

Police officer martyred
LAHORE (INP): A police sub-inspector has been martyred in the firing of an unknown motorcyclist wearing a helmet near Misri Shah area in Lahore on Sunday. According to police the police officer Rana Arshad was killed near Ek Moriya Pul. The fire hit the neck, stomach and heart of the martyred police sub-inspector. Police officer Rana Arshad was shifted to Yakki Gate Hospital for medical assistance but he succumbed to injuries.



RIYADH: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif speaks at a session "Redefining Global Health Agenda" of World Economic Forum's Special Meeting on Global Collaboration, Growth and Energy for Development.

PM designates Ishaq Dar as Deputy PM

ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar was given the additional charge of deputy prime minister on Sunday, according to a notification issued by the Cabinet Division.

The appointment comes at a time when PM Shehbaz and Dar, along with other ministers, are in Saudi Arabia to attend the World Economic Forum's (WEF) special meeting on Global Collaboration, Growth and Energy. According to the notification, the appointment was made by Prime Minister Shehbaz

Sharif "with immediate effect and until further orders".

Before Dar taking the role, the last deputy prime minister of the country was Chaudhry Pervez Elahi, then of PML-Q, who was appointed to the position in June 2012.

Dar served as federal minister for commerce and investment in the 1997-99 government of Nawaz Sharif and has twice served as federal minister for finance, economic affairs, revenue and statistics (1998-99 and 2008).

Prior to his first assign-

'Undocumented economy has been biggest challenge'

RIYADH (INP): Pakistan's Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has said that the undocumented economy has been the biggest challenge for the country. Speaking at the World Economic Forum special meeting at Riyadh on Sunday, finance minister said that around 10 trillion tax circulating in the market. "We are considering over moving to digital currency," Aurangzeb further said.

"We have 9.4 trillion annual revenues and half of our economy has been undocumented," Finance Minister said. He said that the government providing cash assistance to entitled women as income support. Beneficiary women want to get the cash by digital vault, he added.

IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva speaking at the World Economic Forum special meeting said some countries including Pakistan facing economic hardships.

The IMF chief said some countries are doing well, but others are "falling behind," without providing further clarification.

IMF chief said that Covid-19 pandemic hit hard to the economies of low-income countries. "The global economic suffered 3.3 trillion dollars loss during the pandemic Kristalina Georgieva said.

Five persons killed, eight injured due to rains in KP CM KP expresses grief over loss of precious life

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) issued a report on the loss of lives and property due to rains in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) during the last two days, in which five people died and eight were injured.

According to the report, three men and two women died, while five children, two men and one woman, were injured.

A total of 14 houses were damaged, of which one was completely damaged and 13 were partially damaged. Due to heavy rains, life and financial accidents took place in different districts of Bajaur, Batagram, Mansehra, Buner, Dir Upper, and Lower. All highways and link roads in the province have been opened for all types of traffic.

Relief activities are ongoing in the rain-affected districts by PDMA and all related agencies.

Rains are likely to continue intermittently until April 30. PDMA had issued a letter to all the district administrations on April 24 to stay alert and take pre-emptive measures.

PDMA's Emergency Operation Center is fully functional, so people should report any untoward incident to 1700.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur has expressed his heartfelt grief and sorrow over the death of five people in a rain related incident here on Sunday. In a message, the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa expressed his heartfelt sympathy and condolences to the bereaved families. The Chief Minister expressed his best

wishes for the speedy recovery of those injured in these accidents.

The Chief Minister has also announced financial assistance to the affected families and directed the concerned authorities to take necessary action in this regard. Timely relief should be ensured to the affected families, Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur said.

He said, best medical care should be provided to the injured.

A detailed report of the loss of life and property across the province should be submitted, Ali Amin Gandapur directed.

In this hour of sorrow, the provincial government is with the victims, Chief Minister said in his message. The victims will not be left alone and will be given all possible support, Ali Amin Gandapur assured the bereaved families.

Gaza war casts shadow over White House correspondents' dinner

WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): Security was tight Saturday as the annual White House Correspondents' Association dinner kicked off, with President Joe Biden to make what is a traditionally lighthearted address amid protests and boycott calls over the conflict in Gaza.

A long list of VIP guests, including journalists and celebrities from Chris Pine to Molly Ringwald, arrived in black-tie attire as more than 100 protesters outside the Washington Hilton hotel chanted "shame on you" and other slogans while confronting attendees. At the banquet, in keeping with longstanding tradition -- interrupted during the Donald Trump years -- Biden was seated on the dais ahead of the evening's comedy roast, this year to be delivered by Colin Jost of "Saturday Night Live."

Biden's every move has been shadowed for months by protesters angry over US support for the Israeli military offensive in Gaza. He has been met by shouts of "Genocide Joe" and noisy calls for an immediate ceasefire.

Protesters at one point unfurled an enormous, multi-story Palestinian flag from a window on the hotel's top floor, as others congregated on the road below holding placards, chanting and shouting from bullhorns. More than two dozen Palestinian journalists this week issued an open letter urging their American colleagues to boycott the dinner.

"You have a unique responsibility to speak truth to power and uphold journalistic integrity," said the letter. "It is unacceptable to stay silent out of fear or professional concern while journalists in Gaza continue to be detained, tortured and

killed for doing our jobs."

According to the New York-based Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ), at least 97 journalists -- including 92 Palestinians -- have been killed since war erupted on October 7 with Hamas's invasion of southern Israel. At least 16 others have been wounded.

The group Code Pink, part of an anti-war coalition, said it intended to "shut down" the dinner to protest "the complicity of the Biden administration in the targeting and killing of Palestinian journalists by the Israeli military."

It said its action would be "nonviolent" but offered no details.

The Washington Metropolitan Police Department told AFP it was "prepared to facilitate any safe and peaceful demonstration" but that guests would also be able to access the event.

PEMRA urges IHC to exclude Justice Sattar from audio leak case

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) has formally appealed to Justice Babar Sattar of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) to step aside from overseeing the audio leak case.

PEMRA -- a key party in the audio leak case -- has filed a supplementary application before the IHC ahead of its forthcoming hearing scheduled for Monday, around the contention that Justice Sattar should recuse himself from the case due to a previous IHC bench having already addressed a similar matter.

The application underscores the importance of continuity, advocating that the bench previously involved in a related matter should continue to handle the ongoing petitions. Justice Sattar was presiding over petitions filed by Najam Saqib, the son of former Chief Justice Saqib Nisar, and Bushra Bibi, the spouse of former Prime Minister Imran Khan.

Saqib's petition challenges a parliamentary committee's inquiry into an alleged audio recording wherein he purportedly sought a bribe for a ticket of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). On the other hand, Bushra Bibi contests an inquiry initiated by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) regarding her purported conversation. During previous hearings, Justice Sattar had directed the intelligence agencies and the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) to trace the origin of the leaked audio.

The Frontier Post

PM calls upon bridging gap between Global South, North in health sector

RIYADH (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday while terming the global inequity in health sector as 'the first and foremost problem' called upon bridging the widening gap between the Global South and the Global North.

Expressing his views in a session of the World Economic Forum (WEF) regarding global health, the prime minister said that the Covid-19 pandemic had exposed the existing gaps largely between the Global North and Global South in terms of provision of health facilities and distribution of vaccines. He said that the climate change issue had also completely changed the landscape.

Pakistan was not responsible for any emissions in the world, he said, adding but in the year 2022, it witnessed the worst climate triggered floods which hugely devastated the infrastructure and buildings and as consequently, they had to spend billion of rupees to rehabilitate the affected people.

Prime Minister Shehbaz said that for the rehabilitation efforts, they sought costly loans. "Can a developing country like Pakistan afford it?" he questioned and observed that for provision of health facilities, a developing country like Pakistan required resources.

"The yawning gap between the Global South and Global North should be bridged," he emphasised. Sharing his personal experiences, the prime minister said that treatment for the fatal disease like cancer was too costly for the poor population of Pakistan.

He said that as a chief minister of Punjab, he had provided about 130 million inhabitants of the province with best medical treatment initiatives like screening and treatment facility for Hepatitis in the remotest and backward areas of the province where the poor people had been in dire need of basic facilities like education and health.

The prime minister further informed that as the former chief

PM meets IMF chief; reiterates govt's commitment to revive Pakistan's economy

RIYADH (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday met with Managing Director (MD) of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Kristalina Georgieva wherein he reiterated his government's commitment to put Pakistan's economy back on track. In the meeting held on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum Special Meeting here, the prime minister said that he had directed his financial team, led by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb to carry out structural reforms, ensure strict fiscal discipline and pursue prudent policies that would ensure macro-economic stability and sustained economic growth, according to a PM Office press release.

He thanked Georgieva for supporting Pakistan in securing the USD 3 billion Standby Arrangement (SBA) from IMF last year that was about to be completed. The IMF Executive Board is expected to meet on April 29 to decide on the final tranche of USD 1.1 billion under SBA. The IMF chief appreciated the prime minister's leadership for timely securing the SBA last year.

Both sides also discussed Pakistan entering into another IMF program to ensure that the gains made in the past year were consolidated and its economic growth trajectory remained positive. IMF MD shared her institution's perspective on the ongoing program with Pakistan, including the review process. This was the first meeting between the prime minister and IMF MD since his re-election. They last met in Paris in June 2023 on the margins of the Summit for New Global Financial Pact. Prime Minister Shehbaz also extended an invitation to the IMF MD to visit Pakistan at her convenience.

Two terrorists gunned down in DI Khan IBO

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: On 28 April 24, Security Forces conducted an intelligence based operation in Dera Ismail Khan District on reported presence of terrorists.

During conduct of the operation, intense fire exchange took place between own troops and terrorists, and resultantly two terrorists; Terrorist Faheem Nawaz @Gandapuri and Terrorist Mohsin Nawaz, were successfully neutralised and sent to hell.

Weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from killed terrorists, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities against the Security Forces as well as innocent civilians including target killings and extortion.

Sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other terrorist found in the area as the menace of terrorism are determined to wipe-out from the country.



Week-long anti-polio drive from today

RAWALPINDI (APP): As many as 906,011 children under five years of age will be vaccinated against polio during a week-long campaign that will commence in the three tehsils of the district on April 29.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the District Health Authority, Dr. Ejaz Ahmed, told APP that children would be vaccinated in the areas of Rawalpindi City, Cantonment, Tehsil Rawalpindi (Rural), Gujar Khan, and Taxila. Meanwhile, District Superintendent of Vaccination Dr. Muhammad Nadeem of the District Health Authority said that 2,834 mobile teams, 677 area incharges, and 192 Union Council's medical officers would participate in the drive to complete the immunization task. In addition, "269 fix centers have been set up to administer the drops," adding that anti-polio drops would also be administered at 125 transit points while teams have been deputed to toll plazas so that no child could miss immunization.

Abbas says only US can halt Israel's attack on Rafah, expected in days

RIYADH (Reuters): Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said on Sunday only the United States could stop Israel attacking the border city of Rafah in Gaza, adding that the assault, which he expects within days, could force much of the Palestinian population to flee the enclave. "We call on the United States of America to ask Israel to not carry on the Rafah attack. America is the only country able to prevent Israel from committing this crime," Abbas told a special meeting of the World Economic Forum in the Saudi capital Riyadh.

Israel, which has threatened for weeks to launch an all-out assault on the neighbourhood saying its goal is to destroy Hamas' remaining battalions there, stepped up airstrikes on Rafah last week.

Western countries, including Israel's closest ally the United States, have pleaded with it to hold back from attacking the southern city, which abuts the Egyptian border and is sheltering more than a million Palestinians who fled Israel's seven-month long assault on much of the rest of Gaza.

"What will happen in the coming few days is what Israel will do with attacking Rafah because all the Palestinians from Gaza are gathered there," Abbas said, adding that only a "small strike" on Rafah would force the Palestinian population to flee the Gaza strip. "The biggest catastrophe in the Palestinian people's history would then happen."

Abbas reiterated that he rejects the displacement of Palestinians into Jordan and Egypt and said he is concerned that once Israel completes its operations in Gaza, it will then attempt to force the Palestinian population out of the West Bank and into Jordan. Israel launched its offensive in Gaza after Hamas led an attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7 in which Israel said 1,200 people were killed and 253 taken hostage. More than 34,000 Palestinians have since been killed, according to the Gaza health ministry, and most of the population displaced.

Hamas official says delegation to respond to Gaza truce plan in Egypt Monday: A senior Hamas official told AFP on Sunday that the group would deliver its response to Israel's latest counterproposal for a Gaza ceasefire on Monday in Egypt.

"A Hamas delegation headed by Khalil al-Hayya will arrive in Egypt tomorrow... and deliver the movement's response" to the Israeli proposal during a meeting with Egyptian intelligence officials, said the official who declined to be named.

Mediator Egypt had sent its own delegation to Israel this week to jump-start stalled negotiations even as fighting in the Gaza Strip rages.

Egypt, Qatar and the United States have been unsuccessfully trying to broker a new Gaza truce deal ever since a one-week halt to the fighting in November saw 80 Israeli hostages exchanged for 240 Palestinians held in Israeli prisons. Diplomatic efforts have been stepped up in recent days to reach a truce and hostage-release deal in Gaza. US news website Axios, citing two Israeli officials, reported that Israel's latest proposal includes a willingness to discuss the "restoration of sustainable calm" in Gaza after hostages are released.

It is the first time in the nearly seven-month war that Israeli leaders have suggested they are open to discussing an end to the war, Axios said.



LAHORE: Chairman Senate, Syed Yusuf Raza Gillani addressing to Asma Jahangir conference.

Two factories sealed over pollution

LAHORE (APP): The Environment Protection Department (EPD) has sealed two factories on Multan Road for violating smog regulations here on Sunday.

The factories, identified as Maria B Ocean Dyeing and Friends Thermopore, were shut down after failing to control smoke emission, contributing to the city's smog problem.

EPD Lahore's Assistant Director Ali Ijaz, leading the Anti-Smog Squads, conducted inspections on Multan Road, targeting various factories for non-compliance with environmental standards.

The actions taken reflect the directives of the Judicial Water and Environment Commission and the Director-General of Environmental Protection Punjab, emphasizing the government's commitment to addressing the health hazards posed by air pollution.

Assistant Director Ali Ijaz stated that factory owners causing pollution will not be permitted to compromise public health and that legal actions will be enforced against such entities. The crackdown is part of a broader initiative to combat the annual smog crisis that plagues Lahore, often ranking it among the world's most polluted cities.

CM says committed to worker well-being

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has affirmed the government's commitment to health, welfare and safety of every worker in Punjab.

In her message on World Day for Safety and Health at Workplace, the CM said the purpose of celebrating Occupational Safety Day is to reaffirm our commitment to ensure a safe and healthy environment for workers at workplace.

The chief minister said that workers' safety comes

first. "We would make sure they get home safely every day. The Punjab government has already started an occupational safety campaign in collaboration with the private institutions, she mentioned.

Maryam Nawaz Sharif said that awareness of workplace safety culture is essential in factories, offices, construction sites and farms, adding that accidents can be prevented through the implementation of the Safety Act and training.

The chief minister explained that labor laws are being amended, companies that do not care about the health and safety of employees will be fined. She vowed, "Occupational safety is the responsibility of the government and its implementation will be ensured."

Maryam Nawaz Sharif impressed upon employers to ensure workers' safety and a healthy working environment, saying that employees' safety is also the responsibility of every organisation.

LESCO detects 75,276 power pilferers in 222 days

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) has detected a total of 75,276 connections from where the customers were pilfering electricity in all its circles of five districts (Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara) in 222 days of grand anti-power theft campaign.

LESCO spokesman told the media here Sunday that the company had also submitted FIR applications against electricity thieves, out of which 71,540 FIRs had been registered in

respective police stations, while 30,031 accused had been arrested. The LESCO has so far charged a total of 90,769,366 detection units worth Rs 3,376,105,222 to all the power pilferers.

Grand anti-power theft operations against electricity thieves are being conducted on the directives of the Federal Power Division and the LESCO Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Engineer Shahid Haider was supervising these operations. The LESCO chief vowed that the operations would con-

tinue without any discrimination until the complete end of electricity theft. The electricity pilferers as well as the LESCO officers and employees who facilitate them were also being brought to justice.

The spokesman added, the LESCO found 304 customers stealing electricity through various means and 144 cases had been registered against the accused, while five accused were arrested during the last 24 hours. On the 222nd consecutive day of the anti-power theft campaign.

FIA arrests human smuggler in Lahore

LAHORE (PPI): The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Anti-Human Trafficking Circle Lahore Sunday arrested an absconder human smuggler involved in visa fraud.

According to a report, the accused human smuggler Muhammad Ahmed was apprehended following a major operation in Lahore.

The FIA spokesperson said human smuggler Muhammad Ahmed stands accused of orchestrating visa fraud schemes wherein he duped individuals by falsely claiming employment opportunities abroad, especially in Italy.

The FIA spokesperson said that the suspect amassed millions of rupees through his fraudulent activities and collected 8 lac rupees from one complainant alone. After absconding upon receiving the funds, the accused was tracked down and arrested in Lahore during a raid.

31 naan, roti shop owners arrested

LAHORE (PPI): District administration Lahore has registered 42 cases and arrested 31 persons over violating and disobeying the government orders regarding prices of Naan and Roti. According to a report on Sunday, during checking of as many as 1321 points in Lahore, 1217 shops were selling naan and roti according to the rates, fixed by the government while about 104 shopkeepers were over charging.

The price control magistrates imposed fines of Rs137000 to those who violate the prices of naan and roti. Assistant Commissioner City Rai Babar imposed heavy fines for two violations and sealed the shops.

Assistant Commissioner Raiwind Zainab Tahir inspected several tandoor points in Johar Town area.

AC Raiwind Zainab Tahir directed the concerned price control magistrate to display the flexes prominently. Assistant Commissioner Cantt Nabil Memon while checking shops at Faisal Ghaman Road and Nishtar Colony imposed a fine of Rs5000 on Tandoor Malik for violation. Deputy Commissioner Lahore Rafia Haider said that the prices and weight of naan and roti are being checked on a daily basis and strict action is being taken against those who violate the prices.

She said that for the convenience of the citizens, flexes are also being installed at prominent places related to the prices of bread and bread.

DC Lahore Rafia Haider said that citizens should register on Chief Minister Punjab Helpline 080002345 to complain about the price of naan and roti.

‘Improvement in law & order situation top priority: Lanjar

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Home Minister Ziaul Hassan Lanjar has said that serious efforts are being made to improve the law and order situation in the province.

He said that the top leadership of the People's Party has directed to further improve law and order situation in Karachi and other cities of the province, a communique said. "As the home minister, I have been working for almost a month and a half, and there has been a

decrease in the street crimes in the last week. Action is also being taken against negligent police officers", he added.

He was talking to the media after a meeting of the Sindh Bar Council in Karachi on Sunday. In the meeting, Yasir Arafat was elected as the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Sindh Bar Council, while Kashif Hanif was elected as the Vice Chairman. Abdul Star Loharani was elected as the Chairman of the BF

Committee. Sher Muhammad Wassan as the Chairman of the Legal Education Committee, and Ehsan Sial as the Chairman of the Disciplinary Committee.

He said that Karachi is the heart and capital of Sindh and peace and security are our top priority from Kashmore to Karachi. In response to a question, the minister said that we will establish peace in Sindh at any cost and we will crush the dens of dactyls and kidnappers.

PUC, HOAP reinforce Saudi directive Private Hajj bookings through registered companies only

LAHORE (APP): Chairman Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) and Patron-in-Chief Hajj Organizers Association of Pakistan (HOAP) Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Sunday emphasized the pilgrims regarding private Hajj bookings through companies registered with the governments of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia reinforcing the directive from Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah.

Addressing a press conference along with other HOAP representatives, including Saeed Ahmed Malik, Chaudhry Ehsanullah, Malik Abdul Khaliq, Chaudhry Muhammad Adil, Khalid Mahmood Bhatti, Pir Shafat Ahmed Boudla, Shahid Manzoor, and Zeeshan Qamar, he informed that private Hajj bookings were still open, with Hajj operation set to commence on May 9, and training sessions starting from May 5.

Ashrafi urged the pilgrims to focus solely on their religious duties and refrain from engaging in political, sectarian, or communal activities, including raising slogans or displaying images in the Haramain Sharifain.

Chairman Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) and Patron-in-Chief Hajj Organizers Association of Pakistan (HOAP) Hafiz Mehmood Ashrafi further highlighted the issue of individuals engaging in political and sectarian activities during their pilgrimage, urging the Pakistani government to take action against them.

He emphasized that training sessions for private pilgrims, organized by HOAP, would be conducted regularly in Lahore, Karachi, and Islamabad, with the code of conduct set to be issued next week.

Ashrafi also warned against fraudulent prac-

tices by unregistered companies on social media and fake websites, advising the public to book only through officially registered quota holders or tour operators.

Additionally, he announced that, in accordance with the instructions of Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman and with the efforts of Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki, this year's Road to Makkah program would include pilgrims from Karachi, benefiting 24,000 private pilgrims and ensuring a smooth process without any complaints.

He praised Pakistan's Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony for implementing corruption-free measures, acknowledging the efforts of Minister Chaudhry Salik Hussain and governments of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

Minister links progress to education

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Law Azam Nazeer Tarar said on Sunday that Islam underlines the importance of education and cleanliness and no nation could excel without acquiring education.

Addressing a convocation of Allama Iqbal Open University held at Idara-i-Nazaria-i-Pakistan here, he said he was honoured to attend the ceremony and congratulated the students for completing their degrees. He said, "The credit goes to teachers, parents and Allama Iqbal Open University for producing such talented students."

Azam Nazeer Tarar said being Pakistani it was a matter of pride for all of us that Allama Iqbal Open

University had been established in 1974 as a first distance learning university in the region.

"Education is a personality building instrument and it also refines a person. An educated person or an educated mother contributes a lot to society besides helping rise standards," he added.

Azam said that country was full of potential and Pakistanis were proving their mettle in various fields all over the world. "It is a high time to make collective efforts to steer the country out of existing challenges," he maintained.

The federal minister said that good teachers, skillful staff and best policies were required for

making a prestigious university. "Education and health are among top priorities of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. When he served as Punjab Chief Minister in past, he had focused on school education, restructuring of universities and improvement of examination centres. It is the responsibility of the state to provide inexpensive education to children. It is a government responsibility to ensure a uniform system of education in the country so that the sense of disparity could be eliminated," he added.

Allama Iqbal Open University Vice Chancellor Dr Nasir Mahmood and others were also present.

PTI takes out train march from Karachi to Sukkur for Imran's release

KARACHI (PPI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Sindh organized a train march from Karachi to Sukkur for the release of PTI founder Chairman Imran Khan and the return of the stolen mandate. The march was led by PTI central leader Barrister Shoaib Shaheen and Sindh President Haleem Adil Sheikh.

The train march received a warm welcome upon reaching various railway stations in Sindh. Participating leaders included PTI Sindh General Secretary Advocate Ali Palh, PTI leaders Justice (Retd) Noor-ul-Haq Qureshi, former MNA Fahim Khan, former MPA Jamal Siddiqui, Barrister Ali Tahir, Dr. Masroor Siyal, Haji Nasir Arian, Women Wing Sindh

President Sarina Adnan, Arslan Khalid, Jansher Junjo, Rizwan Khanzada, Aman Qazi, Zain Kolachi, Wali Maghiri, Advocate Dania Megsi, and other leaders of PTI Sindh.

The train march, facilitated by Awami Express, started from Karachi and passed through Landhi Station, Jhungshahi Station, Kotri Station, Hyderabad Station, Serhari Station, Tando Adam Station, Shahdarpur Station, Dor Station, Bandhi Station, Nawabshah Station, Kot Laloo Station, Padidan Station, Mehrabpur Station, Bharia Station, Setharja Station, Rani Pur Station, Gambat Station, Khairpur Station, reached Rohri Station. At each station, PTI leaders, workers, and citizens warmly welcomed the train march and chanted

slogans for the release of Imran Khan and the return of the stolen mandate, displaying banners and Imran Khan's pictures in protest.

