

PMA cadet wins Award
F.P. Report
KAKUL: A cadet of Pakistan Military Academy (PMA), Kakul has achieved distinction at the UK's Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst by winning Hodson's Horse Merit Award, reported on Saturday. PMA 148 Long Course's gentleman cadet (GC) Abdullah joined the Sandhurst in April 2022, and after showing outstanding performance graduated from the institution on April 12, 2024.

11 shot dead in Noshki

F.P. Report

NOSHKI: Eleven people were killed in two separate firing incidents early on Saturday morning along the National Highway in Noshki district of Balochistan.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has taken notice of the harrowing incident and sought a report. The first incident took place as a bus carrying passengers from Quetta to Taftan was targeted by armed assailants. Nine passengers were kidnapped from the bus and subsequently shot to death.

The Noshki SSP said the victims were identified and then killed, adding that they hailed from Mandi Bahauddin, Gujranwala, and Wazirabad cities of Punjab. He said their bodies were discovered in a desolate, mountainous area. Simultaneously, in the other incident, a vehicle plying on the National Highway was fired upon, in which two people were killed by armed individuals. Three others were injured.

The victims were residents of Noshki itself. The district deputy commissioner, Habibullah Musakhail, confirmed the incident and said the victims' bodies were later found beneath a bridge after a search by police and paramilitary forces. He said that among the dead were nine bus passengers.

Approximately 12 armed men, according to the police, had blocked the N-40 Regional Corporations Development (RCD) highway. The attackers stopped a bus and took nine passengers to the nearby mountains, where they were shot dead, after verifying the national identity cards.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif strongly condemned the incidents and expressed deep sorrow and regret over them. He prayed for the victim and expressed sympathy and condolences with their families. He has sought a report on the incident, stressing that terrorism would be eradicated from the country. "Terrorists and their facilitators will be punished," the PM stressed.

Federal Interior Minister Mohsin

Naqvi wasted no time in strongly condemning the incidents and expressing sorrow and grief over the heinous acts. He emphasized that such atrocities have no place in the Pakistan envisioned by Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

He also expressed solidarity with the bereaved families and said the government stood with them in this hour of grief. Naqvi vowed to ensure that those responsible for the bloodshed are brought swiftly to justice.

Meanwhile, Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti echoed similar sentiments, condemning the barbaric killings and reaffirming his commitment to relentlessly pursue and prosecute the perpetrators. He asserted that the terrorists involved in the incidents would not be spared and face the full force of the law, emphasizing that the enemies of peace are enemies of the nation itself.

"The killing of passengers is an inhuman act, an unforgivable crime," he asserted, adding that the terrorists involved in the "cowardly attacks on innocent people: would be chased and eliminated. Bugti extended his heartfelt condolences to the grieving families and reassured them of the government's resolve in the face of such cowardly acts. "The state will play its part," he added.

Funeral prayers of Noshki terror attack victims offered: The funeral prayers of nine labourers, who were abducted and shot dead by unknown assailants in Balochistan's Noshki District, were offered on Saturday.

In early-hours of Saturday, about 10-12 armed assailants blockaded the Quetta-Taftan Highway N-40 in the vicinity of Sultan Charhai near Noshki. Deputy Commissioner Habibullah Musakhel claimed that the unknown assailants checked the identity cards of passengers from the Taftan-bound bus and abducted nine of them. They were subsequently shot dead. The bodies of the abducted passengers – who were said to be labourers – were found under a bridge nearby after an hour and a half, Musakhel added.

Six killed, several injured in Sydney mall stabbing

SYDNEY (Reuters): An attacker who fatally knifed six people in a mall was shot dead by police in Sydney's beachside suburb of Bondi on Saturday, police said, as hundreds fled the scene. The assailant was shot by a police officer after he attacked shoppers in the busy Westfield Bondi Junction shopping centre, police said in a statement.

Five of the six victims killed were women, while eight people, including a nine-month-old baby, were taken to hospital with stab wounds, New South Wales Police Commissioner Karen Webb told a press conference. Police at this stage do not believe the attack was terror-related, Webb said.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said there was no indication yet of the man's motive. "This was a horrific act of violence, indiscriminately targeting innocent people going about an ordinary Saturday doing their shopping," he told a press conference.

"Tonight the first thoughts of all Australians are with the victims of these terrible acts." Australia has some of the world's toughest gun and knife laws, and attacks such as the one on Saturday are rare. Emergency services were called to the mall just before 4pm (0600 GMT) after the stabbing reports, police said.

Ayush Singh, 25, was working in a cafe in the



mall when he saw the attack and then heard gunshots as police responded. "I saw the guy with the knife running and chasing people. As he walked just past beside me I heard two or three gunshots and the guy was neutralised," he told Reuters. "People around me were terrified. There were some old ladies I helped to get them inside a safe place inside the cafe."

Two other witnesses told Reuters they heard shots. "Even 20 minutes after people were rushed out of the mall, I saw Swat teams of people sweeping the surrounding streets," one witness said. The other said they saw a woman lying on the ground and took shelter in a jewellery store.

An eyewitness described the police officer shooting the attacker to state broadcaster ABC. "If she did not shoot him, he would have

kept going, he was on the rampage," said the man, who did not give his name. "She went over and was giving him CPR. He had a nice big blade on him. He looked like he was on a killing spree."

Several posts on social media showed crowds fleeing the mall and police cars and emergency services rushing to the area. The mall will remain closed on Sunday while an investigation continues, police said. Yesterday, a 16-year-old boy was charged with murder after two stabbings, one of which resulted in the death of another teenager, near a school in western Sydney, The Guardian reported. Queensland police arrested five teenage boys and charged one of them after the death of a 70-year-old woman at an Ipswich shopping centre in February.

Pakistan repays \$1b in Eurobonds

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan has repaid \$1 billion in Eurobonds as a scheduled payment ahead of seeking a long-term bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The bond, launched in 2014 and repaid, was maturing this month. "The payment was made to the agent bank for onward distribution to the bond holders," the State Bank of Pakistan said in a statement.

Pakistan has been struggling with a balance of payments crisis, record inflation and steep currency devaluation

since an IMF standby arrangement averted a sovereign default. Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb is due to leave on Sunday for Washington to attend the IMF-World Bank spring meeting, where he will start negotiations for Pakistan's 24th long-term IMF bailout.

Aurangzeb briefed Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif about the new IMF programme on Friday, the government said in a statement. The IMF standby arrangement of \$3 billion Islamabad secured last summer expired on Thursday. Its final tranche of \$1.1 billion is expected to be released after the multilateral lender's board meets later this month.

The two sides have spoken in recent weeks about negotiating the longer-term bailout to continue with necessary policy reforms to rein in deficits, build up reserves and manage soaring debt servicing. Pakistan is in discussions with the IMF for a potential follow-up programme, the IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva said on Thursday.

SG Muslim World League calls on PM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Sheikh Dr. Mohammad bin Abdul Karim Al-Issa, Secretary General of the Muslim World League paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif at the Prime Minister House on Saturday and discussed matters of mutual interest.

The Prime Minister welcomed Dr. Al-Issa and thanked him for visiting Pakistan on the occasion of Eid ul Fitr. He appreciated the valuable contributions and services of Dr. Al-Issa for promoting the true image of Islam around the world. He also acknowledged the critical role of Muslim World League in developing unity among the Muslim Ummah, advocating for Muslim causes around the world and in spreading the message of peace, tolerance and inter-faith harmony.

The Prime Minister conveyed his best wishes and prayers for the health and long life of His Majesty King Salman bin Abdul Aziz as well as for the Crown Prince and Prime Minister His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdul Aziz. He underscored that Pakistan attached utmost importance to its strong fraternal ties with Saudi Arabia that were rooted in common faith, shared values and culture.

Extending his best wishes to the Secretary General for the success of his ongoing visit, the Prime Minister assured him of Pakistan's continued support and partnership with the Muslim World League.

Secretary General of Muslim World League praised the Prime Minister for his commitment and efforts to further strengthen ties between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. He congratulated the Prime Minister on the success of his recent visit to Saudi Arabia. Sheikh Dr. Mohammad bin Abdul Karim Al-Issa is visiting Pakistan from 07-15 April 2024.

2400 Indian Sikhs arrive for Mela

F.P. Report

LAHORE: A jubilant gathering of 2400 Indian Sikh pilgrims arrived at the Wagah Border near here on Saturday, marking the commencement of festivities for Khalsa Janam-din and Vasakhi Mela 2024. Welcomed with warmth and hospitality, the pilgrims were greeted by prominent officials including PSGPC Pardhan Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora and Additional Secretary Shrines Rana Shahid Saleem, along with esteemed Sikh leaders such as Sardar Mampal Singh, Sardar Tara Singh, and Satwant Kaur.

Expressing gratitude towards the government of Pakistan and the Evacuee Trust Property Board, group leader Kulvant Singh and deputy party leader Amarjit Singh expressed their delight at being in Pakistan. They emphasized the significance of visiting the sacred Sikh sites in the country, highlighting the fervent desire among Sikh communities to make this pilgrimage.

Secretary Shrines Rana Shahid Saleem assured that all necessary arrangements for security, medical facilities, and other amenities had been meticulously organized under the guidance of board Chairman Arshad Farid Khan. The Gurudwara Panja Sahib in Hasan Abdal was adorned with vibrant colors and decorations, symbolizing the spirit of the occasion. Similar preparations were completed at Nankana Sahib, the birthplace of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, and other significant Gurdwaras.

The highlight of the Vasakhi Mela festivities is scheduled for April 14 at Gurudwara Panja Sahib Hasan Abdal, where pilgrims will gather to celebrate and partake in religious rituals. The pilgrimage, spanning ten days, will conclude on April 22, after which the Sikh devotees will return to India.



NOSHKI: Paramedics shifting coffins of those killed by gunmen in Naushki area of Balochistan.

24 perish in Balochistan, Punjab lightning strikes

F.P. Report

QUETTA / LAHORE: At least 24 people were killed after lightning struck in Balochistan and Punjab as heavy rains hit the provinces, officials said Saturday, with more downpour is expected to hit the country.

Amid the heavy rainfall, lightning claimed 16 lives in South Punjab and 8 in different areas of Balochistan. Officials said that eight people were killed by lightning in Surab, Dera Bugti, Pishin and other areas of Balochistan after westerly waves entered the province.

Lightning struck two youths, Farid Ahmed and Jabir Ahmed, sitting in a garden of Tanak area in Surab district, killing them on the spot, while one other was injured. Meanwhile, one person died in Pishin district and another in Dera Bugti district by lightning. In Rahim Yar Khan district, two children died in Basti Kalwar, one person in Thul Hassan, a couple in Basti Khokhran Feroza, a farmer in Khan Bela and a shepherd in Mari Allah due to lightning.

Another person died in Khairpur Dahan and an eight-year-old child in Chak-113 area of Bahawalpur district by lightning. A woman was killed in a similar incident in Lodhran. Rains, thunderstorms, and dusty winds have affected almost the entire Balochistan and some parts of Punjab. Quetta also received heavy rainfall, breaking the spell of blistering weather and turning the weather pleasant.

Electricity breakdown on scores of feeders plunged the cities into darkness with no power in most of the areas in Quetta since last afternoon. Meanwhile, the weather became cold because of hailstorm in Washuk, Khuzdar, Surab, Kalat, Mastung, Noshki, Bolan and Pashin. Whereas Noshki, Kolpur and

Mastung experienced rain with thunder and lightning. Rainwater drains are feared to get flooded soon as Zhob, Sherani, Barkhan, Mosakhel, Kohlu, Sibbi, Jhal Magsi, Loralai, Ziarat, Quetta, Chaman, Pishin, Qila Abdullah, Qila Saifullah, Lasbela, Qalat, Khuzdar, Ziarat, Muslim Bagh, Turbat, Harnai, Naseerabad, Jafferabad, Chaghi, Panjgur, Gwadar and Ketch experienced intermitted heavy rains and the districts are expected to receive more in next 48 hours. On the other hand, the spokesperson of the Balochistan government said instructions have been issued to all commissioners and deputy commissioners viewing the unusual rains and weather conditions in the province.

The district disaster management authorities have been alerted while Chief Minister Sardar Sarfaraz Bugti has ordered action to remove encroachments from all natural drainage channels, he said. The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) said more rain was expected in Kohlu, Quetta, Zhob, Sherani, Barkhan, Mosakhel, Sibbi, Jhal Magsi, Chaman, Pishin, Qila Abdullah, Qila Saifullah, Lasbela, Qalat Khuzdar, Ketch, Harnai, Nasirabad, Jafirabad, Chaghi, Panjgur and Gawadar.

Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Director General Jahanzaib Khan said Hamidabad area of Pishin has been flooded after rain. At least 15 houses were destroyed in the flood, while people were being evacuated to a safe location, he said.

Khan said two PDMA teams and heavy machinery had been dispatched to the affected area. The PMD said Zhob received 40mm rain, Quetta 22mm, Barkhan 9mm and Panjgur 1mm during the last 24 hours.

Two jawans embraced Shahadat in Buner operation

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Security forces conducted an intelligence based operation in Buner District, on reported presence of terrorists. During the conduct of operation, after an intense fire exchange, HVT Terrorist ring leader Saleem @Rabbani was sent to hell, while two other terrorists were injured.

Terrorist Saleem @Rabbani remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities against the security forces as well as extortion & target killings of innocent civilians. He was highly wanted by the Law enforcement agencies and Government had fixed Head money of PKR 5 Million on him.

However, during the operation, two brave sons of soil, Lance Havildar Mudassar Mehmood (age-36 years; resident of district Rawalpindi) and Lance Naik Haseeb Javed (age-27 years; resident of district Poonch, AJ&K), having fought gallantly, embraced Shahadat. Sanitization



operation is being carried out to eliminate any other terrorists found in the area. Security forces of Pakistan remain determined to wipe-out the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif lauded the security forces for their successful operation against terrorists in District Buner. The prime minister said that the valiant Jawans of the Pakistan Army with their professional capability had sent the enemies of the country to hell. He further said that he along with the entire nation paid tribute to the valorous soldiers for their valiant act.



The prime minister also expressed his deep grief and sorrow over the shahadat of Lance Havildar Mudassar Mehmood and Lance Naik Haseeb Javed, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. He prayed for the high ranks of the martyred and for the bereaved families to bear the losses with fortitude.

The unprecedented sacrifices of the sons of the soil were a matter of great pride for the whole nation, he said, adding that the nation was standing along with its armed forces in the fight against terrorism. He also expressed the resolve to continue fighting the specter of terrorism till its complete elimination.

Punjab holds first Air Ambulance training session

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The training session for Punjab's first Air Ambulance Service has commenced, marking a milestone in the province's healthcare infrastructure, officials said Saturday.

Conducted in preparation for the imminent launch of the Air Ambulance service scheduled for

June, the training session saw the organization of practice flights aimed at accessing major hospitals across Punjab swiftly and efficiently. This innovative service is expected to revolutionize medical response in the region by providing rapid transportation to major hospitals across Punjab.

During the recent training, pilots and medical teams collaborated to simulate emergency patient transport

scenarios, ensuring readiness for any situation. Participants engaged in drills to effectively handle medical emergencies and transport patients to hospitals with utmost urgency and care. This initiative promises to enhance the speed and efficiency of emergency medical services, potentially saving countless lives by providing critical care in the golden hour.

Police besiege MNA's home

F.P. Report

WAZIRABAD: A heavy contingent of police in Wazirabad laid siege to the residence of PTI-SIC MNA Ahmad Chattha, who is the son of senior politician and former National Assembly speaker Hamid Nasir Chattha, sources said on Saturday. Sources in the police have said that Ahmad is wanted in connection with an incident of violence on May 9.

Opp alliance launches protest movement

F.P. Report

PISHIN: The six-party opposition alliance launched its protest drive against the government today with a rally in Balochistan's Pishin where Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Omar Ayub vowed to reclaim their rights through the "Tehreek Tahafuz Ayin".

"The people of the country came forward to make this movement successful," the politician said during his address in front of a charged crowd.

The gathering was held at the Taj Lala Football Stadium in Pishin after the alliance comprising PTI, Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC), Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Balochistan National Party-Mengal (BNP), Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM) and Pashunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) decided to begin a nationwide movement against the government. Senior leaders and members of the opposition parties — including BNP chief Sardar Akhtar Mengal, PkMAP chief Mehmood Khan Achakzai, SIC chief Hamid Raza, JI's Dr Ataur Rehman and others — were all present at the gathering.

It should be noted that the political rally was held despite the imposition of Section 144 owing to the law and order situation in the district. Lamenting the imposition of the restrictions, the PTI politician said: "The government of Balochistan had placed check-posts on the way to Pishin."

Omar Ayub, during his address, spoke about the release of his party's founder Imran Khan and others. Addressing the gathering, BNP chief Mengal said he doesn't consider the government formed at the Centre as the government of Pakistan.

"This government is Form 47 government. This is the government of the Election Commission," he said, adding that the country's mandate was stolen during the February 8 general elections. Following their win in the general polls, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), alongside a coalition of multiple parties including the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), has formed a government in the Centre.

Mengal, while lamenting the formation of government in Balochistan, said: "In Balochistan, such people were made successful who are not even recognised by the people in their neighbourhood."



Child reunited with parents

LAHORE (APP): Motorway police reunited an 8-year-old child with his parents on the Lahore Thokar Niaz Baig Motorway. Motorway officials said a child, Azan, had escaped from his family from the Chuhng area. The child was unable to give his address due to mental weakness. DSP Riaz Khan handed over the child to his parents. They expressed their gratitude to the motorway police for finding the child. Sector Commander Ghulam Qadir Sindhu appreciated the performance of the officers.



MULTAN: An attractive view of the Jamia Masjid at Dera Adda after rain in the city. —APP Photo

Sharjeel vows to speed up action against drug dealers

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon has stated that the days of drug dealers are numbered, and the Sindh government is determined to rid the province of drugs. In a statement, Senior Provincial Minister for Information, Excise, Taxation, Narcotics Control, Transport, and

Mass Transit Sharjeel Inam Memon commended the efforts of the police and excise narcotics control personnel against drugs. He emphasized that drug dealers are poisoning the veins of our new generation, and they will not be forgiven in any way. People from all walks of life must come forward for a drug-free society. Sindh Senior Minister

Sharjeel Inam Memon's instructions to crack down on drug dealers in different districts are ongoing. Another 56 drug dealers have been arrested during the ongoing crackdown. 10 kg of hashish, 28 grams of heroin, 5 grams of ice, 1036 liters of local made liquor, and harmful gutka have been recovered from the arrested accused. 27 drug peddlers have

been arrested and booked in different areas of Badin. The police of Dadu district have arrested 29 drug dealers, including one female drug dealer. 5720 grams of hashish, 21 liters of locally made liquor, 28 grams of heroin, 5 grams of ice, and 6000 grams of harmful gutka were recovered from the accused, and cases have been registered.

ASF officer mistreats girl at Karachi airport

KARACHI (INP): In a disturbing incident, an officer of Airport Security Force (ASF) mistreated a young girl at Jinnah International Airport, Karachi, callously throwing a young girl onto the ground after forcefully grabbing her by the hair. In a statement, an ASF spokesperson confirmed the authenticity of the video but said that the officer was responsible for his action, not the entire force.

The incident captured in the video, which has gone viral on social media, took place at the International Arrivals section of Jinnah International Airport, Karachi.

In the footage, a young girl can be seen eagerly running towards her father, who had arrived from abroad. However, the ASF officer heartlessly stopped the underage child and threw her to the ground by grabbing her hair.

Following the disturbing act, the distraught girl burst into tears and ran towards his father and embraced him tightly. The video ignited a firestorm on social media, prompting authorities to take action against the responsible officer.

IGP releases Rs 1.8m for cops medical expenses

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr Usman has released Rs 1.8 million additional grant for medical expenses of police personnel serving in various districts including Lahore.

As per details, Lahore Police Constable Zubair Younas was provided with Rs 500,000 for medical treatment, while Gujranwala Police Inspector Ghazi Muhammad Riaz was given Rs 500,000 for medical expenses. Bahawalpur Police Constable Zahid Javed was handed over Rs 350,000 for medical treatment, and Bahawalpur's injured Constable Rashid Mahmood was provided with Rs 250,000 for medical expenses and Khanewal Police Constable Hamza Abbas was given Rs 500,000 for medical treatment.

A Punjab police spokesman said the online welfare processing of applications and payment of funds to force through the compensation award committee was continuing without any interruption. IGP Dr. Usman directed the officers to continue priority measures for welfare of the force and full support should be provided to every official suffering from any kind of medical problem.

Alhamra Eid gala continues

LAHORE (APP): The Alhamra Arts Center, The Mall, is alive with the spirit of Eid-ul-Fitr, treating visitors to a three-day celebration filled with joy and entertainment.

According to a spokesperson here Saturday, families and children flocked to the center to enjoy the festivities. Among the highlights were the heartwarming distribution of Eid gifts to children, adding to the festive cheer.

Alhamra Executive Director Tariq Ali Basra emphasized the significance of the festivities in fostering a deeper connection to Pakistan's rich cultural heritage, especially among the younger generation. He thanked the talented artists and enthusiastic participants whose contributions made the event a resounding success.

Renowned artist Haseeb Pasha, also known as Hamun Judghar, commended the Alhamra administration for creating a memorable celebration that brings the community together through the arts. Scheduled for April 14 at 2 pm, the highlight of the festivities promises to be the enchanting children's drama "Ainak Wala Jin," offering an afternoon of enchantment and delight for all attendees.

