

KP again shaken by quake

PESHAWAR (INP): Another quake of mild intensity hit several cities of KP early Sunday morning after the tremors shook several parts of Punjab and KP a day before. The quake hit Bajaur, Upper and Lower Dir, Chitral and Kurram areas. The magnitude of the earthquake was recorded at a magnitude of 5.4 on the Richter scale, with its epicentre located in the Hindukush mountain range at a depth of 186 km beneath the surface.

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First national English daily published from Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, Karachi and Washington D.C

Member ECP visits PSs

PESHAWAR (APP): Member Election Commission Justice (R) Ikramullah Khan visited various polling stations and talked to the voters during different polling stations. Provincial Election Commissioner Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shamshad Khan and other officials were also accompanying him. The Member Election Commission inquired about the arrangements and turnout from the polling staff.

Vol. XXXIX

No. 198

Regd. No. 241

MUHARRAM-UL-HARRAM 18, 1445 -- MONDAY, AUGUST 07 2023

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

Price. 30

Train crash kills 30, dozens injures near Nawabshah

NAWABSHAH (INP): Over 30 people were killed and dozens others injured when eight bogies of Havelian bound Hazara Express derailed near the Sarhari Railway Station close to Nawabshah on Sunday.

Local people, rescue personnel, railway officials, Pakistan Army, FC and officials of district management reached the scene and joined the rescue operation.

Talking to media at People's Medical College Hospital in Benazirabad, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah confirmed the death toll.

He said that the injured could be shifted to Karachi if needed and directed the local administration and health officials to expedite relief and rescue efforts.

According to Railways and Aviation Minister Khawaja Saad Rafique, the accident occurred at 1:18pm and around 1,000

passengers were travelling in the Hazara Express.

During rescue operation, dozens of cars, tractors, rickshaws and motorcycles were seen parked on a road that runs alongside the track at the site of accident.

Volunteers were witnessed through a canal that separates the road from the railway line to help, and lifting the injured to get them assistance.

Some passenger compartments were upright but off the tracks, while others lay on their side, mangled steel from the undercarriage twisted and buckled.

There were chaotic scenes at the Nawabshah Trauma Centre as ambulances and private cars ferried the injured for treatment.

Talking to media in Lahore, Minister for Railways Khawaja Saad Rafique said that initial investigation showed that

the train was travelling at a "reasonable" speed, adding that officials had reached the scene and an emergency was imposed in hospitals in Sukkur and Nawabshah.

He said, "This is quite a big accident. There can be two reasons: first that it was a mechanical fault, or the fault was created — it might be a sabotage. We will investigate it."

The minister further stated that relevant district administrations, Rescue 1122 personnel, the Pakistan Army and Pakistan Railways staff reached the site of the accident soon after the incident and began relief activities.

The incident comes a day after the Allama Iqbal Express escaped a major disaster when two of its bogies derailed near Padidan railway station in the wee hours of Saturday, resulting in the suspension of traffic on the affected

railway track. However, no casualty was reported in the incident, said rescue officials.

The accident was also a grim reminder of a collision between two trains near Daharki in Sindh in June 2021, which resulted in the death of at least 65 people and left about 150 others injured. In that accident, an express derailed onto the opposite track, and a second passenger train crashed into the wreckage roughly a minute later.

It should be mentioned here that accidents and derailments occur frequently on Pakistan's antiquated railway system, which has nearly 7,500 kilometres of track and carries more than 80 million passengers a year.

PM grieved over loss of lives in train accident

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Sunday expressed grief and sorrow over the



loss of precious lives in an accident of Hazara Express in Nawabshah.

He prayed for the depart-

ed souls and ordered the administration to provide the best possible medical treatment to the injured. He

sought a report from the railways authorities about the accident.

He praised the efforts of

personnel of Pakistan Railways, Rescue and Pakistan army for their timely help.



LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif addressing during groundbreaking ceremony of PKLI University and launching of National Hepatitis C Elimination Campaign.

PM: Serving ailing people; a collective responsibility of all

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday said that all those who were tasked with the onus to serve humanity, should strive for the provision of free-of-cost health and education facilities to the poor and deprived segments of society.

The prime minister was addressing a conference arranged here to create awareness about the elimination of Hepatitis-C in the country arranged at Pakistan Kidney and Liver Institute (PKLI).

Addressing the participants, the prime minister said it was their collective responsibility to serve the poor and deprived masses by setting up health facilities like the PKLI in line with the vision of Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of the nation, and in accordance with the concept of the welfare state.

The event was attended by Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman, ministers, experts and relevant authorities. The prime minister termed the event a historic and said that he always desired to see PKLI working on the pattern of Johns Hopkins of the USA.

He said the PKLI jour-

ney started in 2014, when he requested Dr Saeed Akhtar to set up a state-of-the-art institute for the kidney and liver diseases in Punjab province. The prime minister said that the institute was established with an autonomous body to rid it of any official red tape.

The project was launched in 2015 and was completed in 2018 when the first kidney transplant was performed, he recollected. The prime minister said that till this day, a total of 1000 transplants had been performed at PKLI which was another milestone.

The PKLI had now Rs 15 billion in the trust fund which would help in providing free treatment to the poor people, he added.

He observed that previously, they used to send liver disease patients to other neighbouring countries. PKLI was established in the country which entertained patients irrespective of class and without discrimination, he said, adding it was also an essence for the creation of Pakistan for which Quaid and a large number of people gave huge sacrifices.

(Continued on Back Page)

PM praises LDA for landscaping work

ISLAMABAD (APP):

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday appreciated the landscaping work of Lahore Development Authority (LDA), under the supervision of Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi, at Pakistan Kidney and Liver Institute (PKLI).

On his Twitter handle, the prime minister shared his thoughts along with a combo of pictures of the entrance of PKLI.

"A breathtaking view of the landscape adorning the entrance to the Pakistan Kidney and Liver Institute (PKLI). Public places, especially hospitals, should wear a friendly look," he posted in a tweet.

The prime minister also commended DG LDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa and the Punjab CM.

Bilawal takes notice of train accident

KARACHI (APP): Chairman of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Sunday took notice of the Hazara Express train accident that occurred near Nawabshah on Sunday and directed the relevant authorities to investigate it.

According to the statement issued by Media Cell Bilawal House, Chairman PPP expressed his heartfelt condolences and sympathy to the families of the passengers who died in the unfortunate accident near Sirhari railway station and prayed for eternal peace for departed souls.

He issued instructions that his party workers should also participate in rescue activities with the rescue teams of the Sindh government. He also urged the Sindh government to ensure better treatment for the passengers injured in the accident.

CM expresses grief over train incident

PESHAWAR (APP): In wake of the tragic Nawabshah train accident, Caretaker Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan on Sunday expressed deep sorrow and grief for the loss of lives.

The Chief Minister extended his heartfelt condolences and solidarity to the bereaved families of the deceased victims.

Amidst this time of immense grief, Chief Minister Azam Khan offered prayers and patience to the mourning families of those who lost their lives.

He also expressed his sincere wishes for the speedy recovery of the injured victims, hoping for their swift healing and well-being.

Nawaz Sharif to be next PM if voted to power: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP):

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Sunday said Nawaz Sharif would be the next prime minister of Pakistan and would change destiny of the country by initiating projects in the sectors of agriculture, industry and infrastructure.

He was speaking at a public meeting here after laying foundation stone for Taray Garh interchange on the Lahore-Bahawalnagar motorway and Rai Mansab Ali Khan interchange on the Abdul Hakim motorway on the Bucheki-Nankana road.

"Nawaz Sharif will serve the people of Pakistan as prime minister for another term if voted to power. He considers the whole of Pakistan as his family and in the past selflessly served the people," he remarked.

He said Rs 263 billion would be spent on the construction of motorway from Lahore to Bahawalnagar and on other projects.

He recalled that in the past, Pakistan suffered from loadshedding of 20 hours every day and then Nawaz Sharif came in 2013 and he removed the darkness caused by power shortages by setting up power projects, revived industry and agriculture and brought the CPEC project of \$ 30 billion with the collaboration of China.

He said their govern-

ment provided laptops worth billions of rupees to millions of students, adding he was unfairly criticised for delivering laptops to youth who were now using modern tools of communication and earning livelihoods.

He noted that Nawaz Sharif initiated the project of Diamer Bhasha and Dasu dams and made Pakistan a nuclear state by conducting six nuclear explosions in response to five explosions by India.

He reminded that Nawaz Sharif rejected the offer of \$ five billion by the then US President Bill Clinton and went on with the nuclear explosions while ignoring pressure. Nawaz Sharif also started Zarb e Azab led by Pakistan army to eradicate terrorism and the jawans of armed forces and people from all sections of society rendered sacrifices against terrorism.

Shehbaz Sharif said unfortunately terrorists were again allowed to re-enter Pakistan and they took many innocent lives in terrorist acts. In the era of Nawaz Sharif, the PM said Pakistan had good relations with friendly and brotherly countries including China, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, Qatar and others.

Then Imran Niazi was imposed on the country after rigged election in

2018 and his regime caused severe damage to relations with these countries including Islamic countries and he resorted to baseless allegations of corruption against companies of China, he added.

Ties with China were broken by the former government of Imran Niazi despite the fact that the neighbouring country massively invested in infrastructure, power and road projects, he pointed out.

The prime minister said former judge Saqib Nisar and other co-conspirators ousted Nawaz Sharif on the basis of residence permit even when his name was not among the 400 persons named in the Panama papers. Nawaz Sharif and his daughter Maryam Nawaz appeared before the court 100 times in their cases and did not evade arrests as was later done by Imran Niazi who presented a fake receipt for an expensive watch imprinted with a model of Khana-e-Kaaba and came in court with a "bucket on his head", he added.

He said those who filed false and concocted cases against opposition leaders now met divine justice.

He said in the tenure of Imran Niazi, several cases of corruption surfaced including wheat and sugar scams in which money was

minted by unnecessary export and import of these commodities and then these acts of fraud were never probed and citizens bore the burden of loot and plunder. He said his government faced unprecedented challenges of inflation and devastating floods.

"My government distributed Rs100 billion among the flood affectees and several hundreds of billions are still required for their rehabilitation," He said due to his government's policies and distribution of seeds and fertilizer on lower rates, bumper wheat was produced while cotton production this year would also be at record levels.

"My government saved the country from default and from difficult economic conditions, unemployment and price hikes by signing the agreement with the International Monetary Fund."

He said reasons of current inflation were war in Ukraine and rising international commodity and fuel prices, adding due to the mismanagement of the past government, his government had to sign agreement with IMF despite its tough conditions.

Saudi Arabia gave \$ two billion, UAE \$ one billion and China rescheduled loans of \$ five billion so that Pakistan could meet

the financing needs for finalizing the IMF agreement, he informed.

He said as chief minister he served the people of Punjab with sincerity, undertook massive projects in health and education sectors, built road network in the province and gave free medicine to people.

He vowed that their next government would bring revolution in the agriculture sector, extract minerals worth billions of dollars and equip youth with latest tools of information technology. The youth programme would be implemented at the federal and provincial levels and more laptops would be given to the students on merit.

He lamented that billions of rupees were wasted on unnecessary court cases instead of a focus on mineral extraction in the provinces. He told that the National Assembly would be dissolved on August 9 and a caretaker government would be formed.

He prayed for the departed souls who lost their lives in the train accident during the day and after sinking of a boat in Head Sulemanki.

Earlier, the prime minister was given detailed briefing on the new infrastructure projects. Governor Punjab Balighur Rehman and legislators of PML (N) accompanied the prime minister.

PTI threw 'petrol bomb of inflation' on people, says Marriyum Aurangzeb

KARACHI (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Sunday criticized the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) four-year rule which triggered extreme inflation in the country due to wrong economic policies and massive corruption of its leadership.

"The people fully know the difference between development, destruction and conspiracies," she said while drawing a comparison between the destructive policies of the PTI government, and development-oriented and public-friendly initiatives of the coalition government in the last 15 months. Addressing a news conference at the Karachi Press Club, she recalled that the PTI pelted petrol bombs on the police when the PTI chief's residence in Zaman Park was raided.

She said the PTI chief was the mastermind of May 9 incidents when the Law Enforcement Agencies' vans, mosques, ambulances, memorials of martyrs and sensitive installations were set on fire.

On the contrary, she said the three-time prime minister brought prosperity and development in the country by ending load-shedding and curbing terrorism. Nawaz Sharif launched China Pakistan Economic Corridor, made the coun-

try's defence impregnable and spread network of roads across Pakistan, she added.

Marriyum said curbs were imposed on the media and freedom of expression during the four-year of the PTI, however, the press clubs across the country provided a platform to the then opposition leaders to spread their messages among the masses and highlight fascism of the previous regime.

She said the PTI chairman was declared "predator" for media by the international organization, but Pakistan ranking in press freedom improved during the last fifteen months of the coalition government.

She said the PEMRA Ordinance of 2002 was a "black law" which was enacted by a dictator, but it was the coalition government which introduced amendments after twelve months of extensive consultation with the relevant stakeholders.

The PEMRA (Amendment) Bill 2023 would not be enacted until all the objections raised on the legislation were addressed, she added.

To a query, she said the appointment of caretaker PM was a constitutional responsibility of the Prime Minister and the Opposition Leader, and the

people would be informed as soon as the names for the purpose would be finalized.

The National Assembly would be dissolved on August 9, she said, adding responsibility of holding election was on the Election Commission of Pakistan.

The minister expressed the confidence that the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) would be victorious in the next general elections under the leadership of former prime minister Mian Mohammed Nawaz Sharif.

She said that Gawadar was part of the country and the economic progress relied on the ports.

Marriyum Aurangzeb said that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project was stopped by the previous government and it was restored by the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif soon after coming into the power. She said that the coalition government made the extensive efforts to chart the country on the path of progress and economic stability.

The minister said former Prime Minister Mohammed Nawaz Sharif said goodbye to International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 2016 but the previous government signed the agreement again and then violated and suspended it for political gains.

She said the coalition government after coming into power re-negotiated the deal and reached a 9-month standby agreement with the IMF to save the country from default.

She said the prime minister had presided over the meeting of Council of Common Interests (CCI) which unanimously approved the results of Digital Census 2023. The CCI meeting had the participation of all provinces and political parties.

"Throughout the world, there is a system in place for attracting foreign direct investment, and the purpose of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) is to facilitate direct foreign investment by providing a one-window operation to the investors," she said while responding to another query.

The Prime Minister had brought all institutions together under the umbrella of SIFC, she said while condemning the propaganda which alleged that the certain lands were being handed over to the council.

She said process for investment in five sectors under SIFC had been uploaded on digital portal, which would be made accessible for general public and through this, all reservations will be addressed. All provinces



and ministries are made part of SIFC, she added.

The initiative would end Pakistan's reliance on foreign debts, she said while citing examples Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Iran, Iraq, and other western countries that following the same initiative for attracting foreign investment.

At the outset of press conference, the minister expressed her grief over the train accident took place near Nawabshah today.

She prayed to the Almighty to rest the departed souls in the eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved families to bear irreparable loss.

The Federal Minister for Railways has held a detailed press conference regarding the incident, she said, adding relief operation was underway at the site of the accident.



PAC organizes 'Sab Say Pehlay Pakistan' rally

RAWALPINDI (APP): Punjab Arts Council (PAC) Sunday organized the 'Sab Say Pehlay Pakistan' flag rally in connection with the Pakistan Independence Day celebrations.

The rally led by the Director of Arts Council Waqar Ahmed started from Murree Road and culminated at the Arts Council.

The rally was accompanied by a musical band playing national anthems while the participants of the rally held the Pakistan flag in their hands and chanted Pakistan Zindabad.

Dozens of artists including Anjum Khabibi, Yar Muhammad Khan, Raja Abdul Sattar, Arshad Minhas, Sapna Shah, Saeed Anwar, Afzal Latifi, Arshad Khan, Anjam Abbasi, and others participated.

Addressing the rally, the Director of Arts Council Waqar Ahmed congratulated the nation on the commencement of Independence Day celebrations and said that living nations celebrate their Independence Day with full enthusiasm.

He said that there was no substitute for freedom in the world and the world develops only in freedom.

"We should be grateful to Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Allama Iqbal, thanks to whom we are breathing freely, according to the government's vision, Pakistan will soon emerge as a major economic power in the world," he added.

He further said, "Punjab Arts Council will organize various programs till August 14." At the end of the rally, a special prayer was offered for the security, development, and prosperity of Pakistan.

54 Pak students selected to study in US

LAHORE (APP): The United States Educational Foundation in Pakistan (USEFP) hosted 54 students for a two-day pre-departure orientation, who have received scholarships from the US government to study in the United States for one semester under the Global Undergraduate Semester Exchange (UGRAD) Programme, Higher Education Commission (HEC) official sources in Lahore told APP on Sunday.

Hailing from all regions of the country, the students will attend undergraduate classes at 51 US colleges and universities, while participating in workshops to strengthen leadership skills, and engage in community service projects, they said.

The recipients of the scholarships have been selected on merit, because the students with the potential not just to excel in higher education but to bring change and development to their communities. It is believed that their American classmates will learn a lot from this group of talented students, added sources.

CHANGE OF NAME

My Correct name is Muhammad Abdullah whereas in the academic documents it is wrongly written as Abdullah. May I be written and called by correct name. Muhammad Abdullah son of Sardar Khan Pawka Peshawar

Outsourcing does not mean selling or pledging of anything: Rafique

AJK Assembly strongly rejects abrogation of Article 370 by Indian govt

MIRPUR (NNI): The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly (AJK LA) in its meeting held here on Sunday, strongly rejected the abrogation of Article 370 by Indian government and termed it a dirty conspiracy against the state subjects and their democratic rights.

They termed the sinister actions as an atrocious assault to alter the region's demographics and erode Muslim majority Kashmir's ancient political, cultural and religious identity. According to details, the legislative body through a unanimously adopted resolution, presented by Leader of the House Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq on Saturday denounced the Indian move and termed it as a flagrant violation of the UNSC resolutions.

While presenting the resolution in the assembly, the AJK PM said that 5th August was another darkest day in the history of Kashmir. He said that being a representative forum of the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir, the AJK legislative assembly represents the sentiments and feelings of the Kashmiri's living on both sides of the Line of Control. The august House, he said, rejects the India's attempted annexation of the held territory of Jammu and Kashmir and considers all its actions as illegal and against the spirit of the UN resolutions and international law.

The House considers changing the status of IIOJK and dividing it into two Union Territories as an attempt to push forward Hindutva agenda in the region and erode identity of Kashmiri's. The resolution condemned the India's cultural aggression and distortion of the Kashmir's history and its civilization.

He said that this house condemns in strong terms the Indian bid to reduce Kashmiri's role in political decision making process, depriving them of the right to due representation through illegal, unjust and unconstitutional delimitation process.

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Minister of Railways and Aviation Khawaja Saad Rafique has said that outsourcing something does not mean selling or pledging it.

Addressing a press conference, he said that Islamabad Airport was going to be outsourced and it's our guarantee that no employee would be deprived of jobs.

He said Islamabad Airport would be outsourced for 15 years and next we would do the same at the Lahore and Karachi airports as well.

The minister said that we were left behind but the entire world had done it. Our airports should be modernized, he emphasized.

Due to the statement of a personality, he said the PIA had been facing Rs70 billion loss annually. He said flights from UK would be launched soon.

The aviation minister said that lot of tasks are yet to be done in the railway and we are going to bring private investment in the railway production unit. As many as 400 acres of land has been acquired in Gwadar, he added.

Durrani inaugurates 'Kalam Bibi Int'l Women Institute' at Bannu University

BANNU (APP): National Assembly Deputy Speaker Zahid Akram Durrani has inaugurated the 'Kalam Bibi International Women Institute' here at the University of Bannu.

In this regard a ceremony was held wherein Zahid Akram Durrani was chief guest. On this occasion, the deputy speaker was accompanied by former MPs Fakhr-e-Azam and Qari Gul Azeem. Bannu University Vice Chancellor Dr Khair uz Zaman gave a briefing to the deputy speaker.

Addressing the ceremony, Durrani said it was a long standing demand of the people to have a university for women in the area and this institute would help to ensure provision of quality education to the female students of the area.

He acknowledged the role of Federal Minister for Planning Development &

Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal and the Higher Education Commission (HEC) in establishment of this institute.

He said the institute established at a cost of Rs 25.4 million would be totally solarized. He said the southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Bannu remained neglected during the last government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) as no funds were released for development of these areas.

He said the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) led federal government was making efforts to ensure quality education across the country as it plays a key role in the development of any society.

The 'Kalam Bibi International Women Institute' would provide an opportunity to local females to get quality education at their doorstep.

Punjab govt to provide all possible facilities to freelancers: Commissioner

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chhatta said that Punjab government was making all-out efforts to provide more facilities to freelancers. He informed that the provincial government was setting up an Information Technology (IT) Hub in Rawalpindi to facilitate the freelancers and provide IT opportunities to the youth of the twin-cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. In a statement issued here Sunday, the DC said that 800 youth would be benefited daily in two shifts in the IT Hub.

The freelancers who were doing IT related work at home would have all the facilities available at the IT Hub, he said adding, 61 percent women were involved in PITB's e-employment programs. He informed that the Board was working on several projects related to the IT industry. Punjab government is working day and night on IT and agriculture industry, he said adding that Punjab government was working on many advanced projects,

particularly in agriculture sector.

He informed that Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) and Municipal Corporation Rawalpindi (MCR) had signed an agreement to set up first Information Technology Hub in Rawalpindi. On the special directives of Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi, the administration under the supervision of Chief Secretary Punjab Zahid Akhtar Zaman had accelerated efforts to set up an online freelancer IT hub in Rawalpindi.

The Commissioner said that the administration was working on IT Hub project for last three months. The building for the IT hub was ready and the workplaces had also been created, he said. When the youth would get the workstation and workplace, more employment opportunities would be created, the Commissioner said.

IT hub would generate foreign exchange as well as employment opportunities, the Commissioner added.



LAHORE: Railway Minister Khawaja Saad Rafique Inaugurate Steel Shop at Mughalpura Railway workshop.

Murad chairs PCIC meeting, decides to start KCR Project

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Sunday presided over the 11th meeting of the Provincial Coordination & Implementation Committee (PCIC) and decided to take over the Karachi Urban Transport Company (KUTC) to start Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) Project and resolved land issues of Malir Expressway to speed up work on the project.

The PCIC meeting was attended by provincial ministers Imtiaz Shaikh, Sharjeel Memon, Nasir Shah, Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab, Special Assistant to CM Qasim Naveed, Corps Commander Karachi Lt Gen Babar Iftikhar, Chief Secretary Sohail Rajput, Chairman P&D Hassan Naqvi, PSCM Fayaz Jatoti, Commissioner Karachi Iqbal Memon, MD SSWMB Imtiaz Shah and others. The Chief minister was told that the Karachi Urban Transport Company (KUTC) would undertake the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) project. The company was still under the control of the federal government.

The chief minister said that he would talk to the prime minister to take over the KUTC which was responsible to fulfill the documentation of the KCR project.

The CM was also told that Pakistan Railways had demanded equal value of land from the Sindh government to handover the Right of Way (RoW) of KCR. At this, the chief minister said that the Sindh government had given land to the railway authorities purely for railway purposes. "The KCR is also a train and it would operate on the same track, then why the railway authorities were demanding value of the land," he questioned.