Addressing the crowd at various railway stations, PTI central leader Shoaib Shaheen said, "Today, I congratulate the PTI Sindh team. Today's train march from Karachi to Sukkur is for the release of Imran Khan. Our struggle for peace continues, whether it's through long marches or rallies, until Imran Khan's release." He added, "The way the people of Sindh have welcomed today's train march proves that the people of Sindh stand with Imran Khan."

Soon, the people of Sindh will free themselves from the clutches of dacoits in governance. Imran Khan will soon be out and will

ensure real freedom for the people. In the current unjust system prevailing in the country, Imran Khan is necessary for salvation."

PTI Sindh President Haleem Adil Sheikh stated, "Today, we are going from Karachi to Sukkur through the train march with slogans for Imran Khan's release. This train march is to awaken decision-makers who think that such actions will be accepted. Now, there will be only one voice everywhere, demanding Imran Khan's release. He said until Imran Khan is free, our struggle will continue. The time is not far when PTI will govern Sindh, and the people will be saved from these thieves. Today, the people of Sindh have voiced their decision: Imran Khan must be released."



KARACHI: A horse driven cart carrying passengers arrive at Frere Hall. —APP Photo

Delegation of Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation calls on Governor Punjab

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The delegation of Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation met Governor Punjab, Muhammad Balighur Rehman, today at Governor House Lahore. The delegation comprised Chairperson Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation, Cecilia Lazaro, founder and Executive Director of Akhuwat Foundation, Akhuwat Foundation, Abubakar Siddique and others.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that good work of welfare organizations which are serving the humanity should be acknowledged as it motivates other people too. Governor Punjab said that those who dedicate their lives for humanity are great.

Governor Punjab while appreciating the welfare services of Amjad Saqib, head of Akhuwat Foundation, said that conferment of Ramon Magsaysay Award on him is honour for the country.

He said that in Pakistan, Akhuwat, Edhi, Indus Foundation and other



organizations like them are playing an important role alongside the government in poverty alleviation and social development.

Governor Punjab said that people to people contact is very important in the relations between the two countries. He said that many foreign delegations meet him and tell him that got a different perception about Pakistan from media before visiting, but they found it otherwise.

The participants of the delegation thanked the Punjab Governor for inviting them to the Governor House. While expressing their views, they said that the people of Pakistan are very hospitable. On this occasion, the delegation

was also given a visit to the Governor's House.

Meanwhile, Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rahman expressed deep grief and sorrow over the demise of senior politician, Afzal Tarar. Governor Punjab also expressed his heartfelt condolences to the late Afzal Tarar's daughter, Saira Afzal Tarar and other bereaved family members. He said that the late Afzal Tarar was a man of principles. The deceased served the country and the nation with sincerity, he added. Governor Punjab said that his services for the country and the party will be remembered. He prayed that Allah Almighty raise the ranks of the deceased

and give patience to the bereaved.

Besides, Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rahman attended the walima ceremony of the sons of Vice Chancellor, Fatima Jinnah Medical University, Dr. Khalid Masood Gondal at a local hotel in Lahore. Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dr. Khalid Masood thanked the Punjab Governor for attending the walima ceremony of his sons.

Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, Federal Minister of Law, Nazir Tarar, National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq, provincial ministers, vice chancellors of universities and important personalities attended the Walima ceremony.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali meeting people and traders during his visit to Sard Chah area of Provincial Capital on Sunday.

Labour complex Regi Lalma Minister directs to expedite work

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa minister for labour department Fazal Shakoor Khan on Sunday directed the concerned authorities to expedite works on labour complex Regi Lalma Peshawar and complete it immediately. He also issued directives to take action for the vacation of flats occupied through illegal ways in labour colonies. The provincial minister issued these directives on the occasion of his visit to Workers Welfare Board (WWB) Hayatabad Peshawar. The minister was flanked by the secretary, chairman and other officers of WWB.

On the occasion, the KP labour minister was briefed about the marriage and death grant. It is said in the briefing that 200 million rupees were approved for marriage grant but Workers Welfare Fund(WWF) Islamabad has released only 93 million. Similarly, a total 150 million budget for death grant approved but only 42 million released. The marriage grant was disbursed among 338 and death grant to 70 beneficiaries. Further it is said that the total budget approved for post-matric scholarship is 1350 million but only 480 million released. The KP minister for labour department Mr Fazal Shakoor Khan also

briefed on the present status of Regi Lalma flats and told that external electrification work on the labour complex comprising 2,056 flats in Regi Lalma Peshawar has been completed. As soon as PESCO extends power supply to the complex, WWB will apply for the issuance of a demand notice to install individual energy meters for the energization of its flats for occupancy. However, during the briefing, the minister was also informed about the board hajji policy and brought into the notice of the labour minister that every year WWB 10 industrial workers through open balloting were sent for pilgrimage.

Four Hindko language books awarded F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Four Hindko language books published by the Gandhara Hindko Academy, Peshawar, have been awarded by the Pakistan Writers Guild Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The decision was announced on Sunday as the committee of experts constituted by the literary organization declared the best books of Urdu, Pashto and Hindko published in the year 2022. The four publications awarded included "Ghazlaan Nazmaan Terey Naam", a book of poetry by Ahmad Nadeem Awan; "Dukh Chhupawaan Kismaan", a poetic collection by Muhammad Nawaz Sabir; "Chunni Naal Bandhi Kahaniyaan", short stories by woman writer Gul Arbab and "Matti Naal Matti" a novel by Nazeer Bhatti. It is worth mentioning here that the Abaseen Arts Council awarded four Hindko language books published by the Hindko Academy in the year 2022. These books were authored by Faheem Siddiqui, Ahmad Nadeem Awan, Ali Awais Khayal and Waheeda Malik. As many as 12 publications published by Hindko Academy have won the annual Bhil International Literary Awards this year. The publications were penned by Muhammad Ziauddin, Sikandar Hayat Sikandar, Waseem Shahid, Raza Hamdani, Nazeer Bhatti, Ahmad Nadeem Awan, Faheem Siddiqui, Ali Awais Khayal, Faseeha Ziauddin, Gul Arbab and Waheeda Malik. It may be noted here that Gandhara Hindko Academy, Peshawar, was launched under a public-private partnership in 2015 to promote the Hindko language and culture. Later, the academy expanded the scope of work to include other Pakistani languages and the cultures associated with them. The academy is funded by the KP government and managed by the Gandhara Hindko Board, a literary and cultural organization, working for the promotion of Hindko and other languages since its launch in 1993.

Mayor Peshawar for solution of all problems

PESHAWAR (APP): Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali said that he is always trying to provide facilities to the people at their doorsteps, he is trying his best to solve the problems of the people at their doorsteps. The repair work on the drain has been started by issuing orders. Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali received a complaint that there is an urgent need to repair the Yaka Tooth

drain because people face severe difficulties in coming and going here. Taking immediate action, Haji Zubair Ali reached Yeka Toot and inspected the drain, on which the Mayor of Peshawar issued orders for the immediate construction of the drain, on which the repair work has been started. While paying tribute to him, the residents of Mangi and Maskinabad

also requested Mayor Peshawar that there is a serious problem of drainage in their areas, due to which the residents of the area are facing serious problems, on which Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali, taking immediate action, provided immediate pipes for drainage water in Darmangi and Maskinabad, on which the construction work was started.

Operation against encroachers continue

PESHAWAR (APP): The encroachments in the city could not be stopped and operations against encroachers continued in different areas all across the City. A grand operation

against encroachment is underway in Board Bazaar of the district administration in the provincial capital Peshawar in the light of the orders of the provincial government. The district administra-

tion Peshawar along with Peshawar Development Authority officials, officials of the traffic police and local police conducted a joint operation in Board Bazar with 21 people arrested.

Saif congratulates Insaf Lawyers Forum F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Advisor on Information, Barrister Saif, has congratulated the Insaf Lawyers Forum on winning the elections of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa High Court Bar. In his congratulatory message, he expressed hope that the newly elected office-bearers would fulfill their role in upholding the rights of lawyers, the independence of the judiciary, strengthening democracy, and promoting national development.

Collective efforts needed to eradicate Drug addiction

PESHAWAR (APP): Sajid Khan, a 48-year-old resident of Pabbi Nowshera was living a happy life with his family until he had become a victim of drugs addiction in 2004. Started hashish in deep frustration and anxiety after failing to get a dignified job in 2004, Sajid with sobbing eyes said, "the drugs addiction had taken away my honour and prestige in society and snatched bread from my children. I used three to four hashish cigarettes daily after paying Rs400 per cigarette after selling my dowry articles."

"Except mother, my family left me alone when they came to know that I was an addict. I was treated at hospitals several times after developing serious pain in chest and stomach but unable to leave the ugly habit after it polluted my blood," Sajid said while tears rolling down over his cheeks.

Dr. Riaz Khan, a senior

medical officer, Govt Hospital Pabbi said that drugs addiction was a social scourge. He said "we all have just a single life and a single chance to live. Drugs are weapons that destroy people, take away their prestige, beauty and pull them down."

He said such patients feel great stomach pain, diarrhoea, cholera, sleeplessness, weakness and starting water from eyes and ears besides depression, anxiety panic attacks, psychological problems and become non productive to the society.

"The patients whose bloods were polluted by life-threatening drugs including heroine or hashish were prone to restart drugs unless properly look after on consistent basis by their families," he said.

Dr Riaz said that even educated women and men associated with different professions aged 18-50 take drugs through injections while

many use tablets and once developed pains in kidney consult doctors. He said such patients were prone to loose kidneys besides become victims of HIV AIDs, TB and Haptitus C that could prove fatal if untreated. He said most of ice abusers were youth and students of colleges and universities and two weeks to one month are required for rehabilitation after admission. The treatment of drugs addicts was expensive and around Rs50,000 to Rs 200,000 per patient was being spent to recover, he said.

Dr Riaz said globally, there are great concerns about polio and HIV AIDs but no serious efforts took place to eradicate the menace of drugs addiction and its illicit trafficking affecting about 35 million people worldwide every year.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes

(UNODCO) report 2019 had revealed that an estimated 271 million people aged 15-64 used drugs in 2017, which is 30pc higher of people that took drugs substances in 2009. Some 35 million people had suffered from drugs disorders in 2017 at global level and only one out of seven drugs patients received medical treatment. Globally, around 11 million people injected drugs in 2017 of whom 1.4 million become victims of the killer HIV AIDs and 5.6 million of hepatitis C. The opioids drug users stands at 53.4 million, which is 56 percent higher than the previous year estimate and is responsible for two-third of 585,000 people who died due to drugs addiction in 2017. Dr Amjad Khan, Incharge Social Welfare Department's Drugs Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre (DTRC), Peshawar said that a

national survey conducted in 2013 had revealed that approximately 6.7 million people aged 15-64 had suffered from drugs addiction in Pakistan. He said about 78 percent male and 22 percent female were diagnosed of taking various types of drugs substances including opium, cocaine, heroines, ice, medicated and non medicated and injectable drugs. Likewise in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, he said the numbers of drugs addicts remained 1.6 million people including 78 percent male and 22pc female during 2013. He said majority of patients of drugs disorders including ice addicts came to the centre belonged to Khyber, Peshawar, Swabi and Charsadda districts due to its increased population and close location with the centre citing various reasons regarding started of drugs and narcotics.

He said the patients history revealed that socioeconomic imbalances, poverty, unemployment, lack of drugs education, family disputes, peers and education pressure and neglect were found major causes of drugs addiction. He said the number of patients aged 25-40 suffering from ice drugs belonged to middle and elite class are relatively higher than opium and heroine addicts being treated at DTRC. He said 11 detox units and drugs rehabilitation centres including Mardan, Peshawar, Nowshera, Charsadda, Kohat, Karak, Swabi, Swat, Malakabd and DI Khan districts were established for treatment and psychological services to patients. He said detoxification and rehabilitation centres in 12 districts would be setup in KP besides a model detoxification and rehabilitation centre at Lakki Marwat. Dr Amjad said the numbers

of beds at DTRC would be increased from existing existing 120 to 500. Besides awareness to counter smuggling of illicit drugs, he said four pronged strategy was adopted focusing on supply reduction, controlling illicit drugs trafficking, treatment and rehabilitation measures in addition to enhance cooperation with national institutions and enforcement agencies in fight against drugs. He said the regional offices of anti narcotics department in Peshawar, DI Khan, Abbottabad, Swat and Mardan were converted into excise police stations where trained investigation officers deployed to investigate narcotics cases after registration of cases. The experts said that drugs addiction was a social scourge and collective efforts of all stakeholders were required to win fight against it.

KP govt sets precedence of progress for entire country: Muzammil

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to KP CM on Finance, Muzammil Aslam, has stated that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government under the vision of ex-Prime Minister Imran Khan, Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has set precedence of progress for the entire Pakistan. He expressed these sentiments in a statement, highlighting the plight of voters in Punjab, who, despite supporting Imran Khan, are now suffering under the government's oppression and coercion. Muzammil Islam criticized the Punjab government's failures, citing instances of Section 144 being imposed, extravagant displays of power, and unavailability of medical treatment. He also mentioned broken promises such as the failure to provide 200 units of free electricity. Additionally, he accused the Punjab government of betraying farmers by purchasing wheat at lower rates than promised, further exacerbating their financial distress. Despite facing challenging financial circumstances, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has announced the purchase of 6 lakh tons of wheat at the promised rate of 3,900 rupees per ton. Muzammil Islam emphasized the government's commitment to prioritize local farmers by ensuring that three lakh tons of wheat are bought from them. He warned that if the target is not met, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa farmers



could sell their wheat to the Punjab government, indicating the province's proactive stance compared to others. Moreover, Muzammil Islam highlighted the success of the donor conference, where international financial institutions pledged \$1.8 billion, attributing this achievement to Imran Khan's vision and Ali Amin Gandapur's dedication. He concluded by affirming the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's commitment to various initiatives, including the Ramadan package, implementation of health cards, and ongoing wheat procurement at the promised rate of 3,900 rupees per ton.

RMI's three-day Int'l conference on health research concludes

PESHAWAR (APP): The three-day International Conference on Health Research 2024 (ICHR-24) concluded at the Rehman Medical Institute (RMI) on Sunday with hundreds of national and international researchers and health professionals. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad, Chairman of the Higher Education Commission (HEC), was the special chief guest at the closing ceremony. Chairman RMI Prof. Muhammad Rehman, Principal Rehman Medical College,

Dr. Mukhtiar Zaman, Principal Rehman College of Dentistry Prof. Dr. Ghulam Rasool, Prof. Dr. Saeed Farooq from Keele University UK, Prof. Dr. Jehan Bakht Vice Chancellor of Agriculture University Peshawar, and Dr. Khalid Khan, along with numerous researchers and health professionals, participated in the concluding ceremony. Addressing the gathering, the HEC chairman commended RMI's excellence in research and its potential to achieve university status now. He stressed the importance of research in solving national challenges and urged for its continued translation into practical solutions to eradicate healthcare challenges. Dr. Ahmad highlighted the importance of conferences like ICHR-24 in fostering a national research culture. He encouraged students to actively engage in research and pursue recognition on the global stage. The HEC chief also commended Prof. Dr. Muhammad Rehman's outstanding contributions to the field of medicine. In his address, CEO RMI Shafique Ur Rehman said that RMI is setting new standards in research and innovation. He emphasized the need to tap into opportunities created by shortages of healthcare professionals globally by training a new generation of medical professionals, particularly focusing on the young population of the country.

Neuralink Telepathy: Mind controlled actions finally become a reality!

Amna Butt

COULD anyone believe that the childhood fantasy of moving objects with just a thought would one day become a reality? Well, technological development never ceases to impress, and now in the year 2024, Elon Musk's newly launched product "Neuralink Telepathy" vows to accomplish just that.

This small coin shaped device - a brain computer interface chip - is designed to connect your brain both to your phone and computer. These chips consist of flexible hair like fibers that are precisely inserted into the brain using a surgical sewing machine like robot, understanding the underlying patterns in the human brain signals, and decoding them into specific actions. The company initially commenced trials on primates (and pigs) in 2017 to ensure the chip worked. However, in December 2022, the company came under federal investigation due to allegations of mistreatment, including the killing and mishandling of animal participants. For example, in 2021, Neuralink implanted 25 out of 60 pigs with devices that were the wrong size. Afterward, the company killed all the affected pigs. Furthermore, veterinary reports indicate that Neuralink's monkeys also suffered gruesome fates. In one monkey, a bit of the device "broke off" during implantation in the brain. The monkey scratched and yanked until part of the device was dislodged, and infections took hold. Another monkey developed bleeding in her brain, with the implant leaving parts of her cortex "tattered." Both animals were euthanized. "The agency's major safety concerns involved the device's lithium battery; the potential for the implant's tiny wires to migrate to other areas of the brain; and questions over whether and how the device can be removed without damaging brain tissue," the employees said. Despite all allegations, Neuralink received the green signal from FDA for human clinical trials. The project then gained immense popularity in January 2024, when the first human trial was conducted on Noland Arbaugh, a 29-year-old patient with quadriplegia. Arbaugh was able to play chess by sim-

ply visualizing his moves, deeming the project successful. This demonstration highlighted the potential for Neuralink's technology to enable new forms of interaction between humans and computers while still leaving room for improvement. The real question is, will this invention prove to be an asset or a liability? Originally, Musk claimed that its neural device would allow disabled people to regain movement and restore vision to the blind. But this is not his end goal, rather a step on the way to achieving a much wider long-term objective. That objective is, "to achieve a symbiosis with artificial intelligence." He hopes to counter the fear of AI eventually surpassing human intelligence. Elon states: "Generally, people underestimate the capability of AI. They sort of think it's like a smart human, but it's going to be much more than that. It'll be much smarter than the smartest human." Musk's proposed solution: "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em." Alongside Neuralink, companies like Synchron and research institutions like Rice University offer promising solutions for treating depression and neurological diseases with less invasive methods, further shaping the future of human-AI interaction. While the concept seems captivating at first glance, it risks intruding on privacy and complicating thought processes. Experts worry that such brain devices may be vulnerable to hacking. What will happen if someone intercepts the connection and uses it to control your thoughts and hence your actions? Neuroethicists refer to this as brainjacking. In conclusion, Neuralink's "Telepathy" offers an alluring glimpse into a future where humans and AI merge minds. While promising newfound freedoms, it also raises alarms about privacy, manipulation as well as the relating biological side effects. As we stride forward, let us ensure innovation is tempered with caution, steering toward a future where technology enriches rather than encroaches upon humanity. Haleema Jawaad, Minahil Aftab and Soha Tufail assisted the writer under the Supervision of Instructor Miss Ayesha Aziz of COMSATS University Lahore.



In brief

DPO takes notice

KHANEWAL (INP): District Police Officer (DPO) took notice of torture of influential culprits on a rickshaw driver. Police arrested an accused here on Sunday. According to details, six influential culprits set their own court on road and tortured a rickshaw driver with batons and steel pipes in suburban area Tulamba of Khanewal over personal grudge. The poor rickshaw driver continued begging pardon and residents of area also interfered to rescue him but the culprits were not ready to spare the rickshaw driver. DPO Khanewal took the notice as the video of incident went viral on social media and directed strict action against culprits. The police after registering a case into the incident arrested an accused identified as Waseem while raids were being conducted to arrest five other accomplices.

FIA arrests Afghan nationals

FAISALABAD (INP): Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) immigration successfully apprehended two Afghan Nationals travelling abroad on fake Pakistani documents. According to the details, the FIA immigration successfully arrested two Afghan nationals at the Faisalabad International Airport, who were trying to travel to Saudi Arabia on fake Pakistani passports and CNICs. The arrested individuals were identified as – Razaq and Javed Virk – who attempted to travel to Saudi Arabia by using a fake Pakistani passport. The arrested Afghan nationals have been booked in the case, while more arrests are expected on the revelations of the arrested.

Army organizes health unit

WANA (INP): Pakistan Army organized a mobile health unit in Spinwam tehsil of North Waziristan to provide free treatment to the local people. More than 800 local people of Gulab Khel and Zakir khel areas adjacent to Pak-Afghan border were given treatment at the camp. People were given free medicines and ultrasound facility. A special lady doctor was arranged for women. The people were educated about general hygiene and importance of polio prevention. They expressed their gratitude to the Pakistan Army for the free medical camp.

5 criminals arrested

SARGODHA (INP): Police claimed on Sunday to have arrested five criminals and recovered contraband from their possession. The teams of different police stations raided various localities and arrested Tahir, Kamran, Waheed, Shakoor and Nouman and recovered 2 kg hashish, 1 kg opium, three guns and four pistols from them. Further investigation was underway.

Anti-polio drive from today

LARKANA (APP): All arrangements have been finalized for the seven-days National Immunization Campaign in which more than 306,950 children of the Larkana district up to the age of five years would be vaccinated Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV) from April 29 to May 06 to save them from the crippling disease of Polio. This was disclosed by the District Health Officer (DHO) Larkana Dr. Shoukat Ali Abro here Sunday. He said that the children up to five years of age would be administered OPV during the three days campaign.

Captain Kernal Sher Khan's Mausoleum

Pakistan Army completes preservation



F.P. Report

SWABI: The Pakistan Army is proud to announce the completion of the preservation efforts at the mausoleum of Captain Kernal Sher Khan Shaheed (Nishan Haider)

in Swabi.

Responding to the heartfelt request of the martyr's family and the local community, the Pakistan Army undertook the preservation and adornment, completing the project within a commendable timeframe

of four months.

The mausoleum now stands as a testament to the sacrifice and valor of Captain Kernal Sher Khan, adorned with commemorative photographs and items that illuminate the life and legacy of the revered mar-

tyr. In a dignified ceremony marking the completion of the reconstruction and decoration, Corps Commander Peshawar Lieutenant General Hassan Azhar Hayat inaugurated the Mausoleum, paying homage to the martyrs by laying flowers and reciting Fatiha. During the ceremony, Corps Commander Peshawar had the honor of meeting with the family of Captain Kernal Sher Khan Shaheed, expressing profound respect and gratitude for the martyr's service to the nation.

The family of Captain Kernal Sher Khan Shaheed, along with the local community, extended heartfelt appreciation to the Pakistan Army for their unwavering dedication in preserving the memory of the beloved hero.

Uplift projects inaugurated

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Provincial Law Minister inaugurated development projects worth 78 million rupees in Kohat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Aftab Alam Advocate, inaugurated the projects in the presence of Shahriyar Afridi MNA and PTI's President for Darra Adam Khel.

The formal inauguration took place in the areas of Gulam Banda to Sheen Dhand and Turki Ismail Khel Roads in the Jawaki region of Darra Adam Khel, costing a total of 78 million rupees. The inaugural ceremony was attended by the Tehsil Chairman Gumbat Sajid Iqbal, local leaders of PTI including Ishfaq Qureshi and Wasim Khan, Saif ur Rehman, local administrators, and a large number of people.

Aftab Alam Afridi directed the relevant authorities to complete both projects within the specified time without compromising on the quality of work. He warned that if the work is not up to the standard, it will have to be redone from scratch. The Law Minister emphasized the importance of proper drainage on the mentioned roads and keeping the level of drains lower than the road surface.

He stressed that developmental work is not a favor but a responsibility towards the people, ensuring that the grievances of the public are addressed and their trust is not betrayed. Previously, Minister for Law Aftab Alam Afridi and Shahriyar Afridi MNA inaugurated the projects by cutting the ribbon.

