

The Frontier Post

PM urges masses to defeat political masquerades of PTI in elections

FAISALABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday urged the people to avenge the rigging of the 2018 general elections with the power of their mandate during the upcoming general elections by defeating the political masquerades of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). He said during the 2018 rigged polls, Imran Niazi and his clique were brought to power but the people of Faisalabad would defeat them in the general elections by massively supporting the PML-N candidates.

Addressing a ceremony after laying the foundation stone of development projects, including the Faisalabad Satyana bypass linking Motorway-3, the prime minister said during the PTI's four years rule, not a single brick was laid on the projects initiated by the PML-N government rather than a barrage of baseless and awkward allegations were levelled against the opposition leadership.

"Imran Niazi was made a prime minister through rigged polls (Jhurloo elections), with malfunctioning of RTS and the PML-N was deprived of its seats", he added.

The prime minister sneered that contrary to Imran Niazi's tall claims for a vast network of public welfare projects, nothing tangible could be witnessed. Where were those 300 billion dollars, they claimed were parked abroad! he remarked and jeered that not a single penny could be brought back.

The prime minister further castigated the PTI chairman for his claims against seeking financial support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and said rather he reneged on the agreement and conspired and burdened the coalition government. The ceremony was attended by ministers, parliamentarians, relevant authorities, party leaders and a large number of people.

The prime minister said if the people give mandate to the PML-N in the next general elections, Nawaz Sharif would be the prime minister and under his guidance, he would work as an ordinary worker.

"We, all along with our coalition partners in the government, shall set the country on path of progress and prosperity," he declared.

The prime minister also commended Nawaz Sharif for initiating billions dollars CPEC projects and said during his tenure, inflation was locked at 3.5 per cent. If the people decided to bring Nawaz Sharif to power in the upcoming elections, within a decade, the former prime minister would transform the country to compete India on the economic fronts, he added. He assured that if given a chance, they promised 'to fight for Pakistan and secure its lost place among the comity of nations and will break the begging bowl by sending its pieces to be decorated around Banigala'. He opined that such achievement would not be possible with witchcraft but by hard work, sincerity and devotion. Under the guidance of Nawaz Sharif from 2013-2018, he said, the development journey of the country continued with its economy skyrocketing, but through a conspiracy involving former chief justice Saqib Nisar who was then heading the coterie, disqualified the former prime minister in Iqama case.

That journey was ended, he said, adding that he had reminded the officials at that time that a day would arrive when they would repent of bringing Imran Niazi to power.

He said that his government had distributed Rs 100 billion across Pakistan after the last year's devastating floods that had affected millions of people. He said they had steered the country out of default due to the joint efforts of a coalition government. The prime minister also announced to give millions of laptops to the young people if came to power besides, developing agriculture, natural resources and minerals sectors.

About the hike in prices of electricity, the prime minister maintained that it was not applicable to those consumers using up to 200 units.

He regretted that the 190 million pounds fraud story and proceeds from the Toshakhana watch sale should have been deposited in the national exchequer or donated to the students of Danish schools instead of making way into pockets of PTI's leadership.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister for Communications Maulana Asad Mahmood said that the mega road network projects were initiated and completed under the PML-N governments and the leadership of the Sharif brothers. Criticizing the PTI's government, he said they had played havoc with the country and its institutions, adding under the leadership of Maulana Fazlur Rehman, amir of JUI-F, Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) was formed which constitutionally get rid of PTI's corrupt regime. The person who claimed to have restricted the federal government within the jurisdiction of the federal capital had been restricted to Zaman Park in Lahore now, he said without naming PTI chairperson Imran Khan.

The minister expressed confidence that the next government would be formed by the allied parties in the federal government.

Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah said these two development projects would cost Rs10 billion and help save fuel, and time and spur economic activities in the district.

He said that due to the personal interest of the prime minister during his tenure as chief minister of Punjab had completed different mega uplift projects in Faisalabad, adding serving the masses was practically proved by the Sharif brothers.

The minister berated the PTI's government and its leadership for their failure to initiate any development project in the country, adding the PML-N government was removed through a conspiracy which badly affected the country's economy and politics.



FAISALABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif is unveiling the plaque during groundbreaking ceremony for dualization of a road from Faisalabad Bypass to Motorway (M-3) via Satiana.

Fazl urges Muslim world to recall ambassadors from Sweden

KARACHI (NNI): Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Fazl) chairman Maulana Fazlur Rehman urged the Muslim World to recall ambassadors from Sweden over the desecration of the Holy Quran.

Addressing the protestor's rally held against the desecration of the holy Quran, JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman said that such acts are unacceptable for Muslims across the world as Muslims respect the holy scriptures of every religion. He said that people will sacrifice their life for the Holy Quran. "We will make their life hard if such acts did not stop in the Western world" he warned.

JUI-F chief Fazlur Rehman termed Islam as the red line for Muslims across the world and incidents like this will not be tolerated in the future as Muslims consider it as an attack on Islam.

"The heinous conduct had been repeated more than once in Sweden. This despicable act is seen as a war against the Muslim world," he said.

"We respect all sacred books. for and received permission from Swedish police to desecrate the Quran outside the Iraqi embassy on Thursday. It is important to mention here that a man desecrated the Holy Quran in Sweden's capital Stockholm last week, resulting in strong condemnation from several states, including Pakistan, Turkiye, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Iraq, and Iran.

Sweden's government also condemned the burning of the Quran outside Stockholm's main mosque, calling it an "Islamophobic" act.

"The Swedish Government fully understands that the Islamophobic acts committed by individuals at demonstrations in Sweden can be offensive to Muslims," the foreign ministry said in a statement. "We strongly condemn these acts, which in no way reflect the views of the Swedish government," it added.

The condemnation came in response to a call for collective measures to avoid future Quran burnings from the Saudi-based Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Protesters in Sweden had applied

FM commends Turkish role in securing grain deal

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has resolved to work with Turkiye and other Islamic countries to prevent incidents of desecration of the Holy Quran. In a tweet, he strongly condemned the acts of desecration of the Holy Quran in several European cities. The Foreign Minister also commended the role of Turkiye in achieving the landmark Black Sea Grain Corridor agreement last year, which has played a significant role in stabilizing global food prices, especially in developing and the poorest countries.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said he spoke to his Turkish counterpart Hakan Fidan and lauded his efforts in this regard.

He extended Pakistan's full support to international efforts in reviving the landmark Black Sea Grain Corridor agreement.

First SC bench to hear PTI chairman's nomination

QUETTA (PPI) The first bench, which was formed by the Supreme Court (SC) to hear the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) nomination in the Quetta lawyer's murder case, has been restored, according to a report on Sunday.

Earlier, the bench had been changed at the request of the PTI chairman. Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar had been included in the bench in place of Justice Musarrat Hilali. However, the first bench has been restored at the request of the PTI chairman. According to the new cause list issued by the SC, Justice Musarrat Hilali will be part of the three-member bench.

The bench, headed by Justice Yahya Afridi, will hear the case tomorrow. Justice Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi will also be part of the bench.

The court has summoned the PTI chairman in a personal capacity for bail in the Quetta lawyer's murder case.

Rivers Indus, Chenab, Ravi, Kabul continue to run in low flood with rising trend: FFC

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Flood Commission (FFC) has said that currently, rivers Indus, Chenab, Ravi and Kabul are flowing in low flood with the rising trend at Kalabagh-Chashma, Chashma-Taunsa, Marala-Khanki and Warsak-Nowshera reaches respectively.

According to the daily FFC report issued on Sunday, flash flooding of moderate to heavy intensity is expected in the Nullahs of Balochistan (Loralai, Kalat, Sibbi, Makran and Nasirabad divisions including hill torrents of D G Khan division during the next 24 hours. The combined live storage of the country's reservoirs stands at 9,833 million acre feet of the total 13,443 MAF.

Yesterday's trough of westerly wave over northern parts of Pakistan has moved away eastwards. Yesterday's monsoon low over Southwestern Chattisgarh (India) moved West-Northwestwards and lies over southwestern Madhya Pradesh and adjoining Rajasthan (India).

Moderate to strong moist currents from the bay of Bengal and Arabian sea are penetrating into the lower half of Pakistan up to 7000 feet. Seasonal low lies over Northwestern Balochistan. For the next 24 hours, Flood Forecasting Division (FFD) Lahore has predicted scattered widespread wind thunderstorm/rain of moderate to heavy intensity with isolated very heavy falls over South and Southeastern Sindh including Punjab (DG Khan Division), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (D I Khan Bannu and Kohat Divisions) and Balochistan (Zhob, Loralai, Kalat, Sibbi and Makran and Nasirabad Divisions).

Heavy rains in KP resulted death of four persons, one other injured

PESHAWAR (APP): Due to heavy rains all across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa resulted in the death of 4 people while one person was injured, a report issued by Provincial Disaster Management said here Sunday.

According to reports so far, 67 houses were partially damaged and 7 houses were completely damaged due to floods and rains across the province with 39 houses in Lower Chitral while 19 in Upper Chitral were partially damaged due to flood.

On the instructions of the Relief Department, District Administration, PDMA, Rescue 1122, Civil Defence, and related institutions are on alert, spokesman of the Relief Department said here. Relief materials were provided to the affected families of Chitral Upper and a detailed assessment of the damage will be started as soon as the flood waters recede in Lower Chitral, spokesman of the Relief Department added.

Sensitive communities in Chitral Lower had already been shifted to safer places with food items (dry ration) being provided to the affected families and Dir Lower road has been cleared for traffic by the district administration.

The district administration mobilized heavy machinery for the speedy restoration of the roads and the road has been cleared for traffic at Koghuzi, the spokesman said. A one-way road has been opened by the district administration of Dir Upper. The two-way rehabilitation of the road is in progress, he informed.

PDMA had issued a letter to all concerned institutions and district administration besides giving on the spot instructions to take precautionary measures regarding rains, flash floods, urban flooding and flooding in rivers.

The Rescue 1122, Monsoon Mock Exercises, Preparation and Training in progress with Rescue 1122 is conducting evacuation training in boats to deal with the possible flood situation in monsoon, said Dr. Khateer Ahmed, Director General of Rescue 1122. Rescue 1122 presented a practical model of exercises in Kabul River in Nowshera, Dr. Khateer Ahmed said.

People trapped in the Kabul River were also rescued by boats, the official of Rescue 1122 said. DG 1122 said that Rescue 1122 also conducted a search by scuba diving and the Rescue 1122 is providing training to security agencies, civil defense, schools and colleges and local people within the resources available across the province.

Meanwhile, PDMA had issued a letter to all concerned institutions and district administration besides giving on-the-spot instructions to take precautionary measures regarding rains, flash floods, urban flooding, and flooding in rivers.

DG Rescue 1122 Dr Khateer Ahmed said that people trapped in the Kabul River were also rescued by boats. The Rescue 1122 officials also conducted a search operation by scuba divers.

CM KP for urgent relief measures in rains hit areas

PESHAWAR (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Azam Khan on Sunday issued strict directives to the relief department and district administrations to remain on high alert and provide relief to people of the area hit by torrential rains and flash floods.

The Chief Minister has also instructed relevant officials to ensure immediate assistance to those affected by the heavy downpours.

He said that rescue and relief operations are to be promptly launched to ensure the safety and well-being of the affected population, as the situation demands urgent attention.

People in distress should be provided immediate relief and support. We must take all necessary measures to ensure their safety and wellbeing, said Chief Minister Muhammad Azam Khan.

The Chief Minister further assured that the caretaker provincial government would leave no stone unturned in providing every possible assistance to those facing difficulties during this challenging hour.

He said that we will stand by the affected people throughout this difficult time and every possible help will be extended to them.

He said that the relief and rescue teams have been deployed to affected areas to provide immediate aid and assess the extent of the damage.

Security forces continue relief activities in Swat, Dir, Chitral

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Security forces continued relief activities in flood-hit parts of Swat, Dir and Chitral after the communication system was affected in the nearby areas after the water level rose in the Panjkora River.

Moreover, an under-construction bridge was partially damaged in Shamsi Khan due to landsliding. In other landslide incidents, Kalakot, Sheringal and Kumrat Road was also damaged.

A bridge washed away in floods after heavy rainfall in Chitral's Buni area. Contingents of security forces reached the affected areas with heavy machinery to make alternative routes for public movement.

The security forces also continued rescue and relief operations in Swat and Shangla and restored roads and communications systems.

The contingents have also provided food and water to the residents of the affected areas.

At least four people were killed and several others were injured in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) as a result of heavy rains, a report issued by Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) on Sunday stated.

According to the PDMA report, 67 houses were partially damaged and seven houses were completely damaged due to floods and rains across the province.

On the instructions of the Relief Department, District Administration, PDMA, Rescue 1122, Civil Defence, and related

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UET Media



KP govt declares rain emergency in Lower, Upper Chitral

PESHAWAR (INP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government on Sunday declared a rain emergency in Lower and Upper Chitral following flash floods and torrential downpour. Heavy rain with strong winds and thunderstorms lashed parts of the province on Saturday, triggering landslides and destroying infrastructure.

The rain continued intermittently through the day, resulting in a "large-scale devastation" in the district. The deluge also triggered flash floods in Chitral, which washed away bridges, roads, and livestock. According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department, several areas

of the country are likely to continue to receive rain until July 26.

The notification issued by the Relief, Rehabilitation and Settlement Department on Sunday said that the deputy commissioners of both districts had requested for an "emergency" to be declared in order to enable them to "launch immediate rescue and relief activities".

Therefore, the provincial government declared a rain emergency in the two districts with immediate effect, adding that it would remain in place till August 15 "for provision of relief and restoration of damaged communication network

and water supply".

Meanwhile, KP Interim Chief Minister Mohammad Azam Khan directed the relief department and the district administration to remain on "high alert". He directed authorities to immediately launch relief and rescue activities and to ensure that aid was provided to the affected.

The chief minister also ordered for the affected people to be moved to safer locations and asserted that the provincial government would help them "in every possible way".

Separately, four people of the same family lost their lives while one was injured in a landslide in Gilgit

Baltistan's Skardu district, police said. Skardu Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Raja Mirza Hasan said a family hailing from the Astore district was heading to Gilgit from Skardu when the landslide occurred.

He added that as the family fled their car for safety, they got caught in another landslide, which killed three women and a child. SSP Hasan further said that officials could not reach the affected family immediately as the highway was blocked at four points due to landslides triggered by rainfall. Rescue teams are trying to reach the site of the incident to recover the injured and the bodies, he added.

CS directed to facilitate rain/flood hit population

PESHAWAR (INP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali has expressed deep grief and sorrow over the losses caused by heavy rains and floods in Chitral and other districts of the province.

The Governor advised Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry to ensure all possible assistance to the flood and rain-affected people in Chitral and other regions.

Haji Ghulam Ali directed to take prompt actions to address the situation to provide necessary aid to the affected communities.

He also advised the officials concerned for immediate measures to restore the ground route to Upper Chitral.

The Governor instructed that no effort should be spared in providing aid to the affected people in the Chitral district and other regions, hit by floods and heavy rains.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister for Irrigation Haji Fazal Elahi speaking at Pakhtunkhwa Radio's program "Pakhtunkhwa Online".

All relevant depts on high alert to deal with rain, flood situation

PESHAWAR (APP): Caretaker Minister of Information and Endowment Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel Sunday said that on the orders of the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan all the relevant department across the province are on high alert to deal with rain and flood situation in the province.

Talking to media men, Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel said that the Caretaker Chief Minister is personally monitoring the rescue and relief activities in the affected areas.

He expressed grief over the loss of life and property due to rains and floods in the province.

The caretaker provincial minister expressed his deep sorrow over the death

of 3 people, including a woman, due to the collapse of a roof and wall in Mansehra district. Houses have been damaged in Chitral due to torrential rains and floods, Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel said.

He said, link roads are being restored with heavy machinery in Chitral Lower and the teams of district administration, PDMA, Rescue 1122 and civil defense department are engaged in relief activities in the affected areas.

Residents from sensitive areas have been shifted to safer places and the affected families are being provided with food items and dry goods while the provincial government will provide all possible assistance to the affected citizens, Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel said.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali offering feteiha for martyred police personnel.

Minister: Modern irrigation system become indispensable for agricultural self-sufficiency

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker provincial Minister for Irrigation Haji Fazal Elahi on Sunday said that modern irrigation system has become indispensable for agricultural self-sufficiency, while the construction of canals and dams can make more barren land arable and this is among the top priorities of the government.

He revealed that the federal government has given us a formula for the distribution of the water of the Indus River among the four provinces under the IRSA Act. According to this act, he said, our province's share is 8.78 million cubic feet (14 percent), but due to the lack of an active canal system.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa cannot use its share of water properly.

He added that Chishma Right Bank Canal (CRBC) Lift Low Gravity project has been approved with the federal and provincial part-

nership, the cost of which being shared by our province is 35%, but due to lack of resources, this crucial project has been delayed. If this project is completed on time, he maintained, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would be able to use enough of its share of water, which will bring 2,86,000 acres of additional land under cultivation.

He was speaking at Pakhtunkhwa Radio's program "Pakhtunkhwa Online". Prof Dr. Abasin Yousafzai was the host while Ghulam Hussain Ghazi, Station Director Pakhtunkhwa Radio was also present on the occasion. The Irrigation Minister agreed with viewpoint of the host that the role of English era in developing canal system of the subcontinent was great, but after independence, he said, major irrigation projects were completed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. These included Warsak Canal System (150,000 acres), Gomal

Zam Dam Canal System (194,000 acres), CRBC Canal System (360,000 acres) and Marwat Canal System (170,000 acres). Apart from this, he said, work on major projects like capacity enhancement of Baran Dam, Remodeling of Warsik Canal System, Pehur High Level Project and Seran Valley Right Bank Canal Project (Mansehra) is progressing rapidly.

On the alarming situation of continuous fall of underground water level in different cities of the province, he said that there are only two ways to prevent the ground water level from falling further. First to stop ruthless wastage of water as he said, people should meet their water needs from above ground water.

Secondly he said canal system development is must through the cities and revealed that to raise the water level in Peshawar, work is in progress on Jabba Dam and Warsik

Dam Tunnel.

He said that Rs 7 billion have been paid to the concerned firm for the construction of second tunnel parallel to the Warsak Dam Tunnel and the wide canals to be taken out of it will irrigate millions of acres of additional dry barren lands in the suburbs of Peshawar and would prove to be the milestone of the green revolution in the area. While there is also urgent need to launch such projects in other cities, he added.

Regarding the construction of small dams in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the provincial minister said that so far 37 dams have been constructed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including the merged districts. From which, he said, 137,732 acres of lands are being irrigated. Apart from this, he further revealed, work is in progress on 24 more dams which will irrigate 49,523 acres of additional land. Similarly, he said, a feasibility study has been given to Nespak for mid-level dams in southern districts, work on which is in progress. Among other ben-

efits, he recalled, the project will irrigate about 150,000 acres of land and protect tank and also will DI Khan from flood ravages. On the question regarding the timely warning system of floods, Haji Fazl Elahi said that more than 100 gauges have been installed on various rivers in the province to check the flow of water out of which 22 gauges have been converted into modern telemetric system.

Similarly, he said, 360 kilometers of embankments have been built across the province to prevent the rapid flow of water on all natural drains and rivers, while important projects are also under consideration in the federal development program in the context of environmental change, he added.

In response to another question, he said that the Irrigation Department has also started making full use of solar energy, while solar irrigation schemes are being given to all the districts of the province on an equal basis, contrary to the past complaints.

Govt promoting of backward areas: Zafar

PESHAWAR (APP): Advisor to Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism, Culture and Archeology Zafar Mahmood on Sunday said that the caretaker government is using all available resources for the welfare of the people so that the people of backward and remote areas can get basic facilities and all their legitimate rights in time.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is becoming a hub for domestic and foreign tourists due to the initiatives of the caretaker government. Shandoor festival was attended by more than expected. He said this while talk-

ing to a delegation led by former Nazim Ghabral Malik Muhammad Khan. On this occasion, Qazi Muhammad Alam, Chairman of Gujri Adab Swat, Maulana Muhammad Iqbal and Malik Dawood were also present. The delegation while highlighting its long-standing problems, said that the advisor to the chief minister informed all the details while presenting health, education, illegal cutting of forests and other problems of construction and repair of roads and bridges in the tourist places of Swat district.

Zafar Mahmood said that the caretaker govern-

ment is solving the problems faced by the people according to the aspirations of the people. There will be no compromise on the provision of their legitimate rights. The people should fully support the government in the construction and development of the country, said Zafar.

Advisor Zafar Mahmood accepted the invitation of the former Nazim to visit Swat. The delegation thanked Zafar Mahmood for listening attentively to the issues and taking personal interest in solving them and assured full cooperation for the development of the country.



PESHAWAR: Mannat Alam procession passing through its traditional route at Imam Bargah Ali Kiyani.



PESHAWAR: A beautiful view of Faqirabad railway track after a rain experience in City.

SCN approaches minister for halting indiscriminate cutting of forest trees in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Sarhad Conservation Nature (SCN), a non-governmental organization striving for conservation of environment, culture and heritage, has approached Federal Minister for Climate Change, Sherry Rehman to take notice of planned and indiscriminate cutting of forest trees in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) over the

pretext of diseased and windfallen trees.

In a letter sent to Federal Minister for Climate Change on Sunday, the SCN office bearers urged Sherry Rehman to divert her attention to a matter of grave concern that requires her immediate attention and intervention.

"It has come to our organization's attention that cer-

tain senior officials within the Provincial Forest Department of KP are engaged in the indiscriminate cutting down of forest trees in specific parts of the province," reads the letter.