CM reviews law, order, gives nod for setting up special unit

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz presided over a special meeting in Murree on Saturday to comprehensively review law and order situation in the province.

The inspector general of police (IGP) gave a detailed briefing on overall law and order situation, said a handout issued here. It was decided in principle in the meeting to launch a special unit, besides conducting IT training of the staff to eliminate organised and cyber crimes in the province. Various proposals and recommendations were put forth to undertake concrete steps to safeguard life and property of people.

An approval was also accorded to enforce a special audit system in order to ascertain corruption and unprofessional attitude in police. The police officers and officials found involved in conniving with the corrupt

mafias and criminals would undergo special court martial, the meeting decided. In case of asking for bribe, a complaint could be registered via CM's special dashboard.

A proposal to establish border security force to check smuggling was also reviewed in the meeting. It was decided in principle to set up a functional specialized police force to effectively counter every crime.

An approval was granted to vigorously carry out a campaign for complete eradication of narcotics. It was decided to make legislation for awarding death penalty to those found involved in committing molestation of women and children.

The chief minister ordered to undertake strict measures to root out culture of illegal weapons in Punjab and it was decided to make amendments to the relevant laws in this regard. The CM also ordered to undertake

additional measures for permanent elimination of kite-flying and usage of metallic wire. She underscored, "Crime can be reduced by ensuring stern punishment to the culprits. It is a fundamental responsibility of the Punjab government to protect every citizen of Punjab," she said.

"We would provide the latest arms and ammunition, state-of-the-art equipment, night vision technology and drones." The CM ordered to launch an effective crackdown for permanent eradication of terrorism, smuggling and criminal gangs. There is a dire need to streamline prosecution and investigation system as well, she added.

Senior Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Chief Secretary, Secretary Home, IG Police, Additional IGP, Commissioner, CCPO, RPO and other officers were also attended the meeting.

FBR to block sim cards of 1.8 million non-filers

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has decided to block the mobile phone SIM cards of approximately 1.8 million non-filers across the country. The FBR possesses the authority to disconnect not only the SIM cards but also electricity connections of these individuals.

Special powers have been granted to 145 district tax officers across the country to take action against non-filers under Section 114B. Strict measures will also be taken against those who fail to submit their tax returns.

FBR authorities have reported that 1.8 million people did not file their income tax returns for 2023 compared to the previous year. Although opportunities were provided to non-filers to submit their returns after January, the implementation of the decision was postponed and will now commence after Eid.

Punjab holds first Air Ambulance training session

LAHORE (PPI): The training session for Punjab's first Air Ambulance Service has commenced, marking a milestone in the province's healthcare infrastructure, officials said Saturday.

Conducted in preparation for the imminent launch of the Air Ambulance service scheduled for June, the training session saw the organization of practice flights aimed at accessing major hospitals across Punjab swiftly and efficiently.

This innovative service is expected to revolutionize medical response in the region by providing rapid

transportation to major hospitals across Punjab.

During the recent training, pilots and medical teams collaborated to simulate emergency patient transport scenarios, ensuring readiness for any situation.

Participants engaged in drills to effectively handle medical emergencies and transport patients to hospitals with utmost urgency and care.

This initiative promises to enhance the speed and efficiency of emergency medical services, potentially saving countless lives by providing critical care in the golden hour.

Minister directs necessary measures after rainfall

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Local Government and Community Development (LG&CD) Minister Zeeshan Rafique has directed the municipal administrators across Punjab to ensure all necessary arrangements put in place in light of recent rainfall in the province.

The minister emphasized the importance of precautionary measures, advising that the alerts regarding rainfall from the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Punjab should be taken into consideration. LG&CD Minister Zeeshan Rafique stressed the need for machinery to be prepared for the drainage of rainwater, especially in low-lying areas, and for a proactive review of the sewage sys-

tems to prevent any blockages. Despite the ongoing holidays, he insisted that the citizens should not face any inconvenience due to the rains.

Furthermore, he instructed the Secretary LG&CD and CEOs of waste management companies to maintain coordination with the local government department and other relevant departments, including the PDMA, to take joint actions and avoid any emergency situations.

He particularly mentioned the provision of all possible services and facilities to tourists visiting Murree during Eid holidays, ensuring their stay is comfortable and free from rain-related troubles.

Punjab CM believes in taking practical steps: Azma

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari said on Saturday that Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz believed in taking practical measures instead of making hollow slogans.

In a statement issued here, she said that in just one month, the CM bought a plane to launch as an air ambulance, as per her promise. She said that Maryam Nawaz had announced launching air ambulance service during her maiden speech after being elected as the Punjab CM.

Performance of the Punjab government was visible on ground not on social media, she said and added that opponents of Maryam Nawaz had no potential to compete with her. She said that the PML-N had always fulfilled promises made with the people.

Azma Bukhari said, "Maryam Nawaz is first women chief minister and till now more than two dozens of programmes have started in Punjab." She said that it was unfortunate that those who had promised to give 10 million jobs and five million houses gave nothing to people except 'Panagah and Langar Khana'.

Railways constable arrested

LAHORE (INP): A Pakistan Railways constable has been arrested for beating a poor woman in a train after a video of the incident went viral.

Constable Mir Hassan, who assaulted a woman in the Multan Express train, was arrested and suspended from duty, Railways official said. The incident of assaulting a woman onboard the train occurred on April 7. After a video of the incident went viral on social media, the Inspector-General of Railway Police took note of the assault.

South DIG Abdullah Sheikh confirmed the arrest of the officer and his suspension, stating that such officers are not deserving of any leniency. He further emphasized that such disgraceful acts are unacceptable under any circumstances, and a case has been registered against the constable for his actions. He stated that besides taking legal action against the officer, strict disciplinary measures will also be taken.

DIG South stated that a thorough investigation is being carried out from all aspects of the case to ensure transparency.

89 arrested for profiteering

LAHORE (APP): The district administration has intensified price control measures following the Chief Minister's directives and conducted raids at 3,648 points resulting in the arrest of 89 violators during Eid holidays.



PAKISTAN ENGINEERING COUNCIL

ATTENTION

Students, Parents & Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

It is for the information of all Students, Parents and HEIs that before seeking admission in any Engineering degree/program in Pakistan, it must be assured whether the degree/program has been accredited by Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC). Moreover, it is to apprise that PEC will register only such graduates of accredited engineering programs/batches which are included either in "First Schedule" or "Second Schedule" after due procedure/assessment under PEC Act and Byelaws. Details of Accredited Engineering Programs are available at PEC website, on links below:

For Accredited Engineering Programs / Batches offered by HEIs in Pakistan (Level-I & Level-II):

<https://pec.org.pk/accreditation/programs-under-level-I/>

<https://pec.org.pk/programs-under-level-II/>

For Accredited Engineering Programs/ Batches offered by HEIs outside Pakistan:

<https://pec.org.pk/accreditation/accredited-engg-programmes-outside-pakistansecond-schedule/>

Under Process or New Engineering Programs offered in Pakistan

- After requisite initial scrutiny and subsequent Zero visit, PEC provisionally allows/grants NOC to start new engineering program offered in Pakistan. Details of such engineering programs are available on PEC website: <https://pec.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Zero-Interim-All-Zones-data-upto-106-EAB-Aug-2022.pdf>
- After grant of NOC, new engineering programs are provided necessary facilitation and expert assistance by PEC through periodic evaluation (interim and accreditation visits) as per well-defined and comprehensive mechanism. Only such engineering programs which meet stipulated criteria duly evaluated through accreditation visit in final year are accredited and approved by PEC. HEIs are responsible to comply and maintain all PEC rules, regulations, guidelines and standards; in case of non-compliance permission of such programs is cancelled.
- Grant of NOC/interim permission for an engineering program does not guarantee that such program will also be accredited by PEC.
- PEC will register such engineering graduates whose programs are duly accredited and thereby notified through SRO (Gazette Notification).

Guidance for Seeking Admission in Engineering Programs Outside Pakistan

Such students who intend to seek admission (after Fall-2021) in any engineering program outside Pakistan are hereby informed that PEC shall register only such engineering graduates who have obtained 60% marks in Intermediate/F.Sc Pre-Engineering OR equivalent qualification and their engineering program is accredited by relevant professional bodies/forums like ENAEE (EUR-ACE)/ FEANI and Washington Accord etc. as per Second Schedule of PEC Act accessible at:

<https://pec.org.pk/accreditation/accredited-engg-programmes-outside-pakistansecond-schedule/>

Guidance for HEIs Offering Admission in Engineering Programs in Pakistan

- It is mandatory for all HEIs to submit details of admitted students as per approved intake provisionally within one month of admissions and final enrolled student data will be submitted at the end of 1st semester; as per approved format on PEC SIS portal (<https://sis.pec.org.pk/>). Failing which, the HEI will be liable to imposition of Penalty and relevant batch shall be declared ineligible for PEC Accreditation/Registrations. Details of penalty to be imposed in such situation are available at PEC website at: <https://pec.org.pk/accreditation/violation-penalties/>
- All HEIs are responsible to meet the PEC Regulations and Standards, and submit request will in time for Zero/ Interim/ Change of Scope/ Accreditation visit, as very well defined in PEC Accreditation Manual 2019. In case of any violation, necessary action shall be initiated as per prevailing PEC Act, Byelaws and Regulations.

Complaint for any violation of PEC Policy/ Regulations regarding admission and approved number of seats by HEIs may be sent to registrar@pec.org.pk so that necessary action may accordingly be initiated.

For admission in an engineering program, PEC Regulations for Engineering Education should be followed.

Secretary / Registrar

Pakistan Engineering Council, Ataturk Avenue, Sector G-5/2, Islamabad

051-9204466

www.pec.org.pk

PID(I)6142/23

All seats in Senate from KP right of PTI: Barrister Saif

PESHAWAR (PPI): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Adviser Barrister Dr. Saif has said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) should be given full seats in the Senate from KP which is our right.

In statement on Saturday, he said that for some time, Election Commission has started a series of hostility with PTI. Barrister Dr. Saif said that anti-PTI campaign continues on behalf of Election Commission.

He said that the PTI is being pushed out of the political process under a campaign. The Senate election became controversial due to the unconstitutional and legal decisions of the Election Commission, said Barrister Saif.

He said that due to the wrong decisions of the Election Commission, the issue of reserved seats arose in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He further said that in the case of reserved seats, the Election Commission violated Section 104 of the Election Act. Barrister Dr. Saif said that we have reservations about the decisions of the Election Commission on the issue of reserved seats.

The Election Commission does not have the authority to misinterpret the Constitution, Barrister Dr. Saif said.

"Election Commission's attitude against PTI is biased and we do not trust the Election Commission, Adviser Information concluded.

Orphan children, families enjoy train safari



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor on Tourism and Culture Zahid Chanzab said on Saturday that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) arranged an another spectacular train safari to the historic Takht Bhai Buddhist ruins for the orphan children of Zamong Kor and families to provide them an opportunity of enjoyment and entertainment.

Organized on the special directives of Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, he said that the families and destitute children enjoyed the guided train tour to the historic Takht Bhai Buddhist relics and explored the archaeological significance of this remarkable place declared by UNESCO as world heritage site.

Zahid Chanzab said the train safari was also aimed at promoting religious tourism and informing people about the KP's rich history and heritage sites.

The tourists were taken from Saddar Cantt Railway Station, where they were welcomed with vibrant tunes of a traditional band performance.

The tourists reached the Takht Bhai Railway Station after sightseeing stops at various stations, including City Railway Station, Nasirpur, Pabbi, and Mardan.

Throughout the excursion, the participants explored the remnants of the 1st Century A.D of Buddhist Civilization.

The tourists were also briefed on the historic significance of UNESCO's World Heritage site besides visiting ancient monasteries inside the Buddhism Archaeological Complex.

During the journey, the tourists were informed about the traditions, culture of the Buddha era and the religious importance of these relics to Buddhism followers and archaeology experts, who often visited these sites for prayer and meditation. There was a great rush of tourists and visitors at the historic sites and scenic places during the Eid holidays.

The visitors hailed the initiative and stressed the need for organising such activities for the entertainment of tourists and promotion of tourism in the province in future.

They said that the train safari tour was also one of such great endeavours, which was fully enjoyed. The KPCTA staff members and the Tourism Police facilitated the tourists.

Takht Bhai stands as a testament to the grandeur of ancient Buddhist monastic centres declared by UNESCO as the one of the rich World Heritage sites.

Secretary inspects process

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Secretary Health, Mehmood Aslam Wazir visited various designated polio vaccination spots during Eid and inspected ongoing inoculation process.

He visited various toll plazas and check posts to witness the vaccination process of children. He also listened to problems of polio workers and assured them cooperation.

Stressing upon workers to realize their responsibilities in national cause of polio eradication he directed them to be vigilant to inoculate children who missed vaccination due to travelling from one place to another.

The Secretary also urged transporters to cooperation with polio workers deputed on toll plazas and check posts for vaccination.

DO Soacial Welfare suspended

PESHAWAR (APP): Adviser to Chief Minister Mashal Azam Yousafzai on Saturday took notice of the public complaint and suspended District Officer Social Welfare Kohat Amjad Afridi for breaching the criteria laid down by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government for the distribution of Eid packages.

The Additional Secretary of Social Welfare Muhammad Farooq was appointed as the inquiry Officer. District Officer Social Welfare Hangu was given the additional charge of District Officer Social Welfare Kohat.

Supply from 142 feeders affected

PESHAWAR (APP): The electricity supply to consumers was affected from 142 feeders due to heavy rain that lashed most part of the province.

56 feeders were tripped in Peshawar Circle, 44 in Khyber, 20 in Swat and 22 feeders of Bannu Circle were affected.

Pesco field staff has restored electricity supply from majority of the feeders while work on the remaining feeders is underway.

Pesco authorities have urged consumers to be patient and extend cooperation to workers in restoration work.



PESHAWAR: Local people enjoying during Eid holidays.

Minister underlines steps for welfare of people in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial Food Minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Zahir Shah Toru has said that under the leadership of Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, our government in the province is working on projects with far-reaching results for the welfare of the people.

He said that health cards have been restored besides the provision of cash assistance worth billions of rupees to the poor citizens during Ramadan. He was interacting with the local elders, party workers and people who came to greet him on Eid-ul-Fitr at his residence and interacting with the media.

Zahir Shah Toru said that Mardan is the second largest city in the province, the development of which is the top priority of the provincial government. He said he had already talked to the Chief Minister and Health Minister to provide funds for the completion of the ongoing projects of DHQ Hospital and Benazir Children Hospital in Mardan and the required funds will be provided soon and by June this year these projects will be completed.

He said that they are working on many projects for the development of Mardan, the fruits of which will benefit the people here. In response to a question, Zahir Shah Toru said that there are specific situations regarding the security of our province, in the context of which a meeting was held with Corps Commander Peshawar.

He said that being a responsible government, it is necessary to communicate with the security agencies to be aware of the security situation so that necessary measures can be taken to protect the public.

The provincial food minister mentioned the steps taken by the food department to control prices and prevent artificial inflation during Ramadan and said that the food department and administrative officers' throughout the province had worked hard to provide food items at reasonable prices to the people.

The Provincial Food Minister Zahir Shah Toru himself directly supervised these initiatives which yielded positive results, he concluded.

Polio victim contributing in fight against climate change

PESHAWAR (APP): A young polio victim performing as role model for countrymen in ongoing fight against increasing threats of climatic changes has decided to embark on a countrywide travel by visiting 400 cities with the objective of planting saplings and spreading awareness about importance of increasing green cover.

"The objective of countrywide visit is to convey message about pressing need of planting trees to reduce the impacts of climate changes in shape of devastating floods, erratic rains, global warming, heat wave," said Khizar Wali Chisti, a young teacher of 32 years age who is a polio victim and walks with the support of crutches with the mission of planting 10 million trees in the country with his hands.

"I have set the target of planting 10 million trees in the country and so far succeeded in planting more than 150,000 saplings," said Khizar whose left leg is paralyzed due to polio.

Talking to APP from his hometown, Pak-Patan, Khizar Wali Chisti informs that he is arranging funds to purchase a heavy vehicle for carrying of sapling in different parts of the country. The countrywide journey is tentatively scheduled to start in June 2024 during which Khizar Wali will visit different cities and meet with public to inform them about growing threats posed by climatic changes.

Pakistan is ranked among top ten in the list of most vulnerable countries due to climate induced disasters and the disastrous flood of 2022 is an eye opener for all the countrymen, Khizar opined.

Khizar also spent recently passed holy month of Ramadan and religious festival of Eid in plantation of trees in different cities of Punjab.

During Razman, I visited Lahore and besides planting different trees also planted a Miyawaki forest in the city, he told APP.

Around a couple of months earlier, Khizar Wali organized Fourth Annual National Tree Festival in Pak-Patan wherein experts from across the country were invited who apprised visitors about importance of planting indigenous trees and tips about kitchen gardening. Being a teacher, Khizar Wali Chisti also tries to create awareness among people about importance of increase in green cover.

If heat wave continues to increase with the same pace and temperature kept on around or more than 50 degree celcius in major parts of the country, how people will bear it and there will be crisis of very serious level for mitigation of which we have to work jointly by creating awareness and taking practical measures, he added.

There is a need for creating awareness among all sections of society because people from top to bottom and of all ages are getting affected from climatic changes, Khizar stressed.

Khizar has formed a group in name of 'Green Oasis' on social media platform for creating awareness about importance of increasing green cover.



PESHAWAR: Provincial Secretary Health Mehmood Aslam Wazir listening problems of polio workers.

Rain, thunderstorm predicted for parts of KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The meteorological Department has predicted rain-wind-storm and thunderstorms most districts of the province during the next 24 hours.

According to the meteorological department, rain-storms and thunderstorm is expected in Chitral, Dir, Abbottabad, Manshera, Swat, Haripur, Kohistan, Shangla, Buner and Malakand. Same weather conditions are expected in Waziristan, Kohat, Lakki Marwat, D I Khan, Bannu, Karak, Peshawar, Charsadda, Mardan, Swabi and Kurram.

The weather situation is attributed to a strong westerly wave that may grip most parts of the country from April 13 to April 15.

The heavy rainfall may generate floods in Dir, Swat, Chitral and Kohistan. Concerned authorities have been issued directives to remain alert to meet any untoward incidents.

Farmers are also been advised to take precautionary measures in the predicted weather conditions.

Wildlife animals at Peshawar Zoo draw influx of children, families

PESHAWAR (APP): Anaya Bibi (8), a fourth grade student of a private school was excited after visiting the Peshawar zoo where wild animals were caged attracting an influx of children alongwith families on the Eidul Fitr celebrations.

"Seeing wild animals including cobra snake, lion, falcons and zarafa with own eyes were my dream. Big thank you to my papa for fulfilling my childhood dream today," said Anaya, a resident of Pabbi Nowshera district at the zoo.

"I am very impressed that rare wildlife animals were kept in natural environment besides facilities made for the visitors at Peshawar zoo," she told APP while seeing falcons.

Like Anaya, thousands of children alongwith families visited the zoo during Eid holidays and took keen interest in zarafas, lions, cobra snakes, bears, pheasants, dears, cranes, reptiles, birds, parrots and falcons. These animals remained center of attraction of small children, youth and families arrived from different districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and spent few hours in its relax environment amid fun and laughter.

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

The zoo was established on 29 acres land near University of Peshawar. It was the biggest zoo of Pakistan established by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa wildlife department where in almost all species of wild animals and birds existing in the country were caged in natural habitats.

At entrance, big status of elephant and zarafa have been installed in front of main gate that attract attention of visitors, and children while passing through Rahatabad Road. Falcons' cage remained a centre of attraction of tourists, wildlife lovers, students and children where three large sizes brown and black eagles are kept.

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

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

Sidra Sheraz (30), who came to the zoo alongwith her children from Nowshera told APP on Friday that it was a great gift for people of Peshawar, which has not only enhanced beauty of Peshawar but also become a symbol of healthy entertainment.

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

"Falcons have always attracted my children and that is why I came here to see them closely on my kids demands," she said.

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

She underscored the need for proper shelter shades, trees plantations and proper cold watering for animals, adding services of DVM doctors may be hired 24/7 for looking after medical needs of the animals in harsh weather conditions.

Dr Muhammad Naem of the Swabi University said that the zoo was a good addition in provision of healthy entertainment and recreation facilities for residents of Peshawar and adjoining districts.

People from Attock Punjab have also visited Peshawar zoo, which are bringing people of all provinces further closers by enhancing bonds of friendship and love besides knowing about each others' culture, language and traditions.

He said the negative effects on people's mental and psychological health put by coronavirus in the past had been ended courtesy by the Peshawar zoo. Its play-lands, train ride, swings, motion and camel ride, cafeteria and safari train added colours of the zoo.

Suggested an establishment of a testing laboratory at the zoo premises for treatment of common diseases, he said the facility would help avoid deaths of precious animals in future. He said fare of zoo was relatively high and small children should be exempted from it.

Special focus should be made on training of doctors and staff employed at the zoo so that they could properly take care of the animals as per international standards.

The wildlife experts urged visitors not to throw stones at animals or tease them, and extend full cooperation with zoo staff. They said the zoo was identity of Peshawar and visitors should make it neat and clean for people.