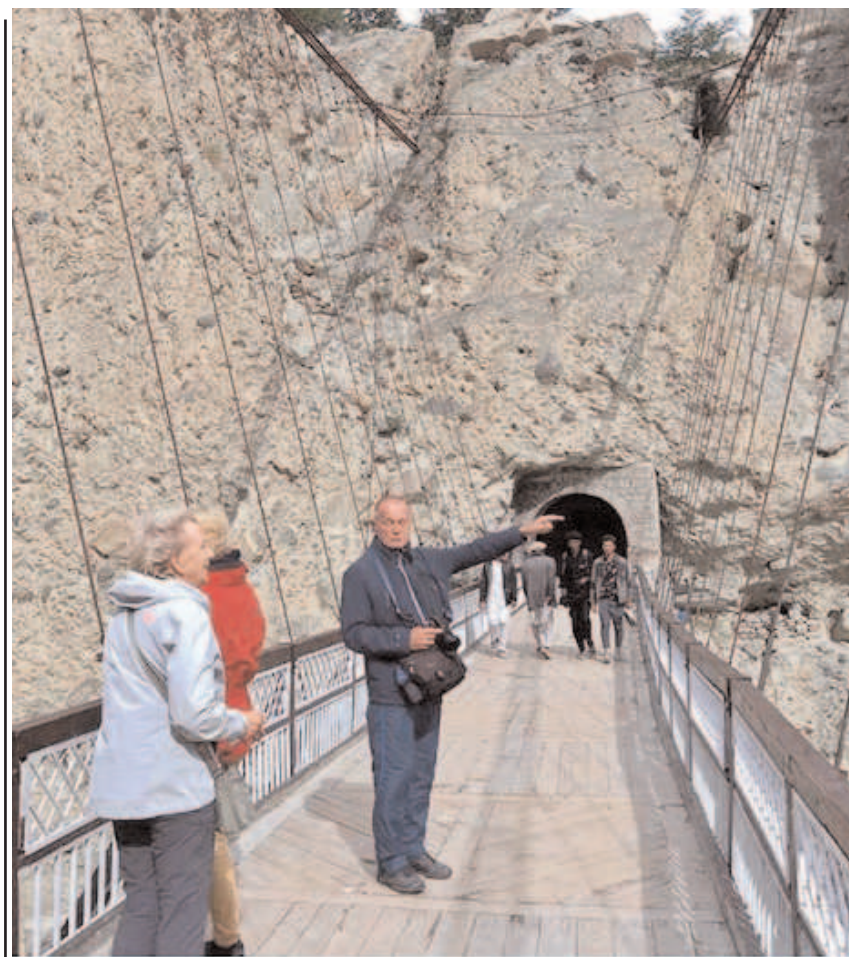
Vaccination drive underway in Cholistan

BAHAWALPUR (APP): Livestock Department, Government of Punjab has continued the vaccination drive against black quarter disease in Cholistan which was detected in cattle.

Director, Livestock Cholistan, Dr. Muhammad Tauseef Tahir told media persons that the Livestock Department, Government of Punjab had continued a vaccination campaign in the Cholistan desert area to control black quarter disease. "Black quarter disease was found in cattle in different parts of the country including Cholistan," he said.

He said that tens of thousands of cattle including buffaloes, cows, camels and goats had been vaccinated in order to boost their immunity against viruses and diseases. He said that the vaccination drive was launched in Cholistan in January 2024 which still was underway.

He said that teams of the Livestock Department had vaccinated 309,350 cattle in Cholistan so far and added that the target of vaccinating 474,787 cattle would be achieved soon. He added that the campaign would remain continuous in upcoming month of May.



GILGIT: Foreign tourist visiting the historical 100 years old suspension wooden bridge Daniyor.

More than 300 partially damaged in Shangla

SHANGLA (APP): In Shangla, more than 300 residential houses were destroyed and hundreds were affected during the torrential rains and three people were reportedly killed including a woman with nine other injured.

The link roads leading to various upper areas of Shangla were severely affected after the landslide, which C&W and TMA officials are busy clearing, most of which have been cleared.

During the torrential rains, the boundary walls of three government schools collapsed while more than 50 water supply schemes were flooded.

Due to the lack of PDMA media coordination system in Shangla, journalists are facing serious difficulties in gathering infor-

mation. Cheques have been given to the people who were killed and injured during the stormy rains on the instructions of the provincial government.

The peoples whose houses have been damaged are also waiting for the help of the government to rehabilitate their houses. This is a big question that needs to be addressed.

Most of the constituencies of Shangla are insisting that the funds received for the rehabilitation projects in Shangla should be spent only on the projects that have been affected and not on political grounds.

The people of the areas criticize the political pundits who utilized the funds on their own rather to rehabilitate the projects insisted for the public interest.

Meanwhile, rains con-

tinued intermittently in Shangla, crops, fruits and vegetables were severely damaged by hailstorm in different areas. Due to heavy rain, most of the fields have become slippery.

Traffic problems due to sliding on main cities. The Karakoram Highway including Alpuri Tabsham Alpuri to Khwaza Khela main highway is also facing problems due to sliding in places.

The flow of water is continuously increasing and the electricity system of Wapda is also severely affected due to water and heavy flow in the water channel of local hydropower plants with most of the generators are inoperable and the local electricity system has also been affected.

Farmers all set to stage forceful protest demo

FAISALABAD (INP): Khalid Hussain Bhatt, the central chairman of the Farmers' Union, has stated that unless the Punjab government procures wheat, the issue cannot be resolved.

He said purchasing of an additional 400,000 metric tons of wheat by federal government cannot resolve the issue as already there is a surplus of 4 to 5 million metric tons. Where will we take it?" he questioned. He announced a protest sit-in in front of the Punjab Assembly on April 29.

Speaking in News program with local TV channel, he said, "The Prime Minister has ordered the purchase of an additional 400,000 metric tons of wheat, but there are areas where the Pasco center is not present, and wheat is not procured.

400,000 metric tons of wheat are to be purchased by Pasco for the entire Pakistan. Until the Punjab government purchases wheat, the issue cannot be resolved."

"It is a welcome step by the Prime Minister to order the purchase of an additional 400,000 metric tons of wheat, but it will not suffice for farmers. This time in Punjab, there is a surplus of 4 to 5 million metric tons of wheat.

Where will we take it? Last year, farmers had stored 25, 25 metric tons of wheat at home, but when the tehsildar came, cases were filed against us, and the wheat was taken away, saying we couldn't store it," he added. "Farmers cannot set the rate for wheat and sugarcane; the government determines the rate. Last year, the rate for wheat

was Rs. 4,000, urea Rs. 3,500, DAP Rs. 9,000, and electricity bill Rs. 25 per unit. The fertilizer mafia has imposed expensive rates on us. The electricity bill has been increased to Rs. 70 per unit," he lamented. "The government has devised a program to loot farmers by reducing the rates; now they should also buy wheat. The administration and the government don't even want to talk to farmers anymore. It's the rainy season, and wheat is getting spoiled.

Threats are being issued that if protests are held in front of the Punjab Assembly, they will be apprehended. Farmers are the only ones who guarantee the country's security. On April 29, we will stage a protest sit-in in front of the Punjab Assembly," he concluded.

PTI-backed candidate wins Balambat chairman slot

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: According to unofficial and unverified results, the Pakistan Tahreek Insaf backed candidate for the Balambat tehsil chairman Shakir Shuiab defeated the Jamaat-i-Islami candidate Imranud Din in the by-election held here on Sunday.

Heavy rains affected the process in the morning and noon. The turnout slightly improved when the weather became clear late in the day. The PTI workers celebrated the victory at Rabat and distributed sweets.

A total of 979 officials of the police department and Dir Levis performed security duties at 99 polling stations. The polling remained peaceful and no report of violence was received from any part of the council during voting.

However, later after the count the PTI and JI

activists clashed at one of the polling stations in Rabat. As a result three activists identified as Shahabud Din 38, Murad 40 and Abdali 13 were injured when they stoned each other.

The injured were taken to the DHQ hospital Timergara. The Lower Dir deputy commissioner Wasil Khan had imposed section 144 on entry of male staff in female polling booths, aerial firing, taking of mobile phones inside the polling station, entry of unregistered voters, setting up election camps within a radius of 200 meters and use of loud speakers.

The number of registered voters in the council is 145,640 including 80,388 men and 65,261 women. The election candidate and their parties succeeded in bringing women voters to the polling stations and hundreds of women polled votes in favour of their

choice candidate.

The election commission has set up a total of 99 polling stations (80 for male and 19 for female voters) with 266 polling booths including 116 for female voters.

The seat fell vacant when the PTI elected tehsil chairman Asim Shuiab failed to return to the council despite repeated calls from the ECP as he was wanted by police in the May 9, 2023 riots case. Since then he has been in hiding and according to some sources the tehsil chairman has left the country long before.

The ECP announced a by-election on the slot. Three candidates including Shakir Shuiab of the PTI, Imranud Din of JI and independent Syed Alam Shah were in the running. The PPP, ANP, PML-N and JUI-F had already withdrawn their nominees in the support of the JI candidate.





Pope meets women prisoners in Venice, first trip in months

VENICE (AFP/APP): Pope Francis on Sunday visited a prison for women in Venice ahead of a mass in the watery city representing the 87-year-old pontiff's first trip outside Rome for seven months.

The one-day trip to Venice will be closely watched amid concerns over the fragile health of Francis, who has toured the world extensively in his 11 years as pope but has not travelled since visiting the French city of Marseille in September.

Arriving by helicopter at 8:00am local time to the courtyard of the women's prison on the island of Giudecca, the pope greeted one by one the approximately 80 inmates, staff and volunteers.

The pope, who throughout his papacy has spoken up in defence of prisoners and the marginalised, encouraged the women to reconstruct their lives "brick upon brick, together, with determination" during their time behind bars.

"Prison is a harsh reality, and problems such as overcrowding, the lack of facilities and resources, and episodes of violence, give rise to a great deal of suffering there," he said, sitting in front of the prisoners.

"But it can also become a place of moral and material rebirth..." he

added. Francis called on the prison system to "offer detainees the tools and room for human, spiritual, cultural and professional growth, creating the conditions for their healthy reintegration". The pope also toured the art exhibition housed at the prison that considers the daily lives of the inmates through the work of 10 different artists. The exhibit is the Vatican's entry for this year's Biennale festival of art, which began last weekend.

Francis's visit represents "a historic moment because he will be the first pope to visit the Venice Biennale," said the exhibition's lead curator, Jose Tolentino de Mendonca.

Last year in December, a bout of bronchitis forced the pope to cancel a trip to Dubai, where he was to have addressed UN climate talks.

He also pulled out of an Easter event at the last minute in March, after suffering for several weeks from what the Vatican called a "light flu".

Following the prison visit, the pope is due to address young people at the Basilica di Santa Maria della Salute, a landmark church on the south end of the Grand Canal.

From there he will head to St Mark's Square via a bridge built on a base of boats lined up across the canal

and preside over a mass starting at 11:00am.

He is due to depart Venice in the early afternoon, having become the fourth pope to visit the city, after Paul VI (1972), Jean-Paul II (1985) and Benedict XVI (2011).

The diocese of Venice is one of the largest in Italy, with 125 parishes, and has close ties with the papacy. Three Venice patriarchs became popes in the 20th century.

Francis's visit comes on the same weekend as Venice launches a new entry fee for day-trippers, aimed at easing the pressure of tourism on the UNESCO World Heritage site.

As a guest, the head of the Catholic Church will be exempt from buying a five-euro (\$5.30) ticket, but non-resident pilgrims visiting for his mass will have to pay.

The pontiff, who uses a wheelchair, has suffered increasing health problems in recent years, from knee pain to surgery for a hernia and on his colon. Despite his health, the Vatican is planning an ambitious 12-day trip to Asia in September, taking in Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, East Timor and Singapore. Before that, the pope is due to make two other trips within Italy, to Verona in May and Trieste in July.

Schools closed, warnings issued as Asia swelters in extreme heatwave

MANILA (AFP/APP): South and Southeast Asia braced for more extreme heat on Sunday as authorities across the region issued health warnings and residents fled to parks and air-conditioned malls for relief.

A wave of exceptionally hot weather has blasted the region over the past week, sending the mercury as high as 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit) and forcing thousands of schools to tell students to stay home. The Philippines announced on Sunday the suspension of in-person classes at all public schools for two days after a record-shattering day of heat in the capital Manila. In Thailand, where at least 30 people have died of heatstroke so far this year, the meteorological department warned of "severe conditions" after temperatures in a northern province exceeded 44.1C (111.4F) on Saturday. And in Cambodia, Myanmar, Vietnam, India and Bangladesh, forecasters warned that temperatures could exceed 40C in the coming days as people endured searing heat and stifling humidity.

"I dare not go out in the daytime. I

am worried we would get heatstroke," said a 39-year-old cashier in Myanmar's Yangon who gave her name as San Yin.

She said she has been going to a park with her husband and four-year-old son at night to escape the heat of their fourth-floor apartment.

"This is the only spot we can stay to avoid the heat in our neighbourhood," she said. Global temperatures hit record highs last year, and the United Nations weather and climate agency said Tuesday that Asia was warming at a particularly rapid pace.

Extensive scientific research has found climate change is causing heat waves to become longer, more frequent and more intense.

Myanmar has recorded temperatures that are 3-4C higher than the April average, its weather monitor said last week.

And on Sunday, the national forecaster predicted temperatures in the central city of Mandalay could rise to 43C. The ministry of water and meteorology in Cambodia warned that temperatures could also hit 43C in some parts of the country in the week

ahead, while the health ministry advised people to monitor their health "during hot weather related to climate change". Temperatures in Vietnam were also forecast to remain high during a five-day national holiday, with forecasts as high as 41C in the north.

Forecasters there said it would remain intensely hot until the end of April, with cooler conditions expected in May. India's weather department said Saturday that severe heatwave conditions would continue through the weekend in several states, with temperatures soaring to 44C in some locations. "I have never experienced this heat before," Ananth Nadiger, a 37-year-old advertising professional, told AFP from Bengaluru. "It's very unpleasant and it takes the energy out of you."

The world's biggest democracy is in the middle of a six-week general election that saw millions of voters queue up in searing temperatures on Friday. India's election commission said it had formed a task force to review the impact of heatwaves and humidity before each round of voting.

Togo split over controversial reform on eve of vote

LOME (AFP/APP): Togo on Monday holds legislative elections after a highly divisive constitutional reform that opponents say paves the way for President Faure Gnassingbe to further extend his family's decades-long grip on power.

At the helm of the small West African country for nearly 20 years, Faure Gnassingbe succeeded his father Gnassingbe Eyadema, who ruled for almost four decades.

Critics say the political dynasty's hold on the small West African nation will be extended by the reform.

People in the streets of the seaside capital Lome were split over the election, the role of Togo's leader, and who it should be.

Building painter Komlan Gato said he hoped the vote could usher in a new leader but was unsure about the fairness of the ballot.

"I am certain that if these elections are transparent, there will be change in this country. We are tired of seeing the same family in power," he said. "I was born in January 1970 and I only know the Gnassingbe family in power."

Indonesia's Ibu volcano erupts, ash up to 3.5 km

JAKARTA (Xinhua/APP): The Ibu volcano on Halmahera Island in the eastern Indonesian province of North Maluku erupted early Sunday, according to the country's Center for Volcanology and Geological Hazard Mitigation (PVMBG).

PVMBG reported that the volcano erupted at around 00:37 a.m. local time for about 206 seconds, throwing ash up to 3,500 meters above its peak.

Standing as high as 1,325 meters above sea level, Ibu volcano is classified as in the second danger level, below the highest level of IV. PVMBG called on the public not to have activities within a radius of 3.5 kilometers from the crater. Located on the Pacific Ring of Fire, Indonesia is one of the countries with the most volcanoes in the world.

Strong convective weather causes extensive flight delays in Guangzhou

GUANGZHOU (Xinhua/APP): Strong convective weather in the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou on Saturday has caused extensive flight delays, Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport said in a statement on Sunday.

Part of the lighting system in its Terminal 2 was temporarily cut off due to voltage fluctuations at a power station near the airport, which was caused by the strong convective weather, but it did not affect the airport's normal operations, the airport added. As of 11:11 p.m. Saturday, a total of 70 flights were delayed by over an hour due to thunderstorms and heavy downpours, and the airport had launched a yellow emergency response for large-scale flight delays.

One man dead after migrant boat sinks off Greek island

ATHENS (AFP/APP): Greece's coastguard said on Sunday it had found the body of a man believed to have drowned when a migrant boat sank near the island of Samos.

It said 25 people it described as "foreigners" were spotted on a "semi-submerged dinghy ... and rescued from the sea west of the South Aegean island". They were transferred in good health to the port of Vathi, the coast-guard added.

Searches for missing people were underway with the help of European Union border agency Frontex.

State-run TV channel ERT reported survivors as saying four people were missing. Greece has seen a rise in undocumented migrants this year.

More than 7,000 people arrived in January and February, an increase of 184 percent compared to 2023 according to official data. The country of 10.4 million has received more than 460,000 applications for asylum since 2013, including over 12,500 this

year.

The islands in the northeastern Aegean Sea are one of the gateways for asylum seekers hoping to reach the European Union, many fleeing conflict or poverty.

In June 2023, 82 people drowned and hundreds went missing when a migrant trawler sank off the coast of Pylos.

Several enquiries into the tragedy are still underway and certain NGOs have accused the Greek coastguard of delaying efforts to come to the migrants' aid.

Enchanting Pak folk artist leave audiences spellbound

SHAHNISABZ (APP): On the third consecutive day of the inaugural celebrations of Shahrissabz, Uzbekistan as the ECO Tourism Capital for 2024, the "Folk Competition and Fashion Show" was held with an array of diverse cultural programs. Enchanting folk artists and fashion designers belonging to Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) countries leave audiences spellbound.

The folk competition and fashion show showcased a diverse array of cultural programs featuring fascinating performances by talented folk artists, including designers, singers, and dancers, which left the audience enthralled and captivated.

The highlight of the program was the mesmerizing performance by the esteemed veteran Pakistani folk singer Asfandiyar Khattak from the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC), leaving attendees filled with delight and excitement.

His captivating presence

on stage enthralled the audience, leaving them in awe of his folk dancing talent. To elevate the spirit of the event, Asfandiyar presented a graceful classical performance in musical tones. The enchanting performance added a touch of grace and artistry to the competition, captivating the audience with the beauty of classical dance.

Furthermore, the celebrated folk dancer mesmerized the audience with his captivating rendition of special Pakistani music, enthralling everyone with his enchanting melodies.

The graceful movements and soulful expressions added an extra layer of charm to the occasion. The classical folk dance also conveyed profound emotions, leaving a lasting impact on the hearts of the spectators. Meanwhile, talking to APP President, ECO Institute of Culture (ECI), Dr. Saad Khan, the competition provided a platform to delve into the rich historical connection between the ECO member

states, shedding light on the significant cultural and spiritual impact of folk dance in the region.

The other participants also shared their knowledge, fostering a deeper understanding of ECO countries heritage. Dr. Saad further said, "This event at Shahrissabz encompasses a wide range of artistic expressions, including music, singing, dances, handicrafts, and cuisine, all of which are unique to the region." "By highlighting these rich cultural forms, the festival promotes appreciation, preservation, and recognition of the artistic treasures that contribute to the distinct identity of member states," he added.

The event showcased the region's artistic craftsmanship, allowing attendees to appreciate and purchase authentic creations. Furthermore, the festival celebrated cultural exchange by featuring representations from ECO states, adding a delightful touch of diversity and fostering cross-cultural connections among attendees.

China confronts Japanese politicians in disputed East China Sea area

BEIJING/TOKYO (Reuters): China's coast guard confronted Japanese lawmakers in waters claimed by both countries in the East China Sea, China's embassy in Tokyo and Japanese media said on Sunday, the latest in a series of maritime disputes involving China and its neighbours.

Chinese vessels took unspecified law enforcement measures, the embassy said in a statement, adding that it had lodged solemn representations for what it called "infringement and provocation" by Japan near tiny, uninhabited islands that Beijing calls the Diaoyu and Tokyo calls the Senkaku. The Japanese group, including former Defense Minister Tomomi Inada, was on an inspection mission organised by the city of Ishigaki in Okinawa prefecture, according to the Chinese embassy and Japanese public broadcaster NHK. Japan and China have repeatedly faced off around the Japan-administered islands. China also has escalating run-ins with the Philippine navy in disputed areas of the South China



Sea, where Beijing's expansive maritime claims conflict with those of a number of Southeast Asia nations. Inada's group spent three hours near the islands on Saturday, using drones to observe the area, and the Japanese coast guard vessel sought to fend off the Chinese coast guard, NHK said. "The government and the public are aware of the severe security situation," said Inada, a senior official of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, according to NHK. "The Senkaku are our sovereign territory and we need to go ashore for research."

It was the first such inspection trip to the area

involving a member of Japan's parliament since 2013, NHK reported.

Officials of Japan's foreign ministry were not immediately available for comment outside of working hours. China strongly urged Japan to abide by what it called a consensus reached between the two countries, stop political provocations, on-site incidents and hyping up public opinion, the embassy said. It asked Japan to "return to the right track of properly managing contradictions and differences through dialogue and consultation, so as to avoid further escalation of the situation".

‘No hero’: UK’s modest D-Day veterans keep history alive

LONDON (AFP/APP): Donald, Ken and Henry wear their medals with pride, but reject the title of heroes even if they are among the last British veterans alive who took part in the D-Day landings in Normandy in June 1944.

The trio, all pushing 100 years or beyond, told AFP that their job now was to bear witness to history and tell the story of World War II to younger generations, as the country prepares for the 80th anniversary of the key military operation.

Despite the passing of the decades, their memories of those events remain precise and vivid.

Ken Hay, 98, set foot on Juno Beach in Courseulles-sur-Mer a few days after the first wave of soldiers landed on June 6. "I should have been frightened. I don't think we were. I'm no hero, I'm not trying to make myself one, but it was all part of the adventure," he told AFP in London.

Tasked with advancing towards an inland observation post, his unit was attacked from the rear by

German soldiers and he was captured, along with four other members of his regiment.

He was then transported by train to Poland with dozens of other prisoners and sent to work in a coal mine.

But Russian troops advancing from the east forced the Germans to empty the camps, with the prisoners having to walk hundreds of kilometres (miles) west.

Hay was finally liberated by American troops and was repatriated by aeroplane two days before Victory in Europe Day -- May 8, 1945 -- the date of the German surrender.

Henry Rice, also 98 years old, was in charge of communications aboard the HMS Eastway landing ship, delivering equipment to the soldiers on shore at Normandy.

"I was 50 percent excited, 50 percent not sure," he recalled of his mission.

"For a young man, it was so big, so many ships."

But his gaze clouded over at the memory of the thousands of men killed on the French beaches, including nearly 1,500

British on the first day.

"The mental picture I have of men in the water, I don't like to think of that," he said. After participating in the Normandy landings, Rice served in the Mediterranean and in Asia, until the Japanese surrender that marked the end of the global conflict.

"I feel lucky" to have returned alive, he said.

Compared to other veterans, "particularly those soldiers who had landed and survived, I feel 'petit'", he added.

"I'm so proud of them. I was not in the face of danger like they were," he recalled, despite dodging several enemy torpedoes.

Donald Howkins, 103, landed two days after D-Day, and recalled being "very frightened".

"The sea was pretty rough, the barge was going up and down. But when I was on the beach I was OK. You just carried on with what you've got to do."

When asked about how he feels ahead of the 80th anniversary commemorations, which many heads of state are expected to attend, he joked: "too

bloody old".

Howkins has already gone to several commemoration events in Normandy, but will not go this year as he now uses a wheelchair and the trip is too difficult.

But Ken Hay will be there and expects to experience a "mixture" of emotions. "It's very sad when you go to the graves... but it is also nice" to meet the French locals, he said, especially the children, who are taught about the historic events at school.

"They recognise us, want to shake your hands... it's a lovely atmosphere."