The SCN is committed to preserving and safeguarding our natural resources, including the invaluable forests that contribute significantly to the

reduction of Greenhouse Gases as well as the well-being of the environment, climate change and society, it added. Showing its concerns, the SCN observed the tree felling activities appear to have been initiated without any transparent and accountable assessment, consultation, or public disclosure. This lack of transparency raises serious

doubts about the validity of the reasoning provided by the senior officials of the Forest Department.

Furthermore, no comprehensive scientific study or environmental impact assessment has been conducted to ascertain the actual extent of disease and windfall impact on the forests in question, it continued.

Ecological disaster unleashed: The vanishing Chitral-Mastuj road, flash floods

Riaz Zarain

In a shocking display of environmental irresponsibility, the construction of the Chitral-Mastuj Road has triggered a catastrophic ecological disaster in the serene region of Kari. The construction company, along with the district administration, has recklessly discarded by-products such as stones, soil, regolith rocks, and other debris into the river channel, causing the river Chitral to drastically lose depth. This heedless act has resulted in the inundation of surrounding roads and areas, leading to the complete disappearance of the Chitral-Mastuj Road in Kari.

The consequences of these actions are dire, as the road served as a crucial link between upper Chitral and lower Chitral, fostering connectivity and coexistence between the communities on either side of the river. Tragically, this symbol of connectivity now lies buried under debris, leaving both regions isolated and struggling to cope with the aftermath.

Similarly, the valley of Shogram, though not directly affected, is also at risk of facing a similar calamity. The careless dumping of construction waste into the river channel poses an imminent threat to the Chitral-Mastuj Road

near Shogram. If no immediate intervention is taken, Shogram could suffer the same fate as Kari, with roads and areas inundated, cutting off vital routes of connectivity for the locals.

As if the devastation in Kari and the looming threat in Shogram were not enough, the situation has been exacerbated by flash floods in the streams of Denin and Kari. These flash floods, triggered by an increase in temperature and torrential rainfall, have intensified the ecological crisis. In Ayun Valley, once a serene and picturesque landscape, a flash flood reported in the nearby Kalash Valley has raised

concerns that the already critical situation may worsen. The potential blockage of river Chitral near Ayun could lead to the complete inundation of the valley, causing further devastation and displacement of communities.

Additionally, the valley of Kojiu has fallen victim to the merciless dumping of construction waste. The construction company's disregard for the environment has caused the river Chitral to reach its peak near the village of Kojiu. The river's wrath is inevitable, and there are grave concerns that the road near Kojiu may soon vanish, cutting off yet

another vital route of connectivity for the locals.

The construction company's brazen pursuit of profit at the expense of the environment is nothing short of a travesty. Their actions have disrupted the natural flow of the river Chitral and upset its delicate ecological balance. The once life-sustaining river has now become a formidable force of destruction, engulfing the very roads that were meant to facilitate development and ensure prosperity.

The district administration, entrusted with safeguarding the region and its people, has demonstrated a shocking level of negligence

and disregard for the environment. Their failure to enforce proper waste management protocols and monitor construction activities has allowed the construction company to perpetrate this heinous act without facing consequences. Their inaction has facilitated the continuation of this reckless and destructive behavior, leading to the loss of vital infrastructure and impending threats in other regions.

The repercussions of their irresponsible actions have been catastrophic for the people of Kari, Shogram, and Kojiu. Countless homes have been washed away, livelihoods shattered, and access to

essential services and markets severed.

The ecological devastation caused by the wanton disposal of construction waste into the river channel is beyond measure. The river's delicate ecosystem has been thrown into disarray, suffocating aquatic life and destroying crucial habitats. The people who reside near the bank of the river are at constant risk due to changing river flows and height. The ability of the river to support local agriculture and fishing communities has been severely compromised, threatening the very livelihoods that depend on its bounties.

The current flash floods

in the streams of Denin and Kari have further worsened the situation in Ayun Valley, with the river changing its course swiftly, posing a significant threat to lives, property, and the overall ecological balance of the region.

The construction company and district administration must be held accountable for their blatant disregard for the environment and the well-being of the people they were meant to serve. Urgent measures must be taken to rectify the damage caused, and robust monitoring systems must be implemented to prevent such ecological disasters in the future.

(The author is RS/GIS specialist)



In brief

Five a of family injured

FAISALABAD (INP): Five members of a family suffered multiple injuries after the car they were riding struck a road divider near Samundri on Sunday, rescuers and police said. The driver apparently lost control over steering. The injured were shifted to the tehsil headquarters hospital. They were identified as Musarrat, 66, Riaz 32, Naila, 25, Eman Fatima, 4, and Ayesha.

Man shot dead by guard

SHEIKHUPURA (INP): A man was shot dead by security guard of a factory after exchange of hot words here on Sunday, police said. According to details, security guard of a solar factory located at Kot Pindi Das road had a verbal clash with a person over petty issue. The security guard got furious and gunned down 40-year old Rabnawaz. The body was shifted to hospital for postmortem and police after registering a case against the guard started an investigation.

3 electrocuted as rain lashes city

PAKPATTAN (INP): Tragedy struck Pakpattan district on Sunday as heavy rainfall led to three fatalities from electrocution in different incidents. According to Rescue 1122, Waqas lost his life due to electric shocks while taking a bath, while a heartbreaking incident occurred when a two-year-old girl accidentally came into contact with a live power cable, resulting in her unfortunate demise. In a separate incident, Ramzan also succumbed to electrocution while taking a bath in Arifwala. The incidents serve as a stark reminder of the hazards posed by electrical mishaps during rainstorms.

Kidnappers arrested

SARGODHA (APP): Police claimed on Sunday to have arrested a woman and her facilitator for kidnapping a newborn baby from the nursery ward of District Headquarters (DHQ) Teaching Hospital six days ago. According to police, more than six special teams were formed for the recovery of kidnapped baby boy. The teams used modern technology and succeeded in arresting a woman accused and her facilitator from Lak Adda for kidnapping the baby boy. District Police Officer Muhammad Faisal Kamran said the accused and the female facilitator would be punished according to law.

DC visits Allama Iqbal Library

SIALKOT (APP): Deputy Commissioner Sialkot Adnan Mehmood Awan accompanied by Dr AS Chughtai visited Allama Iqbal Library Paris Road here on Sunday. Talking on the occasion, the DC said that Iqbal Library was the oldest library of Sialkot where thousands of valuable books had been showcased. Under the supervision of Municipal Corporation Sialkot, the project of rehabilitation and upgradation of the library building was in progress. Dr AS Chughtai offered technical/management support from Chughtai Lab/ Foundation to renovate Iqbal Library and put it on modern lines.

Two held with narcotics

SIALKOT (APP): Police claimed to have arrested two notorious drug barons and recovered contraband from them. In a crackdown against drug peddlers and criminals, Kotwali police conducted raids and arrested Ali Mustaq and Riaz with 4.4 kg hashish.

Three-day contact sessions concluded at GKMC, BKMC-MTI

F.P. Report

SWABI: A three-day "Certificate in Health Professional Education" (CHPE) contact sessions was successfully concluded at Bacha Khan Medical Complex (BKMC) and Gajju Khan Medical College (GKMC), Swabi. The contact sessions took place in the College Auditorium Hall and saw active participation from faculty members representing various medical colleges.

The CHPE contact session was conducted as part of the GKMC faculty development program, in collaboration with the "National University of Medical Sciences" (NUMS). The contact sessions were skillfully led by distinguished Senior Professors of Medical Education from NUMS, namely Dr. Ayesha Rauf, Dr. Naushaba Sadiq, and Dr. Rokhsana Ayub, ensuring a high-quality learning experience for all the participants.

Participants, while the focal person for this program was Mr. Saad Khan Assistant Computer Programmer of GKMC-MTI.

In this CHPE contact sessions, nearly 50 faculty members including GKMC/BKMC, Allied THQs TOPI, Chota Lahor, and DHQ Swabi participated. Moreover, faculty members from other esteemed institutions like Swat Medical College, Combined Military Hospital (CMH) Peshawar, and Resalpur were also present. The sessions spanned three days and provided valuable insights and knowledge to all participants.

Dean/CEO GKMC-MTI Prof. Dr. Shams-Ur-Rehman appreciated the dedication and commitment of all participants and emphasized the significance of such faculty development Programs. He highlighted that with this contact sessions, nearly all faculty members of GKMC-MTI have fulfilled the

CHPE course requirement, making it essential for the teaching cadre.

Dean/CEO GKMC-MTI highlighted the importance of the faculty development program and ensured that they will continue a similar program in the near future as well.

This comprehensive program encompasses a diverse range of topics, centering on teaching, learning, and assessment within the healthcare profession and enabling the faculty to develop highly effective instructional strategies, design and implement impactful academic and research programs, and adeptly evaluate student performance.

The successful completion of this three-day CHPE contact sessions at GKMC/BKMC-MTI reflects the commitment of the medical education community to continuous professional development and enhancing teaching methodologies.

‘Steps afoot for peaceful conduct of Muharram’

D.I.KHAN (APP): Commissioner Zafarul Islam on Sunday said the steps were being taken under the nationwide policy of the Ministry of Interior to ensure peaceful conduct of Muharram in Dera Ismail Khan and Tank districts.

Talking to media, he said the police and FC personnel were deployed at all the entry and exit points besides the sensitive places in both the districts.

The personnel of the Pakistan Army were also on alert, he said and added that these days would be completed peacefully by demonstration of sacrificing the spirit of Karbala.

He said the efforts and mutual unity being demonstrated by both schools of thought would help in peaceful conduct of Muharram.

He informed that more than 250 private and government CCTV cameras have been connected with the police control room in Dera Ismail Khan, adding, the routes of traditional processions, sensitive places were being monitored regularly.

The comprehensive security plan of police was well-functioning and the personnel of other affiliated institutions were also on high alert, the commissioner said.

He said the health

department staff have been assigned special responsibilities while the officials of TMA were active in sanitation and street lights.

The emergency service Rescue 1122 has also completed all its planning for Ashura, he added. Commissioner Zafarul Islam said that the WAPDA has been asked to avoid load-shedding in sensitive areas from 12:00 noon to 12:00 midnight.

However, he said, there were complaints of tripping from that areas and the authorities concerned assured their resolution.

Moreover, he said, the standby electricity generators would also be provided in that areas by the administration on Muharram 9 & 10. The commissioner said both the schools of thought in Dera Ismail Khan were demonstrating mutual unity according to the peace agreement of 2009, which was very welcoming.

"We have to thwart the ambitions of the anti-state forces unitedly for which the law enforcement agencies are firmly standing," he said.

He demanded of the citizens to extend their cooperation in this regard by reporting the law enforcement agencies about any suspicious activity or presence of any suspected person if they noticed around

them.

He assured that the name of the informer would be kept confidential. About the jamming of mobile phone network on Muharram 9th and 10th, he said the instructions of the Federal Interior Ministry and the Provincial Home

Department would be followed in this regard. About the ban on pillow riding, he said it was the police of provincial and the federal governments.

However, he said, the elderly and sick persons would be exempted from this ban after investigation by the police officials so that the rule of law could be maintained with minimum sufferings of the people.

The commissioner said all these measures were being taken with a spirit of thwarting the ambitions of anti-Islam and anti-state forces, adding, the public support was must to make these steps successful.

He said the month of Muharram has been sacred since the beginning of this universe.

The Muharram has been a month of respect, respect and sacrifice since the beginning of this universe, he said and added, the sacrifice rendered by Imam Hussain (R.A) and other martyrs of Karbala have made this month more sacred.

ATH Board meets to resolve problems

ABBOTTABAD (APP): Chairman Ayub Medical Complex (AMC) Board of Governor Mushatq Jadoon Sunday chaired a meeting of the Board at AMC to address the current challenges and issues faced by the institution and gather information on the responsibilities of the hospital's authorities.

The meeting was attended by the Board members, including Wing Commander (R) Ayaz Khan and Professor Dr. Aftab Rabani and the hospital's management team.

During the meeting,

Dean Professor Dr. Omar Farooq and Medical Director Professor Dr. Alam Zeb Swati provided detailed briefings on their respective responsibilities and ongoing projects. Furthermore, Hospital Director Dr. Ashfaq Ahmed, Nursing Director Shams ul Huda, and Finance Director Faheem Khan will also provide their briefings in the coming week.

The Board members discussed the issues pertaining to the hospital's Human Resources (HR) and explored further avenues for progress. They were

also briefed on the complete status of the litigation cases. They emphasized that resolving these matters through sitting together with hospital employees would be a favorable development.

The hospital administration is striving to provide the best possible facilities for the treatment and care of patients, and its objective is to ensure the public is provided with top-notch healthcare services. In addition to this, every effort is being made to address other challenges faced by the public.

PBM arranges awareness seminar on Thalassemia

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): Pakistan Bait-ul-Maal (PBM) arranged an awareness seminar on Thalassemia in line with an awareness campaign launched across South Punjab by the department from July 18-23.

Under the directions of MD, Pakistan Bait-ul-Maal Amir Fida Pracha and Director South Punjab Maher Mazhar Abbas, Assistant Director PBM Muzaffargarh Syed Kashif Saleem organized the seminar at PBM Women Empowerment Center on Sunday.

State Minister Maher

Irshad Ahmed Sial, urged the participants to must undergo Thalassemia tests before marriage so that not to marry a Thalassemia patient in case of a Thalassemia carrier. He said that the Parliament had already passed the law and there was a dire need to implement it and Thalassemia-free tests must be dispatched with the marriage contract (Nikkah).

Dr Sheikh Muhammad Sikander, consultant physician and Dr Muhammad Athar Kaleem, from the Health Department, gave a complete briefing to the participants about

Thalassemia. They said that Thalassemia was not less than a challenge to human life and appreciated the PBM efforts to launch an awareness drive regarding it. Thalassemia is a hereditary disease and medical tests should be done to prevent it because no permanent cure has been discovered for this disease yet and tests before marriage especially cousin marriage must be done, they added.

Advocate High Court and Chairman civil society network Khair Muhammad Budh, Syed Nouman Gillani and others attended the seminar.



QUETTA: Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami Siraj ul Haq addressing Provincial Electoral Convention of Jamaat-e-Islami Balochistan.

2 sisters dead as landslide hits house in Swat

SWAT (INP): Two sisters lost their lives after a landslide struck their home in Madyan area of Swat.

The natural disaster occurred in Tehsil Bahrain, shaking the entire community and causing profound grief for the affected family.

According to the rescue spokesperson, the incident unfolded in the early hours of the morning when a massive landslide descended upon the dwelling of Noor Rahman, a resident of Madyan.

The force of the landslide caused a part of the house to collapse, tragically burying five members of the family under the debris.

As emergency responders and local volunteers rushed to the scene, their efforts were focused on locating and rescuing the trapped family members.

Amidst the chaos Noor Rahman's wife and one of his daughters were miraculously pulled out alive.

PHP arrest eight criminals

FAISALABAD (APP): Punjab Highway Patrol (PHP) police claimed to have nabbed eight criminals including three proclaimed offenders and recovered illegal weapons, stolen motorcycle and other valuables from their possession.

PHP spokesman Inspector Rizwan Bhatti said here on Sunday that on the special direction of SSP Patrolling Faisalabad Region, the PHP Jawans launched a vigorous campaign against criminals on all highways of the region.

During the drive, the patrolling police arrested five criminals identified as that Ali Raza, Zeeshan, Abdur Raheem, Muhammad Saleem and Qamar Abbas from Asghar Abad, Sahianwala, Jhamra, Chak No. 228-GB and Chimranwali.

The police recovered a Kalashnikov, a rifle, a repeater, a pistol, a number of bullets/cartridges and 10 liters liquor from their possession. The PHP police also nabbed three proclaimed offenders from different parts of the region and locked them behind bars. Further investigation was underway.

FESCO finalizes arrangements

FAISALABAD (APP): FESCO has finalized all necessary arrangements to ensure uninterrupted power supply to its consumers during the Ashura days.

In a press statement issued here on Sunday, FESCO Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Engr Bashir Ahmed said that all employees and officers of the company were made alert to deal with any emergency during Ashura days.

He said that FESCO teams had already checked the areas of Imam Bargahs for removing faults from electricity transformers so that uninterrupted power supply could be ensured to the consumers.

He said that emergency centers had been set up in all five circles of the company where FESCO staff would remain present round the clock and the people could contact them in case of any emergency.

Police crackdown on activists, leaders of PTI continue

SHANLA (APP): Shangle Police crackdown on activists and leaders of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), who are involved in

May 9 and 10 vandalism is continuing and a case has been registered against 35 under 3 MPO, in which 16 others have been arrested, and raids are ongoing for their arrest.

Late night Police raids at the houses of some important PTI leaders including former Provincial Minister Shaukat Yousafzai's brother Liaquat Yousafzai.

A total of 16 activists and leaders have been arrested in various Police Stations of Shangle district, for which a team of lawyers including President Shangle Bar Association and General Secretary Insaf Lawyers Forum Malakand Division Jawad Ali Noor

Advocate, President of Tehreek-e-Insaf Lawyers Forum reached Peshawar High Court.

Among those arrested under 16 MPO are Anwar Ali Jan, Hamidullah Khan, Nawabzada, Ihsan Bahadur, Khaliq Zaman, Ali Akbar, Nisar Muhammad Sulaiman Ameer, Pir Aman Khan, Ali Baz Khan, Khalil Muhammad, Faizullah, Rozi Khan, Muhammad Rehman, Jahanzeb, Samiullah, who have been transferred to jail immediately after their arrest.

Mock drills of Police conducted in Shangle

Police mock drills were conducted at sensitive places of Circle Bisham wherein Police, Elite Force, ATS and 1122 personnel participated in the exercises in order to increase the professional

skills of the police personnel and to ensure the safety of public and private property in case of any possible unpleasant situations.

The mock drills were conducted on the directives of District Police Officer Shangle Sajjad Ahmad Sahibzada. Presented a practical demonstration of safely evacuating the Azadars during a procession. During the mock exercise, the Police men used force against the attackers and arrested them successfully.

In addition to providing immediate medical aid to the injured persons during the resistance with the Police, they repeated the drill to protect themselves from the attackers and presented a practical demonstration of different formations.

Suspect in sisters' murder makes shocking confession

MUZAFFARGARH (INP): The murder of three minor sisters has made startling revelations about the killing incident on Saturday in Muzaffargarh.

According to media reports, the suspect – identified as Basit – told that he wanted to kill the entire family.

However, he said, he changed his intention to kill his mother after seeing her face. The suspect refused to answer the question regarding killing his sisters.

On Monday, three sisters were brutally slaughtered in

Thermal Colony area of Muzaffargarh district.

Police had detained three brothers of the girls on suspicion and found one of them, identified as Basit, suspicious during interrogation. Later, Basit confessed to the crime and led the police to the murder weapon.

He allegedly told the police that the family showed more love to his sisters instead of him. In his statement, he also said he was fond of playing PUBG from where he learnt the style of killing.

Police told the media that the accused is seemingly suffering from inferiority complex. They added that police also recovered a murder weapon from the accused.

The suspect told the police that at the time of the incident, his father had gone to work, the mother was also not home. The suspect's other brother who was at home was sent by him to get flour from the flourmill before he killed all three sisters. The minor victims were Fatima (7), Zahra Ijaz (8), and Areesha (11).

Govt to patronize mango orchards at national level

MULTAN (INP): Mango trees should be given the status of a national tree and steps should be taken to increase mango exports as it will not only help earn foreign exchange but also improve the living standard of peasants.

This was recommended by different speakers including Chairman Seraikistan Council Zahoor Dharaija, Malik Allah Nawaz Wanis, Saleem Darbari, Aamir Shehzad, and many others in a seminar on Mangos, here. Chairman Seraikistan

Council Zahoor Dharaija lamented that mango orchards were being ignored continuously. The government should patronize the mango orchards at national level.

He stated that an agriculture-based free industrial zone should also be introduced in the Seraiki region so that growers could find excellent opportunities to earn bread and butter.

Malik Allah Nawaz Wanis, another speaker, observed that the region used to produce over 70 percent of the country's

mangoes. Multan is popular at the global level for its exotic mangoes.

He stated that juice factories should be introduced in the region. He also expressed concern about the massive level of cutting of mature mango trees.

Police foil drugs supply attempt

MULTAN (APP): Police have foiled an attempt of supplying drugs at educational institutes and arrested two inter-province drug dealers during a special operation launched here on Sunday.

In line with special directives of City Police Officer (CPO) Mansoor-ul-Haq Rana, the Qutabpur police under the supervision of SP Cantt Division Capt (retd) Qazi Ali Raza launched a special operation against drug dealers of educational institutes.

The police foiled an attempt of drugs supply and arrested two inter-province drug dealers Bar-bar and Akram.

The police also recovered 20 kg Hashish, two kg Ice and two kg opium from their possession.

SP Cantt Division Capt (retd) Qazi Ali Raza said that police have successfully destroyed the network of drugs supply attempt educational institutes.

Negligent doctor operates on patient's throat instead of nose

JHELUM (INP): A surgeon in a private hospital in Jhelum operated on a patient's throat instead of his nose out of sheer negligence, it surfaced on Sunday.

According to the hospital sources, a man named Kashif was to undergo nose surgery, but the surgeon mistakenly operated on his throat.

"It was my mistake. The patient also had tonsillitis which I failed to tell earlier. I will operate on his nose as soon as he gets better," Dr Ahmad Nawaz Kayani said.

The patient, on the other

hand, claimed that he did not have any problem with his tonsils, adding that the doctor was supposed to operate on someone else's throat in his stead.

"A patient was scheduled to undergo throat surgery right after me, but the doctor operated on my throat without checking my file," he alleged.

He also wrote an application to the Jhelum deputy commissioner for action against the surgeon.

"My condition is bad. I will now go to the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) for nose surgery," he stated.



Spain to choose between Sanchez or return of the right

MADRID (AFP/APP): Spain votes Sunday on whether to hand Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez a fresh four-year mandate or, as polls suggest, bring the right back to power with its far-right ally.

