: ECP invites applications by 19th

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan has extended an invitation to political parties that have complied with the provisions of the Allocation of Election Symbols of the Election Act, 2017, and the Election Rules, 2017.

These parties are requested to submit applications for the allocation of symbols as prescribed under Rule 162 of the Election Rules, 2017. The applications, bearing the signature of the respective Party Head, must reach the Election Commission's Secretariat in Islamabad no later than July 19, 2023.

According to the press release of the Election Commission of Pakistan, the political parties are advised to file applications for the allocation of symbols according to the requirements of Section 216 of the Elections Act, 2017. The applications should contain a detailed list of symbols applied for in order of preference, symbol or symbols if any allocated to the political party during the previous general elections, every such application shall be signed by the Party Head, by whatever name designated and address of the head office of the political party.

On receipt of applications from the Political Parties, the eligibility of each party will be ascertained in the light of Section 215 of the Election Act, 2017 which is reproduced hereunder: ECP said that notwithstanding anything contained in any other law, a political party enlisted under this Act shall be eligible to obtain an election symbol for contesting elections for Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament), Provincial Assemblies, or local government on submission of certificates and statements referred to in sections 202, 206, 209 and 210. It may also be clarified that those political parties which submitted applications for allotment of symbols for Punjab and KPK Assemblies General Elections in February / March-2023 shall apply afresh.

Seven killed in Mardan road mishaps

E.P. Report

MARDAN: Seven people including three minors were killed and two others were injured in separate incidents that took place during Eid-days, the police and rescue-1122 officials told *The Frontier Post*.

In the first incident, two youngsters were killed while the third sustained multiple injuries when bikes collided with each other near the Chora Police Station. The slain youths were identified as Zahidullah, 20 and Husnain, 15, while the injured as Bilal, 13. The rescue-1122 officials rushed to the spot and took them to district headquarters hospital Mardan for further medico-legal procedure.

In a firing incident, two persons were shot dead while their colleague received several bullet wounds in Jamalgarhi area of tehsil Katlang. The deceased were identified as Ishfaq, 40, Zawat, 30, and the injured as Abdullah. The police registered FIR in the double murder case on the complaint of relatives of the victims followed by launching further investigations by police into the case.

‘Disrespectful’: EU latest to condemn desecration of Holy Quran in Sweden — OIC calls emergency meeting

BRUSSELS (Agencies): The European Union joined several Muslim nations on Saturday in condemning the latest incident of desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden while the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) would be convening an emergency meeting on the matter next week.

The censure comes after a man, who fled from Iraq to Sweden several years ago, tore up and burned the Holy Quran outside Stockholm's central mosque on Wednesday — the first day of Eidul Azha in the country. He has been charged by Swedish police with agitation against an ethnic or national group and a violation of a ban on fires that has been in place in Stockholm since mid-June. The act has drawn strong criticism from several countries, including Pakistan, Turkiye, Jordan, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Iraq and Iran.

In its condemnation issued today, the EU said the act of burning the Holy Quran or any other holy book was "offensive, and disrespectful and a clear act of provocation." "Manifestations of racism, xenophobia and related intolerance have no place in Europe," Nabila Massrali, the EU spokesperson for foreign affairs and security policy, said in a statement. "The EU joins the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in its strong rejection of the burning of a [copy of the Holy] Quran by an individual in Sweden. This act in no way reflects the opinions of the European Union."

She added, "It is even more deplorable that such an act was carried out on the important Muslim celebration of Eidul Azha." Meanwhile, the OIC announced a day after the incident that it would be convening an emergency meeting of its executive committee next week to discuss the matter. The intergovernmental organisation of 57 countries said in a statement that the meeting had been called by Saudi Arabia in its capacity as chair of the Islamic Summit Conference and would take place at the OIC headquarters in the Saudi

city of Jeddah.

The emergency meeting would also go over the procedures for dealing with the fallout from the incident, it added. In an earlier statement, the OIC strongly condemned the incident, saying that such an act contradicted "international efforts to spread the values of tolerance, moderation, and renunciation of extremism." It also reiterated its condemnation of such "reprehensible acts that some extremists deliberately commit" and urged relevant governments around the world to "take effective measures to prevent its recurrence".

