

1st post Hajj flight arrives

KARACHI (APP): The first post Hajj Flight No. PK-832 carrying around 361 Hujjaj from Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, reached Jinnah International Airport -Karachi on Sunday. The Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori welcomed the Hujjaj and put garlands on them upon their arrival. The first post Hajj flight arrived in the city at around 3:35pm.



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OIC urges joint action to combat desecration of Holy Quran

JEDDAH (NNI): In an emergency meeting held the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has emphasised the crucial need for collective measures to prevent the desecration of the Holy Quran.

The call comes in the wake of a distressing incident where the holy book was burned during a protest in Sweden, sparking outrage and deep concern among the Muslim community worldwide.

The statement by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, most of whose members have a Muslim-majority population, was issued after an extraordinary meeting in Saudi Arabia's Jeddah called to discuss Wednesday's incident.

"We must send constant reminders to the international community regarding the urgent application of international law, which clearly prohibits any advocacy of religious hatred," OIC Secretary-General Houssein Ibrahim Taha said.

The intergovernmental organisation of 57 countries said in a statement that the meeting had been called by Saudi Arabia in its capacity as chair of the Islamic Summit Conference and would take place at the OIC headquarters in the Saudi city of Jeddah. The

Pakistan to write letters to int'l parliaments on Quran's desecration

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Acting President Sadiq Sanjrani decided to write a letter to the international parliaments regarding the desecration of Holy Quran in Sweden.

Sadiq Sanjrani says that the incident is to be condemned that hurt the sentiments of the entire Islamic world. He said that the parliament, government and people of Pakistan were deeply saddened by the incident, the Swedish government should take immediate action.

The acting president further said that under the guise of freedom of expression, hurting sentiments cannot be allowed. Hateful acts are also a violation of interna-

tional laws, he asserted. Sadiq Sanjrani called upon the international community to take notice of the incident inciting them to play role to prevent such incidents. On the other hand, protests also held in different countries of the world, including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Syria, Lebanon, and the United Arab Emirates, over the desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden.

The OIC also called an emergency meeting and strongly condemned the desecration of the Holy Quran. The European Union also denounced the desecration of the Holy Quran, saying that the incident was offensive, disrespectful and clearly provocative.

emer-gency meeting would also go over the procedures for dealing with the fall-out from the incident, it added. In a conversation with the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Houssein Ibrahim Taha, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian called for an emergency meeting of the foreign ministers of the OIC in light of the recent act of blasphemy of burn-ing the Quran in outside a Mosque in Sweden. The OIC foreign ministers should hold the meeting at

the earli-est possible time to address the dese-cration," Amirabdollahian said.

Amir-Abdollahian pointed out that the OIC meeting can be made concurren-ly with the Ministerial Meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement in Baku, Azerbai-jan, on July 5-6. A man tore up and burned the Holy Quran outside Stockholm's central mosque on Wednesday, the first day of the Muslim Eid al-Adha holi-days. The act angered OIC member Turkey whose back-ing Sweden needs to gain entry to the NATO military

alliance. Swedish police had granted permission for a protest to take place. But after the burning, police charged the man who carried it out with agitation against an ethnic or national group.

The incident has triggered large protests in Baghdad in front of the Swedish Embassy. It has also been condemned by the United States. Turkey in late January suspended talks with Sweden on its NATO application after a Danish far-right politician burned a copy of the Holy Quran near the Turkish embassy in Stockholm.

Four security officials martyred in attack on Sherani checkpoint in Balochistan

QUETTA (NNI): An Frontier Constabulary checkpoint was attacked by terrorists in the Dhana Sar area of Shirani district in Balochistan.

Reportedly, one FC and three police personnel have been martyred in the attack, as per security officials.

The martyred officials have been identified as station house officer Bahadur Khan, Babar, sepoy Afzal Shirani and Baz Khan Harifal. One terrorist was also killed in an exchange of fire, they said further.

The officials said an exchange of fire between the security forces and terrorists is going on.

According to the Shirani deputy commissioner, the attack took place

at the joint checkpoint of the police, Levies and FC forces early in the morning. A search operation in the area is underway.

The Balochistan chief minister's spokesperson, Babar Yousufzai, has condemned the Shirani terrorist attack. The terrorists want to destroy the law and order situation with this cowardly attack, he remarked. He said no concession will be offered to the terrorists, adding the entire nation is proud of the sacrifices rendered by the security forces.

Balochistan Chief Minister Abdul Qudus Bizenjo condemned the attack, saying terrorists couldn't demoralise security forces with cowardly acts.

He said security forces were ensuring the security of the country and the nation with firm determination and courage.

Condemning the attack, the Balochistan governor, chief minister and home minister maintained that the blood of the martyrs will not go in vain. Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has strongly condemned the terrorist attack. He offered condolences to the bereaved families of the martyred security officials. "Cowardly terrorists cannot discourage us and our soldiers with such attacks," he stressed.

He said he saluted all the martyrs of the country, including those of the Shirani checkpoint.

FM Bilawal expresses resolve to boost trade with Japan

TOKYO (NNI): Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Sunday declared his intention to boost trade and promote diplomatic ties with Japan. Addressing at a function organized by the Pakistani diaspora in Tokyo today, Bilawal appreciated Japanese contributions to technology.

He underscored the importance of Pakistanis living abroad, saying, "The overseas Pakistanis are our assets, who are playing vital role to promote bilateral ties between Pakistan and Japan." The Foreign Minister said both countries can benefit from investment in agriculture and livestock. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said incumbent government is working on economic diplomacy

to bring prosperity in the country.

He said Pakistan can learn from Japan's advancement in Information Technology and other fields.

He also mentioned the country's potential in the IT sector, saying the steps had been taken to improve youth's skills. The Foreign Minister urged Pakistani overseas particularly businessmen to play their role for increase in trade between two countries and also strengthening of bilateral relations.

The Foreign Minister emphasised his commitment for boosting agricultural exports between Pakistan and Japan. He praised the country's mangoes, saying, "Mangoes from this country are

eaten by people all over the world."

Bilawal also met with representatives of the Japan International Development Agency (JICA) and the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) to discuss potential for trade and investment.

During the meetings, the matters related to bilateral cooperation in trade and investment came under discussion. The Foreign Minister said during his meeting with Japanese leadership and entrepreneurs, he will urge them to enhance trade and investment in Pakistan.

He said Pakistan has over 65 per cent population of youth and we can exploit this human resource through skills-based education and training.

After winning elections, PML-N to end inflation on priority basis: Nawaz

DUBAI (NNI): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supreme and former Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif has said that after winning the upcoming elections, PML-N will end inflation on a priority basis.

The former prime minister held an important meeting with the Pakistan Muslim League (PMLN) Gulf delegation in Dubai.

PML-N's UAE chapter president Ghulam Mustafa Mughal led the delegation. On the auspicious occasion of Eidul Azha, Nawaz greeted the PML-N leaders. Maryam Nawaz, the PML-N's chief organiser, and Ehsanul Haq Bajwa, the leader of the party's

Gulf chapter, were also present.

MPA Azad Ali Tabasim, Ghous Qadri, Abdul Waheed Pal, Abu Bakr Afandi, Chaudhry Abdul Ghaffar and Ifthikhar Butt were also included in the delegation.

The PML-N leader was briefed about the high morale of the party workers based in the Gulf countries including the UAE.

During the meeting, the delegation inquired about the well-being of Nawaz Sharif, while PML-N delegation also met PML-N Senior Vice President and Chief Organizer Maryam Nawaz. Nawaz Sharif reached Dubai from London to spend Eid days with his family members

including Maryam Nawaz who reached there from Pakistan.

Meanwhile, Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz discussed the strategy of the upcoming elections with the delegation.

Nawaz Sharif assured and said that the PML-N will quickly overcome the problems of Pakistan.

Nawaz Sharif said that he saluted his party workers who were facing difficult situations.

Sources divulged, the former prime minister will hold further key meetings. The discussions will include consultations aimed at strengthening country's economic system. On the other hand, investors and friendly

nations wanted to see political stability in the nation.

Last week, the legal committee was formed in line to clear the path for Nawaz's return to the country. According to sources, committee to be headed by Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar. The committee also comprised SAPM Ata Tarar, Irfan Qadir, Amjad Pervaiz and other lawyers.

The committee will make every effort to remove any legal barriers to Nawaz's return to the country.

As per sources Pakistan People's Party leadership is expected to have another meeting with PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif.

The Frontier Post

Tareen returns home from London

ISLAMABAD (INP): Istikhkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) patron-in-chief Jahangir Khan Tareen on Sunday returned to Pakistan after a medical check-up in the United Kingdom (UK). According to details, Jahangir Khan Tareen reached Pakistan after undergoing several medical tests in London. Jahangir Tareen went to UK before Eid over health issues. On June 8, Jahangir Tareen officially launched the "Istehkam-e-Pakistan" party.



JEDDAH: Extraordinary, open-ended meeting of the Executive Committee of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, at the headquarters of the General Secretariat in Jeddah.

PM Shehbaz Sharif summons federal cabinet session

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has summoned the federal cabinet session today, citing sources.

PM Shehbaz Sharif summoned the federal cabinet's session on Monday in which the participants will review the political and economic situation of the country. Sources divulged on Saturday that the meeting will also cover the issue of extending the stay of Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

The Afghan refugees' two-year extension had ended on June 30. While the Home Ministry has advocated for an additional six-month extension. According to sources, along with the potential ratification of the five-year national sports policy, the HEC Amendment Bill is also on the table.

The matter in line with the waste disposal project in Islamabad will also be part of the meeting agenda.

PM Shehbaz will participate in the 23rd Meeting of SCO Council of Heads of State being held in video-conference format on Tuesday (July 4). The invitation to the prime minis-

ter to attend the SCO-CHS was extended by Indian counterpart Narendra Modi in his capacity as the current Chair of the SCO.

At the forthcoming CHS, the highest forum of the SCO, the leaders will deliberate on important global and regional issues and chart the future direction of cooperation among SCO Member States.

This year, the SCO CHS will also welcome Iran as a new member of the organization.

PM Shehbaz's participation in the CHS illustrates the high importance that Pakistan attaches to the SCO, as an important forum for regional security and prosperity, and enhanced engagement with the region.

On Friday, PM Shehbaz talked about the economic revival plan of the country, saying that everyone will have to put efforts for uplifting the country. "Debts and loans are not the solution as we have to get rid of them and focus on our own domestic resources," said the prime minister.

PM Shehbaz added that all the institutions including judiciary, par-

liament and defense institutions will have to put their efforts jointly to strengthen the country's economy.

PM Shehbaz to attend SCO summit on Tuesday via video link: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will participate in the 23rd Meeting of SCO Council of Heads of State being held in videoconference format on Tuesday. The invitation to the Prime Minister to attend the SCO-CHS was extended by the Prime Minister of India in his capacity as the current Chair of the SCO.

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Ch Shujaat again meets Pervaiz Elahi in Camp Jail

LAHORE (NNI): In a bid to break the ice between the cousins, Pakistan Muslim League (PML-Q) chief Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain on Sunday met Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) President Chaudhry Parvez Elahi at Lahore Camp Jail.

Shujaat's son Chaudhry Salik Hussain and Chaudhry Wajahat accompanied Ch Shujaat to the jail to inquire about Elahi's health. Both the Chaudhrys also discussed the political situation prevailing in the country. The meeting between the two is significant as Shujaat has been trying for the last several weeks to convince Pervaiz Elahi to quit the PTI and join the PML-Q again so that his ordeal in the jail could come to an end.

However, so far the PTI president has not shown his willingness to return to the PML-Q. It is noteworthy that Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi, the President of Tehreek-e-Insaf, is currently serving judicial remand in a money laundering case. The former Punjab executive was apprehended by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on June 26, subsequent to being granted bail in an anti-corruption case.

Elahi is among the PTI leaders who are standing firm with the party chairman, Imran Khan, despite a government crackdown that is followed by a mass exodus of leaders from the former ruling party.

The doctors of Punjab Institute of Cardiology (PIC) conducted a medical examination of former chief minister of Punjab Parvez Elahi in the prison and termed the health of Elahi as 'satisfactory'.

During their fourth visit, the doctors team recommended some medical tests to Elahi. Sources said Parvez Elahi was suffering from heart disease and PIC has formed a medical board for Parvez Elahi.

Security forces kill three terrorists in DIK IBO: ISPR



F.P. Report

RAWALPIND: On 02 July 23, security forces conducted an Intelligence Based Operation in general area Kulachi, DI Khan District.

During the conduct of operation, after intense fire exchange, three terrorists were sent to hell.

Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the killed terrorists.

The killed terrorists remained actively involved in various terrorist activities against security forces, Police and innocent civilians. They were also highly wanted for conducting a raid on a Police CP in

Kulachi on 11 April 2022, which resulted in Shahadat of five brave police constables.

Sanitization of the area is being carried out to eliminate any terrorists found in the area. Security Forces of Pakistan are determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism.

‘Biden to travel to UK, NATO summit, Finland’

W A S H I N G T O N (AFP/APP): US President Joe Biden has scheduled a diplomatic trip to Europe this month with stops in the United Kingdom, at the NATO summit in Lithuania and for meetings in Finland, the White House said Sunday.

Biden is set to depart July 9 for "engagements" with the UK's King Charles III and Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, the White House said in a statement. He will then continue to the NATO summit in Vilnius followed by a visit to Helsinki for the US-Nordic Leaders Summit.

Biden had been widely expected to attend the NATO summit. The US has said that the alliance is nearly consensus on how to address Ukraine's membership push at the upcoming summit, as the Eastern European country -- with support from Western nations -- continues fighting off a Russian invasion.

The trip comes as the White House prepares to welcome Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson in Washington ahead of the talks in Vilnius, to talk about Stockholm's ambitions to join the alliance. Sweden asked to join

NATO in May 2022, three months after Russia invaded Ukraine, but its membership bid, which must be ratified by all 31 member states, has been blocked by Turkey and Hungary.

Top diplomats from Turkey and Sweden will meet on Thursday, the day after Kristersson's White House visit, at NATO headquarters in Brussels for talks on Stockholm's bid to join the alliance.

Turkey dropped objections to Sweden's Nordic neighbor Finland joining earlier in the year and Helsinki became a NATO member in April.

LAHORE: Visitors viewing displayed artworks at Lahore Museum.



Minister for spirit of sacrifice throughout year not on Eid

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister Information, Hajj and Auqaf Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhel on Sunday said that the spirit of sacrifice should be throughout the year and not just on Eid. He said Eid-ul-Azha is an opportunity for the entire Muslim world to celebrate and share happiness collectively.

On the contrary, he said, if we always keep fresh the spirit of eternal self-sacrifice as demonstrated by Hazrat Ibrahim and Ismail (peace be upon them) and follow it in the true sense, then Muslims all over the world can get rid of divisions and become united and develop by leaps and bounds.

He was speaking as chief guest at the special Eid show 'De Akhtar Mulghalre' on the occasion of Eid-ul-Adha at the studio of Pakhtunkhwa Radio Peshawar FM 92.2.

Secretary Information

and Public Relations Mukhtiar Ahmed and station director Pakhtunkhwa Radio Ghulam Hussain Ghazi also participated in this Eid show while Prof Dr. Abasin Yousafzai and producer Fitrat Bunerri hosted it.

Barrister Feroze Jamal Kakakhel hailed the innovation and public acceptance of Pakhtunkhwa Radio and said that the media as a whole can light the candles of hope in the society by pulling the society and people from the morass of growing anxieties and despair.

On a question of Dr. Abasin, the Minister said that Eid is not only for children but also for adults.

On Eid, he said, most of the families get together after a long separation away from their city or homeland, while the pilgrims also return to their homes after the obligation of Hajj and share the joys with each other.

The provincial minister said that the main require-

ment of Eid-ul-Azha is to help the neighbors, the relatives and the needy in odds and get the pleasure of God as well.

He said the families of martyrs should be also be met and sick friends should be visited for enquiring after their health.

To a question, Barrister Feroze Jamal said that his government will restore the joys of the people by taking them out of the shock and frustration of the tragic events of May 9 this year.

In the same way, the Minister said, his govt will restore the splendor of parks in the cities and provide hundreds of additional entertainment facilities to the people, while we will also focus on character building by lightening the burden of children's books and bags.

He said that Eid-ul-Adha is also a requirement.

Hence he said we must not break people's hearts but unite them and revive the values of bringing

peace in the society, modesty and respect and compassion towards the younger ones. He said that even then we have many people gathered and happy in a small studio but how many are unhappy in big bungalows. The only solution to this unrest is to populate our mosques and houses, he added.

Provincial Information Secretary Mukhtiar Ahmad said in his Eid message that parents and teachers should share the joys of students, children and youth and save them from loneliness as well as bring them into practical life so that their creative capabilities can improve.

The Station Director Radio Pakhtunkhwa thanked the Provincial Minister and Information Secretary for visiting the Broadcasting House and assured that Radio Pakhtunkhwa will continue to entertain the audience with new programs throughout the year apart from Eid.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister Information, Hajj and Auqaf Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhel speaking during a special Eid show at studio of Pakhtunkhwa Radio Peshawar FM 92.2.

We trying to make life easier for people: Mayor



PESHAWAR (APP): Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali Sunday said that they are trying to provide convenience to the people in their districts.

Talking to groups of delegation, which called on him, Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali said that during the days of Eid, electricity transformers were provided to the people on an emergency basis.

Zubair Ali said that the electricity transformers of his areas were damaged, due to which the people are facing a lot of problems and there is a concern that the meat of the sacrifice during the days of Eid will spoil.

Transformers were provided on an emergency basis in the areas of village Tahkal, on which the residents of the area thanked Mayor Peshawar.

Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali assured the people that every possible step would be taken to make the lives of the people easier and for this the doors of his house are open for the people.

Haji Zuair Ali said that they have come to power to solve the problems of the people and would try his hardest to overcome each and every problem in time.

Naran, Shogran witness massive influx of tourists

PESHAWAR (APP): The Kaghan, Naran and Shogran valleys Sunday have become hotspots for tourists, attracting a large number of visitors during the Eid holidays.

During a span of three days, an astounding 22,500 vehicles and 7,710 motorcycles have made their way into these breathtaking valleys. To cater to the influx of tourists, the authorities have taken significant measures by announcing the continuous opening of Babusar Top 24 hours a day over the next three days.

Families, seeking to amplify their Eid celebrations are gathering in Naran, where the crystal-clear waters of the Kunhar River in Naran have captivated fishing enthusiasts, while others enjoy the melodious music alongside the river.

Acknowledging the substantial number of incoming tourists, the Kaghan Development Authority (KDA) along with the administration and police, has encouraged its staff to ensure seamless guidance and assistance for the visi-

tors.

During the three-day Eid period, an impressive number of 22,500 vehicles and 7,710 motorcycles crossed through the valleys.

In order to facilitate the convenience of tourists, the district administration of Mansehra and Kaghan Development Authority (KDA) after consideration and consultation with relevant authorities has made the decision to keep Babusar Top open for 24 hours which was earlier allowed from 9 am to 5 pm accessible.

Minister condemns Quran desecration

PESHAWAR (APP): Information Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhel on Sunday expressed strong condemnation over the desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden.

In a statement issued here, the minister said that the heinous act has deeply wounded the sentiments of the entire Muslim Ummah.

He said that the federal government should strongly protest at the diplomatic level. The desecration of the Holy Quran is an act of global terrorism that inflicts harm on the emotions of the entire Muslim ummah, said Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah.

Rain predicted from today

PESHAWAR (APP): The Regional Meteorological Department on Sunday predicted five days rains starting July 3 to 8 in most parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

According to a notification issued by PDMA stated that Regional Met Office Peshawar has informed that a new spell of rains is starting for which people are urged to take all precautionary measures to avoid any loss of life, damages to infrastructure and crops and animals.

Furthermore, all concerned authorities asked to take the safety measures. Tourists to be informed about weather forecast, ensure availability of all emergency services staff and machineries and other resources, and all concerned line departments to remain vigilant in restoring road links.

In case of any occurrence, updates may kindly be shared with PDMA, active round the clock via helpline 1700.

Payments under BISP to begin tomorrow: Kundi

PESHAWAR (APP): Minister of State for Poverty Alleviation & Social Safety, Faisal Karim Kundi has said that the process of the payment of installments under Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) will begin from today (Monday).

In a message for deserving women under BISP here on Sunday, he urged them to collect their installments from the specified retailers and inform them in case of any complaint.

He said that 0.9 million cards of the BISP were suspended by the previous PTI government including 7000

cards of the deserving women of D.I. Khan are being unblocked. He further said that the teams of BISP are formally contacting those people whose cards have been unblocked. So far over 2,50,000 cards have been restored.

Kundi said that the holders of blocked cards either

contact the local office of BISP or send a message on 8171.

For the redressal of the complaints of beneficiaries, he said a new system for direct recovery from banks is being introduced during the current month, while dynamic survey will continue after Eidul Azha also.