Ahead of European elections in 2024, a shift to the right in the euro-zone's fourth-largest economy, mirroring a similar move in Italy last year, would be a huge blow for left-wing parties in Europe.

It would be even more symbolic as Spain currently holds the rotating presidency of the European Union.

Nearly all polls and pundits suggest the vote will spell victory for Alberto Nunez Feijoo's right-wing Popular Party (PP) -- but surprises could be in store.

By the time the last surveys were published on Monday, around one in five voters were still undecided, and it remains unclear what impact the timing of the vote, held at the height of the summer holidays in the scorching late July heat, will have on the turnout. As many Spaniards are on vacation, more than 2.47 million -- a record number -- of the 37.5 million registered voters have cast an absentee ballot, the Spanish Postal Service said on Saturday.

Polling stations open at 9:00 am (0700 GMT) and close at 8:00 pm, with the results expected a few hours later. It has not been a good final week of campaigning for the PP

leader, who stumbled over the issue of pensions, boycotted the final televised debate between candidates, and saw a resurgence of troubling questions about his ties with a now-convicted drug dealer in the 1990s.

Even so, "it would be a huge surprise if the PP did not win. But whether it will be able to form a government is another matter," said Pedro Riera Sagera, a political scientist at Madrid's Carlos III University.

Feijoo is hoping his party will reach the magic figure of 176 deputies within the 350-seat parliament, which would allow it to govern on its own, but the polls suggest otherwise. They show he will likely fall short and have to strike a deal with the only available partner -- the far-right Vox, which emerged in 2013 from a split within the PP.

This presents a real challenge for Feijoo, who has built his reputation on being a moderate, but whose party has recently made deals to jointly govern with Vox in local and regional authorities following the right's triumph in May's regional elections.

Throughout the negotiations, Vox refused to back down on controversial positions such as its rejection of abortion or trans rights, its refusal to acknowledge gender violence or its denial of climate change.

Vox leader Santiago Abascal has warned the PP it will demand a role in government in exchange for its sup-

port, in what would mean the first far-right participation in a Spanish government since the end of the Franco dictatorship in 1975.

Feijoo has kept his plans regarding Vox close to his chest, saying in an interview published Friday in daily newspaper El Mundo that "a candidate should not say who they will ally himself with two days before an election." A coalition government with Vox "is not ideal," he added.

Sanchez has used the prospect of a national PP-Vox government to try to rally leftist and moderate voters.

He warned during a TV debate on Wednesday that such a government "would not only be a step backwards for Spain" in terms of rights, "but also a serious setback for the European project." He argues the only alternative is keeping in power the current coalition government between his Socialists and the far-left.

Far-left party Podemos -- his coalition partner since 2020 -- has been absorbed this year by Sumar, a new formation led by his highly popular labour minister, Yolanda Diaz, a communist. While the Socialists and Podemos regularly clashed, Sanchez has smooth ties with Diaz.

But Riera said the chances of the leftist coalition holding on to power were slim and that there was a "serious risk" neither side could secure a working majority, which may mean a repeat election in a few months.

Cambodia votes as Hun Sen near-guaranteed election win

PHNOM PENH (AFP/APP): Cambodians voted Sunday in an election that long-time leader Hun Sen is all but guaranteed to win as he looks to secure his legacy by handing the reins to his eldest son.

The 70-year-old former Khmer Rouge cadre has ruled since 1985 and faces no real contest in this vote, with opposition parties banned, challengers forced to flee and freedom of expression stifled.

His Cambodian People's Party (CPP) is likely to retain all 125 seats in the lower house, prolonging his grip on power and paving the way for a dynastic succession some critics have compared to North Korean politics.

The only serious opposition party was disqualified on a technicality in the run-up to the polls and it will be a surprise if any of the 17 other small, poorly funded parties win seats.

Hun Sen cast his ballot in the capital Phnom Penh shortly after polling stations opened at 7:00 am (0000 GMT), according to AFP journalists at the scene.

More than 9.7 million people are registered to vote in the seventh election since the United Nations first sponsored polls in 1993, after years of conflict -- including the era of the genocidal Khmer Rouge -- left the country devastated.

Over the last 30 years whatever hopes the international community might have had for a vibrant multi-party democracy in Cambodia have been flattened by the juggernaut of Hun Sen's rule.

The veteran PM has begun to look to the future, saying he would

hand over to his son, four-star general Hun Manet -- possibly even in the coming weeks. "We have exercised our civil right and responsibility and right... of citizens to vote to choose the party we love to lead the country," the 45-year-old scion told reporters after casting his ballot. Many wonder whether Hun Manet, educated in the United States and Britain, might bring change to the country -- though Hun Sen has made it clear he intends to keep pulling strings even after his son takes over.

Asked by AFP what he plans to do for Cambodia when he becomes prime minister, Hun Manet replied: "I have no comment on that."

It was Hun Manet who led the final CPP rally in Phnom Penh on Friday, telling a raucous crowd that it was "victory day" for the country. Critics would disagree, and rights groups have condemned the election.

On the eve of voting, a 17-strong coalition -- including the Asian Network for Free Elections and the International Federation for Human Rights -- said the polls were of "profound concern".

"The upcoming electoral exercise indicates a notable absence of transparency, fairness, and inclusivity in the electoral process," the coalition said in a statement issued Saturday.

The only real challenge to the CPP had come from the Candlelight Party (CP). But in May, the country's electoral body refused to register the party, rendering it ineligible to compete. The decision came after the CP per-

formed better than expected at last year's local elections, winning 22 percent of the popular vote.

Internationally, Hun Sen has played off tensions between the United States and China, racking up huge sums in Chinese investment that came with no demands for democratic reforms. Speaking before the vote, the CP told AFP that the registration decision meant there was no way the election could be either free or fair.

"Everyone knows who will win," said Rong Chhun, the party's vice-president. There was similar despondency among some people voting under heavy police presence at a dusty polling station in Phnom Penh. "I don't feel excited or anything because there are no opposition parties left," Oum Sokum, 51, told AFP. Ahead of the election, freedom of speech has been heavily stifled, with one of the few remaining independent news outlets, Voice of Democracy, shut down earlier this year.

And last month, Hun Sen ordered election laws changed, banning anyone who fails to vote in the upcoming poll from ever running for office -- a move that will affect exiled rivals. Among those challengers is long-time foe Sam Rainsy, in self-exile in France for almost a decade to avoid criminal convictions he says are politically motivated. Domestically, opposition leader Kem Sokha languishes under house arrest, after being sentenced to 27 years for treason over an alleged plot with foreigners to topple Hun Sen's government. Polls close at 3:00 pm.

Thousands moved to safety as wildfires rage on Greek island of Rhodes

ATHENS (AFP/APP): Officials on the Greek island of Rhodes evacuated thousands of locals and tourists from villages in the southeast of the Aegean island, where wildfires were raging out of control for a fifth day.

High winds and a nine-kilometre (six-mile) fire front running from the centre of the island to its eastern beaches were creating extreme conditions, Vassilis Varthakogiannis told Skai TV.

"This is not a fire that will be over tomorrow or the day after tomorrow," Varthakoyannis added. "It'll be troubling us for days."

Another 1,200 people were expected to be evacuated from the villages of Pefki, Lindos and Kalathos, he added. "We had set up firebreaks around the village of Laerma last night," Konstantinos Taraslias, a deputy mayor of Rhodes, told Open TV.

"But a 180-degree change of the winds this morning helped the fire

grow much bigger across many kilometres ... reaching a tourist area."

In Athens, the foreign ministry said it had activated its crisis management unit to facilitate the evacuation of foreign citizens in Greece due to the ongoing forest fires. Local officials on Rhodes said on Saturday they had moved 30,000 people threatened by wildfires to safety -- including 2,000 who had to be ferried off beaches.

George Hadjimarkos, regional governor of the South Aegean, told Skai television that the operation, which was still ongoing, had been hampered by fires cutting off some road access.

"The aim is to protect human life," he said.

Tourists and some locals were being taken to gyms, schools and hotel conference centres on the island where they will stay overnight, while firefighters battled the blaze.

In addition, three passenger ferries have been moored at the port of

Rhodes to accommodate those rescued, Athens News Agency reported. Members of the coastguard, the armed forces and local authority workers used dozens of buses to help move people away from the fires, said Rhodes municipality official Teris Hatzioannou.

Where the fires had cut off road access, some tourists had to walk to safety. "It is an unprecedented situation for the island," Panagiotis Dimelis, head of the Archangelos village council, told Skai TV, adding that many locals had rushed to help the tourists.

For the beach operation, the coastguard said three of its boats led more than 30 private vessels to pick up people from the Kiotari and Lardos beaches on the east of the Mediterranean island. A Greek navy boat was also headed to the area to help, according to the coastguard.

Later Saturday, fire services spokesman Yannis Artopoios told ERT TV that

‘Vigilance is key’: Al Shabaab threat rising in Kenya’s northeast

NAIROBI (AFP/APP): In Kenya's rural northeast, roadside bombs and beheadings that killed two dozen people last month appear to be part of a troubling escalation of violence by Al-Qaeda-linked Islamists, analysts say.

A regional economic powerhouse and a popular tourist draw, Kenya has not suffered a high-profile jihadist attack since 2019, when 21 people lost their lives at a hotel and surrounding offices in Nairobi.

The recent attacks have been small-scale and focused on minor targets, but have raised fears that Al-Shabaab jihadists, who have been blamed for the assaults, are turning their attention to Kenya as they suffer losses in their native Somalia. Estimated to have between 7,000 and 12,000 fighters, Al-Shabaab has in recent months faced a multi-pronged counterterrorism offensive by the Somali National Army and US-trained "lightning" commandos supported by clan militias known as "macawisley".

The militants, who have waged war against the fragile government in Mogadishu for over 15 years, have recently carried out several attacks along Kenya's long and porous frontier with Somalia.

Twenty-four people, including 15 security officers, were killed in six separate attacks last month alone. In one of the most grisly assaults claimed by the group, about 30 militants descended on two sparsely-populated villages in Kenya's coastal Lamu county on June 24 and killed five civilians, beheading some of them.

One resident, Hassan Abdul, said that "women were locked in the houses and the men ordered out, where they were tied with ropes and butchered".

The remote forested mainland is not normally a stopover for tourists visiting the nearby popular Indian Ocean island of Lamu, but the gruesome killings are a signal to Kenya, analysts say.

The attacks are a way for "Al-Shabaab to say that despite being under pressure, they still have the firepower and are a force to be reckoned with," said Nicolas Delaunay, International Crisis Group director for East and Southern Africa.

"It could also be a way of warning Kenya who has pledged to participate in the Somali government's offensive against Al-Shabaab," he told AFP. Kenya is no stranger to the long-running Islamist insurgency in

Somalia and has been repeatedly targeted by Al-Shabaab since it sent troops into the country in 2011 as part of an African Union force. The militants appear to have been emboldened by the changes in Kenya's security leadership following the election of President William Ruto last August, said Roland Marchal, an Africa specialist at Sciences Po university in Paris.

"There is relative disorganisation at the border," Marchal said, adding that Al-Shabaab was seizing the chance to take "revenge" against Kenya for deploying troops in rural central and southern Somalia where the militants remain entrenched. The violence has also threatened to spill into Ethiopia, as the militants try to make their presence felt in Africa's second most populous country.

Addis Ababa said last month that it had foiled an attack by the jihadists in the border town of Dollo. Al-Shabaab fighters were chased out of Mogadishu in 2011 by an African Union mission which has been in Somalia since 2007. The militants have also lost some ground in the countryside after Somalia's President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud last year launched an "all-out war" against the group, describing the jihadists as "bedbugs". But while the gains of the Somali offensive have been significant, the "situation still remains very fragile," African Union Commission chair Moussa Faki Mahamat warned last weekend.

Hassan Khannenje, director of The Horn International Institute for Strategic Studies in Nairobi, told AFP that Al-Shabaab was "on the back foot in Somalia". "There is a desire on their part to demonstrate continued relevance and resilience." A US official last month told AFP the recent cross-border attacks by Al-Shabaab were a "manifestation of desperation". But Kenya is taking no chances. A string of major attacks on the Westgate shopping centre in 2013, Garissa University two years later, and the Dusit hotel complex in 2019 left hundreds of Kenyans and foreigners dead. The East African nation earlier this month said it was delaying the planned reopening of its long-closed border with Somalia over the deadly attacks. The phased reopening would not go ahead as announced "until we conclusively deal with the recent spate of terror attacks and cross-border crime," Interior Minister Kithure Kindiki said.

Flooding in eastern Canada leaves four missing

MONTREAL (AFP/APP): Four people in Canada, including two children, were reported missing Saturday in flooding triggered by torrential rains in Nova Scotia, police said.

The children were in a car that was submerged, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police said. The three other people in the car managed to escape.

In a separate incident in the eastern province, a

youth and a man were reported missing under similar circumstances, the police agency said.

Heavy rains falling since Friday in Nova Scotia have cut off roads and flooded homes. Premier Tim Houston told a news briefing that the province had received some 25 cm (10 inches) of rain -- the equivalent of three months' rainfall -- in less than 24 hours.

Houston declared a state of emergency in several areas of the province and urged residents not to join the search for the missing as "conditions remain dangerous."

He estimated that it would take several days for the water to recede.

People in the Windsor region got evacuation orders in the middle of the night because of the danger that flooding would cause the breach of a dam.

But relief valves were opened early Saturday to reduce pressure and the situation is now under control, said Windsor Mayor Abraham Zebian. News footage and images on social media showed roads that looked like rivers and many cars abandoned in the water.

Environment Canada's weather service said heavy rain was expected into the evening in the eastern part of the province.

Wounded US veterans accept new mission: healing coral reefs

KEY WEST (AFP/APP): Billy Costello walks the deck of a ship wearing his scuba gear and fins, as well as a prosthetic right leg, before dropping into the sea.

He's part of a group of US Army veterans wounded in combat who are planting coral in a reef off the southern tip of Florida.

The mission is twofold: save coral that is threatened by disease and rising sea temperatures, and help veterans heal wounds -- both physical and emotional.

A total of 31 veterans were joined by six divers from the Mote Marine Laboratory in Key West on a recent July morning to render their services planting coral at a reef called Higgs Head.

Since 2011, the lab and the nonprofit Combat Wounded Veteran Challenge (CWVC) have teamed up for a week annually to help restore coral reefs, a key ecosystem for marine life.

Costello, 41, is in his element as a former diver for the Army's 3rd Special Forces Group.

In 2011, as he passed

along a road in Afghanistan, a bomb exploded, ruining his right leg. In the following months, he learned about CWVC and joined its activities. Now, on this Florida morning, he is swimming to a site chosen by Mote scientists, about half a mile (800 meters) offshore. CWVC puts wounded veterans in challenging environments, partnering with researchers who observe and gather information on them to help improve treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder, head trauma and other conditions. "I have climbed mountains with them, and I have scuba dived to the depths of the ocean," Costello told AFP.

"They have been instrumental in my recovery, helping me learn what I was going to be able to do after losing my leg."

Mote President Michael Crosby is proud of the partnership. "Every year I make sure I'm here with these men and women who have sacrificed so much for the country," he said. "Now they're on a new mission with our laboratory to restore these coral reefs that are the rainforests of the sea." During the excursion, the veterans listen in the water for directions from a Mote lab employee who dives ahead of them, map in hand, to a depth of about 14 feet (four meters).

The scientists leave boxes on the seabed divided into square compartments, each containing a coral fragment.

The divers grab wire brushes, scraping areas of the reef clean of algae and debris, and coat them with epoxy resin.

Then they carefully take the coral pieces and glue them on.

In little more than an hour the veterans and institute staff plant 1,040 stony corals from six different species.

The specimens have been lab-grown and chosen because they have shown greater resistance to dangers such as increasing water temperature, ocean acidification and disease, explained Crosby after participating in the dive.

PHOENIX (AFP/APP): Melanie Floyd took her kids to the zoo in Phoenix in the morning, when temperatures in the heat wave roasting the city and much of the US southwest were still bearable.

Standing before a turtle exhibit, she downplayed this extreme weather event in a world grappling with climate change.

"As long as we have AC and as long as everyone is making smart choices," this stay-at-home mother aged 32 told AFP, "staying hydrated, going in the shade, staying cool, not overexerting themselves, I think it's tolerable."

At her home it is, indeed, nice and cool. She keeps the air conditioning between 75 and 78 degrees Fahrenheit (23 and 26 degrees Celsius) so she can look after her kids, aged two and six, comfortably as they play with coloring books and crafts.

Outside, day after day for more than three weeks, the temperature in Phoenix is surpassing a hard-to-fathom 110F.

The heatwave affecting much of the southwest and southern United States -- including the record temperatures in

Phoenix -- is igniting debate on how fast global warming is moving.

For Floyd, this particular weather event is no big deal.

"You have to fluctuate as the weather fluctuates, so you have to be flexible with it," Floyd said.

In this desert city many people that spoke to AFP expressed similar views about the rising frequency of brutally dangerous heat as global warming caused by human activity grinds on: One must learn to live with it.

For many of them life is a series of mad dashes from offices to restaurants to shops, all with air conditioning cranked up good and frosty.

In the city center and well-to-do suburbs, people do not think twice about leaving their car running while they get out to do an errand, so as to keep it cool for when they come back.

But in less wealthy areas, heat like this is another thing altogether.

"If the temperatures go on like this, many people will not be able to cope," said Rosalia Licea, 37, who is raising five kids on her own.

She lives in a mobile home park where most of

the trailers are from the 1950s. Early in this heat wave her air conditioning broke down.

For two days the temperature inside their mobile home hit 97F. The whole family had to take refuge in the room of the eldest child, which had a window AC unit. One of the smaller kids started having headaches.

Licea, who hails from Mexico, works several low-paying jobs to make ends meet. She does not have the \$2,000 it would cost to buy a new AC system.

So she came up with a makeshift solution: spend \$800 to fix the broken one.

"I had no choice, what with my kids," she said. "It was the priority, more than buying groceries or paying my rent."

Even with the new motor in the old AC unit, one of the air conduits is broken so the cold does not reach her living room.

That is something else she will have to pay to have fixed.

Licea tried but failed to qualify for aid offered by the city or some utility companies for people to upgrade their air conditioning units.

A study in 2022 by Arizona State University found that while mobile homes make up five percent of all housing in Maricopa County, which includes Phoenix and its suburbs, they account for 30 percent of indoor heat-related deaths in the city.

"It is easy to say 'we can adapt' when you have access to everything," Licea said. "It is different for us."

A fire broke out some days ago at her mobile home park, where the residences are hooked up directly to electrical pylons through shoddy connections.

One mobile home was destroyed. The fire is believed to have started because of an electrical overload, with washing machines, dryers, fridges and full-blast air conditioning all operating at once.

After 19 years in Arizona, Licea lives in fear of an electrical short circuit. So she mainly prepares salads for meals and tries to avoid turning on the lights to keep her electricity consumption, and the temperature, as low as possible.

"If I could move to a state that is not so hot I would do it," Licea said.

The Frontier Post

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Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at
Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town,
Peshawar.
Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001
Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573
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Mango diplomacy and Pak-US ties

Recently, Pakistan Mission in the United States hosted the annual BBQ Reception and Mango Festival at the Embassy of Pakistan, Washington DC. Many foreign diplomats, senior US officials, US lawmakers, the think tank community, and notable Pakistani-Americans attended the festival with traditional zeal and zest. The Speakers highlighted the importance of Pakistan-US engagement and stressed the need for enhanced trade and economic ties between the two friendly counties which would further reenergize and consolidate their partnership and alliance.

Diplomacy is the foremost art of resolving interstate disputes, removing constitutional and legal glitches, and settling down trade and economic ties between the parties without indulging in unceasing interstate rivalries, arbitration, and court tribunals at the global level. Diplomacy is the main driver of foreign policy that steers the broader goals of the states by adopting different strategies, tools, and mechanisms to achieve national objectives through peaceful means. As of today, Washington DC is one of the major hubs of global diplomacy among the other global capitals in Asia, Europe, and North America, where world nations pursue their diplomatic agenda by advertising their national brands, food staples, cuisines, along with the celebration of important religious and national events to engage with the US government, private businesses, trade associations, and wider diplomatic community from across the world. Pakistan's mango diplomacy is very popular and proved to be an effective tool for engaging other nations and bringing them to the negotiating tables for strategic dialogues, and trade and monetary deals with other countries and institutions. Historically, the delectable taste of Pakistani foods and delicious mangoes have always touched the souls of foreign guests and filled their minds and hearts with joy, love, and attraction for Pakistanis and their country.

Over the past years, Pak-US relations had experienced a record low after the unilateral US withdrawal from Afghanistan, owing to the fact that Pakistan has played an admirable role in the conclusion of the historic Doha accord and onward evacuation of US troops, foreign diplomats, and Western citizens from war-hit Afghanistan. However, the South Asian nation refused to provide military basing for the US troops and partnering in the proposed over the horizon Counter Terrorism campaign in neighboring Afghanistan. The ongoing US-China rivalry along with Pakistan's political, economic, and security crises, badly marred the Pak-US relationship over the past years. Interestingly, amid heightened distrust and uncertainty, the spiel of cipher conspiracy further tore apart the bilateral relations between the long-time friends.

Historically, Pakistan and the United States had enjoyed long-standing economic relations and security partnership since the beginning of their formal bilateral ties in the late 40s. Both nations witnessed periodic ups and downs and their bilateral ties went through several phases of impressive cooperation and severe diplomatic break-ups throughout history. Despite a flimsy economic and security partnership, both countries had been cooperating with each other in Counter Terrorism and supported each other viewpoints at the multilateral forums where their national interests coincide. Pakistan is an important Muslim state that holds unimaginable importance for the United States due to its geostrategic location, military power, nuclear arsenal, association with Beijing, and unique position in the Muslim world. The same goes for Pakistan which could not afford US's animosity and intends to maintain its longstanding security and economic partnership with Washington.