Like his frontline comrades, he considers it very important to keep the story of World War II alive for younger generations.

"I could warn them of the danger of war, but I would prefer to tell the leaders of countries, stop it," said Rice.

"In this lifetime, we've had these horrible things," he added, his eyes welling with tears as he recalled conflicts that have marred the globe since World War II.

Marmalade fest celebrates quintessential British breakfast treat

PENRITH (AFP/APP): The Japanese ambassador raved about the daffodils and the glorious spring sunshine. The Australian envoy joked about beating the "Poms" at their own game. A life-sized Paddington waved and clapped.

On the steps of a centuries-old country house in northwest England, one of the nation's most eccentric cultural events -- the Dalemmain World Marmalade Awards -- was in full swing. Inside, in an oak-panelled room lined with portraits of family ancestors, winning jars of the quintessentially British fruit preserve covered every surface.

"Excellent marmalade, just cloudy," read one judge's report card. "Good colour and set," said another. "Jar should be filled to the top," said a third.

Every January and February, when bitter Seville oranges from Spain are available for a few short weeks, marmalade makers shut themselves away in their kitchens to chop, pulp and boil. Many of those home-made marmalades -- along with other non-Seville marmalades from as far afield as Hawaii, Japan, Taiwan and Australia -- wind their way to Dalemmain, which this year received just under 3,000 pots of the sweet, sticky condiment.

The 2024 competition

featured 17 categories, including entries from a Taiwanese orphanage in the children's section and a US women's correctional facility in the newly introduced prison's class.

Made by boiling together the juice and peel of citrus fruits, sugar and water, marmalade as we know it now was pioneered commercially in the late 18th century by the Keiller family of Dundee in Scotland.

Spread generously on buttered toast, it is traditionally a staple of British breakfast tables as well as the favoured sandwich filling of children's character Paddington, a small bear from "deepest, darkest Peru".

"We got a silver, which we're delighted about!" said James Stoddart, a prison rehabilitation worker in northeast England, spotting his jail's entry adorned with a silver star.

Two prisoners had lobbied to take part, inspired by one of their daughters who loved Paddington, he said, even though neither of them had a clue how to make marmalade.

"You're not allowed glass inside prisons so we had to really fight to get it in and get it done," he said, adding that 12 jars were eventually produced, including one that was sent to the little girl.

Founded by Dalemmain chatelaine Jane Hasell-McCosh, the awards are

held annually at the family's historic house in the Lake District National Park and have raised more than £250,000 (£310,000) for charity. From just 60 jars from the local area in 2005, there are now spin-off events also taking place in Japan and Australia.

Atsuko Hayashi, owner of The English Kitchen in Tokyo, said the pastime had changed her life by helping her to "connect with people" globally.

For London-based Danish photographer Henrik Knudsen, marmalade making was "a very English thing" which he had happily adopted since living in the UK.

But he said getting it right was not an exact science and the results could be unpredictable.

The clarity could be wrong, the peel might be a bit tough, the texture could be too runny, he said. "That's the charm of it."

Marmalade received an unexpected boost during the 2022 celebrations for Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee, when the late monarch took part in a televised comedy sketch with Paddington.

The skit was a welcome reminder of marmalade's qualities at a time when homemade has never been more popular, said Caroline Hodge, winner of the dark and chunky category.

Mass-produced mar-

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JALIL AFRIDI
Managing Editor

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

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

“USA and Canada Toll Free Number 415-3704551

US should be part of solution to Gaza conflict

Representatives of the Palestinian Fatah movement and the Islamic Resistance Movement, or Hamas, met in Beijing on Friday to discuss ending the internal divisions in Palestine. This latest development, although not confirmed by Beijing, not only contributes to forging Palestinian unity but also is conducive to defusing the ongoing crisis in the Middle East.

Ahead of the meeting in an interview with the media on Thursday, Khalil Al-Hayya, a leading member of Hamas' political bureau, said the movement was ready to disarm and transition into a political party that is part of a unified Palestinian government on condition that an independent Palestinian state is established along the pre-1967 borders in accordance with the international resolutions.

China has taken a low-key approach to the meeting, with the Foreign Ministry simply saying that the country consistently supports internal reconciliation among the different Palestinian factions through dialogue and firmly backs strengthening the internal unity in Palestine. The meeting is a clear indication that China is making every effort to resolve the crisis in Gaza.

By seeking to facilitate reconciliation between the two Palestinian factions, China hopes the political forces of Palestine can show greater solidarity in promoting a political solution to the conflict that upholds the legitimate rights and political status of Palestine with the support of the international community.

With the Gaza conflict still ongoing, China is maintaining close communication with all relevant parties, actively participating in United Nations Security Council consultations, and pushing for efforts to de-escalate the situation and promote peace talks.

Last month, Chinese diplomat Wang Kejian visited Egypt, Palestine, Israel and Qatar, which also included a meeting with the head of Hamas' political bureau, Ismail Haniyeh, during his visit to Qatar. The latest development in Beijing was only made possible thanks to a series of such diplomatic mediation efforts.

What China has done so far in its efforts to resolve the Israel-Palestine conflict, which includes promoting Palestinian unity, upholding justice at the United Nations Security Council and calling for an immediate cease-fire, stands in stark contrast to those who have constantly fanned the flames of the conflict.

US President Joe Biden on Wednesday signed into law legislation that includes \$26 billion in assistance for Israel, the majority of which is earmarked for military spending. Turning a deaf ear to domestic and international calls for it to press Israel to stop the brutal killing of Palestinian civilians, the Biden administration has continued to get blood on its hands by supplying arms to Israel and repeatedly blocking the UNSC's efforts to call for a cease-fire. Earlier this month, it vetoed a UNSC draft resolution to grant full UN membership to the State of Palestine despite its alleged support of the two-state solution.

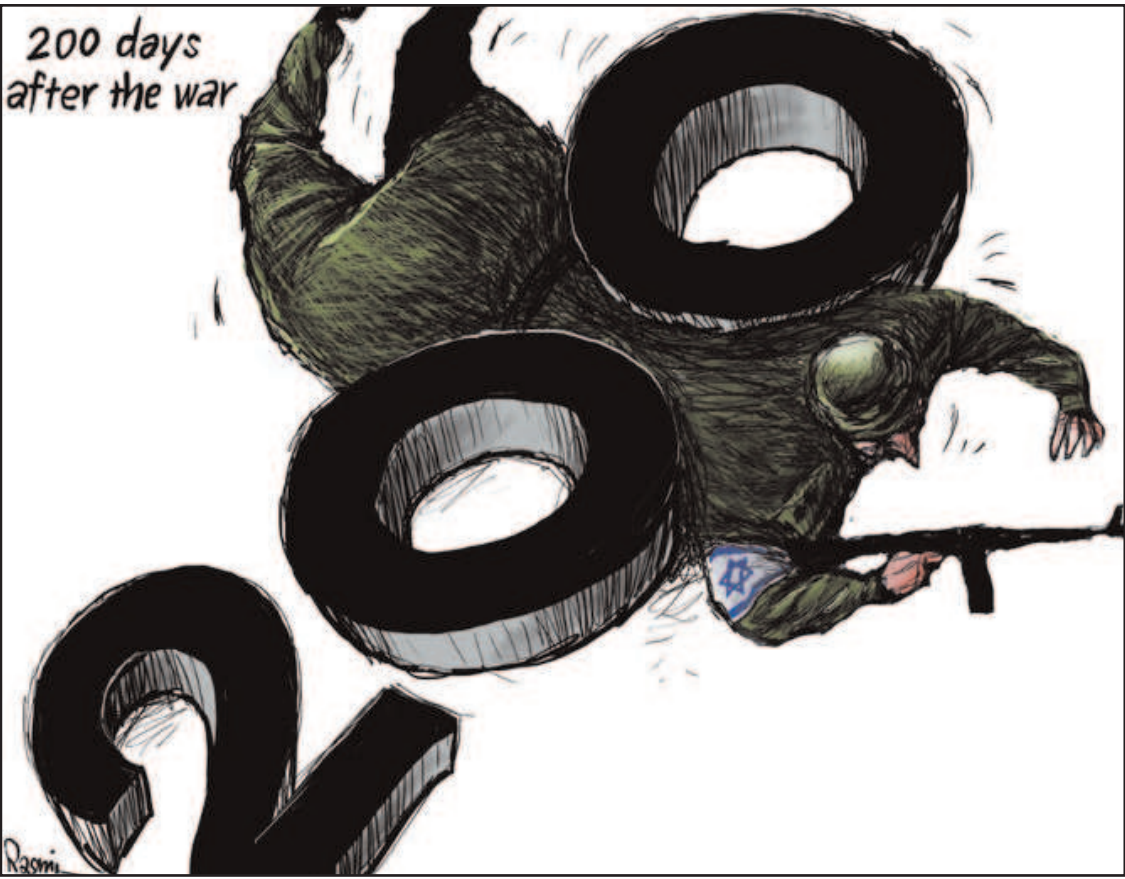
To date, more than 34,200 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza since Israel launched its military offensive against Hamas. The conflict has not only caused a humanitarian catastrophe but also spilled over to other parts of the region, dragging more parties into the fray.

At present, apart from losing the moral high ground because of its callous support of Israel's relentless military offensive in Gaza the US itself is feeling a strong backlash from what it has sowed in the Middle East: Many university campuses in the US are convulsed in chaos as students stage pro-Palestine protests. Hundreds of demonstrators have been arrested amid allegations of police brutality, all triggered by the US' lopsided policy on the ongoing conflict.

The Gaza conflict and its resulting effects show once again that the perpetual denial of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people is the root cause of the Palestinian question. It is high time the US stopped being part of the problem with its blind support of Israel and instead became part of the solution by putting its weight behind international peace efforts and joining hands with those countries, such as China, that are actually working to try and secure a meaningful cease-fire in Gaza and a long-term solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict through dialogue and consultations.

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Israel and Iran — between deterrence and destruction

Yossi Mekelberg

Following the first direct military confrontations between Israel and Iran, which have taken place over the past two weeks, commentators have been debating whether the exchanges ended in a draw, or whether one of the nations gained the advantage.

While this question will continue to dominate the headlines for a while, the more pertinent question is whether both sides have, at least for now, saved enough face to step back from the brink, or whether they, and the rest of the Middle East, continue to stare into the abyss of a full-blown war that could drag the entire region into the conflict.

The simple answer is that neither side is interested in such a confrontation, and both are conveying, in their own peculiar ways, this lack of desire or intention to escalate the situation any further, while doing very little to at least de-escalate the rhetorical battle between them.

One consistent aspect of the relations between these two sworn enemies is that neither of them trusts the intentions of the other, and so they continue to send mixed messages through their behavior. Moreover, the events in recent weeks cannot be considered outside the broader regional context, in particular the war in Gaza, the escalation of the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah along the Israeli-Lebanese border, and the destabilizing activities carried out by Iran through its proxies in the region.

The presumed Israeli airstrike that hit an Iranian diplomatic mission in Damascus at the start of this month and killed several senior Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps officers could easily be seen as an act of escalation because of where it took place — after all, embassies, consulates and diplomatic missions are regarded as sovereign territory — and the seniority of those killed.

However, Tehran has held fire on several previous occasions when assassinations of senior Iranian military personnel and leading scientists, in some cases on Iranian soil, were attributed to Israel.

This suggests either that the Iranian regime considered the attack on its consulate in Damascus as the straw that broke the camel's back, and the pressure within its own ranks not to lose face and to take deterrent action was overwhelming, or that it sensed an opportune moment to catch Israel at the weakest it has been for a long time, as a result of the military and diplomatic consequences of the war in Gaza. In fact, it was most probably a combination of both of these factors that caused Iran to miscalculate.

There is a danger that decision-makers in Israel will similarly draw the wrong conclusions from the international collective efforts to avert the Iranian drone and missile strikes on Israel.

Some have argued, wrongly in my view, that Iran's decision to launch its attack was no more than an elaborate piece of theater,

given that Israel and the US, along with other countries in the region, were informed of the strikes in advance, giving them time to minimize the resulting damage. There is, therefore, a strong sense that this was a drama the script for which was known to all the protagonists.

Even if that were the case, such a scenario can be successful only as long as everyone plays their part to perfection — and the attack on Israel could have ended

There might have been a very different outcome to Iran's attack, intended or not. It could have resulted in massive damage to Israeli military facilities and might even have erroneously hit a major population center. The only known serious injury caused during the attack was to a young girl; had there been more casualties, Israel's retaliation would have been on a much more extensive scale and could have dragged the US, other Western allies, and the entire region into a wider war. Iran has proved that it can launch coordinated, long-range drone and missile attacks. However, it miscalculated Israel's air-defense capabilities and, more crucially, underestimated the ironclad support, in the words of President Joe Biden, of the US in the event of such an attack. This was backed by additional support from the UK and France. In this sense, Tehran handed Israel both military and political achievements. The justified international criticism of the death and devastation that Israel has sown in Gaza for months, and the humanitarian catastrophe it has inflicted on the people of the territory, clearly has not lessened the West's commitment to the security of Israel; although for some, the motivation for preventing Iran from hitting Israel hard also stems from the great importance attached to ensuring Israel remains a major military and political force to counterbalance Iran and its axis of resistance. Moreover, it is feared that had Iran managed to cause widespread devastation with its attack, Israel might have retaliated with its full arsenal of military capabilities, resulting in a more widespread conflict that could have shattered the region and probably the global economy.

In a major disaster. The launch of about 350 lethal weapons was not a low-key operation. It is only because, as has been reported, 99 percent of the drones and missiles were intercepted that the damage was minimized, which then allowed Israel to respond in a more measured way, without even explicitly taking responsibility for its response.

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very different outcome to Iran's attack, intended or not. It could have resulted in massive damage to Israeli military facilities and might even have erroneously hit a major population center.

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and France. In this sense, Tehran handed Israel both military and political achievements. The justified international criticism of the death and devastation that Israel has sown in Gaza for months, and the humanitarian catastrophe it has inflicted on the people of the territory, clearly has not lessened the West's commitment to the security of Israel; although for some, the motivation for preventing Iran from hitting Israel hard also stems from the great importance attached to ensuring Israel remains a major military and political force to counterbalance Iran and its axis of resistance.

Moreover, it is feared that had Iran managed to cause widespread devastation with its attack, Israel might have retaliated with its full arsenal of military capabilities, resulting in a more widespread conflict that could have shattered the region and probably the global economy. Israel can be largely satisfied with the international support it received in defense of its skies and for uniting, at least for now, an alliance that is ready to confront Iran and its proxies. Nevertheless, it would be a serious mistake to think that as a result of this the situation in the Gaza Strip, or even the Palestinian issue as a whole, has been sidelined. If anything, it has illustrated just how dependent Israel is on its allies for its security, and that the defiance shown by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and some of his mindless ministers toward Washington of late is not only misplaced but a threat to its security.

If there is one thing that Iran and Israel have in common, it is an aggressive sense of insecurity that borders on paranoia. This is partly due to objective historical reasons, some of them tactical, while the rest has more to do with the psychological and domestic considerations of the nations than any sound strategy.

They both see themselves as perpetually facing existential threats and perceive each other as a major source of those threats. As a result, they continually develop capabilities and strategies that instead of de-escalating the tensions between them, simply enhance their mutual image of one another as eternal enemies, which leaves them with almost no space to coexist peacefully in their troubled neighborhood.

Iran continues to develop its military capabilities and a ring of regional proxies, some of which are on Israel's borders and, therefore, keep Tel Aviv on its toes. Meanwhile, Israel's strategic DNA is characterized by preemption and proactiveness, anywhere and at any given time. It builds its counter-deterrent capabilities but is over-reliant on military power at the expense of diplomacy.

The result is that both nations constantly walk a tightrope and any misstep could easily set the region on fire; the past few weeks have provided ample evidence of this.

Muslim world must take lead in encouraging a more moderate approach by the Taliban

Dr. Azeem Ibrahim

For decades, the plight of women in Afghanistan has served as a poignant symbol of the country's tumultuous political landscape.

Despite efforts to encourage the Taliban to adopt more moderate behavior and become more inclusive, the stark reality is that it continues to be the case that women in the country are targeted, denied basic rights, and subjected to systemic discrimination.

As Afghanistan grapples with poverty and instability, the draconian policies of the Taliban have only exacerbated the suffering of the country's most vulnerable citizens.

The relentless Taliban assault on women's rights is a grim reminder of the group's regressive ideology. Despite pledges of moderation, they persistently deny women the rights to education and employment, effectively relegating them to the status of second-class citizens in their own country.

Shockingly, Afghanistan is the only nation in which girls are prohibited from attending school beyond the age of 11, plunging countless young women into a cycle of ignorance and oppression.

It is crucial to recognize that the Taliban's draconian measures are not rooted in Islamic law but rather stem from entrenched cultural biases. As Salam Al-Marayati, president of the Muslim Public Affairs Council, rightly notes, the Taliban's policies represent a distortion of Islamic teachings that serve as a pretext for the perpetuation of gender apartheid. This distinction is pivotal in understanding that the Taliban's agenda is not purely religious but rather a product of patriarchal Pashtun culture.

Attempts to encourage a more moderate approach by the Taliban and advocate for women's rights have yielded limited results, highlighting the futility of traditional diplomatic approaches. Despite international pressure, the Taliban have demonstrated a steadfast refusal to compromise on issues pertaining to women's rights, leaving little room for meaningful dialogue or progress. Western nations, in particular, have found themselves at an impasse, torn between their principles and pragmatic considerations.

The challenge is compounded by the geopolitical reality that Afghanistan's neighbors have largely accepted the ascendancy of the Taliban and are engaging with them on pragmatic terms. While Western powers remain steadfast in their demands for inclusivity and respect for human rights, the group's grip on power remains unyielding. This stark contrast underscores the political impossibility of offering concessions or olive branches to a regime that remains so deeply entrenched in its ideology.

In light of these challenges, the adoption of a more transactional approach toward engagement with the Taliban is imperative. Rather than pursuing lofty ideals of political inclusivity, Western policymakers must prioritize pragmatic solutions that address specific issues incrementally. This necessitates a departure from grandiose demands for wholesale change to instead focus on tangible, achievable goals that benefit Afghan civilians.

It is also increasingly evident that the Muslim world must take the lead in advocating for change within the Taliban regime. With their deep cultural and religious ties to Afghanistan, Islamic nations have a unique opportunity to influence the Taliban and encourage them to modify their policies on female education.

One effective strategy would be to offer scholarships for Afghan women to study in Islamic countries, thereby providing them

with access to Islamic education and empowering them to become agents of change within their society.

Since the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan in 2021, several Muslim-majority countries and organizations have attempted to persuade the Taliban to moderate their policies, particularly on the issues of women's rights and inclusivity.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation in particular has taken an active stance, sending delegations of Islamic scholars to Afghanistan to urge the Taliban to lift the bans on the education and employment of women. However, these efforts have yet to bear fruit as the regime remains defiant in the enforcement of its strict interpretation of Islamic law.

The quest by the Taliban for international recognition and normalization of relations continues to face significant obstacles because of their oppressive policies, the failure to form an inclusive government, and concerns about the presence of terrorist groups in Afghanistan.

The US and the wider international community have maintained a unified stance, conditioning any normalization of relations on the Taliban fulfilling their security obligations, respecting human rights, and establishing an inclusive political system.

While the Muslim world's engagement with the Taliban aims to encourage a more moderate approach by the regime, the group's unwavering stance on issues such as women's rights has limited the progress achieved so far. But the prevailing view is that meaningful reforms need to originate from within Afghanistan, rather than being imposed through external pressure.

Despite the lack of success in the efforts so far, engagement by Muslim nations, therefore, seems to be the only realistic avenue for bringing any sense of moderation to the Taliban. After all, these nations share historical, cultural, and religious connections with Afghanistan that transcend geopolitical boundaries.

This shared heritage imbues the Muslim world with a moral imperative to intervene on behalf of Afghan women and advocate for their rights. By leveraging these cultural ties, Islamic countries can establish a rapport with the Taliban and initiate constructive dialogue with the aim of promoting female education as an integral component of Islamic values.

Moreover, offering scholarships for Afghan women to study in Islamic countries is a practical and tangible solution to the education gap in Afghanistan. By providing access to quality education abroad, scholarships would empower women from the country by providing them with the knowledge and skills needed to effect positive change within their communities.

In addition, exposure to diverse cultural and educational experiences fosters critical thinking and resilience, thereby enabling Afghan women to challenge oppressive norms and advocate for their rights upon their return home.

Ultimately, the leadership of the Muslim world in efforts to moderate Taliban policies on the education of women will be essential for fostering sustainable change in Afghanistan. By offering scholarships and promoting educational opportunities for Afghan women, Islamic countries can empower a new generation of leaders who are equipped to challenge entrenched norms and advocate for gender equality.

The Muslim world has a moral obligation to support Afghan women in their pursuit of education and empowerment.

Leading from the middle

Today's most pressing challenges — as well as the future's most promising opportunities — are not bound by borders. Strengthening our economies, improving our collective security, addressing climate change, and unlocking the benefits of frontier technologies all depend on cooperative approaches. Yet, the world is at risk of drifting toward a perilous state in which collaborative agendas are replaced by confrontational mindsets.

A more contentious geopolitical climate is of such concern that in September 2023, at the opening of the UN General Assembly in New York, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned: "Global challenges are mounting. And we seem incapable of coming together to respond."

Indeed, alarm bells abound; for instance, just 12 percent of the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals are on target to be met by the 2030 deadline.

Thankfully, though, there are some bright spots.

At the G20 summit last December, India made it a priority to include representation from the Global South in the dialogue and steered leaders of the world's largest economies to agreement on a joint declaration on climate financing, global debt and other issues — this despite predictions that agreement would be impossible to achieve.

At November's UN climate conference, COP28, in Dubai, the UAE committed to leading an "inclusive and safe space for all participants," and parties

agreed for the first time to transition away from fossil fuels toward renewable sources of energy.

From April 28 to April 29, Saudi Arabia and the World Economic Forum will convene leaders from around the world for a special meeting in Riyadh on strengthening cooperation, particularly between the Global North and South.

Borge Brende

Today, at a time of geopolitical turbulence, middle-power leadership — particularly from the Middle East — will determine whether the world makes progress on critical security, environmental, and technological priorities. This is because the solutions to several of the

Jeddah hosted peace talks for Ukraine that were vital in bringing to the table key parties from the Global North and South. In a meeting between Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Riyadh earlier this year, the two discussed ways to operationalize the Ukrainian peace plan.

two-state solution with Palestinians.

On climate change, the success of a green energy transition that is equitable and fosters growth can only happen if capitals in the Middle East help move it forward. This is because while the region produces about 30 percent of the world's oil and 23 percent of its natural gas, many countries are poised to become green power leaders of the future. Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman recently said that the Kingdom was committed to being the "center-piece" in the renewable market. Through its Vision 2030 plan, Saudi Arabia is diversifying non-oil exports and aiming to increase its share of non-oil GDP from 16 percent to 50 percent by the end of the decade.

And on unlocking new technology opportunities ahead, generative AI has the potential to add between \$2.6 trillion and \$4.4 trillion in economic benefits annually, according to McKinsey & Company. But this can only happen if stakeholders worldwide work together. Here, Saudi Arabia has been building partnerships with countries around the world and has committed to an annual investment of 2.5 percent of GDP in the research, development, and innovation sector by 2040.

At a complex geopolitical moment, when challenges demand collective approaches, if middle powers continue to shape solutions, and do so in a collaborative way, we will be on course toward a stronger future.

Today, at a time of geopolitical turbulence, middle-power leadership — particularly from the Middle East — will determine whether the world makes progress on critical security, environmental, and technological priorities. This is because the solutions to several of the world's most pressing challenges not only run through the region but require the type of collaborative approaches that middle powers have championed. On global security, leadership from Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, will be vital in forging paths in two of the most urgent crises: Ukraine and Gaza. In August 2023, Jeddah hosted peace talks for Ukraine that were vital in bringing to the table key parties from the Global North and South. In a meeting between Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Riyadh earlier this year, the two discussed ways to operationalize the Ukrainian peace plan.