Seminar on completion of 10-years of China Pak Economic Corridor

PESHAWAR (APP): Preparations for holding an International Seminar on the completion of 10 years of China Pakistan Economic Corridor kicked off in the provincial capital Peshawar with the seminar scheduled on July 5, 2023.

The Chinese Cultural Center China Window in Peshawar is going to present papers on the usefulness of CPEC will be presented in the seminar organized in collaboration with the Higher Education Commission, KP Investment Board and IM Sciences.

The seminar will have four sessions in which prominent personalities from different fields of life will express their views on

this great project of Pakistan-China friendship. In this seminar to be held on July 5, awards will also be given to those Pakistani and Chinese companies who have invested a lot in CPEC projects and besides providing employment to a large number of people, have contributed to the economic development of

Pakistan.

Played a prominent role, according to the organizers of China Window, this will be the first and unique seminar of its kind in Peshawar, in which the speakers will express their views on the project on the completion of ten years of CPEC, while videos of various projects will also be shown.

WSSCK completes three-days Eid special cleanliness operations

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: During three-days special cleanliness operations, the Water and Sanitation Services Company Kohat (WSSCK) has disposed of around 1825 tons of animal waste in 6 Urbans and KDAs of Kohat in an environment-friendly manner.

A press release issued here on Sunday stated that as many as 100 different vehicles including Suzuki mini tippers, garbage compactors, tractor trolleys, skip tractors, tractor shovels and excavators took part in the special cleanliness campaign during the three-days of Eid ul Azha.

In the special Eid cleanliness campaign, nearly 550 staff including administrative officers participated. The special cleanliness campaign of Eidul Azha was formally inaugurated by Assistant Commissioner Kohat Usman Ashraf and Chief Executive Officer of WSSCK Arif Rauf on the first day of the Eid.

The WSSCK in its jurisdiction areas has set up around 321 collection points and 25 transfer stations in its jurisdictional areas.

The public was already informed about this through social media and awareness campaigns.

Pamphlets and around 3000 thousand biodegradable bags were also distributed in the campaign.



During the Eid, Chief Executive Officer of WSSCK Arif Rauf, Deputy General Manager Tahir Arif, Manager Operations Shehbaz Khattak, Manager Media and Communication Asma Ali and Chief Inspector Muhammad Sohail were present on the field to monitor the cleanliness so that there should be no public complaints regarding cleanliness.

The WSSCK had successfully completed the cleaning operation by 11 PM on the first day of Eid.

The WSSCK Hotline Complaint Cell remained open on all three days of Eid from 8 AM to 12 PM and received 19 complaints regarding sanitation and 26 regarding water during Eid which were resolved on time.

During Eidul Azha, the water supply staff also remained on duty for

three days and ensured uninterrupted supply of water.

In the three days of Eidul Azha, the sacrificial animal wastes were dumped into a pre-dug pit at the dumping site and disposed of in an environmentally friendly manner after the operation was over on the third day of Eid.

After the end of the cleaning operation, all the collection points were washed with fennel and lime was also added there to prevent the spread of germs.

During Eid, the district administration also appreciated the performance of the institution.

The institution also received a lot of video messages from the public and the work of WSSCK Kohat also got a lot of appreciation on social media.

Climate change-induced sizzling temperature poses threat to ecological balance, glaciers resources

PESHAWAR (APP): Highly vulnerable to climate change vulnerabilities, Pakistan was also facing a looming threat to an ecological and socioeconomic balances besides shortage of water resources owing to continued rising of temperature and fast melting of glaciers affecting people.

The rise of global temperatures and green houses gas emissions have put Pakistan under a heightening risk of disasters, including heatwaves, droughts, floods, and melting glaciers. "Pakistan is highly susceptible to climate change-induced weather patterns including rising temperatures, unpredictable rains and floods besides fast melting of glaciers in Gilgit Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that could be tackled through whooping plantation," said Tauheedul Haq, former conservator of KP Forest Department while talking to APP on Sunday.

He said Pakistan was a

unique country where over 7,253 glaciers were providing fresh water supplies to millions of people for irrigation, drinking and industrial purposes and its preservation was imperative for agriculture growth and economic prosperity.

Mostly located in Himalaya, Hindukash and Karkoram regions of Gilgit Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, he said these glaciers were a distinctive source of freshwater for agriculture, irrigation, drinking and industrial supplies to people, agriculturists, farmers and industrialists living in those regions and downstream upto Karachi through river Indus.

Besides 2,253 mighty, medium and small glaciers, including Baltoro (63km), Biafo (67km), Batura (57km) found in Gilgit Baltistan, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Upper Chitral district was blessed with around 500 glaciers especially at Trichmir

mountains ranges providing freshwater to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Sindh provinces through rivers Swat, Panjokra, Kabul and Indus throughout the year.

He said Pakistan contains more glaciers than any other parts of earth outside of the polar region. "Our irrigation network has largely depended on these glaciers that continuously re-charge our irrigated system in all provinces," said Tauheedul Haq.

He said Pakistan was heading towards a situation of water shortage and food insecurity due to fast melting of glaciers, poor investment in agriculture, flooding, rapid population growth and water loss.

According to National Water Policy 2018, the per capita surface water availability has declined from 5,260 cubic meters per year in 1951 to around 1,000 cubic meters in 2016 and this quantity was likely to further drop to about 860

cubic meters in next few years, marking our transition from a "water stressed" to a "water scarce" country.

The policy disclosed that the minimum water requirement to avoid food and health implications of water scarcity was 1,000 cubic meters per capita per year and the situation underlined the need for rapid development and management of the country's water resources especially completion of construction of dams of Mohmand and Diamir Bhasha to conserve the precious commodities for future generation.

Tauheed said the changing and unpredictable precipitation patterns may cause serious consequences, including flash floods in the north of Pakistan as we have seen last year's flooding and increasingly prolonged droughts in the southern parts of the country.

With glaciers retreat, he said more glacial lakes

would form like that of Atabad lake in Gilgit Baltistan besides increasing the risk of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOF).

"The weather conditions have changed as hot weather was being witnessed even in March and April that was not so decades before in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa due to lack of rains and snowfalls besides high deforestation," he said.

The National Forest Policy 2015 has revealed that Pakistan was losing about 27,000 hectares of forests per year. The policy said forest resources were under tremendous pressure mostly in community and private-owned natural forests in Gilgit Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where deforestation was making negative impact on agriculture yield and quality of water at outlets besides triggering land degradation and loss of biodiversity.

"Pakistan's average annual rainfall was ranging

between 400millimeter (mm) to 1000mm while snowfall ranged about 60 inch that could be increased by bringing more areas under forestry cover especially in high altitude and glaciers zones," he said.

He said that the early start of summer season and subsequently heat waves lead to fast melting of glaciers, resulting in flooding and waste of fresh water.

Tauheed said forestry cover in the country was around five percent, which was low compared to 25percent international standard and bringing mountainous areas under afforestation through farm forestry and enclosures would help minimize melting of glaciers in northern Pakistan.

Ibrahim Khan, Deputy Project Director, 10 billion trees afforestation project said that numerous measures were taken for maintaining ecological balance and water resources through sustainable growth

and preservation of forest resources.

He said all concerned departments were taken on board for preempting fire incidents in forest due to heatwave during summer. He said Forest Amendment Bill 2022 was enacted for sustainable growth and protection of the green gold.

As per the law, the government would also take necessary measures for protection of forest carbon rights and to declare any forest or nearby area as national park.

He said that 690.16 million plants including 352 million through 6081 enclosures and 337.06 million through farm forestry were planted under the 10 billion trees afforestation project till April 30, 2023.

Ibrahim said the provincial climate change policy 2016, range land policy, and REDD plus strategy have been implemented in the province.

He said federal government had allocated Rs

3,950 million for three ongoing schemes including Rs 26.5 million for capacity building on water quality and monitoring and SDG (6.1), Rs 20.95 million for Climate Resilient Urban Human Settlements Unit and Rs 3,902.55 million for a revised project of Up-scaling of Green Pakistan Programme in budget 2023-24.

He said Rs 100 million was allocated for Pakistan Bio-safety Clearing House (Pak-BCH) for GMOs Regulation, Rs. 2,800 million for a national programme for the improvement of watercourses phase-II, and Rs. 900 million for the national programme for enhancing the command area in Barani areas of Pakistan besides Rs. 700 million for the promotion of olive cultivation on a commercial scale. He said these projects on completion would help mitigate adverse effects of climate change and control temperature.



In brief

Woman kills father-in-law

LAYYAH (PPI): A woman allegedly killed her father-in-law over a petty dispute in Layyah's Kot Sultan area, police said on Sunday. A police team excavated the body of Faqeer Muhammad from his residential property after suspect Sobia Yousaf admitted to killing her father-in-law on June 21 and buried his body in a portion of the house. The police said Sobia's husband Zahid Hussain worked in Lahore. The complainant Mujahid Hussain told the police that his father had been missing for the last 10 days. Sobia disclosed the murder after being interrogated by other family members. The body was shifted for autopsy and a case was registered against Sobia.

Man stabbed to death

BUREWALA (APP): A man was stabbed to death by unknown outlaws at Village 158/EB Babriyanwala on Saturday late night. According to police sources, Abdul Rauf Kharal resident of Village 158/EB Babriyanwala in premises of Sadar Burewala police station was sleeping at his outhouse situated at the same locality. The family members found his body early morning as some unknown outlaws stabbed him to death by repeated blows of a sharpe edged weapon on his neck. The police took the body into custody and later, handed over to heirs after conducting autopsy of the body. However, case under murder offence has been registered against unknown outlaws and police have started the investigations, police sources added.

Dens of dacoits destroyed

KASHMORE (INP): Police's operation against the dacoits of Bangwar gang in katcha area of Kashmore, which is now into its third day on Sunday, has started producing desired results as several of them have been taken into custody and their several dens have been destroyed as well. Sources said that police have sealed all entry and exit points of Gablu area where the operation is underway. On the other hand, SSP Kashmore Irfan Samun has said that the operation against outlaws for the release of captives will continue. "All persons who have been held hostage by these dacoits will soon be freed," he has hoped.

Cotton, rice crops damaged

PAKPATTAN (INP): Cotton and rice crops were badly damaged after several acres of land was inundated following development of a 50-feet wide breach in a canal near a suburban village of Pakpattan. 55 SP on Sunday. Farmers, on the other hand, have complained that none reached to rescue them despite the fact that they repeatedly approached the concerned department. Resultantly, they said, they were left with no other option but to try to plug the breach on their own, but without any success.

12 years boy molested

WAH CANTT (APP): A 12 years old boy was molested in the limits of Wah Saddar Police station on Sunday. Police sources said. According to the sources, Faizan took the boy to his house where he sexually assaulted him. Following the medical examination, the assault was confirmed. Police registered a case against the accused and send him behind the bars. Further investigation was launched.

Positive activities stressed for healthy personality: Rashid

D.I.KHAN (APP): Station Commander Brigadier Rashid Khan has underlined the need for promoting positive activities among the youth for their healthy personality development.

He expressed these views while speaking as the chief guest on the occasion of the Wrestling Competition organized with the support of the Pakistan Army at Haq Nawaz Park.

He opined that youth had to play a key role in national development and they should be attracted towards healthy activities like wrestling for a healthy society's development.

He said All-Pakistan Country Wrestling Competitions would be organized with District Wrestling Association to provide opportunities in sports to citizens.

Famous wrestlers and a large number of citizens were present in Haq Nawaz Park to watch the wrestling competitions. As many as 20 wrestlers aged 15 to 35 years participated from

across the country.

Those who were declared winners included Hamad wrestler, Qadir wrestler, Dildar wrestler, Tariq wrestlers and Amar wrestler and the chief guest awarded them cash prizes and trophies.

The station commander, Brigadier Rashid Khan was apprised about the historical status of the Dasi Wrestling game and the problems being faced by the wrestlers.

The station commander assured them of his full cooperation in this regard and added that all possible help would be provided to enable them to brighten the name of the country not only at the national level but also at the international level.

Dera Rescue 1122 tackles 70 emergencies during the days of Eidul Azha

The district emergency service, Rescue 1122 tackled a total of 70 various emergencies across the district on the three days of Eidul Azha.

Sharing a detailed report about the Rescue 1122 performance during Eidul Azha, its spokesman said on Sunday the total emergencies includee 43 medical, 14 road traffic accidents, three fire eruptions, one fighting, one building collapse, and eight other different emergencies.

He said all these emergencies were reported during the three days of Eidul Azha and the district emergency service provided prompt first aid services to victims while successfully shifting them to nearby hospitals.

During the Eid days, he said Rescue 1122 also provided referral services to people and shifted during 12 emergencies, and 10 patients were shifted to the District Headquarters Hospital (DHQ) from the hospital of other Tehsils.

Similarly, he said in two emergencies the patients were taken to other districts from Dera Ismail Khan including Peshawar, Islamabad, and Multan.

Five died, four injured in different incidents

QUETTA (INP): At least five people including children were killed and four people were injured in various incidents across Balochistan.

According to details, in the first incident, a person was killed when a speedy vehicle hit him to death at Inscorb Road in Quetta.

The police shifted the dead body to the nearby hospital. Similarly, unknown armed persons shot and killed a person on Joint Road and fled the scene. In the third incident, unknown gunmen opened fire and injured businessman Mir Mehboob.

Apart from this, Saifullah, a resident of the Ghousabad area of Quetta, drowned in the river while taking a bath to make a picnic during the Eid holidays at the picnic point Peer

Ghaib area of Bolan district, 100 km away from Quetta.

Husband kills wife over domestic issues

A man, in a fit of rage, opened fire and fatally shot his own wife over domestic issue in Sohbatpur district of Balochistan province.

According to the police, the incident occurred within the jurisdiction of Shaheed Malik Muhammad Ali Police Station. As soon as the information about the incident was received, the police immediately reached the scene.

The police took the body of deceased woman into custody and transferred it to DHQ Hospital Sohbatpur for further legal procedure.

The police stated that the perpetrator managed to escape after committing the crime. Moreover, it was

assessed in the initial investigations that the incident happened due to domestic violence.

APP adds: At least three people were injured in road mishap near khada- Kocha area of Mastung district on Sunday.

According to Levies sources, the victims were on way to Mastung from Quetta on a motorbike when their bike slipped on National Highway near Amanullah Kariz due to over speeding. As a result, they received injuries on the spot.

The injured were shifted to Ismail Baloch Welfare Society Rescue Center where they were referred to Quetta Civil Hospital for further treatment processes after provision of first aid. The victims' identity could not be ascertained so far.

Rescue1122 extends its services during Eid

ABBOTTABAD (APP): The Emergency Rescue Service 1122 Abbottabad Sunday has responded and provided assistance in 26 emergencies throughout the Eid-ul-Azha vacation.

According to the spokesperson of Rescue 1122 Abbottabad Sajid Iqbal, the District Emergency Officer Muhammad Arif Khattak canceled the holidays of all staff members to ensure efficient and timely services for the general public during Eid-ul-Azha vacations.

Additionally, instructions were given to estab-

lish medical camps at various tourist destinations. The Emergency Officers of Rescue Stations Fahad Ali Masood conducted visits and celebrated Eid with their colleagues in the camps.

Rescue 1122 Abbottabad delivered services of international standards in response to 26 emergencies during the three days of Eid. These emergencies consisted of 3 traffic accidents, 22 medical incidents, and 1 event related to recovery or animal rescue.

During this time, Rescue

1122 provided on-site medical assistance to over 24 persons involved in different incidents.

Unfortunately, three road traffic accidents resulted in the loss of one life. The majority of the injured patients were immediately shifted to local hospitals in Rescue 1122 ambulances.

Moreover, through the Rescue Referral Service, five people were transferred from one hospital to another within the district to ensure access to better medical treatment.

374 road accidents during Eid days in Faisalabad

FAISALABAD (APP): As many as 374 road traffic accidents occurred in Faisalabad during three days of Eidul Azha 2023.

A spokesman said here on Sunday that Rescue-1122 received calls about 374 road accidents during the Eid holidays in Faisalabad and responded promptly within average response time of 7 minutes.

In these accidents, three people lost their lives whereas Rescue 1122 provided first aid to 218 victims in addition to shifting 196 injured to various hospitals for further treatment, he added.

Man's body found from canal: The body of a young man was found from

Gugera Branch Canal near Tandlianwala Road in the area of Dijkot police station.

A spokesman said here on Sunday that some passersby spotted the body of a 35-year-old man floating on surface of water and informed the Rescue-1122.

Divers of Rescue 1122 fished out the body and handed it over to the area police who started investigation for its identification and search of family members, he added.

Robber killed in police encounter: PHP police claim to have killed an alleged robber in an encounter in the area of Baluchni police station.

Police spokesman

Inspector Rizwan Bhatti said here on Sunday that a PHP team had received information that two armed bandits were on their looting spree near Asghar Abad patrolling post late Saturday night.

The team, headed by Assistant Sub Inspector (ASI) Maqsood Shahid, rushed to the spot and signalled two suspects riding a motorcycle to stop. But they opened fire on the police party and took shelter in nearby crops.

The police also returned the fire, and during the encounter, one of the robbers received bullet injuries and died on-the-spot, whereas his accomplice managed to escape from the scene.

The police recovered one motorcycle (125), one rifle (222-bore), one pistol (30-bore) and other items from the spot and shifted the body to mortuary for postmortem.

The rifle was snatched by the robbers from one Mubasshar, security guard of Sitara Mills near Parco Baseline about 45 minutes ago of the encounter while further investigation was under progress.



HYDERABAD: Youngsters enjoying mechanical swing ride at Fun Land Park.

IG committed to enhance facilities for tourists

ABBOTTABAD (INP): In order to enhance tourist facilitation and provide the necessary support, the Inspector General Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Akhtar Hayat Khan Gandapur, paid a visit to the Tourists Facilitation Center established by the Traffic Police at Dhamtoor bypass road Abbottabad.

The aim of the IG KPK visit was to ensure the smooth arrival and stay of tourists in the Galiyat region while offering them a range of services and assistance.

Upon arrival, Inspector General Akhtar Hayat Khan Gandapur was warmly welcomed by Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Police Hazara Division Omar Tufail Gandapur and Superintendent of Traffic Police Arif Javid Khan.

Inspector General during his tour of the Tourists Facilitation Center inspected the reception camp and the mobile canteen which were established specially to cater to the needs of the tourists.

Man killed over old enmity

SIALKOT (APP): A man was killed and another was injured over an old enmity in Basra Shamywala village here.

According to Rescue spokesperson, 27-year-old Hassan was killed and 17-year-old Fakhir was injured seriously in the exchange of fire. Rescuers shifted the injured to THQ Hospital Pasnur in critical condition.

20 'criminals' arrested in Sargodha

Sargodha police arrested 20 alleged criminals in a crackdown across district on Sunday.

A spokesperson said the personnel of different police stations conducted raids in their respective areas and arrested Sohail, Sajad, Momin, Shafique, Rafique, Shaheen, Tahir, Razaq, Rustam, Rehman and others.

The police also recovered 282 litres of liquor, 3-kg hashish, 2-kg opium, 289 litres of raw liquor, 12 pistols, nine Kalashnikov, 128 bullets and valuables worth millions of rupees from them.

Further investigation was under way.

MEPCO nabbed power pilferers

MULTAN (APP): Multan Electric Power Company (MEPCO) caught 16985 power pilferers across the 13 districts of South Punjab and imposed a Rs 534.2 million fine on them during the fiscal year 2022-23. Rs 408.3 were recovered and deposited into the treasury. 4285 applications were got registered out of 14889 applications sent for registration of cases against power pilferers during the above said period.

Grand operation was underway against the power pilferers across the region under the supervision of CEO MEPCO Engineer Mahar Allah Yar Bharwana. Rs 432.6 million fine was imposed on 16220 domestic power pilferers while 4045 cases registered during the fiscal year 2022-23.

Road accidents claim four lives

ATTOCK (INP): Four young men have lost their lives in two different road incidents in various parts of Attock district, police and hospital sources said.

In the first incident, three cousins lost their lives as their car rammed into road side tree near Thalian interchange in the limits of Fatehjang Police Station. Police while quoting the family of the deceased, has said that Majid Ghori along with his cousins Shahid Ghori and Imran Ghori, the residents of

Talagang were going to Murree to celebrate the Eid vacations while they met the fatal incident.

Later, their bodies were dispatched to their native town after fulfilling the legal requirement. Moreover, 18 years old man lost his life when the motorcycle he was riding collided head on with another motorcycle on Pathargarh road in the limits of Hassanabdal Police Station.

Police and hospital sou-

rces said that Muhammad Noman was going from Dolian village to Hassanabdal city to celebrate Eid with his uncle when he met an incident. He was taken to THQ hospital from where he was shifted to Rawalpindi where he succumbed to injuries. Respective police registered two separate cases and started further investigations.

APP adds: A young boy was drowned while bathing in a pond located in a private housing society in the limits of Fatehjang Police Station on Sunday.