The current scenario presents an unequivocal potential for bilateral cooperation between Washington and Islamabad in multiple domains including bilateral trade and investment, education, science and technology, climate change, security, counter-terrorism, and regional and global political affairs that suit both nations but obviously lead to a greater consensus and align their strategic interests in the future. Global politics and diplomacy evolve all the time, whereas friendship, partnerships, alliances, and blocs are not fixed, they appear and diminish with the evolving priorities of the national states. In fact, there is an utmost desire on both sides for repairing fractured ties and renewing the historic relationship between Pakistan and the United States but contemporary issues overwhelmed this quest for a reunion. Currently, Ambassador Khan set the stage for greater cooperation between long-time friends and former strategic allies by arranging a BBQ and mango party that would surely sweeten the hearts and minds of our American friends. Hopefully, such endeavors will reap fruit, and Pak-US ties will grow at a faster pace in the future.

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Support from Israeli expats offers big boost to protesters

Yossi Mekelberg

If there is behavior you would not normally associate with Israeli expatriates and members of Jewish communities around the world, it is vociferous criticism of Israel, even of administrations whose behavior through the years they have felt deeply aggrieved by.

Any such criticism is usually confined to conversations within immediate families or social circles, not shared in public with the wider society.

There has always been a mentality of not wanting to “wash dirty laundry in public,” and some sort of submissiveness to the decisions and actions of the Israeli government.

Thanks to the current government, however, this approach has changed and protests against its attempted judicial coup continue to take place frequently in places such as New York, Los Angeles, London, Paris, Berlin and even as far away as Sydney.

There is no single answer to why this specific Israeli administration, unlike all the others before it, has managed to provoke such opposition and anger among Israeli expats, as well as from more liberal elements in Jewish communities.

Yet two things clearly unite the protesters. The first is an understanding that the 2023 version of the Israeli government is a threat to the very values upon which — at least declaratively speaking — the country was founded and are still held sacrosanct. This is true because so many of this government's actions are endangering its long-term survival.

The second is a recognition that the actions of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government are harming the bond between the Jewish state and Israelis and Jews who live outside Israel. The actions are challenging the very foundations of any willingness among these communities to support a country that is on a journey toward authoritarianism.

Bear in mind that supporting Israel, regardless of the state of its domestic affairs, is in any case becoming more challenging for many as a result of its 56-year occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, which continues to deprive Palestinians of their national and human rights. But this issue has, for now and for tactical reasons, been parked by the leaders of the protests in order to keep the pro-democratic camp united.

As is the case with the protests taking place inside Israel, an impressive leadership structure, the members of which are all volunteers, has emerged organically in other countries. It is made up of a group of people from different walks of life who for months have dedicated almost every waking hour to rallying support for those battling to preserve democracy at home. They are doing so with creativity and great political astuteness.

By now, there is enough evidence of the effectiveness of these protests around the world and of how they are annoying Israeli officials. In one infamously

incident, a member of the Knesset who is one of the driving forces within the coalition government, and a very unpleasant one, violently snatched a megaphone from the hands of a female demonstrator in New York, where the politician was participating in Israel's 75th Independence Day celebrations.

This loss of nerve by a leading member of the Israeli government served

and the weekly protests that gradually became a daily occurrence, and indeed from a coalition government that is as much Netanyahu's worst nightmare as it is for most Israeli citizens.

These junkets came at vast expense to the public purse. Off to Rome, Paris, Berlin and London they jetted, in quick succession, allegedly on official visits — but given that Israeli

Busha, sounds even more powerful — and that democracy will prevail long after he is gone.

After several of these whirlwind weekend trips, and protests, the Netanyahus stopped taking them, most probably to avoid facing such humiliation abroad.

Some people, even among those who support the pro-democratic demonstrators, have asked whether it is legitimate for individuals who live abroad to protest against an Israeli government and to do it so publicly and vocally.

Frankly, I believe it is indeed legitimate — and in the spirit of full disclosure, I myself have participated in some of these protests — because freedom of expression is a basic right.

Many of the Israelis who take part in these rallies have paid their dues to Israel by serving in its military or paying their taxes year-in, year-out, so they have supported the Israeli economy and society during their residences abroad. Many do not intend to live in other countries permanently, and if and when they decide to return to Israel they would like to find themselves in a country that has not changed beyond all recognition — and much for the worse.

For too long it was expected, even demanded, of Israelis in Jewish communities abroad that they support whatever actions were taken by Israel's leadership and avoid any criticism of it, even if such support left those communities facing moral and ideological dilemmas, or friction with other segments of the societies in which they live.

For most of the time since the Jewish state was established, this was indeed the case. The exhilaration and enthusiasm created by fulfilling the Zionist dream led many people to turn a blind eye to Israel's faults, whether it was the Nakba, the post-1967 occupation, widespread corruption, or how its democratic system has recently been plunged into a downward spiral.

Now, however, demographically and perceptually, there has been a profound change, which the current judicial coup has only underlined, and which has accelerated existing trends.

It is estimated that about 1 million Israelis live abroad, the vast majority of them in the US, and unlike many members of the current coalition government, they served in the armed forces and are expected to do so in the future. They continue to contribute to their home country's economy and society, and their advocacy for Israel has been invaluable.

Therefore, there is no requirement for them to remain silent and stand idly by while their home country is hijacked by a group of anti-democratic and corrupt political pyromaniacs.

The main battle to safeguard Israel's democracy will be fought by those protesting en masse across Israel itself, but the protests in other countries are providing Israelis at home with a significant tail wind, sending them the clear message that they are not alone in their just, and winnable, battle.

Israeli recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over the Western Sahara

Zaid M. Belbagi

In a seismic announcement this week, Israel recognized Moroccan sovereignty over the Western Sahara. This long-awaited development was a requirement for Morocco's agreeing to join the 2020 Abraham Accords, the normalization agreements between Israel and a number of Arab states.

Though the recognition was not immediately forthcoming, its arrival this week follows a similar announcement by the US, and recent support from Spain and Germany for Morocco's autonomy plan.

A vast territory covering more than 250,000 sq. km, the Western Sahara, otherwise known as Morocco's Southern Provinces, accounts for almost 40 percent of Moroccan territory.

Soon to be home to the largest port in the country — and if Morocco's bid to host the 2030 World Cup is successful, the location of the opening match of the tournament — the territory is very much sharing in the development that is taking place in the rest of the country.

Where a low-scale conflict once persisted for decades, the Rabat region is now attracting three times the level of investment in areas in the north of the country. These economic realities reflect its growing role as a regional hub that is unmistakably Moroccan.

Moroccan control over the territory has long been politically contentious, in Rabat and in other regional capitals. Often described as an unresolved post-colonial open wound, the reality is that it is impossible for Morocco, which lost a third of its historical Eastern territory with the 20th century French creation of Algeria and Mauritania, to relinquish the area.

Long supported by Algeria, the Sahrawi cause of the rebel Polisario group took on a Cold War character, as much like today, Algiers endeared itself to Moscow.

In the modern context, Morocco's rapid development has become a bone of contention.

Israel joins the likes of Bahrain, the UAE and Jordan as one of many countries that have formally recognized Moroccan sovereignty over the territory, echoing the 1975 opinion of the International Court of Justice that “ties of allegiance” between Sultans of Morocco and the tribes of the region “have existed since antiquity.” As Dakhla and Laayoune become international destinations and the phosphates of the region provide critical supplies of fertilizer amid the global commodities crisis caused by the war in Ukraine, effective governing of the region by Morocco has supplanted conflict with development. Today, the estimated 20,000-60,000 Sahrawis languishing in camps on the Algerian border, who are nominally part of the Polisario movement, represent less than 10 percent of the wider population of the territory who are Moroccan citizens of Sahrawi origin.

contention to resource-rich, but economically stagnant, Algeria, where a military-led government has sought an extension of the conflict to placate a restive young population that is two generations removed from the veteran freedom fighters still in power.

It is against this backdrop that the Israeli and US recognition has come about. Though there are of course Israelis of Sahrawi origin, this week's announcement is less a declaration about the Abraham Accords than a ratification of the de facto reality on the ground.

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Morocco's agreement with Israel is itself also a formalization of day-to-day realities. Given that 20 percent of Israelis are of Moroccan origin, the normalization of relations was much needed, less as an expression of the realpolitik and more to meet the consular requirements of families who travel between the two countries and consider themselves dual citizens.

So established is the Moroccan Jewish community within Israel that Col. Sharon Itach, Israel's first-ever military attaché to Morocco, who arrived in Rabat this week, was born to Moroccan parents. So was Knesset Speaker Amir Ohana, who recently visited Rabat.

As much as the position taken by Israel on the Sahara is “clear-cut” — and comes amid broader momentum in Morocco's favor after Washington and Madrid, and other European capitals, supported its autonomy plan — Morocco has nevertheless been prescriptive in its continued support for a two-state solution to the Palestinian issue. An effective broker between both sides of the conflict for decades, Morocco recently condemned Israeli military action in Jenin amid the wider international outrage.

In addition, the country's chairmanship of the Al-Quds Committee, which is responsible for the protection of Al-Aqsa Mosque and the cultural heritage of Jerusalem, remains a key pillar of its foreign policy. With 87 percent of the intergovernmental organization's funding coming from Moroccan taxpayers, the cause remains a politically sensitive rallying point in Morocco and is unlikely to be affected by the normalization agreement.

Broadly speaking, the Abraham Accords represent a diplomatic coup of sorts for Israel. With animosity against Iran on the wane, they provide another conduit for diplomatic outreach. Decades after the establishment of Israel, recognition from its Arab neighbors, who long refused to acknowledge its existence at all, has been a foreign policy priority. It is, therefore, unsurprising that the accords have been such an important focus for Tel Aviv.

In hindsight, however, they were signed without significant progress, or commitment, on the Israeli side to improving the situation of the Palestinian people. In pacing its engagement with Israel, Morocco avoided a similar fate by achieving a major diplomatic goal prior to offering Israel what it sought most.

This should be at the forefront of the considerations among Israeli decision-makers as they seek to ingratiate themselves with other Arab countries, which are unlikely to follow suit on normalization without any significant movement on the big issues in the region.

Now is the time to take control of AI before it takes control of us

This week, the UN's Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization announced that it would support 50 countries in their efforts to formulate legislation and policies to regulate the development and deployment of artificial intelligence.

This is the first time that a global, intergovernmental organization has stepped in and raised the crucial issue of how the development and use of AI will be regulated, and the critical importance of ensuring governments having a key say in these areas.

In the past decade or so we have seen AI emerge from the labs of big tech companies and begin to enter our homes, offices, and public spaces. Already, largely unknown to most of us, practically every aspect of our lives is touched by AI and its use in some way.

Certainly, a lot of this is harmless, at least in theory. It makes life a little bit easier for us as consumers and, of course, makes a lot of money for the companies that are developing and using AI.

The technology has already entered our lives and we live with it every moment of the day, for example when we order food online, read news on a website, buy clothes either from a bricks-and-mortar mall store or an e-commerce website, or watch a film or television series online.

In all of these transactions or interactions, and many more, AI is proactively used in a suggestive manner to help customers make decisions about what they want to read, watch, eat, or buy.

AI can also help doctors diagnose illnesses and plan treatments, or assist in the training of office workers through the use of simulated environments. There are many more areas in which ordinary people can be assisted by AI technology without any negative effects on their lives.

For businesses, AI is manna from heaven. It could help them save a lot of money in wages as AI takes over many basic tasks such as research, writing software code and even, in some cases, writing basic news reports.

All of these developments might leave a few million people jobless but many bosses might justify this by saying these are minor changes to the job market when viewed from the global perspective of a population of more than 8 billion people, and the existing evolution of the job market over the past few decades.

The threats posed by unchecked use of AI go far beyond the risk of unemployment. As UNESCO cautioned two years ago, there are huge ethical questions linked to the use of AI, mainly arising from the potential for the technology to embed bias, contribute to climate degradation, or threaten human rights. The organization warned, and rightly so, that the risks associated with AI have already started to compound existing inequalities in societies, resulting in further harm to already marginalized groups. For example, what if AI is used within judicial systems in countries such as France or the US, which already suffer from deep racial divides. If AI models are used by courts and police to decide whether a suspect should be granted bail, for example, or a convict should be released on parole, a higher proportion of people from racial or ethnic minorities are likely to be denied justice because AI tools would be trained using datasets which themselves are the product of decades, if not centuries, of bias and injustice in these countries. Similarly, there is a huge risk of AI being used to stir up panic or racial and ethnic hatred in volatile communities. Already, there have been instances of deep-fake technology used to create misleading images and videos that are then spread and go viral on social media, potentially posing extremely serious threats to law and order, and to the lives and well-being of minorities. There are dozens of examples from every corner of the world each week highlighting the use of deep-fake and AI technology to spread fake news, stoke hatred, and provoke hate crimes against members of vulnerable communities. Deep-fake tech can also be used to create tensions between countries, for example by making it seem like a neighbor is about to mount a military attack or cause harm to another state in some other way.

But it is not only about jobs, even if a few million of them become just the latest sacrifice on the global altar of shareholder returns and dividend incomes, which have become the operational mantras of the corporate world.

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Ranvir S. Nayar

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hate crimes against members of vulnerable communities.

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In short, the examples of potential and actual misuse and abuse of AI-enabled technologies are endless.

Given all this, the use of AI must be strictly limited only to the extent that is necessary for it to achieve legitimate goals, which must benefit society as a whole and not just line a few people's pockets.

Similarly, governments must ensure that AI is not used to spread hatred or trample on the human rights of the most vulnerable communities, and that the data and privacy rights of all individuals are preserved.

Technology firms must ensure they use AI and data only in such a way that respects national and international laws and best practices. Every single business that uses AI, and the tools that utilize it, must be subject to regular audits so that governments can ensure they are complying with the rules and norms. It is also vital to ensure that AI always remains completely under human control and is not allowed to run amok on its own.

All of these actions, and more besides, are needed from governments and other authorities but, as is the case in every other sphere of life, few countries have all the tools, understanding, manpower and financial resources to develop and implement robust systems of governance for the development and deployment of AI.

It is, therefore, critical that nations join forces immediately and work together to ensure that AI rolls out in a manner that benefits society and does not become the master of our lives, in the way that we have already allowed big tech to become too powerful to be effectively regulated by governments.

It is imperative that we rein in the technology right now, rather than have it reign over us a few years from now.

After a failed mutiny, what next for the Wagner mercenaries?

Maria Maalouf

national security.

Military analysts in the West are carefully studying the remarks by Russia's mutinous mercenary leader Yevgeny Prigozhin last week as he welcomed Wagner Group mercenaries to Belarus.

He told them to be respectful to their hosts, to train the Belarusian armed forces, and to be ready for new missions and a "new journey to Africa."

The main issue with the Wagner Group is how they will operate after their failed June 23-24 mutiny: a march on Moscow that suddenly stopped after Vladimir Putin struck a deal with Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko to have the Wagner troops stationed in the former Soviet republic.

The mutiny made Putin look weak and threatened. Therefore, the destiny of the Wagner Group and its 25,000 fighters will be determined by the Russian president, because he does not want to appear before the world as weak or threatened.

There are a number of strategic factors that Putin will employ to keep the Wagner Group under his authority, and a few strategic realities that could determine its future. For sure, Putin will deny the Wagner chief's allegations. First, Prigozhin said his mutiny was not targeting Putin and that he was not trying to remove the president from power. Instead, he was aiming to settle scores with Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and military chief Valery Gerasimov.

Putin is supporting the two most senior military officials in his cabinet against Prigozhin and his allegations. This will deprive the Wagner leader of much his group's legitimacy and legal status. If Prigozhin continues to harbor animosity toward the defense ministry, the Russian leadership will curtail much of his militia's activity outside Russia — because it would not be clear whether any military action by Wagner would be for its own advantage, or in the interests of Russian

Wagner has previously served Russian foreign policy. Its forces fought with the Russian regular army in annexing Crimea in 2014. It fought Daesh in Syria, it took part in missions in the Central African Republic and Mali, and recently it captured the Ukrainian city of Bakhmut.

However, Putin will not allow Wagner to take any further part in the fighting in Ukraine. He wants to win the war against the West and Kyiv using only the armed forces of Russia. The military situation for Putin is not totally desperate, since this summer's Ukrainian counter-offensive has so far largely failed to dislodge Russian troops from the positions they have occupied since the invasion began in February last year. Putin will impose as many limitations as possible to hinder and impede any military assignments for the Wagner Group, in Ukraine or elsewhere. Wagner's presence in Belarus could be a long-term commitment to avoid their involvement in future wars in Africa and in the Middle East. As their registration with the defense ministry continues, the Russian government will be able to know exactly how many Wagner Group fighters are engaged in wars in places such as Syria and Libya.

Wagner may in fact transfer most if not all of its troops from Syria to Belarus. While they were deployed in Syria as early as 2015, the trend has been one of moving Wagner military personnel from Syria to Ukraine. This did not leave the Russian forces in Syria in any way weak or vulnerable. This is why Wagner may be forced to pull all of its military units from Syria without much strategic loss for Moscow.

Moreover, it is not clear what the future lies for the Wagner Group in Libya. They have been there since 2014. They are siding with the government of the eastern part of the country commanded by Field Marshal

Khalifa Haftar. They supported him in his attack on Tripoli in 2019. However, Wagner's numbers there are not that large, perhaps no more than 2,000 fighters. Putin will seek a political and military freeze in Libya to be able to control all the forces loyal to Wagner and not require any help from them in Libya. Wagner Group could pull out, or be militarily inactive.

However, the most difficult situation for Putin and the Wagner Group is in Sudan, and the conflict between the regular army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces. A shadowy Russian company called M-Invest—based in St. Petersburg, Prigozhin's home city—has an office in Khartoum, and an agreement with the Sudanese government to mine for gold. In fact, the company is a front for the Wagner Group, and was employed by the former dictator Omar Bashir to suppress protests in late 2018.

It is not clear whether Putin will allow Wagner to continue to operate in Sudan. He may order it to be inactive. He may also change the nature of its missions to one of intelligence gathering. But the situation is so unstable in Sudan that no foreign government, including Russia, will make any long-term commitment.

The Russian government has a great deal of strategic ambiguity when it comes to the Wagner Group and its operations in the Middle East. Antipathy in the Kremlin suggests that Wagner's future in the Middle East will not exceed the scope of the missions assigned to it in the past. Russia will probably gradually phase the militia out in Syria, Libya, and Sudan. Whether they are replaced with other troops loyal to Moscow will depend on the progress of the conflicts in those countries. But Russia will strive not to lose wars there — it may institute a series of military doctrines to allow Moscow to exercise power in Syria, Libya, and Sudan without any reliance on mercenary troops.

Russia's Black Sea grain gambit is a clear win for Turkiye

Nikola Mikovic

Russia's recent decision to suspend its participation in the Black Sea Grain Initiative, a UN-backed agreement that has allowed Ukraine to export food during the ongoing conflict, will have repercussions that go beyond threatening global food security. It could also rewrite the region's political map.

In the eyes of many Russian propagandists, the grain-deal reversal is payback for humiliation caused by Turkiye on July 7, when Ankara repatriated five captured Ukrainian commanders.

The fighters had spent several months in a secure facility in Turkiye after surrendering to Russian troops in the Ukrainian port city of Mariupol last year. They were part of the Azov Regiment, which Russia considers a terrorist organization.

From Moscow's perspective, Ankara's decision to send the men home was a slap in the face. If Russia had extended its participation in the grain deal, which uses Turkiye as a transit hub, Moscow would have looked even weaker, the thinking goes.

The withdrawal from the deal does not mean that the Kremlin is ready to reimpose another full-scale blockade of the Black Sea, as it did at the beginning of the war, or that it plans to jeopardize its relations with Ankara. However, there is no doubt that one of the major goals of Russia's recent missile strikes on Ukrainian ports was to prevent, at least temporarily, the country from exporting grain.

Despite having differing views on the UN-supported export initiative, Moscow and Ankara remain "friends." The Russian president is expected to visit Turkiye in August, and the grain initiative will be high on the agenda. Although Russia has shown its hand, Turkish President

Recep Tayyip Erdogan insists that Russia is still interested in a continuation of the agreement.

What any new deal might look like remains unclear. Russian officials say that Turkiye will have to purchase Russian grain "at normal world prices." Ankara, on the other hand, hopes to continue buying both Russian and Ukrainian grain at a discount.

And yet, because Erdogan seems to have the upper hand, it is conceivable that Russia will have to accept Ankara's conditions. Failure to do so could be costly for Moscow.

For one thing, Turkiye could effectively close the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits to Russian naval and civilian ships heading to Syria, complicating Moscow's engagement in the Middle Eastern country.

Russian energy companies involved in multibillion-dollar projects in Turkiye could also be squeezed. Rosatom, which is building a nuclear power plant in the southern Turkish province of Mersin, and Gazprom, which seeks to turn Turkiye into a gas hub, would almost certainly apply pressure on the Kremlin to avoid angering its Turkish counterpart.

Barring that, Turkish authorities could follow the West and impose sanctions on Russian oligarchs who have found safe haven in their country.

Turkiye and Ukraine might even implement a grain deal without the participation of Russia, which would represent another humiliation for Moscow. In this scenario, Ukraine could simply continue exporting grain to Turkiye, ignoring Russia's threats. Indeed, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky recently called on Erdogan and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to support grain shipments

without Russian involvement.

Kyiv and Ankara understand that it is unlikely the Kremlin would dare sink Ukrainian or Turkish civilian ships, as such an action could lead to direct involvement by Turkiye in the war in Ukraine. Thus, Ukraine and Turkiye can simply continue doing grain business as usual.