The OIC also emphasised the importance of adhering to the UN Charter in terms of promoting and encouraging respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all at the global level. Meanwhile, Pakistan, too, strongly condemned the "despicable act", stressing that "such wilful incitement to discrimination, hatred and violence cannot be justified under the pretext of freedom of expression and protest". "The recurrence of such Islamophobic incidents during the last few months in the West calls into serious question the legal framework which permits such hate-driven actions." "We reiterate that the right to freedom of expression and opinion does not provide a license to stoke hatred and sabotage inter-faith harmony," the Foreign Office said in a statement on Thursday.

It further stated that Pakistan's concerns about the incident were being conveyed to Sweden and urged the international community and the national governments to undertake "credible and concrete measures to prevent the rising incidents of xenophobia, Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred". Separately, a statement issued by the president's office termed the incident "painful". It said the act had "deeply hurt the sentiments of billions of Muslims, [and] every state must take measures for the prevention of such Islamophobic acts".

On Friday, thousands of supporters of Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr held a protest outside of the Swedish Embassy in Baghdad and demanded an end to diplomatic ties. The protesters also briefly breached the embassy. Iraq's foreign ministry also summoned Sweden's ambassador on Thursday, urging the Swedish government to hand the man over so he could be tried in accordance with Iraqi law.

Kuwait, too, summoned Sweden's envoy, based in the United Arab Emirates, over the incident, after the UAE and also called in the country's diplomatic representatives. "The deputy minister of foreign affairs handed the Swedish ambassador an official protest note containing the condemnation and denunciation of the State of Kuwait for the burning of a copy of the Holy Quran by an extremist," the foreign ministry said. The note also denounced Sweden for repeatedly permitting the act, the foreign ministry said.

The United States also condemned the incident but said that issuing the permit for the protest outside the Stockholm mosque supported freedom of expression and was not an endorsement of the action. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, as well as the Turkish foreign minister, have condemned the incident. For his part, Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson distanced himself from the act.

"It is difficult to say what the consequences will be. I think there are many people who have reason to reflect," Kristersson told a press conference. "This is a serious security question. There's no need to insult other people," the right-wing head of government said. "I think that just because some things are legal, they are not necessarily appropriate." In an apparent reference to protesters breaching the Swedish embassy in Iraq, he said, "It is of course completely unacceptable to have people who unlawfully break into Swedish embassies in other countries."

Govt win trust of int'l community: Asad Mehmood

E.P. Report

this crisis.

DI KHAN: Federal Minister for Communications Mufi Asad Mahmood on Saturday said that the coalition government was effectively going ahead with its prudent policies to steer the country out of economic woes and restore the confidence of the international community.

"The previous government pushed the country into economic quagmire while toeing anti-Pakistan policies, but the present government is committed to rid the country of negative policies and restored trust of international community," he expressed these views during a meeting with delegations of elders and notables who called on him at his residence at Abdul Khel.

He said the government's policies had started yielding results and as a result of which it had restored the trust of Saudi Arabia and China on both the diplomatic and economic fronts. He added that the staff level agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was inherited from the previous Imran government and the present government successfully brought the country out of

the ground level, which was causing accidents. Now, he said, the government had rectified all those flaws and sent a design change and correction plan for approval. He said the Paniyala interchange would be restored and every possible step would be taken for its development.

He said that projects of the communications department were pursued in a transparent manner and its record was open for the opponents. He said that during the tenure of the prior government, work was stopped on Bund Korai, city-II and Abdul Khel Grid and now instructions had been issued to complete work on those projects.

He said, "The previous government stopped the service road of Hakla Yarik Motorway as soon as the KP limits started, but we have made Issa Khel Mianwali Road while keeping in view the interest of people." He added that Arsula Bannu Link Road was announced by Mian Nawaz Sharif in 2017, which was stopped by the previous government. To connect Punjab and KP, Klarkot Abdul Khel road project was started by former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

Moreover, in some places, the road has been built below

the ground level, which was causing accidents. Now, he said, the government had rectified all those flaws and sent a design change and correction plan for approval. He said the Paniyala interchange would be restored and every possible step would be taken for its development.