In brief

Grand Jirga held in Wana F.P. Report

WANA: A grand jirga of 9 tribes of Ahmed Zai Wazir was held in Wana lower Waziristan, to permanently open the Angoo adda gate and remove the obstructions in the connection of smooth business activities. A large number of tribal elders and local ulemas participated in the jirga. It was decided in the joint jirga that the second grand jirga of 9 tribes will be held in Wana bazar on Monday in which all the people of Ahmadzai Wazir will be fully participated. It is important to mention here that the Angoor adda gate has been closed for the last 5 months, which has caused a loss of more than 100 billion to the national exchequer and about more than five and a half billion rupees to the people involved in trade. In addition, five thousand poor people have become jobless due to gate closure in Angoor adda village alone; and local transport related to Angoor adda business has been completely destroyed. In Saturday's jirga, a reliable source said that apart from transport, hotels, godowns, petrol pumps, service stations in Wana have been closed due to lack of trade activities at Angoor gate, leaving thousands of war-torn tribal youth jobless and in abject poverty. A large number of businessmen of Wana have shifted most of their money to continue their business on the Toorkhan, Ghulam Khan and Kharlachi borders after the trade activities on Angoor adda ended and this massive transfer of money has led to unemployment in the area. Now, it has become completely uncontrollable. It should be clear that the closure of Angoor gate due to this, riots, dacoits and thefts have become the norm in lower Waziristan. All the elders and ulemas present in today's Jirga told the media that the major reason for the incidents of theft and robbery in lower Waziristan is unemployment among the local youth.

Commissioner visits jail F.P. Report

MARDAN: Commissioner Mardan Division Shaukat Ali Yousafzai along with DC Mardan Muhammad Fayaz Khan Sherpao visited Central Jail Mardan on the morning of Eid. Superintendent Jail Mohammad Arif Khan welcomed them. Commissioner Mardan Division met the prisoners and deportees and congratulated them on Eid. He also presented Eid gifts to male and female prisoners and children staying with them in the jail. Commissioner Mardan and DC Mardan also visited the district headquarters hospital and visited the patients. He also distributed Eid gifts among the patients. Later, he also visited the orphanage and Darul Aman and distributed gifts and Eid among the residents there. He announced to organize a feast for the children of the orphanage after Eid.

Two killed

SARGODHA (INP): At least two persons were killed while three sustained injuries as a speeding car overturned here under the jurisdiction of laxian police station on Saturday. Police spokesperson said that a family including Khurram (45) was travelling to Sargodha from Hafizabad on his car along with his wife Safia(48), daughter Sidra(12) two sons including Nouman(9) and Aqib (15). When they reached near Sargodha, their car over turned due to tyre burst.

Flood water swept away roads in Chitral

F.P. Report

CHITRAL: Heavy rain hit hard resulting roads swept away by closing all traffic between Chitral and Peshawar wherein a house was affected in Chitral city and a girl child was injured and was shifted to District Headquarters Hospital. Deputy Commissioner Chitral Muhammad Imran told media men here on Saturday.

He stated heavy machinery is working on the opening of roads besides a high alert has been issued to those living close to Nala's and stream due to heavy rain. Muhammad Imran Khan said that officials of the district administration have been on high alert along with NHA's and PDMA staff. A house was affected by heavy rains in Chitral city, a girl was injured, he confirmed.

The injured girl was shifted to the District Headquarters Hospital, Chitral and doctors said that she is out of danger. There was a confirmed report that tourists' vehicles were affected by floods in Chamarkhan Nala, and the route was restored, Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Imran said.

He disclosed that in Lower Chitral Belpok village, Chitral Garam Chashma road was closed due to flood relay and the traffic was also affected. Due to rain, the Chitral to Peshawar road is closed for all types of traffic due to flooding in rivers and canals and tourists and local peoples have been advised to avoid unnecessary travel. Deputy Commissioner Chitral said that rain continues in Lower Chitral district and suburbs till now. In the light of the orders of Deputy Commissioner Lower Chitral Muhammad Imran Khan, line departments are on alert.

Traffic flow is affected at various places due to increase in flood water level and landslides in Nullas. The machinery of the TMA department and NHA are busy cleaning various drains. The machinery of the NHA department is engaged in the clearance operation at the location of heavy floods, Muhammad Imran Khan said.

Tourists are advised to travel after

obtaining complete information about the access roads, he said. Avoid unnecessary travel in inclement weather until routes are fully cleared and if any untoward incident report an emergency to DC control room on the following Telephone No. 0943412519. Heavy rains have caused flooding in "Meena Khor" on Lowari Tunnel Road. Travelers to Chitral, including tourists to Lowari Tunnel, should also avoid traveling before the rain stops and the water level recedes, Deputy Commissioner Chitral while issuing warning to the general public and tourists, said.

Heavy rain in most districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Peshawar, the Met Office said. The official said that the Cold has returned due to rain with Eid and will also be cold due to rain. It has been raining continuously since last night in the city of Peshawar and in the rest of the areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Due to rain, the temperature has dropped significantly, the officials of the Meteorological Department said.

About the highest rainfall record, he said, Kalam 18mm, Malam Jabba 17mm, Parachinar 15mm, Chitral 17mm, Darosh 10, Mirkhani 09, Dir (Upper 07, Lower 02), Saidusharif Swat, Patan 03, Kakul 02mm rain recorded. In Upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Kashmir, there was rain with strong winds and thunder in few places including Chitral. Rains and snow-fall are likely to continue intermittently till April 15, the official said.

Meanwhile, electricity supply was affected in most areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa due to rain. As many as 140 PESCO feeders have been tripped due to rain, a PESCO spokesperson informed when contacted. He said 56 feeders have been tripped in Peshawar Circle, 44 in Khyber, 20 in Swat and 22 in Bannu Circle. PESCO field staff are working to restore power, a PESCO spokesperson said. Repair work on several feeders has been completed and power has been restored to some areas, PESCO spokesperson said. Work on the remaining feeders is in progress, power will be fully restored soon, spokesperson PESCO said.

Section 144 imposed in Pishin ahead of Opp's rally

PISHIN (INP): As the six-party opposition alliance — led by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) — prepares to gather for a political rally in Pishin today, Section 144 has been imposed by the local government in view of the law and order situation in the district.

As per the notification issued by the district's deputy commissioner on Friday, a gathering of more than five people will be prohibited in the Pishin with Section 144 also enforced on the closure of important highways.

"The Government of Balochistan Home & Tribal Affairs Department, in exercise of powers conferred under Sub-Section (6) of Section 144 Cr.P.C 1898, has imposed ban on blockade of national/main highways, roads, red zones including processions, rallies and gathering of five (05) or more than five persons/sit-ins across the Province Balochistan with immediate till further orders," the notification read. The directives were issued on the order of the provincial government's home and tribal affairs department.

The district also witnessed heavy rain due to which rainwater has accumulated inside the ground where the opposition is set to hold its inaugural rally.

However, measures are being taken to drain the water ahead of the rally.

Meanwhile, the six-party opposition alliance, in its bid to start a formal movement against the government today (Saturday), has named its protest campaign "Movement to Protect the Constitution (Tehreek Tahafuz Ayin)". The six-party alliance comprises PTI, Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC), Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Balochistan National Party-Mengal (BNP), Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM) and Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP).

During a meeting of the parties in Quetta on Friday night, the strategy for launching the protest movement and today's public meeting was decided with PkMAP's Mahmood Khan Achakzai appointed as the president of the movement. PTI Central General Secretary Omar Ayub Khan, BNP chief Akhtar Mengal, JI acting chief Liaquat Baloch, MWM chief Raja Nasir Abbas and SIC chief Hamid Raza Qadri also attended the meeting.

Speaking to the media, Omar Ayub said that a historic meeting of the opposition alliance was held. He said the name of the opposition movement is

"Constitution Protection Tehreek" and its president Achakzai is forming a coordination committee for the movement. It was agreed that the next meetings will be held in Lahore under the action plan on April 29. Furthermore, he said they reject the government based on Form 47 and a country which does not follow the Constitution has no future.

Achakzai said that the Constitution is a social agreement and they will hold rallies from Sunday to protect it. "We will not abuse anyone, we will talk about the supremacy of the Constitution," he said. Talking to the media, Mengal said had the movement started 20 years ago, there would not have been any Form 47. He added that political forces and people will play an important role in this movement.

The SIC chief maintained that "Tehreek Tahafuz Ayin" would prove to be a big movement and the party will play a leading role in this movement as the main objective is to establish the supremacy of the Constitution. MWM's Allama Nasir Abbas said a law of the jungle is prevailing in the country and they are ready to face every difficulty for the supremacy of the Constitution.

Adventure sports enthusiasts flock to Galiyat for snow games

ABBOTTABAD (APP): Arrived with baggage of cooked food, fruits and tents for camping at the picturesque Thandiyani, Qaiser Khan's family, a former Wapda employee, was rejoiced after visiting their dream tourists' resort to enjoy snow games, mountaineering and trekking amid rainy weather since last night.

Enjoying national and cultural songs of Sohni Dharti and Monga da Khyber Zalmi national songs along with his children and other family members on his music system, Qaiser's sons Zershah and Ehtisham were busy in hammering and fixing tents' bolts at a suitable place of Thandiyani to enjoy the rainy weather on weekend without any charge.

Amid disappearing sun behind clouds hovering over Thandiyani hills amid blossom of seasonal flowers, Qaiser's wife who belonged to Wapda Town Nowshera, was seen preparing green tea on gas stove after warming up the Peshawari's famous Chappli Kabab, Paye and Polao rice dishes they brought along and making it ready on 'Dastarkhwans' to serve her fam-

ily members on Saturday.

"Galiyat is my favorite tourists place. I have planned Galiyat's tour few years ago but postponed it due to travel restrictions owing to COVID-19 pandemic and today dream of my family to see its mesmerising natural beauty with soothing environment came true," Qaiser told APP. "I was stunned to see the nearby black clouds, natural beauty and cool fresh air of Thandiyani and advised families to come here in large numbers due to its better road connectivity."

Wearing traditional Peshawari Chappal, the 59-year-old tourist said that he had brought tents and other stuff along as the hotel room and food cost was very high for a common man at Galiyat. "The rent of a normal two-bedroom per night in Thandiyani and Nathiagali is approximately Rs10,000 to Rs12,000 that was beyond of hiring capacity of middle class."

He said that he had selected Thandiyani as first camping site as the tourists can see the snow-covered Pir Panjal mountain range of Kashmir and lush green terrains of Kaghan and Kohistan

besides snow-clad ranges of Swat and Chitral from Thandiyani top having 2,750 meters height of the above sea level, which are taking nature lovers and adventure sports enthusiasts over the moon.

Like Qaiser Khan, hundreds of thousand families and tourists arrived at northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa especially Malakand and Hazara divisions including Galiyat and Thandiyani to explore its waterfalls, gushing rivers, Saiful Malook, Ansoo, Dudipath and Mahoodhand lakes and colonial era tracks besides enjoying the expansive trout fish and water boating in River Kunhar at Kaghan and Khanpur dam at Haripur. "Despite torrential rains in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab provinces, the response of tourists, adventurers and adventure sportsmen in Malakand and Hazara during Eid holidays was impressive," Saad Khan, the spokesman of Cultural and Tourism Authority told APP on Saturday.

He said thousands of tourists and adventure sports enthusiasts visited Malakand and Hazara divisions during last three days'

vacation of Eid exploring its breathtaking beauty. Dir Upper, Malam Jabba Swat, Galiyat including Thandiyani and Nathiagali, Chitral Lower including Kaslah valley and Kaghan and Naran including Saiful Malook and Ansoo lakes in Manshera district were the most visited destinations during Eidul Fitr holidays.

Israr Ahmad, Sales and Marketing Manager, Swat's Seerna hotel said domestic tourists' response to Swat during eid days was higher than last year due to enhanced roads infrastructure and Swat Expressway. He said that tourists families from other cities including Karachi, Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Lahore have visited Swat in large numbers during Eid days due to better roads connectivity and enjoyed trout fish besides water rafting and paragliding in Kalam.

Tourism will not grow with full potential unless we promote sustainable and planned tourism as per international practice, Saad Khan said. To promote sustainable tourism, he said four Integrated Tourism Zones (ITZ) would be developed at Mankiyal

Swat, Thandiyani Abbottabad, Ganol Manshera and Madaklasht Lower Chitral. These ITZs would be constructed with a loan grant of USD 70 million of the World Bank, and that its feasibility studies and master planning was in advance stages and practical work would launch soon after completion of all code formalities.

He said ITZs Thandiyani and Mankiyal would be connected with Swat and Hazara motorways through link roads that would open up entire Malakand and Hazara for tourists and make Pakistan a hub of international tourism. KP government signed 44 memorandum of understanding worth USD 8 billion with international firms during Dubai Expo 2022. To promote skiing sports, Saad Khan said the government has taken a principle decision to establish ski resorts at Kaghan, Chitral and Swat.

Four new hill stations including one each in Chitral and Abbottabad besides two in Kaghan would be developed. The spokesman said construction of four colonial era tracks between Thandiyani-Nathiagali having 8,200 feet height,

Gujranwala (245). This surge in traffic accidents during Eid highlights the need for increased public awareness and enforcement of traffic regulations to ensure safer travel on Pakistani roads.

Meanwhile, a youth has allegedly committed suicide after refusal of his girlfriend for marriage here in the area of Satiana police station on Saturday. Police spokesman said that one Nauman r/o Chak No. 433-GB had reportedly developed love affairs with a girl of the same locality and insisted upon the marriage but the girl refused.

Over this issue, the boy committed suicide by shooting himself near Railway Phattak. Therefore, the police dispatched the body to mortuary for postmortem and started investigation, he added.



CHARSADDA: KP Minister for Health, Syed Qasim Ali Shah inquiring after the health of injured nurse at her residence.

Security arrangements finalized for Baisakhi festival F.P. Report

ATTOCK: The district administration on Saturday finalized security arrangements for the upcoming Baisakhi festival at Gurdwara Panja Sahib in Hassanabad. The District Police Officer (DPO) Dr. Sardar Ghiyas Gul Khan has said a foolproof security plan has been finalized for the Sikh pilgrims.

The Sikh pilgrims from around the world will visit Gurdwara Sri Panja Sahib in Hassanabad to participate in the Baisakhi festival. The DPO said that the protection of all religious places and followers is the top priority and they would not any miscreant to spread unrest.

As per reported by our district representative faisal munir that DPO Attock will supervise a fresh contingent for security deployed at various places. Around 1,023 police officers and personnel, including six DSPs, 13 Inspectors/SHOs, 143 upper superintendents, 95 head constables, 728 constables and 36 ladies constables will be deployed to monitor the security. He said that apart from this, security cameras, walk-through gates and metal detectors would be installed as well.

He said that besides this regular force, 26 sections of elite commandos will be on constant alert and patrol for the protection of Sikh pilgrims while shops close to the gurdwara would remain closed and Rescue 1122 officials would be present on high alert.

Sikhs pilgrims would not be allowed to leave the temple during their three-day stay from April 13 to 15, and accommodation would be provided within the premises," he added. Earlier, the DPO while issuing instructions to the officials concerned to provide foolproof security to the pilgrims coming from all over the world, said that the protection of the life and property of the pilgrims is their utmost responsibility. He had directed the traffic in charge to manage the parking and flow of traffic during the festival. He also instructed Rescue 1122 officials to keep three vehicles on standby. District police officer Dr. Sardar Ghiyas Gul Khan said a foolproof security plan has put in place for Sikh pilgrims. The safety of religious places and their followers is our top priority. All Sikh pilgrims can worship freely without fear or danger he added.

Tehsil chairman by-election in Dir Political parties launch electioneering

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Pakistan Tehreek Insaf and Jamaat-i-Islami both on Saturday launched their election campaigns for the election of tehsil chairman slot to be held on April 28th. The Awami National Party also convened a workers' convention in this regard on April 16 at Odigram. The election commission has scheduled election for the Balambat tehsil chairman on April 28.

The PPP and JUI-F have withdrawn their candidates in favour of the JI's Imran Din advocate while the PTI has fielded Shakir Shuiab, the brother of former tehsil chairman Asim Shuiab, who has been in hiding after the May 9 riots. The ANP has fielded Muhammad Hayat for the slot. A former district councilor Syed Alam Shah, a PTI disgruntled candidate, is also in the running.

The JI held a workers' meeting in this regard at the hujra of former MNA Sahibzada Yaqub Khan which was addressed by former MNA Sahibzada Yaqub Khan, former district councilor Shad

Nawaz Khan, former tehsil nazim Imran ud Din advocate and others. They said the JI would not leave the ground open for any one and would contest the by-election for the tehsil chairman slot.

The PTI also held a meeting at the house of Shakir Shuiab to formally launch the election drive. The seat went once to the JI while twice to the PTI in the past elections. The seat fell vacant when its elected tehsil chairman, Asim Shuiab, failed to return to the house despite repeated calls from the ECP as he was wanted to police in the May 9th riots. The ECP announced a by-election on the seat.

Youth killed: A youth identified as Sudais 21 s/o Ajab Khan, a resident of Hajiabad was killed when a car he was riding in skidded off the road and fell into a ravine at Anwarabad in the jurisdiction of Balambat police station here on Saturday. Rescue 1122 team reached the spot and shifted the body to a nearby hospital. The car was also rescued.

The Balambat police station registered a case and started further investigations. Meanwhile the mud house of one Alam

Khan collapsed due to torrential rains at Safary village of Khall here on Saturday. However, the inmates remained unhurt as they came out of their house when the incident was occurring.

Board exams: The Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Malakand's controller of examinations Muhammad Naseem Khan told local journalists at Timergara on Saturday that annual examinations for grade 9th and 10th would commence from April 18 for which all arrangements had been finalized. The controller said that more than 3000 supervisory staff had been deputed to perform duties in over 500 examination halls in parts of the Lower Dir, Upper Dir, Malakand and Bajaur districts.

He said that more than 110,000 candidates were appearing in the examination. The officials said that CCTV cameras had been installed in all examination centers while inspection committees had been formed to make the exercise totally cheating-free. He said that cheating by students would be checked to eradicate the menace.

Traffic accidents claim 25 lives on Eid days

FAISALABAD (INP): At least 25 people were killed and over 2,500 injured in traffic accidents across Punjab province during the first two days of Eid al-Fitr, according to Rescue 1122, the emergency service provider.

Spokesperson for Rescue 1122 highlighted a surge in motorcycle accidents across various districts. Additionally, car and wagon crashes were prominent in Faisalabad and Multan. Dr. Rizwan Naseer, Director General of Rescue 1122, expressed concern over the loss of life and injuries. He urged citizens to prioritize traffic rules and safety measures while traveling.

Data from Rescue 1122 reveals a staggering number of accidents during the festive period. Over 4,500 incidents were reported across the province, with Lahore experiencing the

highest at 770. Men constituted a significant portion of the casualties, with 4,100 reported victims. Women were also not spared, with 1,203 injured in accidents.

Emergency services treated a significant number of casualties. Over 2,545 people sustained serious injuries and were transferred to hospitals. Additionally, first aid was administered to 2,733 individuals at the accident sites. The report further details the types of vehicles involved in the accidents. Motorbikes topped the list with 4,422 incidents, followed by rickshaws (219) and cars (496).

Specific locations within Punjab witnessed a higher concentration of accidents. Lahore reported the most (770), followed by Faisalabad (288), Multan (256), and

Gujranwala (245). This surge in traffic accidents during Eid highlights the need for increased public awareness and enforcement of traffic regulations to ensure safer travel on Pakistani roads.

Meanwhile, a youth has allegedly committed suicide after refusal of his girlfriend for marriage here in the area of Satiana police station on Saturday. Police spokesman said that one Nauman r/o Chak No. 433-GB had reportedly developed love affairs with a girl of the same locality and insisted upon the marriage but the girl refused.

Over this issue, the boy committed suicide by shooting himself near Railway Phattak. Therefore, the police dispatched the body to mortuary for postmortem and started investigation, he added.



Sunday, April 14, 2024

Vietnam sentences real estate tycoon to death for fraud

HANOI (AP): The unusually harsh death sentence given to a real estate tycoon in Vietnam was a pivotal moment in the decadelong "Blazing Furnace" anti-corruption campaign as the Vietnamese business community wrestled with an uncertain future.

Real estate tycoon Truong My Lan, who was sentenced to death by a court in Ho Chi Minh city for orchestrating the country's largest ever financial fraud case, was one of Vietnam's most important businesspeople for years. She has been convicted for fraud amounting to \$12.5 billion — nearly 3% of the country's 2022 GDP — and for illegally controlling a major bank and allowing loans that resulted in losses of \$27 billion, state media outlets reported.

Vietnam typically gives death penalties crimes like terrorism or murder and, according to Amnesty International, has among the highest rates of capital punishment worldwide. But a death sentence for a financial crime is rare in the country. Sentencing marked a "big turning point" in the ongoing anti-corruption drive in Vietnam, said Nguyen Khac Giang, an analyst at Singapore's ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute. "It signals that the party's commitment to a crackdown on corruption

has ... expanded," he said.

The Communist Party's so-called Blazing Furnace campaign began in 2013, but it wasn't until 2018 that authorities began scanning the private sector. Since then, several owners of Vietnam's fast-growing businesses have been arrested. The trial for Trinh Van Quyet — the former chair of the real estate company FLC, which also owns Vietnam's third-largest airline, Bamboo Airways — will likely be heard next. He was arrested in 2022. Giang said Lan's trial was "an example" for upcoming cases. The anti-corruption campaign is a hallmark of Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong, Vietnam's top politician. The 79-year-old ideologue views corruption as a grave threat facing the party and has vowed that the campaign will be a "blazing furnace" where no one is untouchable.

