

3 more terrorists killed
F.P. Report
RAWALPINDI: Security forces conducted an intelligence based operation in general area Hassan Khel, Peshawar District on reported presence of terrorists. During conduct of the operation, own troops effectively engaged the terrorists' location, as result of which terrorist ringleader Ayaz @ Muhammad and terrorist Ahmedey @ Koochi were killed, while two other terrorists were injured.

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing a meeting on Pakistan Single Window Company.

PM reviews progress of Pakistan Single Window Company

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday chaired a meeting to discuss the expansion of the Pakistan Single Window Company, aimed at facilitating trade and commerce in the country.

The prime minister expressed his satisfaction with the company's current operations and directed that its scope be expanded to facilitate the public in obtaining municipal services. He emphasized the need to replicate the company's successful model, inspired by China's Single Window system, which had been a guiding light for Pakistan.

Chief Executive Officer of Pakistan Single Window Company Syed Aftab Haider, in his detailed briefing, informed the prime minister that 65% of the country's trade was currently being facilitated through the company. He also revealed that 11 government departments and 29 banks were linked with the company.

The company had been ranked among the best in the region in the United Nations' 2022 Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, it was told. The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan, Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb, Minister of State for Information Technology Shaza Fatima Khawaja and relevant senior government officials.

Shehbaz calls for joint efforts to build a 'tobacco-free' Pakistan: On the World No Tobacco Day, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has pledged to intensify his efforts to reduce tobacco production and consumption, with the ultimate goal of creating a tobacco-free Pakistan.

The prime minister, in his message on Friday, urged the stakeholders

including the civil society, professional associations, non-governmental organizations, and the media to collaborate with the government in its national efforts for eliminating the menace from the society.

"By firmly rejecting tobacco, we can establish the groundwork for a healthier and more prosperous Pakistan. Let's resolve, say 'No to Tobacco' and work together for building a tobacco-free Pakistan," he added. He said the Day served as a powerful reminder of the collective effort needed to combat the pervasive and devastating impact of tobacco use on public health.

This year's theme "Protecting Children From Tobacco Industry Interference" focuses on safeguarding our future generations by ensuring that tobacco use continues to decline. It is important to note that tobacco not only impacts the individuals who consume it but also has detrimental effects on the well-being of those in close proximity.

PM Shehbaz said Pakistan was amongst the 15 countries of the world, having a heavy burden of tobacco-related ill health and "faces a double burden of disease primarily cancers, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases". The government, he said, had taken stringent measures to curb tobacco use which included placing large-sized pictorial health warnings on tobacco packages, banning the sale of loose cigarettes, banning point-of-sale displays and increasing tobacco taxation. However to completely eliminate from Pakistan, both production and consumption of tobacco must be reduced.

He said the government had raised taxation on cigarettes to about 150% to discourage the use of tobacco. "Moreover, all forms of tobacco advertising and promotion are prohibited, including advertising on national TV, radio, print media, bill-

boards, point of sale advertising and product display. Restrictions are also in place on sponsorship of cigarette companies and the publicity of such sponsorship," he added.

Premier for plans on B2B meetings, attracting Chinese industry during his China visit: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chaired a meeting to review the preparations for his upcoming visit to China, wherein he directed the formulation of comprehensive plans to hold result-oriented business-to-business meetings between the two countries.

He instructed the relevant authorities to devise strategies for attracting Chinese industries to set up their units in Pakistan, assuring his government's all-out facilitation to the industrialists and investors. During the briefing to the prime minister on the preparations for his China visit, it was told that a delegation of industrialists, investors, and businessmen would accompany him to China's Shenzhen city. The delegation would hold meetings with the Chinese business community to promote business-to-business linkages between the two countries.

The prime minister directed Pakistan's Ambassador to China to extend all-out facilitation to the Pakistani business delegation during its visit there. The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, federal ministers including Jam Kamal Khan, Ahad Khan Cheema, Rana Tanveer Hussain, Attaullah Tarar, Dr Musaddik Malik, and Abdul Aleem Khan, Minister of State Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Special Assistant to PM Tariq Fatemi, PM's Coordinator Rana Ehsan Afzal, Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Jahanzeb Khan and senior government officers. Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal and Pakistan's Ambassador in Beijing joined the meeting via video link.