The chief minister directed the DS Railways, present in the meeting, to resolve the issue and give the go-ahead to the provincial authorities so that it could be communicated to the Chinese authorities to initiate the KCR project. It was pointed out that the National Railways Administration (NRA), China required to conduct an updated feasibility study of the KCR Project. At this the P&D Chairman told the CM that the feasibility study has been done and sent to Chinese authorities. The chief minister said that now the Chinese authorities have to make a Framework agreement to start the project. Malir Expressway is 3x3 lane, 38.75 KM high-speed controlled access road starting from Jam Sadiq Bridge and ends before the Kathore interchange near M-9. It has six interchanges to be constructed which shall connect major traffic arteries of the city.

The Project is divided into two segments, 15 and 24 km respectively with a construction time of 30 Months. The first section from Jam Sadiq Bridge to Quaidabad is to be constructed within 1.5 Years (18 Months). The completion of the first segment (till Quaidabad) is envisaged by the end of the current year. Construction activities are in progress on Interchanges at EBM Causeway, Shah Faisal, and Bridges over Nallah and Chakora. The Construction activities on road pavement in the first segment are at an advanced stage. N&C of Pakistan Railways (PR) – Objection of PR on design drawings was again discussed and sent back to PR on 1st August 2023.

Construction of Embankment on almost 15 Km out of 24 KMs in progress in the second segment -

from Quaidabad to Kathore. The Design related issues pertaining to the 2nd Segment – Right Of way (ROW) passes through Samo, Lasi and Shafi Goths, the dense population settlement, envisaging removal/ compensation of structures.

It has been worked out that 138.2 acres of land would be acquired in the second segment with a tentative land acquisition cost of Rs 3.7 billion.

The Chief Minister directed the P&D dept not to disturb the people living in the villages but construct a 2 km elevated structure (bridge) on the left side of the villages on the existing alignment - at the outer periphery of the right bank of Malir River - bypassing Samo, Lasi, and Old Shafi Goths to avoid land acquisition and relocation. "The provincial govt would pay for the construction of the bridge," he said.

The CM directed the works dept to complete the first segment of the expressway by the end of November 2023. The CM was told that the Link Road connects National Highway N-5 to Motorway M-9, a 22 km long, four-lane dual carriageway project. Commercial Corridor providing upcountry access to Port Qasim, Industrial areas of Landhi, Korangi, and Steel Mill. There is a grade intersection at N5 and Grade separated Interchange at M-9. The construction of the M-9 Interchange with slip road would cost around Rs2 billion.

The construction of two bridges over M9 – N5 Link Road was undertaken in the additional Scope of M9 – N5 Link Road. The CM directed the works & Services dept to coordinate with the PPP unit and resolve all the issues and start work on war footings.

GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA COMMUNICATION & WORK DEPARTMENT

NOTICE INVITING E-BIDDING (Single stage single envelop E-Bidding System)

The C&W Division Kohistan Upper, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa invites electronic Bids from eligible firms/ contractors in accordance with KPRA procurement rules 2014, amended up-to-date (Publication date) on Single Stage single Envelop procedure for the following work(s)

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Required PEC Category	Bid Cost In Million	2% Earnest money of the Bid Cost	Tender Fee @ 0.03% of Bid cost	Period of Completion	Date & Time of Opening of Bid
1	Maintenance & Repair works of all roads in District Kohistan Upper for the year of 2023-24	C-5 and Above	30.00	2%		As per Work Order	25-08-2023 at 12:30 PM

- Bid Solicitation Documents and Instructions to Bidders can be obtained from the office on any working day or downloaded from C&W website (www.cwd.gkp.pk) & KPRA website (www.kpra.gov.pk) before the submission date / time.
- The bidders should submit their E-bids as per KPRA Notification No. S.R.O. (14)/Vol.1-24/2021-22 dated 10/05/2022
- Original Call Deposit for Bid security and Tender Fee @ of Rs.0.03% of the tender/Bid cost should be from the local National Bank of Pakistan Dasso so that verification process of the Deposit at Call is completed within 2/3 days positively to avoid the chance of bogus Call deposit shall be enclosed as to reach the office on or before closing date/time.
- Legible Scanned copy of bid security shall be submitted electronically along with the bid on E-bidding system.
- All bidders are required to be registered with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa revenue Authority under Finance Act, 2013 Act No. XXI of 2013.
- Venue of Bid opening is office of the Executive Engineer C&W Division Kohistan Upper.

INSTRUCTION TO BIDDERS

- The bid should accompany the following:
 - Bid Security and Tender Fee in the shape of Call Deposit.
 - Enlistment Order of C&W Department (Photocopy).
 - Renewal of Registration for CFY ZU23-2024 (Photocopy).
 - National Identity Card (CNIC Photocopy).
 - Valid Pakistan Engineering Council registration copy for current calendar year 2023-24.
 - Form H of the Company / Firm.
 - Documents showing general capabilities, financial soundness, general and relevant record, personnel Capabilities, equipment capabilities, registration with KPRA and Income Tax / NTN Certificates etc.
- The contractors quoting their bids up-to a limit of 10% below Engineer Estimate shall submit bid security @ 2% only of Engineer Estimate.
- The contractors quoting their bids more than 10% below up-to 20% below on Engineer's Estimate shall submit along-with their bids 8% Additional Security of Engineer's Estimated cost in addition to 2% bid security. If the bid is not accompanied with the required amount of Additional Security, then it will be considered as non-responsive and the 2% bid security shall be forfeited in favor of Government and the second lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly.
- Similarly, a contractor quoting bid more than 20% below shall submit with his bid an additional security on Engineer's Estimated cost equal to the differential amount of submitted bid and Engineer's Estimate along-with detailed rate analysis. In case of more than 20% below bids, if the bid is not accompanied by the detailed rate analysis and / or required amount of additional security, then the said bid shall be considered as non-responsive. All the securities submitted along-with such non-responsive bid shall be forfeited in favor of Government and the 2nd lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly.
- In case detailed rate analysis submitted with the bids is, in view of the Procuring Entity, not convincing, the Head of the Procuring Entity may declare such bid as non-responsive without any forfeiture of bid securities and record reasons thereof.
- The procuring entity may offer the contract to next lowest bidder after due diligence in the context of financial difference between such two bids or may advertise procurement opportunity afresh.
- After commencement of work by the successful bidder, the procuring entity may replace the Additional Security with a bank guarantee of the same amount from the scheduled bank, if the already deposited security is not in the form of bank guarantee.
- The Additional Security shall be released to the contractor in four installments i.e. 1st installment of 25% to be released upon completion of 25% of the project. 2nd installment of 25% to be released upon completion of 50% of the project. 3rd installment of 25% to be released upon completion of 75% of the project and the 4th installment of 25% to be released after 100% completion of the project.
- All such effort to conspire to cartel making shall be considered as violation of Rule-44 and shall be attributed towards miss-procurement under rule-54 of procurement Rules bid.
- The bidders are required to quote their rates above or below on both MRS2022 Bi Annual as well as on Non schedule items.
- Any Electronic Bidder who provides incorrect/incomplete information shall stand Non-Responsive.
- Any electronic Bidder who submits fake or forged documents or information shall stand debarred for participation in the bidding
- Time allowed for the completion of the work as specified in the NIB shall start from the issuance of Letter of Acceptance (LOA).
- Electronic Bids validity period is 90 days.
- Successful Bidder should sign the agreement with the department with Twenty-Eight (28) days after issuance of LOA.
- If the evaluated electronic bid cost of two or more than two bidders is equal then the successful bidder will be declared through draw.
- The employer has the authority to reject a bid or all the bid assigning cogent reasons.
- Bid security of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd bidder for the specific work will be retained by the Department till the approval of the bid.
- All those contractors who have been debarred in further bidding by the Department shall also not be allowed to participate in the E-Bidding otherwise their CDR will be forfeited in favor of Government.

Eng. Zahoor Elahi Baig, Executive Engineer
C & W division Kohistan Upper

INF(P) 1842/23



LAHORE: Families visiting Shahi Qilla during Sunday holiday in the Provincial Capital.



SSP Operations reviews security arrangements

PESHAWAR (APP): SSP Operations Haroon-ul-Rashid Khan has visited various polling stations to review the security arrangements for the by-elections of Tehsil Mathra of Warsak Division.

During the visit, SSP Operations reviewed all the security arrangements and also interacted with the jawans on duty and issued special instructions. SSP Operations Haroon-ul-Rashid Khan also met the polling staff.

SP Work Division Arshad Khan is also with him on this occasion. Peaceful conduct of by-

elections in Mathra tehsil of Warsak division is being ensured, SSP Operations Haroon ul Rashid Khan said.

Fool-proof security arrangements have been made for the by-elections of Tehsil Mathura of Warsak Division, SSP Operations told media men during his visit.

He said, Capital City Police (CCPO) Peshawar has created a special security plan for fool-proof security arrangements.

Under the security plan, around 4000 police officers, officials as well as ladies police are serving for

foolproof security, he informed.

Special responsibilities have been assigned to Quick Response Commandos (QRCs) to deal with any emergency situation, SSP Operations Haroon ul Rashid Khan said.

DSP Mathra visits polling stations

DSP Mathra Muhammad Ishaq Sunday visiting various polling stations in the by-elections.

Talking to media men, he said, steps have been taken for maintaining law and order situation during the by-election being continued without any break

since morning at 8.00 am. He said the clothes of every voter are being searched and for maintaining law and order situation, around 3,000 police personnel are deployed at different polling stations.

Police are on alert at the most sensitive polling stations, Muhammad Ishaq said.

He said, Lady Police officers are also performing their duty in the by-elections with sensitive polling stations being monitored by CTV cameras.

It is hoped that the by-elections will end peacefully, Muhammad Ishaq said.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali listening problems of city residents at his office.

Imran found guilty of corrupt practices in Toshakhana case, says constitutional experts, politicians

PESHAWAR (APP): Constitutional experts and politicians here Sunday said that Pakistan Tahir-e-Insaf Chairman, Imran Khan was found guilty of corrupt practices in Toshakhana case and was disqualified for five years from election.

“The court judgment was very clear. PTI Chairman was sentenced to three-year imprisonment and rupees one lakh fine after the court found him guilty of corrupt practices in Toshakhana case involving sale of expensive state gifts,” said senior lawyer and member of Peshawar High Court Bar Association

(PHCBA), Noman Bukhari while talking to APP.

He said Imran could not contest election for five years now unless his sentenced was overturned by the higher courts.

PMLN KP Spokesman and former MPA Ikhtair Wali said that the government had nothing to do with the verdict or the arrest of Imran Khan.

Talking to APP, he said that Imran Khan was given free and fair trial in Toshakhana case.

He said Imran has deliberately submitted fake details and hide benefits he accrued from the national exchequer wilfully and intentionally from selling the expensive state gifts.

He said as per the constitution, Imran Khan was automatically banned from politics for five years after the court ruling declaring that PTI Chief dishonesty has been established beyond doubt.

Ikhtair Wali Khan said that there was no justifica-

tion of hue and cry after the court inclusive judgment and if PTI workers has any reservation may approach to the higher court for remedy.

He said Tosakhana case has nullified all the anti corruption claims of the PTI Chairman.

Wali said that PTI Government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has closed down its own created Ehtesab Commission in Peshawar after it started exposing corruption of PTI rulers.

Ikhtair Wali said that PTI’s billion trees afforestation project was taken over by NAB Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He said that traffic jam in Peshawar had unnerved Peshawarties due to ill planned BRT corridor.

Wajid Ali Khan, PMLN leader and Ex Minister said that negative politics of Imran Niazi led to disintegration of PTI into different groups.

He said Imran has mostly used his energies in poli-

tics of accusations and victimization of political opponents.

Wajid Ali said that politics of Imran Niazi was finished after Toshakhana case.

He said PTI despite nine years rule in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa failed to deliver in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and address people problems.

Wajid said that Imran Niazi Government had badly damaged the economy and political values besides shattered confidence of monetary institutions.

He said the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif saved the country from economic default and bankruptcy after signing agreement with IMF.

PMLN after coming into power would address the nine years long sense of deprivation of people of the province and would expedite pace of economic development.

‘Imran will soon be out’

PESHAWAR (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) senior leader and former provincial finance minister Taimur Khan Jhagra has vowed that PTI Chairman Imran Khan would soon be out of jail, as your party will not break and it will only get stronger, because you will lead this country again.

In a heartfelt letter in the name of PTI Chairman, Taimur Jhagra said: “Dear Imran Khan, You have fought for this country all your life. We are all human. We all err. But for whatever flaws people say you have, through the time I have known you, I have known a man who is more fearless, more courageous, and more well meaning than any other politician I know. And who has done more for this country than any other politician has.”

“That is why so many of us who want to see change in this country choose to stand with you,” he added.”



PESHAWAR: District Population Welfare Officer Syed Muhammad Usman Shah giving award to Family Welfare Councilor on her best performance.

Climate change-induced weather patterns adding to miseries of KP upper areas’ inhabitants

PESHAWAR (APP): With fall of sun rays on his tent early morning, the poor wood seller Ali Zafar (48), started his painstaking journey towards nearby mountains to collect stones for reconstruction of his three marla house, swept away by the recent flash floods and torrential rains in Upper Chitral.

Commonly known as ‘Shino Lala’ in his native village due to his blue eyes, Ali Zafar after having breakfast, fasten big saddlebags to his two mules and moved towards the mountains to collect as much stone slabs as possible for construction of his house in village Meragram.

The stone-made house of the poor wood seller was completely destroyed by the July 12 floods here.

“I was offering Fajar prayer on the fateful morning of July 12 when the gushing water from Tirich Mir mountain ranges came in a jiffy and swept away my three marla house constructed by my father besides taking away all household luggage including furniture, two goats and stored wheat,” he recalled.

Ali said, “I could only save my two mules being sole earning for my family.” Worried about fast approaching winter season, Ali Zafar works from dawn to dusk along with his son and other family members to complete the structure before start of winter.

Zafar said due to exorbitant cost of construction materials including bricks and cement he could not afford a brick house and therefore was forced to construct a stone and mud-made house.

Zafar’s son helps his father in cutting and shaping the stones in such a manner that could easily be fixed in walls.

Similarly, Umar Mian, another poor labourer of the same village was also busy in repairing of his house on self basis after it was severely damaged by the climate change-induced weather of the last month.

He said half of his house was buried under flood debris while the remaining half was also in deplorable condition, therefore he was trying to remove the debris and fix the structure so that he could shift his family here before the winter starts.

They also complained about non-availability of drinking water as the only water supply line in the area was also swept away by the floods.

They appealed to the provincial government to release special compensation package for the affected poor villagers at earliest so that they could complete their houses well before the winter season in Upper Chitral.

“Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’s upper districts including Chitral, Swat, Kohistan,

Dir, Buner, Manshera and Abbottabad are highly vulnerable to climate-change induced weather patterns including flash floods and torrential rains due to deforestation and fast melting of glaciers owing to rise in temperature,” said Dr Muhammad Mumtaz Malik, former Chief Conservator KP Wildlife Department while talking to APP.

He said the environmental degradation, cutting of forests and population explosion have created socioeconomic imbalances and biodiversity loss.

Dr Mumtaz said illegal constructions at river Swat beds in Kalam, Bahrain and at river Kunhar in Naran and Kaghan areas of Manshera districts as well as high rate of deforestation in Kohistan had increased chances of environmental degradation due to soil erosion by flash floods and torrential rains making Pakistan fifth most vulnerable country to climate change.

He said Pakistan was losing about 27,000 hectares of forests per year mainly in private and community-owned natural forests of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit Baltistan owing to poverty, rapid population growth and high demand of wood.

The climate change-induced weather patterns, green houses gas emissions, rise in temperature and increase in construction activities in mountainous

areas have put 2,353 glaciers mostly located in Gilgit Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under danger with increased chances of floods in river Kabul, Sindh and Punjab provinces thus exposing KP and Punjab provinces to floods and environmental degradation in future.

Dr Mumtaz said with the glaciers retreat, more glacial lakes like that of Attabad in GB would form with more chances of glacial outbursts floods.

He said environmental degradation and deforestation have made negative effects on seasonal rainfalls in the country where normally 600millimeters to 1000 millimeters rainfalls was predicted per year.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government in order to counter environmental degradation, floods and erratic rainfalls’ negative effects started billion trees afforestation project under which 1.20 billion trees were planted during 2013-18.

Later, the project was extended to all provinces, GB and AJK with plantation target of 10 billion during 2019-23. “Under 10BTAP, KP has planted 700 million saplings against the target of 1 billion and the remaining shortfall of 300 million mainly caused by shortage of funding, lands for afforestation and law and order problems would be achieved by July 2024,”

PESHAWAR: Government Girls Higher Secondary School Batni Langoo facing shortage of staff only 6 teachers are out of 35 sanctioned positions while 300 students are enrolled in the school.

The students told media personnel that only arts teachers are posted in the school while there is no science teacher. They claimed that no staff has posted at the secondary level which will deprive the students further education.

A resident named Javeed Khan said that Amazai of Mandanr tehsil is already underprivileged while unavailability of staff will deprive their children education. He argued that most of students didn’t enroll at the school due to unavailability of staff at secondary level.

Another commoner namely Sar Mir Khan told that on one hand the residents are facing multiple problems including financial constraints while on the other hand their children are depriving from education due to negligence of competent authorities.

Village Council chairman Muhammad Taj Khan paid thanks to former education minister Sardar Babk for establishing the school in the premises.

He added that a Jirga also met recently with former minister regarding the subject matter while Sardar Babk assured his support in this regard.

Assistant District Education Officer Buner Female Muhammad Ali told that the issue is upheld before competent authorities while shortage will be overcome during next recruitment while responding to media.

He highlighted that in 2022, 4253 cases of sexual abuse of children were reported, indicating that 12 children become victims of sexual abuse every day, marking a 30% increase compared to 2021.

Imran Takkar added that

activities level taking into account both qualitative and quantitative sustainability indicators and integrated it with project scheduling and resource leveling problems into a multi-objective model.

He has developed a Grey Wolf Optimizer based solution algorithm for the model and compared its performance with an existing widely used metaheuristic algorithm. He has also developed two real-life construction case studies to demonstrate the applicability and practicality of his framework.

Similarly, Dr. Fareed research work was aimed at the selection and manufacturing optimization of materials for aircraft skin. The objectives were met by developing a simple but novel material selection methodology, followed by curing optimization which resulted in improved properties.

The proposed research will lead to reducing the weight of an aircraft by 30 % if the existing aluminum alloy skin is replaced with an alternate proposed optimum material. The

Speakers urge govt to ensure free education

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: FNF Pakistan organized a training workshop on the prevention of child abuse for relevant stakeholders in Peshawar.

The workshop had 30 participants from Peshawar and nearby districts, including teachers, journalists, social workers, lawyers, students, and representatives from other relevant departments.

The workshop was attended by FNF Pakistan’s Head of Program, Muhammad Anwar, child rights expert Imran Takkar, and peshawar based senior journalist Shamim Shahid.

Imran Takkar briefed the participants on different aspects of child abuse and emphasized the need to build synergy for the cause.

He highlighted that in 2022, 4253 cases of sexual abuse of children were reported, indicating that 12 children become victims of sexual abuse every day, marking a 30% increase compared to 2021.

Imran Takkar added that

child abuse often leads to various psychological problems, causing victims to grow up fearful and experience mental health issues.

During the event, Muhammad Anwar, FNF Pakistan’s Head of Program, stated that symptoms of sexual abuse include frightening behaviors such as nightmares, depression, abnormal fear, attempts to run away, and the development of extremely inappropriate sexual behavior for the child’s age.

He pointed out that 50% of child abuse victims are acquainted with their abusers, and abusers can come from any class, caste, religion, or ethnic group, emphasizing that they cannot be classified into a single type or category. The abuser can be a man, woman, child, acquaintance of the child, or a complete stranger.

Senior journalist Shamim Shahid said that the root of all the children related issues is the enormous increase in population and political instability

in the country, due to which economic problems arise and parents send their children to work instead of education. He said that the primary responsibility of promoting and protecting the rights of children is the state. After the 18th amendment in the country, according to the constitution, every child should be in school from 5 to 16 years, yet 2 crore children of school age do not go to school, of which about 1 crore are in child labor.

Shamim Shahid said that laws were made for the promotion and protection of human rights in the country, but their implementation has always been a question mark.

He said that child labor is increasing day by day due to the economic situation in the country. In order to reduce this, there is an urgent need for all partners to work together. He further said that if we want to eliminate child labor from the country, provision of free and compulsory education to all children from 5 to 16 years will be ensured.

Engr. Altaf, Engr. Fareed successfully defend their Ph.D thesis

PESHAWAR (APP): Engr. Altaf Hussain and Engr. Fareed Ahmed, Department of Industrial Engineering, University of Engineering and Technology, Peshawar successfully defended their Ph.D thesis here at the video conference, UET Peshawar.

Prof. Dr. Iftikhar Hussain, Vice Chancellor, UET Peshawar was the Ph.D supervisor of Engr. Altaf while the supervisor of Engr. Fareed was Prof. Dr. Sahar Noor, Dean Faculty of Mechanical Chemical and Industrial Engineering.

The topic of their Ph.D thesis were “Mutli-objective schedule optimization framework for sustainable project management” and “Selection and manufacturing optimization of material for aircraft skin” respectively.

Both the scholars presented their research findings through a seminar in public forum session, followed by Viva-Voce examination by the Examination Committee.

Dr. Altaf has developed a sustainability assessment framework for projects at

performance of the aircraft is improved in terms of flying hours and increased payload.

The REC members of Engr. Altaf included Prof. Dr. Sahar Noor, Dean MCI UET Peshawar, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Zubair, Ex-Director, AWC, Prof. Dr. Adnan Tariq, Dean Faculty of Engineering University of Wah, Prof. Dr. Shaukat Ali Shah, Department of Mechanical Engineering UET Peshawar while the REC members of Engr. Fareed included Prof. Dr. Asad Hameed, CAE NUST Raisalpur, Engr. Khuram Rehman, Wing Commander, AMF, PAC Kamra, Dr. Kareem Akhtar, Department of Mechanical Engineering, UET Peshawar and Dr. Imran Ahmad, Department of Industrial Engineering UET Peshawar. Prof. Dr. Misbah Ullah, Chairman Department of Industrial Engineering, UET Peshawar, Prof. Dr. Hamidullah, Director Undergraduate Studies, senior faculty members, officials and a large number of students was also present on the occasion.

activities level taking into account both qualitative and quantitative sustainability indicators and integrated it with project scheduling and resource leveling problems into a multi-objective model.

He has developed a Grey Wolf Optimizer based solution algorithm for the model and compared its performance with an existing widely used metaheuristic algorithm. He has also developed two real-life construction case studies to demonstrate the applicability and practicality of his framework.

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The proposed research will lead to reducing the weight of an aircraft by 30 % if the existing aluminum alloy skin is replaced with an alternate proposed optimum material. The



PESHAWAR: PPP’s provincial member council Muhammad Shakeel Khan Babar in a group photo after conciliation of two groups. F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza



In brief

DC imposes section 144 in Dir Lower

DIR LOWER (APP): Deputy Commissioner, who has charge of the District Magistrate Dir Lower Iftikhar Ahmed Sunday banned public gatherings and gatherings of more than 5 people in Dir Lower under section 144. Instructions have been issued to all Assistant Commissioners, Additional Assistant Commissioners and Police in this regard. Approval of the Deputy Commissioner for any gathering (political or otherwise) is mandatory under Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Civil Administration (Public Service Delivery and Good Governance Act 2020). Legal action will be taken in case of violation.

Two motorcyclists killed in fatal road crash in Vehari

VEHARI (INP): Two motorcyclists lost their lives in fatal road crash on Khanewal Road in Vehari on Sunday, rescuers and police said. A trailer knocked down the motorcycle, leaving two riders dead and a woman injured. The bodies and the injured were shifted to a nearby hospital. The victims were residents of a local village.