It's making foreign investors jittery while dampening Vietnam's economic outlook at a time when the country has been positioning itself as the ideal home for businesses looking to shift their supply chains away from China. Vietnam already lost two presidents in a little over a year and the country's bureaucracy has ground to a halt with terrified officials choosing to do nothing lest

they be in the crosshairs. Lan's death sentence sent "shockwaves" across the Vietnamese business community, creating a "sense of uncertainty" about the future, said Giang.

The real estate sector in particular is floundering. An estimated 1,300 property firms withdrew from the market in 2023 and high-rises lie empty in major cities like Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh. Add to this poor global demand and reduced public investment slowing Vietnam's economic growth down to 5.05% last year, compared to 8.02% in 2022, according to government data. Meanwhile, despite the long campaign against graft, public opinion about corruption in Vietnam remains mixed, according to an annual survey built on interviews with nearly 20,000 people known as the Vietnam Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index. It found that, while fewer people were asked for bribes, the number of people who felt the government was serious about fighting corruption had actually dipped in 2023 from the previous year.

Giang said that these were now "uncharted waters" for Vietnam, making it impossible to predict what lay next. "We haven't really seen anything like this before," he said.

13 killed in Kenya flooding

NAIROBI (AP): Heavy rains pounding different parts of Kenya have led to the deaths of at least 13 people and displaced some 15,000, the United Nations said, as forecasters warned more rains can be expected until June. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, citing the Kenya Red Cross Society, said that nearly 20,000 people have been affected. That includes the estimated 15,000 displaced by heavy rains and flash floods across the country since the start of the wet season in mid-March. The East African country has seen thousands of people killed by flooding in previous rainy seasons, mostly in the lake regions and downstream of major rivers.

The Kenya Red Cross Society told The Associated Press that five major roads were cut off by the floods, including Garissa Road in northern Kenya, where a bus carrying 51 passengers was swept away. All passengers were rescued. Kenya's disaster management agency issued a flood warning to residents of Lamu, Tana River and Garissa counties that are downstream of Tana River after flooding breached dams upstream. Residents have been urged to move to higher grounds.

So far, nine out of 47 counties in the country have reported flooding incidents. Mudslides have been reported in the central regions. Four people were killed in Narok county, in the western part of the country. The Kenya Red Cross Society's secretary general, Ahmed Idris, told Citizen TV that "lifesaving assistance" including shelter and clean drinking water was being offered to those displaced and are living in camps to avert outbreaks of waterborne diseases. The rainy season is expected to reach its peak towards the end of April and subside in June, according to the meteorology department.

'I survived - but lost 17 of my family'

MOZAMBIQUE (BBC): "I don't know how I managed to escape - I can't swim," says Muaziza Ambaraje. She was on board as Mozambique's worst sea disaster in recent memory unfolded. The 47-year-old is a regular on the makeshift ferry between Lungá, where she was born, and Mozambique Island where she lives.

"No wave took us by surprise, we didn't hit any rocks, and the wood didn't come loose," she recalls. "Water got into the boat because it was overcrowded - lots of people panicked and started to jump into the sea." Next, Ms Ambaraje describes a nightmare jumble of bodies lying and dead, as she struggled to keep afloat. More than 100 people died in the chaos, including 17 members of her family.

Her mother, father, grandmother, nieces and nephews all died, says Ms Ambaraje. She can't think of any reason she was spared other than God's mercy. They had been on their way to visit Mozambique Island's popular weekly market ahead of Eid, says Ms Ambaraje, in what was meant to be a time of celebration in this Muslim-majority part of the country. "I felt completely broken inside," recalls Momade Issufo, who rushed over to rescue people as soon as he heard the news of the shipwreck.

"I saw bodies piled up on the shore - some were children as young as three years old. People were panicking. 'I had no choice - as a human being I had to help. There were still people in the rescue boats, so we transported their bodies in my truck to their relatives' homes." The 44-year-old says his heavily pregnant cousin was among the dead. The ordeal has left him feeling depressed and unable to work.

Mr Issufo wants the Mozambique government to build a new bridge from the mainland to the island, a Unesco World Heritage Site, so people don't have to rely on the dangerous boats. Thousands of fishing boats operate illegally as ferries along the country's 2,750km (1,708-mile) coastline, by the government's own admission.

Ukraine could face defeat in 2024

KYIV (BBC): The former commander of the UK's Joint Forces Command has warned that Ukraine could face defeat by Russia in 2024. General Sir Richard Barrons has told the BBC there is "a serious risk" of Ukraine losing the war this year. The reason, he says, is "because Ukraine may come to feel it can't win".

"And when it gets to that point, why will people want to fight and die any longer, just to defend the indefensible?" Ukraine is not yet at that point. But its forces are running critically low on ammunition, troops and air defences. Its much-heralded counter-offensive last year failed to dislodge the Russians from ground they had seized and now Moscow is gearing up for a summer offensive. So what will that look like and what are its likely strategic objectives?

"The shape of the Russian offensive that's going to come is pretty clear," says Gen Barrons. "We are seeing Russia batter away at the front line, employing a five-to-one advantage in artillery, ammunition, and a surplus of people reinforced by the use of newish weapons." These include the FAB glide bomb, an adapted Soviet-era "dumb bomb" fitted with fins, GPS guidance and 1500kg of high explosive, that is wreaking havoc on Ukrainian defences.

"At some point this summer," says Gen Barrons, "we expect to see a major Russian offensive, with the intent of doing more than smash forward with small gains to perhaps try and break through the Ukrainian lines. "And if that happens we would run the risk of Russian forces breaking through and then exploiting into areas of Ukraine where the Ukrainian armed forces cannot stop them." But where? Last year the Russians knew exactly where Ukraine was likely to attack - from the direction of Zaporizhzhia south towards the Sea of Azov. They planned accordingly and successfully blunted Ukraine's advance.

Now the boot is on the other foot as Russia masses its troops and keeps Kyiv guessing where it is going to attack next. "One of the challenges the Ukrainians have," says Dr Jack Watling, senior research fellow in land warfare at the Whitehall thinktank the Royal United Services Institute (Rusi), "is that the Russians can choose where they commit their forces. 'It's a very long front line and the Ukrainians need to be able to defend all of it.' Which, of course, they cannot. 'The Ukrainian military will lose ground,' says Dr Watling. "The question is: how much and which population centres are going to be affected?"

It is quite possible that Russia's General Staff have yet to go firm on which direction to designate as their main effort. But it is possible to broadly break down their various options into three broad locations. "Kharkiv," says Dr Watling, "is certainly vulnerable." As Ukraine's second city, situated perilously close to the Russian border, Kharkiv is a faces criminal corruption charges. The president has also struck a hardline against protests and labour strikes, and has been accused by rights activists of wielding the legal system against critics. "The public's message is loud and clear, President Yoon, you've got to change," said Rhee Jong-hoon, a conservative-leaning political analyst. "You need to talk to the other side, and meet the opposition leader, and pass bills through coordination with the opposition if you need."

Lee Jun-han, professor of political science at Incheon National University, also urged Yoon to become more lenient, but both analysts said he may struggle to change. "The hope of the media and voters may be that the president should take the election results carefully and make changes to the way state administration is conducted in the future," Lee said. "The president's leadership style is not one that easily embraces those things."

A former prosecutor with no previous political experience, Yoon was nicknamed the "fighting cock"



tempting goal for Moscow. It is currently being pummelled daily with Russian missile strikes, with Ukraine unable to field sufficient air defences to ward off the lethal mix of drones, cruise and ballistic missiles aimed in its direction.

"I think the offensive this year will have breaking out of the Donbas as its first objective," adds Gen Barrons, "and their eye will be on Kharkiv which is 29km [18 miles] or so from the Russian border, a major prize." Could Ukraine still function as a viable entity if Kharkiv were to fall? Yes, say analysts, but it would be a catastrophic blow to both its morale and its economy. The area of eastern Ukraine known collectively as the Donbas has been at war since 2014, when Moscow-backed separatists declared themselves "people's republics".

In 2022 Russia illegally annexed the two Donbas oblasts, or provinces, of Donetsk and Luhansk. This is where most of the fighting on land has been taking place over the past 18 months. Ukraine has, controversially, expended enormous efforts, in both manpower and resources, in trying to hold on to first the town of Bakhmut, and then Avdiivka. It has lost both, as well as some of its best fighting troops, in the attempt.

Kyiv has countered that its resistance has inflicted disproportionately high casualties on the Russians. That is true, with the battlefield in these places being dubbed "the meat grinder". But Moscow has plenty more troops to throw into the fight - and Ukraine does not. The Commander of US Forces in Europe, General Christopher Cavoli, has warned that unless the US rushes significantly more weapons and ammunition to Ukraine then its forces will be outgunned on the battlefield by ten to one.

Mass matters. The Russian army's tactics, leadership and equipment may be inferior to Ukraine's, but it has such superiority in numbers, especially artillery, that if it does nothing else this year, its default option will be to keep pushing Ukraine's forces back in a westward

direction, taking village after village. This, too, is a tempting prize for Moscow.

The southern Ukrainian city of more than 700,000 (in peacetime) sits dangerously close to the Russian front lines. It is also something of a thorn in Russia's side given that it is the capital of an oblast of the same name that Russia has illegally annexed, and yet the city is still living freely in Ukrainian hands. But the formidable defences that Russia built south of Zaporizhzhia last year, in the correct expectation of a Ukrainian attack, would now complicate a Russian advance from there.

The so-called Surovikin Line, consisting of triple layers of defences, is laced with the largest, most densely packed minefield in the world. Russia could partially dismantle this but its preparations would probably be detected. Russia's strategic objective this year may not even be territorial. It could simply be to crush Ukraine's fighting spirit and convince its Western backers that this war is a lost cause. Dr Jack Watling believes the Russian objective is "to try to generate a sense of hopelessness".

"This [Russian] offensive will not decisively end the conflict, irrespective of how it goes for either side," he says. Gen Barrons is also sceptical that, despite the dire situation Ukraine now finds itself in, Russia will automatically drive home its advantage with a decisive advance. "I think the most likely outcome is that Russia will have made gains, but will not have managed to break through."

"It will not have forces that are big enough or good enough to punch all the way through to the river [Dnipro]... but the war will have turned in Russia's favour." One thing is certain: Russia's President Vladimir Putin has no intention of giving up on his assault on Ukraine. He is like a poker player gambling all his chips on a win. He is counting on the West failing to supply Ukraine with the sufficient means to defend itself. Despite all the Nato summits, all the conferences and all the stirring speeches, there is a chance he may be right.

Compromise may better serve South Korea's president

SEOUL (Reuters): After rising to power by embracing uncompromising and sometimes combative politics, South Korea's President Yoon Suk Yeol may have to rethink his signature style if he hopes to protect his legacy and party after a crushing election defeat.

Yoon, who was elected in 2022 for a single five-year term, is facing growing criticism, including from some members of his own party, for sticking to a hardline stance on a number of hot-button issues and scandals in the run-up to elections that saw the opposition bloc led by the Democratic Party (DP) retain its control in the National Assembly.

Critics accused Yoon of failing to build on his People Power Party (PPP)'s initial popularity, engineered by its chief Han Dong-hoon, by repeatedly rejecting his advice on several issues, including accusations of bribery against the First Lady. From the beginning of his term, the president has also refused to meet DP head Lee Jae-myung, who narrowly lost to Yoon in the closest presidential election ever and

for his tenacity as a lawyer and was courted by the conservative bloc after he showcased his uncompromising nature by filing bribery charges against a key aide to outgoing President Moon Jae-in - the man who hired him. Yoon said he would "humbly" accept the results of vote, work to improve the economy, and reform his administration, with several top aides, the prime minister and party leader Han offering to resign.

In the wake of the vote, his office said the president would communicate more with the opposition. "I wish things were handled in a more preemptive manner," one government official said. "Responses were sort of slow at times which made trouble worse, and that apparently swayed people against us." Another official admitted the results were worse than expected, and would complicate the final years of Yoon's administration. Both officials declined to be named due to the sensitivity of the matter.

Just weeks earlier, Yoon was improving in opinion polls largely due to his medical reform plan and

opposition infighting over nominations. But as surveys increasingly pointed to a sweeping victory for the opposition days before the polls, some PPP members, including a candidate running in a key battleground area in Seoul, started to demand Yoon withdraw from the party, though others dismissed these calls as premature.

"His way of handling contentious issues is unsophisticated and one-sided with no way out at all, and voters effectively vetoed that in the election," said Kim Hyung-joon, a professor at Pai Chai University. "The president should fix his government's decision making mechanism so that he can remain the last troubleshooter, leaving it to party leaders and ministers to resolve conflicts and arrange a settlement first."

Yoon Hee-woong, a public opinion analysis director at Opinion Live, said if Yoon wants to preserve a legacy, the election should be a wake up call. "Every president has ambition to make a good record within his or her term," he said. "And to win public support, they can't avoid calls for communication."

Bodies of four women found in migrant-type boat

MADRID (AP): The bodies of four women have been found in a rubber dinghy boat off the coast of southeast Spain, authorities said. The government office in the southeast city of Murcia said the boat was towed by marine rescue services to the port of Cartagena after being spotted by coast guards.

It said the women

appeared to be of North African origin and may have been migrants trying to reach Spain. Migrants regularly use such boats to reach Spain from north-west Africa. Autopsies are to be held to establish the cause of death, the office said. No other occupants were found in the boat and it was not immediately known if there had been

any beforehand. Tens of thousands of migrants from sub-Saharan countries fleeing poverty, conflict and instability in West Africa try to reach Spain each year by boat. Most go in large open vessels to the Canary Islands in the Atlantic, while others from Morocco, Algeria and Middle Eastern countries try to cross the

Mediterranean Sea and Atlantic Ocean to mainland Spain. Several thousand die making the hazardous journey. The Interior Ministry says 15,351 migrants arrived in Spain by boat between Jan. 1 and Mar. 31, up by more than 4,000 in the same period last year. The vast majority arrived on the Canary Island route.

Russia launches first Angara-A5 space rocket

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russia test-launched its Angara-A5 space rocket for the first time from the Vostochny Cosmodrome in the Far East, successfully putting a test load in low orbit as part of an effort to develop a new post-Soviet launch vehicle. The test launch of the Angara-A5, Russia's first post-Soviet space rocket, was aimed at underscoring Moscow's ambition to be a major space power and the growing importance of Vostochny, situated in the forests of the Amur region of Russia's Far East.

But two launches of the Angara rocket were aborted at the very last minute on both due to a malfunctioning of a pressurising system and then a problem with the engine launch-control system. To the relief of Russian space officials, they were third time lucky, just hours before Russia celebrates Cosmonaut Day marking the day 63 years ago that the Soviet Union's Yuri

Gagarin became the first man in outer space.

"There is an engine start, the flight is normal," mission control said as the rocket blasted off to space, reaching more than 25,000 kilometres (15,500 miles) per hour in minutes. "The fuel tanks detached and then the central section detached and a test load was placed into orbit," Russia's space agency, Roscosmos, said.

"The rocket worked normally," Roscosmos said. "With this launch, flight design tests of the Amur space rocket complex with Angara heavy-class launch vehicles on Vostochny began." The 54.5-metre (178.81-foot) three-stage rocket, with a mass of about 773 tonnes, can carry about 24.5 tonnes into space, according to Russia's Kommersant newspaper. The defence ministry is also involved in the project, which Moscow says uses only Russian components and less environmen-

tally damaging fuel and will replace the Proton M as Russia's heavy-lift rocket, which has been in operation since the mid-1960s.

Russia began the Angara project a few years after the 1991 break-up of the Soviet Union as a Russian-made launch vehicle that would ensure access to space even without the Baikonur Cosmodrome, which Russia rents from Kazakhstan. "The creation of the Angara space rocket complex (KRC) is a task of special national importance," Roscosmos said.

"The commissioning of the Angara spacecraft will allow Russia to launch spacecraft of all types from its territory and provide our country with independent guaranteed access to space." The first Angara-A5 test flight took place in 2014, and another followed in 2020, both from Plesetsk in northern Russia. A partial test followed in 2021 that was a failure.

The Frontier Post

Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town, Peshawar.

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

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

Sino-Indian border tensions can be tamed

IN a welcome move that may give a timely boost to the development of peaceful and stable China-India relations, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has expressed the wish for the two neighboring countries to "urgently" resolve their long-standing border disputes, describing their relationship as "important and significant" to the region and the rest of the world.

"It is my belief that we need to urgently address the prolonged situation on our borders so that the abnormality in our bilateral interactions can be put behind us," Modi said in an interview with Newsweek published on Wednesday. He cited continued "positive and constructive bilateral engagement at the diplomatic and military levels" as the way to solve the disputes. The two neighbors have been embroiled in border disputes over the past more than six decades as much of the around 3,500 kilometers of the borders they share are yet to be demarcated.

Tensions and frictions persist even today, flaring up in the western section of the boundary in May 2020 when Chinese and Indian troops had a face-to-face standoff in the Galwan Valley which lasted for more than two years. The two sides have since held more than 20 rounds of commander-level talks, among other efforts, to try to de-escalate tensions and maintain "peace and tranquility" in the border areas. Modi's latest remarks could be interpreted as a gesture of goodwill, as the two sides try to find a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable settlement to their border disputes at an early date and turn the final page on them.

That the two countries have kept the talks on the ground and the consultation mechanism running provides grounds for optimism that they will be able to not only continue to uphold peace along the border in accordance with bilateral agreements and protocols, but also begin a new chapter of friendly bilateral relations. During the latest round of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs, which was held in Beijing late last month, the two sides agreed to "promote the transition of the border situation into a normalized phase of control and management".

As two ancient civilizations and two major emerging economies, China and India have far more common interests than they do differences. Their relations should by no means be defined by their border disputes. That bilateral trade grew to \$136.2 billion in 2023, a record level, along with other areas of improvement in bilateral ties, indicates that China and India are not threats to each other, but cooperation partners and development opportunities. It will serve both countries' interests best if China and India can properly manage and control the border issue, and work together to bring their relations onto the track of steady and sound development.

US holds deciding card

IN what the Palestinian Authority ambassador to the United Nations called a "historic moment", the UN Security Council decided on Monday to review the PA's renewed application for full membership, and to make a formal decision this month. This is indeed historic, considering that the PA's last, and first application, which Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas submitted in 2011, didn't even make it to a vote. It may also be historic because international sympathy for the proposed "two-state solution" is reaching a historical high as Israel faces an increasing global backlash against its military operations in Gaza. With humanitarian concerns dominating global news headlines, even the United States, Israel's closest ally, has urged the Benjamin Netanyahu government to exercise restraint and repeatedly emphasized the importance of "two states" as the ultimate resolution to the Israel-Palestine issue.

But the extent to which the latest bid for membership proves to be historic remains to be seen. The degree of diplomatic breakthrough that enabled the PA's 2011 bid to result in Palestine gaining its present status as a non-member observer state may be less forthcoming this time. This is not because Palestine doesn't deserve the full membership it desires, or Palestinians don't deserve the kind of international recognition full UN membership would bring. They are entitled to a rightful place among nations, and to be treated as equals.

But a state can't become a UN member without the approval of both the UN Security Council and General Assembly. As per the UN Charter, the application needs to first be approved by the UNSC, and then get the support of two-thirds of member countries in the UNGA. According to its rules of procedure, the UNSC should decide whether the applicant is committed to peace and able and willing to carry out the obligations set in the UN Charter, and, accordingly, whether to recommend the applicant for membership. With about 140 of the 193 member countries recognizing Palestine as a state, the application is widely believed to stand a good chance in the UNGA. So its fate lies with the Security Council.

The presiding UNSC president's remarks on Monday about the referral receiving no objection doesn't mean that would continue to be the case going forward. For its long-standing, openly, repeatedly stated sympathy and support for the Palestinian people and the "two-state solution", there is little doubt about China endorsing full membership for Palestine. However, as has been obvious, especially since the onset of the Gaza conflict, the UN, its Security Council in particular, has become unprecedentedly divided over ongoing conflicts from Ukraine to Gaza. Theoretically, Israel's vehement opposition to the UNSC considering awarding Palestine full UN membership won't suffice to derail a decision in the PA's favor, unless the US manifests it by using its power of veto.

UNSC approval requires at least nine votes in favor, with no vetoes. That the US didn't prevent the referral from being made in the first place and has repeatedly highlighted the two-state solution doesn't mean it will support the PA's bid for full membership. Washington's commitment to "two states" has always been conditional — it should follow a deal between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The US' UN Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield has said the US "position is a position that is known, it hasn't changed". The US supporting immediate UN membership for the PA will thus betray not only its commitment to Israel as a close ally, but also its own set condition of a deal negotiated by Israel and Palestine. The latter seeming a remote possibility given the doubts Israel has expressed about both the PA's capacity for delivering peace as well as its corresponding commitment. Given all this, the truly historic breakthrough that is widely hoped for could continue to prove elusive.

Important Notice

The Frontier Post will not be responsible for the comments in the articles and letters. The Frontier Post requests the writers of articles and letters to please make sure that they write their email addresses and mention the names of the cities, towns, districts or tehsil of their residences at the bottom of their articles and letters.



US must remain vigilant as terrorism threat evolves

Dalia Al-Aqidi

RUSSIA was struck by an unparalleled tragedy on March 22, as gunmen launched a brutal assault on Moscow's Crocus City Hall, resulting in the loss of more than 140 lives. The events of that fateful day - the deadliest attack on Russian soil in decades - plunged the nation into mourning and shock.