PM directs cut in PoL prices

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In a major decision on Friday, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has directed the Ministry of Finance to cut the price of petrol by Rs 15.4 per liter and that of diesel by Rs 7.9 per liter.

The government's pro-people policies have led to a notable decline in inflation and a stabilization of the economy, the prime minister said in a statement released by the PM Office.

Petrol and high-speed diesel (HSD) prices were expected to decrease by approximately Rs6.5 to Rs7.5 per litre on May 31, despite a slight exchange rate loss due to a bearish trend in the international market.

Informed sources had said the prices of petrol and HSD had declined in the international market by about \$3.25 and \$2.1 per barrel, respectively, in the last fortnight. This is on top of the \$8.7 and \$4.3 per barrel drop in petrol and HSD rates, respectively, in the previous fortnight.

The import premium on petrol has decreased by about seven per cent in the last fortnight to \$9.7 from \$10.3 per barrel. However, the rupee slightly lost about 10 paise against the US dollar during the fortnight.

The HSD price also dropped by about \$2.1 per barrel in the international market, and its import premium paid by the benchmark Pakistan State Oil remained unchanged at \$6.5 per barrel. Thus, the HSD rate was estimated to be down by Rs6.25 per litre from the current rate of Rs274.08 per litre at the depot stage.

India must stop campaign to suppress Kashmiris: FO

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Friday reiterated its call for India to stop its ongoing campaign to suppress political activists and intimidate the Kashmiri public in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

"The headquarters of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference in Srinagar also remains sealed. India must stop its ongoing campaign to suppress political activists and intimidate the Kashmiri public. The people of Jammu and Kashmir should be able to freely exercise their right to self-determination as enshrined in the relevant UN Security Council resolutions," the Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said at her weekly press briefing here.

Highlighting the unabated Indian authorities' campaign to crush dissent in IIOJK and the confiscation of properties, she told the media that earlier this week, the properties including lands and a shop of two more Kashmiri youth were sealed in Shopian District. The Indian authorities have so far seized hundreds of properties across the occupied territory to punish Kashmiri activists, she added. The spokesperson reiterated Pakistan's resolve to continue extending political, diplomatic, and moral support to Kashmiris for the just and peaceful settlement of the dispute as per the UN Security Council resolutions.

She told the media that during his visit from May 29-30, Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov met Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Acting President Yousuf Raza Gilani, besides holding in-depth talks with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar. The two sides reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthen bilateral strategic relations and broaden the scope of cooperation in all areas of mutual interests and agreed to enhance parliamentary exchanges, strengthen cultural cooperation, and promote people-to-people exchanges.

The spokesperson mentioned a symposium held by the foreign ministry in connection with Vesak Day that brought together foreign delegates, including at the ministerial level, prominent Buddhist monks, and scholars on Buddhism and

interfaith understanding. Besides showcasing Pakistan's rich cultural heritage, the event explored the dimensions of Gandharan Heritage that emerged over 3,000 years ago in Northwest Pakistan, the importance of building bridges and understanding between different communities.

Spokesperson Baloch highlighted the fourth round of Pakistan-Greece Bilateral Political Consultations held on May 29 in Athens, and the sixth round of Pakistan-Hungary Bilateral Political Consultations on May 27 in Budapest. During the meetings, the respective sides agreed to further advancing high-level dialogue and cooperation, and work together on maintaining a positive trajectory in bilateral ties. She told the media that on May 29, Pakistan and St. Lucia formally established diplomatic ties at a ceremony in New York. The joint communique was signed by Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Munir Akram, and his counterpart from St. Lucia.

"Over the last three years, Pakistan has established diplomatic relations with Palau, Kiribati, the Dominican Republic, St. Kitts & Nevis, and the Commonwealth of Dominica. This decision reflects Pakistan's firm commitment to enhance its diplomatic outreach and expand cooperation with countries around the globe," the spokesperson remarked. Spokesperson Baloch announced that at the invitation of Chinese President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif will undertake an official visit to China from June 4-8.