What these instances have in common is that the successes are due in large measure to an inclusive approach and to the leadership of so-called "middle powers" — countries such as India, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE that are not global superpowers but are playing an outsized role in moving the global agenda forward.

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Riyadh has also been a critical player in working to bring parties together to negotiate a ceasefire in Gaza. At the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos in January, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan reiterated the Kingdom's commitment to formally recognizing Israel if it takes steps toward a

Cameron faces tough battle to repair his tarnished legacy

David Cameron, the former UK prime minister, has repeatedly, and conveniently, stated that "Britain is back" since he returned to government when he was appointed foreign secretary in November. However, his attempts to rewrite the history of the troubled political legacy he left the UK to deal with in 2016 when he resigned as premier is unlikely to succeed.

Six years after leading the Conservatives back to power in 2010, Cameron stepped down as prime minister after his huge political gamble on a referendum about Britain's membership of the EU backfired. Now, he is energetically seeking to rewrite his political legacy after being given a position in the Cabinet by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak.

Cameron's appointment as foreign secretary was surprising for several reasons. Firstly, he is only the second former prime minister since the Second World War to later assume another Cabinet post (and only the fifth since 1900). And following his ennoblement as Lord Cameron shortly after his appointment in November, he is only the third Cabinet minister in recent decades to serve from the House of Lords.

Secondly, his foreign policy record while prime minister, including his proclamation of a "golden

era" of UK-China relations, jars with the significant shift in Western sentiment toward Beijing in recent years. Sunak even referred to Cameron's approach as being "naïve" and said the UK's approach needs to evolve as China is "consciously competing for global influence using all the levers of state power."

If anything, Sunak's view of Cameron's "golden era" policy on China is mild compared with the thoughts of some other Conservative MPs. Former party leader Iain Duncan Smith, for instance, said of Cameron's return to the Cabinet: "I am astonished at his appointment. It seems to send a signal to China that we are pursuing business with them at all costs and any costs. Those who have been sanctioned (by Beijing) now feel more abandoned than at any time. Those facing genocide and persecution will feel more abandoned than at any time."

This is the context in which Cameron took office six months ago, seeking to rewrite his own political legacy. On the positive side of the ledger, even some of his critics acknowledge that he has brought a renewed energy to the role of foreign minister compared with his immediate Conservative predecessors in the role.

During his first 100 days in office he made 36 official visits to 26 countries,

Andrew Hammond

including Ukraine, Israel, the West Bank, several European capitals, the Falkland Islands, Paraguay, Brazil and the US, including a stop in New York City to attend the UN.

Moreover, the fact he is a former prime minister has also possibly made it easier for him to arrange some meetings than it would have been for his Conservative predecessors as foreign minister, such as James Cleverly. Take, for example, Cameron's recent meeting with Donald Trump in Florida; the former president might not have been so quick to grant an audience to a UK foreign secretary who had not previously ruled the country.

It is also clear that Cameron genuinely enjoys being foreign secretary. As the UK's former national security adviser, Peter Ricketts, observed: "Frankly, I don't think Sunak is very interested in international affairs and I think he's happy to leave that to Cameron, who always found foreign affairs fascinating as prime minister and now he can do it full time."

Nevertheless, Cameron is unlikely to fundamentally change his political legacy. One of the most famous quotes in UK politics was by controversial former Cabinet minister, Enoch

Powell, who said: "All political lives, unless they are cut off in midstream at a happy juncture, end in failure, because that is the nature of politics and of human affairs."

While that is much too sweeping a statement to be factually accurate, it nonetheless captures the predicament of several recent UK prime ministers, including Cameron. Liz Truss, for example, survived fewer than 49 days in office, the shortest-ever tenure in 10 Downing Street. Her predecessor, Boris Johnson, ultimately limped from office after a series of damning scandals.

So while Cameron has brought more energy to the Foreign Office, he has done little to stabilize the wider sense of strategic drift in UK foreign policy in recent years. Moreover, he appears to still disagree with Sunak on potentially key issues, including the government's plan to send asylum seekers who enter the UK illegally to Rwanda.

Sunak has repeatedly threatened to withdraw the UK from the European Convention on Human Rights if judges at the European Court of Human Rights try to thwart his Rwanda policy.

However, Cameron has said: "I don't think it's necessary to leave the (convention), I don't think that needs to happen to make

this policy work." He is acutely aware that only two nations have ever left the human rights convention, Russia and Belarus, and it is not a club he wants the UK to join.

Indeed, Cameron has explicitly stated he favors a return to the pre-Brexit returns agreement with France, to help break up smuggling gangs and stop people making the perilous journey across the Channel in small boats. Under such a deal, he said, "people land on a beach in Kent, you take them straight back to France, you therefore break the model of the people smugglers. Now, I'd love that situation to be the case again, that's the most sensible thing."

However, he concedes that this is "simply not possible" because "the situation we're in" since leaving the EU means it is not practical.

Taking all of this together, it is therefore unlikely that Cameron will be able to completely shake off the troubled political inheritance he left the UK with in 2016 when he resigned as prime minister in the aftermath of the Brexit vote.

While his more energetic approach to foreign affairs compared with recent Conservative predecessors is welcome, there remains a deeper, wider sense of strategic drift in UK foreign policy.

Islamic thought can help the region attain a green future

Rodrigo Tavares

country should not lead to or result in any kind of damage, harm or degradation in the natural environment of another country."

If Saudi Arabia is currently undertaking plans to plant 10 billion trees, it is worth noting that as far back as 1983, those Saudi scholars advocated for the "revival, restoration, or recovery of lands" based on Qur'anic principles. And as encapsulated in a saying of Prophet Muhammad: "On Doomsday, if anyone has a palm shoot in hand, he should plant it."

The world's 1.8 billion Muslims may interpret the religious knowledge system differently, and likewise, they may not have a uniform interpretation of climate change. However, several Qur'anic verses and principles, such as Tawhid (unity of creation, including humans and nature), Mizan (maintaining the balance and proportion God

heavy industrial production, waste incineration, reliance on fossil fuel-based mobility, and deforestation, as the primary drivers of ongoing climate change.

But what efforts are Muslim-majority countries and communities making to steward the environment and address the climate emergency? Undoubtedly, there is still a considerable journey ahead. It is noteworthy that many of these countries rank low on the Yale

Environmental Performance Index, despite being particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Ideals hum a sweet melody, but reality has its own offbeat rhythm. However, taking a long-term perspective, numerous oil-producing nations in the Gulf region have embraced decarbonization plans and strategic visions focused on environmental sustainability. For instance, Saudi Vision 2030 serves as a widely recognized national

The Qur'an contains around 200 verses addressing environmental matters. One of the pioneers of Islamic environmentalism was the Iranian philosopher Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who, in the 1960s, highlighted the links between environmental degradation and the spiritual crisis of the modern world. More recent contributions include the ones by Iraqi Islamic eco-theologian Mawil Izzi Dien, Saudi Arabia's environmental planner Othman Llewellyn, Kurdish Islamic environmentalist Ibrahim Ozdemir and the Sri Lankan eco-theologian Fazlun Khalid. Building on scientific insights, many Islamic scholars point to human activities, including heavy industrial production, waste incineration, reliance on fossil fuel-based mobility, and deforestation, as the primary drivers of ongoing climate change.

has built into his creation), Khalifah (humans as stewards of God's creation), and Maslahah (care for future generations), have been applied to address environmental concerns.

Indeed, Muslims hold the belief that humanity bears the responsibility of stewardship, or khalifah, over the planet, understanding that divine accountability awaits them. The Qur'an contains around 200 verses addressing environmental matters.

One of the pioneers of Islamic environmentalism was the Iranian philosopher Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who, in the 1960s, highlighted the links between environmental degradation and the spiritual crisis of the modern world. More recent contributions include the ones by Iraqi Islamic eco-theologian Mawil Izzi Dien, Saudi Arabia's environmental planner Othman Llewellyn, Kurdish Islamic environmentalist Ibrahim Ozdemir and the Sri Lankan eco-theologian Fazlun Khalid. Building on scientific insights, many Islamic scholars point to human activities, including

masterplan among the country's citizens, signaling a commitment to environmental stewardship.

From the bottom-up, various Muslim organizations have embarked on reforestation, recycling, and energy efficiency initiatives. They have built low-carbon mosques and disseminated guidelines on conducting the Hajj and the Umrah in an environmentally-conscious manner. There are also non-profit organizations, such as the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences, whose goal is to encourage Muslims to live up to their responsibilities as stewards and work toward leaving a livable earth for future generations. Survey data further demonstrate that the majority of Muslims recognize climate change as a significant societal challenge.

The success of the global environmental agenda hinges on its diversification. This entails more than just formally inviting different people to participate; it is about having a sincere interest in the value they could add.

Gulf states, Turkiye playing key role in Iraq's reemergence

Sinem Cengiz

Over the past decade or more, the Middle East's center of gravity has shifted to the Arabian Gulf, as the Gulf states have started to play more active roles in the region, while the geopolitical influence of countries such as Iraq, Syria and Egypt has relatively declined. However, recent developments are reasserting the prominence of some of these countries in regional politics, particularly with Iraq reemerging as a significant actor.

After decades of conflict, Iraq is trying to pitch itself as a regional actor not only in mediating disputes but also facilitating economic integration and cooperation. For example, Iraq, which has often been an arena for rivalry between regional actors, was instrumental in planting the seeds for last year's China-brokered Saudi Arabia-Iran deal. The Iraqi

government is now trying to leverage its relationships with Turkiye, the Gulf states and the West to shift the country's status from being a victim of foreign interference to becoming a platform for cooperation. This has not gone unnoticed by Turkiye and the Gulf states.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Monday paid a long-anticipated visit to neighboring Iraq, his first since 2011, accompanied by a large entourage. The trip occurred at a critical juncture and led to mutual understanding between the two parties, culminating in the signing of 26 agreements and memorandums of understanding on various areas.

One of the most concrete outcomes was the signing of the four-way memorandum of understanding for joint cooperation on the Development Road project

between Turkiye, Iraq, Qatar and the UAE. This \$17 billion plan aims to establish road and railway infrastructure linking the Gulf with Turkiye via Iraq, leveraging Iraq's geographical status and its numerous borders to facilitate transportation and trade. The project is to be carried out in three phases: the first to be completed in 2028, the second in 2033 and the third in 2050.

Should the Development Road project achieve its goal of reaching the Turkiye-Iraq border through collaborative efforts between the two countries, it has the potential to catalyze a fresh era of economic cooperation. Such success could mitigate existing conflicts and prompt Ankara and Baghdad to explore alternative approaches toward each other. This would also prove that political disputes can be ironed out through

economic and development initiatives. Ankara and Baghdad have been collaborating closely on the project for some time, with one of the key considerations being the involvement of countries in terms of funding. The participation of Qatar and the UAE addresses this concern. The Gulf countries' engagement with Iraq is mostly due to Washington's proactive efforts to draw Baghdad into closer alignment with the Gulf orbit of influence in a bid to contain Iran's influence, as well as Turkiye's engagement in Iraq. When Baghdad announced the Development Road project, it hosted a one-day conference that brought together ministers from the Gulf Cooperation Council states, Turkiye, Iran, Syria and Jordan to discuss the initiative. With Iran not in this

picture, it might be an indication that Iraq is keen to get out of the Iranian shadow.

Qatar, meanwhile, is keen on establishing a direct economic connection with Turkiye. Doha has also shown an interest in expanding its investments in Iraq. This commitment started with an initial pledge of about \$10 billion earmarked for infrastructure and service projects.

Regarding the UAE, Iraq is aiming to leverage the expertise of Emirati firms in managing large ports. The UAE has chosen to assist Iraq, particularly in financing the project, for two main reasons: to support Iraq's distancing from Iran and to participate in a regional initiative, aligning with its broader vision for development.

However, both Gulf states need to safeguard

their investments against Iraq's unpredictable political landscape. This entails making a sustained, strategic effort to shape Iraq into an area of influence.

It is noteworthy that, aside from helping to ease tensions between Riyadh and Tehran, Iraq also facilitated a meeting between the Qatari and Emirati leaderships after years of tension between the two countries. Therefore, the infrastructure project will not only enhance Turkish-Iraqi relations and Ankara's relations with the Arab world in general, but it will also foster intra-GCC cooperation as the Gulf states expand their footprint in Iraq. Intra-GCC cooperation would provide strategic depth for the Gulf states in Iraq, making their investments resilient to external and internal pressures.

However, while the Development Road could potentially improve Iraq's

relations with Turkiye and the Gulf states that are involved, it could also complicate the existing economic and political disputes between Kuwait and Iraq, including their disagreements over maritime borders. However, in light of these disagreements, a healthy political dialogue is necessary to ensure the successful implementation of the project.

Here, Turkiye and the other GCC states' roles are important. While being cautious, it might be possible that the project could prompt Baghdad to engage in negotiations with Kuwait to address the maritime dispute. Such discussions could prove beneficial for both sides, fostering collaboration in their development initiatives and easing tensions.

Another aspect casting doubt on the feasibility of the Development Road's

implementation is the presence of numerous competing regional connectivity initiatives, such as the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative and the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor. However, the region can undoubtedly accommodate more than one economic corridor. It is not a zero-sum game.

In today's evolving regional landscape, the Gulf states are playing a significant role in helping Iraq's reappearance in regional politics. Economic initiatives like the Development Road project signify a shift toward cooperation and regional integration, keeping contentious issues aside. While challenges and competing projects do exist, collaboration among stakeholders, including Turkiye and the Gulf states, promises a more prosperous and interconnected region.



Pakistan's economy on path to recovery: Governor

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Governor State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Mr. Jameel Ahmad said that firm commitment of the government and the SBP to respond to the macroeconomic challenges has resulted in significant improvement in economy. He was delivering his keynote address as the Chief Guest on Members Convocation of ICMA Pakistan at a local hotel in Karachi. In his keynote address, Governor Jameel Ahmad congratulated the graduating accounting professionals and encouraged them to make a mark for themselves.

While elaborating on the recent improvement in Pakistan's economy, Governor Jameel shared that it is worth taking a step back and analyze where our economy is standing and where it is headed. He shared that a year ago, Pakistan was facing a very challenging macroeconomic environment. Inflation

reached to as high as 38 percent; the FX reserves were fast depleting; the exchange rate was under a lot of pressure; and uncertainty was quite high. However, today, inflation is coming down sharply; our reserves have risen to around US\$8 billion despite heavy debt repayments and will so cross US\$ 9 billion mark; the current account deficit has narrowed quite significantly, and as a result, the PKR is stable. Uncertainty has also reduced. Pakistan's bilateral and multilateral partners are continuing their support. And the stock market is reaching new highs.

Governor, while citing Pakistan's economic improvements, shared that progress was made possible because of a firm commitment of the government and the State Bank of Pakistan to effectively respond to the macroeconomic challenges. He shared that unpopular yet necessary measures had to

be taken. The State Bank raised the policy rate to 22 percent, in order to reduce pressure on inflation and the current account. The government also undertook fiscal consolidation by constraining non-essential current expenditures. This coordinated policy response is now yielding the desired results.

Governor SBP stressed on the need for fresh perspectives and innovative solutions to address the longstanding issues facing our economy. This fresh perspective and innovative thinking has become more necessary, as the global shocks facing our economy are getting increasingly complex. He shared that climate change, technological advancements, cybersecurity threats, and financial innovations are adding new dimensions to the risks to economic and financial stability.

Governor encouraged the graduates to proactively respond to these emerging challenges as our country

needs professionals with in-depth knowledge of economics, finance and accounting to find workable solutions. He said that leadership skills are also paramount, so that you can design and implement the policy and regulatory decisions with courage and fortitude. In conclusion the Governor encouraged the graduates to work with dedication, hard work, and unwavering commitment to excellence to help in shaping the economic landscape of Pakistan.

Earlier in his welcome address President ICMA Pakistan Shehzad Ahmed Malik extended a warm welcome to Governor SBP Mr. Jameel Ahmed, Deputy Governor Dr. Inayat Hussain and Deputy Governor Mr. Saleem Ullah for accepting the invitation to attend the Convocation. He congratulated SBP team on their efforts for stabilizing the economy.

In the end, Governor SBP bestowed degrees upon the graduating CMAs.



CHINIOT: A worker busy in making traditional basket with branches of tree at his workplace.

Gas theft crackdown continued

F.P. Report

LAHORE: During the ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, SNGPL continued raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad, disconnecting another 612 connections; Rs20.3 million fine imposed.

In Lahore, the regional team disconnected 13 connections on illegal use of gas. The team also imposed fine of Rs 0.35 million against gas pilferers.

In Multan 13 connections were disconnected on illegal use while another 2 disconnected on use of compressor.

In Peshawar the company disconnected 36 connections on account of direct use of gas and illegal use of gas and amount of Rs 1.29 million have been booked against gas theft cases.

In Sahiwal three connections were disconnected on illegal use of gas.

In Faisalabad the team disconnected 2 connections on illegal use of gas while imposing fine of Rs 0.05 million against gas pilferers.

In Bahawalpur the team disconnected 2 connections on illegal use of gas while another 9 on use of compressor.

The regional team of Sheikhpura disconnected 418 on illegal use of gas while another 114 on use of compressors and also imposed fine of Rs 18.62 million against gas theft cases. The team also lodged 19 FIRs against gas pilferers.

Economic reforms useless: PEW

LAHORE (INP): President Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW), Dr. Murtaza Mughal has said that economic reforms are useless without practical political reforms.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, he said that economic reforms will only achieve goals when political reforms were introduced, otherwise, it would be nothing than wasting time and resources.

Murtaza Mughal said that economic reforms were being carried out under the pressure of the IMF, but the elite were spared and all burden was being placed on the poor.

More attention should be paid to political reforms, otherwise process of economic reforms will remain incomplete and ineffective, he added.

The business leader said that a person who used to work at a roadside tea stall has become prime minister of India and has been changing the destiny of his country.

The son of an African migrant has served as president of the US, and the son of an Indian migrant was presently the prime minister of the UK, he added.

However, politics has transformed into a money game in Pakistan. Our politicians were often considered disgustingly rich, self-serving, and uncaring of the people they govern.

Our politicians were known for scheming and cutting ruthless deals to secure a big stack of cash.

Poor and mediocre were getting top slots in other countries, but in Pakistan, such people cannot reach the district council because here politics has been turned into a game of wealth and greed.

Murtaza Mughal said that certain families dominate all major political parties and that intra-party elections were a joke and deception.

Joint efforts to tackle fiscal challenges

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Pakistan Industrial Associations Front (PIAF) has asked the government to give priority to the economic recovery, emphasizing the necessity of joint efforts to tackle Pakistan's economic difficulties.

PIAF Chairman Faheem Rehman Saigol observed that country's GDP growth rate has always remained below its potential despite efforts to boost economic growth, as the development of important sectors and investment prospects was hampered by inadequate revenue collection, structural problems, and governance issues.

Since it has been causing serious governance and economic issues for years, the cost of goods, food, petrol, and other necessities has increased, and inflation has almost reached 45 percent, which is not bearable for the common man.

On the other hand, there has been an increase in dissatisfaction among the public that no state institution is performing well and to save them from the haughtiness and bad administration pervasive in the system. The only way for this to go from a failure to a success story, as in other countries, is if the federal and provincial governments defy them and pursue fundamental changes in governance, fairness, openness, accountability, and the consistent economic policies minimum for 15 years.

Faheem Saigol expressed confidence in the country's ability to overcome these challenges and highlighted the new government should fulfill the commitment to eradicating poverty and unemployment.

He said that the government should remain steadfast in its commitment to guide Pakistan through its current economic and political challenges, with a focus on unity, effective governance, and public welfare.

The PIAF Chairman said that the country has had trouble raising enough money to cover its expenses. Due to the low tax-to-GDP ratio, borrowing and outside help are heavily relied upon to close the fiscal imbalance. In Pakistan, there is a recurring budget deficit because the government spends more than it takes in. The national debt burden has risen, as a result, needing substantial financial resources for debt repayment. Both internal and external debt in Pakistan has been constantly rising.

The PIAF leader said that budget is largely consumed by debt servicing; leaving little money for social welfare and development initiatives. Circular debt, which is the accumulation of unpaid invoices and pending payments among power generation firms, distribution companies, and the government, is a problem in Pakistan's energy sector.

Other troubling issues also exist, posing obstacles to our economy's expansion. Pakistan is ranked 173rd internationally for tax payments. According to a World Bank analysis, Pakistani businesspeople pay 47 taxes yearly. A single business that conducts business in four different Pakistani provinces annually disburses five corporate income taxes, twelve employer-paid pension contributions, twelve Social Security payments, one property tax, one professional tax, one vehicle tax, one stamp duty payment, one fuel tax payment, and twelve payments of goods and sales tax. An exporter needs 75 hours to complete border compliance and document compliance. Additionally, Pakistan dropped 23 spots on the indicator for corporate loan availability.

He said that the government will have its work sharply cut out as far as the economic challenges are concerned. Coming at the back of fast-unfolding climate change crisis and recent COVID pandemic that pushed millions into poverty with little fiscal capacity of government to provide anywhere near close to what was needed in stimulus spending.

He said that even though Pakistan's economic crisis is a recurring factor in the country's political unrest, it has a history of ignoring the nation's true issues, which include poor governance, a broken judicial system, outdated laws, complicated tax system, lack of transparency, duplication in the government system, ineffective bureaucracy, improper use of our human, natural and water resources, lack of efficient local government, inadequate/unreliable data for country's planning, and the consistent flaws in policies in execution by the government departments.

Two-day conference on 'Social Entrepreneurship in Pakistan' held



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Two-day conference on 'Social Entrepreneurship in Pakistan' organized by Accountability Lab Pakistan with the support of US Mission in Pakistan in partnership with Pakistan-US Alumni Network (PUAN) concludes in Islamabad.

"With more than 44,000 exchange alumni, PUAN members like you are establishing climate-smart businesses, investing in community-driven enter-

prises, promoting entry to markets for underserved and marginalized communities, and you are tackling seemingly intractable problems through entrepreneurship - all while contributing to the growth and development of Pakistan," said Deputy Chief of Mission Andrew Schofer.

"Social Entrepreneurship is not just a buzzword; it is the driving force for tomorrow's transformation, a catalyst for inclusive development, and a pathway to empowerment for all members of society" reiterated Former Senator and Chairman of Senate's Defense Committee, Mushahid Hussain Syed, during his keynote speech at the conference.

Speaking to the participants at the opening ceremony, Fayyaz Yaseen, Executive Director of the

Accountability Lab said that the key objective of the conference is to highlight aspects of social entrepreneurship, the connection between business and civic engagement, its widespread impacts, on Pakistan, and ways to address the issues involved. Attended by 120-150 mid-senior PUAN alumni members from various corners of the country and experts from both private and public sector including civil society organizations, academia, parliamentarians and the media, the conference ignited discussions, fostered collaborations, and charted a path towards a more socially conscious and economically sustainable Pakistan. Talks by sectoral experts, exposure visits, plenary discussions, brainstorming sessions, and group presentations were

the key highlights of the conference.

The Country President of Pakistan-US Alumni Network, Sahibzada Aamir Khalil shared, 'this conference is not just about dialogue; it is about action. We are here to identify and address the barriers hindering the growth of social entrepreneurship in Pakistan, offering actionable insights and solutions to create an enabling ecosystem for aspiring social entrepreneurs.'

The conference featured a diverse range of activities and engagements designed to inspire, educate, and empower participants including panel discussions with experts; guest lectures, outreach visits to key government institutions promoting skill development and strengthening entrepreneurship echo system; and development of action plans for promotion of social entrepreneurship.