In a chilling display of violence, militants armed with guns and incendiary devices stormed the venue just moments before a concert was due to begin, indiscriminately firing bullets at unsuspecting concertgoers. The carnage that ensued highlighted the sheer brutality of the attack, bringing back the horror of international terrorism. Amid the chaos and devastation, the specter of terrorism loomed large, as Daesh's Khorasan Province claimed responsibility for the heinous act, further compounding the anguish of those affected.

The release of footage from the attack served as a stark reminder of the pervasive threat posed by extremist ideologies and underscored the urgent need for collective action to combat the forces of hatred and division. This attack offered a stark reminder of the danger of the Daesh terrorist organization and the transformation of the geographical areas of its operations.

The Moscow operation starkly highlighted the adaptability of Daesh and its ability to perpetrate acts of terror beyond its traditional geographic boundaries. Despite facing significant setbacks, including the loss of crucial territories, it continues to pose a formidable challenge to global security.

Just two weeks prior to the attack, American officials had both publicly and privately informed Russia about "extremists" with "imminent plans" for such an assault. This vital intelligence exchange fell under a guiding principle within the US intelligence community known as the duty to warn. This principle dictates that the American intelligence agencies should prioritize sharing critical information about imminent threats whenever feasible.

This commitment holds true regardless of whether the potential targets are considered allies, adver-

saries or something in between. The terrorist attack sounded an alarm in the US, as echoed by Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who issued a sobering reminder of the ongoing threat posed by Daesh. Despite significant efforts to combat this menace over the years, Blinken emphasized that the Moscow attack serves as a stark indication of the

ring amid a complex landscape of immigration policies and enforcement challenges, raises legitimate concerns about America's ability to defend itself against the looming threat of extremism.

Can the US effectively shield itself from the dangers posed by extremist elements, particularly when it has such porous borders? This question strikes at the

This commitment holds true regardless of whether the potential targets are considered allies, adversaries or something in between. The terrorist attack sounded an alarm in the US, as echoed by Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who issued a sobering reminder of the ongoing threat posed by Daesh. Despite significant efforts to combat this menace over the years, Blinken emphasized that the Moscow attack serves as a stark indication of the group's enduring potential for violence.

group's enduring potential for violence.

Speaking from the State Department, he expressed his condolences for the tragic loss of innocent lives and underscored the imperative for sustained efforts to prevent Daesh from regaining strength and carrying out further acts of terror. Blinken's remarks serve as a call to action, highlighting the ongoing necessity to confront and neutralize the threat posed by radical groups to ensure the safety and security of communities worldwide.

This event has ignited a crucial debate, prompting us to ponder a fundamental question: If a nation like Russia, which is known for its stringent border controls and meticulous monitoring of crossings, can still find itself vulnerable to terrorist attacks, what does this imply for the US?

Under the Biden administration, the nation has witnessed a significant influx of illegal immigrants crossing its borders without restriction, condition or vetting. This surge, occur-

heart of national security discourse and demands a nuanced examination of policy frameworks and their implications for safeguarding the country from potential threats.

In recent testimony, a military general and the director of national intelligence sounded a clarion call regarding the significant threat posed by Daesh and its affiliates, emphasizing their assessment of potential attacks within the country. However, according to the Department of the Treasury's 2024 National Terrorist Risk Assessment, the primary terrorist threat to the homeland currently emanates from individuals residing within the country. These individuals, influenced by ideologies associated with groups like Al-Qaeda and Daesh or domestic violent extremism, are motivated to carry out deadly attacks independently, without direct orders from any terrorist organization.

This assessment underscores the evolving nature

of terrorism, particularly the growing influence of online radicalization via social media platforms. These platforms serve as virtual breeding grounds for individuals susceptible to extremist ideologies, providing them with a means to connect, radicalize and coordinate attacks with limited detection. Consequently, the homeland security landscape has become increasingly complex, necessitating a multifaceted approach to counterterrorism efforts.

A similar report from the Department of Homeland Security highlighted that terrorism, whether originating from foreign or domestic sources, remains a significant threat to the safety and security of the US in 2024. However, the threat landscape is evolving, with new challenges emerging alongside traditional ones. Looking ahead, the Department of Homeland Security assesses that the risk of violence stemming from individuals radicalized within the country will persist at a high level. This threat is characterized by lone actors or small groups carrying out attacks with minimal advance warning, posing significant challenges for law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

The report highlighted that foreign terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda and Daesh are actively seeking to rebuild their capabilities abroad. These groups maintain extensive global networks of supporters, raising concerns about their potential to target the US.

As such, vigilance and proactive measures are essential to counter the multifaceted nature of modern terrorism. And as the US navigates this ever-evolving threat landscape, policymakers, law enforcement agencies and the broader community must address the root causes of extremism. This includes robust efforts to counter online radicalization, enhance intelligence-sharing mechanisms and strengthen community resilience against extremist influences. By adopting a comprehensive approach that addresses both the symptoms and underlying drivers of terrorism, US administrations can better safeguard the country and mitigate the risk of future attacks.

Britain is now irrationally terrified of freedom

Sherelle Jacobs

TO call it a farce does not even come close. The Brexit saga has tipped into the realms of national tragedy. For some reason, it is taboo for Leavers such as myself to admit that the project has been a calamity. When it comes to "The B Word", British politics has become gripped by a kind of "violence of silence" - with politicians and voters alike reluctant to confront the fallout from the country's mangled, halfway situation. But after a trip to the Devon fishing town of Brixham, I am more compelled than ever to be blunt.

On the one hand, Brixham represents our country at its best. It exudes an understated dynamism and a keen sense of national identity. In the morning, trawlermen watch their catch being auctioned at Brixham's world-leading, state-of-the-art fish market. In the evening they pour into the Sprat and Mackerel where the landlord has been known to pour pints in his slippers and Wi-Fi is banned. ("We Talk to Each Other" read the signs.) In the restaurants visitors feast on the hake, gurnard and cuttlefish prolific in Channel waters (as opposed to mass-imported cod that has, in some twist of insanity, become our national dish).

Sadly, Brixham also captures everything that is wrong with this country. Tory Brexiters promised that leaving the EU would allow Britain to "take back control" of its waters, and enable our fishermen to feast on a "sea of opportunity". Instead, the fishermen of Brixham told me that they are at the mercy on a daily basis "to whatever side of the bed French customs get up on" and are "drowning in red tape". They are in despair, as Defra - with a zeal reminiscent of Brussels bureaucrats - slaps questionable quotas on fish, from cuttlefish to pollack. As one skipper, Tom, who voted Leave, told me: "To be honest it ain't much better, because we've still got the same people in government who were there before, who have still got the EU ideology."

It is not just the fishing industry that is reeling from the botched Brexit. In recent weeks, Britain's trade talks with Canada have gone over the cliff, and the wine industry has warned that the new Brexit alcohol duty regime is "unworkable". Tory efforts to introduce border checks for goods of animal and plant origin are becoming a fiasco.

As Brexit trade chaos worsens, the deregulatory dreams of Tory Leavers fade. In January 2023, we were once again promised a bonfire of red tape. Within a few months, the pledge to scrap 4,000 EU laws had been completely watered down.

The question is why Brexit has spectacularly failed. Of course, the conventional Remainer wisdom is that it was doomed from the start. But this neglects the elephant in the room: as it turns out, Britain is terrified of freedom.

Much of this fear is harboured by the elites. Whitehall is terrified of allowing our fishing industry to thrive, lest trawlers decimate the ecosystem. Defra officials - working

within a bureaucracy that incentivises error avoidance over public service - are afraid to use their common sense on fishing quotas.

Britain is equally terrified of free trade, lest it plunges us into a libertarian dystopia awash with cancerous meat and alcoholism. Canadian negotiators have walked away because the UK Government, beholden to this country's protectionist farming lobby, refuses to allow Canadian farmers to sell hormone-treated beef here. Some 10kg of steroid-implanted cow has about as much extra oestrogen as a boiled egg. It is the chlorinated chicken hysteria all over again. The new Brexit alcohol duty regime that links rates to specific alcohol strength outdoes Brussels in its convoluted paternalism.

Most striking of all is that we are petrified of seizing on the biggest opportunity presented by Brexit and becoming an AI superpower. Parliament is growing sceptical that Britain can pursue a lighter regulatory approach to AI without degenerating into an America-style "Wild Wild West". Hollywood fears that AI will exterminate humanity are starting to intermingle toxically with our Christian-socialist suspicion of "tax dodging" big tech egos. When it comes to leading the world on AI healthcare, privacy concerns are turning policy-makers and voters queasy about leveraging our trump card - which is the NHS's possession of the world's single biggest and most detailed collection of health records

If the ruling class is out of its depth using tax breaks and moonshot projects to seduce multinationals into building the super processors needed to train large AI models on UK soil, then we had better fall in with the EU's vaguely forming plan to build one giant pooled data bank, for machine learning firms to feast on.

Similarly, if we are not going to fight for freedom on the global stage by forging a new model for liberty in the 21st century, then we should at least do our bit for Western security by reclaiming our disproportionate sway over EU foreign policy - not least given its shifting stance towards Russia.

What we categorically should not do is go on pretending that the country can afford to live with a halfway Brexit. The soft-Remainer view that Keir Starmer might be able to negotiate a superior, closer deal with the EU, while remaining outside the single market, is deluded. Having outwitted British negotiators into signing an agreement almost entirely on Brussels' terms, the EU has little incentive to reopen talks.

Equally, the view that the symbolic or theoretical regaining of British liberty makes it all worthwhile is based on a flawed idea of freedom. True liberty is not simply a principle of non interference, or "freedom from". It is also the "freedom to" - the liberty to act, to build, to progress. Without the latter dimension, Brexit "freedom" is meaningless. And in this high stakes era, as we teeter on the brink of both an AI revolution and a geopolitical dark age, it is dangerous.

The Telegraph

Danger knocking on the door of Lebanon's Christians once again

Hussain Abdul Hussain

THE Christians of Lebanon find themselves defenseless against the existential threat that is coming their way from Islamist Iran and its Hezbollah militia. This week, Pascal Sleiman, a father of three and an official with Lebanon's biggest Christian party, the Lebanese Forces, was kidnapped and later found dead. He became the second Lebanese Forces official to be murdered in the space of eight months, after Elias Hasrouni was assassinated last August.

Shortly after the news of Sleiman's kidnapping spread, Hezbollah launched a disinformation campaign, in which it tried to accuse him of being a victim of his dealings with the narcotics underworld. But when this fabrication did not stick, thanks to Sleiman's stellar reputation as an IT engineer and family man, the disinformation instead argued that he was the victim of a random carjacking.

A day after his disappearance near the coastal city of Byblos, Sleiman's body was found in a border town with Syria in the northeast. The idea that car thieves would drag the body of their victim to their presumed stronghold, some 100 km away, instead of disposing of it right where they intercepted him, which was a desolate area, raises more questions than it answers. Sleiman was reportedly killed by a blow to the back of his head using the bottom of a handgun.

In August, the body of Hasrouni was recovered near his car, which had veered off the road that led to his hometown in southern Lebanon. Again, Hezbollah launched a disinformation campaign and claimed that Hasrouni had been killed in a car crash. But forensic medical examiners found that Hasrouni was killed the same way as Sleiman: a blow to the back of his head with the bottom of a handgun. Eyewitnesses said that, before Hasrouni's murder,

locals had observed bearded men with baseball hats — a common Hezbollah style — sitting in a car and monitoring the road. Videos later showed that Hasrouni was intercepted and killed.

In February 2021, Lokman Slim, an outspoken Shiite opponent of Hezbollah, also disappeared while he was driving on a road in south Lebanon. He was later found killed in his car, shot five times by a gun with a silencer. Before murdering him, Slim's assassins carried out the same exercise as Sleiman's killers: they threw away his cellphone to prevent electronic tracing. The pattern of carjacking, disposing of the kidnapped person's cellphone and then either shooting or hitting the victim on the back of the head suggests that the assassins were likely deployed by the same party and told to use similar tactics.

With Sleiman, given the tensions his murder has

raised between Lebanon's Christian Maronites and Muslim Shiites, the killers seem to be trying to scapegoat a few low-grade car thieves. But a clash in the official narrative has revealed some confusion on the part of the Lebanese state, which is now firmly under Hezbollah's thumb. While Prime Minister Najib Mikati called the operation an "assassination," the Lebanese army endorsed the claim that the perpetrators were Syrian thieves. Like Mikati, the Lebanese Forces called Sleiman's murder "an assassination par excellence."

Feeling threatened, partisans of the Lebanese Forces have revived their battle cry from the days of the civil war that ended in 1990: "Danger is knocking on the doors." Meanwhile, in a speech, Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah warned the Lebanese Forces and another Christian party, the

Phalange, against stoking sectarian tensions that could lead to a new civil war. This was a not-so-veiled threat for Christians to take the hit lying down.

Assassinations are not the only threat the Christians of Lebanon have been facing. Since Nasrallah announced his "war of support" of Gaza on Oct. 8, his militia has hidden in the predominantly Christian southern town of Rmeish with the aim of firing rockets into Israel. In December, a launcher was found in the outskirts of the town and was removed by the army. Hezbollah tried to repeat the same trick again last month, but this was rejected by locals.

Residents of many other southern towns have also repulsed Hezbollah's attempts to launch rockets into Israel from their areas for fear of a devastating Israeli reprisal. Hezbollah's campaign of assassinations of its opponents started, if we are to believe the UN Special Tribunal for

Lebanon, in 2005, when it killed former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. Since then, the Iran-backed militia has killed at least two dozen opponents.

Hezbollah's harassment of Christians has aggravated an already open wound: Since 1975, the number of Christians in Lebanon has dwindled, with their proportion in the population declining from half to about a third. Losing their numbers is not the only Christian problem. The Lebanese Forces — a formerly formidable militia that disarmed after the civil war, like all other armed militias with the exception of Hezbollah — is now at the mercy of its rivals, especially the Iran-backed militia. In the absence of a just and capable state, Lebanon's Christians are facing extinction unless the world finds a way to help them persist in a country that Christianity believes witnessed the first of Jesus' miracles.

Ditching European trade for China and India was ever a poor bet

Will Hutton

THE world has changed since, post-Brexit, "Global Britain" set itself to "pivot" from sclerotic Europe towards booming Asia. Always a fanciful idea that disregarded Asian realities, it has now become farcical. Neither China nor India are proving the easy pickings on which "buccaneering" Britain could ride to economic success, denied through being tied to the "corpse" of an EU economy allegedly shackled by regulation and tax. Brexit ambitions are turning to ashes.

Instead, there is China, run by an ever more openly dictatorial and militarily ambitious communist government. Its economy is plagued by politically inspired production targets: everything from building flats to EV batteries outstripping any likely demand. There is growing youth unemployment and a once fevered, now overblown, property market retrenching to such an extent it threatens the viability of the vastly over-extended banking system.

Meanwhile, the rival Indian economy may be growing a little faster but eerily suffers from parallel structural problems that it does not want to make worse by promoting yet more foreign access to its markets. The prime minister, Narendra Modi, author of a virulent Hindu nationalism set to intensify after his expected election victory in June, sees little merit in a trade deal with the former colonial master unless it overtly favours India. Inevitably, the negotiations have stalled. Imagining that Asia could replace Europe as Britain's chief trading partner was always a poor bet. Leaving aside the small matter of geography, it now looks risible.

The entire Asian "pivot" was flawed from the beginning, with the courting of China by David Cameron and George Osborne in the 2010s; recall how, at the 2015

UK-China summit, Britain took upon itself to be the strategic "bridge" between China and western markets without either agreeing to this self-appointed status. Clearheadedness about China, and the modest extent of British power, was subordinated to the need to assuage the delusional Eurosceptic wing of the Tory party that, despite Britain then being in the EU, we could still play the China/Asia card. It would be win/win, typified by agreeing that China would be welcome to help build the planned new wave of nuclear power stations.

Eurosceptics may have had their doubts about putting such a key part of Britain's energy supply in Chinese hands, but any criticism at the time was low octane. Today, they are among the strongest critics of China's dark intentions, whether of an alleged Chinese spy working in parliament or using its new technological mastery to do Britain down. Indicative of the change of heart is that two years ago the government bought China out of the deal to build Sizewell C. For President Xi Jinping's ambitions are very different from the great founding father of the Chinese economic miracle in the early 1980s, Deng Xiaoping, who created markets, promoted more free enterprise and opened up to foreign investors. The party would remain pre-eminent but in a looser, more open China. Instead, Xi wants to translate party pre-eminence back to wholesale dominance. His means is there for all to see in "Xi Jinping" thought: "One country, one people, one ideology, one party, one leader"; and the aim is for China to become the globe's number one power and to reshape the global system to favour its, rather than western and particularly American, interests.

In this respect, he is a Chinese

version of Donald Trump or Modi. Thus the elimination of political freedoms in Hong Kong, the sabre-rattling over Taiwan, and ever tighter control of the party apparatus. It is accompanied economically by a crackdown on independent business and monumental state investment in a techno-utopian vision in which the state directs "new productive forces" - artificial intelligence, semi-conductors and electrical vehicles - to become a global "megatrend". But as the US treasury secretary, Janet Yellen - currently on a four-day visit to China - calculates, the Chinese economy is in such trouble that its immediate focus is less on driving for global dominance than avoiding an economic tailspin - the fall-out from which could damage everyone. She is courteously reminding her Chinese hosts that if China tries to flood American markets with cheap EV batteries or semi-conductors to solve its problems, the US will respond with tariffs - however reluctantly. China, aware that if foreign markets close, its overcapacity problems would become so insuperable they could threaten its political stability, has dialled down on threatening Taiwan, eased its tensions with Australia and is actively calming the US relationship - so important as a destination for more than \$500bn (£396bn) a year of Chinese exports.

The Chinese leadership is no less concerned about the plummeting birth rate, with the overall population falling for two consecutive years. The average number of births per woman has fallen to one, against the 2.1 needed to sustain the population, and among the lowest in the world. If the trends continue, ambitions for global domination will be torpedoed by a shrunk working population diverted to

supporting hundreds of millions of elderly people. Xi sees it as a national emergency: Chinese women need to be more patriotic and return to a traditional role as wives and mothers, he urges, encouraged by tax incentives and cheaper housing. It is less women's lack of patriotism and enfranchisement to blame, but something darker - a collective unwillingness to bring babies into a society and economy that, for all the Communist party's grandiose ambitions, does not work for ordinary men and women. It may even collapse. India's birth rate, although twice that of China's, has been declining faster - and worrying Modi just as it worries Xi.

But aggressive Hindu nationalism and China's state-led "Leninist capitalism" achieve their economic success only by conniving in unsustainable structural imbalances that are obvious in the life of ordinary people - making them hyper-cautious about having babies. In China, it is tracts of uncompleted blocks of flats and no viable social security system; in India, it is sky-high unemployment, particularly for young graduates, and endemic official corruption.

Neither society promises a world in which the mass of their populations flourish, for all the talk of becoming fully developed economic superpowers. We don't need to leap from the kowtowing of the Cameron/Osborne era, via wild Brexit delusions, to standoffish hostility - both countries, for all their problems, remain too economically important for that. Rather, we trade with our eyes open when it is mutually advantageous, avoid becoming dependent on either, intensify our security efforts and invest in our own backyard in Britain and Europe where our interests and values are so strongly aligned. Brexit, RIP.

The Guardian

Space-based solar power close to becoming a reality

Khaled Abou Zahr

THE concept of harnessing solar energy from space has transitioned from the realms of science fiction to almost tangible reality, with advancements in technology bringing us closer to tapping into the vast power of the sun. And the Gulf Cooperation Council countries have a unique opportunity to be at the core of this potential new method of power distribution. Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Oman have already set out ambitious plans for the future of space.

This is a perfect and historic opportunity to continue being leaders in the energy sector and, more importantly, the future of renewable energy, while also becoming leaders in the commercialization of space. Although telecommunications have so far always been the core of the space economy, this is a development that fits the long-term goals of the GCC.

We need to be a little technical to better understand. There are two primary methods proposed for this endeavor: space-based solar power and direct sun reflection. Space-based solar power involves the collection of solar energy by satellites in geostationary orbit that are equipped with photovoltaic panels. These satellites would harness the energy from sunlight and wirelessly transmit it to Earth via microwaves or laser beams. A constant exposure to sunlight, unimpeded by the Earth's atmosphere or the day-night cycle, would allow for an uninterrupted energy supply.

The key challenges for this method are the cost-effective launch and maintenance of the solar satellites and the development of safe and efficient energy transmission systems. Advancements in photovoltaic technologies and the development of self-assembling satellites are enhancements that improve the efficiency and feasibility of space-based solar power systems. In contrast, direct sun reflection is a concept that involves the use of a constellation of mirrors in space to reflect sunlight directly onto solar farms on Earth. This method aims to

increase the amount of solar energy captured by these farms without the need for additional infrastructure. The mirrors can be placed in low Earth orbit and be capable of reflecting sunlight to extend the productive hours of solar farms, potentially adding up to two extra hours of peak sunlight per day. This could lead to a significant increase in energy production — as much as 60 percent annually. The idea is that, by focusing additional sunlight onto solar panels on the Earth's surface, the overall efficiency and output of solar farms can be greatly enhanced.

This method was first experimented with by Russia through its Znamya project in the 1990s. Znamya aimed to demonstrate the feasibility of illuminating various points on Earth by reflecting sunlight from space using mirrors. Znamya 2, a 20-meter reflector launched in 1992, successfully illuminated a 5 km-wide area with a brightness matching that of a full moon, despite limited visibility due to clouds. Its successor, Znamya 2.5, attempted to create a 7 km-wide luminous spot in 1999, but it failed when the mirror tore on an antenna. The ambitious Znamya 3, envisioned to be 60 to 70 meters wide, was never realized after the preceding experiment's failure.