Minor girl injured as cluster bomb exploded

NEELAM VALLEY (INP): A minor girl was critically injured when a cluster bomb exploded in the Neelam Valley. As per the details, the minor girl touched the bomb mistakenly as she thought it was a toy. The incident took place in Dhok Palri area of Athmuqam near Neelam Valley. The District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) said that the bomb exploded moments after the minor girl touched it. The rescue officials are giving her first aid.

Two drug peddlers apprehended

BAHAWALPUR (INP): The district police have apprehended two alleged drug peddlers from the Khairpur Tamewali area and recovered hashish from their possession. A spokesman for Bahawalpur police said here that acting on a tip-off, a police team of Khairpur Tamewali police station took two alleged drug pushers into custody who were identified as Fayyaz and Zulfiqar. The police also recovered 1,840 grams of hashish from the possession of the accused. The police have lodged a case against the suspect. Further probe was in process.

Two labourers die while cleaning well

JHELMUM (INP): Two labourers died while two others fainted while cleaning a well in a village on Sohawa-Chakwal road in Jhelum on Sunday. The labourers were cleaning the well by turning on the generator when the incident happened. Those who died were identified as Basit and Aqib. Bodies as well as those fainted were shifted to hospital.

15 'criminals' arrested

SARGODHA (INP): Police claimed on Sunday to have arrested 15 criminals including four proclaimed offenders and recovered illegal weapons and narcotics from their possession. In a crack-down against criminals, the police arrested Faisal, Adil, Abid, Kashif, Aziz, Ali, Intiaz, Dilawar, Hussain, Umair, Hamza, Amir, Aslam, Sultan and Mohsin. and recovered 12 pistols, nine guns, 459-litre liquor and 1.08 kg hashish from them. Cases have been registered against the accused.

PRCS distributes relief among displaced families

MUZAFFARABAD (APP): In response to the devastating land sliding incident that struck the union council Patreend (Damishi, Abhiyal), the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) AJK chapter has taken immediate action to support the affected communities by distributing essential relief items. The incident, which caused immense loss of property, has left many families displaced and in dire need of immediate assistance.

The PRCS AJK, with its unwavering commitment to humanitarian aid and disaster response, has been on the ground since the tragedy occurred. Working tirelessly in coordination with local authorities and government departments, the society conducted a needs assessment to identify the most urgent requirements of the affected population.

In a display of solidarity and empathy, the PRCS successfully organized the distribution of critical relief items that were aimed to alleviate the suffering of those affected by the catastrophic land sliding and to provide aid and support. In this context, a graceful ceremony was held at union council patreend Damishi where the affected community was provided with essential relief items, that include tents, shelter tool kits, kitchen sets, hygiene kits, water coolers, buckets, blankets and mosquitos net.

It should be remembered that on August 01, nineteen houses were damaged as a result of devastating land sliding that struck the Damishi Abhiyal area of union council Patreend Muzaffarabad. The opposition leader in Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly Khawaja Farooq Ahmed and Minister Chuahdary Rasheed graced the ceremony with their presence. Besides, Secretary Pakistan Red Crescent Society AJK Chapter Ms Gulzar Fatima, Assistant Commissioner Muzaffarabad (Ruler) Muneer Qureshi and other government officials were also present on this occasion.

While addressing the affected community here at Domaishi, the opposition leader Khawaja Farooq Ahmed said I extend my deepest condolences to all the families who have lost their homes and properties during this disaster. Our hearts go out to you, and we stand together as a nation to offer our prayers and support in this difficult time. "I would like to applaud the swift response by the Pakistan Red Crescent Society AJK and government departments", added the opposition leader.

Speaking on the occasion, the Member of the Legislative Assembly and sitting Minister Chaudhary Rasheed commended the PRCS and all the volunteers who have tirelessly worked to organize this relief distribution.



Security forces conducted youth engagement session

F.P. Report

SOUTH WAZIRISTAN: The security forces conducted a youth engagement session at Sarwokai area of District South Waziristan here on Sunday.

During engagement, the feedback on various ongoing projects was taken and discussed. The security forces encouraged youth committee to work hard for the betterment of their community. The youth committee also appreciated the efforts of security forces for focusing on projects and education for the betterment of the locals. The committee also proposed a cricket ground in the area.

Security forces assured the youth committee that the demands of the locals will be forwarded to the concerned authorities for timely completion.

One killed, eight injured in tractor-trolley, truck collision

BAHAWALNAGAR (INP): A young man was killed, while eight others were injured in a horrific road accident in Bahawalnagar near Nine R Bridge in Bahawalnagar on Sunday. A tractor-trolley collided with a truck, leaving a young man dead on the spot and eight other people wounded.

Rescue 1122 officials said two victims are still in critical condition. The body

and the injured were shifted to a nearby hospital.

Police impounded the tractor-trolley, but its driver managed to flee from the scene.

Bahawalpur police arrest bandits, recover cash: The district police have arrested four alleged bandits from the Noshahra Jadid area and recovered cash that the robbers snatched from people.

According to a spokesman for Bahawalpur

police, acting on a tip-off, a police team of Noshahra Jadid police station conducted a raid in an area lying within their jurisdiction and successfully apprehended four bandits. The police also recovered cash Rs 92,000 and weapons from the suspects. The bandits used to deprive people of cash and valuables at gunpoint. The police have registered a case against the accused. Further probe was in process.

Two robbers killed in Sheikhpura encounter

SHEIKHPURA (INP): Two robbers were killed and arms recovered after exchange of fire, police said on Sunday.

According to details, the police was taking nabbed robbers for recovery when their accomplices attacked police party.

In retaliatory firing of police, two robbers were killed while their accomplices managed to escape.

The police recovered arms from possession of

killed robbers wanted by police in several cases of street crimes, robberies and drug peddling. The bodies were shifted to hospital.

Man kills sister-in-law in Shikarpur for 'honour': A man killed his sister-in-law at Dakhan, a suburban village of Shikarpur, for 'honour', police said on Sunday. The man killed Waheeda and managed to flee from the spot, police added. The body had been shifted to a hospital.

On Friday, in yet another tragic incident of honour killing, and that too in Sindh, a woman was killed by his own son for "honour" in Bhit Shah town in Matari district, police said.

Police said they had arrested accused Israr Lashari and launched an investigation into the incident. Separately, in another incident, two people were killed for 'honour' in Sindh's Moro city in Naushahro Feroze district.

DHQ Kasur renamed after Baba Bulleh Shah, notification issued

KASUR (INP): The Punjab government has renamed District Headquarter (DHQ) Hospital Kasur after Baba Bulleh Shah and issued notification in this regard.

According to Medical Superintendent Dr Farooq Ahmed, in line with the directions Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi, all resources were being

utilized for the provision of best medical facilities to people in the hospital. He said that patients were getting free medical treatment in the hospital and urology ward had been made fully functional while the facilities of digital X-ray and ultrasound had been ensured in evening and night shifts.

The MS said that air-conditioners and new

water coolers had been made available in all wards of the hospital to facilitate patients and their attendants.

Dr. Farooq demanded the provincial government to get constructed new building of emergency ward, warehouse, medical college, water turbine and new big generators in the hospital to improve the medical facilities.



BASIGRAM: Special Assistant to PM Engr. Amir Muqam offering dua after inaugurating construction work of bridge.

Ban imposed on gatherings in DI Khan under section 144

D.I.KHAN (APP): Deputy Commissioner Mansoor Arshad has imposed Section 144 in Dera Ismail Khan with immediate effect to ensure a peaceful environment in the district.

According to a notification issued here by the DC office, a ban has been imposed on the unlawful assembly of five or more persons in public places initially for three days.

The order aimed at ensuring public safety by preventing breach of the peace would come into force immediately and remain enforced till August 9.

Social media blossoms with wedding of 95-year Mansehrian

MANSEHRA (INP): The social media websites blossomed with the wedding ceremony of 95-year-old man hailing from district Mansehra of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The elderly groom Muhammad Zakriya has 10 sons and daughters and 34 grandsons (Children of sons and daughters).

First wife of Zakriya died in 2011 after which he was feeling loneliness but at last after prolong demand, his younger son Waqar fulfilled his desire and organized his wedding ceremony.

The newlywed bride was a widow who was in her 50s.

Muhammad Zakriya takes special care of his health.

He said that he had never consumed farmed foods, never drank cold water and likes to eat stale bread.

Shahbaz Sharif has proven to be a seasoned politician: Amir Muqam

F.P Report

SWAT: Adviser to Prime Minister Engineer Amir Muqam has said that Shahbaz Sharif has proven to be a seasoned politician owing to the fact that instead of saving his own politics during the 16-month coalition government, he has succeeded in saving the country.

The advisor said that now it is the duty of the people that if the country is to be led towards stability, then they have to support the Muslim League-N, just like the country was brought out of crisis in the 2013-18 government under

the leadership of Nawaz Sharif.

Engineer Amir Muqam said that today Pakistanis have realized that only the Muslim League-N under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif has the power to get Pakistan out of its problems. He further said that seeing the enthusiasm of the people present at the gathering, it is evident that the next government will be of Muslim League-N only. The advisor said that it is his desire that the construction of the roads from Gabral to Kamrat and Chukiatan should be completed soon. He thanked Nawaz Sharif and Shahbaz

Sharif for supporting him at every level in solving the problems of the people of the region. The advisor said that the projects inaugurated today will not only provide relief to the people of the region but will also promote tourism in the region.

Adviser to Prime Minister Engineer Amir Muqam today addressed various inaugural gatherings in NA-2 which included Bahrain, Mankyal, Othrorr and other areas. A large number of people participated in these gatherings and many significant political figures joined the Muslim League-N.

‘Sacrifices of Sindh Police cannot be forgotten’

MIRPURKHAS (APP): Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police Mirpurkhas Range Zulfikar Ali Mehr met the heirs and families of police martyrs on the occasion of "Police Martyrs' Day" and paid tributes to the unparalleled sacrifices of hundreds of martyrs of Sindh Police here on Sunday.

On this occasion, DIG Mirpurkhas Range said, those who sacrifice their lives to maintain peace and protect the lives and property of the citizens are the heroes of the nation and the heroes of the Sindh Police. He also expressed that every year,

the Sindh Police celebrates 4th August as Police Martyrs' Day. "I salute the mothers of these martyrs, who sacrificed their lives for the dear country; I salute the families, parents and children of these martyrs, whose loved ones achieved the great position of martyrdom. As Head of Mirpurkhas Range, the best welfare of the families of police martyrs is my top priority" he added. Earlier this DIG Mirpurkhas Range and SSP Mirpurkhas Captain (R) Asad Ali Chaudhry distributed certificates and gifts to the heirs of the martyrs.

Travel agent arrested

FAISALABAD (INP): The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) in Faisalabad has arrested a travel agent for allegedly defrauding people under a low-cost Umrah package, says in media reports.

The accused, Umar Mehmood, was running

Bab-e-Noor Travel Company. He was accused of taking millions of rupees from people under the pretext of sending them to perform Umrah, but he neither sent them to the holy land nor returned their money.

The FIA team, led by Sub Inspector Ajmal

Hussain, conducted a raid on the travel agent's office and arrested him. The accused has been locked up and further investigation is underway. The FIA has urged people to be careful when dealing with travel agents and to only deal with reputable companies.

Flood in river Sutlej – local communities, PDMA helping affectees to mitigate effects

MULTAN (APP): Feeling pain of those displaced, whose belongings are taken away by flood and who felt dejected to witness so much water after almost 36 years, the local communities and relatives came forward to lend helping hands by providing them shelters and food despite arrangements made by Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) for flood affected people around river Sutlej.

A ferocious flood is witnessed this year in river Sutlej submerging hundreds of acres of land leaving thousands of people homeless, but the generous assistance of local community remained exemplary.

Punjab Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) has also established relief camps, equipped with different sorts of facilities including availability of food, healthcare, fodder for animals and camps but most of the affectees sought shelter at their relatives' or friends' homes instead of camps so far. During last three decades, the flow of water in river Sutlej was on decrease and the river had almost dried up near Bahawalpur. Noticing this trend, people had constructed structures in low-lying areas of the river, which are now under water. The flood water also entered into scores of adjacent "Mauzajat" and damaged hundreds of homes and crops on thousands of acres. Although, the majority of the farmers have picked crops, especially maize which is a popular crop of the region.

A citizen namely Sajjad Saldaira, a resident of Sahuka (Burewala) talking to APP informed that a good number of flood-affected people left the river bed and sought shelter in relatives and friends' homes. He informed that he himself managed accommodation for 15 families. Relatives, friends and other people were exhibiting kind gestures in this

crucial time for flood-hit people, he said, adding the majority of displaced people were farmers and cattle holders whose animals had also been adjusted. Another citizen, Qasim also spoke and informed that he also provided residence facility to two families, while a good number of flood-hit families were living in their village.

Responding to problems in the areas, he stated that the government should increase number of medical professionals as some people were facing health complications. Similarly, the availability of fodder for cattle should be managed properly and the administration should provide "Wanda" to feed animals as due to flood, there was a shortage of fodder for cattle. Regarding the flood situation in River Sutlej, Deputy Commissioner Vehari Syed Asif Shah stated that about 2100 citizens, residing in low-lying areas had been shifted to safer places. "People have had constructed settlements in low-lying areas and the administration is trying its best to evacuate them", said Asif Shah. He, however, urged people to cooperate with the administration teams and warned that the water level could rise further. About Punjab Disaster Management Authority's work, Deputy Director Information Vehari Syed Majid Ali Naqvi observed that PDMA was offering all possible assistance to the district administration.

PDMA was not only providing resources and performing a crucial role in disaster management and response but also helping to minimize the impact of flood damages. Early warning systems, evacuation, and rescue operations were being managed through assistance of PDMA, he added. Many residencies in Jamlaira, Rakh Jamlaira, Bandmor, Mehrabad, Lakha Saldairah, Basti Rahim, Bhaini

Mianwali, Moghla Basti, Mochianwali, Basti Joyianwali, Mauza Koor, Banda Baqir Shah and others faced huge losses due to floods. A total of 13 flood relief camps have been established in district Vehari. However, six relief camps are operational as officials from eight different departments including Health, Rescue 1122, Police, Civil Defense, Livestock, etc were performing duties there. The remaining seven relief camps would also be made operational as per requirement, Naqvi informed.

Naqvi said the administration had found out that in most cases one family member of each displaced family was left behind to look after the residence and Rescue 1122 boats were regularly visiting such places, providing them necessary food and other items of daily use besides trying to convince them to leave the place as water could rise further anytime.

Majid Shah Naqvi recalled that usually water level increases in September in the river due to rains between August 15 to September 15, however, this year, it was unusual.

It is pertinent to mention that in district Vehari, there are two headworks including Head Islam and Head Saifan having a capacity to manage 300,000 cusecs and 400,000 cusecs of water respectively.

When asked about flood situation in river Chenad and Ravi, Commissioner Multan Aamir Khattak said, "Water level in river Chenab is normal and there is no threat of flood so far." "However, river Ravi is facing low level flood, but the situation is in complete control. People in low lying areas have been shifted to safer places and will not be allowed to return till the flood threat is over, while instructions have been issued to officials concerned to remain highly vigilant," Khattak added.



Pressure mounts on Niger coup leaders as deadline approaches

NIAMEY (AFP/APP): Pressure on Niger's coup leaders mounted Sunday with the approach of the deadline set by the West African regional bloc ECOWAS for the military to relinquish control or face possible armed intervention.

Former colonial power France, with which the junta broke military ties after taking power on July 26, said it would "firmly" back whatever course of action ECOWAS took after the Sunday deadline expired.

"The future of Niger and the stability of the entire region are at stake," the office of French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna said after she held talks in Paris with Niger's prime minister, Ouhoumoudou Mahamadou. ECOWAS military chiefs of staff have agreed on a plan for a possible intervention to respond to the crisis, the latest of several coups to hit Africa's Sahel region since 2020. "We want diplomacy to work, and we want this message clearly transmitted to them (the junta) that we are giving them every opportunity to reverse what they have done," ECOWAS commissioner Abdel-Fatau Musah said on Friday.

But he warned that "all the elements that will go into any eventual intervention have been worked out", including how and when force would be deployed. Niger has played a key part in Western strategies to combat jihadist insurgencies that have plagued the Sahel since 2012, with France and the United States stationing around 1,500 and 1,000 troops in

the country, respectively.

Yet anti-French sentiment in the region is on the rise, while Russian activity, often through the Wagner mercenary group, has grown. Moscow has warned against armed intervention from outside Niger.

The coup "is an error of judgement that goes totally against the interests of the country", French Armed Forces Minister Sebastien Lecornu told AFP in an interview Saturday.

"This putsch will weaken the fight against terrorism in the Sahel, where activity by armed terrorist groups is resurging, notably taking advantage of certain failed states like Mali," he said. Niger, one of the poorest countries in the world, relies heavily on foreign aid that could be pulled if President Mohamed Bazoum is not reinstated as head of state, he added.

The junta has said it will meet force with force. Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune spoke out against any military intervention in neighbouring Niger. "We categorically refuse any military intervention," he said in a television interview Saturday evening, adding that such action would be "a direct threat to Algeria". He stressed "there will be no solution without us (Algeria). We are the first people affected". "Algeria shares nearly a thousand kilometres" of border with Niger, he said. "What is the situation today in countries that have experienced military intervention?," he said, pointing to Libya and Syria. Mali and Burkina Faso, where military juntas have taken power since 2020, have

also said that any regional intervention would be tantamount to a "declaration of war" against them.

Bazoum, 63, has been held by the coup plotters with his family in his official Niamey residence since July 26. In a column in The Washington Post on Thursday -- his first lengthy statement since his detention -- Bazoum said a successful putsch would "have devastating consequences for our country, our region and the entire world".

Bazoum, who in 2021 won an election that ushered in Niger's first-ever transfer of power from one civilian government to another, urged "the US government and the entire international community to help us restore our constitutional order".

Nigeria has cut electricity supplies to its neighbour Niger, raising fears for the humanitarian situation, while Niamey has closed the vast Sahel country's borders, complicating food deliveries. Senior Nigerian politicians have urged President Bola Tinubu to reconsider the threatened military intervention. "The Senate calls on the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as chairman of ECOWAS to further encourage other leaders of ECOWAS to strengthen the political and diplomatic options," Senate president Godswill Akpabio said. Senators from northern Nigerian states, seven of which share a combined border of roughly 1,500 kilometres (900 miles) with Niger, have already advised against any intervention until all other options had been exhausted.

Stranded migrants saved, but dozens missing off Italy in rough seas

ROME (AFP/APP): At least 30 migrants are missing following two shipwrecks off the Italian island of Lampedusa, according to survivor testimony, as rescuers on Sunday winched to safety 34 others stranded on the rocks by rough seas.

Around 28 people were reported lost at sea by survivors on one boat, while three were reported missing from the second, after both went down in stormy weather on Saturday, said the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Both were rickety iron boats believed to have set off from Sfax in Tunisia on Thursday.

Italy's coastguard said it had saved 57 survivors from the two shipwrecks, and recovered the body of a woman and a minor.

It released dramatic footage Sunday of the rescues, in which people could be seen carried high on the crests of vast waves, while a coastguard vessel soared and plunged nearby.

While some people tried to climb onto the vessel as it rocked, others, wearing black rubber rings, clung desperately to one another in a human chain.

Cultural mediators with the IOM believed there were "at least 30 people missing" after speaking to those pulled from the waves, press

officer Flavio Di Giacomo told AFP.

An investigation into the shipwrecks has been opened in Agrigento, on the nearby Italian island of Sicily.

Agrigento's chief of police Emanuele Ricifari said the traffickers would have known bad weather was forecast. "Whoever allowed them, or forced them, to leave with this sea is an unscrupulous criminal lunatic," he told Italian media.

"Rough seas are forecast for the next few days. Let's hope they stop. It's sending them to slaughter with this sea," he said.

As the stormy weather continued Sunday, an alpine rescue team and the fire brigade lifted to safety migrants marooned on a rocky part of Lampedusa's coastline.

The Sicilian Alpine rescue service (CNSAS) said the 34 migrants had been stuck on the rocks since late Friday, after their boat was tossed onto the rocks by strong winds.

They were provided with food, water, clothes and emergency thermal blankets by the Red Cross, but the coastguard was unable to rescue them by sea due to the high waves.

The CNSAS said it had pulled 29 of the 34 people to safety -- includ-

ing six women, two of whom were pregnant -- while the fire brigade recovered the rest.

The Central Mediterranean migrant crossing route from North Africa to Europe is the world's deadliest. Over 1,800 people have died attempting it so far this year, Di Giacomo said -- almost 900 more than last year.

"The truth is that figure is likely to be much higher. Lots of bodies are being found at sea, suggesting there are many shipwrecks we never hear about," he said.

The number of bodies found has increased in particular on the so-called Tunisian route, which has become increasingly dangerous, Di Flavio said, because of the type of boats used.

Sub-Saharan migrants are being put out to sea by traffickers "in iron boats which cost less than the usual wooden ones, but are utterly unseaworthy, they easily break up and sink", he said.

Migrants also often have the engines stolen from their boats at sea, so that traffickers can re-use them.

Nearly 92,000 people have landed on Italy's shores so far this year, according to the interior ministry, over twice the number in the same period last year.

French billionaire Drahi to face investors as graft claims swirl

PARIS (AFP/APP): French-Israeli billionaire Patrick Drahi is set to make a rare appearance in front of investors this week with his multinational business empire Altice in the grip of a corruption scandal.

Swiss-based Drahi, whose empire spans telecoms and media in Europe, Israel and North America, is expected to try to ease investor concerns weeks after one of his top lieutenants was detained in Portugal. The authorities there have accused Portuguese billionaire Armando Pereira of 11 offences of corruption and money laundering, with a central allegation that he set up a network of bogus suppliers to embezzle money through Altice's procurement system. Pereira denies the claims but the scandal has spread from Portugal to other parts of Drahi's empire, with executives in the United States and France being dismissed, suspended or stepping back. Drahi, who generally keeps a low profile, has amassed a fortune estimated at more than \$10 billion, making him France's 13th richest man, according to French magazine

Challenge.

He pieced together a network of companies through leveraged acquisitions and is now a major player in telecoms in France, Israel, Belgium, Luxembourg, Portugal and Switzerland.

Drahi, who also owns broadband firm Altice USA and part of Britain's BT, is known as an art lover and bought the auction house Sotheby's in 2019.

But his investment spree was made possible only by amassing a debt pile worth around \$60 billion.

With interest rates rising and the corruption scandal making headlines, Drahi's calls with investors on Monday and Tuesday will be closely monitored by investors. The company has tried to play down the investigation, saying it is cooperating with the authorities and highlighting that several employees have been suspended.

Pereira, despite being widely seen as Drahi's right-hand man, has no official post at the company.

Arthur Dreyfuss, CEO of Altice France, told a meeting with trade unions on Wednesday that only a handful of the companies named in the Portuguese

inquiry had trading relations with Altice.

"At this stage, this represents less than four percent of our annual purchases in terms of volume," he said.

But Olivier Lelong of the CFDT trade union, who was at Wednesday's meeting, told AFP that the nature of the allegations suggested fundamental issues with the company.

"On a day-to-day basis, expenses are the most closely monitored thing in the group," he said.

"It's on such a scale... that there must have been a problem with the company's control and governance," Drahi, 59, was born in the Moroccan city of Casablanca and moved to France at 15, eventually studying at the country's top engineering school, the Ecole Polytechnique.