Police sources said that 11 years old Muhammad Zameer went to a water pond located in the premises of a private housing society to beat the heat where he was drowned. Later his body was flushed out by local volunteers and shifted it to the Tehsil Headquarters Hospital where he was pronounced dead.

Later, his body was handed over his relatives

for burial after fulfilling legal requirements.

Armed bandits looted bakery

Four armed bandits equipped with different weapons looted a famous bakery located on Kohat road in the limits of Fatehjang Police Station, police sources told on Sunday.

According to the sources, four armed bandits entered the bakery in the guise of customers and made hostage all the staff members and customers at gunpoint present at the shop. Later, they snatched cash, cell phone from the staff and customers and fled away successfully with looted booty.

The victims told reporters that the outlaws were talking in Pushto. Police reached at the crime scene after 20 minutes after making a call on the police emergency helpline 15.

Fatehjang Police registered a case and launched further investigation.

Malaria outbreak hits Dadu, alarming health officials

DADU (INP): Dadu, a district in Sindh, is facing a significant health crisis as a large number of malaria cases have been reported, raising concerns among health officials and residents alike.

The district has witnessed a surge in malaria infections, with some patients experiencing multiple bouts of the disease. This recurrence is particularly alarming, as it poses

additional health risks and highlights the urgency of addressing the situation.

To combat the spread of malaria, doctors have been prescribing Primaquine tablets to affected patients. However, obtaining these essential medications has proven to be a challenge due to shortages in local medical stores.

This shortage is exacerbating the difficulties faced by both patients and health-

care providers in managing the outbreak effectively.

An official statement from the district administration highlights the severe impact of the recent floods, which has contributed to the escalation of malaria cases in Dadu.

The aftermath of the flood has created an environment conducive to the breeding of mosquitoes, the primary vectors responsible for transmitting the disease.

Interpol arrests murder suspect wanted by police

SIALKOT (INP): Interpol Pakistan has arrested the man wanted by Sialkot police in connection with the case of attempted murder in Muscat on Sunday.

The Interpol, police's request, had issued a red warrant for his arrest.

Later, the Federal Investigation Agency's (FIA) immigration staff handed over Rizwan to Sialkot Police.

FIA arrests man for travelling with fake documents:

On the other hand, the FIA's immigration personnel deputed at Lahore airport have arrested a man, who was about to board a flight to Hungary on fake documents.

Spokesman for the Agency has told media that Shahid Ali planned to travel to Hungary for higher education. "But when

the FIA staff checked his passport, they found out stamp of a fake visa pasted on it.

"Initial investigation has revealed that the suspect's brother-in-law had got the passport in lieu of Rs2 million," the spokesman said, adding, "Shahid has been shifted to anti-human trafficking circle while the hunt for the agent has begun.

Dacoit gang busted, looted valuables recovered

KHANEWAL (APP): Police have busted a dacoit gang and arrested five members of the gang besides recovering looted valuables from their possession during a crackdown launched on Sunday.

Taking action on the rising incidents of motorcycle and valuables snatching by armed outlaws, the District Police Officer (DPO) Rana Omer Farooq directed officers concerned to launch a comprehensive crackdown against the criminals.

The Chub Kalan police led by Station House Officer (SHO) Imran Shahid busted the notorious Mubeeni Gang and arrested ring leader Mubeen Anwar, Arsalan, Zeeshan, Sheraz and Kamran.

Police have recovered looted valuables including six motorcycles, cash

230,000 and illegal weapons from their possession by tracing 19 cases from the arrested criminals.

Further investigations were underway and more recoveries were expected, police sources added.

During another operation, the police arrested the member of a motorcycle lifter gang namely

Muzamil. The police recovered seven stolen motorcycles and weapons from his possession while further investigations were continued, police sources added.

The DPO Rana Omer Farooq lauded the police team and directed officers concerned to continue crackdown against criminals.

5,086MT entrails lifted in Sargodha division

SARGODHA (APP): The solid waste management department disposed of 5,086 metric tonnes of offal and entrails of sacrificial animals during three days of Eid in Sargodha division.

According to official sources, 3,000 sanitary workers participated in the cleanliness operation in the division with heavy machinery. They collected 2,441 metric tonnes of animal waste in Sargodha, 1,550 metric tonnes in Khushab, 475 metric tonnes in Mianwali and 620 metric tonnes in Bhakkar.



UN chief calls on world to make troubled Haiti ‘top priority’

PORTAUPRINCE (AFP/APP): On a visit to spotlight violence and chaos in Haiti, the UN secretary-general on Saturday called for a robust international effort to help the country's beleaguered police in fighting rampant criminal gangs.

For months, Antonio Guterres has raised the alarm bell about the situation in the Western Hemisphere's poorest country, which has been wracked by spiralling violence, a worsening public health situation and political instability.

But he traveled to Port-au-Prince -- his first visit to Haiti as head of the United Nations -- to make his point on the ground.

"We must put Haiti on the international political map, and make the tragedy of the Haitian people the international community's top priority," Guterres told a press conference.

"I met Haitians, and I felt the exhaustion of a population that has been facing a cascade of crises and unbearable living conditions for too long," he said.

"This is not the time to forget about Haiti," Guterres said after meeting with Prime Minister Ariel Henry, and other political and civil society leaders.

Guterres urged the UN Security



Council, which is due to discuss the Haiti situation later this month, "to authorize the immediate deployment of a robust international security force." In October, he relayed Henry's request for a non-UN force to support the overwhelmed national police force. But the call has gone unheeded. A few countries have indicated their willingness to participate, but none has volunteered to lead an operation in a

country where multiple past foreign interventions have become mired.

"I call on those states that have the capacity to provide a robust security force to stop hesitating and be ready to follow a Security Council decision," Guterres said.

"Every day counts. If we don't act now, instability and violence will have a lasting impact on generations of Haitians."

Twitter bans record over 11 lakh accounts in India

NEW DELHI (INP): Elon Musk-run Twitter banned a record 11,32,228 accounts in India between April 26 and May 25 in what the company owner cited his meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the US who told him that a company "doesn't have a choice but to obey local governments."

The micro-blogging platform, going through a churning under Musk who has now appointed a new Twitter CEO in Linda Yaccarino, also took down 1,843 accounts "for promoting terrorism" on its platform in India.

In total, Twitter banned 11,34,071 accounts in the reporting period in India.

Twitter, in its monthly report in compliance with the new IT Rules, 2021, said that it received 518 complaints from users in India in the same time-frame through its grievance redressal mechanisms.

In addition, Twitter processed 90 grievances which were appealing account suspensions. "We

overturned 25 of these account suspensions after reviewing the specifics of the situation. The remaining reported accounts remain suspended," said the company. Most complaints from India were about abuse/harassment (264), followed by hateful conduct (84), sensitive adult content (67), and defamation (51).

Orkney council to look at proposals to become territory of Norway

LONDON (BBC): The Orkney Islands could change their status in the UK or even become a self-governing territory of Norway under new proposals. A motion will go before the council next week to investigate "alternative forms of governance".

Council leader James Stockan said Orkney does not get fair funding with its current relationship within the UK.

He wants to look at Crown Dependencies like the Channel Islands and overseas territories like the Falkland Islands.

He suggested another possible future could be like the Faroe Islands - which is a self-governing territory of Denmark.

Councillor Stockan told BBC Radio Scotland there were many areas where Orkney was being "failed dreadfully" by both the UK and Scottish governments.

He said: "We are really struggling at the moment, we have to replace the whole ferry fleet which is older than the CalMac

fleet. "We are denied the things that other areas get like RET (Road Equivalent Tariff) for ferry fares. "And the funding we get from the Scottish government is significantly less per head than Shetland and the Western Isles to run the same services - we can't go on as we are."

Mr Stockan said an in-depth study of the finances had never been carried out. "We know that we have contributed for the last 40 years through north sea oil, and the dividend we get back isn't sufficient to keep us going," he said.

"We've got a unique opportunity right at the heart of all the wind projects round our waters."

Mr Stockan is urging councillors to back his idea to find new ways for Orkney to get greater financial security and economic opportunities for Orcadians. Orkney Islands Council previously voted in 2017 to look at whether the islands could have greater autonomy. While they wanted to

have a "stronger voice", they did not back full independence for Orkney. Mr Stockan's motion also cites British Crown Dependencies Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man as potential models to follow. But he warns that a large amount of staff resource would be needed to investigate the options and consult the public.

"The council will decide whether it supports this motion and from there we will take our time, because we don't want to do this emotionally," he said.

"We want to look at all the practical implications and then we'll evaluate the results. "We are looking for the very best position for future generations and our place in the world. Mr Stockan also suggests that the council should investigate how Orkney could secure a "Nordic connection" with Denmark, Norway or Iceland. Orkney was previously held under Norwegian and Danish control until it became part of Scotland in 1472.

The islands were used as security for the wedding dowry of Margaret of Denmark, the future wife of King James III of Scotland.

Mr Stockan said: "We were part of the Norse kingdom for much longer than we were part of the United Kingdom.

"On the street in Orkney people come up and say to me when are we going to pay back the dowry, when are we going back to Norway. "There is a hug affinity and a huge deep cultural relationship there. This is exactly the moment to explore what is possible." The UK government said it was providing £2.2bn to level up UK communities, including £50m to grow the economies of Scotland's Islands - including Orkney. A spokesperson said: "We will always be stronger together as one United Kingdom, and we have no plans to change the devolution settlement."

The motion will be discussed by Orkney Islands Council on Tuesday.

Moroccan women shake up world of Gnaoua music

E S S A O U I R A (AFP/APP): Young Moroccan women are bringing new and inclusive energy to the centuries-old art of Gnaoua, a spiritual musical repertoire traditionally reserved for men.

Also known as "tag-naouite", it gained worldwide recognition after it was listed by UNESCO as intangible cultural heritage in 2019.

"Why shouldn't women be part of this dynamic?" asked Asma Hamzaoui at the Gnaoua World Music Festival in Essaouira, a southern coastal city steeped in the musical tradition.

The 26-year-old Casablanca native is one of the first women to perform Gnaoua, which blends African rhythms with spiritual chants and poetry. Her father, a Gnaoua master, initiated her into the artform at a young age.

"I've accompanied him to his evening gatherings since I was seven years old," recounted the young woman, who in 2012 formed the group "Bnat

Timbuktu", or The Girls of Timbuktu.

"I gradually learned to play the guembri, a three-stringed lute made of camel skin. My father made sure that I learned as much as possible before I flew solo."

The all-female ensemble wowed the festival-goers -- with Hamzaoui on vocals and the guembri, and four musicians on qraqeb steel castanets.

They played alongside the Amazones d'Afrique, another all-female group, from Mali.

- 'Feeds the spirit' -

"It's exceptional to have women playing Gnaoua music, which shouldn't be reserved for men," said Hamza Tahir, a member of the audience. "They bring fresh air into this music."

Inspired by Bnat Timbuktu's success, rising star Hind Ennaira developed her passion for tagnaouite in her hometown of Essaouira.

Its fortified citadel on the Atlantic coast is a breeding ground for the mystical musical tradition, in which religious

hymns invoke ancestors and spirits.

Originally practised by enslaved people and dating back at least to the 16th century, Gnaoua has gone from being practised largely in private gatherings, where therapeutic rituals accompanied the music, to public events such as concerts and festivals.

"The city of Essaouira is the cradle of tag-naouite," said Ennaira, who was taught to play the guembri by friends. "It is beautiful heritage that feeds the spirit. It is important for young people to value it."

Ennaira put her own touch on the tradition by bringing in a guitarist and drummer to accompany the traditional ensemble.

"At first, there were some differences because they were not used to working with a woman," she said. "But after some challenging exercises, they adapted to me and we became complementary."

- 'Jimi Hendrix' style - Younsa Mansour -- the front woman of the band

Bab L'bluz ("The Blues Gate"), which fuses Gnaoua, rock and blues -- also encountered challenges entering the music scene.

"There were two constraints for me: first, the fact that this field is usually reserved for men, but also how we interpret traditional music," the musician told AFP.

"It is not very accepted or even tolerated by some of the stricter individuals."

"We replaced the bass with the guembri and the guitar with the awisha (a small guembri) and created a kind of 'power trio' in the style of Jimi Hendrix with reimagined traditional instruments," explained Mansour.

The 32-year-old vocalist passionately defends women's freedoms, saying that "as a woman, I have not had an easy life".

"There was a lack of women in this field. When I see Asma Hamzaoui or Hind Ennaira, they are magnificent," she said.

"It is not easy to evolve in a predominantly male universe, but we see changes emerging."

Two killed, dozens wounded in Baltimore mass shooting: police

WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): At least two people were killed and 28 wounded in a mass shooting at a street party early Sunday in the US city of Baltimore, police said.

Police received multiple calls about a shooting in the city's Brooklyn neighborhood just after 12:30 am Sunday (0430 GMT), Acting Police Commissioner Rich Worley told a press conference.

"Upon officers' arrival we located multiple victims suffering from gunshot wounds," Worley said.

One 18-year-old woman was found dead at the scene in the East Coast port city, and a 20-year-old man died after being taken to hospital, a police statement said.

He added that the wounded were being treated at area hospitals, with three of them in critical condition.

Worley said authorities were working to identify a suspect and determine a motive for the shooting.

"This is an extensive crime scene,

our detectives are going to be here quite a while," he said.

Speaking to reporters at the crime scene, Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott condemned the shooting.

"This is an absolute tragedy that did not have to happen," he said.

"It again highlights the impacts and the need to deal with the over-proliferation of illegal guns on our streets and the ability for those who should not have them to get their hands on them," Scott said.

"We will not stop until we find those cowards who decided to just shoot dozens of people, causing two people to lose their lives," he said.

With more firearms than inhabitants, the United States has the highest rate of gun deaths of any developed country -- at least 44,357 in 2022, including 24,090 suicides, according to the Gun Violence Archive (GVA).

Sunday's incident was at least the 338th mass shooting to occur so far this year, according to the GVA,

which defines the term as a gun-related incident in which four or more people are wounded or killed.

Earlier this year, Scott penned an editorial in The Washington Post in which he said his city "has over-relied on the three Ps -- policing, prosecution and prisons -- to reduce violence."

"An act of violence doesn't start or end when someone pulls a trigger. There are countless points along the way where we can intervene," wrote the mayor, who was elected in 2020 on a pledge to reduce gun violence.

That includes access to "behavioral health services, housing support, life coaching, case management and other resources to ensure that a situation never gets to the moment at which a person harms another human being," Baltimore, a city of about 575,000 located 40 miles (65 kilometers) north of the US capital, has one of the highest murder rates in the country.

Geneva moot highlights plight of Kashmiri political detainees

GENEVA (NNI): In Geneva, speakers have expressed their concern over the continued illegal detention of Kashmiri political detainees languishing in different jails of India and Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

The speakers addressing a seminar 'Plight of Kashmir prisoners' held on the sidelines of the 53rd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, said that thousands of detainees lodged in different jails were getting worse with every passing day.

They said that thousands of Kashmiris who were arrested before and after 5th August 2019 have been languishing in India's notorious jails like Tihar, which has become a death trap for Kashmiris.

They said that a sizable number of Kashmiris who were taken into preventive custody on 5th August 2019 continue to rot in Amphala, Udampur, Hiranagar, Kathua and Kot Bhalwal jails. The speakers said the Indian government has given a free licence to its forces and agencies like National Investigation

Agency (NIA) and Enforcement Directorate to arrest Kashmiris. They said dozens of top rank political leaders, including Muhammad Yasin Malik, Musarat Aalam Butt, Shabbir Ahmad Shah, Nayeem Ahmed Khan and Aasiya Andrabi were picked up from their homes and whisked off to prisons outside the valley.

"They have been actually abducted by NIA and ED and shifted to New Delhi's Tihar jail under frivolous and concocted charges," the speakers said, adding that scores of detainees including Dr. Qasim Fakhtoo, Dr Shafi Shariati, Ghulam Qadir and many more were rotting in jails serving life terms.

The speakers, while referring to conviction of prominent Kashmiri leader Muhammad Yasin Malik, said that Malik's conviction in a manifestly dubious and politically motivated case filed by the Indian National Investigation Agency, amply demonstrates how the Modi government was using judiciary as a weapon to silence legitimate Kashmiri voices.

Referring to India's his-

tory of using the judiciary and other state apparatus to suppress the political and democratic dissent in the occupied territory, the speakers said that India, which had deprived Malik of his fundamental right to defend himself in the court of law after implicating him in a concocted case, was now hell bent on eliminating him by using its judiciary. Raising their concerns over the Indian investigation agency's bid to seek the death penalty for Yasin Malik, the speakers said that the NIA's malicious intention poses a grave threat to the life of Mr. Malik who has been leading a nonviolent movement, advocating for the peaceful resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute. They said that it was quite astonishing to note that the JKLIF chief and other Kashmiri leaders were being penalised just for raising their voice for the voiceless Kashmiris.

They said that the Modi's double-edged onslaught against Kashmiris was aimed at whipping up anti-Muslim sentiments, polarise people and win votes. They said

that the Hindu nationalist party-BJP-which played communal card to stoke hatred between the people to win elections was now using the same tactics to save its vote bank.

They said that there were ample evidence which suggests that the Modi led apartheid regime, which thrives on communal divide and anti-Muslim sentiment, could use the unlawful execution of the Kashmiri leader Yasin Malik as a means to regain popularity and to bolster chances of retaining power in the upcoming Parliamentary Elections being held in 2024. The speakers appealed to the UN secretary general to take swift and decisive action by demanding the Indian government to stop using its judiciary as a weapon to punish Kashmiri leaders who have been waging a peaceful struggle to achieve the fundamental rights guaranteed to Kashmiris by no less an authority than the United Nations. They said that India being a signatory to the Geneva Convention on political prisoners was bound to respect the rights of prisoners.

‘Zulu King Misuzulu kaZwelithini treated for suspected poisoning’

SOUTH AFRICA (BBC): South Africa's Zulu King Misuzulu kaZwelithini is being treated in hospital for suspected poisoning, his traditional prime minister has said. The king sought medical attention in Eswatini as he is uncomfortable with seeking treatment in South Africa, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi added.

This follows the sudden death of one of his senior advisers, also of suspected poisoning, Chief Buthelezi said. However, the king's official spokesman said he was in "perfect health".

The monarch was currently not in hospital, and "unnecessary panic" should not be created, Prince

Buthelezi. The Zulu king does not have formal political power and the monarch's role within broader South African society is largely ceremonial, but he remains hugely influential with a yearly government-funded budget of several million dollars.

A faction within the family is challenging his claim to the throne in court, insisting that he is not the rightful heir of his late father, King Goodwill Zwelithini. They insist that another son of the late king, Prince Simakade, should be the monarch.

King Zwelithini had six wives and at least 26 children. His will has also been challenged in court by his first wife, Queen Sibongile Dlamini-Zulu, and her two daughters. A court dismissed their case last year, but they said they would appeal against the ruling.

There is no suggestion that any members of the royal family are behind King Misuzulu's suspected poisoning. The South African police have not yet

commented on the claims.

In his statement, Chief Buthelezi said King Misuzulu's senior aide, Douglas Xaba who stayed with him, "passed on quite suddenly and that there are suspicions that he was poisoned". "When His Majesty began to feel unwell, he suspected that he too may have been poisoned."

"He immediately sought out medical treatment in Eswatini. I am informed that His Majesty felt uncomfortable seeking treatment in South Africa, as his parents had both received treatment in South Africa and subsequently died," Chief Buthelezi said.

Chief Buthelezi added that while the king had recently appointed Prince Africa as the head of communications in his office, he, as the traditional prime minister, had an obligation to inform the Zulu nation of "this worrying situation".

"Our immediate concern is the King's wellbeing. We as the Zulu nation pray for His Majesty's full and swift recovery. "Should there be any reason for further

investigations, that will be attended to by the authorities," Chief Buthelezi said.

In his subsequent statement, Prince Africa said there appeared to be an "orchestrated agenda and a desperate narrative to communicate defamatory and baseless claims" about the king's health. "Ultimately, this creates unnecessary panic and perceptions of instability in the Royal Crown," he added.

However, Prince Africa confirmed the monarch had undergone a thorough medical examination in Eswatini while visiting his uncle, King Mswati III.

The checks were carried out because of "our current times of pandemics such as Covid-19 and other dangerous ailments", and also "to mitigate against any untimely eventuality, given the reports of Mr Xaba's sudden passing". King Misuzulu's accession to the throne was sooner than expected, and he has been at the centre of palace intrigue. His father died during the Covid pandemic in March 2021 of diabetes-related complications.

Indian troops committing systematic HR abuses in IIOJK

SRINAGAR (NNI): Political experts and analysts have said that systematic human rights violations committed with impunity by Indian troops are daily witnessed in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

The political experts and analysts in their interviews and statements in Srinagar said human rights

situation in the occupied territory has further deteriorated since August 2019 when the Modi-led fascist Indian government repealed Kashmir's special status and imposed military siege in the territory.