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25 dead after bus catches fire in India

PUNE (Agencies): At least 25 people were killed and eight others injured after a bus caught fire overnight on an expressway in western India on Saturday, police said. The bus was travelling to the city of Pune when it hit a pole and overturned after midnight, causing its diesel tank to catch fire, senior police officer Baburao Mahamuni told reporters.

"There were about 30-35 people in the bus. Twenty-five people have died and eight others are injured," he said. The injured, including the bus driver, have been admitted to a hospital near the site of the crash in Maharashtra state, about 400 kilometres (250 miles) east of India's financial capital Mumbai. Police said they had launched an inquiry into the crash.

"The priority at this moment is to identify the bodies and hand them over to their family members," local media quoted police superintendent Sunil Kadasane as saying. Images showed the bus engulfed in flames and later the charred remains of the vehicle overturned on the highway. Three children were among the dead, a police officer told reporters.

"Deeply saddened by the devastating bus mishap in Buldhana," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Twitter. "My thoughts and prayers are with the families of those who lost their lives. May the injured recover soon." Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said he felt "deep grief" over the accident and pledged compensation of 500,000 rupees (\$6,100) to the families of those killed.

Accidents are common on India's vast network of roads, which are poorly maintained and notoriously dangerous. The main causes are excessive speed, not wearing helmets -- sales of two-wheelers far outstrip those of cars -- and not using seatbelts. India accounts for 11 percent of the global road death toll despite having just one percent of the world's vehicles, according to a World Bank report released in 2021.

The same report estimated 150,000 car crash fatalities in India annually, or one person every four minutes. It added that road crashes cost the Indian economy around \$75 billion each year, with medical expenses and loss of income driving many accident survivors into poverty.

Sacrifice by elite inevitable

(Continued from Page 1)

Development Bank. Calling it the darkest day in the country's history, the prime minister said May 9 incidents were part of the conspiracy against the country carried out in connivance with the local and foreign anti-state elements.

To a question, he said no innocent person would be hurt for the May 9 arson. Those who attacked civilian installations would be tried in anti-terrorism courts and others in the military courts for attacking the military installations, he explained. He also appreciated the role of Chief of the Army Staff General Asim Munir for his engagement with the Saudi and UAE governments to bring in \$2 billion and \$1 billion from the two friendly countries respectively.

To a question, PM Shehbaz clarified that the IMF agreement would in no way impact CPEC or Pak-China ties. He assured the newsmen that while being in any role, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leadership would continue to strive for rendering sacrifices to support the national economy.

Asked about any relief for the common man after the IMF agreement, the prime minister said the plan was not a "sweet", rather it was a tool to stabilize the economy and strengthen the engagement with international institutions. However, he expressed the hope that inflation would come down and the country would regain its lost status of a fast-developing nation.

He said it was the time for the elite to face most of the hardships. Even in the last budget, the incumbent government had imposed the super tax on the elite class and did not bow to their pressure for reversal. About the austerity measures, he said some of the ministers and parliamentarians were not drawing salaries and also appreciated the Senate chairman for agreeing not to pursue the bill providing for increasing his perks. He said the government would carry forward its laptop scheme and planned to distribute another 100,000 laptops among the students in next fiscal year.

Responding to another query, the prime minister said Nawaz Sharif and his daughter faced jails and

appeared before courts on a daily basis without seeking adjournments, unlike Imran Niazi. He assured that Nawaz Sharif would come back soon from abroad as he had gone there for medical treatment. Briefing media about the government's plan to outsource the Islamabad International Airport, he said the state-owned entities were eating up around Rs 600 billion annually. He said the government would confine its role to the policy-making and facilitation of the investors.

The prime minister said the people of Pakistan would decide the fate of those who pushed the country to default. He said after being disqualified, Nawaz Sharif had never uttered a word against the country, but contrarily, Imran Niazi acted as an enemy of the state after being removed (from the prime minister's office) through a constitutional process. To another question, PM Shehbaz said the incumbent government would give up on completion of its term, however, it would be up to the Election Commission of Pakistan to announce the election date.