In Beijing, he will meet President Xi and hold delegation-level talks with Premier Li, besides meeting with Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, and heads of key government departments. The prime minister will also visit the cities of Xi'an and Shenzhen. An important aspect of Prime Minister Shehbaz's visit will be meetings with corporate executives of leading Chinese companies dealing in oil and gas, energy, ICT, and emerging technologies. In Shenzhen, he will address the Pakistan-China Business Forum with leading businesspersons, entrepreneurs, and investors from both countries. He will also visit economic and agricultural zones in China.

Azerbaijan FM calls on COAS

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: The Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan, Jeyhun Bayramov, called on General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS), at the General Headquarters (GHQ).

During their meeting, they engaged in in-depth discussions on matters of mutual interest, including regional peace and stability. The COAS emphasized Pakistan's long-standing fraternal ties with Azerbaijan and reiterated the country's unwavering commitment to providing comprehensive assistance and cooperation in the spheres of defense and security.

Furthermore, the COAS praised the Azerbaijani Armed Forces for their exemplary professionalism and valor. The visiting dignitary expressed his sincere appreciation for Pakistan's steadfast support to Azerbaijan and acknowledged the country's pivotal role in maintaining regional stability.

Cylinder blast kills 7 in Hyderabad

F.P. Report

HYDERABAD: The death toll from the gas cylinder blast in Hyderabad's congested Preetabad area has risen to seven as two more children succumbed to their injuries in Karachi's civil hospital on Friday.

Eight-year-old Ali Hasan passed away at 7 AM, and twelve-year-old Azaan Ali son of Raees died at 4 AM today morning. The channel reported that the hospital officials said both children had sustained 100 per cent burns that were a cause of death.

Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah and Governor Kamran Tessori visited the injured at the hospital. The provincial ruling party, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari expressed his condolences to the families of the deceased and wished the injured a speedy recovery.

PPP Chairman Bilawal assured that no effort would be spared in providing the best medical care for the injured. Bilawal called for a thorough investigation and directed the provincial government that if the incident resulted from criminal negligence then those responsible should be held accountable.

Thursday, heavy explosions occurred in a gas cylinder shop in Hyderabad triggering subsequent blasts in other cylinders. The explosions caused fires in several nearby homes and injured more than 60 people including women and children. The injured were rushed to Civil Hospital Hyderabad, but due to inadequate facilities, 23 severely injured people including children were shifted to Civil Hospital Karachi. Six of these patients have died, while 17 remain in critical condition in Karachi.

Two held for killing Punjab workers

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Balochistan Home Minister Zia Langoo on Friday announced that two suspects were arrested in connection to the murder of seven labourers hailing from Punjab in Gwadar.

Lango announced in a press conference that two terrorists responsible for the murders of Punjab workers in Gwadar had been arrested. The suspects, he said, linked to the banned BLA were targeting Punjabi workers. Weapons were recovered from them, he added.

Lango emphasised the government's commitment to eradicating terrorism and warned that any threat to Pakistan will be dealt with severely. He also dismissed rumours about fencing in Gwadar as baseless.

Trump found guilty at hush money trial



NEW YORK (Reuters): Donald Trump became the first US president to be convicted of a crime when a New York jury found him guilty of falsifying documents to cover up a payment to silence a porn star ahead of the 2016 election. After deliberations over two days, the 12-member jury announced it had found Trump guilty on all 34 counts he faced. Unanimity was required for any verdict. Trump watched the jurors dispassionately as they were polled to confirm the guilty verdict.

The verdict plunges the United States into unexplored territory ahead of the Nov 5 presidential election, when Trump, the Republican candidate, will try to win the White House back from Democratic President Joe Biden. Trump, 77, has denied wrongdoing and was expected to appeal. He faces a maximum sentence of four years in prison, though others convicted of that crime often receive shorter sentences, fines or probation. Incarceration would not prevent him from campaigning, or taking office if he were to win.

Opinion polls show Trump and Biden, 81, locked in a tight race, and Reuters/Ipsos polling has found that a guilty verdict could cost Trump some support from independent and Republican voters. The jury notified the court they had reached a verdict at 4.20pm and read out all 34 guilty counts shortly after 5.00pm (5.00am Singapore time).