They said the international rights bodies have repeatedly raised alarm about the worsening rights situation in IIOJK, adding several United Nations

reports have documented massive human rights violations by Indian troops in the occupied territory. They said killings, arrests, torture and molestations have become a routine as the Modi regime is blatantly violating every human rights principle in IIOJK. The political experts and analysts said HR violations in occupied Jammu and Kashmir are

directly connected to unresolved Kashmir dispute and the global powers must demand that India respect its rights obligations. They said the worsening situation in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir needs urgent international attention and the world community must act immediately to protect Kashmiris from Modi's onslaught.

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Pak-IMF deal and economic revival

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that dedicated efforts by all the state institutions to execute the Economic Revival Plan and sacrifice by the elite class were inevitable to ensure that the latest IMF programme signed by the government was the last one. According to the Premier, the risk of Pakistan's default has been averted with the signing of stand-by agreement with the IMF. While citing success of Turkey and a neighbouring country to get rid of the IMF loans, the premier urged People to pray that this would be the last IMF loan and Pakistan will not have to go back to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) again in future. According to the Premier, it was the time for the elite to face most of the hardships and contribute to the revival of the economy by paying taxes levelled by the government. The Premier told the newsmen that the government had recently unveiled an Economic Revival Plan to get rid of loans and stabilize the economy through a comprehensive programme of enhancing investment in agriculture, mining and information technology, and boosting exports.

Pakistan has finally secured a \$3 billion stand-by agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that has averted an imminent default risk of the South Asian economy. Months long negotiations for the revival of \$6.5 billion Extended Facility Funded (EFF) between Pakistan and the IMF could not made any breakthrough despite multiple rounds of talks, however parties reached a \$3 billion Stand by agreement that would take effect after approval of the IMF Board of Governors in the coming weeks.

The country has been struck into acute economic frailty, that emerged out of persistent political anarchy, low foreign reserves, poor governance, and high cost of living coupled with certain global elements such as global energy crisis, and the war in Ukraine, etc. which practically drove the South Asian nation to the brink of economic default. In contrast, an all-time intensified political anarchy created worse situations for the masses. The severe economic issues and price hikes pushed the middle and lower middle classes below the poverty line, while low government spending in the social sectors sharply declined the life quality of the people. There had been a little hope for improvement in the economic outlook of the country, if those conditions exist in the country.

Realistically, the IMF's endorsement of Pakistan's economic policies and revival of EFF program was crucial for the restoration of global confidence in the country and the revival of economic and industrial activities in the nose-downed economy. The successive governments had always demand sacrifice from the public to endure massive price hikes, pay bulk of indirect taxes and suffer hard time to rescue the country economy. Currently, the coalition government has imposed 8% super tax on rich segment of the society and demanded sacrifice from the elite, Meanwhile the upper house of the parliament approved a lucrative pay package for the Chairman Senate which is a slap on the face government austerity policies as well as public suffering. Apparently, member National and Provincial Assemblies as well as Technocrats sitting the upper house belong to the well off and privileged section of the society. Pakistani parliamentarians form almost 90% of the landlords/feudals in the country while this privileged class owns one half of the country's industry. In addition to it, the parliamentarians owes sole power to plan, legislate and execute policies in their benefit and undoubtedly this class wholeheartedly protects its interests as it did recently in the case of Chairman Senate Salaries, Allowances and Privileges Bill-2023.

Currently, Pakistan faces an existential threat due to its weak economic outlook and persistent political unrest, but our political leadership failed to access the gravity of the risks and the sensitivity of the situation and still chasing discriminatory policies to get out of current economic upheaval. A new wave of price hike broke out in the aftermath the recent Pak-IMF deal that will seriously affects all segments of the society, businesses and industry, thus demanding sacrifice from those who already lingering under the burden of price hike, energy bills and taxes is just unfair and hypocritical. The ruling class must pause demanding a hecatomb from others but it is high time that they should pause their dirty fight for power, cease approving unlimited pay, allowances and privileges for themselves, and their families in reward for a few years of their luxurious service to the nation.

In fact, Pakistan economy would not be rescued through mere prayers and faithfulness, only concrete practical measures, across the board accountability, rational approach and continuity of economic policies is the only way forward to revive the nose-downed economy on sustainable and permanent basis. Otherwise cosmetic measures, selective approach and politically motivated policies had not worked through out history and unlikely to prove worth it in the future.

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West Bank needs a de-escalation, not an Israeli military operation

Yossi Mekelberg

In his book “The Art of War,” the Chinese general and philosopher Sun Tzu remarked that “the enlightened ruler is heedful, and the good general full of caution.”

More than 2,500 years later, as the Israeli drums of war threaten to unleash a major military operation in the West Bank, it is increasingly apparent that the politicians in the country seem to be heedless and it is indeed the generals who are more circumspect, despite immense pressure from some of their political masters.

From the very beginning of the current Israeli government, there have been calls by the far-right elements within it for a large-scale, widespread military operation, especially in the northern West Bank. These calls are mainly from those who represent Israeli settlements, who not only illegally occupy Palestinian land but also now lead key government ministries.

To be sure, there has been a marked deterioration in the security situation in the West Bank, especially in and around the cities of Jenin and Nablus, which are once again emerging as the hubs of armed resistance to the occupation.

The writing has been on the wall for months, if not years, but Israel has adopted an extremely short-sighted strategy based on a working assumption that between its military might, security coordination with the Palestinian Authority, and the divisions among Palestinians, there is enough of a guarantee for its continued security within the Green Line, and for the security of the settlers in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

This strategy represents nothing short of exercising a deliberate and willful ignorance, as all recent developments have been pointing toward a malaise and resentment that has been bubbling for some time, and is now close to the surface. A new generation of armed groups, main-

ly made up of young Palestinians, has emerged in the West Bank. They are not affiliated, at least not directly, with the more recognizable factions of the Palestine Liberation Organization or the Islamist movements Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

Newer groups, such as the Jenin Brigade and the Lions' Den in Nablus, are the manifestation of a growing frustration among the young with the so-called status quo, whether in these cities or refugee camps, and hence they are resorting to militancy and armed resistance, including acts of terrorism.

While these groups are relatively small, each comprising a few hundred members at most, their impact is being felt across the West Bank. Their attacks on Israelis, whether soldiers or civilians, take place chiefly in the West Bank but also, much less often, inside Israel itself.

However, what Israeli authorities refuse to recognize is that it is mainly the harsh conditions of the occupation, in addition to the crisis of legitimacy within the Palestinian Authority — which is perceived as no more than a facilitator of the Israeli occupation through its security cooperation and its corrupt, ineffective and increasingly authoritarian actions — that have created such fertile ground for political violence.

As long as there is Israeli military rule, the ongoing expansion of settlements in the West Bank with the clear aim of annexing it, and the lack of any prospect of fresh elections or unity within the Palestinian political system, there will not be any calm or stability in the West Bank or in Gaza.

Add to this the cuts to basic services and high levels of unemployment and poverty, while the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East is on the verge of economic calami-

ty, and it should be no surprise that despair among Palestinians has become endemic.

Violence against civilians is clearly not justifiable by either side. But for Israel to be able to claim the moral high ground in the face of Palestinian militancy, it needs not only to stop killing innocent Palestinians but also to refrain from all other oppressive measures against the population of the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

If one can learn anything from the wider history of military occupations, and resistance to them, it is that the most military force can achieve is a temporary lull, often at a very heavy price, especially to the civilian population.

In the long term, it solves nothing. It enrages, justifiably so, an already agitated population to the extent that more people become supporters, active or passive, of the armed struggle and others, mainly among the youth, are encouraged to join armed groups.

At present, Israeli security forces already conduct daily operations across the West Bank, particularly in centers of militancy such as Jenin and Nablus, where they do capture and kill some suspected militants. But more often they kill and maim innocent bystanders, and by doing so simply pour more oil onto the fire.

In a recent survey, more than half of Palestinians polled in the West Bank and Gaza expressed the belief that the most effective means of ending the Israeli occupation and gaining self-determination was to resort to armed struggle. Only one-fifth expressed a belief that this objective could be achieved through negotiation or popular peaceful resistance.

These findings should alarm every single Israeli, because after decades during which a majority of

Palestinians held onto the hope that a two-state solution could be achieved through diplomatic means, that hope has turned to despair. A military operation will only exacerbate this explosive situation, rather than restoring faith in a political solution.

The pressure from the religious, ultra-nationalist elements in the Israeli government for a major military operation emanates from a delusion that such widespread action can guarantee the country's security, combined with their desire for a full-blown, biblical confrontation in the face of the embarrassing evidence, being given daily during his corruption trial, about his and wife Sara's unquenchable thirst for expensive presents from those with economic interests in Israel, far-right politicians are determined to hurriedly pursue their doomsday scenario while this freakish government still clings to power.

If the government continues to ignore the advice of its security forces that it avoid escalating the tenuous situation in the West Bank, it will only lead to more bloodshed on an even bigger scale and a situation in which many innocent people will be trapped, along with the possible outbreak of a full-fledged third intifada, the collapse of the Palestinian Authority, and the prospect of Hamas joining the fray from Gaza.

This is hardly a desirable scenario for anyone, including Israel, unless the current government is truly determined to press the destruct button not only on its democratic system, but also on its extremely fragile relations with Palestinians, large parts of the wider region, and the international community — and thus embroil itself in weeks, months, possibly years of bloodshed.

Still some work to be done to get GCC's SMEs into the mainstream economy

Stephane Ulcakar

The importance of SMEs to GCC economies is hard to overstate. A longstanding backbone of growth, they are a vital source of innovation, ingenuity, and entrepreneurship — qualities synonymous with the region itself.

Yet, despite the sector's prominence, the GCC is also home to SMEs that operate on the periphery of economic life. Admittedly, the Gulf's shadow economy is small, accounting for just 18 per cent of GDP compared to 28 per cent globally, but in the quest to build the nations of the future, every business counts. The challenge now is to draw informal activity into the light — and the task begins with inclusion.

The premise is simple: bolstering financial and economic inclusion in turn bolsters long-term economic prospects and creates more equitable and stable societies. For the GCC, the premise is compelling, and the reasons for embracing it are manifold.

The benefits First and foremost, by enlarging the scope and transparency of activities within the formal economy, GCC countries will benefit from additional sources of income. The region can also stimulate economic progress and increase domestic demand by expanding financial services for underbanked and unbanked populations.

What's more, inclusion can help reduce dependence on informal financial systems leading to greater stability in the financial sector and stronger and more sustainable growth for SMEs themselves.

Financial and economic inclusion can yield social and sustainability gains too. By increasing the availability of financial services, the GCC can further sustainable development goals while empowering low-income and marginalized populations to participate fully in the economy. Here, Saudi Arabia's STC Pay is making an impact.

By providing a range of financial services through a digital platform, STC Pay aims to increase financial inclusion and reduce reliance on cash transactions. Initially focused on blue-collar workers, the wallet now counts 8.5 million users and has received a license from Saudi Central Bank to become a digital bank.

The motive The case of STC Pay offers just an indication of GCC's commitment to inclusion. Indeed, nurturing the small and medium-sized business community is a priority for government leaders—and with good reason. Shadow activity is estimated at 15 per cent of GDP in Saudi Arabia, 17 per cent in Bahrain, 22 per cent in Kuwait, and 24 per cent in

the UAE and Oman. While small compared to global averages, these ratios represent sizeable impact in a region where SMEs are a key driver of economic growth.

In the UAE alone, SMEs employed more than 86 per cent of the private sector labor force as of mid-2020 and accounted for over 60 per cent of GDP. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia aims for SMEs to contribute 35 per cent by 2030, and Bahrain set a target of 50 per cent to be achieved by the same year.

The measures With ambitious targets to reach, the GCC is spearheading the MENA region's fight against the informal economy through a comprehensive set of measures:

Streamlining regulations. Simplifying business registration procedures and reducing regulatory burdens will attract shadow actors to the formal economy.

Improving tax oversight. Increasing tax enforcement and reducing tax evasion can incentivize shadow actors to enter the formal economy.

Providing financial services. Improving access to financial services may encourage shadow actors to take advantage of the benefits that come with being part of the formal sector.

Offering access to credit: Enabling SMEs to obtain credit is vital to improving financial inclusion and can be achieved through digital financial services, credit reporting, microfinance institutions, financial literacy, alternative finance, and public-private-sector collaboration.

Creating a level playing field. Ensuring that assistance and resources are distributed fairly and holding all businesses to the same standards can motivate shadow actors to leave the informal sector.

Offering incentives. Government incentives, such as tax breaks or subsidies, may encourage shadow actors to enter the formal economy. Success hinges on the existence of a robust enabling ecosystem. Among its many component parts, such an ecosystem necessitates a clear and robust legal framework, a simple and transparent tax system, and well-developed infrastructure encompassing transportation, energy, and communications. AI and digital solutions are critical too, alongside market access and much-needed investment for SMEs.

The task at hand is great, but with the right enablers and an ecosystem that fosters growth, the GCC can succeed in its mission to shrink the shadow economy and embrace the hidden potential of one of the region's most vital sectors.

Gaping global gender gap demands urgent action

Ranvir S. Nayar

On the face of it, the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2023, published last week, should bring cheer to the organizations and individuals that are striving for gender equality and parity. After all, progress has been made across the board, on almost every single parameter, as the overall score is 68.4 per cent — up from 68.1 per cent last year. On almost all benchmarks, progress has been made toward closing the gender gap.

However, the pace of closing the gap — or achieving parity between males and females — is painfully slow. This was acknowledged by the World Economic Forum, which stated that, at the current rate, it will take fully 131 years for the world to achieve parity; a rate that even the report's authors say is too slow to be acceptable. It is a joke and almost a slap in the face of the UN, which has set gender equality as one of its 17 Sustainable Development Goals for 2030.

Besides education and health — the two parameters on which the world as a whole is doing reasonably well, with the gap closed up to 95 per cent — there is a lot of work to be done in every benchmark, including, most worryingly, economics and political participation, with even the most advanced and politically aware nations far from achieving equality. Political parity, for instance, has barely inched up from 2022, hovering at 22.5 per cent, marginally higher than last year's 22.4 per cent. Even more worryingly, the race for parity has taken a backslide in terms of economic participation and opportunity, with the score falling from 60 per cent in 2022 to 59.8 per cent in 2023.

Only nine out of 146 nations covered in the report have closed the overall gap to 80 per cent or more and the highest, Iceland, with 91.2 per cent, is the only one to have closed the gap to more than 90 per cent. As can be expected, there is a lot of disparity among the different regions of the world.

Seven of the top 10 nations are European, while Africa, Latin America and the Asia-Pacific account for only one country each and North America is surprisingly absent from the top 10.

While Europe is in the lead, just ahead of North America, in terms of overall parity, Southern Asia and the Middle East and North Africa are the laggards, with Southern Asia clocking 63.4 per cent and MENA 62.6 per cent. Accordingly, these two regions will take 149 and 152 years, respectively, to achieve total gender parity, says the report.

For humanity to achieve the goal of achieving gender parity at a much faster and more acceptable rate, it is important for every section of society to play its role. As of now, even Iceland, which leads the world, is not on track to meet the UN SDG target.

First of all, governments need to acknowledge how far behind they are in their attempts to

achieve this goal as per the UN's timelines. Next, they should introduce stringent legislation, with incentives and penalties, to ensure that parity is actually achieved, as more than 20 years of platitudes and lip service have seen practically no advancement on gender equality.

For gender parity to advance, governments need to increase their social budgets, whether for education, health or childcare. For instance, the economic participation of women, at least in developed nations, can only progress if women can afford to leave their children in childcare. This sector has regressed since the COVID-19 pandemic, with many women spending more money on childcare than they earn from working. This has been seen in Europe and North America in particular.

Similarly, for gender parity to be achieved in terms of education and health in the Southern Asia and MENA regions, the governments there need to

invest more, such as by setting up more schools closer to the home villages of many of the girls and women who currently miss out on an education.

Businesses, too, need to be policed more closely and penalized if they fail to progress toward gender equality. Here, even the most “progressive” parts of the world appear medieval, as the glass ceiling is far from being broken. Only 5 per cent of companies worldwide were being led by a woman in 2021, as per a survey conducted by consultancy firm Deloitte.

Never mind the position of CEO, women have to struggle to even get a seat in the boardroom. Even in a country like the US, just 23.9 per cent of board members are women. These are the low-hanging fruits that businesses and governments must achieve rapidly. There is no cost or challenge involved in a company having women make up at least 50 per cent of its directors. But the fact that women remain so far behind even in developed nations

shows the sheer dominance of men and the mindset that they are satisfied or even happy with the status quo.

An even bigger challenge than the boardroom is to ensure some sort of parity in political power. As of January 2023, according to the UN, only 31 countries had women as the head of state or head of government, while women constituted only 22.8 per cent of Cabinet ministers around the world and 26.5 per cent of members of national parliaments.

For these changes to come about, ordinary people also need to change their mindsets. Instead of tolerating these inequalities, societies need to put an end to them by protesting, voting or even through consumer power, such as by preferring products made by companies that are seen to be taking concrete steps toward ensuring gender parity.

If societies remain silent on this issue, gender equality may forever remain a distant dream and a mere slogan.

Vladimir Putin is weakened — but his system isn’t

The recent mutiny attempt by Yevgeny Prigozhin’s Wagner mercenary army has undoubtedly weakened Vladimir Putin personally: He publicly promised a forceful response and a harsh punishment for the “traitors,” then accepted a compromise brokered by Belarusian dictator Alexander Lukashenko and allowed Prigozhin to leave the country unpunished, with pretty much his entire force.

The more important question, however, is whether the turbulence has weakened the system that runs Russia.

Alexey Navalny, the jailed Russian opposition leader who has never led a violent riot, wrote in a Twitter thread that he learned of Prigozhin’s escape while on trial for a seemingly endless list of offenses against the government:

And when, a minute later, they were telling me about the seizure of Rostov, the helicopters that had been shot down and the armed column heading for Moscow to “kill that bastard Shoigu,” and the masked bailiffs were also listening and nodding, I kept expecting someone to suddenly yell “You got punk’d!” But no one did. Instead the prosecutor came in and we continued the trial in which I stand accused of forming an organization to overthrow President Putin by violent means.

No wonder Prigozhin was calmly making arrangements to move to Belarus while Navalny faced yet more years and years behind bars for daring to speak up about the regime’s corruption — and not much more. Navalny is much more of a threat to the system than Prigozhin, even if the latter managed to do more damage to Putin personally in one tense day than the former in almost two decades of political activity.

Russia under Putin’s leadership is easy to see as a personalist dictatorship. The president has almost unlimited powers under Russia’s much-rewritten, much-abused constitution and Putin’s place in the government system is so central that — at least ostensibly — even minor decisions cannot be made without his approval. That, however, is not how the system really works, as one of the regime’s top intellectual architects, Gleb Pavlovsky, kept repeating in his final years to anyone who would listen.

A political scientist and spin doctor who worked for the Kremlin during the early Putin years but ended up as a regime opponent, Pavlovsky died earlier this

year. Yet his books about “System RF” (the initials stand for the Russian Federation), written in the 2010s, still provide perhaps the best existing explanation for what happened during the Wagner mutiny — and for the Ukraine invasion that led to it.

Putin the man, in Pavlovsky’s view, is little

The system that elevated him to the top largely had been built under his predecessor, Boris Yeltsin. It is defined by agility, insolent risk-taking, greed for others’ resources and a need always to be a step ahead of adversaries, Pavlovsky wrote in 2015: System RF emerged from the Soviet Union’s collapse as a highly mobile one. Now it is not restricted by ideology and it easily combines a lack of openness with a liberal approach to others’ assets. It doesn’t care if people flee it or read about it on the internet. It is highly resistant to protest that could have ruined the Soviet system. Its new foundation is that it’s omnivorously unprincipled, capable of taking initiative in breaking and discarding any norm. This mode of operation is in evidence in both the Ukraine invasion and the handling of Prigozhin’s machinations. Putin — or System RF, as Pavlovsky would have argued — radically broke rules in both cases, showing agility and flexibility above all, confounding expectations and always, even in extreme adversity, trying to stay ahead of events. Russians in positions of power big and small have condoned this way of acting because they have adjusted to coexisting with the predatory system and acquired a stake in its continued existence. This support comes, however, with a caveat, according to Pavlovsky. It is useless to try to incite this coalition to protest against its own interests. But someday it will betray the state: Just feed us and you can do what you like! In this sense the Putin majority, passive and conformist in its basic attitudes, will one day become apocalyptic for Russia. It has, after all, already proved that to preserve its position and emotional balance and it is willing to accept any tyrannical moves inside and outside the country.

more than the “user of the Putin signature.” He is not a dictator because he runs a “fluid state” government rather than a rules-based one. He stays on top by dividing and ruling rather than by taking responsibility for decisions.