After an early career spent working for fibre-optics companies, he set out on his own and bought up several troubled cable and mobile operators, before hitting the big time in 2014 when he took control of SFR, France's second-biggest mobile operator. From there he built his vast empire, with unions dubbing him the "cost

killer" for his habit of streamlining the firms he bought.

But with the corruption claims and rising interest rates forcing him to renegotiate the terms of his loans, Drahi is facing one of his biggest challenges to date.

"Patrick Drahi has built his success on access to low-cost debt," Denis Lafarge, a partner at PMP Strategy, told AFP.

Drahi is known as a smart financial operator and has long relied on selling off infrastructure like telecoms masts and fibre networks to raise cash.

Lafarge said those options are getting thinner but he still has some sellable assets -- the Meo operator in Portugal and some data centres could be sacrificed. Sylvain Chevallier of the BearingPoint consultancy added that rising inflation meant businesses like Altice will be able to raise prices and raise cash that way. But the immediate need is for Drahi to stem the damage from the corruption inquiry.

"It's important for him to speak out," said Dreyfuss.

"Until we have proof to the contrary, Altice is a victim of all this.

Vote clears Senegal opposition figures for presidential run

DAKAR (AFP/APP): Deputies in Senegal's parliament passed a vote Saturday that effectively restored the right of two key opposition deputies to run in the country's presidential election next year.

The vote cleared any person convicted but then either pardoned or amnestied to run for office, clearing the way for Khalifa Sall and Karim Wade, who would otherwise have been ineligible. The proposal was passed by 124 votes to one.

Once the text is officially promulgated, which seems likely given it was backed by the government, both men will be free to run for office.

Sall, a former mayor of Dakar, and Wade, son of former president Abdoulaye Wade, have both been considered leading contenders for the presidential vote, due in February 2024.

They were prevented from running in the last presidential election, in 2019, because of separate convictions for financial crimes.

The 2019 victor Macky Sall, who is completing his second term in office, is ineligible to run.

Some observers believe that Saturday's parliamentary vote may help ease the tension that has

gripped the country in recent months, as opposition figures complain of moves against them ahead of next year's vote. Senegal until recently enjoyed a reputation of relative stability in the region. But since 2021 it has been shaken by sometimes the deadly political violence between supporters of the government and those of the leading opposition figure Ousmane Sonko.

For months, there was speculation that President Sall might run for re-election despite having already served two terms, until he finally confirmed in early July that he would not be standing again.

But the way in which leading opposition figures such as Wade and Sall had been ruled out of the electoral race because of their convictions also sparked political tension.

On Monday Sonko, widely considered another leading contender for next year's presidential poll, was indicted and detained and his party dissolved.

A government spokesman accused him and his followers of having fomented insurrection and promoted violence.

It now seems more likely than ever that Sonko, who has already

been convicted in two other cases, will be unable to contest the election. In this context then, the presidential race seems more than usually open. But Karim Wade, 54, a former minister during his father's presidency between 2000 and 2012, seems to be back in contention.

His six-year prison conviction in 2015 was for illegal enrichment. He served three years before being pardoned by President Sall in 2016, after which he went into exile.

Saturday's parliamentary vote means that his conviction does not count against him in political terms because of the subsequent pardon.

Khalifa Sall, 67, served as mayor of Dakar from 2009, but he was detained in 2017, accused of embezzlement and sentenced to five years in jail the following year. He was released in 2017, also having received a presidential pardon.

All three opposition figures have denounced the judicial proceedings against them as politically motivated.

President Sall meanwhile, opened talks with a part of the opposition in May, agreeing to discuss the eligibility of Khalifa Sall and Wade for political office.

Those involved in the talks agreed on this latest change to the law as the solution. In 2021, Khalifa Sall and Sonko agreed an electoral alliance. Their coalition, Yewwi Askan Wi, won control of several cities, including Dakar in the 2022 local elections.

In the same year, it became the main opposition force in parliament. Some observers see President Sall's decision to enter talks with supporters of Khalifa Sall and Wade as a bid to split the opposition.

Certainly, while Khalifa Sall and his supporters agreed to enter those talks, Sonko refused.

The case of Sonko haunted Saturday's parliamentary debate, with the presidential camp quitting the chamber when one deputy called for Sonko to benefit from the new measure.

Bakary Diedhiou denounced the proposed law as "cynical", as it was designed to eliminate a candidate who represented great hope for many people.

The presidential camp has left Macky Sall free to nominate a candidate for his own succession and that decision is expected next week.

Firefighters contain wildfire near Spanish-French border

PORTBOU (AFP/APP): Firefighters from Spain and France succeeded on Saturday in containing a wildfire near the countries' shared Mediterranean coastal border, after winds dropped enough to allow water bomber planes to fly. But officials in the southern region of Andalusia, further to the west, said firefighters were battling another blaze Saturday.

More than 130 people had been evacuated from several villages overnight as strong winds fanned the flames around Portbou, a hilly forested area on the Spanish side of the border that is popular with tourists. Spanish forestry rangers said the fire,

which started on Friday, had destroyed around 573 hectares (1,400 acres) of land around Portbou, which has a cross-border rail service to France. An official from the Catalonia regional government said on Saturday afternoon the fire had stopped spreading and the evacuation order had been lifted. Residents should still stay at home and avoid unnecessary travel, officials said. Around 300 firefighters from Catalonia and a dozen French fire engine crews teamed up to tackle the blaze. They said winds had dropped sufficiently to allow water bombers and helicopters to intervene but could not say how long it could take to bring the

fire completely under control. Weather forecasters said winds would pick up again in the evening, after gusting at up to 100 kilometers (60 miles) per hour on Friday night. Earlier on Saturday the flames had come dangerously close to houses in the Llanca area south of Portbou.

Rail services were restarted between Portbou and Figueras to the south and power was restored to up to 4,000 homes on Saturday, Catalan civil protection officials said.

Regional authorities said an investigation was underway into the cause of the fire. But authorities in the southern region of Andalusia along the Mediterranean coast said

150 firefighters were battling a new blaze Saturday.

They were contending with high temperatures and strong winds that had forced around 70 people to evacuate, Spanish media reported. Other residents near the city of Huelva are being urged to remain in their homes, as 17 planes and helicopters were deployed to help fight the blaze in the wooded area, where two main roads had been closed. Last year, some 500 wildfires laid waste to more than 300,000 hectares in Spain, a record for Europe, according to data from the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS).

To date this year has seen some 70,000 hectares destroyed, according to Effis.

K E R K E N N A H (AFP/APP): The two men in bright overalls rooting for plastic on a Tunisian beach do so to make a living, but also in the knowledge that they are helping the environment.

What they do not know is that the waste will become part of a synthetic plastic fibre used to make blue denim cloth to create a dress for the eco-friendly fashion label Outa.

The pair are among around 15 "barbeshas", or informal rubbish collectors, taking part in the Kerkennah Plastic Free programme, backed by the European Union.

This aims to recover the 7,000 tonnes of plastic waste each year that end up littering beaches on the Kerkennah Islands 20 kilometres (12 miles) off the port city of Sfax.

Jean-Paul Pellissier, of the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM), is coordinating the EU-funded project.

He told AFP that on the archipelago, "we have an exciting environment in terms of nature and tranquillity. It's ideal for green tourism".

Pellissier said the islands were a passage point for migratory birds, and that its waters were abundant in Posidonia oceanica seagrass, or Neptune grass.

"But there's one thing you never see in the pictures -- the plastic," he said. Marine currents carry the

waste from Europe into the Gulf of Gabes, and there it washes up to be collected by the barbeshas.

They take their daily harvest to a sorter which passes it on to a collection company and then it is fed into a crusher to be baled.

A partnership has been established with Seaqueal Initiative, an international consortium which buys the marine plastic "at a remunerative and stable price all year round", Pellissier said.

The initiative's website says it "works with ocean clean-ups around the world to bring value to the waste that they recover".

Omar Kcharem is the boss of Kerkennah Plast, which compacts and crushes plastic, and he said working with Seaqueal has created new opportunities, since marine plastic "does not have much value and does not bring in any money".

The plastic granules recovered after grinding the waste are transformed into "Seaqueal Yarn" nylon fibre in Portugal, in one of just four factories in the world equipped with the technology.

"This is innovative," said Pellissier. "Four or five years ago, you couldn't recycle marine plastic because of its lengthy exposure to salt water and the sun."

He said Seaqueal Yarn comprises around 10 percent of recycled marine plastic, but the aim is to

increase this.

Apart from the Portugal side of the operation, the rest is definitely "Made in Tunisia".

In the coastal town of Ksar Hellal southeast of Monastir, a huge machine in the ultra-modern Sitex plant makes an infernal racket as it transforms the Seaqueal Yarn into denim.

Sitex is a denim specialist that has supplied brands such as Hugo Boss, Zara and Diesel. Now Anis Montacer, founder of the Tunisian fabric and fashion brand Outa, has entered into a partnership with it.

He chose Sitex "for its sensitivity to the environment, because in 2022, 70 percent of their manufacturing was based on recycled fibres".

"We worked together to determine the proper yarn strength and the right indigo dye," he told AFP, adding that their collaboration will continue to expand Outa's colour range to include natural dyes.

"The entire process takes place in Tunisia, from the denim transformed in Ksar Hellal to the Tunisian seamstresses who work on the tailoring" for Outa, Montacer said.

Production costs are 20 percent higher, though, than for denim without the marine plastic content.

Despite this, Montacer believes he can "bring together other entrepreneurs and inspire designers to produce eco-responsible

Russia begins construction of Eurasia's largest solar telescope

V L A D I V O S T O K (Xinhua/APP): A groundbreaking ceremony was held Saturday for construction of the largest solar telescope in Eurasia by the Institute of Solar-Terrestrial Physics (ISTP) of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS) in the Republic of Buryatia.

The telescope, the most complex and expensive instrument of the National Helio-geophysical Complex, will be located

at the Sayan Solar Observatory of ISTP, near the village of Monda in Buryatia.

The instrument is estimated to cost about 36 billion rubles (about 375 million U.S. dollars), and is expected to be completed and operational by 2030.

The main objective of the telescope is to study the nature of magnetic fields and the cycle of solar activity, which affect various aspects of life on Earth.

The telescope will enable scientists to explore the fine structure of the photosphere, the visible surface of the Sun, which is inaccessible for smaller telescopes and orbital observatories.

The telescope will also allow spectral analysis and obtain unique data on magnetic fields and movements of matter, as well as help study the causes of solar flares, coronal mass ejections and other phenomena on the sun. The

telescope will contribute to solving fundamental and applied scientific problems in solar physics. The optical mechanism of the telescope consists of 13 mirrors, with the main mirror having a diameter of 3 meters.

The main mirror will be made of astrosittal, a special glass-ceramic material. The height of the entire structure will be 42 meters, and the total weight of the telescope will be 120 tons.

The Frontier Post

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Imran’s arrest and Pakistan

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder and lifelong Chairman, Imran Khan arrested by the Police on Saturday shortly after the trial court hearing the Toshakhana case declared him guilty and sentenced him to three years imprisonment, together with Rs. 100,000 in fine, while inability in paying dues could further extend his jail term for another six months. The verdict, issued by Additional District and Sessions Judge Humayun Dilawar, comes amid the PTI chief’s contentions on both the maintainability of the case and repeated transfer requests based on perceived biases of the judge. However, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) directed the PTI to take up the matter of maintainability with the trial court that had already completed the case proceeding, and the concerned judge warned the PTI legal team to present final arguments otherwise the decision would be announced Saturday.

Another former Prime Minister and leader of a major political group has shared the destiny of his several predecessors through conviction by the court over the charges of misconduct, abuse of power and allegedly causing disgrace for the prestigious office of the country’s Chief Executive. After ouster from the Country’s most powerful position in April last year, more than 150 cases brought about against him which includes charges of sedition, inciting violence and spreading chaos, Toshkhana gift trading and declaration with the Electoral Watchdog, Al-Qadir Trust University and many more. Meanwhile, a grave risk of Khan’s indictment in the May 9’s violence and attacks on military installations still looms overhead because hundreds of the PTI leaders and party workers are currently under trail in the military courts.

There were wide ranging apprehensions and a stern reaction was expected from Imran Khan’s followers in case of Khan’s arrest in the cases currently under trial in several courts in Islamabad, Lahore and other cities. Surprisingly, only a few dozen individuals gathered outside Lahore’s Zaman Park, the family residence of the PTI Chief, to protest Khan arrest while a careful and low level protest trend/campaign had been launched by the PTI Social media teams after their top leader was taken into custody by the Law Enforcement Agencies on Saturday. In the current scenario, the conviction of the PTI Chief could have long lasting effects on the future political landscapes in the country which is rapidly advancing toward nationwide general elections constitutionally planned to be held by October this year. Although, the PTI legal team is preparing to challenge Khan’s arrest in the upper court, however there are bright chances of the endorsement of his conviction by the superior judiciary as the case for Khan’s indictment has been filed by the Election Regulator. The ECP has already held thorough inquiry into the case and confirmed guilt of the popular leader in October last year, while the trial court just reproduced the ECP’s verdict and award punishment of the offence.

Historically, persistent political instability and long periods of dictatorial rule have badly spoiled the Country’s political landscape and gave birth to direct military interventions and secret political engineering by the military establishment over the past decades. That unconstitutional activity not only weakened the democracy and political institutions but also gave rise to bad practices in the politics including horse trading, election engineering, corruption and an increased role of feudals, money, and support of criminal gangs to reach victory stand in the electoral contest. As a matter of fact, politics of hate, violence and blame game has ruined the country’s politics General Zia’s martial law over the past three and a half decades that resulted in premature collapse of politically elected governments, early elections, persistent political unrest and an unsustainable economy during that period. After multiple experiences, the major political parties including the PML-N, and the PPP agreed to strike a charter of democracy that paved the way for political stability and completion of constitutional terms of the assemblies and the government for the first time in the country’s history. Unfortunately, the PTI and few others so-called revolutionary groups tore apart the political resilience in the society and rediscovered the politics of the 90s that finally ended up in the last year’s no confidence motion. Thus, recent years political anarchy led the nation to the brink of an economic collapse and added another black chapter in the history of Pakistan’s democracy.

Apparently, the current political leadership including the PTI and the PDM alliance failed in providing relief to the masses and added to the public depression and economic turmoil. The perception of Pakistani politics is not so promising at the moment. The country is due for a transition to caretaker setup but uncertainty and doubts still exist in the masses regarding the future events. Currently, Public is annoyed of the unceasing political experiments of immature Strategists who made the country a banana republic instead of securing prestige and sanctity of sole Nuclear power in the Muslim world. After-all, it is high time for the politicians to learn from their past mistakes, sit down together and strike a consensus agreement that drives the nation out of the current crises and lead the country toward economic revival and prosperity.

Important Notice

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Al-Sudani’s war on corruption in Iraq is an uphill struggle

Hafed Al-Ghwel

Since assuming the Iraqi presidency in October 2022, Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani has made a veritable crusade against corruption the heart of his domestic agenda. Despite this long overdue commitment to tackling the country’s most debilitating challenge, his progress has been, to put it politely, underwhelming. Systemic corruption continues unabated under the control of an entrenched and sectarian power-sharing system.

For all its colossal oil wealth, Iraq remains stricken by inefficiency, bureaucracy, endemic kleptocracy, and sprawling patronage networks. Pilfering of public funds has more or less become a national sport, from the intensely politicized civil service, which is sinking under its own weight, to the famously crisis-hit electricity sector, which was recently awarded a whopping \$13.5 billion.

The entrenched nature of the corruption, backed by various factions with vested interests in maintaining the status quo, has impeded efforts to create more accountable governance for the Iraqi people.

The roots of this corruption crisis can be traced back to decisions made during the 2003 war and subsequent US-led “reconstruction.” During this period, Washington poured unregulated and unmonitored funds into multiple projects, creating a culture of graft in nearly every echelon of Iraqi governance, exacerbating the pre-existing patterns of corruption.

Instead of being transformed into an agent of much-needed change and progress for the Iraqi people, the public sector emerged from the post-war construction epoch as a center of corruption fueled by indiscriminate spending and lackadaisical supervision. A striking example of this occurred when aid contractors, Iraqi officials and US personnel were found to have directly engaged in corruption during reconstruction projects.

The US Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction estimated that at least \$8 billion, about 13 percent of the total amount allocated for reconstruction, was frittered away in this way. As a result, any hopes of building a robust, efficient and corruption-free public sector were blighted, leaving ordinary Iraqis to grapple with rampant structural deficiencies, made worse by a now interminable legacy of corruption.

The issue is exacerbated by the continual influence of Iran, which uses the corrupt power-sharing system to maintain a foothold in internal Iraqi affairs. This influence, executed through pro-Iran militias, has ensured the survival of systemic corruption. The state-sanctioned Popular Mobilization Forces, a collection of pro-Iranian armed groups, is a prime example of this. They command an annual budget of \$2 billion, part of which flows into largely fictional state payrolls.

The involvement of Iran in Iraq’s nexus of corruption can be seen in the tentacles Tehran extends into

key state ministries, in which pro-Iran militias have been successfully institutionalized and legitimized as autonomous actors. The PMF, established in 2014, has expanded into various activities, legal and illegal. It dominates markets and oversees illegal border crossings, customs evasion, and trafficking. Iraq’s porous borders mean that about \$10 billion in customs revenue is diverted and lost each year.

The PMF’s power not only lies in its weaponry but also in its economic reach and Iranian patronage, which have enabled the organization to embed itself even deeper into Iraq’s political and economic affairs. This

If Iraq could only harness the power generation potential of its flared gas, it could yield output equivalent to double that of the current gas imports from sanctions-hit Iran. Unfortunately, while this makes sense on paper, in terms of avoiding the expense of imported gas and the trouble of finding alternatives when dollars are hard to come by, it is unlikely the current flawed situation will change given the extent of pro-Iranian influence in Baghdad. Is there any chance that Al-Sudani might succeed in his anti-corruption efforts? Given the entrenched and widespread nature of the corruption, he faces a Herculean task. Overturning the current state of disarray would require not only radical institutional reforms but also a sea change in the culture of governance.

entrenchment of Iranian influence means that attempting to tackle corruption is an almost insurmountable challenge for Al-Sudani’s government. The unchecked, unassailable presence of such malign external forces within Iraq’s institutional fabric serves only to bolster the resistance to reforms and perpetuate the corrupt power-sharing system that plagues the country.

At this rate, it is highly unlikely Iraq will be able to reduce the more than \$3.5 billion it spends annually on natural gas imports from Iran to fuel its power stations, which are still only able to produce a little over half of the country’s total electricity needs.

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Is there any chance that Al-Sudani might succeed in his anti-corruption efforts? Given the entrenched and widespread nature of the corruption, he faces a Herculean task. Overturning the current state of disarray would require not only radical institutional reforms but also a sea change in the culture of governance.

Several complex and interwoven mechanisms of corruption, from informal patronage networks to the instruments of state capture, are entrenched deep within the Iraqi core. Al-Sudani’s job is akin to that of an arborist whose task is not merely to prune a tree’s dead or diseased branches

—casts a long shadow over his ambitions, as the very factions that prop up his government are among the beneficiaries of the labyrinthine corruption.

Where exactly does the US figure in this chaotic landscape? Misssteps of the past might have left Washington with an unenviable role in the history of Iraq’s corruption saga, but it still has some key strategic levers that continue to function despite the influence vacuum left by its disengagement from the country.

Any “new” US strategy can be easily shaped to actively support efforts to tackle corruption and implement reforms, chiefly through Washington’s capacity to impose sanctions, lend money, and mediate. It could wield this influence by lending support to honest brokers within Iraq’s public institutions, thereby encouraging the development of oases of integrity that resist the tide of corruption. In doing so, the US would be throwing its weight behind those seeking to enact legislative change, strengthen judicial independence, and enhance institutional transparency.

Washington could further manage the narrative by shining a spotlight on corruption. By highlighting the thefts, the culture of patronage and systemic abuses in a high-profile manner, it might galvanize public opinion and encourage greater support for reform-focused candidates in future elections.

In addition, the US could maintain the economic pressure on corrupt entities through the judicious use of sanctions, ensuring that corruption is an unprofitable enterprise. At the same time, Washington and its international allies could bolster efforts to seize and refund illicitly acquired Iraqi wealth that is squirreled away abroad. Enhanced coordination with global watchdogs could also help ensure that aid and bilateral cooperation is contingent on the achievement of clear anti-corruption benchmarks.

Nurturing a robust civil society in Iraq to supplement Al-Sudani’s efforts could be another area in which the US might play an instrumental role. Nonetheless, the creation of a few oases of integrity will not be a panacea for the deep-seated and systemic corruption Iraq currently faces, nor is some clever maneuvering by Al-Sudani’s government likely to be enough.

However, the maneuvering could serve as a moral and functional counterexample, proof that there is sufficient will to make sure Iraqi public institutions operate with integrity and efficiency, even amid a sea of malfeasance.

That being said, Al-Sudani’s road to reform is littered with obstacles, many of which seem nearly insurmountable under the current political order. If a more accountable, democratic Iraq is the objective, the US strategy for achieving this needs a fundamental reset, one that shifts its role from that of passive observer to an active catalyst of change.

Politics is, after all, the art of the possible.

We should empower regional creative content industries to take center stage

Sara Al-Mulla

Creative-content industries are experiencing an unprecedented boom worldwide. With an ever-expanding and riveting repository of content to choose from, whittling down a list in which to immerse oneself is no easy task.

Yet, with this influx comes the joy of stumbling upon those serendipitous examples of creative works that shine as outlets for entertainment, education, and cultural expression. As such, it is vital that the Arab region devises its own ambitious vision for directing promising artistic expressions and contemporary social narratives toward content-centric productions.

Creativity is key to producing the streams of content that fuel film and television, music, publishing, gaming, performing arts, and knowledge information industries. From an economic viewpoint, these industries can generate substantial revenues in economies that are seeking to diversify, create job opportunities for local talent, attract tourists from fan-centric communities, and capitalize on the enormous potential for exports to global markets.

They can also play an influential role in representing regional cultural heritage, raising awareness about important issues, and inspiring positive personal change. Many governments have taken action to capitalize on this creative wave. South Korea and Japan in particular serve as useful examples of eminent creative powerhouses.

South Korean creative content continues to garner global appeal and accolades, so much so that the video-streaming company Netflix recently announced a \$2.5 billion investment in films and television shows from the country over the next four years.

In recent years, several South Korean productions have topped streaming charts and three of them appear on Netflix’s list of the 10 most-watched TV shows not in the English language: “Squid Game,” “The Glory” and “Extraordinary Attorney Woo.” Meanwhile, the South Korean film “Parasite” made history at the 2020 Oscars by becoming the first non-English-language film to win the prestigious Best Picture award.

A recent report published by the South Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism highlights the value of the creative-content industry’s successes. In 2021, total revenues reached a whopping \$107 billion, with an average annual growth rate of 4.9 percent between 2016 and 2020. Exports rose to \$12.45 billion.

About 109,000 businesses are active in the South Korean creative-content industries, employing 611,000 people. A mix of official policies that support the creation, financing, production, distribution and overseas expansion of creative content have been credited for this success, along with investment in cutting-edge technologies and training for promising emerging talent.

The Japanese creative-content industry has gained immense popularity over the years, domestically and internationally, thanks to its innovative and distinctive style and a devoted fan base.

At the forefront of this we have anime (animation), manga (comics), video games, music, films and TV shows, which contribute significantly to the national economy, backed by numerous strategic policies, programs and events.

For example, CoFesta, the Japan International Contents Festival, showcases the best of Japanese gaming, anime, manga, music, film and fashion. The Cool Japan Fund, a public-private partnership founded in 2013, promotes unique products and services that reflect the Japanese lifestyle and culture, and showcase the talent and imagination that

fuels the country’s creative-content industries.