However, if Moscow did decide to escalate the situation and started attacking ships entering or leaving Ukrainian ports, Kyiv would almost certainly respond. As a last resort, Turkiye could even start supplying Ukraine with weapons via the Black Sea route, which would represent another blow to Russia and its war effort.

To avoid any of these outcomes, the Kremlin might have no choice but to follow Ankara's lead. The Russian propaganda machine could always spin Moscow's policy as another "goodwill gesture" with the goal of helping poor countries in Africa. Erdogan might even insist that Moscow continue to send free grain to nations such as Mali, Djibouti, Sudan and Somalia — places where Turkiye has been trying to increase its influence.

The fact that Baykar, the Turkish combat drone production company, has begun building a plant in Ukraine clearly indicates that Erdogan feels confident and does not see Russia as a threat to its interests. He knows that if Turkiye is at the table, Russia's room for political (and even military) maneuvering is limited.

For now, Turkiye is in the driver's seat. Ankara will not hesitate to push Moscow to reach a new grain deal that saves Ankara money and keeps the world fed. Moscow's latest move might appear strategic but in reality it is a desperate ploy by a leader quickly running out of options.

Now is the time for Gulf nations to enhance ties with Central Asia

Luke Coffey

The leaders of the five Central Asian states — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, known collectively as the C5 — met their Gulf Cooperation Council counterparts in Jeddah last week for a GCC-C5 summit. This gathering built on the success of a ministerial meeting between the C5 and GCC in Riyadh last year.

Central Asia is at a crucial geopolitical crossroads. Muslims, Christians and Jews, alongside the Turkic, Slavic and Persian peoples, have cohabited the vast steppe for centuries. Located between Europe and Asia, Central Asia straddles two major energy-consuming markets.

For millennia the region served as one of the key routes for East-West trade on the Eurasian landmass. Today, billions of dollars are being invested in connecting the region with the rest of the world. Like spokes on a wheel, new and modernized roads, pipelines, fiber optic cables, and rail lines are being constructed connecting Central Asia to East Asia, Europe and South Asia. There is a potential for new connections with the Middle East, too.

In addition to the big players — the US, the EU, Russia and China — other powers, including Iran, India, Pakistan and Turkey, are playing increasingly important roles in Central Asia. Some of them have shared interests, often they are competitors. This creates a tangled web of alliances and interests in what is already a complicated neighborhood. It makes sense that the GCC would be interested in deepening its relations in the region as well.

Meanwhile, the five Central Asian republics need and want, to varying degrees, more engagement with regional powers and groupings such as the GCC. For the countries of the C5, geopolitics is a constant balancing act in relation to

the bigger powers. The more engagement they have with outside powers, the more secure they feel when dealing with bigger regional powers such as Russia, China or even Iran.

There is an important economic component as well. According to the World Bank's Global Economic Prospects report, published last month, economic growth in Central Asia is expected to remain flat this year, at 4 percent.

The impact of an ailing Russian economy has

efforts to modernize their economies, fight corruption, and at least partially privatize many state-owned enterprises. The region is also attracting record amounts of foreign direct investment. There is already a burgeoning economic relationship between the GCC and the C5, with great potential to enhance it.

During last week's summit in Jeddah, a Joint Action Plan for Strategic Dialogue and Cooperation

and devote the required time and energy needed to develop personal relationships across Central Asia. This would help maintain a degree of continuity between GCC-C5 summits.

Secondly, Gulf policymakers must avoid the temptation to view the five Central Asian republics as a single bloc. The region consist of five independent and sovereign states. While they share some aspects of a common history, each retains its own distinct identity, culture and global

Firstly, the GCC should appoint a special envoy for Central Asia. This individual could serve as the primary interlocutor for the Gulf states in the region, and devote the required time and energy needed to develop personal relationships across Central Asia. This would help maintain a degree of continuity between GCC-C5 summits. Secondly, Gulf policymakers must avoid the temptation to view the five Central Asian republics as a single bloc. The region consist of five independent and sovereign states. While they share some aspects of a common history, each retains its own distinct identity, culture and global outlook. It is therefore likely that the GCC will be able to increase its cooperation with some Central Asian republics more than with others. Decision-makers should keep this in mind when developing policies for the region. Thirdly, the GCC should prioritize interconnectivity between the two regions. There is already an ambitious project, the Dry Canal corridor, that intends to create a link between Iraq's southern Gulf coast and Turkish ports by 2038.

spillover effects across the region. Countries such as Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have been hit hard by lower remittances from Russia and the knock-on effect of international sanctions against Moscow.

But it is not all bad news. The energy sector has driven significant growth in Kazakhstan. There is huge potential for energy-sector growth in Turkmenistan, too. The World Bank expects economic growth in Central Asia to increase modestly in 2024. Countries such as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have made

was agreed by GCC members and the Central Asian states. The plan, which covers the period from 2023 to 2027, offers an opportunity for both sides to deepen their economic, trade, security and cultural relationships. Looking ahead, there are four things that the members of the GCC can do to enhance relations with the Central Asian republics.

Firstly, the GCC should appoint a special envoy for Central Asia. This individual could serve as the primary interlocutor for the Gulf states in the region,

outlook. It is therefore likely that the GCC will be able to increase its cooperation with some Central Asian republics more than with others. Decision-makers should keep this in mind when developing policies for the region.

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With creative and ambi-



Keher Kashif for strengthening local manufacturing sector

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman Meher Kashif Younis on Sunday stressed the need for developing and strengthening of local manufacturing sector as a sound manufacturing sector of a country can produce quality goods.

Besides, it helps in reducing reliance on foreign products to reduce imports and promote self-sufficiency, he said while talking to a delegation of industrialists led by Faran Shahid.

He said a well-developed manufacturing sector can help a country diversify its economic base, adding

that over-reliance on a few sectors can make an economy vulnerable to external shocks, whereas a diverse economy is more resilient.

The thriving manufacturing industry can act as a catalyst for economic growth, job creation, and technological progress, he remarked.

He said the government must implement policies and offer incentives to support this sector, recognizing its pivotal role in the economic development of a nation.

He said the concentration of manufacturing industries in specific regions leads to the development of those areas, creating industrial

clusters and supporting the growth of related industries and services.

He said it is a labor-intensive sector, creating a substantial number of jobs across various skill levels. It not only employs skilled workers in production and engineering but also supports ancillary industries, such as logistics, transportation, and services, leading to further job creation.

Meher Kashif Younis said it contributes significantly to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of a country and drives economic growth by producing goods that are consumed domestically or exported to

other countries, generating income and promoting economic activity.

He said that this industry was a hub for innovation and technological advancement. He stressed the need to invest in research and development to improve production processes, create new products, and enhance efficiency, which, in turn, drives progress in other sectors.

Manufacturing goods are often exported to foreign markets, earning foreign exchange that helps improve the balance of trade and supports economic stability by reducing trade deficits, he added.

PIAF calls for reversing decision as Rs7.50/unit jump harmful for traders

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: While describing the government's decision to increase electricity base tariff by Rs7.50 per unit as harmful for the trade and industry, as the businesses are already under financial stress, the PIAF Chairman Faheemur Rehman Saigol urged the government to reverse the proposed jump in power charges.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, he said the government's decision to increase the electricity tariff is anti-industry, and the PIAF strongly condemns the government's move and calls on it to rescind it. He urged the power ministry to identify system constraints and communicate targets to all concerned departments in order to launch a wartime effort to upgrade the transmission system.

It is unfortunate that the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority is all set to accord final approval for massive raise in electricity base rates up to Rs

7.50 per unit (27 percent) for industry, commercial sector, agriculture tubewells, AJK, public lighting and other categories of consumers, who will now have to face the brunt of Rs7.50 per unit.

The PIAF Chairman said that the average sale rate would reach now Rs28.36 per unit from Rs22.59 per unit, posting an increase of Rs5.76 per unit of which variable charges are Rs27.65 per unit - from Rs21.90 per unit with an increase of Rs5.75 per unit and fixed charges of Rs0.01 per unit - to Rs0.70 per unit from Rs0.69 per unit, as the government intends to earn Rs477 billion though this rebasing.

Faheem Saigol said that the increase in base rate of electricity is also part of pact signed between government and International Monetary Fund, which says that the government has to notify Nepra's determinations without any delay and amendment.

The Regulator is scheduled to hold a public hear-

ing on Monday just as an eye wash, on Motion of Leave of Federal government submitted by the Power Division for adjustment in tariffs of Discos and K-Electric, already approved by the Federal Cabinet through circulation. The rate of one unit of electricity for those consumers who will use over 300 units months will touch Rs55.52 per unit after inclusion of FCAs, taxes and surcharges whereas for some categories it will be over Rs60 per unit.

On July 14, 2023, the Nepra approved average rebasing in tariff of Rs 4.96 per unit across the board but the government, after intensive consultation, decided to pass more financial impact of proposed increase to unprotected domestic consumers and other categories through cross subsidization to protected category of domestic consumers and adjustment of Rs 148 billion subsidy.

According to the Federal Government's Motion, the tariff of protected category

of domestic consumers will not be changed which means Rs 3.95 per unit for up to 50 units per month, Rs 7.74 per unit for 51-100 and 001-100 units and Rs 10.06 per unit for 101-200 units.

He argued that this is a big blow to electricity-heavy industries, if not passed on to the consumers. It could also affect the businesses, who are reliant on grid. Roughly this could mean over Rs50/bag impact if their goods are produced using grid.

He said that Pakistan's industry had been harmed by the high cost of doing business, which discouraged investment in capacity and capability and called for easing the burden of heavy taxes on the power sector.

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

PRIME Think Tank stresses structural, public sector reforms

ISLAMABAD (APP): PRIME, the Islamabad-based think tank Policy Research Institute of Market Economy, has stressed the importance of regulatory, structural, and public sector reform in its latest quarterly assessment report, PRIME Plus.

As per the report, "The current government has exerted considerable efforts to ensure stability in the country. Support from friendly nations and the IMF is anticipated to help sustain the country through the election season and the period leading to the

appointment of the new government. The Pakistani Rupee is expected to stabilize in the short to medium term."

"Although global and domestic inflationary pressures persist, they are gradually slowing down. These efforts may help prevent further decline in macro-economic indicators," it added.

The think tank highlighted a positive aspect, noting that the government incorporated expenditure cuts into the budget based on the IMF's recommendations. As a result, the budget

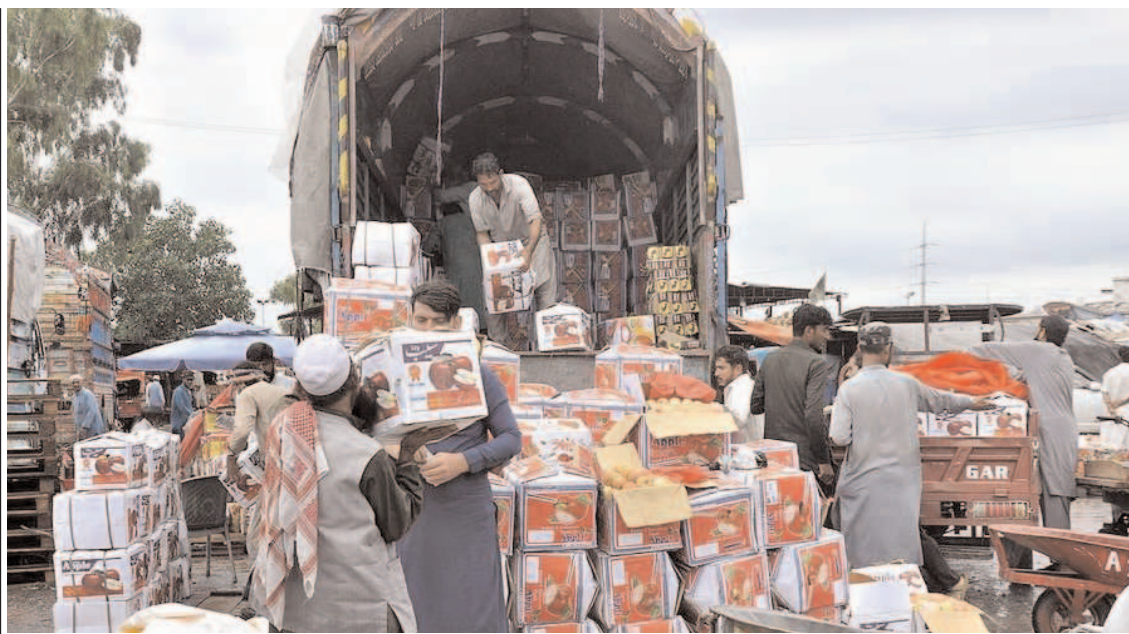
achieved a primary surplus, and the government initiated the process of decoupling pensions from the budget.

PRIME recommended that imposing higher taxes on the existing tax base could impede compliance and dissuade potential new tax filers from participating in the system. Additionally, the think tank observed that companies were increasingly incentivized to explore strategies for minimizing their tax liabilities. The report subtly implied that the budget might have fallen short of fully

addressing these crucial aspects.

According to the think tank, taxes on salaried individuals, businesses, and companies were raised, resulting in an increased tax burden on existing taxpayers. However, the government's efforts to broaden the tax base were deemed unsuccessful.

PRIME made an observation that this budget appears to be more complex than its predecessor, mainly due to the introduction of numerous new tax exemptions and the limited removal of previous ones.



ISLAMABAD: People purchasing fruits at fruit & vegetables market.

Women's role in economy highlighted

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Rice Research and Development Board Punjab Shahzad Ali Malik on Sunday said women empowerment is of immense significance in the global economy including Pakistan. He said as it has far-reaching implications on various aspects of economic growth, development, and sustainability.

Talking to a delegation of women entrepreneurs led by Ms Maheen Kashif, recipient of best CEO award he said when women are empowered and given equal opportunities, it can lead to several positive outcomes that benefit not only women themselves but also society and the overall economy.

He said gender equality and women's empowerment are strongly associated with increased economic growth and productivity.

He said when women are given access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, they can contribute effectively to the labor force, driving innovation and entrepreneurship, and increasing the overall output and productivity of a country.

Empowering women in the workplace and promoting gender diversity fosters a more inclusive and creative work environment, he said adding that diverse teams are more likely to generate innovative solutions and adapt to changing market demands, leading to enhanced business performance and competitiveness.

He said by empowering women, societies tap into a previously underutilized talent pool while education and skill development programs targeting women can help unlock their potential and expertise, contributing to a more skilled and capable workforce.

Shahzad Ali Malik said women empowerment is not just a moral imperative but also an economic necessity. Embracing gender equality and creating an enabling environment for women to participate fully in the economy can lead to numerous positive outcomes, driving economic growth, reducing poverty, and promoting sustainable development on a global scale.

China dominated Pak's FDI with \$432.7 million

ISLAMABAD (INP): In the Financial Year 2023 (from July 2022 to June 2023), Pakistan received the highest Foreign Direct Invest (FDI) worth US\$ 432.7 million from China, Gwadar Pro reported on Sunday quoting the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP)'s latest figures.

In FY 2023, Pakistan received \$1.4377 billion in FDI with China leading with 30.09% of the total FDI coming to the country.

As per SBP, the FDI inflows/outflows include cash received for investment in equity, intercompany loan, capital equipment brought in/out, equity in

accounts abroad, and reinvested earnings.

In FY 2023, the total inflow from China remained at \$475.3 million, the outflow was \$43.1 million, net FDI was \$432.2 million, net foreign portfolio investment (FPI) was \$0.5 million and the total FDI remained at \$432.7 million.

FPI consists of securities and other financial assets held by investors in another country. Along with FDI, FPI is one of the common ways to invest in overseas economies.

In June 2023, Pakistan also received \$ 5.8 million from Hong Kong bringing the total FDI from Hong

Kong to \$96.6 million in FY 23.

In FY 2023, Pakistan received \$182 million from Japan, \$ 172.3 million from UAE, \$135 million from Switzerland, \$118.4 million from the US, \$ 71.5 million from Netherlands, \$63.9 million from France, \$62 million from the United Kingdom, \$ 39.8 million

Besides this, from Singapore, \$38.2 million from South Korea, \$ 25.2 million from Hungary, \$24.3 million from Kuwait, \$23.2 million from Malaysia, \$20.2 million from KSA and \$17.6 million each from Lebanon and Turkey.

PAG announces subsidy program for farmers

MULTAN (INP): The Punjab Agriculture Department (PAG) has announced a subsidy program for farmers in 13 districts including arid area to acquire laser land levellers. This initiative aims to enhance agricultural practices in the region.

In the southern districts of Punjab, including Dera Ghazi Khan, Layyah, Bhakkar, and Rajanpur, eligible farmers will have the opportunity to apply for the laser land leveller subsidy until August 9, as per official sources.

To avail of the subsidy, applicants must possess a tractor, which is a neces-

sary requirement for using the laser land leveller effectively.

Under the subsidy program, the government will provide a generous subsidy of Rs 250,000 against each laser land leveller purchased by the farmers.

Moreover, farmers benefiting from the subsidy will be required to assist other farmers by helping to level 300 acres of land annually. This measure aims to promote cooperation and mutual support within the agricultural community.

Those farmers who had previously applied for the subsidy during the 2022-23 period but were unsuccessful

in obtaining the laser land levellers will automatically be included in the current year's balloting draw, giving them a renewed chance to benefit from the program.

New candidates interested in availing of the subsidy can obtain and submit application forms at the office of the Assistant Director of Agriculture.

With this subsidy initiative, the Punjab agriculture department aims to promote modern agricultural techniques and improve productivity in the arid regions, ultimately benefiting the entire farming community.

‘Pakistan Governance Forum- 2023’ on Tuesday

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives is all set to organize a two-day forum from Tuesday to develop a roadmap for a stable, agile and transparent governance system in the country.

The event titled "Pakistan Governance Forum-2023" would assemble

more than 300 participants including 60 distinguished speakers in a bid to foster a path toward a sustainable, vibrant and transparent governance mechanism.

The two-day event, being held under a landmark initiative of 'Turnaround Pakistan', is anticipated to serve as a pivotal platform for the exchange of ideas

and the formulation of a comprehensive roadmap that will shape the future of governance in Pakistan.

Prominent figures from diverse sectors, political leaders, experts, and representatives from civil society will come together to deliberate on a wide range of crucial aspects of governance.

The future of work in Pakistan: The gig economy and rise of rechnology



Kapeel Kumar

The world of work is changing rapidly, and Pakistan is no exception. In recent years, the gig economy has grown significantly in Pakistan, as more and more people are choosing to work as freelancers or contractors. This trend is being driven by a number of factors, including the rise of technology and the poor standard of education in Pakistan. The poor standard of education in Pakistan, and the lack of job opportunities.

Automation and AI are already having a significant impact on the workforce, and this trend is only going to accelerate in the years to come. Many jobs that are currently done by humans will be automated, which will lead to job losses in some sectors. However, AI will also create new jobs in other sectors, such as soft-

ware development and data science.

The Rise of the Gig Economy

The gig economy is a term used to describe the growing number of people who are working as freelancers or contractors. These workers typically complete short-term projects or tasks for different clients, and they are not typically employed by a single company.

There are a number of factors driving the growth of the gig economy in Pakistan. First, the internet has made it easier than ever for people to find and connect with clients. Second, the poor standard of education in Pakistan means that many young people do not have the skills they need to get traditional jobs. Third, the gig economy offers more flexibility and freedom than traditional employment. On the one hand, it can provide new opportunities for young people to earn a living. On the other hand, it can also lead to problems such as job insecurity and a lack of benefits.

The workplace is becoming more globalized, flexible and more collaborative. The workers have more control over their work hours and location. Workers need prepare themselves for the challenges and opportunities

that lie ahead accordingly.

The Rise of Technology across globe and its landscape

One of the biggest drivers of the gig economy is the rise of technology. Technology has made it easier than ever for people to find and connect with clients, and to complete tasks remotely. This has opened up a whole new world of possibilities for people who want to work independently.

As per research published by mckinsey "The top trends in tech" By 2025, we estimate that 50 billion devices will be connected to the Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT), while 70 percent of manufacturers are expected to be using digital twins regularly (by 2023). Gartner says Some 70 percent of new applications will use LC/CNC technologies by 2025, up from less than 25 percent in 2020. According to Bloomberg, in report published on December 1, 2021 - The global metaverse revenue opportunity could approach \$800 billion in 2024, up from about \$500 billion in 2020. This proliferation of technological innovations means we can expect to experience more progress in the next decade than in the past 100 years combined, according to entrepreneur and futurist Peter

Diamond and Steven Kotler, in the book "The Future Is Faster than You Think"

Tech literacy becomes core to every role, requiring learning to be continuous and built at the level of individual skills that are deployed at the point of need.

As innovation reaches its limits and a culture of continuous learning becomes ingrained in an organization and individual's life, the role of IT undergoes a profound transformation. IT can no longer suffice; instead, it must adapt to support the dynamic environment at the edge of progress.

The Poor Standard of Education in Pakistan

Another factor that is driving the growth of the gig economy in Pakistan is the poor standard of education. The education system in Pakistan is not as good as it could be, and many young people do not have the skills they need to get traditional jobs. This has forced many young people to turn to the gig economy as a way to make a living.

The government and educational institutions in Pakistan need to invest in education and training for young people and teacher's as well as most of them are teaching outdated curriculum. This will help to ensure that they have the skills they need to succeed in the digital age, as well as

ensuring that they have access to social safety nets.

The Importance of Education and Knowledge in Pakistan

In the future, education and knowledge will be more important than ever. The jobs of the future will require skills in technology, problem-solving, and creativity. Young people who are prepared with these skills will be well-positioned for success, we need to adopt a perpetual-learning culture.

In addition to traditional academic skills, young people will also need to develop soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and critical thinking. These skills are essential for working in a globalized and interconnected world.