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Leonid Bershidsky

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always, even in extreme adversity, trying to stay ahead of events.

Russians in positions of power big and small have condoned this way of acting because they have adjusted to coexisting with the predatory system and acquired a stake in its continued existence. This support comes, however, with

the country.

This all-important group of bureaucrats, managers, media personalities, law enforcers didn’t rise to Putin’s defense when his authority was threatened by Prigozhin’s fighters marching on Moscow. Officials, officers, even Kremlin propagandists merely watched from the sidelines. Had the Wagner founder not been offered a chance to avoid a bloody confrontation and make a fresh start in Lukashenko’s Belarus, it’s conceivable that the majority would have accepted Prigozhin — or, more likely, one of his establishment sponsors and allies — as the new leader, on the condition that the system itself would function more or less as before.

The lack of military success in Ukraine and the obvious cracks in Russia’s domestic security — Lukashenko said just the other day that the Kremlin managed to assemble only a ragtag force of some 10,000 armed men, including cadets and cops, to defend Moscow against the Wagner raid — have made Putin replaceable. Pavlovsky’s “coalition,” the backbone of “System RF,” is not violently opposed to a change at the top — but only if there’s a guarantee that it will continue to be “fed.” Prigozhin — or any of his backers among generals and senior officials, now under a cloud of suspicion thanks to their indecision and Prigozhin’s devotion to his private interests and those of his mercenary commanders — would have provided such a guarantee because they are part of the system.

By contrast, someone like Navalny would be hugely disruptive in the “coalition’s” eyes. If such an outsider mustered the force necessary to storm the Kremlin and a few other buildings in Moscow — it’s clear now that Wagner, with up to 10,000 hardened fighters, actually had the capability — the system’s stakeholders at every level would risk ruin, whether as part of a lustration process or as victims of a serious effort at institution-building. That’s why Navalny is being tried for alleged plans to overthrow the regime and Prigozhin will not stand trial for an actual attempt to do so with armed force (even if, in keeping with System RF’s nature, he may suddenly drop dead from extrajudicial causes).

It’s important to make a clear distinction between System RF and Putin, who merely personifies it now. If the personality changes but the system remains, any benefit to Ukraine and the West will be only temporary.

Libya needs a stable political structure but is it ready for party politics?

Hafed Al-Ghwel

Libya remains roiled by instability after more than a decade of a murky “transition” that has side-tracked its political journey, as turmoil persists despite concerted efforts to course-correct.

One unfortunate casualty of this seemingly permanent mess is the role of political parties within the context of the country’s now deeply convoluted sociopolitical background — a prospect consistently inviting consternation among the country’s volatile factions that have come to depend on pervasive uncertainty to insulate themselves from the transparency and accountability in a stable democracy.

For decades, Libya was dominated by one-party rule, and this has created an aversion to the idea of political organization as part of a process to form a distinct polity around hard-fought-for civil liberties. This, coupled with a deeply rooted culture of tribalism and localism, represents a substantial barrier to the acceptance and growth of political parties, let alone the inclusive, collaborative culture they can inspire.

In spite of the hesitation among Libya’s self-serving, ruling elite, it is critical to recognize that a functional political party culture could be instrumental in efforts to consolidate the democratic transition and the unification of the state.

Political parties are absolutely essential, in any democratic system, to represent a variety of interests and provide policy alternatives, which is something that is urgently needed given the diversity of societal groups, interests and perspectives in post-Qaddafi Libya. They also serve as a mechanism through which citizens can voice discontent and wield their influence, from their decisions at the ballot box to active civic engagement, in a structured and effective manner.

After all, the Arab Spring that precipitated the overthrow of Muammar

The international community’s zeal for that kind of structured governance, after Libya’s decade-long paralysis, is evident, and a democratic transition endorsed by the UN Support Mission in Libya and the EU might deliver the necessary platform for instituting an enduring political party culture.

However, the formation and implementation of this externally mandated, and curiously managed, agenda has left a lot to be desired in recent years, UN Special Envoy Abdoulaye Bathily’s plans notwithstanding.

The establishment of political parties is a necessary but not in itself sufficient condition for the emergence of an effective and responsible political system. Political parties cannot be created overnight; they need to be nurtured, groomed and developed over time.

To succeed, they need to be responsive to the needs and aspirations of broader society, remain open to learning from their mistakes and failures, as well as successes, and build credibility by delivering on their promises.

But they can also be a game-changer. A robust political party culture has the capacity to overcome identity politics and foster political dialogue that is inclusive, open and responsive to diverse, even competing, interests.

Political parties also have a key role to play in the development of an enabling environment for democratic governance, through active participation in public policy debate and electoral competition.

Clearly, there are numerous upsides to pursuing a distinct political party culture, even one that can function effectively despite the idiosyncrasies in Libya. However, aspirational endeavors such as this must also remain grounded in a rather disappointing, post-Arab Spring reality, as seen in other parts of the Maghreb and Sudan.

In Libya’s specific case,

adding to the political polarization.

Furthermore, Libya’s security landscape remains saturated with a variety of armed entities, which pose significant threats to the development of a comprehensive political party structure. These groups could either manipulate parties for personal gain or vehemently combat those that undermine their interests (or those of their foreign patrons). This precarious security dynamic will compromise the establishment and preservation of a vibrant party culture.

As Libya navigates these troubled waters, only time will tell whether it is ready to adopt a comprehensive political party culture. The current situation, however, is not promising. After all, Libya’s neighbor, Tunisia, had a fledgling political party culture that emerged after the downfall of Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali, yet that brief courtship — summarily ended by a hyper-presidential power grab — was not devoid of issues.

A persistent lack of public faith in political parties remains evident in both countries, suggesting that the mere establishment of a party system is not sufficient for a thriving democracy, or a panacea for the lack of one.

Historically, Libya’s single-party rule under Qaddafi’s regime inhibited the evolution of mature political discourse. The dearth of political experience and maturity among the populace could therefore impose constraints on the effective operation of political parties. As such, the prospect of a political party culture in Libya represents a double-edged sword. It offers the promise of democracy, structured governance, and international support, yet it must also confront some difficult challenges, including robust tribalism, powerful armed factions and political immaturity. Striking an equilibrium in this scenario is the formidable, yet crucial, challenge facing the

The establishment of formal political parties could impose some much-needed structure and help regulate this chaos, thereby facilitating effective governance. Within such a framework, political parties can, and should, serve as platforms for policy discussions, decision-making and public opinion mobilization. The international community’s zeal for that kind of structured governance, after Libya’s decade-long paralysis, is evident, and a democratic transition endorsed by the UN Support Mission in Libya and the EU might deliver the necessary platform for instituting an enduring political party culture. However, the formation and implementation of this externally mandated, and curiously managed, agenda has left a lot to be desired in recent years, UN Special Envoy Abdoulaye Bathily’s plans notwithstanding. The establishment of political parties is a necessary but not in itself sufficient condition for the emergence of an effective and responsible political system. Political parties cannot be created overnight; they need to be nurtured, groomed and developed over time.

Qaddafi was driven primarily by a quest for democracy, the pursuit of civil liberties, and the establishment of state structures that invite, rather than repudiate, civic participation.

Regardless of the disarray in the country today, this demand still persists among the Libyan public. A successful democracy mandates the presence of a diversified political party system that represents Libya’s diverse voices and concerns. The establishment of political parties could prove pivotal in achieving these aims, especially if any such aspirations dispense with idealism and learn from the failures and inadequacies that doomed Tunisia’s bid for democracy.

However, the prevailing power deficit in Libya has only splintered and caused more turmoil.

The establishment of formal political parties could impose some much-needed structure and help regulate this chaos, thereby facilitating effective governance. Within such a framework, political parties can, and should, serve as platforms for policy discussions, decision-making and public opinion mobilization.

it is crucial to be aware of the country’s unique historical relationship with political parties. Past experiences have led to widespread mistrust in large-scale political organizations. Attempts to establish some kind of political party culture have met with resistance from various factions that view the parties as a threat to their autonomy. Very often, these same groups end up co-opting those attempts into sophisticated tools for minimizing participation and engagement.

Moreover, deeply entrenched political and ideological divisions among the Libyan population, arising primarily from historical grievances and regional disparities, might lead to a profusion of parties with conflicting objectives, adding to the political instability rather than reducing it.

Libya’s societal fabric is also steeped in tribalism and regionalism, potentially exacerbating these disparities and instigating a polarized, irreparably chaotic landscape. In the relatively short period since 2011, Libyan political parties have mainly acted as conduits for regional or tribal biases, thereby

country. Given these considerations, attempting to answer the question of whether Libya is ready for a political party culture is complicated. There appears to be the potential for its development but significant obstacles need to be addressed.

The immediate concern should not necessarily be whether to establish political parties, but rather how to institutionalize them in such a way that fosters national unity, encourages public trust, ensures representation of diverse interests across Libyan society, and contributes to a sustained democratic transition.

If Libya is to progress toward a functional and inclusive democracy, it needs to confront its historical aversion to organized politics, restore trust in state institutions, and foster a political culture that accommodates its multifaceted identity. The true sign of readiness, therefore, lies not in the establishment of political parties in and of themselves, but in a willingness and capability to navigate the significant challenges in a collective and collaborative “bottom-up” context.

Europe’s rapidly changing security map bolsters NATO

Andrew Hammond

Much media bandwidth has been taken up in the past year or so by the economic repercussions of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. However, the conflict is also redrawing Europe’s military map, which is a pressing issue in the run-up to NATO’s annual leadership summit this month.

The most prominent development has been Finland’s incorporation into the Western military alliance, and also the pending accession of Sweden. Moreover, Denmark, which is already a NATO member, voted last year to scrap an opt-out clause that for three decades kept it out of the EU’s common defense policy.

These are huge changes for nations with a history of wartime neutrality and/or keeping a distance from military alliances.

Russia’s invasion shattered a long-standing sense of stability in Northern Europe, leaving Denmark, Sweden and Finland, among others, feeling vulnerable.

The irony, of course, is that far from achieving his aim of less of a NATO presence on his doorstep, Russian President Vladimir Putin now has more NATO than ever in his neighborhood, including just across the 830-mile border with Finland.

While the Finnish, Swedish and Danish developments are particularly striking, there has been a much wider rethinking of the European security landscape. This includes

debates in other countries with non-NATO, “neutral” status, including Switzerland, Ireland, Austria and Malta.

These four nations have joined the European sanctions against Russia and this has had consequences, particularly for non-EU member Switzerland. Russia’s ambassador to the country, Sergei Garmonin, has said, for example, that Moscow will no longer accept any Swiss-hosted peace summit on Ukraine’s future, as had been proposed by President Volodymyr Zelensky, on the grounds that the nation’s reputation for neutrality has been damaged.

More fundamentally, there has been a significant increase in military spending across Europe. Germany, for example, has announced major new investment in its military and reversed a post-war policy that prevented it from sending lethal weapons to conflict zones.

This transformation has been encouraged by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, a former German defense minister who has advocated for the establishment of a combined European army. She wants the bloc to become a more muscular global power and has emphasized the degree to which the conflict in Ukraine is “fundamentally challenging” Europe’s peace architecture.

It is not only the situation in Ukraine that is driving these shifts, however, but also a wider threat land-

scape, including Western concerns about China. Moreover, Brexit eliminated a longstanding obstacle to greater European cooperation in the security sphere, given that successive UK governments had long opposed deeper defense integration at the EU level.

Add to this, too, the uncertainty about transatlantic ties that arose during the presidency of Donald Trump.

Concerns about this across the continent have not gone away, given fears that the result of the 2016 presidential election that put him in the White House might be repeated in 2024.

Certainly, the EU still has a long way to go before it becomes the strategically autonomous goliath championed by some. But the tide is turning and it is against this backdrop that the NATO summit takes place this month.

After coming under the most strain it has endured in its seven-decade history, during Trump’s presidency, the transatlantic alliance’s own fortunes have also shifted significantly in the past year or so. US officials, including former National Security Adviser John Bolton, have confirmed that Trump came close to announcing a US withdrawal from NATO, an organization co-created by Washington in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, which would have been a severe body blow to its future credibility.

The nadir of that troubled period came during the extraordinary scenes in 2018 when, as Trump threw the alliance’s annual summit into disarray by threatening to withdraw, a series of key announcements and press conferences were canceled.

To make matters worse, Trump not only criticized NATO colleagues but in the days that followed had a cordial meeting with Putin in Helsinki. This alarmed not only Canada and Washington’s Western European allies, but sent a chill down the spines of authorities in Eastern European states, many of which were formerly part of the Soviet Union.

Yet, the challenges within NATO during the Trump era were by no means only of his making. One of his critiques of the alliance, that more than half of its members at the time did not spend the prescribed 2 percent of their gross domestic product on defense, was a longstanding sore point that other US presidents had highlighted.

Moreover, Trump was not the only alliance leader to criticize NATO around that time. Take, for example, French President Emmanuel Macron’s astonishing assertion in 2019 that the organization was experiencing “brain death.” Fast forward to 2023, however, and the crisis in Ukraine, coupled with concerns about China, have underscored the continuing relevance of this Western alliance of countries with a collective population of



Pakistan opens doors to Chinese meat enterprises

BEIJING (INP): "There's a lot of potential for enhancing meat exports to China," said Ghulam Qadir, Commercial Counsellor, Pakistani Embassy, while addressing a forum titled "2023 Meat Import Development & Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Port Cold Chain Economy New Growth Forum".

He invited Chinese enterprises to participate in Pakistan's Agri Expo (starting from August 10) in which over 300 top Pakistani agriculture and food processing firms are expected, including meat, fisheries, oil seeds, fruits, and vegetables, food processing ones.

According to a Gwadar Pro's report, Ghulam Qadir stated that the Agri Expo undoubtedly will open doors to meat enterprises, unveiling the untapped potential that the country possesses.

As businesses leverage the opportunities presented by the Expo, the future of Pakistan's meat sector looks bright, promising sustainable economic development and increased global recognition.

In a landmark decision, the General Administration of Customs of China (GACC) has already granted access to Pakistani boiled beef to the Chinese market, he said.

"Donkey meat is another important potential and the protocol on Donkey skin has almost been finalized by Pakistan. This is another opportunity arising. Similarly, donkey meat will be allowed to China in the next two to three months approximately," Qadir added.

He further said that the favorable climatic conditions, an abundance of grazing lands, and ample water resources contribute to the availability of high-quality feed for livestock. With a rising demand for meat, both domestically and globally, Pakistan possesses a vast potential to cater to China's growing market.

PFC to participate in expo

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) will take part in the 3-days Imam Abu Hanifa 2nd International and National Expo and Trade Fair Kabul starting from July 16 to discover business opportunities and explore new market access for Pakistani products.

Chief Executive Officer PFC Mian Kashif Ashfaq talking to a delegation of industrialists led by CH Zeeshan Elahi Arain CEO Marvel Cables here on Sunday said that PFC along with Chenone will be participating in this mega event, said a news release.

"Chenone will also exhibit its high-quality international standards products to capture their share in the global market besides it's an excellent opportunity to showcase Pak products and develop business deals with international buyers", he added.

Mian Kashif Ashfaq said that around over hundreds of Pak companies will be exhibiting their products which included furniture, textile, garments, leather garments, sportswear, sports goods engineering, etc.

He said this expo will also offer professional buyers a sourcing platform with a wide variety of products ranging from basics to the most creative and qualitative.

Mian Kashif Ashfaq said PFC and Chenone have already attended several other international fairs in the United States, China, Italy, Sri Lanka etc and introduced its products which are in great demand.

He hoped in getting orders from foreign buyers. The Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) is facilitating the manufacturers of export products.

He said he will also hold a series of marathon meetings with tycoons for investment to avail the government unprecedented special package for foreign investors.

Mobile phone shipments surge in May

BEIJING (APP): China's mobile phone shipments climbed 25.2 percent year on year to 26.037 million in May, according to the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology (CAICT).

Cellphones enabling 5G services took the lion's share of May's shipments with 20.17 million units, a 13.7-percent year-on-year expansion, said the CAICT, a research institute under the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.



FAISALABAD: Workers preserving sacrificial animal hides at their warehouse.

FTO Coordinator highlights potential of 5G

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman Meher Kashif Younis on Sunday said it is evident that 5G has the potential to revolutionize industries and drive economic transformation on a global scale.

Speaking at a seminar on "The role of 5G in Economy" under the aegis of Gold Ring Economic Forum, a strategic think tank, he said the impact of 5G on the economy is expected to be significant, with numerous potential benefits across various industries, said a news release.

He said 5G technology will open up new possibilities for innovation and

entrepreneurship.

"Startups and businesses will be able to leverage the high-speed and low-latency capabilities of 5G to develop and deploy new applications, services, and business models.

This will spur economic growth, create jobs, and drive technological advancements", he added.

He said this improved connectivity will enable faster and more reliable communication between devices, leading to increased productivity and efficiency across industries.

He said the low latency and high reliability of 5G networks will enable real-time monitoring and control of machinery,

improved supply chain management, predictive maintenance, and overall operational efficiency.

He said this will fuel the growth of mobile-based services, such as mobile gaming, streaming platforms, e-commerce, and mobile advertising.

Meher Kashif Younis said the widespread adoption of 5G is expected to contribute significantly to economic growth and productivity gains.

According to estimates by the World Economic Forum, 5G deployment could generate \$13.2 trillion in global economic output by 2035. The increased efficiency, automation, and innova-

tion brought about by 5G will create new business opportunities, attract investments, and drive economic competitive-

ness, he added. It's worth noting that the full impact of 5G on the economy will unfold over time as the technology matures and more use cases are developed.

It will also facilitate the growth of telemedicine, allowing healthcare providers to deliver remote consultations and remote patient monitoring, said adding that it also facilitate the growth of telemedicine, allowing healthcare providers to deliver remote consultations and remote patient monitoring.

Farmers urged to switch to intercropping for higher agri production, profitability

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Rice Research and Development Board Punjab Shahzad Ali Malik on Sunday stressed the urgent need for switching over to "Intercropping" for growing two or multiple crops simultaneously in the same field for bumper agricultural production to achieve food autarky besides boosting the profitability of farmers across the country.

Talking to a delegation of progressive farmers led by Pir Saddam Hussain Shah of Pindi Shaikh Musa district Faisalabad, he said Intercropping can significantly enhance overall crop productivity, said a press release.

By growing different crops together, farmers can maximize the use of available resources, such as sunlight, water, and nutrients, he added.

He said the complementary nature of different crops helps in better utilization of the growing space, resulting in higher yields per acre.

"Income from intercropping can improve farm profitability and financial stability," he said.

Intercropping provides a form of insurance against crop failure. If one crop is susceptible to pests, diseases, or adverse weather conditions, the other crops in the mixture can compensate for the losses.

This diversification of crops reduces the risk of complete crop failure and helps farmers maintain a

more stable income, he added.

He said different crops have different nutrient requirements and Intercropping allows for the efficient utilization of soil nutrients, as crops with contrasting nutrient needs can be grown together.

He said overall, intercropping offers numerous advantages, including increased yield, risk reduction, efficient resource utilization, weed suppression, pest and disease management, soil improvement, economic benefits, and environmental sustainability.

It is a valuable strategy for optimizing agricultural production and promoting resilient and sustainable

farming systems.

Shahzad Ali Malik highlighting its advantages said some crops act as natural repellents or attractants for pests, which can help in pest management without relying solely on chemical interventions.

While concluding he said, on the other hand, Intercropping promotes biodiversity and ecological balance in agricultural systems. By cultivating diverse crops, farmers create habitats for beneficial insects, birds, and other organisms, which helps in natural pest control and pollination.

This approach reduces the reliance on synthetic pesticides and promotes sustainable farming practices.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor sells ice in a hot day on his truck setup.

DSEZ will pave a new era of industrialization for Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): To promote the value addition component in exports, generate employment, encourage the import situation, and mobilize foreign exchange for the balance of payments support, Dhabeji Special Economic Zones (DSEZ) in Thatta Sindh is another mega project designed within the framework of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) a core component of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

In a major development last week, Federal Minister for Board of Investment (BOI) Choudhary Salik

Hussain chaired the 8th meeting of the Approvals Committee which approved the establishment of eight SEZs including the DSEZ Thatta.

According to a Gwadar Pro's report, "Dhabeji Special Economic Zone has been granted SEZ status after much anticipation; DSEZ will pave a new era of industrialization for Karachi and Pakistan; the groundbreaking is to be held in mid-July 2023,"

reads an official statement of Sindh Economic Zones Management Company (SEZMC).

DSEZ will facilitate the potential investors of China and other countries to either start new enterprises or transfer their facilities to Pakistan.

In 2021, a technical issue emerged regarding the awarding of the contract of Dhabeji Industrial Zone (DIZ) when a petitioner raised questions that the rules of SEZ were not followed during awarding of the contract.

SEZMC stated DIZ is not a special economic zone and later will be declared as SEZ. Now, the government has officially

declared DIZ as DSEZ.