In 2022, the Japanese government launched a research project to explore the roles content creators can play in Web 3.0 and the metaverse.

The Middle East and North Africa region similarly has a rich historical and cultural heritage from which to draw creative inspiration, and in recent years many Arab countries have provided growing support for a variety of artistic endeavors and creative platforms. Take, for example, the strategic investments by Saudi Arabia in the Red Sea Film Fund and a \$38 billion investment in the gaming industry, or the establishment of the Emirates Literature Foundation.

Considering the clear momentum in these sectors, Arab governments should calibrate their interventions to focus on helping them develop and thrive. Establishing a dedicated agency that can take the lead in developing the creative-content industry would be a wise decision, as it could focus on ensuring a robust sector while also monitoring key trends and performance statistics.

The introduction of a suite of sector-specific funds, grants and incentives could help ease the financial constraints that could hamper the development of high-quality content, and allow talent to focus on the creative process.

It is also important to invest in world-class studios, incubators of talent, innovative digital technologies, and co-working spaces.

At the same time, governments should aim to provide universal broadband coverage to ensure as many people as possible have adequate access to regional digital content. Regulations need to be strengthened to safeguard intellectual property rights, and to ensure fair pay, reasonable working hours and occupational safety.

Perhaps the most important investment in this regard is in the development of creative talents in various roles so that they can lead successful commercial projects. A focus on the integration of arts education from the early-years stages in schools and, later, in universities and vocational schools, is fundamental for cultivating the interests, knowledge and skills required to work and succeed in the creative sectors.

Special attention should be paid to nurturing “soft skills” such as imagination, curiosity, conceptualization, emotional intelligence, tolerance, storytelling and teamwork, which can spark boundless creativity and pave the way for authenticity. It is also important that talent scouts are strategically placed in institutions to identify promising talent.

Meanwhile, government agencies can play an influential role in positioning and exporting locally produced creative content, presenting its unique voice on the global stage and widening audiences.

Moreover, cross-cultural exchange programs for students and professionals can help to unleash their wild imaginations and encourage them to explore new perspectives, by fostering the creation of collaborative networks and the representation of diverse voices.

In the same vein, the staging of festivals, book fairs, trade shows and other relevant events that showcase the work of the creative-content industries is important for creating networking opportunities among stakeholders.

Arab talents have the potential to be at the forefront of creative content, if they receive sufficient support in bringing their artistic visions to life. Given the many exciting developments in the sector, and seemingly inexhaustible demand, it is increasingly important for Arab governments to consider ways to ensure that they can become leading global hubs for the creative-content industries.

EU is a ‘green pioneer’ but it cannot achieve global goals on its own

Since the pandemic and the start of the war in Ukraine, the EU has doubled down on the green economy in an effort to meet global environmental goals such as the aims of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement.

Yet it is increasingly clear that Brussels needs more help from the private sector and also the wider international community if it is to get close to success with this vital agenda.

To be sure, the level of commitment within the EU to the green economy is already huge, including a growing momentum behind the European Green Deal megaproject. An example of this commitment is the fact that Brussels has announced more than 50 major sustainability initiatives since the signature policy agenda was announced by the European Commission.

This has helped the EU rebrand itself as a global green superpower, which it hopes will give it a renewed political lease on life to boot. This comes after a few difficult decades during which it faced a number of challenges, such as growing euroscepticism and multiple financial crises.

However, green goals cannot be achieved simply through the announcement by Brussels of endless new political initiatives, however major. More help from the private sector, and international allies, is key.

The monumental scale of the task facing the 27 EU member states is illustrated by the fact that reaching net-zero emissions by 2050 will require about €700 billion in additional investment by the bloc each year. It is a staggering sum and is why the role of the private sector is so crucial.

This is where the EU’s green taxonomy comes in. A cornerstone of the bloc’s environmental strategy, it is a sustainable finance framework in which Europe is yet again a global pioneer. The taxonomy provides businesses and investors with clear and appropriate definitions for which economic activities can be considered the most environmentally sustainable.

It helps to direct capital to the economic activities most needed for the green

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Yet although it is uncertain exactly how the taxonomy will evolve in the next few years, one thing that is clear is that Brussels cannot go it alone, internationally, on this agenda. It needs to bring the rest of the world along with it. One plausible future pathway toward this would be to align the taxonomy with counterpart international measures that are similar if not identical. Bodies such as the International Sustainability Standards Board would have a key role to play here, in terms of alignment and/or equivalence of standards with other key industrialized powers that have a huge stake in this agenda, too, including Japan and the US.
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transition, in line with European Green Deal objectives. These include climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts, sustainable use, and protection of water and marine resources, the transition to a circular economy, pollution prevention and control, and protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems.

Perhaps inevitably, this sensitive agenda has generated some controversy. For instance, the European Commission is facing legal challenges from environmental campaigners, and the governments of Austria

Andrew Hammond

and Luxembourg, over the inclusion of nuclear and gas in the taxonomy, which some dissenters argue is a backward step that amounts to “greenwashing.”

However, the taxonomy has also had its successes, including some scaling up of sustainable investment volumes. There is also some evidence that it is increasingly being used by businesses to signal their sustainability performance and efforts.

and helping companies become more climate-friendly and mitigating market fragmentation. An essential element here will be continuing dialogue between Brussels and the private sector.

One way in which this dialogue is taking place is through a series of European Commission communications until after the European Parliament elections in June 2024, and the next European Commission is formed and given a chance to become “bedded in,” which might take us into 2025.

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There is unlikely to be a complete convergence, even between like-minded industrialized democracies. However, the divergences should potentially be manageable enough to help meet the ultimate, shared, global, green-goal objectives, such as those set out in the Paris Agreement.

The EU taxonomy and its international counterparts could therefore help create a foundation for sustainable global development in the decades ahead.

ensure a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials for European industry, and to reduce significantly the dependency of member states on imports from single-country suppliers, including China.

In the short term, however, there are unlikely to be any big taxonomy announcements until after the European Parliament elections in June 2024, and the next European Commission is formed and given a chance to become “bedded in,” which might take us into 2025.

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Climate change requires true leadership, not party-political point-scoring

Yossi Mekelberg

that do not meet low-emissions standards. As a result, they just managed to hang on to the seat by the skin of their teeth.

This signals that climate is going to be a major battleground in the general election due next year in the UK, with the Conservatives perhaps accusing Labour of waging a war on motorists — even though they are well aware that the Ultra Low Emission Zone, which was introduced by former Conservative leader Boris Johnson when he was London mayor, is improving air quality and will thereby save thousands of lives every year.

However, it is important for Labour not only to introduce climate-related policies that are punitive, especially during the current cost-of-living crisis, but also to introduce affordable alternatives and subsidies.

One of the EU’s main efforts for achieving net-zero carbon dioxide emis-

of peace it is almost impossible to reach a consensus on major issues, however urgent or crucial they might be, with pandemics perhaps an exception.

Painful sacrifices and the ability to mobilize all of society to overcome a severe threat or other crisis requires that we adopt a warlike footing, lest we find death staring us in the face.

Because humanity has neglected sustainable development for more than a generation, the situation has indeed now become warlike in nature and needs to be treated as such. Governments and oppositions must find common ground and get their acts together.

Tragically, the exact opposite is happening, which is what is making it so difficult to find and implement solutions that are cost effective and affordable for as many people as possible. The environment has become a tool for scoring cheap political points among those more interested in winning elec-

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Of course, the primary mission is to prevent a global catastrophe. But in parallel to that we must also present an exciting vision of a new, green economy and society in which new and better-paid jobs are created and in which our air, land and oceans are cleaner. And so that quality of life and life expectancy is improved, people are not forced to abandon their homes due to fires or floods, and biodiversity is preserved. There are plenty of examples to demonstrate that this is not only desirable but also possible.
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sions, replacing gas boilers with heat pumps, has proved to be badly planned and executed and has therefore resulted in a political backlash that has divided opinion.

In the US, meanwhile, during what is one of the worst eras of adversarial politics in the country’s history, Ron DeSantis, a Republican who aspires to take up residence in the White House, launched his presidential campaign by stating that he rejects “the politicization of the weather.”

In doing so, he conveniently ignored the adverse effects climate change is already having in his home state of Florida, where as governor he has presented bills that ban cities from adopting 100 percent clean-energy goals. Even in the more progressively minded Canada, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is struggling to deliver on his far-reaching plans for achieving net-zero.

As time runs short for our chances to contain climate change, it becomes increasingly apparent that there is no more room for incremental adjustments, or even to try to build consensus between deeply entrenched politicians — instead, it has become an imperative that we mobilize all those with integrity and a sense of responsibility to put aside their party-political differences. Their model should be similar to the response to the COVID-19 pandemic or to the war in Ukraine.

History teaches us that in democratic states, in times

tions than saving the planet. Countering climate change should not only be about taxing people and scaremongering, but about building a new, global, sustainable agenda.

Of course, the primary mission is to prevent a global catastrophe. But in parallel to that we must also present an exciting vision of a new, green economy and society in which new and better-paid jobs are created and in which our air, land and oceans are cleaner. And so that quality of life and life expectancy is improved, people are not forced to abandon their homes due to fires or floods, and biodiversity is preserved. There are plenty of examples to demonstrate that this is not only desirable but also possible.

The late British Labour politician Tony Benn once said that he divided politicians into two categories: “signposts” and “weather vanes.” The former remain loyal to their values, principles and worldview. The latter “hasn’t got an opinion until they’ve looked at the polls, talked to the focus groups, discussed it with the spin doctors.”

In a crisis of such importance as climate change, we need our leaders to stand tall and lead from the front with purpose but, unfortunately, there are too many weather vanes, blowing around in the wind. This makes it all the more crucial for all of the signposts to show up, speak as loudly as possible, and show us the way.

How soft power can boost Turkish-Gulf relations

The regional order in the Middle East is undergoing a serious shift due to the normalization of relations among many regional states, domestic transformations within the Gulf nations, and seismic crises among international actors that are affecting the policies of the regional actors.

Turkish-Gulf relations offer an interesting case study on the broader changes in Middle East politics. Following the normalization efforts of the past two years, Turkish-Gulf relations have entered a new phase based on strategies that seek to maximize economic and political gains. The reciprocal visits of the Turkish and Gulf leaders, along with the agreements signed during these visits, lead us to view the rapprochement process through a politico-economic context.

However, studies suggest that, after any rapprochement process, especially at a time of strategic reordering, states should place a strong emphasis on soft power — cultural relations or, in other words, people-to-people relations — to create long-lasting channels of dialogue and cooperation. In order to build crisis-resilient relations between Türkiye and the Gulf states, soft power tools should be employed for

more effective engagement.

The previous deterioration of bilateral ties between Türkiye and the Gulf states was due to their limited engagement and the lack of understanding of each other’s politico-ideological perspectives and regional visions. While their economic and political relations were severely tested due to the differences between their respective policymakers, the people-to-people relations were also affected due to the adverse effects of these tensions on the culture, education and media sectors.

In the rapidly changing geopolitical context of the decade ahead, finding ways to create new areas of cooperation between Türkiye and the Gulf states becomes even more valuable and necessary. Strong cultural and educational relations between Türkiye and the Gulf states can seriously contribute to sustainable engagement, even when political relations are going through a difficult time. Türkiye-friendly public opinion in the Gulf states and Gulf-friendly public opinion in Türkiye can strengthen mutual relationships. To build mutual trust and understanding among these societies and encourage popular support for

Sinem Cengiz

Turkish-Gulf relations, cultural and educational programs are vital.

When people have direct experience of each other’s countries through study, they gain a deeper understanding of the culture, language and society. This also helps in building trust and sympathy in the country where they study. The connection built between people through the educational channel is definitely more resilient to the ups and downs of political relations.

For example, Kuwait University and Qatar University offer year-long Arabic language scholarships for Turkish people. The other Gulf states could follow the same path and offer such scholarships to help in maintaining people-to-people connections. In the same vein, Türkiye has some effective cultural institutions, such as the Yunus Emre Institute, which promotes learning of the Turkish language and cultural norms worldwide. The institute currently has a branch only in Qatar. Similar offices in other Gulf states would open the doors for dialogue on mutually valued but less politically sensitive areas, such as culture and language.

Since the end of the Cold War, Western coun-

tries have engaged in efforts to build cultural centers abroad, such as the Goethe Institute or British Council. The EU also has an effective student exchange program, Erasmus. With the same aim, Ankara and the Gulf capitals can utilize existing programs, such as Türkiye’s Mevlana Exchange Programme, or create a unique new platform for student exchanges.

Through cultural and educational programs, the bond between Turkish and Gulf societies will be created not with force, but through deep understanding of each other’s values. Besides the people, the states that these people belong to will also benefit from this engagement. Studies suggest that cultural institutions have helped advance their respective countries’ strategic interests in terms of protecting their influence and security in a competitive world.

Another possible area of cooperation is the media, which has become an integral part of diplomatic relations because it plays an important role in transforming ties. One of the areas that was influenced by the former tense relations between Türkiye and the Gulf countries was the media. One way to move forward in this sector would be to create a

regional media forum organized by the two sides, as there is a serious need for dialogue among media organizations. There could be exchange programs for Turkish and Gulf journalists. For a better cycle of knowledge in which the media feeds society and vice versa, a better understanding of the cultural and political context is crucial, as it remains key to achieving progress during this rapprochement process.

Both Türkiye and the Gulf countries have influential tools for cultural, educational and media dialogue between institutions and the public. Positive perceptions gained through cultural relations can leave a long-lasting impression, increasing people’s willingness to engage with the Gulf states or Türkiye throughout their lives.

The success of soft power engagement depends on human investment for the long-term, so that it can overcome any future challenges in bilateral ties. Thus, just as economic investments are key to the flourishing of Turkish-Gulf relations, investing in young people — who will offer important voices within society in the future and eventually play a role in the opportunities and challenges in Turkish-Gulf relations — is equally important.

Luke Coffey

Qaeda, who had not set foot in Afghanistan for almost two decades, are now roaming freely. Al-Qaeda’s reestablished presence in Afghanistan was best illustrated when its leader, Ayman Al-Zawahiri, was killed in a US drone strike in Kabul last summer.

But terrorism is only one of many problems the White House has when it comes to developing a coherent Afghan policy. Another pressing issue is the status of the Afghans who helped the US over the years and feared for their lives as the Taliban marched on Kabul. Tens of thousands of Afghans were brought to the US in the final weeks of the American military presence. Almost two years later, Congress and the

White House have failed to pass the legislation to give these Afghans a legal pathway to remain in the US. There’s the added complication of the tens of thousands of Afghans who were promised evacuation but remain stranded there under Taliban control.

There is also no strategy for the groups emerging in opposition to the Taliban. The National Resistance Front, based in the Panjshir valley but active across northern provinces, continues to be the only genuine and non-extremist armed opposition force against Taliban rule.

Though the US worked closely with the National Resistance Front’s predecessor, the Northern Alliance, in the early days after the 9/11 attacks, there has been no public statement of support or any attempt by the US govern-

ment to engage in dialogue with the organization. Last summer, a US State Department spokesman said: “We do not support organized violent opposition to the Taliban, and we would discourage other powers from doing so as well.”

As the US grapples with developing an Afghan policy, it should not be tempted to let the recent talks in Doha be the start of a process in which Washington formally recognizes the Taliban government. The Taliban would benefit from such legitimacy and the international community should do everything it can to prevent it.

Since the Taliban takeover, Afghanistan has been on a downward spiral. There is an acute humanitarian crisis. The Taliban promised that

young girls could go to school, but this still has not happened. The internal divisions inside the Taliban leadership and the overall security situation add to the humanitarian crisis: it is not too dissimilar from the 1990s when the Taliban were last in power.

Ignoring the problems and challenges in Afghanistan in the 1990s planted the seed for the 9/11 terrorist attacks. This lesson must be learned. Although American policymakers might have “Afghan fatigue,” this is no excuse for not having a policy.

Instead of pointless talks with the Taliban, the US should be working with international and regional partners to develop a comprehensive and coherent strategy for the country before it is too late.

The US has no Afghan policy ... it badly needs one

US officials met representatives of the Taliban in Qatar last week, the first face-to-face talks since the militants took over Afghanistan two years ago.

The US does not recognize the Taliban as the government of Afghanistan, but it agreed to engage on specific issues. There was no shortage of those. The top issues were the growing humanitarian crisis, transnational terrorism, the poor economic situation, and the continued breakdown in women’s rights. After the meeting one thing became clear: the Biden administration has no coherent strategy to deal with Afghanistan.

In fact, Afghanistan has been a disaster for the administration, and it has only itself to blame. Donald Trump agreed to a deal with the Taliban in

February 2020 for the phased withdrawal of US forces by May 2021. This was as the starting point that led to the Afghan government’s collapse and the Taliban’s return to power.

In January 2021, when Biden took office, instead of canceling Trump’s flawed agreement he merely postponed America’s withdrawal from May to September. By July, almost all US and international forces had left. On Aug. 15, the Taliban took Kabul. Shockingly, by September 2021, the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, the Taliban controlled more of Afghanistan than it did back then.

Since the last US soldier left Kabul airport in August 2021, after two decades focused intensely and at times exclusively on Afghanistan, the Biden administration has had no

real Afghan policy to speak of. This needs to change.

A good example of this is counterterrorism. Biden has been in denial about the terrorist situation in Afghanistan. As recently as last month, he said the Taliban had been cooperating on terrorism and there was no Al-Qaeda in the country.

After the talks last week in Doha, the American delegation “took note” of the Taliban’s “continuing commitment not to allow Afghanistan to be used as a platform for attacks on the US and its allies,” and acknowledged a “decrease in large-scale terrorist attacks against Afghan civilians.” This assessment is not only laughable, it also contradicts all the available evidence.

It is obvious that any decrease in terrorist attacks

against Afghan civilians is because the Taliban are no longer leading an insurgency. Meanwhile transnational terrorist groups have flourished. The most recent report on the peace and security of Afghanistan by the UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team lays out in detail the growing transnational terrorist threats that have evolved in Afghanistan since the Taliban took over two years ago.

An estimated 21 terrorist groups operate freely in Afghanistan. Some have global ambitions, while some are more regionally focused. Almost all enjoy the hospitality and protection of the Taliban, the two most dangerous being Al-Qaeda and Daesh.

Senior members of Al-



‘Attracting investment in renewable energy FDI inflows into Pakistan’

ISLAMABAD (APP): Former President of SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry Iftikhar Ali Malik Sunday said attracting investment in the renewable energy sector could enhance foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows into Pakistan, and, foster economic development.

He expressed these views while chairing a round table conference on ‘The Impact of renewable energy on the economy’, said a press release issued here.

Iftikhar Ali Malik said, “Renewable energy can have a significant positive impact on Pakistan’s econ-

omy by shifting towards its sources.”

He said, “Over time, renewable energy projects can lead to reduced operational costs compared to conventional fossil fuel-based power generation, leading to potential savings for consumers and businesses.”

“Investing in renewable energy technologies can spur innovation and research, leading to technological advancements that can benefit other sectors of the economy as well,” he remarked.

He said, “Overall, embracing renewable energy can create a more sus-

tainable and resilient economy for Pakistan, while also addressing environmental challenges and ensuring a brighter future for its citizens.”

He said, “Pakistan has faced energy shortages and an increasing demand for electricity. Renewable energy can contribute to meeting the growing energy demand and reduce the strain on the power grid.”

Iftikhar Ali Malik said, “Pakistan has a significant portion of its population without access to electricity and deploying renewable energy in remote areas can also provide electricity access, improving living

standards and supporting rural development.”

He said, “Diversifying the energy mix with renewables reduces reliance on imported fossil fuels, enhancing energy security and reducing vulnerability to international price fluctuations.” He said, “Shifting away from fossil fuels helps mitigate climate change, reduce air pollution, and promote environmental sustainability.”

“It is the need of the hour that creates new job opportunities, stimulating economic growth and contributing to poverty reduction,” Iftikhar Ali Malik concluded.

BOP, Board of Revenue Balochistan collaborate to launch E-Stamping project



F.P. Report

QUETTA: The Bank of Punjab and the Board of Revenue Balochistan signed a service level agreement in Quetta to initiate the E-Stamping project for automating this critical service for the benefit of the citizens. This aligns with the Government of Balochistan’s vision of promoting digital services and ensuring ease of doing business in the province.

Embracing the power of technology, citizens can

now obtain stamp papers effortlessly within minutes, at the click of a button, thanks to a seamless process offered by the Bank of Punjab.

The E-Stamping project will be rolled out across the province and will enhance revenue collection while providing complete data reconciliation.

The ceremony was attended by Mr. Roshan Ali Shaikh (Senior Member Board of Revenue), Mr. Farid Ahmed Khan (Group Chief Corporate &

Investment Banking - BOP), and Mr. Sharjeel Raza Khan (Head Transaction Banking - BOP), along with senior officials from both organizations.

The Bank of Punjab is the only bank in the country extending end-to-end fully automated E-stamping services successfully since 2016. The Bank plans to offer these services in other provinces in joint collaboration with key stakeholders.

The Bank of Punjab

boasts an extensive network of 780 branches spread across Pakistan. In Punjab, the bank operates 471 conventional and 91 Islamic branches. In Sindh, BOP has a growing network of 73 conventional and 10 Islamic branches. In Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, the bank has 48 conventional and 21 Islamic branches. Within ICT, there are 15 conventional and 7 Islamic branches.

In Balochistan, the bank operates 8 conventional and 5 Islamic branches. Furthermore, there are 8 conventional and 2 Islamic branches in Gilgit-Baltistan and 5 conventional and 3 Islamic branches in Azad Jammu & Kashmir.

The Bank of Punjab has established a vast network of 765 ATMs throughout Pakistan. In Punjab, BOP operates 591 ATMs, while in Sindh, there are 66 ATMs.

In Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, the bank has 55 ATMs. Moreover, it has 26 ATMs operating in the ICT region, along with 13 ATMs in Balochistan. Furthermore, the bank has 9 ATMs in Gilgit-Baltistan and 5 ATMs in Azad Jammu & Kashmir.



MULTAN: People purchasing different domestic use items in Sunday Bazaar.

Flour price up by Rs15 per kg in Quetta

QUETTA (INP): The price of flour has increased by Rs15 per kg in Quetta, Balochistan. According to details, the price of flour after an increase of Rs15 per kg has reached Rs150 in Quetta, adding misery to the already inflation-hit people.

It revealed that the price of 20 kg of flour has increased from Rs2,800 to more than Rs 3,000. According to the member of flour mills, wheat from Balochistan is smuggling to other provinces, it is not possible to stabilize prices until wheat smuggling is stopped.

A few days ago, data was released from PBS, according to which Karachi’s citizens are buying the most expensive flour in the country where 20kg bag is being sold at Rs3200

In addition, the prices of flour across the country, including Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Haiderabad, Gogranwala, Khazdar, Bahawalpur, have also increased.

Global rice price index reaches high

LAHORE (APP): The world rice price index of the United Nations Food Agency (UNFA) experienced a notable 2.8 percent rise in July, as compared to June, reaching the highest level recorded in almost 12 years. The overall world food price index also notably rebounded in July after experiencing two-year lows, said a UNFA report.

This hike in prices was mainly driven by excessive demand in key exporting countries and India’s decision to restrict its rice exports, it said. The Food and ARPI, that tracks rice prices among major exporting nations, estimated an average of 129.7 points last month, a notable rise from June’s 126.2 points.

Likewise, the score from July was much higher, nearly 20 percent, than the same adjacent period in the previous year, reaching 108.4 points, marking the highest level since September 2011, the report reads.