The demand for skills in technology and data is growing rapidly. This is because these skills are essential for businesses to succeed in the digital age. As a result, there will be a growing need for workers with these skills in the future.

The government and educational institutions in Pakistan need to invest in education and training for young people and teacher's as well as most of them are teaching outdated curriculum. This will help to ensure that they have the skills they need to succeed in the digital age, as well as

in the future economy.

If done correctly, the gig economy can be a force for good in Pakistan. It can help to create jobs, boost the economy, and give young people the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Need to adopt concept of the need for lifelong learning

The pace of technological change is only going to get faster, so workers will need to be able to adapt and change quickly. This means that lifelong learning will be essential for workers in the future. They will need to be able to learn new skills and adapt to new technologies on an ongoing basis.

Tech Trends in 2023-2024 Everyone in Pakistan Must Be Ready for - No escape

In addition to the skills and education mentioned above, it is also important for businesses and individuals in Pakistan to be aware of the latest tech trends. Some of the most important tech trends that are expected to shape the future of IT and business in Pakistan in 2023 include:

The tech industry is constantly evolving, and it is important for businesses and individuals to stay up-to-date on the latest trends. In 2023-2024, some of the most important tech trends

to watch out for include artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, 5G, the Internet of Things (IoT), and cyber security. There are a number of ways for Pakistanis to learn the skills they need to succeed in the gig economy. One way is to take online courses. There are a number of websites that offer online courses on a variety of topics, including AI-as-a-Service, Genomics, DevOps, 5G, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML), Internet of Things (IoT), Internet of Behaviors, and Edge Computing.

As AI is already being used in a variety of industries, and its use is only going to grow in the coming years. Blockchain has the potential to revolutionize a number of industries, including finance, healthcare, and supply chain management. 5G is the next generation of cellular network technology. Whereas Cyber security is more important than ever in the digital age. As businesses and individuals become more reliant on technology, they are also becoming more vulnerable to cyber-attacks. It is important to take steps to protect your data and systems from cyber-attacks.

These are just a few of the tech trends that are expected to shape the future of IT and business in

Pakistan in 2023. By staying up-to-date on these trends, businesses and individuals can position themselves to succeed in the years to come.

The Future of Youth & Work in Pakistan is Bright

The future of work in Pakistan is bright. With the right skills and education, young people in Pakistan can have a successful and fulfilling career. The gig economy offers new opportunities for young people to gain experience and build their skills. With hard work and dedication, young people in Pakistan can achieve their dreams.

Conclusion

The pace of technological change is only going to get faster, so successful technology leaders will need to be able to adapt and change quickly. They will need to be able to adopt new technologies as they emerge and make them work for their businesses. They will also need to be able to create a culture of continuous learning and innovation within their organizations. "The tech industry is constantly evolving, and it's important for businesses and individuals to stay up-to-date on the latest trends. By doing so, they can position themselves to succeed in the years to come."



In brief

Netherlands win over Portugal

DUNEDIN (Agencies): Stefanie van der Gragt's first-half goal gave the Netherlands a 1-0 victory over Fifa Women's World Cup debutants Portugal in Dunedin. Van der Gragt's powerful header was ruled out by referee Kateryna Monzul before the video assistant referee encouraged her to review her decision. Portugal failed to trouble the Netherlands defence, registering their only shot on target in the 82nd minute. The win moved the Netherlands second in Group E, below reigning world champions USA on goal difference. Despite coming under pressure from a high-pressing Portugal early on, it was the Netherlands with the first opportunity as Lineth Beerensteyn's sliding strike was deflected off the boot of Carole Costa and out for a corner. That corner proved to be the game's decisive moment as it was whipped in by Netherlands captain Sherida Spitse to the back post, where Van der Gragt towered over Tatiana Pinto to head the ball down across goal and into the bottom right-hand corner. The Netherlands' celebrations were cut short by the whistle of Monzul, who thought Jill Roord had interfered with Portugal goalkeeper Ines Pereira before reversing her decision when she reviewed the replay on the pitch-side monitor. Roord nearly put away another Spitse corner with an unchallenged header from close range, but she directed it over the crossbar. While the Netherlands dominated possession and continued to look dangerous from set-pieces, Portugal, despite glimmers of promise from Jessica Silva, offered very little in front of goal. Danielle van de Donk and Beerensteyn forced saves from Pereira early in the second half before Portugal increased their intensity and pushed further into the final third.

Rain threatens England's bid to level Ashes

OLD TRAFFORD (Agencies): England's bid to force a series-levelling win in the fourth Ashes Test against Australia was left hanging by a threat as rain continued to keep the players off the field on Sunday's final day at Old Trafford. A heavy overnight downpour left the outfield sodden and meant play was unable to start as scheduled at 11:00 am (1000 GMT) in Manchester. But with hardy spectators still sheltering beneath umbrellas, ground staff began removing the covers at 1045 GMT as mopping-up operations got underway. The umpires announced that lunch would be brought forward in the hope of resuming play at 1200 GMT. But no sooner had the crowd cheered this announcement than fresh rain fell, with the pitch and square again fully covered. Rain was still pelting the ground at 1400 GMT as the teams remained confined to their changing rooms after several England players had enjoyed a brief kick-about with a football on the outfield. Australia are 214-5 in their second innings, still 61 runs behind England's first-innings 592, after rain meant only 30 overs' play was possible on Saturday's fourth day. England took just one wicket on Saturday when occasional off-spinner Joe Root had Marnus Labuschagne caught behind, but not before the Australian had frustrated the hosts with 111.

Hamza Khan wins World Junior Squash Championship

PESHAWAR (APP): The emerging Hamza Khan of Pakistan succeeded in rewriting history by winning the World Junior Squash title after a gap of 37-long-year in Melbourne, Australia on Sunday morning. It is certainly a good news that engulfed the entire world when a Pakistani emerged as the victorious of the World Junior title as Hamza Khan (PAK) handing a shocking defeat to his rival Mohamed Zakaria (EGY) in a 3-1 battle, the score was 10-12, 14-12, 11-3, and 11-6. Hamza Khan right from the start gave tremendous performances during the World Junior Individual Championship started from July 18-23at Melbourne, Australia. Hamza Khan also faced tough resistance in the semi-final as well against Melvil Scian Imanico of France when he recorded a 3-2, five sets victory, the score was 11-8, 11-4, 10-12, 9-11 and 13-11. Mohammad Hamza Khan

teamed up with Air Commodore (Retd) Aftab Sadiq Qureshi (Contingent Manager), showing excellent worth by defeating top ranking players during the event. The emerging Hamza Khan displayed brilliant performance throughout the Championship and created history by winning the World Championship title after 37 years. Earlier to this squash wizard, legendary Jansher Khan had won the World Junior Individual Championship in 1986 in Australia. Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmad Babar, President PSF, Air vice Marshal Kazim Hammad, Senior Vice President and the whole squash family of squash lovers offer the heartiest message of congratulation on regaining the World Junior Championship title after about 04 decades. Hamza Khan fought back to become Pakistan's first WSF World Junior Squash champion since 1986 and Egyptian 16-year-old Amina Orfi defended



MELBOURNE: Pakistan's Hamza Khan (fourth, left) wins World Junior Squash Championship title in Melbourne.

her 2022 title on a thrilling finals day at the 2023 WSF World Junior Squash Championships. In an incredible men's final, 15-year-old Mohamed Zakaria – who would have become the youngest ever winner of the Men's event with a victory – made the better start, with his precise play helping edge the opening game 12-10. The Egyptian made a flying start to the second game, racing into a 5-0 lead as Hamza Khan

struggled. The 17-year-old Hamza Khan of Pakistan, however, then mounted a brilliant fight-back, with his devastating attacking weaponry at its deadly best as he thrilled the crowd with winner after winner, levelling the match with a 14-12 victory in game two before storming into the lead with an 11-3 win in game three. Spirited Hamza Khan kept up this momentum in game four, finding his attacks with increasing confidence as he ended

Pakistan's 37-year wait for a WSF World Junior Squash Champion with an 11-6 win before collapsing to the floor with emotion. PM felicitates Hamza Khan on winning Junior Squash championship: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday congratulated Hamza Khan on clinching the title of World Junior Squash Champion, 2023. The prime minister thanked the new champion for winning

the title for Pakistan after a gap of 37 years and observed that his win had reminded the triumph of Jansher Khan in the 1986 World Squash championship, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The prime minister also extended his congratulations to Hamza's parents, coach, teammates and the nation on the historic achievement and said the entire nation felicitated Hamza Khan for raising the national flag high in the game of squash.

Lahiru Thirimanne quits international cricket

COLOMBO (Agencies): Sri Lanka batter Lahiru Thirimanne has announced his retirement from international cricket after a 13-year career. "As a player I have given my best, I have tried my best, I have respected the game and I have done my duty honestly and ethically to my motherland," Thirimanne posted on Facebook. "It was a difficult decision to make, but I cannot mention here the many unexpected reasons that influenced me to take this decision willingly or unwillingly. I take this opportunity to thank the SLC members, my coaches, teammates, physios, trainers and ana-

lysts for their support and encouragement." Thirimanne, 33, played 44 Tests, 127 ODIs and 26 T20Is after making his international debut in 2010. He was part of three T20 World Cup campaigns, including Sri Lanka's win in 2014, and played two ODI World Cups. He also led Sri Lanka in five ODIs. "Absolute honor to have the opportunity to represent the country," he posted on Instagram. "Thanks a lot for the 13 years of amazing memories and well wishes thru out my journey (sic). See you on the other side."

His last international match was the Test against

India in Bengaluru in March 2022. The last of his three Test centuries came against Bangladesh in 2021 when his 140 helped Sri Lanka win the match in Pallekkele. He was especially impressive in ODIs in 2015 when he scored 861 runs in 25 games with one century and six half-centuries. Thirimanne played first-class cricket in the most recent season in Sri Lanka, but has lived in Australia for much of the past two years. He has not been consistently available for Test selection, and has since been replaced at the top of the order by the likes of Nishan Madushka and Pathum Nissanka.



COLOMBO: Tayyab Tahir took just 66 deliveries to get to his century, India A vs Pakistan A, ACC Emerging Men's Cup Final.

KP Prime Minister Youth Hunt Women Football League begins

PESHAWAR (APP): Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shabbaz Sharif Youth Talent Hunt Women Football League, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa got under way in a colourful ceremony at Abdul Wali Khan Sports Complex on Sunday. Former Governor and senior politician of the Pakistan Muslim League-N Zafar Iqbal Jhagra was the chief guest on this occasion who formally inaugurated the League wherein teams five teams constituted from all 36 districts across from Dera Ismail Khan to Chitral are taking part under the aegis of Directorate Sports Bacha Khan University Charsadda. Vice Chancellor Bacha Khan University Professor Dr. Bashir Ahmad, Director Sports and former international athlete Shahbana Khattak, District Sports Officer (DSO) Charsadda Tehseen Ullah Khan, football officials and players from Swat Regions including Chitral, Shangla, Dir Upper, Dir Lower, Kohistan Upper, Kohistan Lower, Mardan Region with players from Buner, Nowshera, Malakand Division, Hazara Region with players from all six districts, Bannu Region and

Peshawar are taking part. The ceremony was started with the recitation from the Holy Quran by Qari Kaleem Ullah, followed by the National Anthem and March Past of all the participating teams. Prime Minister Youth Talent Hunt Program is currently going in 10 female and 12 male Games across Pakistan with the aim to hunt talented players' age 15-25 are eligible. Speaking on this occasion, former Governor Zafar Iqbal Jhagra appreciated Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shabbaz Sharif for launching the Talent Hunt Program under which thousands of talented youth would get a platform to come and show their hidden talent. He said it would be a milestone as far as Pakistan's image in the world of sports is concerned. Under the Program, the youth talent would be highlighted by providing them good playing conditions and facilitation. He said the Program was first introduced by the then Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif in 2013 wherein he allocated Rs. 6000 billion for the Program. He expressed

the hope that the youth would do their online registration in 10 female and 12 male games and exhibited their hidden talent both at provincial as well national leagues. He also appreciated Higher Education Commission (HEC), Vice Chancellor and Director Sports Bacha Khan University Prof. Dr. Bashir Ahmad and Shahbana Khattak and Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Youth Affairs Shaza Fatima Khawaja for supervising the program in a successful manner. He said, Program turned out to be a real success as national and international athletes groomed well to represent departments and national teams, respectively. Vice Chancellor Bacha Khan University Prof. Dr. Bashir Ahmad said that they would try to facilitate the players during the Provincial as well National League in Football awarded to them by HEC. He said that a total of 54,000 youths from various regions in the country have been positively engaged through diverse sporting activities under the umbrella of the Prime Minister's Youth Talent Hunt and Sports League.

Pak women squad to leave for China on Tuesday

ISLAMABAD (APP): A six-member Pakistan women squad, comprising five athletes and one official will fly to China on Tuesday to feature in the International University Sports Federation (FISU) Summer World University Games. Also known as Universiade, the Games are taking place in Chengdu from July 28 to August 8. The squad is comprised of athletes – Amtul Rehman, Uzma Azam, Manisha Ali, Maliha Ali, Fiza and official Sumera Sattar. Amtul Rehman, who is a student of Lahore College for Women University (LCWU) will participate in long jump and triple jump events of the Games. Uzma Azam of Government College Women University Faisalabad will showcase her skills in the hammer throw. Lahore Garrison University's Manisha and Maliha will be vying in the taekwondo event, while Fiza will contest in the wushu event. "We've selected them purely on the basis of merit. They all claimed gold medals for Higher Education Commission (HEC) in the recently-held 34th National Games in Quetta," Sumera, who will accompany the girl athletes as manager-cum-coach told APP on Sunday. Sumera, who is also Director Sports at LCWU, said the athletes had been training hard since the conclusion of the National Games.

Mohammad Hafeez picks six wickets to derail Bulawayo Braves

HARARE (INP): The Joburg Buffaloes opened their campaign at the inaugural edition of the Zim Cyber City Zim Afro T10 with a thumping win as captain Mohammad Hafeez picked 6 wickets to derail the Bulawayo Braves. The Buffaloes won the contest by 10 runs in what was a tightly fought contest. Batting first, the Joburg Buffaloes lost wickets at regular intervals from the initial stages. Will Smeed (4), skipper Mohammad Hafeez (1), Ravi Bopara (1) and Delano Potgieter (0) were all back in the hut within the first three overs, with Taskin Ahmed picking three of the first four wickets. Rahim battled along after that even as the likes

of Wessly Madhevere (5) and Wellington Masakadza (9) departed after looking good. Rahim eventually remained unbeaten on 46 as the Joburg Buffaloes huffed and puffed their way over the 100-run mark, and put on a score of 105/7. During the chase, the Bulawayo Braves had their task cut out as batting under the lights was seemingly quite tough. Kobe Herft (9) and Ben McDermott (13) tried to get the Braves off to a good start and put on a 32-run stand for the opening wicket. However, Mohammad Hafeez, the very experienced Hafeez then went onto to pick the wickets of Thisara Perera and Timycen Maruma, both for ducks, to leave the Braves reeling at 35/6 in

the fourth over. That was Hafeez's first over, in which he conceded 0 runs and picked 3 big wickets. The Buffaloes' skipper Hafeez was back in the attack for the next over, and much to the joy of his teammates, bagged three wickets, dismissing Burl (16), Tymal Mills (0) and Tanunurwa Makoni (0), to put his team on the brink of a comprehensive win. Hafeez finished his spell with 6 wickets. Brief Scores Johannesburg Buffaloes – 105/7 (Mushfiqur Rahim – 46*, Tom Banton – 34; Faraz Akram – 1/6, Sikandar Raza – 1/20) Bulawayo Braves – 95/9 (Beau Webster – 39*, Ryan Burl – 16; Mohammad Hafeez – 6/4, Wellington Masakadza – 3/11).

Max Verstappen wins as Red Bull set record with 12th consecutive victory

BUDAPEST (Agencies): Max Verstappen's dominant victory at the Hungarian Grand Prix set a wins record for his Red Bull team. The Dutchman's seventh victory in a row and ninth of the season was Red Bull's 12th consecutive win, dating back to the final race of 2022 in Abu Dhabi. The achievement broke the record of 11 straight wins set by McLaren with Ayrton Senna and Alain Prost in 1988. McLaren's Lando Norris fended off a threat from Red Bull's Sergio Perez to take second place. Lewis Hamilton, who had started from pole position, closed on Perez in the final laps but was not able to attempt an overtake and had to settle for fourth. Hamilton win hopes over by first corner Verstappen's run of five consecutive pole positions was ended by Hamilton on Saturday, who took his first pole since 2021. The seven-time champion always felt

he would struggle to challenge the Red Bull given its strong race pace, but any hopes Hamilton might have had of mounting a challenge were gone within a few seconds of the start. A better getaway by the Red Bull driver had Verstappen alongside the Mercedes on the inside on the run to the first corner. Verstappen claimed the lead as they turned in, and motored away into a race of his own at the front. His win moves him into a 110-point championship lead over Perez. Hamilton's attempts to hold on to the lead by squeezing Verstappen tight to the inside cost him two further positions, as the McLarens of Oscar Piastri and Norris also passed him and demoted him to fourth place. Piastri swept around the outside of the corner to take second place ahead of his team-mate, but their positions were reversed at the first pit stops when

McLaren stopped Norris first and gave him the chance to use his fresh tyres to 'undercut' ahead of the Australian. Norris was unable to challenge Verstappen, who was in another league, as he has been for most of the season. But he had the measure of Piastri and Hamilton and was left in the closing laps to fend off a charge from the second Red Bull of Perez. The Mexican recovered from his disappointing ninth place on the grid using an off-set strategy - starting on the hard tyre rather than the medium used by all the cars ahead of him - and progressively picked off the cars ahead of him. Perez edged closer and closer to Norris in the final 10 laps but after getting to about three seconds behind, the McLaren began to pull away again in the closing laps. Perez began to slip back towards Hamilton, but the Mercedes was still 1.5secs behind at the flag.



BUDAPEST: Race winner Max Verstappen of the Netherlands and Oracle Red Bull Racing celebrates on the podium during the F1 Grand Prix of Hungary.



In brief

IRSA releases 467,900 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 467,900 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 583,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1525.89 feet and was 127.89 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 311,400 cusecs and 257,400 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1214.95 feet, which was 164.95 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded at 71,500 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 302,600, 271,100, 161,400 and 98,400 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 69,000 cusecs of water were released at Nowshera and 124,400 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

6 stolen motorcycles recovered

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested two members gang involved in motorcycle theft and street crimes here on Sunday, recovering six stolen motorcycles and weapons. The arrested gang has been identified as Irfan and Raees, said a police spokesman adding the Rata Amral police have registered separate cases against both the accused and started investigation. Superintendent of Police (SP) Rawal Faisal Saleem appreciated the performance of police team and said that the arrested accused will be channeled with concrete evidence. He said all resources were being utilized to arrest active and organized gangs operating in the city.

Robbers' gang busted

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have busted two member gang involved in house robberies and theft cases in the jurisdiction of Taxila here on Sunday. According to police spokesman, police have recovered seven motorcycles, six mobile phones worth Rs19,500 and weapons used in crimes. The arrested gang members were identified as Abid and Wajid. Police have registered separate cases against both of them and further investigation was in progress. SP Pothohar Muhammad Waqas Khan appreciated the performance of police team adding that the stolen goods were recovered after the identification parade of the accused. He further said that strict action will be taken against organized and dynamic gangs and crackdown against them will be continued.

CDA cancels staff's leaves

ISLAMABAD (APP): To deal with any emergency situation in the Federal Capital during the monsoon rains, Capital Development Authority's (CDA) Chairman Noor ul Amin Mengal has canceled leaves of the officers and employees. "Employees and officers of the authority should ensure their presence in the field with modern machinery round-the-clock to monitor water situation in all drains and nullahs. Apart from this emergency response centers were also fully functional," said a news release. The federal apex agency warned the officers and staff of strict action against negligence in duties. There was no obstruction of any kind in the flow of water in the drains and nullahs while special teams of the CDA, Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad and district administration were deployed in sectors and rural areas.



ISLAMABAD: An attractive view of thick clouds hovering over the skies of the Federal Capital.

Dr Qibla extols China's model of religious pluralism, cultural diversity

ISLAMABAD (APP): Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) Chairman Dr Qibla Ayaz on Sunday lauded China's commitment to religious pluralism and cultural diversity, dispelling any negative impressions of interfaith disharmony in the country.

He, in an exclusive interview with APP, highlighted that China ensured the protection of legal rights for minority communities, including Muslims, without any discrimination or bias.

Sharing his recent personal experience, Dr Qibla Ayaz revealed that he had visited various regions of China alongside a delegation of prominent religious scholars and leaders. They were invited by the Chinese foreign affairs ministry to assess the state of religious pluralism in the nation.

The chairman expressed that he was impressed to witness a country where people from all segments of society enjoy equal rights and have the freedom to practice their religious rituals without hindrance.

During this trip, Dr Qibla observed that minority communities in China joyously celebrated their religious festivals and other social and cultural events,

alongside the majority population. The Chinese government played an active role in supporting and promoting these religious and cultural activities, extending all possible assistance, he maintained.

Dr Qibla also had the opportunity to meet with key religious figures during his visit. He met Muhammad Ismail, Imam of a Masjid in Guilin, Khawaja Abbas, another Imam in Kashghar, and Abdul Raqeeb Al-Sini, head of the Islamic Academy in Aksu, Xinjiang. These religious leaders disclosed that the religious seminaries in China received full official financial sponsorship for various purposes, including salaries, construction, repair, maintenance, and preservation of buildings.

One of the highlights of the visit was the observation of the Islamic Academy, which offered a congenial environment to its students. The academy provided a comfortable hostel and hygienic food to the students free of charge.