The jury found Trump guilty of falsifying business documents after sitting through a five-week trial that featured explicit testi-

mony from porn star Stormy Daniels about a sexual encounter she says she had with Trump in 2006 while he was married to his current wife Melania. Trump denies ever having sex with Daniels. Trump's then-fixer Michael Cohen testified that Trump approved a US\$130,000 hush money payment to Daniels in the final weeks of the 2016 election, when he faced multiple accusations of sexual misbehavior.

Cohen testified he handled the payment, and that Trump approved a plan to reimburse him through monthly payments disguised as legal work. Trump's lawyers hammered Cohen's credibility, highlighting his criminal record and imprisonment and his history of lying. Falsifying business documents is normally a misdemeanor in New York, but prosecutors in Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg's office elevated it to a felony on grounds that Trump was concealing an illegal campaign contribution.

Trump complained that he could not get a fair trial in his heavily Democratic hometown. The case was widely regarded as the least consequential of the four criminal prosecutions Trump faces. Jurors heard testimony of sex and lies

that have been public since 2018, although the charges themselves rested on ledger accounts and other records of Cohen's reimbursement.

It was known as the "zombie case" because Bragg brought it back to life after his predecessor opted not to bring charges. This case was also likely to be the only one to go to trial before the election, as the others are delayed by procedural challenges. If elected, Trump could shut down the two federal cases that accuse him of illegally trying to overturn his 2020 election loss and mishandling classified documents after leaving office in 2021. He would not have the power to stop a separate election-subversion case taking place in Georgia. Trump has pleaded not guilty in all the cases and has portrayed his various legal troubles as an effort by Biden's Democratic allies to hurt him politically.

The trial has distracted Trump in his campaign to unseat Biden. However, he milked the media attention throughout. Shortly after the verdict was issued, Trump's campaign put out a fundraising appeal, titled "I am a political prisoner!". He also announced he would make a public statement to journalists early on Friday.



HYDERABAD: People carrying coffins of cylinder blast victims after offering funeral prayer.

Poet Farhad's recovery IHC declines request to dispose of petition

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court on Friday rejected the request of the additional attorney general to dispose of a petition seeking the recovery of a poet from Azad Jammu and Kashmir, remarking that the case could only be concluded upon Ahmed Farhad's production.

IHC's Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani presided over the proceedings on the plea filed by Arooj Zainab, Farhad's spouse. Lawyers Imaan Mazari and Hadi Ali Chattha represented the petitioner. At the outset of the proceedings, Additional Attorney General Munawar Iqbal Duggal stated that there were cases registered against Farhad in Azad Kashmir, and he was on physical remand until June 2.

The state lawyer stated that Farhad's family had met him, so the habeas corpus petition be disposed of. Advancing her arguments,

petitioner's lawyer Imaan Mazari said her client had not only asked for the return of her husband, but also sought action against those responsible for his enforced disappearance. At this, Justice Kayani remarked that the instant case would culminate only on appearance of Farhad in court.

In argument, AAG Duggal stated that Kashmir was a foreign territory with its own constitution and courts, where judgements of Pakistani courts were treated similarly to judgements of foreign courts. The counsel for the petitioner informed the court that from Islamabad, Farhad's family went to the Dhirkot police station, but he was not there, adding that upon inquiry, it was informed that he had been moved to Muzaffarabad due to the inclusion of sections relating to the charges of terrorism.

Mazari further said that when they reached there, a policeman told them that

the FIR registered was from their police station, but Farhad was with the SHO (station house officer). She added that they had to go extra 14 kilometres away to see Farhad, who was not in good condition, when they saw him. When Justice Kayani inquired about Farhad's whereabouts before his arrest on May 29, the Islamabad prosecutor general stated that the court in AJK would address it.

Justice Kayani remarked that everyone should work within the law, to which the prosecutor general maintained that he works within the law. The petitioner's counsel argued that the court should also look at the misuse of laws and procedures, to which Justice Kayani said "we have to determine the misuse of law". Later, the court adjourned the hearing until June 7, rejecting the request to dispose of the petition for the recovery of poet Ahmed Farhad.



PESHAWAR: Member of the Sri Lankan delegation performing religious rituals during their visit to Peshawar Museum.

PBA rejects proposed sales tax on litigation

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar Bar Association (PBA) has rejected proposed Rs500 sales tax on filling new cases in civil courts and increase in other fees, termed it an additional burden on already economically distressed people, on Friday.