It is worth mentioning here that India, being a key player in the global rice market provider, with 40 percent of world rice exports, restricted its largest rice export category to stabilise domestic prices that had increased to multi-year-highs due to unpredictable weather and floods affecting production.

RCCI to organize 2 days Health Expo

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) will organize the Health Expo and Summit on August 16 aiming to provide a platform to explore export potential and address the key challenges faced by the health and pharmaceutical sectors in Pakistan.

RCCI President Saqib Rafiq while providing details of the event on Sunday said that Pakistan had significant export potential in the pharmaceutical sector, given its capabilities in drug manufacturing, a skilled workforce and a growing global demand for affordable

medicines.

Pakistan’s pharmaceutical industry was known for producing high-quality generic medicines at competitive prices and this cost-effectiveness makes Pakistani pharmaceutical products attractive to countries seeking affordable healthcare solutions, he added.

He said that the pharmaceutical export potential of Pakistan was underutilized due to various factors, including regulatory challenges, limited R&D and global market competition.

Saqib further remarked that the health and pharmaceutical sectors in Pakistan faced multiple challenges

that have implications for healthcare delivery, medical services and pharmaceutical industry growth.

A summit will be being organized on the sidelines of the RCCI Med-Health Expo 2023 to address these challenges impacting both the quality of healthcare services provided to the population and the overall development of the pharmaceutical sector, he further added.

He said that the pharmaceutical regulatory system also faced challenges related to ensuring the safety, quality and efficacy of drugs, as well as addressing issues of counterfeit and substandard medicines.

APBF flays frequent jump in petroleum, power prices

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF) has rejected the frequent increase in prices of electricity, gas and petroleum products, saying the massive jump in electricity base rates and petroleum products prices would make local products uncompetitive in the international market.

APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood remarked that at a time of unsatisfactory export volumes and low industrial growth, the hike in electricity base tariffs for the industry, especially for the SMEs, was really surprising. If the decision is not withdrawn, it will prove dangerous for the country’s SME sector, he stressed.

He said that the ever-increasing cost of production in the country is the real threat to both large-scale manufacturing (LSM) and small-scale businesses (SMEs), as frequent upward revisions in policy rate and continuous fluctuations in rupee against dollar are posing further challenges for the economy.

APBF Chairman Ibrahim Qureshi while describing the government’s decision to increase electricity tariffs by Rs7.50 per unit as an incorrect move, urged the government to reverse the proposed increase. The government’s decision to increase the electricity tariff is anti-industry, and the APBF strongly condemns the government’s decision and calls on it to withdraw this move.

He said that the aggressive economic measures,

high borrowing rates, inflation, oppressive taxation and unstable currency have been negatively affecting running businesses, many of which have closed their operations.

He said that with a view to deal with fiscal challenges the government will have to work on the three-way strategy by implementing short-term goals that will help to keep generating resources for smooth fiscal operations, medium-term goals where the government should focus on financial inclusion, documenting the economy by designing a system where all businesses can be registered and properly document their income including collection of sales tax, initiating the process of privatization as well as improving governance by introducing reforms in each sector.

Syed Maaz Mahmood said that the increase in base rate of electricity is also part of pact signed between government and IMF, which says that the government has to notify NEPRA’s determinations without any delay and amendment.

He stated that on July 14, 2023, the NEPRA had already approved average rebasing in tariff of Rs. 4.96 per unit across the board.

The APBF President observed that the abrupt disruption of concessions committed under various industry policies has resulted in decline in industry’s exports, which declined from \$18.5 billion during FY2021-22 to around \$16.6 billion during the outgoing FY2022-23. He claimed that export performance

was severely set back by the drastic turn in macro-economic conditions during 2022-23, of which the historic rise in bank lending rates; raw material and, retraction of concessional gas and electricity tariffs during the second half of the last fiscal year damaged prospects of export growth irreparably.

Food prices soar in coup-hit Niger

NIAMEY (INP): Shoppers in Niger’s coup-hit capital Niamey face soaring prices for basic foods since the military takeover triggered trade sanctions from West African neighbours.

At one rain-drenched market, customer Ibou Kane said a sack of rice had gone up by more than a third to around 15,000 CFA francs (\$25) since the coup prompted the ECOWAS economic and political bloc to close borders and sever commercial ties. “Frankly, I’ve felt it in my pocket. And right now ... we’re all stocking up,” Kane said.

Coup leader Abdourahmane Tiani, who ousted President Mohamed Bazoum, has said foreign pressure will make coming weeks and months difficult for all Nigeriens, and called for unity. There was no obvious panic-buying at Yantala market, but vendors and shoppers were all feeling the pinch. Cooking oil, too, was up to 33,000 CFA a can from 22,000 a few days before.

Aggressive economic measures negatively affecting trade

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) has observed that the aggressive economic measures, high borrowing rates, inflation, oppressive taxation and unstable currency have been negatively affecting the trade and industry, many of which have closed their operations.

PIAF Chairman Faheem Rehman Saigol in a joint statement along with senior vice chairman Nasrullah Mughal and vice chairman Tahir Manzoor Ch, observed that the ever-increasing cost of production in the country is the real threat to both large-scale manufacturing and small-scale businesses, as frequent upward revisions in policy rate and continuous fluctuations in rupee against dollar are posing further challenges.

They said that the government does not have any

pragmatic plan to address this liability, apart from asking for more loans to repay existing debt. Likewise, the target for current financial year’s exports is too low to meet the country’s revenue.

According to the data, the pace of growth in LSM industries is suffering because of restrictions imposed on imports that have caused a shortage of imported raw material. The steep currency devaluation has also made raw material expensive and business models unviable.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) assessed that the pace of negative growth in big industries could have been slower had the government not imposed restrictions on imports. The central bank has issued the guidelines to commercial banks about the allocation of foreign currency for import purposes.

Faheem Saigol said that the LSM trend indicates

that this year that the overall Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate may remain around 1% due to the shutdown of industries and adverse impact of the devastating floods on the agriculture sector. The government had targeted economic growth of 5.1% in the current fiscal year but the latest estimates – both by the IMF and the federal government – indicate that growth will be marginally in the positive territory.

Since large industries contribute heavily to revenue collection and job creation, any change in their growth impacts the government and business sentiment across the board. The businesses are also facing demand and for advance income taxes from the Federal Board of the Revenue (FBR), coupled with a slow release of genuine refunds (from non-exporting sectors).

The LSM sector contributes nearly one-tenth to total national output, how-

ever, a constant decline in the share and growth of LSM may cause a lot of problems for the government already struggling to create new jobs.

The main contributors towards overall negative growth of 4.4% include the food sector that shrank marginally, the tobacco industry that also contracted by less than 1%, textile output which reduced by 2.7%, petroleum products and cement production dipped by less than 1% and the pharmaceuticals and automobiles – the two sectors hit hardest by the ban on imports – also shrank during the first seven months of the current fiscal year.

Faheem Rehman Saigol said that the conventional approach of focusing solely on improving export while pursuing a passive and imprudent foreign policy towards neighboring countries, poses a significant challenge in meeting export targets.

Regional connectivity vital as Pak-Iran bilateral trade reaches \$2.3b

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Vice President Mian Anjum Nisar has said the bilateral trade between Iran and Pakistan has reached over \$2.3 billion, expressing the resolve to increase bilateral trade to \$5 billion under a five-year trade cooperation plan and stressing the need for enhancing more cooperation in areas of economy and trade and investment between Pakistan, Iran, China and Turkey, as the regional connectivity is the only way to uplift the country.

Mian Anjum Nisar, who is also BMP Chairman and FPCCI former president, was of the view that the

current volumes of bilateral trade is far behind then and actual potential, asking the authorities to take serious measures to remove hurdles in this regard. He said that both Pakistan and Iran can help each other in different sectors. He said both the countries are committed to increase bilateral trade to new high levels. He called for promoting cooperation in the economy, traded and tourism under regional mechanism. He said setting up a special economic free trade region along the common border would help to increase trade between the two countries, as there is potential to increase bilateral trade to \$10 billion in next few years.

SAARC Chamber vice president believed that the

completion of the IP gas pipeline project will definitely serve the national interest of the two countries, as the businessmen wanted to see this gas pipeline be completed, finalized, and operationalized as soon as possible to end up our power crisis.

It is to be noted that the Five-Year Trade Cooperation Plan between Pakistan and Iran (2023-28), which inter alia, sets a bilateral trade target of \$ 5 billion; prioritizes removing impediments on bilateral trade, finalization of the FTA, and establishment of institutional linkages between our respective private sectors; Protocol on Bilateral Economic Consultations, encompassing the rich and in-depth

sectoral discussions held between the two sides; and protocol on the 3rd meeting of the Joint Investment Committee (JIC) between Pakistan and Iran, on issue of bilateral investments.

He said the two sides should also find solutions to the existing banking and financial problems between the two countries within the framework of international rules and regulations.

Mian Anjum Nisar called for promoting cooperation in economy, trade, and tourism under regional mechanisms, adding that the two sides should fully committed to increasing the bilateral trade to \$5 billion. It is good that the two sides have agreed to set up a special economic free trade region along the common

border points.

He was of the view that there is a need to activate more formats of cooperation in areas of economy, trade, and creation of jobs for the people of the two countries.

One of these regional mechanisms is the one between Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan, he said, adding that another one is between China, Pakistan, and Iran when it comes to joint investment and other areas of mutual interest.

He also emphasized the role of the two parliaments in advancing and enhancing bilateral relations between the two countries. We are also of the firm belief that Iran and Pakistan are like one unified country. We are two people living in two

different geographies. He said that the only solution to the problems in Afghanistan lies within the framework of regional initiatives. He said that it is the religious and humanitarian responsibility of the two countries to support the Afghan people, adding that sustainable peace and stability in Afghanistan will benefit the whole region.

I am confident that the steps we are taking will chart the course for a long-term and durable economic partnership between our two countries in the months and years ahead, he expressed confidence.

He added that Pakistan and Iran enjoy a complete convergence of views on all issues of mutual interest. We believe that our pros-

perity and development is firmly intertwined with peace and stability of our neighbourhood and the region, he said.

He further stated that Pakistan espouses a vision for greater regional integration based on enhanced trade and connectivity.

To this end, he added that the two sides have agreed to prioritise operationalisation of the five remaining border markets, by the end of this year. We also discussed ways and means to leverage our unique strategic location, as a conduit between South, Central and West Asia, he said, adding that they also agreed that the ECO is uniquely placed to play this role and the two countries will work with other ECO

states towards achieving this goal.

He said that China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project is critically important for the economy of Pakistan as the project was initiated at the time when no one was ready to invest in Pakistan. Unfortunately, the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) under this project could not be established within time. As a result the industries could not get boost which resulted in increase of unemployment, he said, adding: Recent visit of Chinese vice premier will bring fruitful outcome. The CPEC will bring economic stability in the region and will change the destiny of the regional countries, he added.



In brief

Evans beats Dimitrov

WASHINGTON (DC Agencies): Dan Evans is through to his first ATP 500 final after a straight-set victory over Grigor Dimitrov in Washington DC. The British number two beat the Bulgarian 6-3 7-6 (7-4) and will play Tallon Griekspoor of the Netherlands in the final. He becomes the first British player to reach the final in Washington since Andy Murray in 2006. The 33-year-old will hope to claim a second career title to add to the ATP 250 title he won in Melbourne in 2021. Evans said he felt tired in his semi-final after playing twice on Friday, defeating Russia's Alexander Shevchenko after rain had cancelled their match on Thursday before knocking out home favourite and second seed Frances Tiafoe. "It was so hard after yesterday putting in such a big effort," Evans said in his on-court interview. "Coming back today, it was really important for me to not roll over and have a bad performance. The last few months, that is what has happened a little bit." Dimitrov fired 24 winners to just nine from Evans, but the hard-hitting world number 20 came undone with 30 unforced errors. The ninth seed has returned to form this week, after defeats in his opening matches at Queen's Club, Wimbledon and the Atlanta Open. Meanwhile, 12th seed Griekspoor, who is chasing a third title of the season, came from a set down to beat American top seed Taylor Fritz 3-6 6-3 6-2 for his first win over a player in the world top 10.

Afghanistan ODI squad

DUBAI (Agencies): Afghanistan named a strong 18-member squad for the three-match ODI series against Pakistan that will be played in Sri Lanka. Noor Ahmad made a return to Afghanistan's ODI squad as they fine-tune the final combination ahead of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup in India later this year. Noor's return means that there was no room for left-arm spinner Zia Ur Rahman Akbar, who recently made his ODI debut against Bangladesh. Uncapped leg-spinner Izharulhaq Naveed, who was part of the Test squad, has been left out. Fast bowlers Mohammad Saleem Safi and Wafadar Momand, who were part of the recent ODI tour to Bangladesh, have successfully retained their spots. "Our whole concentration is to prepare the team for the upcoming two big events of Asia Cup and the World Cup 2023," ACB Chief Selector Asadullah Khan said. "This three-match ODI series against Pakistan provides us with a wonderful opportunity to prepare the team for the forthcoming two events." "The preparations for the Pakistan series are progressing well. The players have recently performed well in the Kabul Camp, which has been supervised by ACB's HPC staff. The team will also undergo a week-long conditioning camp prior to the Pakistan series." Afghanistan ODI squad: Hashmatullah Shahidi (C), Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Ikrām Alikhil, Ibrahim Zadran, Riaz Hassan, Rahmat Shah, Najibullah Zadran, Mohammad Nabi, Azmatullah Omarzai, Rashid Khan, Noor Ahmad, Mujeeb Ur Rehman, Fazal Haq Farooqi, Abdul Ferooz, Mohammad Saleem Safi and Wafadar Momand. Reserves: Farid Ahmad Malik and Shahidullah Kamal.

NT Strike beat Pakistan Shaheens to clinch Top End T20 series trophy

DARWIN (Agencies): Jack Wood's unbeaten century led Northern Territory Strike to a 46-run win over Pakistan Shaheens in the final of the Top End T20 Series at the DXC Arena on Sunday afternoon.

Opting to bat first, NT Strike scored a mammoth 185 for four in 20 overs. Right-handed Jack Wood led the charge and scored an unbeaten 101 off 59 balls, which included eight fours and five sixes. He was

supported by Jason Sangha (33, 23b, 1x4, 3x6s), who added 71 runs for the second wicket.

For Shaheens, spinners Aaliyan Mahmood, Ali Asfand and Arafat Minhas snapped a wicket each, while left-arm pacer Sajjad Ali too bagged one wicket and gave away 24 runs from three overs.

In turn, Shaheens managed to score for 139 for seven in their allotted 20 overs.

For Shaheens, Arafat Minhas coming to bat at number six, top-scored for his side with a 30-ball 41, smashing two fours and as many sixes. Muhammad Irfan Khan (24, 25b, 1x4) and Shamyul Hussain (23, 19b, 3x4s) were the other contributors with the bat for the losing side.

For NT Strike, Brodie Symons was the most successful bowler taking three wickets for 16 in three overs. Pakistan Shaheens will

now feature in two 50-over matches on the tour. They will play Papua New Guinea on Tuesday, 8 August and the next day will play Northern Territory Strike before returning.

Scores in brief: NT Strike beat Shaheens by 46 runs

NT Strike 185-4, 20 overs (Jack Wood 101 not out, Jason Sangha 33) Pakistan Shaheens 139-7, 20 overs (Arafat Minhas 41, Muhammad Irfan Khan

24, Shamyul Hussain 23; Brodie Symons 3-16)

Player of the match – Jack Wood (NT Strike)

Pakistan Shaheens squad for two 50-over matches: Rohail Nazir (captain), Aaliyan Mahmood, Ahmed Khan, Ali Asfand, Amir Hassan, Arafat Minhas, Azan Awais, Basit Ali, Faisal Akram, Sajjad Ali, Mohammad Irfan Khan, Shamyul Hussain, Shawaz Irfan, Syed Zeeshan Zameer and Wahaj Riaz.

Pakistan cricket team gets go-ahead to travel to India for ICC World Cup

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): The Pakistan government has finally allowed the Men in Green to travel to India for the ICC World Cup 2023 which is set to take place in October.

"Pakistan has consistently maintained that sports should not be mixed with politics. It has, therefore, decided to send its cricket team to India to participate in the upcoming ICC Cricket World Cup 2023," the Foreign Office said in a statement on Sunday.

It further added that Pakistan believes that the state of bilateral relations with India should not stand in the way of fulfilling its international sports-related obligations.

"Pakistan's decision shows its constructive and responsible approach vis-à-vis India's intransigent attitude, as the latter had refused to send its Cricket Team to Pakistan for the Asia Cup." However, the government expressed deep concerns about the security of its cricket team.

"We are conveying these concerns to the International Cricket Council (ICC) and the Indian authorities. We expect that full safety and security of the Pakistan Cricket Team will be ensured during its visit to India," the FO added. The development comes a few days after the committee formed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Pakistan's participation in the World Cup in India considered sending a delegation to review security arrangements on Thursday.

The committee, headed by Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, comprised Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah, Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar, Information Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Minister of Inter-Provincial Coordination Ehsan-ur-Rehman Mazari, chiefs of the national security institutions, and foreign secretary.

Officials, who spoke to Geo News on the condition of anonymity, had said that most participants of the meeting agreed that Pakistan should go to India for participation in the World Cup. However, some suggestions did come of Pakistan skipping the event as India is also not visiting Pakistan.

However, the sources also said that there was consensus that a security guarantee will be taken from India before the team's departure. The sources also shared that Pakistan will reach out to India and the ICC for sending a security delegation. It added that if there is an agreement on sending a delegation then it will visit India in the last week of August.

Pak team departs to Czech Republic for ITF World Jrs finals

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 14U boy's team has departed to the Czech Republic for participation in the ITF World Juniors Finals, being held from August 7-12.

According to President Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF), Salim Saifullah Khan in a statement said, "It is extremely challenging until the last minute of the ITF deadline to confirm Pakistan's participation."

After all required documents were received from the ITF, the PTF initiated contact with the Czech Embassy in Islamabad in mid-June, to seek an appointment for submitting applications. Despite several reminders, the appointment wasn't provided, at which point efforts were raised at the highest levels, he added.

"I thank the Ministry of Inter Provincial Coordination (IPC), especially the minister, for his all-out help, through our Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as the Pakistan Ambassador in Prague, to seek visas for the contingent."

He said, "Unfortunately, due to their procedures, the Czech Embassy is unable to accommodate our continued requests." My gratitude to ITF Officials and the Czech Tennis Association for their assistance and understanding as, along with my personal endeavours here, they approached the relevant government officials in Prague, he added.

"We will be protesting to ITF on the unprofessional attitude of the Czech Embassy, especially since Pakistan Davis Cup teams were given Schengen visas twice for Austria and Lithuania in the last eight months or so."

Khan said, "Pakistan's participation in this important event was of paramount importance. It is disappointing for me and everyone else involved that two of our leading 14U players, Abubakar Talha and Hamza Roman, instrumental in our securing one of the three berths from Asia, as well as the earlier captain Heera Ashiq, are not granted visas, despite concerted efforts of all."

"While this was most unfortunate, the major consolation one can offer to them is that there are times when the Nation and our Flag must be put before individuals, and this was such a time! With the ITF deadline in its last 24 hours, the only way to ensure the country's attendance was to have players who could travel to Europe without seeking a fresh visa."

With no other options available, we had to select two players and an ITF-qualified Coach to complete the contingent, he added. "Luckily, 2 juniors who were next in line after the trials, qualified for travel, and that is how we ended up with a contingent acceptable to the ITF." He said, "The team now includes Captain/Coach Zain Nawab, and players Nabeel Qayum, Amir Mazari, and Samer Zaman." "The ITF event is scheduled to be held in Postejov, Czech Republic.

FISU World University Games Pakistani athletes fly back home with cherished memories

CHENGDU (APP): Despite not achieving desired outcomes in the ongoing World University Games in Chengdu, Pakistani women athletes on Sunday flew back home with some cherished memories.

Higher Education Commission had fielded five women athletes in the Games that included: Amtul Rehman, Uzma Azam, Manisha Ali, Maliha Ali and Fizza. They all are gold medal winners in the recently-held National Games in Quetta.

Amtul Rehman, who is a student of Lahore College for Women University (LCWU) participated in long jump and triple jump events of the Games.

Uzma Azam of Government College Women University Faisalabad took part in the hammer throw event.

Lahore Garrison University's twin sisters Manisha and Maliha competed in taekwondo event, while Fizza chipped in the wushu event. However none of them made it to the next round of the event in their respective disciplines.

But according to manager-cum-coach of the team Sumera Sattar, the participation in the Games itself is memorable.

"The participation in the

event was an opportunity for the athletes to gain international exposure. They have also experienced different cultures and forge friendships with athletes from diverse backgrounds," Sumera told APP before flying back to the country with athletes.

"Winning medals was the ultimate goal but that alluded them. I personally feel they can take pride in representing the country on such a big platform."

"Undoubtedly, they gained invaluable experiences and lessons. The participation in the event was an opportunity for them to gauge their own strengths and weaknesses," she added.

Amtul Rehman said she had learnt a lot from her competitors. "Before these Games I've no idea as how to compete at the international level," she said.

Beyond the competition, she said they had got the chance to explore the host city of Chengdu. "We've experienced Chengdu's unique culture, cuisine and attractions. I believe these off-field experiences have contributed a lot to our overall sweet memories that will never fade away," she reckoned.

Uzma Azam, who participated in hammer throw event, said although she

remained unable to make a podium finish, the participation in the Games would help a lot in her development as an athlete.

"The support and encouragement from the Chinese people was unprecedented. I felt as if I was at my home soil. These memories will be treasured forever," she said.

Fizza, who represented Pakistan in the wushu said that although she remained unable to get over the line, she was greeted and encouraged for her efforts by the Chinese sport-lovers.

"Featuring in a top-flight international event and competing against top-notch athletes from around the world is an accomplishment worth remembering," she added.

The twin sisters Manisha and Maliha, who contested in women's -67kg and -73kg respectively said that although they could not make it to the next round, they were happy to represent Pakistan at the coveted event. "I've learnt a lot."

The event was of a very high standard as the best of the best were taking part in it. The standard of the competition was not less than Olympics," Manisha said.

She said she had been watching the competitions

of all the taekwondo athletes in the event to keep abreast with the latest techniques of the game.

Her sister Manisha also echoed the same sentiments. "It was a great event to learn from the world's best athletes."

"Yes, we've lost, but the participation in the event has helped us to identify grey areas in our game. We are determined to perform well in our future assignments," she added.

No doubt, the victory is always the ultimate goal but that comes after years of hard work and rigorous training.

These women athletes are Pakistan's asset. It is hoped they will be given more opportunities as well as trained on the most modern lines, enabling them achieve peak performance at the international level and bring laurels for the country.

The athletes should also be proud of their attempts and determination as they are a source of inspiration and motivation for other Pakistani women.

Around 6,500 athletes (3,512 are men and 2,988 women) from 113 countries and regions are competing in 269 events of 18 sports at World Games, scheduled to conclude on August 8.



MELBOURNE: Alex Morgan of USA heads to the goal during the FIFA Women's World Cup Australia & New Zealand 2023 Round of 16 match between Sweden and USA at Melbourne Rectangular Stadium.

Sweden dump defending champions USA out of World Cup on penalties

MELBOURNE (Agencies): Sweden stunned the United States 5-4 in a sudden-death penalty shootout Sunday to surge into a Women's World Cup quarter-final against Japan and consign the defending champions to their earliest-ever exit.

The title-holders dominated the opening 90 minutes but a breakthrough proved elusive with Swedish goalkeeper Zecira Musovic making some startling saves to keep her side alive.