Despite its challenges, the Znamya project stands out as a pioneering effort in space-based solar reflection to Earth. However, the project was discontinued due to technical difficulties in controlling the reflected light and concerns about the environmental impact of such intense beams on Earth's ecosystems and human health.

With space-based solar power systems, a single satellite could generate about 2 gigawatts of power, which is comparable to a conventional nuclear power station and sufficient to power more than 1 million homes. The energy density at the center of the beam from such a system is expected to be about 250 watts per sq. meter. Those competing in the space-based solar power field include major aerospace and technology companies

such as Airbus, Northrop Grumman, OHB SE, Thales Alenia Space and Boeing. Additionally, initiatives like the UK's Space Energy Initiative aim to bring together government, research and industry to develop space-based solar power.

The leading consortium for direct sun reflection, as part of the European Space Agency's SOLARIS initiative, includes Arthur D. Little, Engie, Air Liquide, Thales and Dassault Aviation. It proposes that a constellation of 4,000 mirrors could significantly boost green electricity and green hydrogen production, while saving 8,500 megatons of carbon dioxide emissions over 30 years.

Although they have similar goals, the differences between the two methods are significant. As we often say, space is hard. This is why, on this specific topic and not knowing today which solution will offer the best outcome, GCC countries should join forces in the ambitious goal of harnessing energy from space. There is a poetic turnout, which is that the region is capable of leading with energy from below the ground and above the atmosphere. It is also a natural evolution, not only because of the vast amount of sunshine falling on the Arabian Desert, but also because GCC countries are the core of today's energy supply chain, whether physically or in terms of financial flows.

As we look to the future, the potential for space contributing to a clean and inexhaustible energy source is immense. It could play a crucial role in meeting the growing global energy demand, while also addressing climate change concerns.

It is the perfect challenge for GCC countries to unite and meet together, as the advancements in space technology and material science may soon allow us to overcome the current barriers, making space-based solar power a critical component of our energy mix. As we continue to innovate, the once-distant dream of harnessing solar energy from space is moving closer — and the GCC states should help make sure it becomes a reality.

Britain is usually excited when it boots out a tired old govt

Andy Beckett

WHY are so many voters so unsatisfied with Britain's main parties? In the opinion polls, their combined support is low by historic standards. Barely two-thirds of people say they will vote for them. One poll from this weekend predicted the Conservatives' worst ever election result: only 98 seats.

Meanwhile Labour's membership is falling fast. Also, unusually, the main parties' leaders are unpopular at the same time. While Rishi Sunak is one of the least-liked prime ministers ever, Keir Starmer looks likely to succeed him with his personal ratings firmly negative and trending downwards. The unacceptable replaced by the unpalatable.

This is not how Britain is meant to move towards a new political era. In the run-up to 1964, 1979 and 1997 - our three most mythologised modern changes of government - there was widespread excitement about the administration in waiting. There was also keen anticipation across the right before the 2010 election, until Cleggmania and a muddled Conservative campaign produced a hung parliament. In all four cases, a common desire to be rid of a tired old government was at least partially transformed into enthusiasm for the likely new one.

Yet since Starmer became our probable next prime minister more than two years ago, as Boris Johnson's administration began to disintegrate, such a transfer of political energy has stubbornly refused to happen - and nor has a Conservative revival. Some of the reasons for this stasis are fairly obvious: Sunak and Starmer's limitations as public figures; the lack of serious Tory policies and eye-catching Labour ones; the rise of Reform UK and the revival of the Greens and Liberal Democrats.

A less noticed factor is that the Commons has become ever more fragmented, with more than a dozen parties represented, as well

as more than a dozen independent MPs, most of whom have effectively been ejected from the main parties. The absence of Diane Abbott and Jeremy Corbyn, in particular, has made Labour blander and less appealing to left-wing voters. Meanwhile, the Tories' seemingly endless shift to the right is alienating their more centrist supporters. That some voters are switching off from this repetitive, ideologically limited two-party drama is hardly surprising. However, the disconnect between the main parties and many of their supporters goes much deeper than the unsatisfying politics of the past few years. Its origins are in the turbulent 1980s, when so much of today's society was created.

In that decade, the Conservatives became the party of deregulated capitalism, above all else, thanks to Margaret Thatcher's economic reforms. Meanwhile, Labour began to be less associated with economic equality than before, and more with multiculturalism and social liberalism, through Labour-run bodies such as the controversial but influential Greater London Council (GLC).

These respective party roles and identities have been challenged periodically since, but they have endured and profoundly changed the country. Britain today is ever more accepting of diversity, and ever more damaged by market ideology. In effect, since the 80s, Labour and the Tories have each won one big, society-shaping, battle. But have they won the victory their supporters most wanted? Research into the underlying attitudes of Tory and Labour voters suggests otherwise. In 2020, a report by the thinktank The UK in a Changing Europe found that Conservative voters were far more likely than Tory MPs to believe that "big business takes advantage of ordinary people", that "management will always try to get the better of employees", and that "working people do not get their fair share of the nation's

wealth".

This surprisingly leftwing outlook suggests that, in the eyes of many Tory voters, Thatcher's economic revolution was either misguided, went too far, or both.

The report found a similar Labour tension over social values. Labour voters were more likely than Labour MPs to back the death penalty, to believe that "young people don't have enough respect for traditional British values", and that "schools should teach children to obey authority". On this evidence, the conversion of all Labour supporters to social liberalism remains far from complete. What many Labour voters do still strongly desire, the report suggested, is a more pro-worker, more equal economy - while many Tory voters still want a more ordered, less permissive society. In other words, both groups yearn for the country that existed before Thatcherism and GLC-style liberalism began the great unravelling of paternalistic postwar Britain.

This flux and instability is not confined to the main parties. Last month, the political analyst James Kanagasooriam, the first person to identify the "red wall", examined the attitudes of supporters of the Lib Dems, Greens, SNP, Plaid Cymru and Reform UK, alongside those of voters for the main parties. "Each party's [policy] platform isn't that well calibrated to its voters," he concluded.

For what attracts people to a party? "Vibes seem to be the order of the day." After 14 years of disastrously overpromising Tory premiers, and Labour policies that have never been enacted, many Britons have stopped listening to what politicians say they will do in office. But being guided by a party's "vibes" instead feels unsuited to a time when concrete solutions are needed for so many crises. Until the electoral system changes, Britain is probably stuck with Labour and the Tories. They could connect much better with voters. But voters could also try connecting better with them.

Tory party has lost the plot - and could be bad news for Labour

John Harris

FOR many people reading this, the analogy will seem ludicrous, but hear me out: if the Conservative party was one of your friends, you'd be very worried about them. You can maybe imagine it: a privately educated pal from university, perhaps, who seems to have fallen on hard times and bad company. Ten or 15 years ago, they seemed urbane, clever and super-confident.

Even if some of it went only skin deep, they professed to be green, socially liberal and culturally switched on. Now, though, they tend to look dishevelled and saggy-eyed. After a few drinks - and sometimes before - they speak an increasingly hysterical language of conspiracy theory and political paranoia. They also seem to be furtively spending some of their time with thugs and bigots: the kind of people whom that great English social commentator Paul Weller once associated with the smell of "pubs, and Wormwood Scrubs, and too many rightwing meetings".

Last week, the latest election projection from YouGov predicted the Tories' number of Commons seats plunging from 348 to 155. The party now seems to pin its hopes of avoiding complete wipe-out on putting a few refugees on a plane bound for Rwanda - ideally, it seems, in the wake of a show-down with judges in Strasbourg. Meanwhile, Suella Braverman, whose time as home secretary included the insistence that this was her personal "dream", is about to headline a rightwing gathering in Belgium alongside the authoritarian Hungarian prime minister, Viktor Orbán. In a similar spirit, Liz Truss decided to try to escape the disgrace of her lost weekend in 10 Downing Street by calmly standing on a platform while a fellow speaker lauded Tommy Robinson as a "hero". Giving another signal about who her new allies might be, last week she attended Nigel Farage's 60th birthday party.

These things feed a sense of uncontrolled Tory foment, with

Rishi Sunak a hapless observer rather than any kind of effective participant. Over the weekend, the Sunday Telegraph reported that nearly half of Tory councillors think the government is "too left-wing". The activist website Conservative Post, linked to the high-rolling Tory donor Peter Cruddas, is now urging party members to stop any remaining "liberal centrists" from standing as Tory candidates, and has published a helpful list of what it calls "the first 10" who should go.

By way of illustrating the kind of politics such a move would assist, the former immigration minister Robert Jenrick - once an insipid Tory journeyman but now seemingly on a mission to become the full-blooded Enoch Powell de nos jours - has proposed an amendment to the government's criminal justice bill whereby annual crime figures would include "migrant crime league tables", based on the nationality and asylum status of every offender convicted in English and Welsh courts (according to a report in the Daily Telegraph, the government's main concern is about the plan's practicality, "as ministers have no ideological objections to it"). In among this daily carnival of nastiness and attention-seeking - regularly enlivened by noises off about National Trust scones, flags on football kits and the other small change of current Tory politics - sits David Cameron, who once sold himself as the representative of something very different. Sitting at the cabinet table, he must surely wonder what on earth happened while he was away.

Next month, the writer Geoffrey Wheatcroft will bring out a belated and very lucid sequel to his 2005 masterpiece The Strange Death of Tory England, titled Bloody Panico!, in honour of a phrase used by a long-forgotten postwar Conservative MP named Sir Morgan Morgan-Giles. It highlights what Wheatcroft calls "the undoubted degeneration of

the party in terms of personnel" and its embrace of a fanaticism that gained huge ground after Cameron opened the way with the 2016 referendum. English Toryism, he says, has always had "many grave vices", but also a few redeeming upsides: "pragmatism, scepticism, pessimism and sheer common sense". He goes on: "Those virtues have occasionally deserted the Tories, as in the years before the Great War when Ireland drove them mad. A hundred years later they were driven mad again, by Europe. It was not the fact of Brexit, not even the economic damage it had obviously caused, so much as the political consequences for the Tories, both the party and the Tory press." Once, he says, Conservatism avoided the kind of "blind reaction and extreme nationalism" that ran riot on the continent: now, ironically, its loudest voices are in increasing accord with the populists who are forecast to take a quarter of all seats at June's EU parliament elections.

In the context of the Tories' apparently inevitable defeat, the state of the UK's political right might prompt a very understandable burst of schadenfreude. But no one should laugh: the Conservatives' seemingly unstoppable lurching to the right is actually a grave cause for concern, for a few key reasons. One is to do with the basic functioning of our systems of power, and the fact that governments need to be held to account. Effective opposition, in other words, is a very important job, which an unhinged rabble will not be able to carry out.

But an even bigger cause for alarm centres on a possibility too easily written off. British politics now moves at a breakneck pace: less than five years ago, let us not forget, the party now apparently on its last legs won an 80-seat Commons majority. The state of politics in many of our neighbouring countries speaks for itself. The Tories' immediate future, therefore, may not be quite the comical

sideshow some people assume.

Even in the event of a Labour landslide, the likely survivors will include Braverman, Jenrick and Kemi Badenoch, with the latter styling herself as a more level-headed kind of Conservative, but supported Brexit in 2016 and has a long record of culture-war posturing. Regardless of who becomes the next party leader, post-Brexit Toryism is now built around a solid set of factors that will ensure that the most paranoid, belligerent views will remain noisy and untamed: a reactionary activist base, plenty of supportive media outlets and the element personified by Farage - present both inside and outside the party, and set on constantly yanking the Tories even further to the right. If a Labour government hits the skids, therefore, the consequences could be terrifying.

Which brings me to my final source of anxiety. Keir Starmer's technocratic approach to politics has obviously worked short-term electoral wonders, but it has also left a space that the re-energised post-Brexit right will sooner or later move to occupy: the one reserved for emotion, stories and narratives about what Britain is. Worse still, in the absence of those things, some Labour people are already filling the gap with some very dangerous messages. Last week, the Daily Express published a piece by Josh Simons, the director of the very influential Labour thinktank Labour Together, about immigration policy - peppered with the kind of tropes that any rightwing Tory would happily endorse. The government, he said, "have not made the average working family better off, just increased our population". Migrants "should contribute to the pot before they take from it", and "homes should be built for British citizens before those who live here temporarily". Here, perhaps, was a lesson so far unlearned: that no matter how dishevelled and discredited some people may seem, if you parrot their lines, you may yet allow them to recover and come roaring back.

‘Subject Three’ dance belongs to the world

Liu Taoyuan

A special popular dance has attracted attention widely. There are two stories about the origin of "Subject Three" or kemusan (also known as "Guangxi Subject Three"). One story traces the dance's roots to a wedding in Wuzhou, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, where guests spontaneously broke into a dance as part of the celebrations. The other story suggests Guangxi local people undergo three tests in their life: singing folk songs ("Subject One"), slurping rice noodles ("Subject Two"), and dancing ("Subject Three").

In the popular dance style, performers show off some swag dance moves, such as swinging their knees sideways as they execute a series of fast hand actions, including fast wrist-twisting moves. The dance is accompanied by music that sounds like a mix of Western disco beats and traditional Chinese folk songs.

"Subject Three" continues to

captivate audiences around the world. From self-amusement to international dance competitions, people of different nationalities, races, cultures and social backgrounds are shaking their legs to "Subject Three". This dark horse showcases China's cultural diversity and transcends language and cultural boundaries.

Why has "Subject Three" dance become so popular around the world? The magic of "Subject Three" lies in its simplicity and inclusivity. It has transcended cultural differences and language barriers to become a unique form of expression in the digital age, and allows people worldwide to find a common emotional ground.

Some scholars said the key to the success of "Subject Three" lies in its simplicity, which allows mass imitation and wider participation. Its inherent joy is the secret to its popularity, tapping into people's social, psychological needs. While

some others attribute its popularity to optimism and openness.

But "Subject Three" does not belong to Guangxi alone; it belongs to the world. Throughout history, popular culture has included both highbrow and grassroots elements. The works that are loved by the common people are always universally appealing. "Subject Three" showcases the diverse but inclusive elements of Chinese culture. As such, the central and Guangxi regional authorities should take advantage of this opportunity to introduce more Guangxi cultural products to the world and showcase the charm of Chinese culture.

The global popularity of "Subject Three" shows that cultural creations know no political boundaries. China's stories can be conveyed to the world even through simple, short videos of a dance. Rooted in Chinese grass-roots culture, "Subject Three"

embodies the warmth and reality of the Chinese people's well-being, providing a deeper understanding of the inner world and living conditions of the Chinese people for the international community.

From Psy's "Gangnam Style" in 2013 to "Subject Three" in 2023, over the past decade, some dance styles, songs and other performances have broken boundaries and won over audiences across the world, making it all the more important for cultural exchanges to break free from static cultural perceptions and include more popular art forms.

When it comes to telling China's stories, we often focus on the word "good" to showcase high-brow Chinese culture to the world. But in 2023, the breakout success of "Subject Three" became a classic example of how to tell a good Chinese story. Hopefully, in the future, more stories like "Subject Three" will be heard by the world and loved by people across the globe.



PBF satisfied with current economic situation

MULTAN (INP): Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) has expressed satisfaction over the current economic situation of the country.

In a media briefing after a meeting of the Executive Council of PBF, President PBF Khawaja Mehboobur Rahman, Chairman PBF South Punjab Malik Talat Sohail and Vice President Chaudhry Ahmad expressed that two years ago, there was a situation of uncertainty regarding the economy.

They said that anyone who had not studied the devastation of the Sri Lankan economy was also afraid of Sri Lanka's default as a sign of fear, said a press release issued here on Saturday. Such was the uncertainty of the currency that calls for a minimum dollar value of Rs 350 and as high as Rs 400 were common, they told.

"Now, at least, there was clear satisfaction that Pakistan is not in the dire

situation of bankruptcy. The stability of the Pakistani currency is evident, its continuous high flight has stopped. Importer's barrier to open LCs is over. Dollar is Rs 278 in interbank. The stock exchange index is at an all-time high.

The staff level negotiations with the IMF have already been successful and there is no obstacle for several months like in the recent past. Prime Minister Mian Shabbaz Sharif's visit

to Saudi Arabia Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman reiterated his goodwill towards Pakistan and five billion dollar investment in Pakistan, as well as encouraging prospects for investment from other friendly countries".

PBF will play its role on government reforms at all levels for economic recovery and in the coming days, it will present its prepared economic policy, they expressed.



MULTAN: Vendor displaying caps and umbrellas to attract customers at roadside setup.

OCM Charts show Pak's economic dominance

ISLAMABAD (INP): Optimus Capital Management (OCM) has recently released insightful infographics shedding light on the economic trajectories of Pakistan and India. According to OCM's analysis, Pakistan's economic growth between 1965 and 1990 outpaced that of its neighboring counterpart, India.

The infographics unveiled during the Eid holidays illustrate a stark contrast in the economic performance of the two nations. While Pakistan exhibited robust growth during the specified period, India's growth rate, which surged to 6 percent in 1991-

92, has since been on a steady decline, as highlighted by OCM.

Senior Economist Dr. Ashfaq Hasan, commenting on the findings, expressed concern over Pakistan's economic trajectory. He noted a worrying trend of decelerating GDP growth, which has averaged 3.4 percent per year over the past 15 years.

Hasan emphasized the widening income gaps, rising poverty, and unemployment, attributing these challenges to a lack of focused efforts on economic improvement by successive governments.

OCM CEO Asif

Qureshi underscored the importance of the comparison, stressing that while both countries face governance challenges, India's emphasis on quality education, a vibrant private sector, and advancements in science and technology have propelled its development forward. Qureshi lamented Pakistan's failure to implement necessary structural reforms, contrasting it with India's successful initiatives in the 1990s.

The analysis also points out disparities in global perceptions and media coverage, with negative incidents in Pakistan receiving

disproportionate attention compared to those in India. Qureshi highlighted the adverse impact of such biases on investor sentiment, with capital flowing into India while Pakistan struggles to attract investments.

The data-driven comparison provided by OCM serves as a critical reminder of the divergent paths undertaken by Pakistan and India since their independence in 1947. While both nations share historical and geopolitical ties, their economic trajectories have diverged due to distinct policy approaches and global dynamics.

Software giant Salesforce in advanced talks to buy Informatica

LONDON (Reuters): Customer relations software maker Salesforce (CRM.N), opens new tab is in advanced talks to acquire Informatica (INFA.N), opens new tab, a person familiar with the matter told Reuters on Friday, in the latest sign of increased deal-making in the technology sector.

A deal could be announced soon, said the source, who requested anonymity as the discussions are confidential.

The price being discussed is below Informatica's current share price of \$38.48, according to the Wall Street Journal, which first reported the talks between Salesforce and Informatica.

Salesforce and Informatica did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Private equity firm

Permira, which along with the Canadian Pension Plan Investment Board (CPPIB) holds a controlling stake of over 75% in Informatica, declined to comment. CPPIB could not be reached for comment.

Founded in 1993, Informatica offers subscription-based data management services over the cloud and also helps to automate tasks for more than 5,000 active customers.

Based in Redwood City, California, its customers include Unilever and Deloitte, according to its website. Informatica's shares have risen nearly 43% so far this year, valuing the company at about \$11.35 billion.

The company was taken private in 2015 for about \$5.3 billion by a consortium that included Permira

and CPPIB.

Six years later, Permira and CPPIB took Informatica public again and its shares were listed on the New York Stock Exchange.

If the deal goes through, it would be the biggest for Salesforce since it acquired workplace messaging app Slack Technologies in 2020 for nearly \$28 billion.

Salesforce's dealmaking strategy came under scrutiny in early 2023, when activist investors, including ValueAct Capital and Elliott Management, questioned the company's strategy and pushed the management for changes.

In response, Salesforce implemented cost-cutting and increased share buybacks. It also disbanded its M&A board committee.

Salesforce has been a prolific acquirer. In 2019,

it bought data analytics platform Tableau Software in an all-stock deal valued at \$15.7 billion.

As part of the current enthusiasm for artificial intelligence sweeping through the technology sector, several large deals have been signed.

In January, design software company Synopsys (SNPS.O), opens new tab agreed to buy smaller rival Ansys for about \$35 billion. Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE.N), opens new tab struck a deal in January to buy networking gear maker Juniper Networks (JNPR.N), opens new tab for \$14 billion.

Technology accounted for the largest share of merger and acquisitions during the first quarter, jumping more than 42% year-on-year to about \$154 billion, according to Dealogic.

Vision 2030 putting Saudia on map for global investors: Experts

JEDDAH (Arab News): Saudi Arabia's investment landscape is poised for a prosperous future, fueled by its equity and debt markets, a range of economic experts have told Arab News.

Senior figures from the Kingdom's branch of investment bank J.P. Morgan, financial media outlet Bloomberg, and Saudi tourism funding firm ASFAR all spoke of the positive impact of the Vision 2030 economic diversification strategy.

By focusing on the growth of various sectors, such as tourism, healthcare, and renewable energy, the Kingdom aims to reduce its economic reliance on fossil fuels, foster innovation, create jobs, and enhance citizens' quality of life.

This is already bearing fruit, according to Amine Fichtali, head of investment banking at J.P. Morgan Saudi Arabia.

He told Arab News that the Kingdom stood out as an exciting, compelling investment story for investors.