The facility spanned 25 canals and included gardens and playing grounds to keep the students physically fit. Additionally, the academy boasted a state-of-

the-art library with a wide array of informative materials for students of all levels. Dr Qibla also praised China for its efforts to make religious texts accessible to all, including the translation of the Holy Quran into Chinese and Uyghur languages.

"These translations are widely available throughout the country, demonstrating China's commitment to making religious knowledge easily accessible to its diverse population," he added. Overall, Dr Qibla's visit to China left a positive impression, showcasing the country's model of religious freedom and inclusivity. The religious leaders' insights shed light on China's efforts to promote harmony among different faiths and provide equal opportunities for all religious communities, including Muslims. The delegation was comprised of Dr Qibla Ayaz, Israr Madani, Tehmeed Jan Azhari, Muhammad Tayyab Tahiri, Maulana Fazi-e-Aali Haqqani, Rashid ul Haq, Maulana Atta ur Rehman, Asif Luqman Qazi, Sahibzada Sultan Ahmed Ali, and Maulana Yousuf Shah.

Health specialist warns public for consuming unhealthy food during Monsoon

ISLAMABAD (APP): Health expert on Sunday expressed his serious concern over rising number of monsoon related ailments and suggested the public needs to stay active and not consume unhealthy options like excessive fried, frozen and street food during the monsoon.

Renowned Cardiologist General Dr Azhar Mahmood Kayani, talking to PTV news channel, said that people indulge in eating a lot of junk and oily food the rain for fun which are key factors in contracting such monsoon diseases, adding, people need to be

aware of the hazards associated with rain-related diseases. He added that the people must take care of themselves by ensuring clean surroundings, eating healthy fresh food and by drinking boiled or filtered water. A lot of cases of seasonal diseases such as viral fever, malaria, typhoid and acute diarrhea were being reported in last few days, he added.

He further point out that healthy eating habits and regular exercises at home may help one stay fit and healthy during the rainy season. "This lack of physical activity during the

monsoon not just makes me physically weak and mentally gloomy but also vulnerable to diseases," he added. Dr Azhar Mahmood Kayani suggested that during the rainy season, it was not advisable for the people to store food for a long time and have it later.

Replying to a question about diabetic and heart patients due to obesity, he said that excessive sugar consumption, unhealthy food choices and lack of physical activities were the main reasons to weight gain, obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, cancer, liver, and kidney diseases.

Over 6000 cops to guard 447 Muharram procession, 1925 Majalis

RAWALPINDI (APP): Over 6000 cops have been deployed to guard 447 processions and 1925 Majalis of Rawalpindi district, said City Police Officer (CPO), Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Hamdani.

He informed that Rawalpindi District Police had finalized all the arrangements to ensure foolproof security arrangements for Muharram ul Haram.

The CPO said that over 6000 Police personnel were performing security duties while more than 1000 officers and personnel of traffic Police were also deployed to ensure traffic arrangements.

He informed that special security arrangements had also been made for 40 sensitive processions of the district.

The officers of district police, ladies police, Elite Force, Traffic Police and Dolphin Force would perform their duties while over 5000 volunteers would also be on security duty during Muharram.

The CPO informed that SSPs and Divisional SPs while reviewing routes of the processions were ensuring foolproof security arrangements. Special briefing sessions were also being organized for police personnel.

Before the start of the holy month,

'Aman Carvan' of police and leading scholars met with local scholars and administration in Taxila, Murree, Kahuta, Gujar Khan and Rawalpindi to ensure law and order during Muharram, he added.

Ban on display of weapons and use of loudspeakers would be implemented strictly, he said. Rawalpindi Police control room was monitoring law and order situation 24/7 and special snipers would be deployed on the rooftop at the route of the processions, he said adding, no one would be allowed to join the processions and Majalis without body search. All streets and link roads on the route of the Muharram processions would be sealed.

Special arrangements had also been made to monitor social media and strict action would be taken against those who post and spread religious and communal hatred. He further said, Rawalpindi Police were utilizing all available resources to ensure foolproof security during Muharram. The CPO said that the best possible arrangements were being made to ensure law and order and unity during Muharram with the help and cooperation of Ulemas, District Peace Committee and Anjuman-e-Tajran.

Nayyar Bukhari advises PML-N leadership to take all allies parties on board

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan People's Party senior leader and Secretary General Nayyar Hussain Bukhari Sunday advised Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) senior leadership to take all other allies parties on board as a dialogue between PM Shahbaz Sharif and PPP leadership over the matters of caretaker setup is positively continued.

"Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)' unity and consensus is need of the hour and PPP will accept all that decisions which will come after consensus", he made it clear while talking to a private news channel. Timely and transparent elections in the country will take the country towards stability and progress, he added.

Replying to a question, he said the coalition government had faced enormous economic challenges but succeeded in steering the country out of the crisis due to its prudent policies. Pakistan Peoples Party always believed in democracy and has always worked for strengthening the rule of law in the country, he added. To another question, he said there has been a good working relationship with the PML-N leaders, adding, it is the right of every political party to have a difference of opinion, adding, PML-N addressed some of the reservations but still some parties are not satisfied with the population census which will be addressed with the consultation of all parties.

PM vows to eradicate economic woes, poverty, price hike

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday reiterated the resolve by promising the people to eradicate economic woes, poverty and inflation from the country.

On his Twitter handle, the prime minister thanked Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi, who on his request, extended relief to the provincial government employees and pensioners regarding the increase in salaries and pensions and bringing them at par with the federal government employees and pensioners. He also congratulated the Punjab government employees for an increase of 35 percent in salaries and 17.5 percent increase in pensions.

By doing it, the prime minister said, the caretaker chief minister earned the prayers of millions of government employees and pensioners in the province.

Healthy diet campaign being launched to provide information about food ingredients to public: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday said that under his direction, a 'Sahatmand Ghiza, Tandrusti Sadaa' (Healthy diet, Health Forever) campaign was being launched all over Pakistan that would help consumers to get information about the food ingredients served to them.

On his Twitter handle, the prime minister said under the drive, every restaurant would inform the consumer about the total calories included in the foodstuff.

The prime minister observed that public

health was closely related to the provision of a clean and healthy diet. It was their right to learn about the food ingredients with which they were served so that they could choose food items on the basis of the provision of better and clear information.

He said this extensive campaign was being carried out across Pakistan by the Strategic Reforms Unit in collaboration with food authorities in all provinces.

In addition to it, the prime minister in a tweet posted in the Urdu language further said, a complete nutritional information under the recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO) would be published on packaged food items.

Besides, trans-fat acids were being reduced to 2 percent to prevent heart and other related diseases, he added.

The PM further stressed that their sports fields should thrive, leaving the hospitals deserted and this campaign would be a harbinger for a healthy future.

PM expresses deep grief over death of Sheikh Muhammad: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday expressed his deep grief over the passing away of Sheikh Muhammad bin Hamad bin Abdullah bin Jassim Al Thani, a senior member of the royal family of Qatar.

On his Twitter handle, the prime minister said "I extend my deepest condolences to H.H. Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the Emir of Qatar and the bereaved family. May Allah rest the departed soul in eternal peace!"

VC conference prepares roadmap to promote peace at university campuses

ISLAMABAD (APP): The three-days Vice

Chancellors' Conference on Peaceful and Tolerant University Campuses was concluded here Sunday with a resolution to undertake collaborative practical steps to promote values of peace, tolerance, harmony, respect for diversity and co-existence at the university campuses through ensuring the effective engagement of students and student-centric approach. The Conference was organized by Community Resilience Activity-North (CRA-North) in collaboration with the Inter-University Consortium (IUCPSS) and other organizations.

The Conference pledged full support for various initiatives aimed at promoting peace, inclusivity, harmony and tolerance in the society. It witnessed active participation from over 60 esteemed delegates, including 45 Vice Chancellors and

senior representatives representing universities across the country including the Newly Merged Districts of KP, Punjab, Balochistan, Sindh and Islamabad. Under the theme of "Unity through Diversity: Embracing Differences," the Conference addressed critical issues pertaining to campus environments and student interactions.

The event emphasized the significance of peaceful coexistence, understanding, and mutual respect among students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds.

Distinguished speakers, including renowned educationists and experts, delivered thought-provoking keynote addresses and participated in the panel discussions. They highlighted the importance of creating safe and friendly spaces and promoting dialogue to bridge gaps among individuals with varying perspectives, capacity development of the faculty, updating

curriculum on peacebuilding and tolerance, investment in science and technology to produce skilled youth, strengthening the link between the administration and students, development of peace societies, use campus radios for community awareness, and promote academic exchange between the students from newly merged district and rest of the country.

The Vice Chancellors from various universities shared their experiences and successful strategies implemented in their respective institutes. Four working groups were formed, each representing major stakeholders, including government, civil society and media, university administration and faculty, and students. These groups came together in a collaborative role-play exercise, proposing recommendations that focused on fostering inclusivity and tolerance on university campuses.

Kisan Package -- A way forward to revive ailing economy

ISLAMABAD (APP): With country's major cash crops and raw materials coming from the agricultural sector, its efficient performance always bore pivotal importance to feed the populace and boosting industrial growth.

However, like many other sectors of economy, the agricultural sector also suffered a lot in the post-COVID economic recession globally and internal economic turmoil resulting in price hike of inputs and energy. Therefore, the government had to introduce a multi-billion rupee Kissan Package to revive this sector and enhance the per-acre output of major and minor crops, aiming to achieve sustainable growth and economic development. It was a much-needed package designed to breathe new life into the ailing agriculture sector, offering a range of remedies and support mechanisms for the agricultural industry and farmers.

Especially to address problems of small farmers, the Kissan Package provides tangible solutions, encompassing various components meant for enhancing agricultural productivity, alleviate financial burdens and promote sustainable practices.

"The farmers have started reaping benefits of this package as the government is disbursing an amount of Rs 6,769.5 million to subsidize the cost of cultivation for poor farmers in the form of interest-free loans in flood-affected areas," said Intiaz Ahmed Gopang, Food Security Commissioner at Ministry of National Food Security and Research.

"This amount has been disbursed among 30,362 borrowers by ensuring access to small landholders. The credit facility would help enhance their farm income and alleviate poverty from rural areas of the country," he stated.

"These small farmers with land holding up to 5-12 acres comprise around 86 percent of the total land holdings and play a critical role in agriculture development," Gopang said.

"Therefore, the government is ensuring availability of all other inputs including high-yielding seeds, quality of pesticides and fertilizers on controlled rates to facilitate them." He said an amount of Rs1.48 billion has been sanctioned for waiver of markup on outstanding loans for subsistence farmers in flood-affected areas to revive their farming that was badly affected by flash floods. To support farmers affected by floods, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had announced a relief package worth Rs1.8 trillion in October 2022. This package was aimed to provide assistance to poor farmers, particularly those who suffered losses of their crops during devastating floods. Economic Adviser to the Ministry of National Food Security and Research, Dr Haroon informed that by last month (June), the government under the Prime Minister Kissan Package had disbursed an amount of Rs1,567.9 billion to support farmers and stimulate the agricultural sector.

"Disbursement between July 2022 to June 2023, reached 86 percent of overall targets set. The agricultural sector has been

disbursed Rs1,567.9 billion during the specified period, benefiting 30,362 borrowers to improve the per-acre output of crops and foster sustainable agricultural practices," he remarked.

Additionally, he said the government disbursed Rs12,817 million under Prime Minister Youth Business and Agriculture Scheme to 23,857 farmers to provide financial assistance and support to young farmers in agriculture entrepreneurship.

Dr Haroon said that recognizing the importance of farm mechanization, the government also provided Rs1,056 million to 507 farmers under the markup and risk scheme.

Moreover, he said, the State Bank of Pakistan's Refinancing Facility for Modernization of SMEs (RFMS) allocated Rs5.414 billion to include agriculture SMEs in the SME modernization scheme. "Out of this amount, Rs2,953 billion has been availed by agro-based SMEs, leading to the overall development of the agricultural small and medium-sized enterprises."

An analysis of the disbursement data reveals that out of a total of Rs1,567.9 billion disbursed so far, Rs 816.6 billion was allocated to farm sector and Rs751.4 billion to the non-farm sector from July 2022 to June 2023. According to the Economic Survey of Pakistan 2022-23, despite the challenges posed by the floods in 2022, the Rabi season crops exhibited higher yields with the agricultural sector witnessing an overall growth of 1.55 percent. Key crops

like wheat, sugarcane and maize experienced positive growth percentages of 5.4, 2.8, and 6.9 respectively. Additionally, livestock activities gradually normalized, contributing to the sector's stability.

Although some crops experienced a decline of 3.20 percent, other crops, primarily oilseeds, witnessed an increase of 0.23 percent, contributing 3.32 percent to Gross Domestic Product. The disbursement of Rs1,567.9 billion under the Prime Minister Kissan Package and other related schemes highlights the government's commitment to revive the agriculture sector and stimulate economic growth.

The financial assistance, interest-free loans, and support for mechanization definitely empowered farmers to enhance per-acre crop outputs and the relief package for flood-affected farmers paved the way to mitigating the impact of natural disasters and supporting vulnerable communities.

Despite numerous challenges, the positive growth in crop production is a testament to the resilience of the agricultural sector.

Therefore, continued investment and focused efforts will be vital to sustaining this positive trajectory and fostering long-term economic development. In this scenario what is direly needed is continuity of policies and ensuring that the produce of farmers is purchased at prescribed rates and not leaving them at the mercy of market mafias and commission agents who often usurp their hard-earned money.

Military helicopter repaired

KABUL (Agencies): The technical team of the Ministry of National Defense in Kandahar repaired a military helicopter. The engineers and technicians, team repaired an “MD 530” military helicopter and made it ready for use in the air brigade of Kandahar province, a statement said. This plane, which was stopped from operating in the previous administration, was restored and its test flight was completed, with the efforts of the officials and employees of the air forces.

Turkey to issue passports

KABUL (Agencies): The process of issuing passports for newborn Afghan babies was started by the Afghan Consulate in Turkey. The process of issuing passports for newborn Afghan babies living in Turkey commenced at the General Consulate of Afghanistan in Istanbul, as a result of the efforts of the Consular Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Emirate, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced this news on Saturday.

Kabir: There will never be compromise on Islamic law



KABUL (TOLOnews): Political Deputy Prime Minister Mawlawi Abdul Kabir said that the Islamic Emirate wants to have positive relations with the international community based on mutual respect, but it will never be ready to compromise on Islamic law.

He made the remarks at a gathering at Kabul University. “Now the world has understood this reality, that these individuals are the heirs of Afghanistan and there is a need for engagement with them and the world is obliged to engage because they don’t have anyone else to negotiate

with from the Afghanistan side,” he said. Mawlawi Kabir stressed that those who have received both a modern and Islamic education can serve society. “The Islamic Emirate has not only not opposed modern education but even supports it—those fields

which are not against Sharia law, because we want an Afghanistan to stand on its own feet, which needs engineers and doctors,” he said.

Mawlawi Kabir referred to the US’s 20 years of military presence in Afghanistan, saying that the US war was aiming to eliminate an Islamic government in Afghanistan.

Political analysts said that the Islamic Emirate should accept the legitimate wishes of the international community.

“The interim Afghan government needs to engage with the world countries based on the national interests and Islamic values because positive engagement benefits Afghanistan for recruitment of assistance,” said Najibullah Shamal, a political analyst.

“The interim government should observe the wishes of the Afghans and international community such as with the reopening of schools and thereby pave the ground for engagement with the international community,” said Fazal Hadi, a university instructor.

To consider the recognition of the interim Afghan government, the international community stressed the need to ensure human rights and especially women’s rights, prevent Afghan soil from being used against other countries by terrorist groups, and to form an inclusive government.

152 schools lack buildings in Paktika: Education Department

PAKTIKA (TOLOnews): Abdul Qayom Faraq, head of the Paktika Department of Education, said that out of 410 schools in the province, 152 of them lack buildings.

He called on international organizations to help with the construction of buildings for the schools.

“17 schools will be constructed through the financial support of Japan in Paktika. A team from the ministry came here and conducted the assessment. The costs will be nearly 180 million Afs,” he said.

Meanwhile, students in Paktika urged officials to construct school buildings, saying that the lack of buildings has affected their education.

“If our school is delayed one day due to rain, its effect is like the cost of one year for the country,” said Rozi Mohammad, a student.

“The students are being taught under the hot sun without a shelter.

They cannot study well due to wind, dust and rain,” said Hamidullah, a student.

Currently, based on the numbers of the education department of Paktika, there are a total of 130,000 students, among them 25,000 girls.

Afghanistan floods: 31 killed, 74 injured and 41 missing



KABUL (Agencies): The State Ministry for Disaster Management says at least 31 people have died, 74 have been injured and 41 others are missing due to flash floods in various parts of the country. This comes amid an ongoing weather warning of heavy rain and flash floods across 17 provinces in the country.

Rahimi said that the most of the casualties in the last three days were in Maidan Wardak province. However, of the 31 who died, 25 were in Maidan Wardak province. These included women and children.

beginning of this solar year (March 21), 3,115 residential houses have been completely or partially destroyed, and more than 41,000 acres of agricultural land has been badly damaged, while 3,800 livestock have been lost.

“There is a lot of destruction, there are many casualties, 30 to 35 people are dead, the floods have taken away many cars and destroyed many houses,” said a Maidan Wardak resident. The floods also impacted Paghman district of Kabul province, leaving huge financial losses to the people of the area.

Based on disaster management statistics, 214 people have died and 320 people have been injured due to floods in the country over the past four months.

Afghanistan’s meteorological department meanwhile has warned of heavy rain and flash floods across 17 central and eastern provinces in the country over the next two days.

The affected provinces are Bamian, Ghor, Daikundi, Logar, Khost, Paktia, Paktika, Nangarhar, Nuristan, Laghman, Maidan Wardak, Kabul, Parwan, Kunar, Ghazni, Kapisa, and Zabul. The weather service estimates as much as 40 mm of rain can be expected in some areas. The warning is valid for July 24 and 25.

Governor assures full security

KABUL (Agencies): The governor of Kabul, in a meeting with the representatives of the Shiite community, assured of strict security measures for the protection of citizens of the country taking part in mourning processions during Muharram days.

According to a statement from the governor’s house, Sheikh Mohammad Qasim Khalid, Governor of Kabul, and Qari Mohammad Yunus Rashid, Deputy Information and Culture Minister in Youth Affairs, met with several people from the Shiite community on Sunday.

In the meeting, Shiite elders in Kabul expressed their satisfaction with the security during Muharram days and appreciated the efforts of the provincial authorities and security forces on this regard.

Sheikh Mohammad Qasim Khalid, the governor of Kabul, assured of complete security during Muharram mourning ceremonies. He also listened to Shiite citizens’ existing concerns and suggestions and highlighted the importance of resolving them.

Admin corruption eliminated, transparency restored: Hanafi

KABUL (BNA) Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, in a meeting with the chief of the Supreme Audit Office, said that administrative corruption has been eliminated and transparency ensured in government offices since the return of the Islamic Emirate to power.

The Deputy Prime Minister praised the Supreme Audit Office’s performance in combating corruption and ensuring transparency and urged the Office’s authorities to work diligently for better evaluation of governmental affairs

so that Afghanistan’s governance becomes a model for transparency in regional countries.

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan was able to eliminate administrative corruption and ensure transparency in offices in a

short period, which would not have been possible without the round-the-clock efforts of departments such as the Supreme Audit Office, and this is a great honor for the new administration, said Mawlawi Hanafi.



Mawlawi Mohammad Mohsen, the chief of the Supreme Audit Office, said during the meeting that the bureau’s efforts are crucial for transparency in all government units and that inspectors undertake frequent checks to ensure that irregularities are managed.

Mr. Mohsen also stated that they are working to ensure transparency in all ministries and departments and to fight corruption by the directives of leaders of the Islamic Emirate.

Plans being worked on to allow women to return to work: IEA

KABUL (Agencies): Deputy Minister of Economy Abdul Latif Nazari says a plan is being drawn up for women to return to work and that the current restrictions on women in the workplace are not necessarily permanent.

Speaking on Sunday in Kabul at an IEA government accountability program to the nation, Nazari said: “Fourteen thousand women work in the health sector,.... there are women at the airport, there are women in banks,” said Nazari.

“But there is an effort to pay attention to a procedure that is acceptable to the Islamic Emirate system and that both the demands of our people are taken into consideration and that we can enter into a serious interaction with the international community based on Islamic values and our national interests,” he added.

In addition, Nazari emphasized that as part of the Islamic Emirate’s policy, efforts are being made to use the country’s internal capacities for economic growth and development and to rely less on foreign aid.



“We want to use the domestic and indigenous capacities of the country; we want to get help from the potential that Afghanistan has within itself,” Nazari said.

According to officials from the ministry, they have put in place a system for non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and going forward, organizations will not be allowed free

reign over their projects but will have to abide by requirements set out by the IEA.

The ministry meanwhile stressed that in the past year, the IEA’s efforts focused mainly on preventing an economic collapse but that this year, greater efforts are being made to increase economic growth and development.

13 people killed, 9 injured in Afghanistan last week

KABUL (Pajhwok): Pakistan last week expressed serious concerns about what it alleged safe havens and liberty of action available to the TTP in Afghanistan, but the caretaker government rejected the claim.

Iran last week said regional countries were of the same opinion about cooperation and interaction with Islamic Emirate and the European Union slapped sanctions on three IEA officials.

Casualties Thirteen people were killed and nine others were injured in various incidents across the country. Unknown gunmen killed a 60-year-old man in Parwan, a farmer in Baghlan, a woman and her husband, and a woman was killed in Balkh after being kidnapped.

According to local officials, a man killed his sister in Faryab, seven people were injured in an armed clash between two families in Nangarhar, three children were killed and two others injured when an old mortar shell exploded in Samangan and one person lost his life in a grenade blast in Parwan province.