With the 0-0 deadlock remaining after extra-time it went to penalties in Melbourne -- and the tension went up another notch. Sweden's Nathalie Bjorn was the first to miss, sky-high, only for Megan Rapinoe to do the same.

Rebecka Blomqvist's effort was saved, again putting the USA in the driving seat, only for Sophia Smith to blast wide. When Kelley O'Hara hit the post, it was all down to Sweden's Lina Hultig, who made sure -- but only after VAR ruled her kick had crossed the line.

For the Americans, who just never really got going at this

tournament, it ended their dreams of a third World Cup title in a row in the most painful fashion. It was also an inglorious end for Rapinoe, the Golden Boot winner at the 2019 tournament. She will retire at the end of the season. "This is like a sick joke. For me personally, I'm just like, this is dark comedy. I missed a penalty," Rapinoe told Fox Sports. "I think it can be cruel and just not our day."

She added: "I thought we played really well. I'm so happy for us that we went out like that, playing the way that we did." Expectations were high coming into the tournament for the four-time champions, who had made at least the semi-finals at every World Cup. But they never looked up to the task in the group stage, with just one win, against Vietnam. The dramatic conclusion leaves the tournament without the two top-ranked sides after Germany's group-stage departure. This devastating early exit will be seen as a major underachievement for the Americans, who have been the superpower of international

women's football for so long.

- Musovic stands firm -

Vlatko Andonovski made two changes from the US team that drew 0-0 against Portugal, with Emily Sonnett in for suspended midfielder Rose Lavelle and Trinity Rodman preferred up front to Lynn Williams.

Sweden rested nine players in their last group game, but reverted to their strongest XI with strikers Fridolina Rolfö and Stina Blackstenius returning and Musovic getting the nod as goalkeeper ahead of Jennifer Falk.

After both sides sized each other up, the USA worked the first clear chance on six minutes, but Andi Sullivan's drive from the edge of the box skewed wide. A patient Sweden created space early on, particularly on the flanks, and sent in a series of teasing crosses to use their height advantage, to no avail.

As the game wore on the US assumed midfield control and a livewire Rodman went close to the opener after 18 minutes, letting fly from distance with Musovic palming away. She was forced into a similar stop minutes

later, again from Rodman, but could only watch as a towering Lindsey Horan header rattled the crossbar in the best opportunity of a lively half the US dominated.

The title-holders carried the momentum into the second stanza and only a world-class reflex save from Musovic kept Sweden on level terms, turning a vicious strike from Horan around the post at full stretch. It was all the United States and a goal seemed inevitable, but Musovic again kept Sweden in the game with another cracking save in the 88th minute, this time from Alex Morgan. She pulled off two more brilliant saves in extra-time to take the match to penalties.

Netherlands beats South Africa 2-0 to advance to the quarterfinals

SYDNEY: Netherlands had just advanced to the quarterfinals of the Women's World Cup, yet star midfielder Danielle van de Donk looked inconsolable.

Her yellow card in the second half of the 2-0 win over South Africa on Sunday means she will

serve a one-match suspension. Her tears were likely in realization that she may have played her final match of the tournament if the Dutch lose to Spain in the quarterfinals.

But Netherlands coach Andries Jonker had no time for any negativity. "We've come with the conviction that we can beat everybody. And if you say we can beat everybody, it includes all teams, South Africa, but also Spain," he said. "So it means it's not the last game for Danielle. We want to beat Spain, then she can come back into the tournament." The Dutch certainly appear to be contenders again after losing to the United States in the World Cup final four years ago. After finishing above the Americans in Group E this time, they overcame South Africa at Sydney Football Stadium through goals from Jill Roord in the first half and Lineth Beerensteyn in the second.

Spain is among the title favorites, and backed up its billing with a 5-1 win over Switzerland in the round of 16. Netherlands had to work harder

for its place in the last eight, with goalkeeper Daphne van Domselaar producing a player-of-the-match performance with a string of saves to keep South Africa at bay.

Her teammates were quick to acknowledge her game-saving efforts, rushing to embrace her after the final whistle. "We felt we could have won this game and if I look back, we should have with the opportunities that we had, but we didn't take them," South Africa coach Desiree Ellis said. "If you look at their goalkeeper getting the player of the match, it tells you how well we played."

Netherlands was also aided by an error from South Africa keeper Kaylin Swart, who let Beerensteyn's weak effort squirm out of her grasp and over the line. Just like van de Donk, Swart appeared devastated after the final whistle as teammates and staff consoled her. "Nobody in the world has a perfect game," Ellis said. "You are going to make a mistake and unfortunately that happened, but she kept us in the game as well."



In brief

AIOU declares results of BA

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has announced the results of the BA and Associate degree programs offered in the autumn semester 2022 and the results have been uploaded to the CMS portal. According to the controller examination, the results of the associate degree in commerce will be announced later. The new admissions for BA / BCom (Associate Degree) programs will commence on September 1. It is pertinent to mention here that the results for Matric and FA programs were declared on June 11. The new admissions to the Matric and FA programs started on 15 July and will continue till September 5. Vice Chancellor (VC) of AIOU Prof. Dr Nasir Mahmood after assuming the office, had instructed the Director Admissions and Controller of Examinations to streamline the process from admissions to examinations and follow the academic calendar of the university. The VC has given special attention to good governance in the university, which is why for the first time in the history of the university, the results of the previous semester have been declared before the new admissions begin.

IRSA releases 329,500 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 329,500 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 407,000 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1545.00 feet and was 147.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. The water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 231,200 cusecs and 186,900 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1234.50 feet, which was 184.50 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 43,200 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 202,500, 180,500, 219,800 and 254,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 46,800 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 57,900 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Sunday issued a power suspension programme for Monday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO spokesman, the power supply would remain suspended from 07:00 AM to 12:00 Noon at different feeders and grid stations including Islamabad Circle, Tufail Shaheed, Charah, Frash Town, Karpa Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, Azizabad, People's Colony, Pindhoo, I-14/3, Noon, I-16, HPT (Radio Pak), Lakho Road, Ameer Hamza, Officer Colony, Bajnyal, Chakra, Ameer Hamza, F-17/1&2, Nogzi, Foreign Office, I-14/4 Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Old Rawat, New Rawat, CWO, AOWHS, SPARCO, IST, Feeders, Chakwal Circle, Khanpur Feeder, Jhelum Circle, Puran, Kohar, Sarai Alamgir, Abbaspora, Ajmal Shaheed, F-7 Kachhari, Chakym, Bhagwal, Express Mangala, Madu Kalas, Shah Safi Feeders and surrounding areas.



ISLAMABAD: CDA staffers showing water on plants at roadside greenbelt in Federal Capital.

Pakistan to achieve just, clean energy transition for future generations: Musadik

ISLAMABAD (APP): "Pakistan will not just talk green but will achieve a just and clean energy transition; with or without rest of world for our future generations", said Dr Musadik Malik, Minister of State for Petroleum Division here on Sunday. He was speaking at parliamentary consultation titled "Towards a Sustainable Future: Inclusion of Just Energy Transition and Climate Action in Election Manifestos 2023", jointly organized by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and Parliamentary Taskforce on SDGs, a news release said.

The State Minister said that Russia-Ukraine crisis caused un-proportional energy inflation for the developing countries, thwarting the clean energy transition and access. Therefore, it is imperative that just and clean energy transition be supported with finance mobilization for developing countries to enable technology transfer and indigenous development, he said and stressed that accountability for clean energy transition should be extended equally across the table and not just on develop-

oping countries.

Dr. Musadik emphasized that Petroleum companies in Pakistan including Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL), Pakistan State Oil (PSO) had been urged to transition into energy companies and were looking to invest in renewable energy.

Romina Khurshid Alam, Special Assistant to Prime Minister, emphasized that prioritizing climate action and renewable energy while designing party manifestos can exhibit the commitment to tackling climate change and can strengthen Pakistan's position in international climate finance partnerships.

Clean energy solutions, just energy transition and climate action in election manifestos are not only crucial in addressing the climate crisis but demonstrate commitment to deliver social justice, economic growth and global leadership, she said. She also proposed a resolution to phase out fossil fuel in collaboration with SDPI.

Senator Taj Haider emphasized on addressing the policy inconsistency in

energy sector of Pakistan to ensure a rapid off take of RE in Pakistan. He said that 3000MW electricity was generated from wind and solar at Jhimpir but poor transition infrastructure hindered supply to other areas and these issues were impeding foreign investor interest in wind and solar power plants. He informed that the Senate had unanimously passed a resolution proposing that industrial areas must be equipped with solar parks. He further said that 50,000 houses had been reconstructed, 200,000 houses had been solarized and out of the 2000 700 reverse osmosis plants were solarized in Sindh after 2020 floods. He urged for improving transmission infrastructure and installing local grid systems to improve energy access in impoverished areas.

Dr Shafqat Munir, Deputy Executive Director, SDPI said that energy, water and agriculture were crucial contemporary issues exacerbated by climate change and SDPI was keen to support policymakers in developing policies for mitigation action and boosting the clean energy transition.

Police reunite missing boy with parents

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad Capital Police Industrial Area policeTeam reunited a missing boy with his parents, a Police Public Relation Officer said.

He said that, during the patrolling the Industrial Area police station team found a boy namely Tariq Hussain. Police team shifted the boy to the police station and used technical and human resources and succeeded in tracing the parent of the missing boy.

The police team reunited him with his parents safely. The parents appreciated the police team's efforts and thanked the Islamabad Capital Police for immediate action.

Shah hopes elections to be held on time, PPP to stand if it delays

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan People's Party leader Syed Khurshid Shah Sunday expressed hope that Pakistan Muslim League-N will take the country in the right direction and elections would take place on time in accordance with the constitution as PPP will stand if polls will be delayed. "Election should be held under the code of conduct as economic stability hinges on political stability", he said while talking to a private news channel.

"PPP truly believes in timely and transparent elections which would be better for the country and its stability," he added.

Replying to a question about the progress in the appointment of the caretak-

er setup, he explained that it was important to follow the Constitution, adding, almost all parties are included in the committee.

"They have finalized five names at a committee level, not the leadership level," he added. He said that the PM candidate should be Independent, adding, a candidate should not be an active member of any party nor be a major leader of any party. He also appreciated PM Shahbaz Sharif and the way he took all his allied parties along, adding, he also hoped that now it's all responsibility of PML-N to take wise decisions for the caretaker of set up and timely elections for the smooth system of state affairs.

Pak hosts D-8 conference for promoting bilateral tourism among member states: Aun

ISLAMABAD (APP): Advisor to the Prime Minister on Tourism and Sports Aun Chaudhry Sunday said that Pakistan first time hosted the largest D-8 Senior Officials Meeting in Murree for advancing tourism cooperation with modern lines, exchanging knowledge, and promoting bilateral tourism among the member states.

Talking to a private news channel, he said, "Pakistan has encouraged the D-8 countries to collaborate and promote quality, inclusive, and sustainable tourism that will benefit local communities and protects the environment." "The present government focuses on bringing a revolution in

tourism and agriculture by revamping the sectors on modern lines," he added.

He praised the new initiatives proposed by the Secretariat to enhance cooperation among D-8 countries and expressed Pakistan's willingness to share its experiences in the field of management and training in the tourism sector. "Pakistan's natural beauty, including its tropical beaches, lush forests, and stunning mountains, is another major draw for tourists," he added.

He also expressed hope that this event would encourage foreign tourists to stay longer in our tourism destinations, which then could accelerate our economic recovery from

the tourism sector."

"The event will also become a momentum for us to show the world our capability in hosting global-scale events," he added.

Replying to a question, he said, "The tangible programs include the exchange of information, ideas, and best practices and increasing member-state cross-border investments to develop the tourism sector."

"The ultimate goal is to create world-class tourist destinations in all of the D-8 Member States," he added. He also expressed confidence that by maximizing the Organization's platform, Member States could materialize more opportunities.

Thar coal - a panacea to Pakistan's energy deficiency

ISLAMABAD (APP): Being 28th largest reserve, the Tharparker coal can prove to be a panacea to Pakistan's energy deficiency by producing billions of tone oil and cheaper electricity for domestic, commercial and industrial consumers.

Blessed with 175 billion tons of coal, the reserve is equivalent to 50 billion tons of oil which is more than Saudi Arabian and Iranian oil reserves. These reserves are equal to 2,000 trillion cubic feet of gas which is 68 times higher than Pakistan's total gas reserves.

Since the outgoing coalition government had specifically focused on the development of this project, experts pin hopes that its culmination would help overcome energy deficiency and save hefty and precious foreign exchange spent every year on the import of fossil fuels like coal, oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG).

In many countries, coal is used as a cheaper source for generating electricity as global coal reserves are estimated to be around one trillion tons, while coal-fired based power plants contribute nearly 37 per cent of global electricity generation.

According to Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC) Amir Iqbal, unlocking indigenous Thar coal reserves can generate approximately 100,000 megawatts (MW) electricity for the next 250 years. "This project alone can ensure energy security of Pakistan besides reducing power tariff significantly."

He said coal is considered a cheap energy resource in Pakistan to catch up with future energy requirements of domestic and commercial consumers as during the last five years coal-based power production had also witnessed a significant increase.

"We need to shift to local coal resources to scale down fuel import costs as even in India coal-fired power

plants produce more than two third of total electricity," Amir Iqbal informed. He said India import 200 million tons of coal annually besides utilizing 500-600 million tons of domestic coal while Pakistan's coal production stood at merely 14 to 15 million tons per annum. "SECMC is extracting 7.6 million tons coal per annum from Block-II and its capacity is being expanded to 11.2 million tons," Amir said and informed that Thar coal has total of 13 blocks but only two blocks were being mined presently."

Terming coal reserves the future of Pakistan, Amir Iqbal said Thar coal could not only be used for power generation but also ferried to different parts of the country for use in cement and steel industries. "Once, Thar coal is connected with railway network, it would be open all across the country and pave the way for its economic prosperity." Statistics show that the average coal consumption in power plants is approximately 0.62kg/kWh. However, the new efficient power plants utilize 10% less coal as compared to ordinary plants.

Energy sector experts have also emphasized the significance of utilizing indigenous Thar coal in addressing Pakistan's energy needs as they opine that rising oil and gas prices in the international market make it even more crucial for Pakistan to rely on its own coal reserves.

"Energy crisis in Pakistan remains a pressing issue with energy efficiency not being prioritized," remarked former Chief Economist of the Planning Commission, Dr Pervez Tahir. "Even the private sector contributes to the problem through the use of outdated boilers and equipments." He said as the major chunk of our energy mix comes from thermal besides also relying on fossil fuels, therefore despite climate concerns Pakistan's energy crisis was so dire that it could not survive without coal

supply. Since uninterrupted power supply is considered crucial for the development of industrial, agricultural and domestic sectors, its smooth supply to domestic consumers is equally important.

"The present government has already added 5300 MW cheap electricity to the system from Thar coal reserves in just 10 months besides 720 MW and 1100 MW from Karot Hydropower and K-3 Nuclear Power Plants," said Minister for Power Division Engineer Khurram Dastgir.

The minister informed that total power generation from Thar coal stood at 2640 MW with the formal commissioning of 1320 MW Shanghai Electric Thar Coal Project under the CPEC.

Rising fuel prices and new energy situation after Ukraine war had also necessitated Pakistan to utilize its indigenous resources like hydel, solar, wind and Thar coal as it has already announced not to build any new power projects depending on imported coal and ensure 60 percent of its power through local sources by 2030. Khurram Dastgir said the PML-N government led by the then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had successfully added over 10,000 MW electricity to national grid through China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects during 2013 to 2018.

"Efforts of the then PML-N government had not only controlled load-shedding but added surplus power to the system," he remarked. "The criminal negligence of Pakistan Treacher-Insaaf government had delayed number of projects dragging the country to the verge darkness once again." The federal government in collaboration with the Sindh government has also chalked out a policy framework on the Thar Coal mines project aimed at connecting it with other coal-powered power plants in the country producing 4,000 MW.

Over 669,000 children to be immunized against Polio in high-risk areas

RAWALPINDI (APP): A Week-long anti-polio campaign in high-risk areas of Rawalpindi District will start on August 7 (Monday) in which more than 669,412 children will receive polio drops.

During the drive, 2835 polio teams would visit five towns of the district including Rawalpindi city, Cantonment, tehsil Rawalpindi, Gujar Khan, and Taxila which had been declared high-risk areas, said the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the District Health Authority Dr Ejaz Ahmed while talking to APP.

He said the purpose for

launching the special drive was the presence of poliovirus, detected from environmental samples collected from the area of Sarai Kala, Taxila.

The CEO informed that 2835 teams including 674 area in-charges, 269 fixed points, and 189 Union council medical officers would vaccinate polio drops to over 669,412 children under five years of age during the campaign.

He added that drops would also be administered at 147 transit points while teams would be deputed at toll plazas so that no child could miss immunization.

Dr Ejaz said that the

Polio sample had tested positive first time in Rawalpindi since September 2022 and the third sample in Punjab this year. "The positive sample in Rawalpindi indicates that the virus was circulating in the region, though no case had been reported so far," he said.

"If a single case is reported in a region, it remains a threat to children residing in 200 houses in the vicinity," he added.

He advised parents to come forward and play their role in ensuring the vaccination of their children to eliminate the crippling disease from society.

ICRC honors King Fahd's enduring legacy in advancing Islamic unity, education, humanitarianism

ISLAMABAD (APP): The International Consortium for Religious Diplomacy (ICRC), a non-profitable organization, on Sunday, marked the 18th death anniversary of King Fahd bin Abdulaziz Al Saud highlighting his remarkable achievements in serving the Ummah and leaving a lasting impact on the Muslim world.

Born on March 16, 1921, in Riyadh, former King Fahd, a revered leader, ascended to the throne of Saudi Arabia on June 13, 1982 till 2005, leading the nation into an era of unparalleled progress and prosperity. Addressing the event virtually from Riyadh, Saudi embassy's Press Attaché Dr. Naif Al-Otaibi said King Fahd was a visionary ruler who understood the importance of unity among Muslim nations and worked tirelessly to strengthen ties between them.

Shedding light on one of King Fahd's most significant contributions in fostering Islamic solidarity through the establishment of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), now known as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

This international organization brought together Muslim-majority countries, providing a platform for diplomatic collaboration and addressing issues of common concern, ranging from political conflicts to economic development and humanitarian assistance, he maintained. He said King Fahd's dedication to education and knowledge also left a profound impact on the Ummah adding that he generously supported educational institutions worldwide, emphasizing the importance of knowledge in advancing societies.

Dr. Naif said his philanthropic endeavors included the establishment of King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals in Saudi Arabia, which became a center of excellence for science, engineering, and technology, contributing significantly to the development of human resources in the region. He said King Fahd was committed to humanitarian causes, particularly in times of crisis and played a pivotal role in providing aid and support to Muslim communities affected by natural disasters and armed conflicts, demonstrating his unwavering compassion and concern for the well-being of the Ummah.



ISLAMABAD: Vendors displaying national flag and other stuff at roadside in connection with upcoming Independence Day celebrations.

Earthquakes hit Afghanistan

KABUL (Agencies): Two earthquakes of magnitude 5.8 and 5.3 struck Afghanistan late Saturday and early Sunday, the US Geological Survey (USGS) said. The quake, which struck at 08:31 p.m. on Saturday, hit 47 kilometers south-southwest of Jurm district of northeast Badakhshan province, at a depth of 207.1 kilometers. Hours later, another earthquake measuring 5.3-magnitude struck the same area at 05:02 a.m. at a depth of 203.2km, according to USGS.

Afghan embassy held meeting

KABUL (Agencies): The Afghan embassy in Iran has held a meeting with Iranian passport officials to discuss the provision of vital documents for Afghan refugees' newborns in the neighboring country. The statement from the embassy said that the Afghan Charge de Affairs in Tehran, Mawlawi Fazl Mohammad Haqqani, talked about the process of issuing passports to Afghan citizens in Iran. He said that they give priority to the newborns, then to the students and other Afghans.

Aid operations face critical funding gap

KABUL (TOLONews): The United Nations said that aid operations in Afghanistan face a critical funding gap as humanitarian needs remain severe. Farhan Haq, deputy spokesperson for the Secretary-General, told a press briefing that based on the information of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid (OCHA), the \$3.2 billion appeal to help more than 21 million people across the country is less than 25 percent funded. "On Afghanistan, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs warns that aid operations in the country face a critical funding gap as humanitarian needs remain severe. More than halfway through the year, the \$3.2 billion appeal to help more than 21 million people across the country is less than 25 percent funded. There are critical funding gaps amounting to \$1.3 billion, with many programmes already ended or considerably scaled back due to insufficient resources and aid pipelines at risk of imminent rupture, including for food assistance. Our humanitarian colleagues warn that we only have a short window of opportunity to procure and position vital assistance and supplies before the lean season and winter begin," Farhan Haq told the briefing. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Economy considers the aid of relief organizations important in the country. According to Abdul Latif Nazari, a deputy in the Ministry of Economy, the UN and other international organizations have to provide more humanitarian aid to the needy Afghans.

Concerns voiced over misuse of aid funds



KABUL (TOLONews): The Acting Minister of Refugee and Repatriation, Khalil Rahman Haqqani, criticized the misuse of humanitarian aid in the country. Haqqani said during a meeting to coordinate provincial local authorities and aid organizations that most of relief organizations only send 20% of their help to the people and that 80% of it is embezzled. "Out of 100% of the aid, 80% is spent by printing on banners and on themselves, and they are busy inside and outside the country enjoying themselves, and only 20% is given to the people of Afghanistan," he said. This Islamic Emirate official highlighted that they keep an eye on the activities of relief organizations and do not permit them to operate without coordination with the current government. "Institutions can carry out their programs, distribution surveys, and information in any sector, including education, profession, or assistance, with the coordination of the current system in the provinces and districts, but before that they should share it with us," Khalil Rahman Haqqani noted. Meanwhile, the deputy minister of foreign affairs, Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai, stressed that now more than ever Afghanistan needs assistance in a variety of areas, including education. "A nation can never develop economically, politically, or agriculturally without education. Education should receive greater attention, especially the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education," Stanikzai added. "We visited all these provinces because of these projects, and we saw that in most of the provinces there were no schools, no teachers, and no books," said Qais Arghandiwal, head of an aid organization. Some local officials of the provinces in the meeting asked the international organizations and investors to increase their assistance in the health, education, and agriculture sectors in Afghanistan. "We ask investors who are abroad to return to Afghanistan and invest in their country," said Aminullah Obaid, governor of Daykundi. Criticism of the aid organization's process of providing aid to the people comes as the citizens of the country have repeatedly complained that humanitarian aid does not reach them.

Bus crash in Zabul kills one, injures 19



ZABUL (Agencies): A bus crashed in Afghanistan's southern Zabul province early Sunday, killing one person and injuring 19 others, officials said. The incident happened on Kabul-Kandahar highway around 6:00 a.m. in Shahr-e-Safa district of Zabul province. Zabihullah Jawhar, a spokesman for the provincial police, said that the person who died was the driver of the bus and those injured included women and children. The injured were taken to Mirwais hospital in Kandahar. The cause of the crash remains unclear. It comes a day after a car overturned in Zabul capital Qalat as a result of which one person was killed and two others were injured.