According to CPEC's official website, 1530 acres of land have been allocated to establish DSEZ which will be developed in two phases. DSEZ has been proposed to be constructed in two phases comprising 750 acres for Phase I and 780 acres for Phase II.

DSEZ has easy access to Port Qasim, enabling raw material import and finished goods export without incurring major inland transportation costs and saving time. A direct access road (8km) connecting Port Qasim to Dhabeji Zone is

being developed.

A dedicated cargo deck connecting the zone with ML-1 from Dhabeji Junction and a jetty connecting Port Qasim alongside the Dhabeji zone from the creek side are envisaged to facilitate export-oriented industries.

Karachi Airport (35 Km) via National Highway enables safe travel of foreign workers and management personnel, National Highway enables the transportation of goods to upcountry and Central Asian nations, utilizing the National Trade Corridor.

IMF financing good development but reforms must to end economic crisis

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has termed the agreement with IMF as a positive development for the economy but warned that the multilateral donors financing might not bring any significant impact on struggling economy, as the sustainable solution to Pakistan's economic issues lies in the structural reforms and consistent policies.

FPCCI former president and BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar said the deal would end speculation of a possible default, but the country's debt troubles won't end there, as the more IMF aid will be need-

ed in 2024, he added.

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

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

He said that there is a 9-month agreement which is very positive, as the caretaker government will remain in the facility, however, the IMF conditions have increased the cost of production. He said that

government will make payments to exporters when fiscal space is created. He said that Pakistan is likely to avert default this year, as the country managed to secure a last-minute International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout. He was of the view that a staff-level agreement signed with the lender suggests aid will finally materialize after months of delay.

The remarks come after the IMF announced on Friday that its staff and Pakistani authorities have reached an agreement on Friday that its staff and Pakistani authorities have stepped up efforts to meet IMF demands. It's raised taxes, cut spending in its budget, and hiked its key interest rate to a record at an unplanned meeting. The funding from IMF would also unlock another \$3 bil-

consideration expected by mid-July.

The new SBA builds on the authorities' efforts under Pakistan's 2019 EFF-supported program which expires end-June. He said the funding is likely to be delivered in tranches so that the IMF can make sure Pakistan makes progress on fiscal consolidation and continues to allow the rupee to trade freely.

But chances seem high that the board will approve the funding because Pakistan in recent days has stepped up efforts to meet IMF demands. It's raised taxes, cut spending in its budget, and hiked its key interest rate to a record at an unplanned meeting. The funding from IMF would also unlock another \$3 bil-

lion in loans pledged by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, he said. Together, the loans should allow the country to repay its debts through April 2024, assuming that the current account deficit for the fiscal year comes in below \$4 billion as the central bank projects, he said. He projected that Pakistan dollar funds could rise up to \$9.5 billion on account of inflows from the IMF and friendly nations.

However, this won't be enough to repay \$8.7 billion in loans (net of rollovers) in the year starting July and also pay the country's import bills for the full fiscal year. This means whoever is in power after elections in October will have to negotiate a new deal with the IMF. The

upcoming government would need to adhere to measures agreed with the IMF to secure another program next year, said the report.

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

Anjum Nisar said that the country's economy is plunging into an ever deepening ravine with plummeting foreign exchange reserves, with the continuation of the flawed policy of keeping the interbank dollar rate artificially low that is increasingly being attrib-

uted to the government rather than the State Bank irrespective of the autonomy granted to it.

He said that the government has apparently taken a riskier and longer path of begging from foreign nations to avoid the risk of default. The decision to sell the assets is good but it may not materialize in next few weeks.

The reserves are at critically low level. In case Pakistan defaults, the economic wheel in short-term will come to a halt, the nation will suffer, the imports would be cut to critical goods that too at advance payments.

If the decision is to enhance deposit on debts and make a claim that the sovereign default has been

averted then its cost will be too high to bear in the longer run. The government's dilemma is that should it protect it's remaining vote bank by not going the IMF or protect the economy by going to the IMF.

However, its immediate preference seems protecting the vote bank but it may end up losing the both due to hyperinflation likely to be followed by a default.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that undertaking structural reforms require political will. He said that enacting structural reforms, such as improvements in tax collection system, bureaucracy and ease of doing business requires major political will and strict implementation of policies, he added.



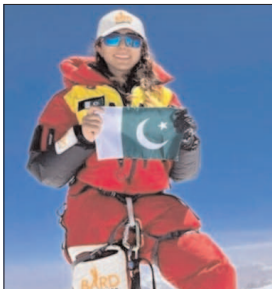
Australia win 2nd Test against England, lead Ashes 2-0



quickly into the crease and immediately walked out of his ground. The ball had barely reached Carey, who gathered and under-armed at the stumps in one motion. Australia immediately celebrated as Stokes and Bairstow converged on the umpires. The third umpire Marais Erasmus deemed the ball not to have been dead and Pat Cummins saw no reason to withdraw the appeal.

When Broad joined Stokes in the middle, England's anger was clear. Broad was in the face of Australia's fielders from the moment he took guard, while Stokes was obviously fuming but channelled his emotions into one of the most awe-inspiring displays of ball-striking Lord's has seen.

He tore into Green with three boundaries in an over through the leg side, then in Green's next over went further with a trio of consecutive sixes, the second of them palmed over the rope by Starc at long leg. He reached his century from 142 balls with the third of them and there was barely a celebration, just a brief raise of the bat in acknowledgement. The fifty partnership came up in 4.4 overs moments before the players took lunch. Words were exchanged between Broad and David Warner as they walked off the pitch, while footage soon emerged of MCC members in the Long Room confronting Australia's players.



Naila Kiani becomes first Pakistani woman to summit

Nanga Parbat

ISLAMABAD (INP): Renowned Pakistani mountaineer Naila Kiani has added another feather to her achievements as she became the first Pakistani woman to scale Nanga Parbat on Sunday.

Naila Kiani was among a group of about 40 climbers including foreigners attempting to summit the Nanga Parbat, also known as the 'Killer Mountain' due to its high fatality rate.

The 8,126-metre mountain has a daunting and treacherous ascent along with the risk of unstable glaciers, avalanches and storms. Other Pakistani climbers in the group were Wajidullah Nagar and Samina Baig.

Naila Kiani's summit was confirmed by Secretary Alpine Club of Pakistan Karrar Haidri. "Today on July 2, 2023, at 10:18 am, Naila Kiani scaled the majestic Nanga Parbat, standing tall at an inspirational height of 8,126 metres," Haidri said.

"She did this to become the first Pakistani woman to climb Nanga Parbat. Naila has now ascended seven of the enormous 8,000-metre peaks on the planet, establishing her as one of the most talented climbers of our time.

"The legendary Everest, the difficult K2, the commanding Lhotse, the perilous Annapurna, the elusive G1 and the G2 are just a few of the mountains she has conquered before.

"Numerous mountaineers and adventure fans all over the world are inspired by Naila Kiani's unwavering resolve, unmatched abilities, and unwavering attitude. She serves as a bright example of how people can overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles."

Earlier, Sajid Sadpara, who is a noted Pakistani mountaineer, had successfully climbed Nanga Parbat without the help of supplementary oxygen and sherpas.

team will travel to India is likely to be deferred until the next government takes charge. The current government will probably not make a formal announcement at this stage. The matter could stretch further until closer to the departure date like it was in 2016 when India hosted the T20 World Cup.

In 2016, Nawaz Sharif's government gave the team a last-minute clearance to travel after sending a delegation to India for security reconnaissance. The PCB had threatened to pull out of the T20 World Cup unless they had assurance from the Indian government regarding the security of the Pakistan team, which eventually resulted in the India-Pakistan match moving from Dharamsala to Kolkata.

In brief

Rashid returns for Bangladesh T20Is

KABUL (Agencies): Rashid Khan, who had been rested for the one-off Test in Mirpur last month, will return to captain Afghanistan in the two-match T20I series against Bangladesh. Rashid is also part of the ODI squad that will be led by Hashmatullah Shahidi. Mohammad Shahzad, who last played international cricket for Afghanistan at the 2021 T20 World Cup, was recalled to the T20I side that also included Mohammad Nabi and Najibullah Zadran. Hazratullah Zazai, who had been left out for the T20Is against Pakistan earlier this year, also returned to the squad. Wafadar Momand, who is uncapped in T20I and ODI cricket, too found a place in the squad alongside Sediqullah Atal, who made his T20I debut against Pakistan in Sharjah in March. Naveen-ul-Haq, who has taken a break from ODI cricket, but is active in T20 cricket, will form the seam attack along with Fazalhaq Farooqi, Azmatullah Omarzai, Fareed Ahmad and Karim Janat. Rashid will be assisted by Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Noor Ahmad in the spin attack. The two T20Is against Bangladesh will be played in Sylhet on July 14 and July 16. Afghanistan squad: Rashid Khan (capt), Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Hazratullah Zazai, Mohammad Shahzad, Ibrahim Zadran, Mohammad Nabi, Najibullah Zadran, Sediq Atal, Karim Janat, Azmatullah Omarzai, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Naveen-ul-Haq, Wafadar Momand, Farid Ahmad, Noor Ahmad, Mujeeb Ur Rahman.

Kyrgios 'almost dreaded' return

SYDNEY (Agencies): Australia's Nick Kyrgios says he was "almost dreading" returning to tennis after a long injury lay-off, but now feels "extremely confident" he can perform well at Wimbledon. Kyrgios, 28, lost to Novak Djokovic in last year's final in SW19 and has only played one tournament this year because of a knee injury that needed surgery. "It's been brutal and hard," said Kyrgios, who is seeded 30th and faces Belgian David Goffin in his opener. "I'm just going to take it day by day." But he added: "What I've achieved in my career never leaves." "Last year wasn't that long ago really. I feel like I'm still serving as good as ever. I'm still able to beat a lot of people on the court." The start of an injury-hit season saw Kyrgios pull out of the Australian Open in January, a decision made on the eve of the tournament and leaving him "devastated". Surgery on a cyst growing in his meniscus quickly followed and he was not able to return to competitive action until last month. "I don't miss the sport at all, to be fair. I was almost dreading coming back a little bit. But it's my job," he said. Kyrgios suffered a first-round loss to China's Wu Yibing at the Stuttgart Open, struggling with his movement during a straight-set defeat, then pulled out of the Halle Open the following week. But he has been practising at the All England Club this week, saying his body felt "OK" after sets against fellow Australian Jordan Thompson and American Maxime Cressy. "I still think there's some question marks for sure. I mean five-set tennis is a completely different base altogether," Kyrgios said.

Theekshana, Nissanka hand Sri Lanka ODI World Cup ticket



BULAWAYO (Agencies): A clinical bowling performance backed by an unbeaten 101 from Pathum Nissanka helped Sri Lanka register a nine-wicket win in the Super Six clash against Zimbabwe and also confirmed their spot at the ODI World Cup in India later this year. The win was set up by the bowlers, as they orchestrated a batting collapse on either side of a 68-run partnership between Sean Williams and Sikandar Raza consigning Zimbabwe to their first loss at the 2023 ODI World Cup Qualifier.

Sri Lanka's new-ball bowling against the Zimbabwe top-order was the play of the day in a clash billed to be between the best batting team and the best bowling team of the tournament. Dilshan Madushanka razed through the top order to leave Zimbabwe reeling inside seven overs.

The left-arm quick, playing only his second game of the competition after being brought in as a replacement for the injured Dushmantha Chameera, had the batters in trouble with the movement as well as change in lengths. He struck in his first over when he had wicketkeeper-batter Joylord Gumbie

caught flicking at short midwicket. He then surprised Wessly Madheveru with a sharp bumper that had him top-edging a pull to mid-off.

In his fourth over of the spell, Madushanka had Craig Ervine poke at a full ball that straightened after pitching outside off as Zimbabwe found themselves at 30 for 3 in the seventh over. He could have had Williams caught at long leg, but Matheesha Pathirana, brought in for the injured Lahuru Kumara, dropped a simple chance.

While Raza got himself going with a perfectly timed square drive, he and Williams were happy to bide their time as they got their eye in. They were partly helped by a wayward Pathirana, who bowled seven wides in his first two overs.

Raza and Williams then used their feet to put Dhananjaya de Silva and Wanindu Hasaranga off their lengths. Williams first slog-swept Dhananjaya through midwicket before cover-driving Hasaranga in the next over. Raza greeted Hasaranga with a pulled six over midwicket before charging down to belt Dhananjaya over his head.

However, Dasun Shanaka broke the stand when he had Raza swipe across the line off a short ball, only for Madushanka to pull off a diving catch at long leg.

Williams soon brought up his fifth fifty-plus score in the competition before Maheesh Theekshana got into his act.

Theekshana first went through Williams' defences before repeating the drill against Ryan Burl in the next over. He then had Luke Jongwe lbw before trapping the last batter Blessing Muzarabani to signal the end of the innings.

Pathirana meanwhile cleaned up Brad Evans and Richard Ngarava to maintain Sri Lanka's record of dismissing each of their opponents in the Qualifier for under 200.

Chasing 166, Dimuth Karunaratne was given an early life when Evans shelled him at short midwicket off Ngarava. Thereon, he and Pathum Nissanka killed the chase with a 103-run stand for the opening wicket. Nissanka exhibited supreme strokeplay after taking his time to get set. He played three aesthetically pleasing strokes of an Evans over to change gears.

Nissanka hit 14 fours in his unconquered 102-ball knock to notch up his second ODI century and set Sri Lanka India-bound with close to 17 overs in the bank.

Sri Lanka's last game in the tournament is against West Indies, while Zimbabwe will next face Scotland in their final Super Six game with the winner assuring themselves of a spot at the ten-team World Cup in India.

PCB writes to Pakistan govt for travel clearance for ODI World Cup

KARACHI (Cricinfo): The PCB has written a letter to Pakistan prime minister Shehbaz Sharif and the interior and the foreign ministry to seek an official clearance to travel to India for the ODI World Cup in October-November. The letter seeks advice on whether the Pakistan team is allowed to travel to India, and if so, if there are any reservations about any of the five venues for the Pakistan games, and if the Pakistani government wants to send a security delegation for reconnaissance.

The PCB wrote the letter on June 26 as a necessary step because unlike visiting any other country, touring India requires government permission due to strained political relations between the two countries. There is no deadline for the government to respond but the PCB will not travel without a clearance from the government.

The PCB shared Pakistan's schedule with the government, which says the team will play its nine league matches in five cities, including the big clash against India in Ahmedabad on October 15.

"Soon after the World Cup schedule was announced last Tuesday, we wrote to our Patron, Honourable Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, through the Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) Ministry, copying the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Interior, requesting clearance to participate in the World Cup," the PCB told ESPNcricinfo.

"The decision to visit India and approve venues



at which we can play our matches is the prerogative of the Government of Pakistan. We have absolute trust in the judgment of our government and will follow whatever is advised. It is entirely up to the Government of Pakistan the process it wants to formulate and follow before advising us on the next steps. If this requires sending an advance team to India to inspect the venues and hold meetings with the event organisers, then it will solely be the government's decision."

Even though the fixtures were officially announced - after a delay - last week, Pakistan were still reluctant to commit their participation without their government's clearance. Pakistan have not toured India since the 2016 men's T20 World Cup, and there has been a lot of speculation in the last year over the two teams touring each other for the upcoming Asia Cup and the ODI World Cup, to be hosted by Pakistan (originally) and India, respectively. The Asia Cup, which will be played from August 31 to September 17, will now be hosted in a hybrid model,

by Pakistan and Sri Lanka because the BCCI said India would not travel to Pakistan.

The two teams haven't played against each other in any bilateral series for over ten years, and face off only at the ICC and ACC tournaments. Pakistan's ministry of foreign affairs had already suggested that it was evaluating the team's participation in the World Cup and would convey its view to the PCB in due course. There is no clear stance on the government's stance related to India, but recently foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari was the first high-level Pakistani official to have visited India for the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Summit in almost 12 years. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is also set to participate in the meeting of the Council of Heads of State (CHS) of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) to be conducted in a video-conference format on July 4 being hosted by India.

It is understood that with the term of the ruling government in Pakistan ending in August, the decision on whether the

Trials for Big-3 Twenty20 Cricket League in USA completed: Muhammad Fayyaz

PESHAWAR (APP): A trial to select a strong team for the forthcoming Big-3 ACL Twenty20 Cricket League in New York, USA completed wherein more than 300 players participated.

This was stated by Pakistan Cricket Board Level-2 coach and head of the selection committee international cricketer Muhammad Fayyaz while talking to APP here on Sunday.

Muhammad Fayyaz, who also did Level-II Coaching from Australia and England said the trials were conducted in Swat, Abbottabad and Mardan wherein more than 300 players took part.

He said the selection would be made purely on performance basis for the forthcoming Big-3 ACL Twenty20 Cricket League

so that the new players could get more venues for exhibiting their performances.

Muhammad Fayyaz is currently working with Pakistan Cricket Board as Assistant Coach in Abbottabad Region, played 71 first class matches and scored 3098 runs, with 11 (50s) and got 44 wickets as a right spinner also represented Pakistan-A team in New Zealand, England, Australia, Canada, said that we want to select the best team for the USA League so to achieve good results.

It would be a new beginning for Pakistan young cricketers to play in the American League. He said our players have had stunning performances in England County but with the opening of new venues like the USA, the players

would have shown better results in the League.

He said they have conducted open trials and among them the best players have been short-listed wherein a camp of longer duration would be set up in Peshawar and Swat on Shama Cricket Ground and Charbagh, Swat besides playing matches so that a good team could be compiled.

He said many of the Pakistani cricketers are now playing in the USA and now with the start of the participation of teams would add to help not only promote cricket in the USA but also the players would be able to make themselves financially strong.

Muhammad Fayyaz, hailing from Swat and ran his cricket Academies in

Birmingham, UK and Canada, said that he had invested more than Rs. 250 million over developing cricket ground, gymnasium, cricket academy, two multi-purpose indoor hall, a 7 kilometer walking track in Charbagh, Swat with the aim to help the youngsters to come and play in a healthy environment.

Swat suffered a lot due to insurgency and militancy and the youth of Swat were mostly confined to their homes due to terrorist activities but now with the military operations, Swat is coming to normal, Fayyaz said.

The youth have great talent and opportunities have been given to the youth of Swat as well in the team.

"I can spend a good life

in the UK and Canada, but I prefer to stay in my motherland Pakistan and serve my youth. Talks with the cricket organizers in the USA continued and hopefully more such teams would also visit USA for different competitions," Muhammad Fayyaz, who also worked for Peshawar Zalmi as selector, said.

Muhammad Fayyaz, who also played 32 T20 matches and scored more 400 runs, disclosed that the name of "Team Shaheens 92" would participate in the USA Twenty20 Cricket League in September this year. He said before going to the USA proper camp would be set up in Swat and Peshawar besides playing matches so the boys would be given competitive exposure before this important visit.





In brief

IRSA releases 251,600 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 251,600 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 409,000 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1511.27 feet and was 113.27 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 218,200 cusecs and 110,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1180.70 feet, which was 130.70 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 59,200 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 136,100, 211,800, 128,000 and 62,300 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 63,700 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 41,600 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

AIOU announces admissions

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has announced the schedule for the admissions in the semester of Autumn 2023. According to the AIOU, the admissions for the first phase of Semester Autumn 2023 will commence from July 15, while the admissions for the second phase will start from September 1 across the country. Vice Chancellor AIOU, Prof Dr. Nasir Mahmood has given the approval to establish information counters, facilitation centers and prospectus sale points across the country to facilitate the students at the nearest places to their residences. Dr. Nasir Mahmood instructed regional heads to guide the students properly. He directed regional heads, tutors, and resource persons to actively participate in the admission campaign to ensure that no child is left out of school. Prospectuses and admission application forms for all the programs will be available online on the university website (www.aiou.edu.pk) on July 15, 2023. Admission in BS (face to face), MS/MPhil and PhD programs can only be applied via online system whereas admission application forms for matriculation, intermediate and I Com can be submitted manually as well as via online mode.

World Youth Skills Day

ISLAMABAD (APP): World Youth Skills Day will be marked on July 15 (Saturday) across the globe including Pakistan, aim of the day is to encourage youth to celebrate the value of acquiring skills like building, making, and creating as a way to achieve personal success and fulfillment. By empowering young people, they can better advance the broader mission of the United Nations (UN) for lasting peace, sustainable development, and human rights for all, according to UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon. A UN resolution to establish a World Youth Skills Day was adopted by the General Assembly on December 18, 2014. On the UN's website, they state that education and training are the keys to success in the workforce. However, unfortunately, existing systems are failing to address the learning needs of many young people. A large number of youths have low levels of achievement in basic literacy and numeracy, according to surveys. Skills and jobs for youth feature prominently in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



ISLAMABAD: People arriving back to the city after spending Eid holidays with their family members in hometowns.