Fichtali added that Saudi Arabia is a top-down, long-term structural story underpinned by socio-economic transformation and the execution of several regulatory reforms that help to promote the Kingdom globally.

These sentiments were echoed by European Director of Bloomberg Constantin Cotzias.

He believes that Saudi

Arabia — with various reforms in its regulatory framework — is emerging as a favorite destination for international investors.

Cotzias told Arab News that international investors want three things.

"They want liquidity, a framework of governance and regulation that works, and a balance of good supervision and innovation to be properly balanced. And then they want that framework to encourage them with investment and the growth in that investment," he said, adding that Saudi Arabia is on the right path.

One of the initiatives to attract businesses to the Kingdom was to offer tax breaks and other incentives to companies that applied to move their regional headquarters to Riyadh before the end of 2023.

This helped encourage some 200 firms to make the shift, including Naspers, Bechtel and Persico from the US, and IHG Hotels and Resorts, PwC, and Deloitte from the UK.

Google, Microsoft and IBM as well as Oracle, Pfizer and Amazon, also have regional headquarters in Riyadh.

Tourism strategy

Tourism is one of the key sectors driving the economic shift in the Kingdom, and Saudi Arabia has launched several initiatives to grow the industry.

These include the open-

ing of historical sites, easing of visa restrictions, and the promotion of cultural heritage to attract international visitors.

All these measures are expected to have huge economic returns and boost the tourism sector resulting in the creation of direct and indirect jobs.

The Kingdom is targeting more than 30 million pilgrims and 150 million tourists every year as part of its ambitious Vision 2030, having already met its original goal of 100 million visitors.

Speaking during a ministerial panel session at the Private Sector Forum held in Riyadh in February, Tourism Minister Ahmed Al-Khatib said that the total number of hotel rooms in the Kingdom reached 280,000 in December.

"The quality of rooms and projects is excellent and will place the Kingdom among the best in the world. The target for 2030 is approximately 550,000 hotel rooms," the minister informed.

Moreover, the Ministry of Tourism recently unveiled the Tourism Investment Enablers Program, aimed at streamlining business practices and bolstering investment appeal for both local and international investors.

As part of the program, the Ministry of Tourism, in collaboration with the Ministry of Investment,

announced the Hospitality Sector Investment Enablers Initiative, aiming to increase and diversify tourism offerings and bolstering the capacity of hospitality facilities in targeted tourist destinations across the Kingdom.

This initiative aims to attract investments in the hospitality sector, with a value of approximately SR42 billion (\$11.46 billion), projecting estimated revenues of about SR16 billion to the Kingdom's gross domestic product by 2030, reported SPA.

Al-Khatib stated: "We witnessed a 390 percent increase in demand for tourism activity licenses last year, marking the beginning of the Kingdom's significant investment in the tourism sector over the next decade, providing opportunities and a conducive investment environment for both local and international investors."

Meanwhile, ASFAR CEO Fahad bin Mushayt told Arab News many regulations have recently changed, and more are yet to come, including the facilitation of visa issuance, be it for business, religious, or tourism purposes.

ASFAR is a company owned by the Public Investment Fund to drive investments in tourist destinations and projects across the Kingdom.

"The other target that the country has set as part of

ME tensions weigh on markets

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): Wall Street stocks tumbled on Friday despite solid bank earnings as oil and gold prices shot up amid worries about a potential widening of conflict in the Middle East.

After spending the entire session in the red, the Dow Jones Industrial Average finished down 1.2 percent, or 475 points, at 37,983.24.

"Heightened geopolitical uncertainty in front of a weekend contributed to today's sell-off," said Briefing.com.

Market watchers cited worries about an imminent attack on Israel by Iran to retaliate for a strike in Damascus -- a possibility also raised by President Joe Biden, who urged Iran against the move.

Oil prices surged more than two percent at session peaks before easing somewhat. Gold also benefitted from its status as a haven investment, breaking the \$2,400 per ounce level. Investor attention was set to focus on the start Friday of the corporate earnings season after economic data released earlier this week largely killed off the possibility that the US Federal Reserve could begin cutting interest rates in June.

Equity markets took the recalibration of expectations of interest rate cuts in their stride as the data showing the US economy in strong health raised hopes that companies will report strong earnings.

At the start of the year markets had priced in six interest cuts by the Fed in 2024, but now expect only two.

JPMorgan Chase, Wells Fargo and Citigroup all reported better-than-expected earnings results for the first quarter. But shares in JPMorgan Chase, which have risen strongly this year, sank 6.5 percent, while the other two banks retreated by less. While Paris and Frankfurt edged lower, London stocks fizzed higher on data showing the UK economy grew for a second straight month in February, further fueling recovery hopes after sliding into a shallow recession in the second half of last year. Dimming hopes for US rate cuts continued to support the dollar, which surged to another 34-year high above 153 yen, putting Japanese officials in the spotlight after they said they were ready to intervene in markets to support their currency.

**In brief****NZ team to arrive on Sunday**

ISLAMABAD, (APP): New Zealand team would land in Islamabad on Sunday for their five-match T20I series against Pakistan, to be played from April 14 to 28. As per schedule, Pakistan team would train at the Pindi cricket Stadium on Monday while New Zealand has opted to rest on the day. Pakistan and New Zealand would train at the Pindi Cricket Stadium on Tuesday and Wednesday. Both captains Babar Azam of Pakistan and Michael Bracewell of New Zealand would take part in pre-series photo-shoot followed by their pre-series media conferences on Wednesday. Both teams would play the first T20I on April 18. Pakistan and New Zealand are scheduled to train at the Pindi Cricket Stadium on April 19. The two sides would play back to back matches on April 20 and 21 and then will travel to Lahore on April 22.

Chelsea's £90 million loss

LONDON (AFP): Chelsea face a huge challenge to avoid breaching Premier League sustainability rules after posting an £89.8 million (\$112 million) loss for the 2022/23 season. The Blues' wage bill soared to over £400 million last season, while they splashed out £745 million on transfer fees. But that investment in the club's first full season under an American investment consortium fronted by LA Dodgers co-owner Todd Boehly failed to deliver success on the field. Chelsea finished 12th in the Premier League last season despite having the second highest wage bill, behind only English champions Manchester City. Mauricio Pochettino's men currently sit ninth in the table this season despite a further £454 million being spent on new players since June 30, 2023. Chelsea's losses were mitigated by the sale of a hotel for £76.3m to the club's parent company BlueCo. Figures for the current season are likely to be even worse as Chelsea are not involved in European football. A run to the Champions League quarter-finals last season was worth around £83 million. Football Association figures released on Friday also showed the west London club have spent a Premier League record £75 million on agents' fees alone this season. Chelsea are likely to have to raise significant sums from selling players before the end of June to avoid falling foul of the Premier League's profit and sustainability rules (PSR). Premier League clubs are allowed to lose a maximum of £105 million across a three-year assessment period. Chelsea posted a £121 million loss in the 2021/22 season. Everton have been deducted a total of eight points on two separate charges and Nottingham Forest docked four points for breaches of PSR this season.

Osaka aiming for Paris 2024

PARIS (Agencies): Naomi Osaka says she "would love to play" at this summer's Olympics Games in Paris after helping Japan reach the finals of the Billie Jean King Cup. Osaka won against Yulia Putintseva as Japan beat Kazakhstan 3-1 to book a spot in November's finals in Seville. However, the former world number one may have to go through an appeals process if she is to compete in Paris. She has not made the mandatory two appearances in the Billie Jean King Cup during the current Olympic cycle.

Ruud sees off Djokovic to set up Tsitsipas final

MONTE CARLO (Agencies): Casper Ruud will face Stefanos Tsitsipas in the final of Monte Carlo Masters after a 6-5 1-6 6-4 win against Novak Djokovic.

The Norwegian won a nail-biting deciding set against the world number one, who double-faulted on Ruud's match point to confirm the result.

World number 10 Ruud will take on Tsitsipas, who beat Jannik Sinner 6-4 3-6 6-4 earlier in the day in Monaco. It was just the second defeat of the year for Sinner. Ruud cruised to victory in the opening set, ensuring Djokovic dropped his first set of the

tournament.

The Serbian, 36, fought back well in the second set, dropping just one game to take the match to a decider. The third set swung back and forth but having got himself back into the game on serve at 4-5, Djokovic double-faulted on Ruud's match point to hand the Norwegian victory.

Tsitsipas, a two-time winner in Monte Carlo, booked his spot in Monaco after two hours 48 minutes of play. The match swung in the deciding set when Sinner, who was on the brink of a double break at 3-1, saw an incorrect call go against him.

The line judge failed to call Tsitsipas' shot as out and Sinner failed to stop in order to review the call, which would have put him 4-1 up.

The Italian failed to recover psychologically, and Tsitsipas won four games in a row from 2-4 down to seal his place in the final. "It was tennis at its highest level that I have been able to play," said Tsitsipas.

"He is one of the toughest opponents I have faced so far and to find ways when there weren't that many, I am proud of that. He gave me a very difficult game and [the] way I overcame it is true excellence."

Match officials announced for Pak vs NZ series

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan Cricket Board Saturday announced match officials for the Pakistan versus New Zealand five-match T20I series, which is set to be played from April 18 to 27 in Rawalpindi and Lahore.

Andy Pycroft, a member of the Emirates ICC Elite Panel of Match Referees, will lead the playing control team that includes five umpires, namely Ahsan Raza (elite panelist), Aleem Dar, Asif Yaqoob, Faisal Afridi and Rashid Riaz (all from the ICC's international panel), who will share umpiring responsibilities.

Pycroft, a former Zimbabwe Test batter, has to date refereed in 144 T20Is. When he will stand in the second T20I on 20

April, he will move ahead of Sri Lanka's Ranjan Madugalle in second place in the list of match referees to officiate in most T20Is. The list is headed by New Zealand's Jeff Crowe (175).

The Pindi Stadium will stage the opening three T20Is on April 18, 20 and 21 before action will move to Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium where the last two matches will be played on April 25 and 27.

Umpire and match referee appointments:

18 April – First T20I. Ahsan Raza and Aleem Dar (on-field umpires), Faisal Afridi (third umpire), Rashid Riaz (fourth umpire); Andy Pycroft (match referee)

20 April – Second T20I.

Asif Yaqoob and Aleem Dar (on-field umpires), Ahsan Raza (third umpire), Faisal Afridi (fourth umpire); Andy Pycroft (match referee)

21 April – Third T20I. Ahzan Raza and Asif Yaqoob (on-field umpires), Rashid Riaz (third umpire), Aleem Dar (fourth umpire); Andy Pycroft (match referee)

25 April – Fourth T20I. Faisal Afridi and Rashid Riaz (on-field umpires), Asif Yaqoob (third umpire), Ahsan Raza (fourth umpire); Andy Pycroft (match referee)

27 April – Rashid Riaz and Faisal Afridi (on-field umpires), Aleem Dar (third umpire), Asif Yaqoob (fourth umpire); Andy Pycroft (match referee).



MANCHESTER: Erling Haaland of Manchester City scores his side's third goal from the penalty spot during the Premier League match between Manchester City and Luton Town at Etihad Stadium.

Five-star Man City go top of Premier League

MANCHESTER (AFP): Manchester City moved to the top of the Premier League as lowly Luton were eased aside 5-1 at the Etihad, while Newcastle thrashed Tottenham 4-0 on Saturday.

Amid a gruelling schedule, Pep Guardiola could hardly have wished for a kinder fixture in between the two legs of his side's Champions League quarter-final against Real Madrid. Guardiola made six changes from a thrilling 3-3 draw in the Spanish capital on Tuesday and City seemed set for a stress-free afternoon from the moment they opened the scoring after just two minutes.

Erling Haaland's shot deflected in off the unfortunate Daiki Hashioka into his own net. Yet the floodgates refused to open as the English champions had to wait until after the hour mark before making the

points safe when Mateo Kovacic smashed in Julian Alvarez's cross at the edge of the box.

Haaland scored five then the sides met in the FA Cup in February.

The Norwegian had to settle for just one time this time when scored from the penalty spot for his 20th Premier League goal of the season. Ross Barkley netted a late consolation for Luton but they have just five games left to save their top-flight status.

Jeremy Doku fired into the far corner after jinking through the Luton defence before Josko Gvardiol scored his second goal in a week after opening his City account in Madrid.

Victory takes City two points clear of Arsenal and Liverpool, who both have a game in hand, and are in action on Sunday.

Liverpool host Crystal Palace at Anfield looking to

bounce back from their shock Europa League defeat to Atalanta.

Arsenal entertain Aston Villa, who moved back into the top four without kicking a ball on Saturday thanks to Tottenham's trouncing at St. James' Park.

Isak double

Alexander Isak scored twice, while Anthony Gordon and Fabian Schar were also on target as the Magpies moved up to sixth and kept their slim chances of Champions League football next season alive.

Newcastle are 10 points adrift of Tottenham and Villa with six games remaining but have the far easier run-in. "We've just got to keep doing our bit which is trying to win every game," said Newcastle boss Eddie Howe.

"We're hopefully returning to somewhere near our best and we've got to keep heading in that direction."

Manchester United can move back above Newcastle into sixth with victory away to Bournemouth later on Saturday. At the bottom of the table, Nottingham Forest edged one point clear of the bottom three after a thrilling 2-2 draw against Wolves.

Matheus Cunha struck twice for the visitors at the City Ground to deny Forest a vital three points after goals from Morgan Gibbs White and Danilo had put them 2-1 in front.

Brentford's first win in 10 games pulled the Bees seven points clear of the drop zone as Ollie Arblaster's own goal and Frank Onyeka earned a 2-0 victory over Sheffield United. Burnley's chances of survival are fading fast after a 1-1 draw at home to Brighton left them still second bottom, six points adrift of safety.

CM KP greets squash players for winning medals

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur Saturday congratulated the best performance of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa players in Australian Junior Squash Championship-2024.

In a message of felicitations, the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur congratulated the players, both boys and girls from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa who showed excellent performance in the Australian Junior Squash Championship-2024.

Mahnoor Ali, Mehwish Ali, Fawad Khan, Yahya Khan and

Ibrahim Zeb deserve congratulations for their outstanding performance in the Championship, said the chief minister KP, who himself use to play squash as U-11, U13 and U15 levels.

These players made the name of the country and the province bright at the international level, he said and hoped that these junior players would play a role in bringing Pakistan back its lost position in the field of squash.

He said sports sector is among the main priorities of the existing provincial government. The present provincial government will take

coordinated measures for the promotion of sports in the province and would take concrete measures to get rid of those damaging the sports. Talented youth will be fully mentored in the field of sports, the chief minister said.

He said that all possible facilities would be provided to the athletes for the promotion of sports and for this good talented players would be encouraged, both financially and morally. He said that a system would be introduced to facilitate the upcoming talented players so that they could achieve name and fame at international level.

Wembanyama stars as Spurs beat Nuggets

NEW YORK (Agencies): Victor Wembanyama scored 34 points as the San Antonio Spurs stunned the Denver Nuggets to open up the race for top seed in the Western Conference.

Denver knew two wins from their final two games would secure top spot and home advantage in the play-offs.

But their defeat plus wins for the Minnesota Timberwolves and the Oklahoma City Thunder leaves the trio level.

It is the first time in NBA history there has been a three-way tie for top spot with one game left.

Wembanyama, 20, added 12 rebounds, five assists and two blocks, while Devonte' Graham hit the deciding jumper with 0.9 seconds left on the clock to seal victory.

Despite the win, San Antonio remain level with the Portland Trail Blazers at the foot of the Western Conference.

At the top, Oklahoma City beat the Milwaukee Bucks 125-107 while Minnesota were 109-106 winners against Atlanta.

Oklahoma City lead the Conference because of their superior head-to-head record between the other two sides, with Minnesota second and Denver third.

The only way Denver can regain top spot is if both Oklahoma City and Minnesota lose in their final games on Sunday.

Nepal batsman Airee smashes six sixes in an over



MUSCAT (AFP): Nepal batsman Dipendra Singh Airee became just the third man to hit six sixes in one over in an international T20 match when he achieved the feat against Qatar in Al Amerat on Saturday.

He joins India's Yuvraj Singh, who made his runs off England's Stuart Broad in Durban in the 2007 World Cup, and West Indian slugger Kieron Pollard who hammered Sri Lanka's Akila Dananjaya in Antigua in 2021.

South Africa's Herschelle Gibbs and

USA's Jaskaran Malhotra have achieved the feat in one-day international cricket while no one has ever done it in Test cricket.

Airee was on 28 from 15 balls, and Nepal on 174 for 7, when medium pacer Kamran Khan began the final over of the innings in the ACC Men's Premier Cup match.

The next six deliveries were all deposited over the ropes as Airee finished on 64 not out from 21 balls.

Nepal, who will appear in their second T20 World Cup later this year in West

Indies and USA, closed on 210 for 7 which was enough to beat Qatar by 32 runs.

It was the second time that Airee, 24, has hit six successive sixes.

He achieved it against Mongolia in their Asian Games meeting in Hangzhou in September, but on that occasion the six sixes were spread across two overs.

Nepal begin their T20 World Cup against the Netherlands in Dallas on June 4. They will also play group games against South Africa, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.



In brief

Man arrested for sexual abuse

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police arrested a man for child molestation here on Saturday. The accused M. Salim raped a 9-years old boy. According to a police spokesman, the father of the victim filed a complaint against the accused in the police station, followed by the case registration and arrest of the accused Salim by the police. According to details, the victim's medical procedure and other legal requirements have been completed. SP Potohar Nasir Nawaz said that the accused would be brought to justice with solid evidence. There is a zero tolerance policy on abuse of children and women which will be ensured at all times, he added.

Farigh Bukhari remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 27th death anniversary of legendary poet, writer and critic of Urdu literature Farigh Bukhari was observed on Saturday. He was born in Peshawar on November 11, 1917. He wrote books, including poetry on various subjects such as literature, social issues and politics in Hindko, Pashto and predominantly in Urdu language. He died on this day in 1997 in Peshawar.

Lyricist Waris Ludhianvi remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): April 11 is the 96th birth anniversary of famous Punjabi movies lyricist Waris Ludhianvi. He was born on this day in 1928 and died September 5, 1992 in Lahore. Waris Ludhianvi's real name was Chaudhary Mohammad Ismael. He belonged to a Gujjar family from Ludhiana. Ludhianvi wrote his first song for film Shehri Babu (1953), which was a super hit song. "Gallan Sun Kay Mahi Day Naal Merian" was a naughty song and also the first ever super hit song sung by Zubaida Khanum. He got more fame from another all time super hit Punjabi song "Dilla Thehar Ja, Yaar Da Nazara Lain Day", which he wrote for the film Mukhra (1958). It was the most super hit song ever sung by Munir Hussain and also composed by Rasheed Attray.

Waris Ludhianvi wrote many super hit songs but a wedding song from film Kartar Singh (1959) became folk song with its immense popularity. It was "Desan Da Raja, Meray Babul Da Pyara". He also wrote songs in many other super hit movies like Mitti Dian Murtaan (1960), Thah (1972), Naukar Vohti da (1974), Sher Khan (1981) and Qaidi (1986).

WASA issues alert after continuous rain

ISLAMABAD (APP): Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) issued an alert after the rain which continued in the city intermittently here on Saturday. Managing Director (MD) WASA, Chaudhary Muhammad Danish directed sewerage, and disposal station officials to remain alert. The disposal station division was ordered to keep standby generators operational and to mobilize teams and machinery into the field. MD WASA directed to run all disposal stations at full capacity and ensure complete drainage of rainwater in the field. He ordered the officials to remain in the field till the complete drainage of rainwater and to follow SOPs for drainage of rainwater from the pond area. Most of the areas were cleared after heavy rain in the city during the Eid holidays as drainage operations by WASA continued uninterruptedly.



ISLAMABAD: A view of rainy weather in capital city. —INP Photo

Talal slams opposition rally in Pashin

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N) leader, Senator Talal Chaudhry on Saturday criticized the recent opposition rally held in Pashin as a futile endeavor or doomed to the outset.

In a sharp rebuke, he condemned the rally as a mere ploy to seize power, devoid of any genuine concern for the people's issues.

Highlighting the absence of crucial discussions on pressing matters such as terrorism in

Nushki, floods, the Palestinian issue, load shedding, and inflation, Talal accused the opposition of prioritizing political gains over addressing the public's concerns.

He lambasted the opposition's tactics, accusing them of deceiving the public with empty rhetoric and futile rallies.

Talal criticized the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government, alleging that the suffering inflicted upon the people during its tenure contin-

ues unabated.

He warned that the public has grown weary of the PTI's politics and will not be swayed by their tactics any longer.

Emphasizing the need for tangible solutions to address the populace's grievances rather than indulging in political theatrics, Talal condemned the derogatory sloganeering against a political leader during the opposition rally, deeming it regrettable and condemnable.

Passenger bus toppled leaving 25 injured

RAWALPINDI (APP): A passenger bus overturned in Taxila resulting in injuries to 25 passengers here on Saturday.

Spokesman Rescue 1122, Muhammad Usman informed that the accident took place due to road slippage near Margalla bypass.

Rescue teams were immediately rushed to the spot and the injured were shifted to the hospital after administering them first aid, he said adding five among 20 victims received serious injuries. According to details, members of the Tablighi Jamaat were travelling in the bus.

SSP Operations reviews security arrangements in Murree

RAWALPINDI (APP): Senior Superintendent of Police) SSP (Operations Flight Lt (Rtd) Hafiz Kamran Asghar visited Murree late at night on Friday. He reviewed the security arrangements and traffic plans being executed in Murree during the Eid holidays.