During his closing remarks, Chairman Accountability Lab Pakistan, Ali Imran added "Our discussions have revolved around the dynamic and essential theme of Social Entrepreneurship. From envisioning its future prospects to exploring technological innovations and the tangible outcomes achievable through robust public-private partnerships and inclusive networks, we have left no stone unturned".

PIDE hosts talks on sustainable fiscal reforms

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) hosted a public lecture on "Sustainable Fiscal Reforms: International Experience and Applications for Pakistan," featuring Arturo Herrera Gutierrez, Global Director for Governance at the World Bank, as the keynote speaker.

At the core of his presentation, Arturo Herrera Gutierrez emphasized the urgent need for sustainable fiscal reforms in Pakistan. Drawing from international

experiences, he highlighted the criticality of establishing a stable and sustainable debt path as a cornerstone for Pakistan's economic future, said in a press release here on Sunday.

"Pakistan stands at a crucial juncture where it can either pave the path for sustained economic growth or fall into the recurring traps of debt distress," remarked Gutierrez. In parallel, he discussed the historical context of economic challenges faced by countries like Mexico during the 1980s and how these experiences shape fiscal strategies today.

Moreover, Gutierrez outlined the necessity of strong macroeconomic frameworks, robust debt management practices, and the establishment of institutional arrangements to ensure discipline in fiscal policy. He emphasized that ensuring fiscal sustainability requires a comprehensive long-term strategy, not just balancing budgets annually. These measures are critical for building credibility and securing access to financial markets. The World Banker emphasized the need to maintain consistency over time to avoid the economic problems of the past. He brought to the attention the resurgence of debt distress globally, particularly post-COVID-19, necessitating a re-evaluation of fiscal sustainability approaches.

His presentation mentioned countries with gross

public debt issues; notably, countries like the US, Canada, Japan, and Pakistan, which have debt-to-GDP ratios exceeding 75%. Japan, with a debt ratio of 252% of GDP and a low interest rate of 0.88%, contrasts sharply with Greece, which faces a higher interest rate of 3.55% despite a lower debt ratio of 168%. This indicates that the debt-to-GDP ratio is significant, but the sustainability of fiscal finances also sends a critical signal to the market, impacting interest rates.

During the lecture, Gutierrez imparted critical insights on sustainable fiscal policies across the globe, focusing specifically on how these strategies can be adapted to Pakistan's economic context.

In contrast, the PIDE team proposed a nuanced perspective, asserting that Pakistan's economic woes transcend simple accounting measures. They advocate for comprehensive healing rather than superficial fixes. Placing growth at the center of its reform agenda, PIDE emphasizes prioritizing economic expansion over mere revenue accumulation.

They advocate for allowing the economy to flourish before imposing additional taxes, suggesting a re-regulation to facilitate transactions and stimulate economic activity, ultimately leading to improved revenue generation by default.

Court Notice

In the Court of Civil Judge-IV/Illaq Qazi District Swat. Case # 195/1, year 2020, next hearing date 29/04/2024. Muhammad Yaqoob etc. Vs. Hussain Urf Ayub Khan etc. Notice to (7) Mst. Bakht Jabena, (8) Muhammad Raheem, (9) Wadan, (10) Syed Raheem, (11) Akhtar Ali, (12) Zafar Ali, (13) Mst. Fatma, (14) Mst. Aleema, (15) Mst. Musrat, (16) Mst. Kainat, (18) Mst. Rehana, (19) Mst. Hafsa daughters and sons Sawal Raheem (Late) r/o Nowshad Mohalla Faiz Abad Saidu Sharif, (20) Mst. Shameem Akhtar widow, (21) Hassan Ali, (22) Liaqat Ali, (23) Asif Ali, (24) Asad Ali (presently abroad), (25) Rehan Khan sons Muhammad Sher Ali Khan (Late) Faiz Abad Swat, (26) Noor Neshta widow, (27) through Heirs, (27/1) Mst. Gul Meena widow, (27/2) Nasreen, (27/3) Meno Shabana daughters Gul Meena (Late), (28) Muhammad Ayub, (29) Akhtar Ayub, (30) Syed Nawab, (31) Mst. Yasmeen, (32) Mst. Saima, (33) Mst. Amina, (34) Mst. Nasreen, (35) Shabana, (37) Mahnoor daughters and sons Muhammad Yousaf (Late) Faqeran Langar Shah Deheri, (38) Naik Muhammad, (42) Nawab, (43) Mst. Sultana Begum, (44) Mst. Azat, (45) Mst. Naseem daughters and sons Mst. Mehar Jana (Late) daughter Jamruz r/o near Ulai Adda Tehsil Kabal District Swat. In above mentioned case the respondent can't be served in the ordinary way, it is therefore proclaimed that if said respondents will not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the Court at 8:30 a.m. dated 29/04/2024. Ex-parte proceeding will be held against the mentioned respondents under my hand and seal of this court.

Court Notice

In the Court of Sami Ullah Khan Civil Judge VI/Alaqa Qazi Buner at Dagar. Case No. 105/1, Institution 6/3/2023/19/2/2024, date of hearing 14/5/2024. Mst. Anwar Sheda Vs. Shakeel etc. Notice to No. (1) Shakeel, (5) Hakem Khan sons of Zaref Khan resident of Bagra Tehsil Daggar District Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants cannot be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.00 a.m. dated 14/5/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Weak economy facing challenges as FDI down

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has said that with energy cost continuing to escalate, the new investment challenges keeping on burdening the already weak economic landscape in the country, as the inflows of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the country has declined by 10 percent during the first nine months of this fiscal year while inflow of overseas workers' remittances have clocked in at \$2.25 billion in Feb 2024, 6.2% lower on a month-on-month basis.

The BMP Chairman and FPCCI former president Mian Anjum Nisar asked the government to take concrete steps to attract foreign investment, as the foreign remittances flows are crucial which can support the country's account balance amidst low volumes of foreign direct investment and nominal growth of exports.

Overseas Pakistanis living in Gulf should further be motivated to maintain an upward momentum in remittances, as they contributed more than 60 percent of the total inflows during last couple of months.

The State Bank of Pakistan reported that the country fetched FDI amounting to \$1.1 billion during July-March of FY24 compared to \$1.216 billion in the same period of last fiscal year (FY23), depicting a decline of \$118 million. During the period under review, FDI inflows were \$1.959 billion against

\$860 million.

Month-on-month basis, net foreign direct investment settled at \$258 million in March 2024, compared to \$170 million during March 2023. The FDI inflows in March 2024 are highest since June 2022.

During the first nine months of this fiscal year, portfolio investment was \$65 million compared to an outflow of \$4.4 million.

During the period under review, the country's total foreign investment surged by 525 percent. The country attracted foreign investment amounting to \$1.264 billion in July-March of FY24 up from \$202 million in corresponding period of last fiscal year.

FPCCI former president observed that the focus should be on streamlining the long-standing structural bottlenecks in the investment climate such as streamlining the FDI approval process.

At the same time, stability in the country's economic and political scenario is critical for any resurgence of investment in the country.

Mian Anjum said that with a view to save the economy the government should announce special incentives for a cash-strapped SMEs, which represents more than 90 percent of around 3.2 million business enterprises in Pakistan, contributing 40 percent to the GDP, employing more than 80 percent of non-agricultural workforce, and generating 25 percent of export earnings.

He, expressing dissatisfaction over the financial

packages, called for a significant cut in import duties and waiver of sales tax, income tax and additional income taxes which are still being charged in this time of grave economic crisis. He said that other factors have been the holding back of profits and dividends of the MNCs to control dollar outflow, which has left scared away foreign investors tremendously as they see the existing foreign investors unable to repatriate their earnings to their home countries.

Data shows that the FDI outflows have remained between \$650 and \$750 million when outflows increased specifically from the telecom sector. Moreover, the FDI from China, which continues to be the largest investor in the country particularly in the power sector, has also come down over these years along with rise in FDI outflows.

The BMP chairman said that China has been the leading investor in Pakistan for few years and was a major contributor to the increase in the size of FDI. However, the outgoing fiscal FY24 may drag down the inflows from elsewhere due to slowdown of economies in the developed countries, he warned.

He said that Pakistan has remained a potential market for foreign investors, who still have plans to make fresh investment in the country, but they have continued to wait for the return of economic stability. He highlighted uncertainty in the rupee-dollar parity as one of the major concerns of foreign investors.



In brief

President's Cup matches washed out

RAWALPINDI (APP): All three matches of third round of President's Cup One-Day Tournament in Abbottabad and Rawalpindi were abandoned without a ball being bowled. KRL and HEC shared points in Abbottabad, SNGPL and SBP shared points at Shoaib Akhtar Cricket Stadium in Rawalpindi, while Ghani Glass and Pakistan Television also shared points at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, Rawalpindi, according to a statement issued here by Pakistan Cricket Board. Fourth round fixtures for Tuesday: SBP v WAPDA, Shoaib Akhtar Cricket Stadium; Ghani Glass v HEC, Abbottabad Cricket Stadium; SNGPL v KRL, Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium.

Inter Club Athletics Championship

FAISALABAD (APP): Inter Club Athletics Championship would be organized at Dhuddiwalla Hostel Ground Chak No. 214-RB here on Wednesday (May 01, 2024). District & Divisional Athletics Association Faisalabad in collaboration with Lyallpur Athletics Club would organize the championship in which various events would be arranged including 100 meter race, 200 meter, 400 meter, 800 meter, 1500 meter, 5000 meter, 110 meter hurdles, 200 meter relay race, long jump, triple jump, high jump, discus throw, etc. The organizing committee has completed all necessary arrangements to hold the event in a befitting manner, spokesman of the athletics association said here on Sunday.

Bagnaia wins Spanish Grand Prix

JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA (Agencies): Reigning MotoGP champion Francesco Bagnaia won his third successive Spanish Grand Prix as championship leader Jorge Martin crashed out. Home favourite Martin lost control of his bike on the 11th lap, allowing Italy's Bagnaia to secure victory following a back-and-forth tussle with six-time champion Marc Marquez, who finished second. Italy's Marco Bezzecchi came third at the Circuito de Jerez. Pramac Racing's Martin, 26, remains the leader in the overall standings, 17 points in front of Ducati's Bagnaia. "The most important thing was the first lap. After that I just tried to push, and Jorge committed a mistake by going too strong on the brakes," said Bagnaia. The race winner said he enjoyed the contest with Gresini's Marquez, who finished 0.372 seconds behind him. "Every time I fight with Marc, I know I have to be aggressive," Bagnaia said. "It was very good." Spain's Marquez sported a tyre mark on his shoulder after the race following a close encounter with Bagnaia after the pair overtook each other multiple times.

Indian cricket should not give Pandya priority

NEW DELHI (Agencies): The commentator and cricket expert, Irfan Pathan, said on Star Sports Press Room show "Ticket to World Cup" that the Indian team should not rely on Hardik Pandya. Expressing his views, Irfan Pathan, emphasized that Indian cricket should refrain from overly prioritizing Hardik Pandya, especially considering the team's lack of World Cup victories. He suggested that Pandya has yet to make a significant impact at the international level despite being considered a primary all-rounder.

Kirsten, Gillespie to coach Pakistan men



LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi on Sunday confirmed the appointment of former South African Gary Kirsten and former Australian quick Jason Gillespie as white-ball and red ball cricket coaches respectively of the Pakistan Men's cricket teams for a period of two years.

"Former Pakistan all-rounder Azher Mehmood has been assigned as assistant coach in all three formats for the period," the PCB Chairman said, adding that a transparent recruitment process had been adopted for the appointment of the coaching staff.

Mohsin Naqvi said that the white-ball cricket coach Gary Kirsten will join the team in England at the end of a foreign cricket league where he is the head coach of a franchise. Kirsten will coach Pakistan in the upcoming T20 World Cup 2024, all white-ball bilateral series, the ICC Champions Trophy 2025, ACC T20 Cup 2025 and ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 in India and Sri Lanka.

He said Jason Gillespie will join the team later as Pakistan did not have any Test cricket commitments.

To a query, Naqvi said the best available foreign coaches have been hired by

the PCB, adding that the foreign coaches bring with them more to offer to the players than local coaches. He expressed hope that the Pakistan cricketers will gain from the cricketing acumen and coaching expertise of these coaches who have vast experience of international cricket and coaching teams. Mohsin Naqvi said that local coaches were behind their foreign counterparts in use of technology and science.

"The players will also be able to improve their language skills in the presence of a foreign coach," the BCP Chairman quipped when asked about Pakistani

players incapacity to communicate in English.

He said that a GPS was made available immediately to the team's coaching staff, adding that the PCB was bound to provide the cricketers with all kinds of facilities instead of keeping the money locked in the bank lockers.

Mohsin Naqvi reiterated his commitment to back his players provided they all go down fighting for the glory of the team and the country, adding that there was no room for lethargy in the team. On instability in the affairs of the PCB, Naqvi said that stability in all matters of the PCB was his ideal, adding that the current political government was stable and did not find anything to worry about.

On women cricket, Mohsin Naqvi said that the PCB was in the hunt for a foreign head coach for the Pakistan women cricket team, adding that PCB's Director International Cricket Usman Wahla is looking for the right person.

On Ihsanullah, he said he had constituted a three-member medical panel to submit its report whether his injury was mishandled, adding that the PCB will

look after all its players in men and women cricket.

On injuries to Shawaal Zulfiqar and other women cricketers, the PCB Chief said that he had referred her to the same medical panel as well, however, added that two women cricketers violated the security protocols and left the team hotel in a car in Karachi which resulted in an accident. He said though the PCB is looking after the medical needs of Ghulam Fatima but there was a need for security protocols.

"On the recommendation of the Punjab Chief Secretary, a female SSP has been appointed to look after the security needs of the team and implement protocols like the Men's cricket team," the PCB Chairman added. Mohsin Naqvi also announced that the PCB will voluntarily provide medical care to the three critically injured boys in Qalat, Quetta, adding that nine cricketers had been injured while protecting themselves from a rain-storm against a wall.

To another query, he said the Kakul physical training camp had nothing to do with injuries to some national cricketers during the recent-

ly concluded five-match T20I series, adding that the hamstring injuries to Azam Khan, Mohammad Rizwan and Irfan Khan Niazi were sustained on the field.

On renovation and revamping of cricket venues prior to the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 in Pakistan, the PCB Chairman said a bid had been invited from international bidders with relevant experience into the construction of cricket stadiums and the bids will be opened on May 7.

"The Gaddafi stadium may be a good stadium for football but it is not meant for cricket and it needs to be renovated and turned into a good facility besides the National Bank stadium, Karachi," he added. He said the PCB, though running against time, will complete upgradation and renovation of these stadiums before the ICC Champions Trophy 2025.

Assistant batting coach Azher Mehmood thanked the PCB for reposing confidence in him and assigning him the coaching role with the Pakistan men's cricket team. He said he would play his due role in helping the Pakistan cricket team excel in all formats.

To a question, he said technology was vital to today's sport, adding that the GPS device would help us monitor the work-load of the Pakistan cricketers, whether they are playing domestic, international or franchise cricket.

To another query, Azher Mehmood acknowledged the fact that the Pakistan team lagged behind in increasing the run-rate between overs 7 and 15, adding that the management wanted to make players get out of the fear. "Our goal is to take the team forward," the assistant coach added.

On goals, the assistant coach said, "Better running between the wickets can help teams achieve higher scores when compared with the opposition and our main focus is to raise Pakistan team's average team score to around 190."

PCB Chief Operating Officer (COO) Salman Naseer told the media that media rights for the Pakistan-New Zealand T20I series had been sold better than the last England series in Pakistan. Taking pride in the sold-out crowds during the Pakistan-New Zealand T20I series, he expected everything to go well.

Rana Mashhood congratulates hockey team being selected for Azlan Shah Tournament

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP) Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan, on Sunday, extended warm congratulations to the National Hockey Team (PHT) on their selection for the upcoming Azlan Shah Cup Tournament scheduled in Malaysia.

Expressing immense pleasure at the announcement, he conveyed his gratitude to all stakeholders for their unwavering support and cooperation in nurturing the talent and the selection process.

Acknowledging the dedication and hard work of the players, Rana Mashhood wished the National Hockey Team the best of luck for the tournament. He expressed confidence in the team's abilities to showcase exemplary sportsmanship and bring glory to the

nation at the international stage.

The Chairman emphasized the importance of sports in promoting unity, resilience, and national pride.

He reiterated the Government's commitment to providing all necessary resources and support to empower athletes and enhance Pakistan's standing in the world of sports.

The Chairman concluded by encouraging all citizens to rally behind the National Hockey Team, offering their fervent support as they embark on this prestigious journey to represent Pakistan with distinction.

Meanwhile, the selection committee comprising Dutch coach Roland Oltmans, Manzoorul Hasan and Shahid Islam announcing the 18-member Pakistan Hockey Team after conducting trials in Islamabad said

that Imad Shakeel Butt will lead the Pakistan team while Abu Bakr will be the vice-captain.

The committee broadcasted that six players of the Karachi camp also managed to be part of the team while two goalkeepers had been included in the Pakistani squad.

Six defenders and six midfielders had also been selected while four forwards were also nominated for the tournament.

Six players had been kept on standby, the committee announced.

Earlier Chairman PMYP Rana Mashhood had constituted a three-member selection committee to select the team while Olympian Khawaja Junaid was also present during the trials on the instructions of Chairman PMYP.



SHEFFIELD: Ronnie O'Sullivan plays a shot against Ryan Day of Wales in their round two match during day nine of the Cazoo World Snooker Championship.

O'Sullivan leads Day in last 16

SHEFFIELD (Agencies): Seven-time champion Ronnie O'Sullivan opened a 5-3 lead as he made a strong start to his World Snooker Championship last-16 match against Wales' Ryan Day. The 48-year-old Englishman is on course for an eighth Crucible title, which would move him clear of Stephen Hendry's mark of seven successes.

O'Sullivan, who thrashed Welsh qualifier Jackson Page 10-1 in the first round, made breaks of 123 and 84 in the opening two frames against Day, but the world number 18 rallied to take the next two. Breaks of 83 and 51 helped O'Sullivan go 4-2 in front before Day responded with a 115, but O'Sullivan restored his two-frame advantage with a 92 in the last frame of the session.

Day, 44, is aiming to reach the quarter-finals for a fourth time, having lost in that round in 2008, 2009 and 2012. He has played O'Sullivan here before - squandering a 9-7 lead to lose 13-10 in their last-16 tie in 2006. "This place gives you lots of great memories and lots of scars," said Day on Wednesday. "That was certainly one of the scars. It's not physical on your skin, but it is lodged away somewhere deep in your mind." Their match is the best of 25 frames, so first to 13, and will resume at 19:00 BST on Sunday before being completed on Monday from 14:30.

Maguire claims victory over rival Murphy

Scotland's Stephen Maguire moved into the quarter-final thanks to a 13-9 victory over 2005 world champion Shaun Murphy. A fired-up Maguire had built a 10-6 lead on Saturday. Murphy had earlier edged two frames on the black and responded with a fist pump, before Maguire did likewise, punching the table and then the air as he moved into a strong advantage going into the third session.

Rybakina, Rublev reach Madrid Open last 16

MADRID (AFP): Women's world number four Elena Rybakina eased to a 6-1, 6-4 win over Egypt's Mayar Sherif to reach the Madrid Open last 16 on Sunday.

The Kazakh, who has a tour-leading three titles this season after triumphing in Stuttgart last week, broke twice in the first set to move 5-0 ahead on the Spanish clay.

Although Sherif battled harder in the second set, surviving four match points to hold for 5-4 down, Rybakina clinched the victory on serve at the Caja Magica.

"Despite the score, it was a very tough match," said Rybakina, who has the best record on the tour this season with 28 wins.

"It was a lot of deuces and we both fought a lot - I'm really happy with the performance today."

Rybakina will face teenager Sara Bejlek in the next round after the Czech defeated American Ashlyn Krueger 6-3, 6-1.

"I've never played against a player like this," said the 18-year-old. "I will try my best and we'll see how it will go tomorrow."

In the men's draw Andrey Rublev came back from 5-0 down in a first set tie-break to beat home favourite Alejandro Davidovich Fokina 7-6 (12/10), 6-4 in a nervy affair.

The world number eight kept his nerve and saved five set points to stun his opponent, before a similarly hard-fought second set.

Rublev broke for a 5-4 lead with a shot which the Spaniard chose to leave as he thought it was long, but Hawk-Eye showed it was in by a whisker.

The Russian wrapped up his win with a forehand winner, his second win of the week after four straight defeats.

Last year's Madrid runner-up Jan-Lennard Struff defeated France's Ugo Humbert 7-5, 6-4.

The German could face last year's victor Carlos Alcaraz in the last 16 if the Spaniard defeats Thiago Seyboth Wild later Sunday.

LeBron stars as Lakers stay alive with win over Nuggets



LOS ANGELES (AFP/APP): The Los Angeles Lakers, fueled by 30 points from superstar LeBron James, stayed alive in the NBA playoffs on Saturday with a 119-108 victory over the Denver Nuggets.

Down 3-0 to the defending champions and facing

14 points in the fourth quarter to ensure it didn't happen again.

"I love the fourth quarter," James said. "I understand it is close-out time and we haven't been able to do that versus this team through three games."

"So tonight I had an opportunity to do that and I wanted to deliver," added the 39-year-old, who connected on six of eight shots in the final period, drew a charge and came up with a steal that he parlayed into a dunk at the other end.

But the four-time NBA champion wasn't ready to celebrate the Lakers' first win over Denver in 12 contests, since December of 2022, knowing that no NBA team has rallied from 3-0 down to win a playoff series.

elimination, the Lakers stood firm on their home floor, weathering a triple-double from Nuggets star Nikola Jokic to send the series back to Denver for game five on Monday.

After the Lakers let double-digit leads evaporate in losing each of the first three games, James scored

"We're still down 3-1," he said. "So each and every game will be its own challenge. We took care of business tonight to extend the series, but we've got to be even better."

Anthony Davis added 25 points and a whopping 23 rebounds for Los Angeles. Austin Reaves and D'Angelo Russell scored 21 points apiece.

Russell repaid the faith of coach Darvin Ham, who kept him in the starting lineup after he went scoreless in game three.

Two-time NBA Most Valuable Player Jokic scored 33 points with 14 rebounds and 14 assists.

Michael Porter Jr. added 25 points and 10 rebounds and Jamal Murray added 16 for the Nuggets in defeat.

Arsenal survive Spurs fightback to boost title charge

LONDON (AFP): Arsenal held on for a pulsating 3-2 win over arch rivals Tottenham in the north London derby to keep their grip on top spot in the Premier League on Sunday.

Bidding to stay one step ahead of Manchester City in the title race, Mikel Arteta's side silenced the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium with a three-goal blast before half-time.

Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg's own goal put Arsenal ahead before Bukayo Saka and Kai Havertz netted to leave Arsenal in complete control.

Cristian Romero and Son Heung-min struck for Tottenham after the interval to set up a nervous finish, but Arsenal clung on by their finger tips. Arsenal sit four points clear of second placed City, who face struggling Nottingham Forest later on Sunday in the first of two games in hand over the Gunners.

City will clinch an unprecedented fourth successive English title if they win their last five matches. But Arsenal are doing all they can to make Pep Guardiola's team sweat as they try to make amends for blowing an eight-point lead in last season's title race.

After the despair of a damaging home defeat against Aston Villa and a Champions League quarter-final exit to Bayern Munich, the Gunners have bounced back impressively.

Aware they have little margin for error with City chasing them,

Arteta had called on his players to show their hunger for success and they responded to his challenge.

Thrashing old foes Chelsea 5-0 on Tuesday was merely the appetiser ahead of the main course Arsenal served up for 3,000 of their jubilant fans packed into one corner of the stadium. Arsenal famously won the league twice at Tottenham's old White Hart Lane stadium, in 1971 and 2004.