‘Fresh wave of inflation from July 12 to further expose Shehbaz govt’

RAWALPINDI (NNI): Awami Muslim League (AML) chief and former interior minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed on Sunday said the cash-strapped Shehbaz-led government's downward count-down is expected to begin from July 12 [the start of new wave of inflation including increasing power tariff].

Taking to Twitter, he asked what was the difference between the IMF decisions of former finance minister Miftah Ismail and his successor Ishaq Dar except they are relatives. "Dar's tone was aggressive initially and then he started bowing before the [International Monetary Fund] to get the loan approved for nine months."

Awami Muslim League

(AML) chief and former interior minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed said a new wave of inflation would engulf the masses from July 12, leading to downward countdown of the incumbent government, adding the three governments -- the sitting government, the caretaker government and the new government -- had to fulfill the IMF's strict conditions in nine months and pay back \$11 billion in six months.

The former minister said the time would tell if the deposit assurances given by the friendly countries would reach any practical conclusion, adding there was no room for errors in the IMF agreement as an environment of now or never had been created.

He was of the view that the government had wasted 10 months, signed [staff level] agreement with [the IMF] on the last day [June 30]. "Is it fair that diesel has become expensive by Rs7.50 even on the arrival of Russian oil in the country, the AML leader questioned."

He said the foreign minister of PPP made more than 50 foreign tourism trips but is a silent spectator on the IMF agreement. Nawaz Sharif's coming or not depends on his health and not on politics and the decision of the case.

Taking jibe at the coalition partners, Rashid said that 13 parties had become politically bankrupt, and the nation had become economically bankrupt.

40,000 people thronged 'Lake View' park during weekend

ISLAMABAD (APP): As many as 40,000 thousand people thronged 'Lake View Park' to enjoy barbecue parties after Eidul Azha with their family and friends. With its spacious location at the shores of Rawal Dam, Lake View Park has started attracting more visitors than other public parks and picnic spots in the twin cities, reported a private news channel.

Traditionally, people used to go to Ayub Park and Nawaz Sharif Park but now both the places seem too crowded and there is little for enjoyment," there are also other attractions in the federal capital including Japanese Park, the Zoo and the whole track up to Pir Sohawa. However, Lake View Park has all the facilities available in one spot, making it the most attractive place for visitors. Thousands of merrymakers, including families and groups of youngsters, belonging to the twin cities and surrounding areas thronged the limited public places in Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

Kundi foresees Bilawal as PM in the making

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader Faisal Karim Kundi on Sunday claimed on Sunday that with the support of the majority of voters, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari will be elected as the country's premier.

Kundi fired a broadside at Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) leader Hafiz Naemur Rehman and his party.

"We won't allow the JI to use politics to spread anarchy in the country."

"JI Emir Sirajul Haq and Naemur Rehman ought to apologise since their elders opposed Pakistan's independence," Kundi maintained.

On Sunday, PPP senior leader Syed Khurshheed Ahmed Shah on Saturday said

that political unity was crucial for the country's economic stability.

Speaking to media, Shah said, "We want to see Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari as the country's premier. The 2008 manifesto, which the PPP developed, was put into practice. The party has finished its manifesto for the first time since Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and former prime minister Benazir Bhutto."

"We will present our manifesto even before the elections," he continued.

Speaking about seat adjustments with other political parties, Shah said, "We will think about the seat adjustments with other political parties."

Karot HPP contributes 3.64 billion units of clean electricity

ISLAMABAD (INP): The 720 megawatts Karot hydropower plant contributed around 3.64 billion units of clean and low-cost electricity to the National Grid in one year of its commercial operations.

This was disclosed by CTG Int'l, which marks the completion of the first year of the commercial operations of the Karot hydropower project. Karot was the first hydropower project completed under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) initiative, which started commercial operations on June 29, 2022.

According to a Gwadar Pro's report, that Karot contributed Rs 4 billion worth of electricity to the National Grid free of cost

during its testing and commissioning phase.

Karot is a steady source of clean and affordable electricity for Pakistan. According to the latest energy purchase data released on June 15 by the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA), Karot contributed more than 509.86 million units of electricity in May 2023 at a cost of Rs 115.02 million.

It comes out that the electricity generation cost for this flagship CPEC power project stood at only Rs 0.226 per unit for the month of May.

The project was executed by China Three Gorges (CTG) at a cost of around \$2 billion.

FIA offloads Hungary-bound passenger

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Federal Investigation Authority (FIA) has offloaded a Hungary-bound passenger at Lahore International Airport for carrying fake travel documents on Sunday.

As per the details, the passenger named Shahid was trying to travel to Hungary. The vigilance team asked him to show his documents upon doubts that he might be travelling with fake documents.

The travel documents provided by Shahid were proven fake by Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) officials. According to the FIA spokesperson, the passport was a fake sticker of Hungary's educational visa. The passenger was handed over to the FIA Anti-Human Trafficking Circle in Gijrat for further investigation. Last month, the Federal Investigation Agency's (FIA) immigration staff offloaded an Afghan woman while boarding a flight to France at Peshawar airport after her passport was found fake.

Tourists asked to observe traffic rules to avoid mishaps in Murree

RAWALPINDI (APP): City Traffic Police (CTP) on the directives of Commissioner Rawalpindi Division had finalized all the arrangements to ensure the security of the visitors and facilitate the tourists in Murree, particularly during the Eid ul Azha holidays while the tourists had been urged to strictly observe traffic rules to avoid traffic congestion and road mishaps, said a City Traffic Police spokesman.

He informed that the City Traffic Officer, Rawalpindi Tamoor Khan had requested the tourists to observe traffic rules on the roads of Murree to avoid traffic mess and any untoward incidents during summer season.

Special teams had been formed to facilitate the tourists and resolve their problems if any in Murree, he said adding, parking the vehicles were not being allowed outside the parking areas. There was a complete ban on illegal parking on the roads in Murree particularly at exit and entry points besides restrictions on cooking at the roadside. The spokesman

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

Several roads including Bank Road, GPO Chowk to Kashmir Point, Hall Road, Lalazar to Kashmir Point, View Fourth Road, View Fourth Road to GPO Chowk, Guldana Road, GPO Chowk to Guldana Chowk, Dilkusha Road, Imtiaz Shaheed Road to Lari Adda via Dilkusha Hotel, Cecil Road, Imtiaz Shaheed Road to Cart Road via Cecil Apartments, Pindi Point had been declared one-way roads to facilitate the motorists, he said. According to a district administration spokesman, a main control room had been set up at Jinnah Hall in Unit office Murree, District Council, Municipal Committee Murree which could be contacted at 051-9269015-16-18.

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

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

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

He said the DC had advised the tourists to avoid wrong parking, double lines, speeding, and taking selfies in the middle of the roads. The spokesman informed that foolproof security was being provided to the tourists in Murree.

He said, all the security and traffic arrangements had been finalized to facilitate the tourists. The holidays of all the departments concerned including Murree administration had been canceled to make the arrangements foolproof. A special plan had also been formulated for Murree under which nearly 1000 personnel including over 700 cops and 285 CTP officials were performing their duties to facilitate the visitors.

ANF arrests 1652 drug smugglers

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan in their operations conducted across the country managed to net 1652 drug smugglers during last 12 months and registered 1678 cases against the accused.

According to an ANF Headquarters spokesman, ANF recovered over 157.551 metric tons drugs during the period.

He informed that as the premier anti-narcotics agency, the ANF, along with other law enforcement agencies, continued to be at the forefront of national anti-narcotics efforts.

ANF seized over 4379.103 kg of meth, 207.561 kg of amphetamine, 492.094 kg of intoxicating tablets, 32312.061 liters of various types of prohibited chemicals, he said. He further informed that additionally, 61781.257 kg of hashish, 43197.508 kg of opium, 9316.695 kg of heroin, 5459.8 kg of morphine, 11.249 kg of cocaine and 3374.103 kg of other drugs were also seized during the period.

Maintaining a strategic orientation resulting from permanent deployments at airports, seaports, dry ports, and border terminals, the ANF continued to conduct regular operations across inter-provincial

borders and to control drug trafficking to secure urban centers, he said.

Special attention was also given to international flights, cargo and container traffic. However, it has been noted that chemical drug seizures doubled as compared to 2021 and 2022, the spokesman added. ANF has also been actively involved in drug demand reduction through awareness programs across the country in the form of lectures, seminars, walks and sports activities, he said adding, ANF rehabilitation centers treated 1879 drug addicts during the period.

Two more rehabilitation centers, Malir and Mangopeer, were established and made operational in Karachi, he said.

ANF also conducted eight maritime operations in 2023 in collaboration with international counterparts, he said and informed that a total of 18.33 tons of drugs including 13.275 metric tons charas, 3.3 metric tons of heroin and 1.6982 metric tons of methamphetamine (ice) were seized. These operations were carried out on the high seas based on intelligence provided by the ANF to maritime international law enforcement agencies, he added.

Indonesia's Lombok, Bali Islands fascinate tourists from Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indonesia's amazingly beautiful islands Bali and Lombok, surrounded by lush green mountains and blue-green waters are emerging as two fascinating tourist destinations that have been gravitating foreign tourists from Pakistan and worldwide again after the Covid-19 pandemic is over.

Both islands have distinctive featured with their natural beaches, providing beach lovers with coral reefs for snorkeling and scuba diving, exploring culture and offering people a place for religious tourism including historical mosques and temples.

Lombok, an island in West Nusa Tenggara province, is a majority Muslim destination that is appealing tourists to explore the charming landscape, blue water, beautiful sea sights and scenic valleys that provide unique experiences. Halal services' excellence has led Lombok to achieve the first rank for the World's Best Halal Tourism Destination, according to the Global Muslim Travel Index in 2019. Lombok would be the next popular destination for Pakistani tourists because of its natural beauty and delicious food. The traditional villages like Sade showcase the island's unique architecture and way of life.

Lombok is not only beautiful in terms of natural beauty and is perfect for travelers seeking a serene escape but also food is similar to Pakistan, said a tourist Hassan Aftab while talking to APP.

Another tourist Ms. Lucia from

England who was in Lombok for vacation, told APP that the Kuta Beach and Gili Islands were the most eye-catching places which were more peaceful and calmer for enjoying holidays. She said that atmosphere of Gili Island was amazing as the beaches, the sunlight and the people were welcoming. Nicolo from Italy said that he prefers to stay in Lombok to Italy during his holidays because he likes blue water and pristine sandy shores. Similarly, Bali has no comparison as Legian, Seminyak, and Kuta Beaches are having picturesque landscapes, and vibrant arts scene. From the stunning rice terraces of Ubud to the iconic sea temples of Tanah Lot and Uluwatu, Bali boasts a rich tapestry of cultural and natural wonders, he added.

Bali is a place where adventure enthusiasts can surf the famous waves of Kuta and Uluwatu as well as they can explore the volcanic peaks of Mount Batur.

Abdul Zahir Abassi a travel agent, who came to attend Bali and Beyond Travel Fair in Indonesia told APP that the number of tourists from Pakistan to Bali and Lombok was increasing swiftly and the opening of direct flights would further enhance this flow of tourists as it would be more economical and convenient. He said that similarly, Indonesian people were visiting Pakistan's northern areas, therefore direct linkages would enhance the tourism economy of both countries. Both Bali and Lombok offer an immense cultural experience

that allows visitors to delve into the rich heritage of the Indonesian people. There are also several similarities between Pakistan's and Indonesia's cultures and tourist sites. Pakistan and Indonesia have distinct identities and cultural characteristics. Both destinations offer a glimpse into vibrant cultures. Pakistan's historic sites like the ancient city of Taxila and the architectural marvels of Lahore showcase its diverse heritage. Indonesia's Bali and Lombok are home to ancient temples and traditional dances.

Explaining cultural similarities, Ambassador of Indonesia to Pakistan Adam Tugio termed distinctive cultural-historic heritage as a treasure trove for the two brotherly countries that have continuously been preserved during history. He said, "Indonesia and Pakistan are heirs of one of the oldest civilizations in the world, with a marked history of religious-cultural communication."

To enhance tourism between both countries, he said that Indonesia and Pakistan are working to start direct flights which ultimately increase linkages among people. Talking to APP, Ni Made Ayu Marthini, Deputy Minister for Marketing, Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, Republic of Indonesia, said that there were multiple common characteristics culturally and religiously between Indonesia and Pakistan that could help enhance people-to-people exchanges as both countries had majority of Muslim populations.



ISLAMABAD: A large number of motorcycles parked in the premises of Shah Faisal Masjid as people visit on weekend.

Tourist flocking to Panjshir

PANJSHIR (Agencies): The number of domestic tourists visiting Panjshir grew to its highest level this Eid. Provincial Head of Information and Culture Mawlana Nasrullah Malekzada said that thousands of domestic tourists have visited since the beginning of Eid al-Adha. Most of the families from other provinces of the country travel to Panjshir for sightseeing and spend their night with the noble families in this province, as far as security is maintained, he said.

Koresh, other games started

KUNDUZ CITY (Pajhwok): Koresh and other traditional games featuring dozens of athletes have commenced in northern Kunduz province in connection with Eidul Adha. Koresh Federation head Muhammad Anwar told Pajhwok Afghan News dozens of athletes from different departments were participating in the traditional belt wrestling. Anwar said the competitions were aimed at entertaining citizens and encouraging athletes.

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

At least 4 Afghan citizens killed in Iran border

KABUL (Khaama Press): Officials in southwestern Nimroz province said that at least four Afghan citizens were killed and another injured due to gun firing by Iranian border security personnel. Iranian border guards opened firing at Afghan nationals who were attempting to illegally enter Iran, according to local sources. The incident took place late Saturday night, claiming the lives of four Afghan nationals who were reportedly from the northern parts

of the country. Meanwhile, another source said that six people were killed in the incident, and the injured person was transferred to the provincial hospital. Taliban officials in southwestern Nimroz province have yet to comment in this regard. Similar gun firing and cross-border shelling have taken place in the past as well, taking the lives of many Afghan citizens. Lack of employment opportunities, instability

and dire economic situation have forced Afghans to take rather risky and illegal pathways to enter neighboring countries and beyond in search of work and a better life. Sometimes, these illegal migrations end up with devastating consequences, resulting in the death of scores of innocent people. Furthermore, fatal traffic accidents have also taken the lives of illegal immigrants in Iran and on the border area with Afghanistan every now and then.

Hajj ceremony: Saudi Hajj Minister hails Afghan best management



KABUL (Agencies): The Acting Minister of Hajj and Religious of the Islamic Emirate, Sheikh Dr. Mawlawi Noor Mohammad Saqib participated in the closing ceremony of the Hajj rituals which was organized by the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah of Saudi Arabia. The Ministry of Hajj and Religious announced this news that the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah of Saudi Arabia, after the suc-

cessful completion of the Hajj rituals, participated in a special meeting in which the heads of delegations of Islamic countries were present. In the meeting, Dr. Tawfiq bin Fawzan al-Rabiah, Minister of Hajj and Umrah of Saudi Arabia, praised the Acting Minister of Hajj and Religious of Afghanistan for preparing with the good management of Afghan pilgrims.

In turn, Minister Saqib praised the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah of Saudi Arabia for providing better services to Afghan pilgrims in Mecca and Medina. Meanwhile, the Acting Minister of Hajj and Religious of the Islamic Emirate, in a special meeting with the Minister of Hajj and Umrah of Saudi Arabia, exchanged views about the Hajj process in the coming year and creating more facilities for it.

Two young Afghans win Diana Award 2023

KABUL (Agencies): Two young Afghans – a male and a female – have been honored with the prestigious Diana Award in the United Kingdom. The Diana Award honors those aged between nine to 25 working for the betterment of the community in any way. The award was established in 1999 after the name of the late Princess of Wales, Diana. It is one of the most prestigious awards a youngster can receive for their humanitarian work. The two awardees from Afghanistan are Mohammad Jawid Amani and Sabera Saed.

“Jawid has dedicated his efforts to address social and human rights issues in Afghanistan. He established the ‘Change Makers of the World’ volunteer community to create positive change in the society. He has provided education and supplies to dozens of war-affected students and has led educational and cultural programmes to improve people’s lives. In 2021, he worked for youth-engagement in the Intra-Afghan Peace Process through the NYCP initiative,” Diana Award website said. “Sabera founded the ‘TAIB Education Foundation’ in Afghanistan to provide free and voluntary educational services for

girls. Despite the difficult political situation, they were determined to ensure that no girl would be left behind. Sabera works tirelessly, managing all the classes herself and offering various subjects, including languages, computers, and school subjects. Their work has had a profound social impact, with over 10,000 girls benefiting from these classes. Serving as a role model and motivating others to join their cause and share their knowledge, Sabera’s efforts have helped decrease forced and underage marriages and challenged cultural barriers to girls’ education,” the website said.

Almost 1 million square meters of Afghan carpets exported in past year



KABUL (Agencies): The carpet manufacturers’ union says the carpet weaving industry has been doing well and in the past year almost one million square meters of carpets has been exported. Union officials said they expect business to increase in the coming year. The carpet industry is one of the oldest industries in Afghanistan, and is the financial backbone of thou-

sands of families around the country. “This number is more than in 1401 (solar year) and will increase because the statistics show us the same, and if I put it in percentage terms, we can export up to 15 percent,” said Mohammad Reza Heydari, the head of the Carpet Manufacturers Union. Some carpet sellers want the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to market Afghan carpets both inside

and outside the country. “We want the Islamic Emirate to provide better conditions for export. Currently, our exports are low,” said Abdul Wali Sakhizada, a carpet seller. “We represent Afghanistan and show Afghan products to the world because they are excellent in terms of quality and condition,” said Azizullah, another carpet seller. At the same time, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry says that they have many plans to support carpet production and some of these plans have been implemented. “Our exports have been very good, and large exhibitions are still going to be held in Turkey, Russia, and the United Arab Emirates, in all three of these countries, fortunately, our carpet sector will play an active role,” said Abdul Salam Jawad Akhundzada, the spokesman of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. A number of economic experts say that when the government increases investment in carpet production, both job opportunities will be provided and the national income of the country will be strengthened.

Residents want removal of ERW

KHOST CITY (Pajhwok): Some people in southeastern Khost province say that Explosive Remnant of War (ERW) put the lives of common people in danger while local officials said efforts were underway to eliminate warheads, shells and grenades remained on the surface from the past. According to local security officials at least 17 people have been killed due to the explosions from ERW in past few years. Haji Mamour, 55, from the Zinikhelo area of Nader Shah Kost district, said he lost his 14 year old son due to ERW explosion. He said on the 18th of last Ramazan, his son and another child were killed when they were playing with a shell and it went off. He asked the government to remove ERW because its existence may result in the loss of more lives. “Warheads and shells from the past still posed threat to the lives of common people, adding that serious efforts were needed to remove these shells.” Nawab, another resident of Khost province, said his nine year old brother was killed and his five year old son was injured in a ERW blast. He asked local security authorities to take action for the removal of ERW. “It was 11:00 when we heard a blast, when I go out I saw that my brother was killed and my son was injured, this area should be cleaned up from ERW.” Police Spokesperson Mustaghfir Gurbaz told Pajhwok Afghan News total four people have been killed and 13 others injured due to ERW blasts. He said the Nadar Shah Kot and Sabari are the districts where ERW still remained. “Our engineering teams in cooperation with common people often visit areas and defuse ERW,” he said. He asked people to inform police or other security authorities when they see an ERW in the area.

Three youths drown to death in river

ASADABAD (Pajhwok): Three young men hailing from Kabul died after drowning in river in Manogi district of eastern Kunar province, an official said. Manogi district chief Ahmad Gulab told Pajhwok Afghan News the incident took place in Tanteel area of the district. He said five people were swimming in the Kunar River when all of them drowned, but local residents rescued two of them and fished out the dead bodies of the three. He said the deceased were residents of Guldara district of Kabul who had come to Kunar with friends. One of the tourists drowned while swimming in the river and two friends jumped into the water to rescue him, but all the three drowned and their dead bodies were found by local residents..

Female FMs call for swift reversal of Afghan women’s restrictions



KABUL (Khaama Press): The Foreign Ministers of six countries have urged the de facto authorities to promptly lift policies and practices restricting Afghan women and girls from exercising their human rights and fundamental freedoms. A historic meeting of female foreign ministers from South Africa, France, Germany, Indonesia, Liechtenstein, and Mongolia was held at Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. “We call for the full, equal, meaningful, and safe participation of women and girls in Afghanistan,” stated a joint statement. “We call upon the

Taliban to swiftly reverse the policies and practices that restrict women and girls from enjoying their human rights and fundamental freedoms, including access to education, employment, freedom of movement, and their full and equal participation in public life.” Meanwhile, the Foreign Ministers also urged “all states and organizations to use their influence, in accordance with the United Nations Charter, to promote an urgent reversal of these policies and practices.” This comes at a time when secondary schools have been closed to girls since the Taliban took con-

trol of power in August 2021, and women have been banned from attending universities and working for aid agencies since last December. The international community and regional countries have massively criticized the suppressive policies; however, the Taliban government still has not lifted the restrictions on women’s education and fundamental rights. The Taliban has recently claimed that women in Afghanistan are given a “comfortable, prosperous life” amid allegations of deteriorating conditions. The Taliban leader,

Hibatullah Akhundzada, in an Eid message, said that under the rule of the Taliban, concrete measures have been taken to save women from many traditional oppressions, including forced marriages, and “their Sahria rights have been protected.” While the Taliban have restricted media freedoms and prohibited women from using public facilities like gyms and parks, in addition to deepening a humanitarian crisis, the restrictions have sparked a heated international backlash, further isolating the country at a time when its economy is in freefall.