Last week, an operation was carried out on a house in Bagrami district of Kabul. Officials had said nothing about the operation, but some media reports claimed three people were killed and six

other were arrested. In the previous week, five people were killed and four others were injured in various incidents across the country.

Before the regime change in August 2021, hundreds of civilians, insurgents and security forces would get killed and wounded in violent accidents across the country.

Islamabad’s claims Last week, Pakistan’s Defense Minister Khawaja Asif said allowing Afghan refugees to settle in Pakistan was “a grave mistake” amid a spike in terrorist activities in the country.

Asif said Pakistan was well aware of terror safe havens and their activities in Afghanistan and added the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan “does not respect the rights of its neighbors” and was not committed to the Doha Agreement.

Pakistan’s army chief General Asim Munir also talked about the presence of TTP militants in Afghanistan and the involvement of Afghan citizens in terrorist incidents in Pakistan.

However, Islamic Emirate spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said Pakistan was a neighboring country and was not dealt with in the light of the Doha Agreement, but a brother country and the soil of Afghanistan would never be allowed to be used against Pakistan.

He said Afghanistan itself had been a victim of decades of war, having bitter memories of conflict and did not support hostilities in any country.

Reacting to Pakistan Army Chief Gen. Asim Munir’s statement, the interim government’s chief spokesman said: “Other countries, including Pakistan, should not blame Afghanistan for their domestic issues or internal insecurity.”

Speaking exclusively to Pajhwok Afghan News, Zabihullah Mujahid opined all countries should try to resolve their domestic problems internally.”

“The Islamic Emirate has repeatedly promised it will not allow the use of Afghanistan’s soil against anyone. We stand firm and will not allow any action against any country, including Pakistan, from Afghanistan,” he commented.

Similarly, Pakistan Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah also alleged Afghanistan had become a safe place for the Pakistani Taliban and asked the caretaker government to live up to what it had promised with the world.

Mujahid stressed: “But we should also be aware that Afghanistan should not be chided for others’ weaknesses, preventing internal incidents or diverting attention from certain problems there. There are vast areas near the Durand Line in

Pakistan, which could be possible used for such things.”

The IEA was against the insecurity of anyone and always supported stability in the region as a priority of the caretaker government, Mujahid maintained.

Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs Maulvi Amir Khan Muttaqi said in a meeting with Pakistan’s Special Representative Asif Durrani that Afghans never harmed anyone. “We will not allow our territory to be used against any country and we always try to work for peace and stability in the region.”

Interaction and recognition

British conservative MP Tobias Ellwood, who is the chair of the defense select committee, after returning from a trip to Afghanistan, praised the Islamic Emirate for improved security, free travel and the disappearance of widespread corruption, adding the black market opium trade is “seemingly gone”.

He asked the British government to reopen its embassy in Kabul and negotiate with the interim rulers in this regard.

However, after facing criticisms from fellow lawmakers, Tobias Ellwood expressed regret and deleted a video in which he praised the Taliban for tackling opium and corruption.

Zabihullah Mujahid praised Ellwood’s “positive” report from Helmand province, which the MP has now removed from Twitter.

Former US Diplomat Annie Pforzheimer has said Russia and Iran may recognize the ‘Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan’ (IEA) government while some circles in the US government were also in favour of cooperation with the IEA.

Talking to the VoA, Pforzheimer said IEA ties with Pakistan were complicated at this stage while Russia and Iran could recognize the IEA as the legitimate government in the wake of improved diplomatic relations.

However, US State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said the US stance about recognizing the Islamic Emirate remained unchanged. Iran’s president special representative and ambassador for Afghanistan, Hassan Kazami Qomi, said regional countries held shared views about interaction and cooperation with Afghanistan and continued to insist on formation of an inclusive government in the country.

Russia will invite representatives of the Taliban to international talks on Afghanistan that it plans to host in Moscow on October 20, President Vladimir Putin’s special representative on Afghanistan has said. The talks will follow a G20 summit on Afghanistan on October 12

aimed at helping the country avoid a humanitarian catastrophe in the wake of the Taliban’s mid-August takeover of power.

Acting Foreign Minister Maulvi Amir Khan Muttaqi said countries which had negative interaction with Afghanistan were turning to positive interaction on realizing facts.

In a meeting with the people of Ahmadzai tribe, acting Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani said Afghanistan would survive and develop and its independence would further strengthen with support of the Afghans if not recognized by anyone.

Last week, the European Union imposed sanctions on Acting Minister of Education Habibullah Agha, Acting Minister of Justice Abdul Hakeem Shari and Supreme Court Judge Sheikh Abdul Hakeem Haqqani.

But Zabihullah Mujahid called the sanctions useless and said issues should be solved through understanding and dialogue.

Ban on women’s salons Dozens of women protested against the ban on beauty salons, but were violently dispersed by security officials.

About the women’s protest in Kabul, UNAMA said Afghans have the right to express their views free from violence and should be respected.

The Vice and Virtue and

Complaints Ministry on June 26 gave one month to all salons in Afghanistan to wind down their businesses.

UNAMA’s concern and response

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in a report expressed concern over human rights violations in the country.

The report from May to June 2023 said the rights of women and girls remain severely constrained under the new rulers.

The report documented instances where limitations were enforced on women’s freedom of movement and employment.

UNAMA has also recorded arbitrary arrests, detentions, and ill-treatment of journalists, as well as restrictions on beauty salons and activities carried out by the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice.

The UNAMA report calls for urgent attention to these issues and emphasizes the importance of upholding human rights and promoting a safe and inclusive environment for all Afghan citizens.

However, Islamic Emirate spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid called the UNAMA report as false, saying it did not reflect facts about the situation in Afghanistan.

He said UNAMA was either quoting those who

had fled the country and were giving wrong information or it itself was spreading propaganda against Afghanistan.

Daesh related concerns and reactions

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) scorned the top Iranian diplomat’s claim that Daesh leaders have entered Afghanistan from Iraq, Syria and Libya.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian alleged some Islamic State leaders and fighters had been transferred to Afghanistan from Iraq, Syria and some parts of Libya in recent months.

Abdollahian said the shifting of Daesh leaders to Afghanistan had become a serious challenge for the interim Afghan government.

But Abdul Qahar Balkhi, spokesman for MoFA, tweeted: “The statement of the Iranian foreign minister about Daesh transfer to Afghanistan ... is untrue and we reject it.”

Balkhi wrote “The security forces of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, before and after the occupation, have fought seriously and regularly against Daesh. As a result, the group has lost its destructive ability.”

Kabul governor Mohammad Qasim Khalid in an interview with TOLOnews that America was supporting the Daesh armed group in Afghanistan.

‘Imran only wants political, economic instability in country’

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah said that no development work had been done in the last four years in Pakistan and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan only wanted political and economic stability.

He termed the PTI regime as a calamity imposed on the country that destroyed its social fabric as well as institutions.

Highlighting about the Faisalabad district, Sanaullah said that not a single project was planned and executed in the city.

He said Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) completed development projects including motorways, hospitals, highways, airports for the welfare of the people. "The leadership of PML-N has a

fundamental role in the development and advancement of country," he added.

Rana Sanaullah said PML-N saved Pakistan from default.

He said JUI-F supremo Maulana Fazlur Rehman always supported Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif.

Pointing out Imran Khan, he said that the PTI chairman had been a problem in Pakistan's politics who does not want to sit with the opposition.

He questioned could a country and politics run like this?

"Imran Khan only wanted political instability in the country so that economic stability could not come," the interior minister commented.

Mission in contact with Pakistani-origin detainees in Libya: FO

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The Foreign Office Spokesperson said on Saturday that Pakistan's mission was in contact with Pakistani-origin detainees in Libya and was interacting with the United Nations for their medical checkups and provision of medicines.

In response to media

queries regarding Pakistani nationals detained in Benghazi, Libya, the Spokesperson, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, said, "At the instructions of the Foreign Minister, our Charge d'affaires in Tripoli, Mr. Ashiq Ali, visited the detention centre in Benghazi and met with detainees of Pakistani ori-

gin. Food and basic necessities have been provided to them." "Our mission is in contact with the United Nations medical team for routine medical check-ups and provision of medicines to the detainees. The mission also remains in contact with IOM for their early repatriation," she added.

Pakistan should continue to work with IMF to improve economy: US

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The United States has said that there is no quick solution to Pakistan's economic problems but it should continue to work with the International Monetary Fund to overcome its difficulties. This was stated by US Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Elizabeth Horst while holding a conversation with the Washington-based Pakistani journalists on Friday.

On the recently concluded \$3 billion Stand-by Arrangement reached between Pakistan and the IMF, she said, "We support the arrangement. It provides (Pakistan) a breathing space". She went on to say: "Pakistan should continue to work with the IMF...There's no quick fix but there's a fix."

She recognized that the coming days would be tough for Pakistanis, but they have to pass through this phase to overcome economic problems.

She called the announce-

ment of the elections in Pakistan encouraging.

She said, "We are ready to work with the government elected by the people of Pakistan. But, she said, America has no role in Pakistan's politics.

"It's for the Pakistani people to decide who they want to elect. We do not support one party against the other. We support the rule of law and democracy in Pakistan," she said.

She said Pakistan and USA have an enduring partnership, adding that both countries have common interest in many issues. She maintained that economy and climate change are major challenges for Pakistan. Ms Horst said that the US is the largest buyer of Pakistani products, the trade was \$9 billion last year. The state secretary said that in 2022, the foreign direct investment by the US for Pakistan was \$250 million, while \$215 million were given to Pakistan for the rehabilitation of flood victims.

Ms Horst said that the US has provided over \$20bn to Pakistan in the last 20 years. "Last year, we had a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) meeting after eight years, climate, energy, health dialogues were also held. We are also working on a green alliance framework," she said. "So, we are resetting the relationship." Ms Horst noted that there were at least 550,000 Pakistanis in the US, who could play a key role in maintaining the US-Pakistan partnership.

The US official noted that about 80,000 Pakistanis have been the victims of terrorism, and that's why she believed Pakistan had a vested interest in combating terrorism.

Ms Horst pointed out that terrorism was both a regional and domestic issue for Pakistan, while the United States considers it a threat to world peace. "The two countries have a common interest in countering terrorism," she added.

Pakistan thrash India by 128 runs to win Emerging Asia Cup

COLOMBO (NNI): Pakistan Shaheens thrashed India A by 128 runs to win the Emerging Asia Cup in Colombo, as the Indian side was bowled out for 224 in reply to 352 runs of Pakistan.

India got off to a flying start in pursuit of 353, as their openers scored 64 runs in eight overs, but then Arshad Iqbal got Sai Sudharsan's wicket for 29 runs.

The other opener, Abhishek Sharma got out after scoring 61 runs by Sufiyaan Muqem, as the young Chinaman got three wickets.

Arshad Iqbal, Mehran Mumtaz and Muhammad Wasim Junior got two wickets each whereas Mubasir Khan got one wick-

et for Pakistan.

Pakistan successfully defended their title, as they had won the last title in 2019 after beating Bangladesh.

The head of Pakistan Cricket Board, Zaka Ashraf congratulated the team on their win and said that Pakistan Shaheens outclassed India in all departments.

Pakistan Shaheens gave a huge target of 353 runs to India in the final of Emerging Asia Cup, as Tayyab Tahir scored a century off just 66 balls. Pakistan were given a great start of 121 runs by the openers Saim Ayub and Sahibzada, as the left-handed opener Saim Ayub was given a lifeline, when he got dismissed on no-ball.

Russia strikes Odesa hours before Putin-Lukashenko summit

KYIV (AFP/APP): The Ukrainian port city of Odesa came under renewed Russian missile attack early Sunday, just hours before President Vladimir Putin was due to hold a summit with his staunch Belarus ally Alexander Lukashenko.

At the meeting in Saint Petersburg, the pair plan to discuss the "strategic partnership and alliance" between their countries, according to the Kremlin.

It will be the first time they have met since Lukashenko helped end a dramatic mutiny by Russian mercenaries from the Wagner group.

Hours before their meeting, Russian strikes targeted Odesa, which has been bombed several times since the start of the invasion.

"Unfortunately, we have one civilian killed as a result of the nighttime terrorist attack by Russians on Odesa," regional governor Oleg Kiper said on Telegram.

Earlier he had reported "18 victims, including four children", in a Russian attack at 3:00 am (0000 GMT). "Fourteen people were hospitalised in the city's hospitals, three of them were children," he said.

Ukraine's Southern Operational Command said Odesa was targeted with at least five types of missile, including Kalibr cruise missiles.

"Air defence forces destroyed a significant amount of the missiles," it said. "The rest caused damage to port infrastructure," and several buildings, it said, adding that a missile had hit the Orthodox cathedral in the city centre. The Orthodox Transfiguration Cathedral in Odesa was damaged, according to a video posted by city hall on its Telegram channel.

Nineteen people were wounded in the overnight attack, including four children, the army reported.

The strategic port has come under repeated attack since Moscow pulled out of a grain export deal last week.

The head of Ukraine's presidential office, Andriy Yermak, repeated Kyiv's call for more missiles and defence systems after the latest attack on Odesa.

"The enemy must be deprived of the ability to hit civilians and infrastructure. More missile defence systems, as well as ATACMS -- this will help Ukraine," he said on Telegram, referring to the long-range tactical

missiles that Kyiv wants Washington to supply.

Odesa has been bombed several times since the start of the invasion, and in January the United Nations cultural agency UNESCO designated the historic centre of the city as a World Heritage in Danger site.

Kyiv has accused Russia of targeting grain supplies and infrastructure vital to any resumption of Ukrainian grain exports.

Moscow has claimed it only targeted military sites.

The attack on Odesa comes a day after a Ukrainian drone strike blew up an ammunition depot in Crimea, forcing the evacuation of the surrounding population and temporary suspension of rail traffic on the peninsula annexed by Russia in 2014.

Moscow also blamed the West and Kyiv for the death of a Russian war correspondent in the southern Zaporizhzhia region, saying he was killed by cluster munitions and promising a "response" against those responsible.

The strike was aimed at "military installations", a Ukrainian army source told AFP.

Israel judicial reform

Netanyahu in hospital ahead of key vote

JERUSALEM (BBC): Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has had emergency surgery to fit a pacemaker, after being taken to hospital on Saturday night.

Doctors at Sheba Medical Centre said the procedure went well and he is not in a life-threatening condition. Mr Netanyahu's hospitalisation comes ahead of a key vote in parliament on a contentious overhaul of the judiciary.

Protests against the reform have swept Israel, with many workers vowing to strike if the bill goes ahead. In a video address ahead of the overnight surgery, Mr Netanyahu said he was feeling "excellent" but listening to his doctors.

There had been growing questions over his health after he was admitted to hospital last week supposedly suffering from dehydration. The operation went smoothly "without any complications," Prof Roy Beinart from the Sheba Medical Center said, adding that Mr Netanyahu was "not in a life-threatening condition".

His office said Mr Netanyahu would be discharged on Monday, but trips planned to Cyprus and Turkey would be rescheduled. Mr Netanyahu said he should be well enough to attend parliament after the procedure. The next 48 hours are expected to see a critical vote on his government's plans for changes to the judiciary. There have been months of protests in Israel over the reforms, which seek to limit the Supreme Court's powers.

The vote - expected to take place on Monday - will amount to a showdown between the hard-line religious-nationalist coalition and swathes of Israeli society. Parliament began debating the highly contested bill on Sunday. One by one, Israeli opposition MPs are taking to the floor of the parliament chamber, pleading with the government to ditch its judicial reform plans.

Elon Musk: Time to say goodbye to Twitter logo

NEW YORK (BBC): Twitter owner Elon Musk has said he wants to get rid of the Twitter bird logo, and replace it with an "X". However, Mr Musk also has a history of making statements that fail to happen or are not serious.

Mr Musk, who has changed the name of the business to X Corp, said the replacement "should have been done a long time ago". According to reports, the billionaire wants to create a "super app" called "X" which is similar to China's WeChat. He said on Sunday he was looking to change Twitter's logo, tweeting: "And soon we shall bid adieu to the Twitter brand and, gradually, all the birds."

He then added: "If a good enough X logo is posted tonight, we'll make [it] go live worldwide tomorrow." Musk posted an image of a flickering "X" on Twitter, and later in a Twitter Spaces audio chat, replied "Yes" when asked if the Twitter logo will change, adding that "it should have been done a long time ago". For some people in Asia, super-apps including India's PayTM and Indonesia's GoJek have been a vital part of everyday lives for the past few years.



KARACHI: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) President Maulana Fazlur Rehman addresses a protest rally held in connection with desecration of holy Quran in Sweden outside Karachi Press Club.

Ukraine recaptured 50% of territory that Russia seized: Blinken

WASHINGTON (Reuters): U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that while Ukraine has recaptured half the territory that Russia initially seized in its invasion, Kyiv faced "a very hard fight" to win back more. "It's already taken back about 50% of what was initially seized," Blinken said in an interview with CNN on Sunday.

"These are still relatively early days of the counteroffensive. It is tough," he said, adding: "It will not play out over the next week or two. We're still looking I think at several months."

Late last month, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was quoted as saying that the counteroffensive's progress against Russian forces was "slower than desired."

Ukraine has recaptured some villages in the south and territory around the ruined city of Bakhmut in the east, but has not had a major breakthrough against heavily defended Russian lines.

When asked if Ukraine will get U.S.-made F-16 fighter jets, Blinken said he believed it would. "And the important focus is on making sure that when they do, they're properly trained, they're able to maintain the planes, and use them in a smart way."

A coalition of 11 nations will start training Ukrainian pilots to fly the F-16 fighter jets in August in Denmark, and a training center will be set up in Romania. Ukraine has long appealed for the Lockheed Martin-made (LMT.N) F-16s, but U.S. National Security adviser Jake Sullivan, said last month there was no final decision on Washington sending the aircraft. U.S. officials have estimated it would take at least 18 months for training and delivery of the planes.

The United States has given Ukraine more than \$41 billion in military aid since Russia invaded in February 2022.

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Overseas Pakistanis never forgot country in difficult situation

JEDDAH (NNI): Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz's (PML-N) self-exiled supremo Mian Nawaz Sharif admired the role of overseas Pakistanis and said that in difficult times, foreign Pakistanis and the business community have taken care of the economy of the country.

In a meeting with a Pakistani business community delegation led by Malik Manzoor Hussain Awan, General Secretary PML-N Saudi Arabia held in Sharif Palace Jeddah PML-N leader welcomed them. Addressing the business community Nawaz Sharif said that overseas Pakistanis and business community brought the country's economic situation out of the quagmire.

The delegation was comprised of Malik Muhammad Ashiq, Hayat Khan, Rana Ashraf, PML-N youth wing president Hafiz Amanullah advocate, Fida Muhammad, Muhammad Shahbaz Mughal and others.

European aviation agency to visit Pakistan

KARACHI (NNI): A delegation of the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) will visit Pakistan in September this year to review a ban on Pakistan International Airline (PIA) flights to Europe. EASA is responsible for ensuring safety and environmental protection in air transport in Europe.

The EASA delegation will undertake a physical audit of PIA as well as the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). Successfully clearing the audit could lead to a reversal of the ban on PIA flights to European Union, say sources. Earlier, Aviation Minister Khawaja Saad Rafique said that Pakistan International Airlines is likely to resume flights to Britain in the next three months.

Rafique told parliament that new legislation this week has removed the final hurdle for Pakistan's national carrier to fly to the United Kingdom. He gave no details about the legislation or why it was required to resume the flights. He said the resumption of services to Britain did not include other European destinations.

Sudan war enters 100th day as mediation attempts fail

NYALA (Reuters): Clashes flared in parts of Sudan on the 100th day of the war on Sunday as mediation attempts by regional and international powers fail to find a path out of an increasingly intractable conflict.

The fighting broke out on April 15 as the army and paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) vied for power, since when more than 3 million people have been uprooted, including more than 700,000 who have fled to neighbouring countries.

Some 1,136 people have been killed, according to the health ministry, though officials believe the number is higher.

Neither the army nor the RSF has been able to claim victory, with the RSF's domination on the ground in the capital Khartoum up against the army's air and artillery firepower.

Infrastructure and government in the capital have fallen apart while fighting has spread westwards, particularly to the fragile Darfur region, as well as to the

south, where the rebel SPLM-N group has tried to gain territory.

Over the weekend, the RSF moved into villages in Gezira State directly south of Khartoum, where the army conducted air strikes against them, according to witnesses.

In Nyala, one of the country's largest cities and capital of South Darfur, clashes have continued since Thursday in residential areas, according to witnesses.

At least 20 people have been killed, medical sources say.

The United Nations says 5,000 families have been displaced. Key facilities have been looted, residents say. "Bullets are flying into homes. We are terrified and no one is protecting us," said 35-year-old Salah Abdallah.

The fighting gave way to ethnically targeted attacks by Arab militias and the RSF in West Darfur, from which hundreds of thousands of people have fled to Chad. Residents have also accused RSF soldiers of looting and occupying wide swathes of the capital.

The RSF has said it would investigate.

While the two sides have shown openness towards mediation efforts led by regional and international actors, none has resulted in a sustained ceasefire.

Both sides have sent delegations to attempt to re-start talks in Jeddah that have yielded often-violated ceasefires. But the Sudanese foreign minister said on Friday that indirect talks had not begun seriously.

The leaders of the army and RSF headed a joint council since the ouster of Omar al-Bashir in 2019, and diverged over plans for a transition to democracy.

Civilian political groups as well as the RSF have accused the army of turning a blind eye to appearances by wanted Bashir loyalists in recent days.

The Forces of Freedom and Change, the main civilian coalition, said on Sunday it was holding meeting in Egypt, which has offered itself as a mediator in the conflict.