The Gunners could not clinch silverware on enemy territory this time, but their fifth win in the last seven north London derbies kept them in the hunt to win the title for the first time in 20 years.

Defeat was a bitter blow for fifth-placed Tottenham, who are seven points behind fourth-placed Aston Villa with two games in hand to keep alive their fading hopes of qualifying for the Champions League.

Playing for the first time since a 4-0 defeat at Newcastle 15 days ago, Tottenham should have been fresher than an Arsenal team in action four times over that period.

But it was Arsenal who emerged from the frenzied fray to snatch the lead thanks to a welcome gift from Hojbjerg.

Arsenal survive Saka's corner curled into the six-yard box, where Hojbjerg tried to head clear in front of Arsenal's Takehiro Tomiyasu but instead diverted the ball into his own net. Romero should have equalised when Arsenal keeper David Raya misjudged James



Maddison's free-kick, allowing the defender to rise for a close-range header that he somehow guided against the post rather than into the empty net.

Mickey van de Ven thought he had drawn Tottenham level when he slammed home after Pedro Porro's shot deflected into his path, but VAR intervened to rule the centre-back was marginally offside. Arteta's men celebrated the decision as though they had scored themselves and they were doing exactly that in the 27th minute.

Havertz floated a superb long pass to Saka on the right flank and the winger drove at Ben Davies before cutting inside to beat Guglielmo Vicario with a clinical low strike from 12 yards.

Arsenal were ruthless in front of goal and Havertz grabbed their third with a well-worked corner routine in the 38th minute.

As Tottenham adopted zonal-marking positions, a group of Arsenal players including Havertz were unmarked as they made late runs into the area, giving the German space to finish off Rice's

corner with a close-range header.

But Tottenham refused to throw in the towel and Romero reduced the deficit in the 64th minute, seizing on Raya's comically bad pass to fire home from the edge of the area.

Rice set up the needlessly tense finale for Arsenal with a rash foul on Davies, conceding a penalty that Son drilled past Raya in the 87th minute. In Sunday's other early kick-off, Bournemouth beat Brighton 3-0 through goals from Marcos Senesi, Enes Unai and Justin Kluivert.



In brief

IRSA releases 131,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 131,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 198,300 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1452.44 feet and was 38.44 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 39,400 cusecs and 5,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1146.00 feet, which was 96.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 57,100 cusecs and 25,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 56,200, 53,400, 87,700 and 34,300 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 81,500 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 11,800 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Armed men looted patients

ISLAMABAD (APP): Six men armed with guns looted a private hospital in Lahore, stealing from both staff and patients on Sunday. According to a private news channel, the robbers targeted a private hospital near 25 Number stop in the limits of Shahdara police station, Lahore. Six armed men took the staff, patients and their caretakers hostage and looted their valuables. During the incident, the robbers were spotted consuming the food of the patients. The incident was recorded on the CCTV cameras of the hospital. The robbers fled the scene. Further investigation is underway.

WASA establishes state-of-the-art lab

RAWALPINDI (APP): Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) Rawalpindi had established a state-of-the-art laboratory to check water quality at Rawal Dam Filtration plant and the lab was regularly monitoring and analyzing the quality of water being fetched from all resources, said Managing Director (MD) WASA Muhammad Saleem Ashraf. He informed that WASA on the directives of the Director General (DG) Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) Kinza Murtaza, had launched a comprehensive campaign to test the quality of water. The MD said that the agency under a comprehensive campaign would continue to test the quality of water being fetched from all resources including Rawal Dam, Khanpur Dam, WASA tube wells and water filtrations plants of WASA and being supplied to the consumers. Currently WASA Lab was analyzing three types of water quality parameters namely physical, chemical and bacteriological parameters, he said adding, physical parameters included water appearance, temperature, pollution, oxygen concentration and TDS level in water while chemical parameters included alkalinity, hardness, sulphate, calcium, magnesium, chlorides, chlorine, sulphite, nitrate, ammonia, iron and arsenic of water. Bacteriological parameters included total coliform and faecal coliform count, he said. He further informed that the Assistant Director (Water Quality)/Junior Research Officer was responsible for obtaining, analyzing and submitting reports of water samples to assess water quality as per W.H.O.'s global standards for safe drinking water.



ISLAMABAD: PM'S coordinator on climate change & Environmental coordination Romina Khurshid Alam awarding medal to the winner in Margalla Hills Half Marathon, held at MHNP.

DC inaugurates polio drive, 0.46 mln children to be administered polio drops

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon on Sunday initiated the anti-drive in the Federal Capital by giving polio drops to a child, marking the start of a week-long effort to reach over 460,000 children under five years old.

Talking to APP, DC said that the ICT administration has launched a large-scale campaign to vaccinate children against the crippling disease. He said that the vaccination campaign would cover 80 union

councils across the city, running from April 29 to May 5. To meet this ambitious target, the campaign has enlisted 538 area supervisors, 2,146 mobile teams, 103 fixed teams, and 167 transit teams, he added.

DC said that these teams would work tirelessly to ensure every child was protected from this potentially devastating disease.

During the campaign, parents could bring their children to vaccination points set up at various educational institutions and

public locations across the city. The effort aimed at to make it easy for families to ensure their children receive the critical vaccine.

The Deputy Commissioner urged parents to take this opportunity to protect their children from the risk of polio, which could cause permanent disabilities. He emphasized the importance of the vaccination and asked all residents to ensure their children receive the drops during the campaign.

IGP Islamabad commends officers for effective duty

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi on Sunday visited and inspected different checkpoints in the federal capital. A public relations officer said that, IGP Islamabad appreciated the police officers deployed on duty at the checkpoints and summoned them to his office.

The IGP Islamabad held a meeting with the police officers in his office, praising them with commendation certificates to boost their morale.

On this occasion, the IGP Islamabad said that boosting the morale of police officers dedicated to the service and protection of citizens and fulfilling duties with utmost sincerity is essential. He further stated that the protection of citizens' lives and property is our top priority.

‘First Margalla Hills Half marathon best effort to champion climate awareness’

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister's Coordinator on Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam on Sunday appreciated the civil society's spirit to promote running as a healthy leisure activity and termed the first-ever Margalla Hills Half Marathon held at the scenic Trail-5 of the National Park as a best effort to champion climate awareness. Addressing the Margalla Hills Half Marathon which is the first and only trail running half marathon in the federal capital organised by the pioneer group of running, Islamabad 'Run With Us' as chief guest, the Prime Minister's Coordinator extended her felicitations to the winning athletes and participants for actively participating in the adventurous endeavour and championing the climate awareness.

More than 150 participants from all across Pakistan including members of diplomatic community, foreigners and experienced runners joined running on all the main trails of Margalla Hills covering an area of 21.1 kilometers, including the portion of Margalla Road from Trail 5 to Japanese Zoo parking and Pirsohawa Road from Talhar Mor to Monal Restaurant. Romina said the participants of the Half Marathon were the real celebrities of the event that deserve praise alongside the organisers of the activity. She added that climate and sustainable development goals (SDGs) are her passion for spearheading the climate agenda at the policy level which is also the need of the hour.

The Minister on the occasion refused to take water in single-use plastic bottle as part of her flagship campaign and awareness drive to apprise masses to end one-time use plastics under the ban being imposed across the federal capital. "The nature and the planet is our mother and we turn to it for solace to get rid of our vagaries of life and have to ensure its conservation. Say no to plastics and I am championing it, whereas media is our messenger and should carry forward this message as well," she said.

She congratulated the marathon winners and participants and lauded their determination to walk for nature. "Everyone got their reward in the form of the best clean air and natural environment during the marathon," she added.

Chairperson, Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB), Rina Saeed Khan thanked the media for supporting the cause of environmental conservation and mass awareness on responsible role

towards nature.

Khan also lauded the Prime Minister's Coordinator for her warm support to the IWMB as a great supporter and advocate of the environment. "She (Romina) has a positive attitude and tremendous support towards IWMB and the Board will invite her on all its events," she added. The IWMB chair said that the marathon was a great experience and would be encouraged in the future as well.

"IWMB has over 100 volunteers who are working without any reward and freely work on picking garbage from trails. We request visitors to enjoy nature but don't litter and create noise and avoid staying in national park after sunset as most of the wildlife is nocturnal," Rina Saeed said.

Founder of Islamabad Run With Us, Qasim Naz said that the main objective of the event was to promote a healthy lifestyle and create awareness to preserve the mesmerizing beauty of Margalla Hills National Park. He informed the participants that Islamabad Run With Us is the first community running club that started in 2016 and had held 600 events so far and also organise four races throughout the year including the Islamabad Half Marathon in April. "This time, due to Ramazan, there has been very little media campaign for the event within 8-9 days of social media campaign, Margalla Hills half marathon has bagged 150 participants that started running at 6:30 am and ended at 10:30am," he said. PM's Coordinator, Romina Khurshid Alam conferred the awards to the winners whereas in the female category, Sadia Maqbool stood third, Emily (a US National) got second position whereas Inab Khan was the winner who is also the member of running squad of IRWS and an international marathon runner.

In the male category, the third position was secured by Athar Akhtar, second by Waqar Ahmed and the winner was Muhammad Akhtar. At the end Qasim Naz presented mementos to PM's Coordinator Romina Khurshid Alam and the Coordinator gave away the memento to Chairperson Rina Saeed Khan. CEO, North Nationals (co-partner of the event), Israr Uddin thanked the PM's Coordinator and organisers of the event for making the event a success and the leadership by the government. He said Pakistan existed in the geographical region prone to disasters and volatile ecosystems that needed special attention of all quarters of the society and his organisation through its products was playing that role.

Climate change challenges Potohar farmers' livelihood

ISLAMABAD (APP): In the Potohar region, renowned for its breathtaking landscapes and historic significance encompassing cities like Attock, Chakwal, Jhelum, Rawalpindi and Islamabad, agriculture relies solely on rainfall. However, farmers in this area face a formidable adversary: climate change. This silent foe poses a significant threat to their way of life, silently impacting their livelihoods.

In a region, spanned over 28448.9 sq km famed for cultivating staples like wheat, maize, pearl millet, gram, barley, and groundnuts, the impact of climate change is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore. Nowhere is this more evident than in the dry Barani region nestled within the heart of Potohar. Here, water scarcity and erratic weather patterns, exacerbated by climate change, have become grim realities faced by farmers and the entire population on a daily basis.

Naseer Memon, a renowned expert on climate change and natural disasters, emphasized the critical link between weather patterns and agricultural outcomes. He pointed out that the delayed snowfall this year could lead to a thin layer of snow, which might swiftly melt as temperatures rise.

Additionally, April witnessed an unusually wet spell, causing significant damage to ripe wheat crops in Punjab. Memon warned that if climate change leads to heavy monsoon showers and subsequent floods, it could wreak havoc on crops, as was witnessed in 2022 when Pakistan incurred substantial losses in the agriculture

sector due to abnormal rains, particularly in Sindh. Moreover, the intrusion of cold weather into the summer months could adversely affect the production of mangoes and dates.

Highlighting the economic ramifications, Memon underscored Pakistan's heavy reliance on agriculture, which forms the backbone of its economy. Any adverse impact on agricultural production due to climate change would directly affect markets, as the purchasing power of citizens would decline sharply. Notably, agriculture accounts for over 40% of rural employment, implying that any setback in this sector would lead to a surge in rural unemployment and sluggish urban markets. Memon emphasized the urgent need for Pakistan to adapt to the realities of climate change and implement smart agricultural practices. This entails aligning crops, varieties, and water management strategies with the rapidly shifting climatic patterns. He stressed the necessity for increased investment in research to tackle these challenges effectively.

A well reputed farmer specializing in wheat and groundnut cultivation in rain-fed agricultural area of Gujar Khan, Lumberdar Raja Tassadique Hussain shared his community's concern over climate change and said, local farmers have been deeply affected by the impacts of climate change. The erratic weather patterns, especially concerning rainfall, have become increasingly unpredictable, posing significant challenges to our farm-

ing practices and livelihoods.

The delayed onset of rainfall disrupts our planting schedules for both wheat and groundnuts, leading to reduced yields and compromised crop quality. Conversely, sudden downpours and flooding events during critical growth stages drown our crops, washing away months of hard work and investment in an instant.

Dr. Muhammad Ismail Kumbhar, an agricultural expert and Director at Agriculture University Tandojam, advocates for Pakistani farmers to adapt to climate change by implementing various strategies.

These include efficient water management practices like drip or sprinkler irrigation, alongside rainwater harvesting and constructing small water reservoirs to ensure water availability during dry spells. Diversifying crops, focusing on heat and drought-tolerant varieties, and promoting research on climate-resilient crops are also essential. Utilizing improved meteorological services aids informed decision-making. Conservation agriculture, which minimizes soil disturbance and maintains soil cover, is crucial. Dr. Kumbhar underscores the severe, multifaceted consequences of climate change on food security and livelihoods in Pakistan.

Diminished water availability from retreating glaciers threatens irrigation, while erratic rainfall intensifies soil erosion and degradation. Livestock farming faces challenges due to pasture and water scarcity, with increased disease prevalence.

Renowned TV host, poet, writer Tariq Aziz remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): Renowned Radio and Television host, film star, poet and writer Tariq Aziz was remembered on his birth anniversary on Sunday. Born on April 28, 1936 in Jalandhar, his family migrated to Pakistan after partition and settled in Sahiwal.

Tariq Aziz kicked off his career with Radio Pakistan in the 1960s and later became Pakistan's first television host.

He became popular from his famous program Neelam Ghar which started in 1974 and later renamed as Tariq Aziz Show that continued for four decades.

He performed in a



number of movies including Chiragh Khan Roshni Kahan, Salgirah, Qasam Us Waqt Ki, Katari, Haar Gaya Insan and Insaniyat.

He was awarded with the Pride of Performance

Award by the Government of Pakistan in 1994 for his services to the entertainment industry.

Tariq Aziz passed away in Lahore on June 17, 2020 at the age of 84 due to cardiac arrest.

44 outlaws held, narcotics, weapons seized

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Police apprehended 44 outlaws from different areas of the city during the last 24 hours and also recovered narcotics and weapons from their possession.

A public relations officer said that, following the special directions of the Inspector General of Police (IGP) in Islamabad, Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, the Islamabad Police has intensified the crack-down against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime in the city.

Meanwhile, Kohsar police arrested an accused, namely Atif Shahzad, and recovered 210 grams of heroin from his possession. The Karachi Company police team arrested two accused, namely Daniyal and Muhammad Aamir, and recovered 167 grams of ice from their possession. The Ramna police team arrested an accused, namely Rashid Maqsood, and recovered 14 dancing pills and 65 grams of ice from their possession.

Likewise, the Sumbal police team arrested two accused, including a lady, namely Noreen Bibi and Abdullah, and recovered 170 grams of ice from his possession. The Tarnol police team arrested the accused, namely Imran Yousaf, Ahmed

Gul, Bilawal Khan, and Sheraz Khan, and recovered 2450 grams of heroin, seven liquor bottles, and 155 grams of ice from their possession.

The Shalimar police team arrested three accused, including Tahir Ali, Waqas Jalil, and Sameena Bibi, and recovered one Kalashnikov, 55 grams of Ice, and two dancing pills from their possession.

Similarly, the Industrial Area police team arrested two accused, namely Ifthikhar Ahmed and Muhammad Taimoor, and recovered 30 liters of liquor and one 30-barrel pistol from their possession. The Shams Colony police team arrested five accused, namely Bilal, Farhan, Arslan, Muhammad Nadeem, and Kashif, and recovered 515 grams of heroin, 180 grams of hashish, and 84 grams of ice from their possession. The Kirpa police team arrested two accused, namely Muhammad Usama and Muhammad Saleem, and recovered 582 grams of hashish from their possession. Moreover, the Sihala police team arrested an accused, namely Amir Altaf, and recovered a 32-bar revolver from his possession. The Humak police team arrested two accused, namely Ifthikhar Zafar and Shahzad Ali, and recovered 227 grams of hashish from his possession.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor on the way along with his bicycle loaded with wooden stools for selling in Federal Capital.

Anti-polio drive starts today

KABUL (Khaama Press): The “Afghanistan Polio-Free” organization recently announced that the polio vaccine campaign in various provinces of Afghanistan will commence tomorrow. The organization stated on its social media platform X on Sunday, that this campaign will begin nationwide from today (Monday). According to the organization’s newsletter, children in this campaign will receive vaccines and vitamin A simultaneously.

Canada to resume Afghan aid

KABUL (Khaama Press): Global News has reported that Canada intends to resume its aid to Afghanistan. The media outlet stated that a committee comprising representatives from various parties in the country’s parliament had urged Ottawa to resume humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. Canada’s Ministry of Safety report indicates that Ottawa plans to initiate this process by the spring of 2024 and aims to achieve total operational capacity for this initiative by the end of this year.

Regional states jointly expand stability: Kabir



KABUL (Ariana News): Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, Political Deputy Prime Minister, has said in a meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan in Kabul that regional countries should play their role in the implementation of large regional projects. Kabir also invited Kazakh businessmen to invest in Afghanistan, his office said in a statement. He added that the Islamic Emirate fully controls Afghanistan’s borders, has eliminated drugs and corruption, and restored national sovereignty. According to the statement, Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Serik Zhumangarin appreciated the progress made by

the Islamic Emirate in Afghanistan and said that his country is ready for long-term trade, transit and investment relations with Afghanistan. Zhumangarin expressed his country’s readiness to grant scholarships to Afghan youth and added that Afghanistan is currently an example of a peaceful country in the region, and due to this, the world wants to establish relations with the Islamic Emirate in various fields. He also called for the start of direct flights between Kabul and Almaty and said that his country is ready for bilateral cooperation with the Afghan government in the cultural field.

Jobs available for migrants, says Ministry

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs says that migrants who have been deported from Pakistan and meet the employment criteria will be provided with job opportunities in both the public and private sectors. Samiullah Ibrahim, the spokesperson for the ministry, added that so far, more than 40,000 deported migrants from Pakistan have fulfilled the necessary conditions for employment and will be hired based on their academic fields. The spokesperson for the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs said: “Almost more than 40,000 Afghan migrants who have returned from Pakistan and are registered with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, have been educated in various fields and are skilled individuals, for whom the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs will provide employment opportunities.” According to Ibrahim, these individuals have received higher education in various fields. “Migrants who are newly deported from countries, especially from Pakistan, are having their

issues addressed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, which strives to employ them in various departments considering their fields of study,” he added. Several of the migrants who have returned from Pakistan are concerned about job opportunities in the country. Sayed Mohammad, a migrant deported from Pakistan, said: “My family members are worried that if we come to Afghanistan, there will not be employment opportunities for them, and the caretaker government should provide job opportunities for Afghan migrants who have returned to the country.” Mohammad Naem, another migrant deported from Pakistan, said: “I have learned baking myself, and my brother has learned tailoring. We ask the Islamic Emirate to employ migrants who have professional skills and education, including myself, in various departments.” The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation reported that in the solar year 1402, about 700,000 Afghan migrants returned to the country from Pakistan.

Floods claim 8 lives over 3 days

KABUL (TOLONews): The State Ministry for Disaster Management Affairs reported that in the past three days, rainfall and flooding claimed the lives of eight individuals and injured three others. According to the ministry, the floods and rainfall also destroyed 140 homes and devastated 20 acres of agricultural land across 15 provinces. “From 25 of April to now, due to rainfall and floods in the provinces of Kandahar, Nuristan, Badghis, Ghor, Nangarhar, Maidan Wardak, Herat, Samangan, Panjshir, Laghman, Kunar, Baghlan, Kunduz, Sar-e Pol, and Parwan, eight citizens have lost their lives, and three others have been injured,” said Janan Saiq, the spokesperson for the State Ministry for Disaster Management Affairs. Several victims in Nangarhar said that recent floods and rainfall have caused them significant financial loss. They request emergency assistance and support from aid organizations and the Islamic Emirate. “We lost our house and all our possessions; we request that aid organizations help us in this matter,” said Herat Khan, a victim from Nangarhar. “The flood has come several times; people have suffered damages, and roads have not been repaired or completed. When the flood comes, it reaches the town square and damages homes,” said Firooz, a victim from Parwan. The Meteorological Department of the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation also reported the possibility of snowfall in high-altitude areas and 15 to 30 millimeters of rainfall accompanied by thunderstorms and severe floods in 17 provinces. The Chamber of Agriculture and Livestock stated that to prevent damage from floods and rainfall, the Islamic Emirate should maintain certain measures. “There must be cooperation with the farmers so they can at least compensate for the damages they have incurred,” said Wasim Safi, the CEO of the Chamber. This comes as over the past year, rainfall and flooding across the country, along with a deadly earthquake in Herat province, have caused substantial financial losses and casualties among the country’s citizens.

Afghanistan shocks Kyrgyzstan

KABUL (BNA): In a thrilling showdown, the Afghanistan national futsal team triumphed over Kyrgyzstan with a remarkable scoreline of 5-3, securing their place in the prestigious Futsal World Cup as Asia’s fifth representative. The victory came as a surprise to many, as Kyrgyzstan boasted an imposing reputation and high-scoring potential. Displaying a combination of aggression and tactical prowess, Afghanistan’s national team caught their opponents off guard with an impressive performance.

Smelters request iron mine allocation from Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLONews): Officials from several iron smelting factories requested the Islamic Emirate allocate one of the iron mines to them. They state that they currently meet the country’s needs with smelted iron, which has posed challenges for them. Industrialist Haji Gul Asadi said: “Our major problem is the lack of raw materials and insufficient electricity.” Another industrialist, Rahimullah Mayar, stated:

“We request the Minister of Mines and Petroleum to allocate part of the Haji Gak mine to us; within one to two years, we will convert from iron ore to sponge iron.” The Union of Iron Smelting Factories also notes that currently, 42 steel smelting plants are operational in the country, and over \$500 million has been invested in this sector. Abdul Nasir Rashtia, the executive head of the Union of Iron Smelting

Factories, said: “We have invested more than \$500 million in the steel sector overall, and we have provided direct employment opportunities for 20,000 people.” The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum stated that it will soon tender the iron mines in the Panjshir province, considering special privileges for local companies. Momayoun Afghan, spokesperson for the Ministry of Mines and

Petroleum, said: “We have announced the Silver House Panjshir iron mine for bidding, and all traders can submit a solid proposal according to our principles and terms, and there is a possibility that based on the principles, the Panjshir mine might be allocated to them.” Khanjan Alkozai, a board member of the Chamber of Commerce and Investment, said: “We hope that this mine will be given to the factories. If the factories operate in a unified manner, it requires significant investment. The capital of the traders must be considered; their bank accounts must be evaluated and then they will be short-listed.” According to information from the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum, the ministry has allocated four iron mines in Herat province to foreign companies with local partners, valuing these mines at \$5.57 billion.

Acting Mines Minister discusses investment opportunities with Ambassador Karimi

KABUL (BNA): In a meeting held in Beijing, China, Sheikh Shahabuddin Delawar, the country’s Acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum, engaged in discussions with Mawlawi Bilal Karimi, the Afghan Ambassador to China. The primary focus of their meeting was to explore potential investment opportunities in Afghanistan’s mines. During the meeting, Sheikh Shahabuddin Delawar provided valuable information to Mawlawi Bilal Karimi regarding the investment prospects in the country’s vast mining sector. The Acting Minister highlighted both large-scale

and small-scale mining contracts as areas of interest for potential investors. Mawlawi Bilal Karimi, having recently held meetings with the leadership of contract companies operating in the Amu River oil field and Aynak copper mine in China, shared his experiences and insights with Sheikh Shahabuddin Delawar. The Afghan Ambassador revealed that Chinese investors have expressed a keen interest in increasing their investments in Afghanistan’s mines. Expressing his commitment to promoting foreign investments in the mining sector, Mawlawi Bilal Karimi pledged to intensify

his efforts in attracting Chinese investors for various mining projects in Afghanistan. The potential expansion of Chinese investments in the country’s natural resources is expected to contribute significantly to Afghanistan’s economic growth and development. The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum issued a statement emphasizing the importance of fostering international collaborations in the mining sector. The ministry highlighted the need for sustainable investments that would not only bring economic prosperity to Afghanistan but also ensure responsible and environmentally friendly



mining practices. Afghanistan, with its abundant mineral resources, holds immense potential for attracting foreign

investments. The discussions between Sheikh Shahabuddin Delawar and Mawlawi Bilal Karimi serve as a positive step toward

strengthening ties between Afghanistan and China, paving the way for fruitful collaborations in the mining industry.