Removing female from public life crime against humanity: AI

KABUL (Khaama Press): The situation of women and girls in Afghanistan under the Taliban regime is deteriorating as women’s voices have been silenced and their dreams shattered, reported Amnesty International. Amnesty International released a video on Twitter showcasing the desperate situation of Afghan women and girls and stated that “sidelining women and girls” from public life can be considered a crime against humanity, and the

ruling regime should be accountable for it. Furthermore, the organization has reminded that the caretaker government in Afghanistan has been accused of widespread human rights violations, and has responded with violence to the legitimate demands of Afghan women over the past nearly two years. According to Amnesty International, Afghan women and girls’ voices have been silenced and their dreams shattered.

They are provided with no vocational training opportunities and are forced to wear a hijab while appearing in public places. Previously, some international human rights organizations had described the situation in Afghanistan as “dire and worrying”. While in Richard Bennett’s latest report about women’s situation in Afghanistan, it was stressed that the practice of “gender apartheid” in the country should be investigated as a serious

international crime. Meanwhile, Afghanistan’s de facto authorities have not admitted any of the claims, calling them foreign allegations and interference in the internal matters of the country. Contrary to the general public’s opinion, Taliban supreme leader Mullah Hibatullah Akhundzada has described the situation of Afghan women and girls as quite satisfactory, adding all their rights are protected and respected.

Woman empowers girls deprived of schooling through art training

HERAT (TOLONews): In the western province of Herat, a pioneering initiative has been launched by a local woman to establish a training center offering miniature art classes to young girls who have been denied education due to the Islamic Emirate’s ban on secondary schools for female students. Maria Arbabzada, the center’s founder, has successfully enrolled nearly 50 students and is determined to support girls who possess a strong desire to learn despite the challenges they face. “Our primary goal is to assist the girls here who are keen and resilient,” stated Arbabzada.



The girls attending the center express that their engagement in art has not only provided a sense of purpose but also rescued them from feelings of hopelessness that stemmed from being confined to their homes and coping with daily depression. Lina, one of the students, shared her enthusiasm for art and her aspirations to further develop her skills. “This gives us hope. I love it. I want to continue growing through this art form, as I have already made significant progress,” she expressed. The recent series of restrictions imposed by the Islamic Emirate, which prohibits women from attending schools, universities, and working at NGOs, has sparked widespread concern.

Zahra Ghulam, a student who attends the art classes, highlighted the importance of education in a country’s development. “When a nation has a high illiteracy rate, it hampers progress in terms of knowledge and industry,” she remarked. Saeeda Habibi, another student, emphasized girls’ aspirations for self-improvement, job opportu-

nities, and financial independence. “We strive to grow just like men, have careers, earn our own income, and become self-reliant,” she asserted. The closure of secondary schools for girls and the restrictions on women attending universities have prompted significant national and international backlash, reflecting the gravity of the situation.

Amid criticisms, Afghan authorities reluctant to publicize cash aid on media

KABUL (Khaama Press): The international community’s \$40 million cash aid packages are shipped to Kabul, however, the Taliban authorities do not publicize it on media anymore, a source in Afghanistan Central Bank said. May 14 was the last time, Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB) announced to have

received a \$40 million cash aid package as part of the humanitarian aid. The flow of financial aid continues to Kabul but the Taliban officials have decided not to publicize it anymore, a source from DAB said. The sources added that international organizations and aid groups transfer

their required money to Afghanistan, and there has not been any change in the procedure so far. Over the past nearly two years, Afghanistan’s central bank regularly reported the shipment of \$40 million in cash aid to Kabul from the international community, which prompted massive criticism among the opposi-

tion groups and the people of Afghanistan. Previously, UNAMA had criticized the publication of such reports by DAB as described it as “misleading and useless”. UNAMA had announced that cash aid is transferred to Kabul by the UN and is deposited in UN accounts in a commercial bank.

IMF accord to put Pakistan’s economy back on track: Ahsan

NAROWAL (NNI): Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Reform Ahsan Iqbal has said that there was a state of mourning in the ranks of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) following Pakistan’s deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), maintaining that the agreement will put Pakistan’s economy back on track.

Addressing a press conference in Narowal on Sunday, Ahsan Iqbal accused the PTI leadership of lobbying throughout the world for scuttling the IMF deal.

The federal minister was of the view that no other party in the country’s entire history had taken anti-state steps which the PTI had taken in such a short span of time. “The party has crossed all limits in its hatred against the state,” Ahsan Iqbal alleged. He, however, expressed satisfac-

tion that at last what he called PTI’s propaganda had failed, and the country was able to clinch a deal with the Fund.

The minister expressed the hope that the deal with the IMF would put the country’s economy back on track.

Ahsan Iqbal said it was unfortunate that in Pakistan taxpayers were made to pay the price for the crime of tax evaders.

Observing that tax to GDP ratio in Pakistan was quite less, he stressed the need for improving it. “We will have to change our lifestyle,” he said, adding, “A nation that sleeps at 2:00 at night and wakes up at 10:00 in the morning can never progress.”

The federal minister remarked “Whole nation has to move towards a tax culture. Everyone has to stop tax evasion.”

KSA, UAE keen to invest in Pakistan: Musadiq

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Minister of State for Petroleum Dr Musadiq Malik on Sunday said that Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates are taking keen interest in Pakistani information technology, agriculture and mining sectors.

KSA has planned to fix funds of 24 billion dollars for investment purposes, while U.A.E allocated 22 billion dollars funds for exploring opportunities in three sectors of Pakistan, he stated in an interview with a private television channel. The heavy investment in three major sectors of Pakistan would open many job opportunities for young people, he added. Our young people having knowledge of advanced technology are fully capable to show the world about their skills, he said. We are hopeful to bring business opportunities here in this

country, he said.

He said the government has recently constituted committees for One-window operations to facilitate the investors. Commenting on Nawaz Sharif’s arrival in Pakistan, he said, after the announcement of the date by the election commission of Pakistan, the former prime minister will come Pakistan to lead the election campaign.

He said the incumbent government’s tenure will be finished by August mid and the Caretaker set-up will invite ECP to announce the schedule for general elections. He said it is the responsibility of ECP to hold the next elections in a transparent manner. He said the PML-N under the guidance of Nawaz Sharif would sweep the general elections. To a question about the next leadership role in this country, he said the PML-N will decide

about the leadership role.

To a question about relief to poor people, he said despite economic challenges, the government has provided maximum relief to employees, and pensioners besides the people working in the private sector. About load-shedding of gas and electricity, he said, we have issued directives to the department concerned to ensure energy supply during cooking breakfast, lunch and dinner timing.

He said that a discussion has been made with Azerbaijan regarding the provision of LNG cargo to Pakistan before next winter. To a question about IMF, he said a nine-month relief operation commenced on Sunday, ensuring a smooth and memorable conclusion for nearly 82,000 government Hajj scheme pilgrims and facilitating their reunion with their families. The Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) along with private airlines including Airblue, Serene Air, and Saudi Airlines will work together to facilitate the safe return of Pakistani pilgrims.

Israeli air strikes hit targets in Syria

D A M A S C U S (AFP/APP): Israel carried out air strikes in Syria near the government-held city of Homs, Syrian state media reported on Sunday, and the Israeli army later said it had responded to rocket fire.

During more than a decade of war in Syria, Israel has launched hundreds of air strikes on Syrian territory, primarily targeting Iran-backed forces and Lebanese Hezbollah fighters as well as Syrian army positions.

“The Israeli enemy carried out air strikes coming from the northeast of Beirut, targeting some points in the vicinity of the city of Homs,” which is about 20 kilometres (12 miles) from Lebanon, Syrian state-run news agency SANA said, quoting a military source.

In a statement several hours later on Sunday morning, the Israeli military confirmed it had conducted strikes. It said they targeted “an anti-aircraft battery in Syria, as a response to the launch of an anti-aircraft rocket from

Syria into Israeli territory”.

It added that Israeli jets had also “struck additional targets in the area”, and that the Syrian anti-aircraft rocket had “exploded in the air” and no injuries were reported.

SANA had reported that Syrian air defences intercepted some missiles, and that there had been some “material” losses.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor said the targeted area in the northeastern Homs countryside was a Hezbollah stronghold housing arms depots belonging to the Iran-backed group.

Israel rarely comments on the strikes it carries out on Syria, but it has repeatedly said it will not allow its arch foe Iran to expand its footprint there.

On June 14, Israel carried out air strikes near Damascus wounding a soldier, according to SANA. The Observatory, based in Britain, said at the time that the strikes had targeted arms depots belonging to pro-Iran fighters.

Israel to buy 25 more F-35 stealth jets in \$3 billion deal: Israel has approved the purchase of a third squadron of F-35 stealth fighter jets in a deal worth \$3 billion, the Ministry of Defense said on Sunday.

The additional 25 aircraft manufactured by Lockheed Martin (LMT-N) will bring the number of F-35s in Israel’s air force to 75, the ministry said, adding that the deal will be financed through the defense aid package Israel receives from the United States.

Israel was the first country outside the United States to acquire the F-35. In May 2018 its air force chief said that Israel was the first to use the plane in combat.

The F-35 is also known as the Joint Strike Fighter and in Israel by its Hebrew name “Adir” (Mighty). Lockheed Martin and engine manufacturer Pratt & Whitney have agreed to involve Israeli defense companies in the production of aircraft components, the Israeli ministry added.

Pakistan announces to collect all Hajj expenses in US dollars from next year

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Talha Mehmood addressing a post-Hajj press conference on Sunday announced to collect all expenses of Hajj in US dollars from the next year. He congratulated the 160, 000 Pakistanis pilgrims on performing the Hajj.

Praising the efforts of the Saudi Arabia Crown Prince Muhammed bin Salman, he said no untoward incident was reported during Hajj 2023 in Jamarat while most of the pilgrims seemed satisfied with the arrangements.

“We can compare this Hajj with 2019 because not all pilgrims performed Hajj in 2022,” he added.

The Minister has commended the Pakistan Hajj mission’s team for their exceptional efforts in making remarkable Hajj arrangements within a very limited time and directed the mission to further enhance the post-Hajj facilities provided to the pilgrims. Additionally, he urged the Hajj mission to initiate preparations for the next Hajj without delay, aiming to enhance the pilgrims’ experience through improved accommodations, meals, and transportation facilities in the upcoming year.

Director Moavineen Sajjad Haider Yaldram briefed the minister about Hajj arrangements.

The meeting was attended by the Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Syed Ata Rahman, and the Director General of Hajj in Jeddah, Abdul Wahab Soomro.

It is pertinent to note that month-long post-Hajj flight operation commenced on Sunday, ensuring a smooth and memorable conclusion for nearly 82,000 government Hajj scheme pilgrims and facilitating their reunion with their families. The Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) along with private airlines including Airblue, Serene Air, and Saudi Airlines will work together to facilitate the safe return of Pakistani pilgrims.

Monsoon rain spell in country begins from today

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) on Sunday forecast monsoon rainfall in the country from July 03 and will continue till July 08.

The Met Office, in a report stated that moist currents from the Arabian Sea are likely to penetrate in upper parts of the country, and a westerly wave is also likely to enter the country from July 3 (tomorrow).

Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Murree, Galliat, Attock, Chakwal and Jhelum, Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan and other areas will receive rain with thunderstorm from July 4-7.

Rain, wind, thunder-shower with isolated heavy falls are also expected in Barkhan, Sibbi, Loralai, Kalat, Khuzdar, Zhob, Lasbella and Naseerabad, Bannu, Karak, Waziristan, D.I Khan, Rajanpur, Multan, Bhakkar, Layyah, Kot Addu, Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar, Sahiwal and Okara from July 5 to 8.



PARIS: Protesters clash with police in the Paris suburb of Nanterre.

Prigozhin-controlled Russian media group shuts amid mutiny fallout

MOSCOW (Reuters): Yevgeny Prigozhin’s media holding group is to shut down, the director of one of its outlets said, highlighting the mercenary chief’s worsening fortunes a week after the collapse of a brief mutiny staged by his Wagner Group fighters.

Under a deal that halted the mutiny, Prigozhin, a former ally of President Vladimir Putin, was allowed to go into exile in Belarus and his men given the choice of joining him, being integrated into Russia’s armed forces or returning home.

Patriot Media, whose most prominent outlet was the RIA FAN news site, had taken a strongly nationalist, pro-Kremlin editorial line, while also providing positive coverage of Prigozhin and his Wagner Group.

“I am announcing our

decision to close down and to leave the country’s information space,” RIA FAN director Yevgeny Zubarev said in a video clip posted late on Saturday on the holding’s social media accounts. Zubarev gave no reason for the decision.

Russian newspaper Kommersant reported on Friday that the country’s communications watchdog Roskomnadzor had blocked media outlets linked to Prigozhin, without elaborating. The watchdog could not be reached on Sunday for comment.

Russian media have also reported that a “troll factory” allegedly used by Prigozhin to influence public opinion in foreign countries including the United States had been disbanded.

In his video post, Zubarev praised Patriot Media’s record, saying it

had defended both Prigozhin and Putin from attacks by the anti-Kremlin opposition, including jailed Putin critic Alexei Navalny.

The Patriot Group had worked “against Alexei Navalny and other representatives of the opposition who genuinely tried to destroy our country”, he said. Despite the abortive mutiny, Russian authorities have not officially outlawed the Wagner Group, but Putin said on Tuesday the finances of Prigozhin’s catering firm would be investigated. He said Wagner and its founder had received almost \$2 billion from Russia in the past year. Wagner’s men have fought some of the bloodiest battles of the 16-month war in Ukraine, and its ranks have included thousands of ex-prisoners recruited from Russian jails.

Punjab govt claims cardiology facilities continue on Sehat card

LAHORE (NNI): Punjab’s caretaker Information Minister Amir Mir has firmly rejected the termination of cardiology facilities on the Sehat card, ensuring uninterrupted access to these services for patients.

Addressing a press conference along with caretaker health minister Dr Javed Akram, he said there is no truth in the news of stopping heart treatment on Sehat Card.

This announcement comes in response to the recent ‘rumors’ that the Punjab government has suspended heart ailment treatment on the health card. Media reports had highlighted that an insurance company associated with the Sehat Card scheme issued a notification stating the cessation of all treatment provisions at private hospitals across the province. According to the notification, heart patients would no longer be eligible for any form of treatment covered by the health card at private healthcare facilities. Refusing to halt treatment through the health card, Amir Mir said the government is determined to ensure that cardiology facilities continue to be accessible to the public.

Aamir Mir said that former prime minister Mian Nawaz Sharif introduced health card only for the poor in 2015. “It became a mafia in the name of Sehat Card during the PTI era and people became billionaires with it, he lamented.

Dr Javed Akram said that the mafia exploited the Sehat card. “The mafia running private hospitals misused the Sehat card and they placed unnecessary stenting just to mint the money. However, he said that the government is determined to deliver the benefits of the health card to the original beneficiaries without closing or limiting access to cardiology services. Dr Javed Akram said that the government is in the process of negotiating a new contract with the Punjab State Life Insurance Company, with the goal of making further improvements to provide enhanced facilities to the public through the health card system.

Attack on mayor’s house shocks France despite ‘calmer’ night

PARIS (AFP/APP): French politicians expressed horror on Sunday after the home of the mayor of a Paris suburb was attacked in a new night of rioting over the killing of a teen by police, even if the violence nationwide was less intense than in previous days.

The government of President Emmanuel Macron has been battling five consecutive nights of violent protests since 17-year-old Nahel M. was shot dead in the Paris suburb of Nanterre on Tuesday by a police officer during a traffic check.

The killing of Nahel M, who was of Algerian origin, has revived longstanding accusations of institutional racism within the French police who rights groups say single out minorities during controls.

Seeking to quell what has become one of the biggest challenges to Macron of his presidency, the interior ministry has for the last two nights deployed 45,000 police and gendarmes nationwide, as well as helicopters and armoured vehicles.

The interior ministry said 719 people were arrested overnight, around half the figure from the previous night with intense clashes still reported in several places, including the southern city of Marseille, but

Iran urges France ‘to end violent treatment’ of protesters

TEHRAN (AFP/APP): Iran called on the French government Sunday to “end the violent treatment of its people” following a wave of rioting triggered by the police killing of a teenager.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani on Twitter also urged Iranian citizens to “refrain from making unnecessary trips to France” and told those already there to avoid “conflict areas”, warning of the “insecure and unpredictable situation”. France has been rocked by a major wave of violent street protests sparked by the fatal police shooting of a 17-year-old of Algerian origin, identified only as Nahel M., in the Paris suburb of Nanterre on

Tuesday. The government has deployed tens of thousands of security forces and made hundreds of arrests as rioters have ransacked shops and torched buildings and vehicles in multiple cities. Kanani said “The French government is expected to put an end to the violent treatment of its people by respecting principles based on human dignity, freedom of speech and the right of citizens to peaceful protests”.

The unrest in France has made headlines in newspapers in the Islamic republic, which was hit last year by nationwide protests and launched a major crackdown on what authorities labelled “riots”.

home, although the mayor himself was at the town hall to deal with the riots. The wife was “badly injured” sustaining a broken leg, prosecutors said.

Prosecutors have opened an attempted murder investigation. “Last night the horror and disgrace reached a new level,” the mayor said in a statement.

“The situation was much calmer,” overall Prime Minister

Elisabeth Borne told reporters as she visited L Hay-les-Roses.

“But an act of the kind we saw this morning here is particularly shocking. We will let no violence get by” unpunished, she said, urging that the perpetrators be sanctioned with the “utmost severity”.

Some 7,000 police were deployed in Paris and its suburbs alone, including along tourist hotspot the Champs Elysees avenue in central Paris following calls on social media to take the rioting to the heart of the capital.

The massive police presence helped keep the violence in check, said Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin.

“A calmer night thanks to the resolute action of the security forces,” he tweeted early Sunday.

But Paris police chief Laurent Nunez cautioned on BFM TV: “No one is declaring victory.”

In Marseille, which has seen intense clashes and looting, police dispersed groups of youths Saturday evening at Canebiere, the main avenue running through the centre of the city, AFP journalists said.

“They came specifically to do damage, loot and leave,” said Youcef Bettahar, a shop-

China complains to France after Chinese tourists hurt in riots

BEIJING (Reuters): China’s Consulate General in Marseille complained to France after a bus carrying a Chinese tour group in the southern city had its windows smashed leading to minor injuries, China’s Consular Affairs Office said in a statement on Sunday.

The Consulate General’s formal complaint called for France to ensure the safety of Chinese citizens and their property, the statement said.

The bus was attacked by rioters on Thursday, according to state broadcaster CCTV, during violence which hit French cities in recent days since the police shooting of a teenager of North African descent. The

Chinese tourists have since left France, the Consular Office statement said.

Chinese citizens in France or heading to France “should “strengthen prevention” and be “more vigilant and cautious” in light of the riots which have swept across the country in recent days, the Consular office statement added.

Rioting across France appeared to be less intense on Saturday, as tens of thousands of police had been deployed in cities across the country after the funeral of the teenager, although there was some tension in central Paris and sporadic clashes in Nice, Strasbourg and Marseille.

Sunday, in a sign of the gravity of the situation in France.

Macron will head a crisis meeting Sunday with members of his government, according to Elysee.

In a bid to limit the ongoing violence, buses and trams in France have stopped running after 9:00 pm and the sale of large fireworks and inflammable liquids has been banned.

Marseille has stopped all urban transport from 6:00pm.

Macron has urged parents to take responsibility for underage rioters, one-third of whom were “young or very young”.

Justice Minister Eric Dupond-Moretti said Saturday that 30 percent of those arrested were minors, while Darmanin said the average age of those arrested was just 17.

The unrest has raised concerns abroad, with France hosting the Rugby World Cup in the autumn and the Paris Olympic Games in the summer of 2024.

Britain and other European countries updated their travel advice to warn tourists to stay away from areas affected by the rioting.

China’s consulate in Marseille similarly warned its citizens to “be vigilant and exercise caution” after state-run media reported the pelting with stones of a bus carrying Chinese tourists in the southern city.

Culture and entertainment have been disrupted, with singer Mylene Farmer calling off stadium concerts and French fashion house Celine cancelling its Paris menswear show. A 38-year-old policeman has been charged with voluntary homicide over Nahel’s death and has been remanded in custody.