Talking to police officials on the occasion he said that thousands of tourists were flocking to Murree, aggravating the high security arrangements.

He directed to ensure the safety of the tourists and to provide the best environment to visiting tourists by taking high-security measures. District Police Officer (DPO) Murree briefed the SSP Operations on special measures the police took during the Eid days in particular.

SSP was informed that officers were checked periodically and were being briefed on duty to pay special attention to security issues. Every possible effort has been made to provide a safe environment to the citizens, said the DPO.

SSP Operations while appreciating the services being rendered by the police directed to enhance coordinated monitoring of the situation further.

Naqvi pays homage to martyred in operation against terrorists

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Saturday paid homage to two soldiers of the Pakistan Army who were martyred in the operation against terrorists in Bunir district.

Martyr Havaladar Mudassar and Lance Naik Haseeb bravely thwarted

the nefarious intentions of the terrorists, said the minister in his message.

Naqvi expressed heartfelt sympathy and condolences to the families of the martyrs and said that Havildar Mudassar and Lance Naik Haseeb got the high status of martyrdom for the sake of peace of the

nation.

Martyrs are the pride of the nation, he said adding that martyrs have cultivated peace with their precious blood. He said that the nation is determined in the war against terrorism and such cowardly acts cannot defeat the unwavering resolve of the nation.

Homage paid to Pakistan Pilot Cecil Chaudhry on death anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): Homage were paid to valor, courage, and bravery of Pakistan Air Force Pilot Cecil Chaudhry on his 12th death anniversary observed on Saturday.

Born on August 27, 1941, Chaudhry distinguished himself during the 1965 war, exhibiting exceptional spirit and prowess by shooting down three Indian planes.

His remarkable endeavors earned him the Sitara-e-Jurat, a testament to his bravery on the battlefield.

Amidst the 1971 conflict, Chaudhry served at Sargodha Air Base. During a mission near the Indian

border, his aircraft caught fire, leading him to eject with a parachute.

Despite sustaining four broken ribs, Chaudhry's unwavering dedication to his nation saw him participate in 14 additional air missions, earning him the Sitara-e-Basalat.

Not only renowned for his courage in combat, but Chaudhry also demonstrated exceptional leadership qualities, eventually heading the esteemed Air Fleet. In 1978, he assumed the role of military attaché at the Pakistani Embassy in Britain.

In 1979, Chaudhry embarked on a deputation

to Iraq, where he imparted invaluable training to Iraqi Airmen. His contributions were acknowledged with Iraq's highest non-military award.

Following his retirement from the Pakistan Air Force in 1986, Chaudhry transitioned into the education sector, continuing to serve his country in a different capacity.

Tragically, Cecil Chaudhry succumbed to lung cancer on April 13, 2012, in Lahore. His legacy endures as a symbol of unwavering patriotism, selflessness, and dedication to the defense of his homeland.

Police organises Eid feast for martyrs families



ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Capital Police organised an Eid festival for paying tribute to the valiant martyrs who sacrificed their lives in the line of duty where the Families of all martyrs of Islamabad Capital Police were invited to the Police Lines Headquarters.

Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Headquarters Hasan Raza Khan, along with senior police officers, officials and families of martyrs offered Eid-ul-Fitr prayers at the Police Lines Headquarters Masjid, a public relations officer on Saturday said.

A smart contingent of police presented the guard of honour to the families of the martyrs. The families of the martyrs visited the martyrs' memorial and recited Fatiha.

All senior police officers, including DIG Headquarters Hasan Raza Khan celebrated Eid with the families of martyrs and police officers and officials.

On this occasion, DIG Hassan said that 62 officers of the Islamabad Capital Police sacrificed their lives in the line of duty. Islamabad Capital Police never forgot the sacrifices of its martyrs.

He further said that, living nations never forget the sacrifices of their martyrs. The brave soldiers who sacrificed their lives for the peace of the country are the proud asset of the Islamabad Capital Police.

DIG Hassan and other senior police officers also distributed the gifts among the martyrs' families. On the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr, events were also organized for officers and officials at different police stations, where senior police officers participated and celebrated Eid with their subordinates.

Hashmi stresses upon commitments to reduce carbon emission

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Pakistan to Nepal Abrar Hashmi said that developing nations like Pakistan and Nepal bore the brunt of carbon emissions largely produced elsewhere in the world and urged the developed countries to fulfil emission reduction commitments.

"Pakistan has been active in international negotiations, advocating for measures like the Loss and Damage Fund. Collaboration with Nepal is crucial in leveraging scientific knowledge to mitigate these impacts," the ambassador said during an interview with Radio Nepal on Saturday.

The ambassador said that melting of glaciers in the Himalayan and Karakoram ranges presented serious risks like floods, droughts, and water shortages for both the nations and beyond.

Pakistan, with its diverse zones and seasonal changes, faced these challenges and had experienced devastating floods due to rapid glacier melt in recent years, he added.

"Pakistan and Nepal, with negligible emissions



compared to our populations, need collective action from major emitters. We must highlight this injustice on global platforms for effective climate policy," the ambassador stressed.

To a question, Ambassador Hashmi said that improved connectivity was key to realizing the full potential of their relations, adding initiatives like reviving direct flights via national flag carriers and facilitating private airlines could enhance trade and tourism.

He further said that South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation's (SAARC) progress had been significant, yet more

needed to be done.

"Addressing developmental disparities and resolving internal issues are critical. Our shared history and civilizations provide a strong basis for revitalizing SAARC's role in regional cooperation," Radio Nepal quoted the ambassador as saying.

Ambassador Hashmi, to another query, replied that cricket offered a great avenue for cooperation.

Bilateral series, exchanges at all levels, and collaborative programmes between their cricket boards could benefit Nepal's cricketing journey, he opined.



ISLAMABAD: A woman passing through colourful trees near Sitara Market in the Federal Capital.

Iranian special forces seize Israel-linked ship

TEHRAN/DUBAI (AP): Commandos from Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard rappelled down from a helicopter onto an Israeli-affiliated container ship near the Strait of Hormuz and seized the vessel Saturday, the latest in a series of attacks between the two countries.

The Middle East had braced for potential Iranian retaliation over a suspected Israeli strike earlier this month on an Iranian consular building in Syria that killed 12 people, including a senior Guard general who once commanded its expeditionary Quds Force there. The Israeli war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip meanwhile is now 6 months old and is inflaming decades-old tensions across the whole region. With Iranian-backed forces like Hezbollah in Lebanon and Yemen's Houthi rebels also involved in the fighting, any new attack in the Mideast threatens to escalate that conflict into a wider regional war.

Iran's state-run IRNA said a special forces unit of the Guard's navy carried out the attack on the vessel, the Portuguese-flagged MSC Aries, a container ship associated with London-based Zodiac Maritime. Zodiac Maritime is part of Israeli billionaire Eyal Ofer's Zodiac Group. Zodiac declined to comment and referred questions to MSC. Geneva-based MSC later acknowledged the seizure and said 25 crew had been aboard the vessel. IRNA said the Guard would take the vessel into Iranian territorial waters.

Earlier, a Middle East defense official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence matters, shared a video of the attack with The Associated Press. In it, the Iranian commandos are seen rappelling down onto a stack of containers sitting on the deck of the vessel. A crew member on the ship can be heard saying: "Don't come out." He then tells his colleagues to go to the ship's bridge as more commandos come down on the deck. One commando can be seen kneeling above the others to provide them potential cover fire.

The video corresponded with known details of the MSC Aries. The helicopter used also appeared to be a Soviet-era Mil Mi-17 helicopter, which both the Guard and the Iranian-backed Houthis of Yemen have used in the past to conduct commando raids on ships. The British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations described the vessel as being "seized by regional authorities" in the Gulf of Oman off the Emirati port city of Fujairah, without elaborating.

The MSC Aries had been last located off Dubai heading toward the Strait of Hormuz on Friday. The ship had turned off its tracking data, which has been common for Israeli-affiliated ships moving through the region. Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz called on nations to list the Guard as a terrorist organization. Iran "is a criminal regime that supports Hamas' crimes and is now conducting a pirate operation in violation of international law," Katz said.

Iran since 2019 has engaged in a series

of ship seizures and attacks on vessels have been attributed to it amid ongoing tensions with the West over its rapidly advancing nuclear program. Since November, Iran had dialed back its ship attacks as the Houthis targeted ships in the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea. Houthi attacks have slowed in recent weeks as the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan ended and the rebels have faced months of US-led airstrikes targeting them.

In previous seizures, Iran has offered initial explanations about their operations to make it seem like the attacks had nothing to do with the wider geopolitical tensions — though later acknowledging as much. In Saturday's attack, however, Iran telling offered no explanation for the seizure other than to say the MSC Aries had links to Israel. For days, Iranian officials up to and including Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei have been threatening to "slap" Israel for the Syria strike. Western governments have issued warnings to their citizens in the region to be prepared for attacks.

However, Iran in the past largely has avoided directly attacking Israel, despite it carrying out the targeted killing of nuclear scientists and multiple sabotage campaigns against Iran's atomic sites. Iran has however targeted Israeli or Jewish-linked sites through proxy forces over the decades. Earlier this week, Guard Gen. Ali Reza Tangsiri, who oversees its naval forces, criticized the presence of Israelis in the region and in the United Arab Emirates. The UAE reached a diplomatic recognition deal with Israel in 2020, something that long has enraged Tehran.

"We know that bringing Zionists in this point is not merely for economic work," Tangsiri reportedly said. "Now, they are carrying out security and military jobs, indeed. This is a threat, and this should not happen." The US, Israel's main backer, has stood by the country despite growing concerns over Israel's war on Gaza killing more than 33,600 Palestinians and wounding over 76,200 more. Israel's war began after Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on Israel that killed 1,200 people and saw some 250 others taken hostage.

On Friday, President Joe Biden warned Iran not to attack Israel and said he felt an Iranian attack on Israel likely would happen "sooner than later." "We will help defend Israel, and Iran will not succeed," Biden added. The Gulf of Oman is near the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Arabian Gulf through which a fifth of all globally traded oil passes. Fujairah, on the United Arab Emirates' eastern coast, is a main port in the region for ships to take on new oil cargo, pick up supplies or trade out crew. Since 2019, the waters off Fujairah have seen a series of explosions and hijackings. The US Navy blamed Iran for limpet mine attacks on vessels that damaged tankers. The UAE meanwhile has sought to mend ties with Iran and issued a statement condemning the suspected Israeli attack in Syria.

PML-N-led govt will perform better: Khurshid

F.P. Report

SUKKUR: Dispelling the impression that Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) plans to play friendly allies, Syed Khurshid Ahmed Shah, a central party leader and Member National Assembly (MNA) on Saturday said Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)-led coalition government would perform better under pressure.

"The government's performance will improve only when it's given tough time," Shah said talking to media in Sukkur. To a question, he said all the issues of the Civil Hospital Sukkur would be resolved within three months and things would change. The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader stressed that the farming sector had the potential to help the country take on its economic challenges. "Pakistan's economic situation can only be improved if attention is paid to agriculture," Shah said.

When asked what was his take on the tensions between the Centre and the Punjab province over the appointment of senior bureaucrats, Shah said he did not see any discord there. "I don't see it as an uncle-niece conflict," said Shah brushing aside any friction between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz.

Responding to a query about what led to the incidents of violence during the elections, Shah said it was the negligence of the caretakers that deteriorated the law-and-order situation during the voting. In the same breath, he said that the security of the citizens would remain elusive until the Sindh police was equipped with modern weapons.

On the Israeli aggression and brutalities in Gaza, the PPP leader said it was the duty of every Muslim to support Palestinians. Shah also condemned America's "hypocritical" attitude in support of Israel. "Israel is continuously trying to crush Muslims," Shah said.

Afghan children face deportation from Iran

KABUL (INP): Thousands of Afghan children endure dire circumstances following their deportation from Iran, a consequence of the Taliban's 2021 takeover. Concerns about child deportation from neighboring countries have garnered global attention.

Tolo News reports that local authorities in Afghanistan's Nimruz province confirmed over 20,000 Afghan children forcibly deported from Iran last year alone. In 2024, Iranian authorities acknowledged deporting more than 900 children. Mohammad Haroon, Border Commander of Nimruz Directorate of Refugees, disclosed that approximately 30 to 40 children arrive in Nimruz daily, left alone after deportation from Iran. He added that their office registered the 20,000 children expelled last year.

One Afghan child shared his ordeal, revealing that economic hardships in Afghanistan compelled him to seek work in Iran. Despite working in a bakery and earning only a few loaves of bread daily, he was deported without his family. Many deported children echoed similar sentiments, expressing despair over their separation from family members still in Iran.

The situation highlights the economic challenges Afghan families face, leading children to resort to illegal means for survival. The Taliban's policies exacerbate the issue, pushing children into labor and other illicit activities.

Calls for action urge the Afghan Taliban to prioritize the country's economic well-being, especially for its children. The international community, including the United Nations and the European Union, is urged to address the plight of Afghan refugee children and the Taliban's involvement in fostering instability in the region.



ISLAMABAD: Sheikh Dr. Mohammad bin Abdul Karim Al-Issa, Secretary General of Muslim World League called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Nearly 55 million face hunger in West and Central Africa: UN

NEW YORK: Nearly 55 million people will struggle to feed themselves in the coming months in West and Central Africa as soaring prices have fuelled a food crisis, United Nations agencies have warned.

In a joint statement, the World Food Programme (WFP), the UN children's agency UNICEF, and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said that the number facing hunger during the June-August lean season had quadrupled over the last five years. It said economic challenges such as double-digit inflation and stagnating local production had become major drivers of the crisis, beyond recurrent conflicts in the region.

And it noted that Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Mali would be among the worst affected. The UN agencies said the prices of major staple grains had continued to rise across the region from 10 percent to more than 100 percent compared with

the five-year average. The situation was particularly worrying in northern Mali, where some 2,600 people are likely to experience catastrophic hunger, it added.

"The time to act is now. We need all partners to step up ... to prevent the situation from getting out of control," said Margot Vandervelden, WFP's acting regional director for West Africa. "We need to invest more in resilience-building and longer-term solutions for the future of West Africa," she added. Food shortages have also resulted in "alarmingly high" levels of malnutrition, with children badly affected.

The agencies said eight out of 10 children aged between six and 23 months do not consume the minimum amount of food required for optimal growth and development. It also said some 16.7 million children under the age of five are acutely malnourished and more than two out of three households are unable to afford

healthy diets. "For children in the region to reach their full potential, we need to ensure that each girl and boy receives good nutrition and care, lives in a healthy and safe environment, and is given the right learning opportunities," said UNICEF Regional Director Gilles Fagninou.

"To make a lasting difference in children's lives, we need to consider the situation of the child as a whole and strengthen education, health, water and sanitation, food, and social protection systems," he added. The region's heavy dependence on food imports has tightened the squeeze, particularly for countries battling high inflation such as Ghana, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone. Policies should be introduced to boost and diversify local food production "to respond to the unprecedented food and nutrition insecurity", said Robert Guei, the FAO's Sub-regional Coordinator for West Africa. — Aljazeera

AI providing new tools to threat actors for attacks

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Widespread adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning technologies in recent years has provided "threat actors with sophisticated new tools to perpetrate attacks", cybersecurity company Kaspersky Research said in a press release on Saturday.

The security firm explained that one such tool was deepfake which includes generated human-like speech or photo and video replicas of people. Kaspersky warned that companies and consumers must be aware that deepfakes will likely become more of a concern in the future. A deepfake — a portmanteau of deep learning and fake — synthesised "fake images, video and sound using artificial intelligence".

Kaspersky explains on its website. The security firm warned that it had found deepfake creation tools and services available on "darknet marketplaces" to be used for fraud, identity theft and stealing confidential data. "According to the estimates by Kaspersky experts, prices per one minute of a deepfake video can be purchased for as little as \$300," the press release reads.

According to the press release, a recent Kaspersky survey found that 51 per cent of employees surveyed in the Middle East, Türkiye and Africa region said they could tell a deepfake from a real image. However, in a test, only 25pc could distinguish a real image from an AI-generated one. "This puts organisations at risk given how employees are often the primary targets of phishing and other social engineering attacks," the firm warned.

"Despite the technology for creating high-quality deepfakes not being widely available yet, one of the most likely use cases that will come from this is to generate voices in real-time to impersonate someone," the press release quoted Hafeez Rehman, technical group manager at Kaspersky, as saying. Rehman added that deepfakes were not only a threat

to businesses, but to individual users as well. "They spread misinformation, are used for scams, or to impersonate someone without consent," he said, stressing that they were a growing cyber threat to be protected from.

The Global Risks Report 2024, released by the World Economic Forum in January, had warned that AI-fuelled misinformation was a common risk for India and Pakistan. Deepfakes have been used in Pakistan to further political aims, particularly in anticipation of general elections. Former prime minister Imran Khan — who is currently incarcerated at Adiala Jail — had used an AI-generated image and voice clone to address an online election rally in December, which drew more than 1.4 million views on YouTube and was attended live by tens of thousands. While Pakistan has drafted an AI law, digital rights activists have criticised the lack of guardrails against disinformation, and to protect vulnerable communities.

SHC's six judges take oath as regular judges

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Six additional judges of the Sindh High Court (SHC) on Saturday took oath as regular judges of the high court. Chief Justice SHC Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi administered oath to the regularized judges. All six of them were appointed as additional judges of the high court in 2023.

The number of permanent judges of the high court has reached to 32. There are still eight vacant seats of judges in the Sindh High Court. The six judges that take took today, included Justice Amjad Ali Bohio, Justice Sana Akram Minhas, Justice Jawad Akbar Sarwana, Justice Khadim Hussain Soomro, Justice Abdul Rehman and Justice Arbab Ali Hakro. The high court's judges, Bar association representatives and senior lawyers attended the oath taking ceremony. Family members of the oath-taking judges also attended the ceremony.

One killed in Turkey cable car crash

ANTALYA (BBC): One person has been killed and 10 others injured after a cable car cabin collided with a broken pole and burst open in southern Turkey. Passengers plummeted to the ground following the crash on Friday evening after the supporting pylon collapsed near Antalya.

The whole cable car system was immobilised while emergency workers tried to evacuate stranded passengers. An investigation into the accident has been opened, the justice ministry said. According to Turkey's disaster and emergency management agency a total of 128 passengers were rescued from the 16 cable cars on Friday night in Antalya's Konyaaltı district.

But, officials said 43 passengers remained stranded by Saturday morning. Seven helicopters and more than 500 rescuers, including specialist mountaineers, remained at the scene on Saturday, the Turkish interior ministry said in a social media post. Turkey's Health Minister Dr Fahrettin Koca also paid his respects on X.

"May God have mercy on our citizen who lost his life in the accident," he said. "I wish a speedy recovery to our injured, and I wish a speedy recovery to the rescued and waiting to be rescued victims."



LAHORE: Sikh Yatrees arriving at Wagah Border to participate in religious rituals.

Hezbollah says fired dozens of rockets at Israeli positions

BEIRUT (AFP): Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah group said it fired "dozens of Katyusha rockets" at Israeli artillery positions Friday, a bombardment it said was in response to Israeli strikes in the south. Hamas ally Hezbollah has exchanged near-daily cross-border fire with the Israeli army since the Palestinian militant group attacked southern Israel on October 7 triggering war in Gaza.

Hezbollah fighters targeted "enemy artillery positions... with dozens of Katyusha rockets" the group said in a statement, adding it was "in response to the enemy's attacks on... southern villages and civilian homes." The Israeli army said "approximately 40 launches were identified crossing from Lebanese territory, some of which were intercepted."

"No injuries were reported," it said, adding that it had earlier intercepted two Hezbollah attack drones that had crossed from Lebanon. Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported Israeli bombardment of several villages near the border. The violence has so far killed at

least 363 people in Lebanon, mostly Hezbollah fighters but also including at least 70 civilians, according to an AFP tally.

In Israel, the military says 10 soldiers and eight civilians have been killed. Tens of thousands of civilians have fled their homes on both sides of the border. Meanwhile, an adviser to Iran's supreme leader said Saturday that Israel is panicking over a possible retaliatory response from Iran after a strike in Syria which killed members of its Revolutionary Guards. "It has been a week that the Zionists are in complete panic and are on alert,"

Yahya Rahim Safavi, senior adviser to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was quoted as saying by the ISNA news agency. "They don't know what Iran wants to do, so they and their supporters are terrified," ISNA quoted him as saying. Tehran has blamed Israel and vowed to avenge the April 1 air strike on Damascus that levelled the Iranian embassy's consular annex, killing seven members of its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), including two generals.

Following the strike,

which Israel has not commented on, its army announced a leave suspension. It also said officials decided to increase manpower and draft reserve soldiers to operate air defenses. "This psychological, media and political war is more terrifying for them than the war itself, because they are waiting for an attack every night and many of them have fled and gone to shelters," Safavi added. Britain-based war monitor the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the April 1 strike killed 16 people. Among the dead were generals Mohammad Reza Zahedi and Mohammad Hadi Hajji Rahimi who were senior commanders in the Quds Force, the IRGC's foreign operations arm.

Zahedi, 63, was the most senior Iranian soldier killed since a United States missile strike at Baghdad airport in 2020 killed Quds Force chief General Qasem Soleimani. The strike in Damascus took place against the backdrop of the Gaza war which began with Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel which killed 1,170 people, mostly civilians.