Changes in Afghan wedding traditions over past three decades

KABUL (Pajhwok): The residents of different provinces have shared their views regarding the changing wedding ceremony customs and said in the past wedding was financially affordable and organized simply but currently more customs have been introduced and the cost has increased. The wedding ceremony is held in every country based on its own culture, Afghanistan like other countries has its own culture and traditions for wedding ceremony and these traditions could vary from province to province. **Wedding ceremonies were simple and brief in the past: Kabulyan** Shahnaz, 80, from Kabul City, told Pajhwok Afghan News: “Wedding means creation of a family when man and woman enter a married life, in the past wedding ceremonies in Kabul were simple, people were not interested in glamour and showcasing but currently new things had emerged which are back-breaking for the groom.” She said: “Thirty years back in Kabul after the first verbal agreement on a mar-

riage the father of the bride organised the engagement even, through there was no Toyana money and the wedding ceremony was organized according to the financial strength of the groom, not more than 300 guests were invited in the reception and at the end the Takt-i-Jami event was held.” She said: “Now the groom has to organize and pay for the engagement, other events such as the Hina night, reception, and Takt-i-Jami is even held in the hotel, at least 500 people are invited in the wedding ceremony, there are demands such as Jahez, golden necklace and bracelets, expensive dresses and other costly demands are made which break the back of groom, in the past we never heard that groom had borrowed money but now everyone say that groom had borrowed money for the wedding.” **Some Nimroz youths remain unmarried for 9-year of engagement** Fatima, a resident of Zaranj City, said: “Marriages in the past were simple and brief, but now it makes youth less fortunate, a youth remains engaged

for six to nine years because he could not arrange the expenses of his marriage.” There is a huge difference between marriages taking place now compared to the past. For instance, 30 years ago Toyana was 30,000 afs but now it reached 600,000 afs. In the past, the wedding ceremony was not very spectacular, it was held at home, it was so simple that they did not cover the car with flowers for the bride, the stage and the place of the bride was not decorated, but now it is decorated in a very special way and the ceremony is held in a hotel. **Wedding ceremonies have become competitive now: Laghman resident** Mohammad Arif, a resident of Laghman province, said: “The foods offered for guests in the wedding ceremonies were less costly in the past but now different varieties of food are served for the guests.” He said in the past the Toyana amount was paid in afghani but now it is demanded in dollars, most families did not give their daughters Jahaiz while in

the past the Toyana amount was spent on Jahaiz and the bride brought it with herself. **No major change in Nuristan wedding ceremonies** Hanifa Nuristani, resident of Nuristan province, said no major changes occurred to the wedding ceremonies which are held in Nuristan province. She said: “In the past there was no culture of Toyana amount, the groom family was asked to give 10 to 20 livestock after there was an agreement about the engagement of a boy and a girl, but now people ask for cash and the culture of livestock was no more practiced.” She said from the past until now, in addition to the fact that all the necessary items for the wedding room were bought by the bride’s father, 20 bags of corn and fresh cheese and a fat cow were also sent to the groom’s house with the bride as a gift. Hanifa Nuristani said: “In each wedding ceremony two or three cows are slaughtered, meat is separated from the soup and then flour is added in the

soup for thickness, later cooking oil is added to the soup and distributed among guests in plates.” She said individuals who could not participate in the wedding ceremony were provided with uncooked meat by the groom’s family. **Daikundi** Syed Habibullah Akbari, who had been married for the past two years, regarding wedding culture and traditions in the past and in the present said: “The people of our province are mostly Shiites, they have their own customs and traditions. In the past, Towayan was not cash, but cattle and sheep, and the dowry was old boxes, felt carpets, something called Palas.” He said: “The bride was brought to the groom’s house on a horse or old jeep, women made circle around the bride, they did not put on much make-up and did not go to the hair salon, food served in the reception were sheep or goat meat and soup.” **Cash Toyana is trend in Kuanr now** Iftikhar Mashwani, a resident of Kunar province, said: “The culture and tradition of wedding cere-

monies had shaped a lot in Kunar, in the past there was not culture of Toyana, 25 sheep or four cows were demanded to tie the knot of man and woman.” “The bride remained at father’s house until the groom did not provide with the livestock, even if they give birth to a child the bride remain at her father’s house,” he said. He said in the past, when the bride was taken to her husband’s house, there was no decorated car, two sticks were laid on the carpet and the men lifted it over their shoulders to transport the bride, but now they transport the bride in a luxurious decorated car. Mashwani added in the past animals were slaughtered in the wedding ceremony the meat was cooked and separated from its soup, flour were added in the soup and it was called Joash and served to the guests, but now different dishes are presented to the guests at wedding ceremonies. **Arduous amount of Toyana is tradition in Paktia province** Ajma, a resident of Paktia province said that Toyana had surged from

three lacks to 12 lacks in the past 30 years. In the past, only rice and meat were prepared for the guests, the number of guests reached 300 people, but now all kinds of food, fruit and even soft drinks are prepared, and more than 1,000 people are invited in each gathering, and for the bride, in the past five suits were bought but now but now 40 different types of clothes are bought. **Some changes happened in Herat wedding ceremonies** Gul Ahmad Omaid, a resident of Herat province, said the customs and traditions are different in the cities and districts of this province, so that in the cities the Toyana amount is low, but in the districts it is more, generally there had not been many changes in the wedding ceremony in the province. He said before engagement relatives from both parties discuss matters related to Toyana, reception, engagement, Edi, Nawruz, Zemistani, Tabastani, Bahari, Khazani and other customs. He said the Toyana amount in the provincial

capital ranged from around 100,000 afs to 300,000 afs, it is low because the groom family themselves prepare the Jahaiz but in the districts the Toyana amount ranged from 600,000 afs to 1,200,000 afs. **No major change in Badakhshan wedding ceremonies** Rafiullah, a resident of Shuhada district, said there was no major change in the customs and traditions of wedding ceremonies in Badakhshan now compared to the past. He said both parties reach agreement on Toyana which should not be less than 200,000 afs because the bride father purchase all important items needed for a house and send with the bride under the name of Jahaiz to the groom’s house. He said from the past till now the list of food for the reception is 20 bags of rice, 12 bags of flour, 140 kilograms of meat, 1.4 tons of firewood, 70 kilograms of potatoes, 70 kilograms of onion, two cartons of tomato paste, one carton of black and green tea each, this is a list handed over to the groom family by the bride family.



RAFAH: Palestinian kids stands amid the debris of a house destroyed by overnight Israeli bombardment in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip.

Saudi leadership declares PM Shehbaz ‘Man of Action’

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was declared the "Man of Action" by the Saudi leadership in recognition of his commitment to reviving Pakistan's economy through massive reforms and foreign investment.

This acknowledgment came during his busy day in Riyadh, where he met different leaders and addressed a special meeting of the World Economic Forum.

The remarks were made during separate meetings of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif with Saudi Minister for Investment Khalid Al-Falih, Minister for Finance Mohammad Al Jadaan, and Minister for Industry Bandar bin Ibrahim Alkhourayef.

During his meeting with the prime minister on the margins of the Forum, Saudi Minister for Investment Khalid Al-Falih called him a "Man of Action," recognizing his performance and speed of work, along with his commitment to contributing to Pakistan's development and progress.

This is the second time Shehbaz Sharif has earned such a distinction from foreign leadership as earlier, he was given the title of "Shehbaz Speed" by a Chinese leader to acknowledge his swift execution of development projects while serving as Punjab chief minister.

"We are all aware of your performance and speed of work," the Saudi minister said, adding that the prime minister was advancing the mission of progress in Pakistan, with their full support. "Your mission is our mission," he remarked.

Saudi minister for finance said that a delegation of Saudi investors would soon visit Pakistan. Pakistan was a priority for their investment and Saudi Arabia would continue to fully

cooperate in the fields of agriculture, information technology and energy.

He lauded Pakistanis's prominent role in the progress of Saudi Arabia in different fields.

During the meeting, it was agreed that Saudi Arabia would further explore opportunities of investment in Pakistan. He reaffirmed the support of Saudi Arabia in the economic progress of Pakistan and called the "progress of Pakistan the progress of Saudi Arabia". He said that Saudi Arabia had made difficult decisions for reforms at the government level regarding its Vision 2030. The prime minister also met the Saudi Minister for Industry who expressed keen interest in collaboration with Pakistan in agriculture, mining, information technology and other areas.

The Saudi minister said he was in contact with the Saudi private companies regarding investment in Pakistan and the representatives of these companies would soon visit Pakistan.

Talking to the Saudi ministers, the prime minister thanked the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz for supporting Pakistan in a difficult time. He said during the previous tenure of his government, the economic conditions of Pakistan improved due to the support and assistance of Saudi Arabia. Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Shehbaz addressed a session of the World Economic Forum (WEF) regarding global health and termed the global inequity in the health sector as 'the first and foremost problem' called upon bridging the widening gap between the Global South and the Global North.

He said that the COVID-19 pandemic had exposed the existing gaps

largely between the Global North and Global South in terms of provision of health facilities and distribution of vaccines. He told the gathering that despite no contribution to the emissions, Pakistan witnessed the worst climate change-triggered floods in 2022 which hugely devastated the infrastructure and buildings and had to spend billions of rupees to rehabilitate the affected people. Prime Minister Shehbaz said that for the rehabilitation efforts, they sought costly loans. "Can a developing country like Pakistan afford it?" he questioned and observed that for the provision of health facilities, a developing country like Pakistan required resources.

"The yawning gap between the Global South and Global North should be bridged," he emphasised.

Sharing his personal experiences, the prime minister said that treatment for fatal diseases like cancer was too costly for the poor population of Pakistan. He said that as a chief minister of Punjab, he had provided about 130 million inhabitants of the province with best medical treatment initiatives like screening and treatment facilities for Hepatitis in the remotest and backward areas of the province where the poor people had been in dire need of basic facilities like education and health. The prime minister said that while being Punjab's chief minister, he had established the first kidney and liver hospital in Punjab which was probably one of the best in Asia providing free treatment to poor. About the dengue outbreak in 2011 in the province, he shared that the phenomenon in the health sector was one of the biggest in the world but that was controlled through engaging international experts, equipment and activating government machinery, civil society and common man.

‘PTI ready for talks with establishment’

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) spokesperson Rauf Hasan reaffirmed the party's commitment to engaging with the establishment within constitutional boundaries.

During a talk show with local TV channel, Hasan clarified Shehryar Afridi's statement on army negotiations, asserting it does not reflect party policy.

Highlighting PTI's stance, Hasan emphasized the importance of institutional adherence to constitutional roles, stating that talks with the establishment aim to ensure compliance with these mandates.

Moreover, Hasan underscored PTI's willingness to engage with political parties, evident in the formation of a six-party opposition alliance. However, PTI chief Imran Khan has directed against negotiations with PPP, PML-N, and MQM, alleging mandate infringement.

Sources within PTI revealed Imran Khan's authorization for negotiations with the establishment and political factions, subject to adherence to constitutional principles. PTI leader Shibli Faraz confirmed Khan's approval for talks. Ahead of negotiations, Terms of Reference (TORs) will be established in accordance with Khan's directives, facilitating discussions with various stakeholders. Speaking to journalists, Faraz stressed the necessity of defining negotiation parameters amidst prevailing political turbulence. He advocated for stakeholder involvement in determining negotiation modalities and environments. Faraz acknowledged both PTI and the establishment as political realities, noting the government's formation under Article 47 necessitates clarity on its authority.

Sharjeel reacted to the statement of PTI leaders

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Senior Minister of Sindh and Provincial Minister for Information, Excise, Taxation, Narcotics Control, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, has reacted to the statement of PTI leaders regarding the occupation of Islamabad and talks with institutions, noting that PTI is simultaneously running a campaign against the institutions while imploring on the other hand.

He said that the Chief Minister of PTI is threaten-

ing to invade Islamabad like terrorists. The threat of occupying Islamabad proves that the ambitions of the Chief Minister of PTI are terrorist in nature.

In a statement, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that PTI members have a history of engaging in terrorism on social media, and now they are discussing terrorism in the capital city.

He said that PTI is making requests for deals rather than negotiations, but the institutions are not prepared. Suffering from internal factionalism, each faction within PTI has its own

narrative. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that For the past year and a half, every faction within PTI has been making requests for a deal. It's contradictory that those campaigning against the institutions are now discussing negotiations with them. He said that PTI initially campaigned against the institutions and is now attempting to politicize them, as evidenced by Shehryar Afridi's statement. This strategy aims to deceive the public and incite conflict with the institutions. Khan's party is actively undermining crucial national institutions.

5th round of Pakistan-Canada bilateral political consultations

F.P. Report

OTTAWA: The 5th Round of Pakistan-Canada Bilateral Political Consultations was held in Ottawa on April 26, 2024. The Pakistan side was led by Ambassador Mariam Aftab, Additional Foreign Secretary (Americas), while the Canadian delegation was headed by Assistant Deputy Minister (Indo-Pacific) Weldon Epp, Global Affairs Canada. The two sides reviewed the entire spectrum of bilateral relations and identified opportunities and

possibilities for further cooperation, especially in the spheres of trade, investment, education, parliamentary exchanges, counter terrorism and people-to-people contacts. The Additional Foreign Secretary briefed on Pakistan's foreign policy priorities and invited Canadian companies to invest in energy, mining and IT sectors in Pakistan.

The two sides discussed mutual collaboration at international fora, including the UN, and agreed to further deepen cooperation.

They expressed satisfaction at the overall progress in bilateral relations and committed to enhance cooperation in all fields of mutual interest. The Canadian side was apprised of recent developments in the South Asian region, especially Afghanistan, Pakistan-India relations and human rights violations in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

The 6th round of Bilateral Political Consultations will be held in Islamabad at mutually convenient dates.



‘Imran Khan grants permission for Fawad’s return to PTI’

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former minister Fawad Chaudhry is expected to rejoin Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) as the party founder Imran Khan has granted permission for his return sources said on Sunday. Well-placed sources in the PTI confirmed that Imran Khan granted permission for Fawad Chaudhry's return to the party. The PTI sources also said a meeting between former chairman of the party Imran Khan and his former cabinet member Fawad Chaudhry is also expected next week. The sources claimed there's also speculation about Fawad Chaudhry being assigned significant responsibilities within the party.

Russia threatens West with severe response if its assets are touched

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russian officials threatened the West on Sunday with a "severe" response in the event that frozen Russian assets are confiscated, promising "endless" legal challenges and tit-for-tat measures.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Russia would never cede territories seized from Ukraine in exchange for the return of frozen assets. "Our motherland is not for sale," Zakharova wrote on the Telegram messag-

ing app. "An Russian assets must remain untouched because otherwise there will be a severe response to Western thievery. Many in the West have already understood this. Alas, not everyone."

In response to Russia's war in Ukraine, the United States and its allies prohibited transactions with Russia's central bank and finance ministry and blocked about \$300 billion of sovereign Russian assets in the West, most of which are in European not

American financial institutions.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said in a separate comment that there was still a lot of Western money in Russia which could be targeted by Moscow's counter-measures.

"The prospects for legal challenges (against the confiscation of Russian assets) will be wide open," he said.

"Russia will take advantage of those and will endlessly defend its interests."

Tesla CEO Musk meets China’s number two official in Beijing

BEIJING (Reuters): Tech billionaire and Tesla CEO Elon Musk met in Beijing on Sunday with China's number two official, Premier Li Qiang, who promised the country would "always" be open to foreign firms.

Musk — one of the world's richest people — arrived in China earlier the same day on his second trip in less than a year to the world's biggest market for electric vehicles.

Chinese state broadcaster CCTV said that during their meeting, Li had promised the country would do more to help foreign firms.

"China's very large-scale market will always be open to foreign-funded firms," Li was quoted as saying.

"China will stick to its word and will continue working hard to expand market access and strengthen service guarantees." Beijing would also provide foreign companies with "a better business environment" so "that firms from all over the world can have peace of mind while investing in China", Li added.

Musk has extensive business interests in China and his most recent visit

was in May and June of last year.

Tesla did not respond to AFP's requests for confirmation of Musk's visit, or share his itinerary for the trip.

CCTV quoted him as praising the "hardworking and intelligent Chinese team" at his Tesla Gigafactory in Shanghai during his meeting with Li.

"Tesla is willing to take the next step in deepening cooperation with China to achieve more win-win results," Musk reportedly added.

Earlier in the day, the billionaire met with the head of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, Ren Hongbin, "to discuss next steps in cooperation and other topics", CCTV said.

The mercurial magnate is a controversial figure in the West, but in China, Tesla's electric vehicles have become a staple of middle-class urban life. Having once derided Chinese EVs, Musk described their manufacturers this year as being "the most competitive car companies in the world". "It's good to see electric vehicles making progress in China," he was quoted as saying by a state-

backed media outlet on Sunday.

"All cars will be electric in the future," Musk's own company has run into trouble in the world's second-largest economy: in January, Tesla recalled more than 1.6 million electric vehicles in China to fix their steering software.

His arrival in China coincides with a cut-throat price war between firms desperate to get ahead in the fiercely competitive EV market.

China's local car giant BYD — "Build Your Dreams" — beat out Tesla in last year's fourth quarter to become the world's top seller of EVs.

Tesla reclaimed that title in the first quarter of this year, but BYD remains firmly on top in its home market. His visit also comes as Beijing hosts a massive auto show, which held press events from Thursday and opened to the public over the weekend.

Comments under posts about Musk's arrival on the social media site Weibo were full of speculation that the celebrity tycoon would attend Auto China while in Beijing.

‘France’s nuclear weapons should be part of European defence debate’

PARIS (Reuters): France's nuclear weapons should be part of the European defence debate, French President Emmanuel Macron told a group of regional newspapers on Sunday, in comments that drew fire from his political opponents ahead of EU elections in June.

Macron has been more strident on defence issues recently, having called on Thursday for stronger, more integrated European defences as he outlined his vision for a more assertive European Union on the global stage, saying "Europe could die".

In an interview set up by EBRA, a group of French eastern regional newspapers, he said a "credible European defence" should go beyond the protection already offered by NATO. "That may mean deploying anti-missile shields, but we need to be

sure that they block all missiles and deter the use of nuclear weapons," he said. Regarding nuclear weapons, while France's doctrine has so far been to use them when the country's vital interests are threatened, Macron said he was open to give a more "European dimension" to these interests. "I'm in favour of opening this debate, which must therefore include missile defence, long-range weapons and nuclear weapons for those who have them or who have American nuclear weapons on their soil," he said. His comments drew criticism from opponents on the right and the left of the political spectrum on Sunday. "Macron is becoming a national danger!," far-right European lawmaker Thierry Mariani wrote on social media platform X.

"#We can't wait for June 9th to

give him a clear signal that his policies are over!," Mariani, a member of France's Rassemblement National (RN) headed by Marine Le Pen, added in a reference to the approaching EU parliamentary elections.

"These comments are exceptionally serious," said European lawmaker Francois-Xavier Bellamy, who will lead right-wing party LR into the EU vote. "We are touching the nerve of French sovereignty", he added in an interview on Europe 1 radio station.

Those at the other end of the political spectrum were equally angry at Macron's comments.

"The nuclear deterrent cannot be shared," said far-left French lawmaker Bastien Lachaud on X. "Under the guise of defending European soil, #Macron wants to liquidate France's strategic autonomy."

Continuity of democracy only solution to all issues: Senate chairman

LAHORE (APP): Senate Chairman Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani has said that continuity of democracy is the only solution to all national problems.

He expressed these views while addressing the concluding session of the Asma Jahangir Conference 2024 as a special guest on Sunday.

While keeping political differences aside, he said that all political parties should come together for the country's progress and fulfill their responsibilities. He said that elimination of violence and promotion of tolerance are essential for establishment of a peaceful society.

He said that the Pakistan People's Party paid several sacrifices for the restoration of democracy. He said that the implementation of the Constitution 1973 by the PPP founder leader and former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was a significant achievement. He said that differences of opinion are a beauty of democracy, adding that everyone must play their role collectively for the national interest. He said that in our era, there were no political prisoners.

The senate chairman said that Asma Jahangir's services for human rights and democracy should always be remembered. He said that participating in the conference is an honor for him, and he congratulates both daughters and the organizer for the successful conference. Gilani said that the vision of Asma Jahangir for human rights should not be overlooked. He said that democracy is the guarantor of human rights and the sole solution to all problems. He said that all political parties, including the PPP, have always supported the supremacy of the constitution, democracy, and the rule of law. He said that a charter of democracy was made between former prime minister Shaheed Benazir Bhutto and PML-N Chief Muhammad Nawaz Sharif. He said that the political leaders need to define their direction based on national interests.

Farooq H. Naik, the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Pakistan Bar Council and former Law Minister, said that Asma Jahangir's services for human rights should not

be ignored. He stressed that the protection of human rights can be ensured only through the supremacy of democracy. All matters should be resolved within the ambit of the constitution and law to prevent conflicts, he said.

Deputy Chairman Senate Syedul Khan Nasir emphasized the importance of dialogue in resolving national disputes. He mentioned that PML-N supreme Muhammad Nawaz Sharif was deciding all party policies. He said that in 2013, "we had the majority, but we formed the government through negotiations for the national interest. Criticism, agitation, and slogans do not solve issues; only dialogue does," he added.

Former chief minister Balochistan Abdul Malik Baloch said that all stakeholders must opt for dialogue for the country's progress, stability, and lasting peace. National dialogue is essential to address Balochistan's issues comprehensively.

Asma Jahangir's daughter Manizeh thanked the participants who attended the conference.

Ukraine warns battlefield situation ‘worsened’ as Russia claims fresh gains

VOZHDVYZHENKA (AFP/APP): Ukraine's army leader admitted Sunday that Kyiv's position on the battlefield has worsened after Russian forces captured another village in the east, pressing their advantage in manpower and ammunition. Russia's troops are advancing in the eastern Donetsk region as Kyiv awaits the arrival of much-needed US weapons that it hopes will stabilise the fragile front lines.

"The situation at the front has worsened," Ukrainian commander-in-chief Oleksandr Syrsky said in a Facebook post Sunday. Ukrainian troops had "retreated" westwards to new defensive

lines in a section of the front that runs past the city of Donetsk, controlled by pro-Russian forces since 2014. Russia has "a significant advantage in forces and means" and had been able to notch up advances amid "heavy fighting," Syrsky said. "In some sectors the enemy had tactical success, and in some areas our troops managed to improve the tactical position," he added.

Russia's defence ministry earlier on Sunday claimed its troops had captured the village of Novobakhmutivka in the eastern Donetsk region -- around 10 kilometres (six miles) north of Avdiivka, which they seized in February.

The stark assessment of the picture facing Ukrainian troops comes at the end of week of ups and downs for Kyiv. The United States finally approved a \$61 billion package of financial aid after months of political wrangling, unlocking much-needed arms for Ukraine's stretched troops. But on the battlefield Russia chalked up more successes. Its troops managed to make rapid advances in a narrow column to the northwest of Avdiivka. In the village of Vozhdvyzhenka, some eight kilometres (five miles) from the fighting in Ocherytne, AFP reporters saw civilians loading a small truck with furniture and belongings on Sunday.