Eye patients treated for free

BADGHIS (TOLONews): A group of ophthalmologists who are funded by a Turkish aid organization have recently arrived in Badghis province and are treating 350 eye patients in the province for free every day. Doctors consider old age and physical injuries of people as factors of increasing eye diseases in the country. "When the age increases, the lens of the eye slowly slows down and the vision decreases and the patient must be operated on," said Mohammad Yosif Usman, a doctor. "In the center, about 350 people are treated by doctors and about 20 to 30 people are operated on. I hope that I will be saved from suffering and pain," said Hafizullah. "People who have eye problems called on doctors to treat them," said Salahuddin a Badghis resident. These doctors are supposed to treat eye patients in Badghis for around two weeks. The residents of the province are asking the current government to establish an eye disease treatment department in this province.

'Security, public well-being first priority'

KABUL (Agencies): Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs in a meeting with Mufti Sheikh Habibullah Samangani and Inamullah Samangani, said that providing security, education, health, transportation, and enhancing public livelihood are the basic obligations of the government. Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs met with Sheikh Habibullah Samangani and Inamullah Samangani, two local representatives from Samangan province. Habibullah Samangani talked about the social, security, and economic state of the people of Samangan province, describing the province's current situation as sound and stable, thanks to the efforts of the security forces of the Islamic Emirate. He also mentioned some concerns and challenges that still exist in fields such as transportation, education, and health, and called government authorities to take steps to address them. Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs Mawlawe Abdul Salam Hanafi, for his part, stated that providing security, enhancing public well-being, education, health, and transportation are basic human rights and are among the key responsibilities of the Islamic Emirate.

The National Economic Advisory Board of Afghanistan will advise the government on economic issues when necessary. Members of the board will be university professors, experts in economic affairs and representatives of trade and industry.

The office of the economic deputy prime minister said in a statement that

the National Economic Advisory Board of Afghanistan will advise the government on economic issues when necessary. Members of the board will be university professors, experts in economic affairs and representatives of trade and industry.

'Going to fight abroad not jihad'

KABUL (TOLONews): The acting Minister of Defense, Mawlawi Mohammad Yaqoob Mujahid, said that if someone goes outside of Afghanistan with the intention of Jihad, his work is not called Jihad. Yaqoob Mujahid said in a speech to the Ministry of Defense's commanders and Mujahideen that if the Amir prevents the Mujahideen from fighting but they still go to fight, then this battle is not Jihad. Audio of Mawlawi Yaqoob Mujahid's speech was released by RTA. "This is the Amir's [Islamic Emirate's Leader] order, and obedience is compulsory. If a person goes outside of Afghanistan with the goal of Jihad, that person's Jihad is not called Jihad. If the Amir prevents the Mujahideen from going to battle and they still do it, this is war, not Jihad," Yaqoob Mujahid said. The acting Minister of Defense said that the members of the Islamic Emirate should not commit an act that harms the achievements of the acting government.

Education must for development

KABUL (Agencies): The political deputy of the foreign ministry, Sher Mohammad Abad Stanekzai, said that Afghanistan cannot develop without education. Stanekzai, speaking at an event in Kabul, asked the higher education and education ministries to pay serious attention to the principle and create the necessary facilities in the education sector. "No country can develop without education, and the Islamic Emirate will open it for its citizens. The reopening of a way to education is also Jihad, and it should be done," Stanikzai said. He emphasized that Afghanistan had fallen behind other countries in the region during the war in education, health, and agriculture. Now that a safe environment has been established, the government and international organizations need more attention to the education sector. "I know that the ministries of higher education and education are paying attention to this issue, and I want them to understand more the issue and such institutions and NGOs that come from outside; I also want their attention to help these ministries a lot to provide facilities to them so that the children of this country may have access to education," he added.

IEA to establish national economic advisory board



KABUL (Agencies): The Economic Commission of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) approved a plan to establish a national economic advisory board. The office of the economic deputy prime minister said in a statement that the National Economic Advisory Board of Afghanistan will advise the government on economic issues when necessary. Members of the board will be university professors, experts in economic affairs and representatives of trade and industry.

Afghanistan to meet 50% of pharmaceutical needs: AFDA

KABUL (Agencies): Officials at Afghanistan Food and Drug Authority (AFDA) said during an accountability report that Afghanistan will be able to meet more than 50% of the country's pharmaceutical needs by establishing manufacturing factories in the next two years. "Our great effort is to industrialize the treatment, food and medical equipment sector. We have to work in our country. In the past year, we have given licenses to dozens of factories that are being built and operate inside Afghanistan," said Abdul Bari Omar, acting head of AFDA. Omar also said that currently, 58 factories producing medical products are active in the country, which covers more than 20% of the market's pharmaceutical needs. AFDA officials have also announced the creation of the food safety law, which, if approved, will prevent the importation of low-quality and expired consumable goods into the country. Over the past year, the department has closed down 771 pharmacies in Kabul due to the presence of expired, low-quality, and smuggled drugs. The department has also destroyed almost 300 tons of medicines and unsafe food, officials said. Meanwhile, the officials said that in the past year, 2,227 manufacturing factories, importing companies and pharmacies have received operating licenses. In the meantime, the construction of four well-equipped pharmaceutical and food laboratories in four zones of the country, registration of new pharmaceutical facilities, support of domestic production, as well as close monitoring of the country's customs and pharmacies are said to be among the major tasks of this department this year.

Haqqani: We should behave well and win public trust

KABUL (Agencies): Acting Minister of Interior Sirajuddin Haqqani has said that a popular government is created if the people trust the government, Emirate. In the meeting, Ahmad Tariq, on behalf of private universities, said that the education of girls in universities should resume, no matter what the terms and conditions are. He said that Afghans should not be forced to take their daughters to places where the Islamic Emirate cannot play any role in creating a desirable environment. Nurullah Nasser, a tribal elder, also said that there should be merit-based appointments. Haqqani admitted that there are shortcomings before adding that it is due to decades of conflict. "Discord is a very bad disease. There were different ideas, parties and personalities, and with that destruction took place and our goal remained unmet. We cannot tolerate what you said either. If we had tolerance and patience, these problems would not have arisen," Haqqani said. He emphasized that the existing problems should not become so big as to cause discord.



Afghan-Kazakh trade exhibition concluded

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Industry and Commerce announced the end of the three-day Afghan-Kazakh exhibition and also official meetings with authorities and the private sector of Kazakhstan. The acting Minister of Industry and Commerce, Nooruddin Azizi, said the exhibition achieved good results and contracts worth \$190 million have been signed between the private sector of both countries in various areas. "Kazakhstan agreed with us to facilitate our business... In the field of transportation, transit, trade facilities, and bilateral investment, we paid a lot of attention to banking issues..." said the acting head of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. "In the Afghan-Kazakh exhibition, 350 traders displayed 420 products to the country. Fortunately, it was welcomed by the host country, and participants," said Akhounzada Abdul Salam Jawad, spokesman of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. The former ambassador of Kazakhstan in Kabul also said that the display of domestic products of Afghanistan in Kazakhstan can be effective in expanding the trade relations between the two countries. "I saw that there is a lot of interest from both sides. Citizens of Kazakhstan visited (displays of) carpets, dry fruits, and other Afghan products," said Omirtai Bitimov, the former ambassador of Kazakhstan to Afghanistan. However, some businessmen who participated in the exhibition consider the establishment of an exhibition of Afghan products to Kazakhstan valuable to introduce goods to the region. "In the carpet section, our participants sold 80% of their carpets in the three days of the exhibition. And in return, they got agreements and orders," said Noor Ahmad Noori, head of the Carpet Union. "We had good sales and the reception of Afghan products by the people of Kazakhstan was excellent, and we hope that such exhibitions will be held in other countries in the future as well," said Naseer Ahmad Majidi, a trader. In the exhibition, 350 representatives of Afghanistan's private sector, which is in 14 sectors, displayed the products and productions of the country in 70 booths for three days in Astana, the capital city of Kazakhstan.



Creating hostile, offensive environment for female: President upholds penalty of PTV employees

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi has upheld the penalty of withholding the promotion for two years upon six PTV employees who were involved in creating a hostile and offensive work environment for a female cameraman (the complainant). He also held that the complainant's termination from service was being rendered as void ab initio as disciplinary proceedings were initiated against her without following the due process, in a slipshod and clumsy manner, and rude and degrading actions were taken against her, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release on Sunday.

The president gave this decision while rejecting the representations filed by PTV, Abdul Rashid, Zia-ur-Rehman, Maqbool Shah, Muhammad Munawar, and Kanwal Masood, in which the Federal Ombudsman for Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace (FOSPAH) had imposed the minor penalty of withholding of promotion for two years and fine of Rs 100,000 upon Zia-ur-Rehman, Abdul Rashid, Maqbool Shah, Kanwal Masood, Saeed Ather, and Muhammad Munawar (the respondents) for issuing charge sheets, suspension orders, transfer orders and orders to ban the entry of the complainant into the premises of PTV in a slipshod manner.

He, however, set aside the penalty of fine imposed by FOSPAH, on 16.10.2017, upon the employees involved in the matter.

The complainant had filed a complaint before FOSPAH alleging that she had been assaulted by two employees at PTV premises and the respondents had supported them.

The charges of sexual harassment, however, could not be established against the accused, however, FOSPAH had decided to impose minor penalty upon the respondents for initiating acts which amounted to workplace harassment.

Earlier, the President of Pakistan on 05.01.2018 had reversed the decision of FOSPAH as the charges of sexual harassment were not proved in the case.

Later, the Supreme Court of Pakistan accepted civil review petitions filed by the complainant (female cameraman) and Attorney General for Pakistan, set aside the earlier judgments of the Supreme Court and Islamabad High Court passed in the matter and remanded the representation to the President for decision afresh.

The Supreme Court in its judgment, dated 06.06.2023, had interpreted the word 'harassment' by elaborating that harassment had two components, first pertained to sexual favors

and the second was about creating a hostile or offensive working environment.

It further held that the facts of the case did not fall within the ambit of harassment of the nature of the sexual favors rather the available record and the proceedings initiated against the complainant in a slipshod manner fell within the ambit of hostile or offensive working environment.

Subsequently, the president held personal hearings of the case in June and July 2023, and decided the matter afresh in the light of the Supreme Court's decision.

In his decision, he noted that workplace harassment was a global phenomenon, prevalent both in developed as well as developing countries, and it cut across religion, culture, race, caste, class and geographical boundaries.

He said that with improved access to education and employment, millions of Pakistani women were entering in employment and many faced workplace harassment on daily basis. He emphasized that it was crucial that in a country like Pakistan, we should strive to eliminate workplace harassment since it was an affront to the fundamental rights contained in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

He said that Article 25 forbade any discrimination on the basis of sex and

guaranteed equal protection of law and equality in all matters. The president said that Article 34 mandated the state to ensure full participation of women in all affairs of national life and under Article 37(c), women had been given a special status in the matters of employment and conditions of work.

The president underlined that the aim and objective of promulgation of the Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2010 was to create a safe working environment for women which was free of harassment, abuse and intimidation with a view towards fulfillment of their right to work with dignity.

"An environment which is free of harassment enables higher productivity and a better performance and quality of living. Harassment is one of the biggest hurdles faced by working women who want to work and contribute to get themselves and their families out of poverty", he remarked.

The president maintained that the term "harassment" as defined in the Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010 could not be examined in isolation but the other aspects of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment also needed to be examined.



FAISALABAD: Interior Minister Rana Sana Ullah Khan visiting Nadra Registration Centre after inaugurating at Union Council 117 Dhanola.

CM Sindh visits train accident site

NAWABSHAH (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah arrived at Nawabshah on a short visit Soon after his arrival, the Chief Minister visited the emergency ward of Peoples Medical University Hospital and checked bed to bed of the victims of Hazara Express tragedy.

The Divisional Commissioner Nawabshah Muhammad Abbas Baloch briefed the Chief Minister over the tragic train incident.

Later talking to the media, the Chief Minister said that as per information gathered 30 casualties out of three are women and one is admitted at Sakrand while 29 dead bodies were brought to PMC.

He said that total injured passengers were 110, which might increase as passengers were still stranded in bogies. CM said the ill-fated Hazara Express met with an accident near Sarhari which is a very tragic incident.

He said that the cause of the accident could be ascertained after complete investigation of the mishap.

He directed hospital administration to provide better treatment facilities to injured people and also, appealed to people of Nawabshah, particularly media persons to vacate the hospital and give time to doctors for treatment of victims.

He said that doctors have also advised him to avoid visiting the ICU however he has appealed to the media to vacate the hospital and also tell people to give space to doctors and medical staff.

CM urged rushing people to give space to relatives of injured and dead passengers to visit them.

CM advised doctors for better treatment of the victims. Doctors said that Peoples Medical University Hospital has enough capacity to treat the victim but in more specialized treatment the victim could be shifted to Karachi or another hospital.

CM said that he would visit the incident site. He said that He has talked to Khawaja Saad Rafique who said that some passengers are still stranded in one of the bogies where rescue work is in progress adding the two relief work trains one from Kotri and one from Rohi have left for the incident site.

Senate passes amended 'Official Secrets Bill 2023' amidst controversy

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Senate on Sunday successfully passed 'The Official Secrets (Amendment) Bill, 2023', marking a pivotal moment in the legislative landscape. The bill, which had faced staunch opposition from various quarters, underwent crucial modifications before achieving passage.

Minister for Law and Justice, Azam Nazir Tarar, presented the bill on behalf of Minister for Interior, Rana Sanaullah Khan, in the house. Notably, the revised version of the bill omitted certain provisions that had granted intelligence agencies the authority to carry out warrantless arrests or searches.

He emphasized that the revised legislation empowers the FIA to conduct investigations into individuals suspected of violating the Official Secrets Act.

He highlighted that the bill no longer includes the amendment labelling an individual as an 'enemy' for engaging with foreign agents, a provision that had sparked extensive debates.

Simultaneously, the Senate Standing Committee on Cabinet, chaired by Senator Rana Maqbool Ahmed, presented its comprehensive report on 'The Official Secrets (Amendment) Bill, 2023'. The committee's report under-

scored the urgency to amend the antiquated Official Secrets Act of 1923, considering the evolving social context and the necessity to safeguard official documents.

It's worth mentioning that the bill encountered formidable resistance during its journey through the upper house of parliament. Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani had referred the bill to the relevant standing committee on August 2, following vehement opposition during the initial proceedings.

Both the ruling and opposition benches saw a clash of opinions regarding the bill. The PTI, JUI-F, and the National Party voiced their concerns, while prominent figures such as Senator Raza Rabbani of the Pakistan Peoples Party and Afnan Ullah Khan of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) raised objections against proposed amendments to the Official Secrets Act 1923.

The amendment brings forth several critical changes, including Section 3 of the bill that defines various offenses such as approaching, inspecting, or undermining prohibited places with malicious intent.

Additionally, the bill makes it an offense to create, possess, or share any

material that could be useful to an enemy of the state.

Section 9 of the amendment outlines severe penalties for incitement, conspiracy, or attempts to commit offenses, with potential imprisonment of up to three years or fines reaching up to one million.

In a groundbreaking move, the bill empowers the FIA to lead investigations, with the investigating officer appointed by the FIA director general. Moreover, a collaborative joint investigation team can be established if the situation necessitates.

Notably, the contentious provision that granted intelligence agencies the power to conduct warrant-less arrests or searches has been removed from the final version of the bill, addressing concerns over potential abuse of power and intrusion into citizens' privacy.

The passing of 'The Official Secrets (Amendment) Bill, 2023' heralded a significant stride towards modernizing legislation to effectively protect official information while upholding fundamental rights and principles. This momentous achievement came after rigorous debates and thorough revisions, signaling the government's commitment to striking a balance between national security and individual liberties.

Approved digital census: Finance Minister asserts low possibility of error

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of Finance and Revenue Muhammad Ishaq Dar Sunday emphasized that the digital census, which was unanimously approved by the Council of Common Interests (CCI), has a low possibility of error.

Defending the digital census in the Upper House while speaking on a point of order, Leader of the House Ishaq Dar pointed out that the decision regarding the new census was made by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government.

He informed the Senate that Rs 34 billion had been spent on the endeavor.

He mentioned that the census had received approval from eight members of the CCI.

The finance minister mentioned that comprehensive details had been provided to all provinces.

The average population growth stands at 2.55 percent, compared to 2.44 percent recorded in the 2017 census. Balochistan has the highest growth rate at 3.25 percent.

The digital population

census incurred an expenditure of 34 billion rupees, he told.

The finance minister also revealed that a minister from the previous government had caused harm to Pakistan International Airlines (PIA).

He asserted that reforms were being implemented to enhance aviation and there was a focus on improving the performance of steel mills. Steps are being taken to reduce PIA's deficit and some aviation-related laws have been presented in the Parliament, he said.

PML-N to empower youth with info-tech skills: Ahsan Iqbal

NAROWAL (APP): The Federal Minister for Planning and Development Prof Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhry said on Sunday the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) wanted to empower youth of the country with info-tech skills and it was making all-out efforts in that direction.

Speaking as the chief guest at the 'Digital Narowal' event held at E-Library here, he said now his entire focus was on launch of modern-day projects for the youth of the country. He said recently the first convocation of the University of Narowal was held, which had been delayed for the past four years. He said the PML-N believed in merit only. "It is

very easy to talk of merit, but PML-N government is demonstrating through practical steps that it believes in merit and only merit. Laptop scheme for brilliant students is the process of recognising the talent of our youth," Ahsan Iqbal said.

The federal minister said that with the laptops given by the PML-N government, lakhs of students were freelancing from Pakistan and earning handsome amounts of money for their families as well as the country. The minister warned that many jobs would disappear in the coming years and the world would replace these professions with new and advanced technology due to artificial intelligence and

digitalization. "Therefore, it is very important that we prepare our youth to compete in this modern world of information technology," he added. "If you are educated, but you don't have IT skills, then you are not ready for new challenges. It is our determination that we want to make Narowal a Silicon Valley.

"We are going to build a quantum computing centre at the University of Engineering and Technology Narowal campus," Ahsan Iqbal disclosed. He said the projects that were delayed during the previous PTI government, had resumed today.

"We will not give you chicken and eggs but IT skills, so that you can be

Serving ailing people; a collective...

(Cont... from Front Page)

He regretted that the poor people in the country suffered while the rich had all the resources to get treatment for themselves at the best facilities in the world. The prime minister said during 2018, about 26 Hepatitis C filter clinics were established in the province under the umbrella of PKLI where patients were treated with great care and with free medicines.

That programme was subsequently halted due to politics, but now these filter clinics again started functioning and treatment was being provided across the

province, he added.

About the Hepatitis C programme, the prime minister said that Rs35 billion fund was provided by the federal government on the basis of half percent contribution by the provincial governments. Earlier, the prime minister launched the national Hepatitis C elimination programme and performed groundbreaking of PKLI University.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman said today, was a momentous day in the health and education sectors of the country as the prime minister would be

inaugurating PKLI University and Hepatitis C Elimination Initiative.

The health and education sectors always witnessed progress during the governments of PML-N which established a vast network of different renowned institutions, he added.

The governor also expressed concerns over a number of out of school children in the country.

Professor Dr Saeed Akhtar, in his remarks, said that they were successful in setting up an information-based system leading to a center of excellence to serve the ailing and poor segments of society.

Cases cannot be avoided by dodging law, attacking institutions — Imran Khan's arrest not political, says Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb has said that cases cannot be avoided by dodging the law, evading the courts and attacking national institutions.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan's arrest has nothing to do with politics, nor it was an act of political vendetta, she said during an exclusive interview with BBC World.

"Peaceful protest is a democratic right of any political party or worker, but no protesters came out on the arrest of chairman PTI as people cannot be fooled every time, courts are there".

The minister said that the legal procedures were completed in the Tosha Khana case against Chairman PTI, and on the completion of his trial, the court announced a verdict on which he was arrested.

She said that Chairman PTI failed to present evidence in his defense, he was accused of abuse of power, but he could not

answer questions when asked about state gifts.

She said apart from this, four more cases of theft of 190 million British pounds, cipher, May 9 tragedy and foreign funding case are also in the trial courts against Imran.

In response to a question, the minister said that no one can be given impunity for misuse of powers.

She said that the arrest of Imran Khan has nothing to do with the elections, he was arrested on the order of the court. He said that when three-time elected Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was arrested, the elections of 2018 were very close, he was arrested along with his daughter and sent to jail.

Marriyum said that when in power Imran Khan jailed all political rivals during his tenure. He misused their powers, used NAB and FIA for the witch-hunt and his political opponents but the present government did not indulge in such tactics.

She said that the law took its course though Imran Khan kept running

away from the law, he did not answer the questions of the court and was found guilty by the trial court.

Marriyum Aurangzeb said that whenever the court summoned him, the situation worsened in Zaman Park, the judicial complex was attacked, then there was also the May 9 tragedy.

She said that when the court saw that dishonesty was proved beyond any doubt, it issued its verdict.

The Federal Minister of Information said that one has to be accountable for one's actions in the law, it has nothing to do with politics, Imran Khan masterminded the May 9 mayhem, instigated party workers to attack sensitive installations, attack national institutions, hospitals, schools and ambulances.

She said that there were also attacks on Capitol Hill in the United States and all those who were involved in them have been punished irrespective of their status.

She said that a person who has been proven guilty in court has to be arrested.

In response to a question, the minister said that during the investigation process in the trial court, Imran Khan was given ample opportunities through 40 hearings but he appeared only three times and could not provide any proof in his defense.

On another question, the federal minister of information said that the arrest of Imran Khan cannot be compared that of Nawaz Sharif.

When allegations against Nawaz Sharif were levelled, he as prime minister, he wrote a letter to Supreme Court for his accountability. He appeared in day-to-day hearings of NAB court for 150 times.

No one burnt any ambulance, hospital, mosque or school during protest against Nawaz Sharif arrest, she maintained.

To a question, she said that the public cannot be hoodwinked every time, Imran Khan incited violence to avoid the law, provoked his workers who attacked the police, rangers and state institutions. He even used children and

women as human shields to avoid arrest, she remarked.

She said that one has to draw a clear line on national interests, when there was an attack on Capitol Hill, whoever was involved was punished.

She said there should be a clear distinction between national interests and attacks on sensitive installations.

She said that Imran Khan has admitted that all this happened on his instructions, he was the mastermind of the entire incident of May 9, so it cannot be said that this crackdown was aimed at any political victimization.

The minister said that Imran Khan had targeted his political rivals for political victimization during his four years in office, when the first two rows of the parliament were in jail.

Replying to a question, the Federal Information Minister rejected the element of political aspect in the arrest of Imran Khan and said that no political process prevented Imran Khan from defending him-

self in the trial court.

Imran Khan should have presented evidence in forty appearances of the trial court.

She told the BBC that when he was asked about the state gifts, he said that the military secretary will know about the gifts because used to do the buy and sell them on my behalf.

When he was asked about the theft of 190 million pounds, he shifted the blame on his cabinet, when asked about the May 9 insurrection, he said his party workers should be answerable because they did everything, and when asked about the economy he blamed his economic team.

She said that Imran Khan was the Prime Minister of the country, he had the authority, he personally bought state gifts and did not disclose them in his tax returns. She questioned as to who stopped him from declaring these gifts in his tax returns and election commission forms.

She said the matter was transparent, it would have

been mentioned in the asset declaration form.

The federal minister said that Imran Khan first sold the gifts and then bought them, and he did not even have the receipts.

She categorically said that the arrest of Imran Khan was not political, he could not answer any question in the trial court, and his theft and dishonesty was proved beyond any doubt, so he was arrested.

In response to a question about the workers' protest over the arrest of Imran Khan, the federal information minister said that people cannot be fooled again and again.

They know what political exploitation and victimization was and what was arrest for a crime.

She said that people have realized that no-one can deceive everyone every time. She said that since Imran Khan has been arrested no protest was witnessed anywhere and, now he was in jail.

She said that if people want to protest, they have the freedom to protest