PBA held an emergency meeting chaired by president Amjad Ali Marwat advocate in which general secretary Izhar Ullah Khan Khalil, Abdul Haseeb, Muhammad Ishaq Khan, Sohail Haider and Afzal

Khan Babakhel along with other lawyers present.

PBA expressed concern over the proposed amendment in Section 13 of the Finance Bill 2024, which suggests imposing Rs500 sales tax on all kinds of claims, cases, and applications filed in courts. The participants termed this tax as "double taxation" which is "illegal".

PHC claimed that the proposed tax would further oppress the already economically struggling people, who are already impacted by terrorism and economic downturn. They

argued that the provision of cheap justice has been compromised due to this illegal tax.

PBA also expressed concerns that litigants are already paying 15,000 rupees as court fees, which was previously 3,000 rupees, and has been increased, making access to justice even more difficult.

PBA warned the provincial government to refrain from imposing such illegal taxes, otherwise, lawyers will be compelled to take extreme measures to protect the public interest.

Minority delegation meets Edu Minister

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A delegation of representatives from minority communities, led by former provincial minister and leader of the Wazir Zada, met with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Minister for Higher Education, Mina Khan Afridi, to discuss issues and obstacles faced by minority students in admissions to universities and colleges in the province.

The delegation included Professor Dr. Kalyan Singh Kalyan from GC University Lahore, Haroon Sarab Dayal from the National Language Delegation for Minority Rights, Jai Parkash Morani, Pashpa Kumari, and Habqoo Gul.

The delegation briefed the provincial minister on the difficulties faced by minority students in admissions to universities and colleges in detail.

They highlighted that in some colleges and universities in the province, the two percent quota for minority students is not being implemented, depriving them of access to higher education and affecting their educational pursuits.

It was emphasized that the two percent quota for minority students in universities and colleges has been specifically allocated, which is their legal right.

The delegation urged the provincial minister to ensure the implementation of the two percent admissions quota for minority students in all universities and colleges in the province so that minority students can also pursue higher education.

On this occasion, the provincial minister directed the relevant officials of the education department to ensure that where the quota for minority education is not being implemented in universities and colleges, its implementation should be ensured according to the law, and there should be no room for negligence or complaints.

Sri Lankan Buddhist leaders delegation calls on Governor

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A delegation of Sri Lankan Buddhist leaders, led by the Honorable Minister for Buddha Sasana, Religious, and Cultural Affairs Vidura Wickremnayake, met with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi at the Governor House in Peshawar.

Governor Faisal Karim Kundi welcomed the Sri Lankan Buddhist delegation to the Governor House.

The delegation is visiting Pakistan to attend a symposium and an exhibition

titled "From Gandhara to the World" organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The delegation was also given a tour of the historic Governor House Peshawar. The Governor informed the Sri Lankan Minister and the Buddhist delegation about the history and culture of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly the ancient Buddhist heritage. Complete protection is provided to the historical and cultural heritage of Buddhism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, said Faisal Karim Kundi.

Buddhist religious leaders from various countries

visit the northern regions and other areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa every year, Faisal Karim Kundi added.

The Buddhist heritage is fully preserved in the form of Gandhara art and culture in Northwestern Pakistan, Faisal Karim Kundi stated.

The meeting also discussed promoting tourism between Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The delegation thanked the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for the hospitality and for preserving the Buddhist heritage in the province.

Meanwhile, Governor on Friday vis-

ited historic Mahabat Khan Mosque and offered Friday prayers.

On this occasion, special prayers were offered for peace, progress, and prosperity in the country, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. After the Friday prayers, the Governor mingled with the worshippers. The Governor also met with the Khateeb of Mahabat Khan Mosque, Maulana Tayyab Qureshi.

Khateeb Maulana Tayyab Qureshi informed the Governor about the historical significance of the Mahabat Khan Mosque.

Roads, motorways vital for promoting tourism: Shaheen

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Minister for Communications and Works, Shaheen Ahmad, has emphasized the necessity of providing facilities to the public for commuting and for the promotion of trade and tourism through the construction of roads and motorways.

He stated that the provincial government is taking comprehensive measures for this purpose, with the Swat Motorway Phase-II project being a crucial part of these efforts.

He expressed these views while presiding over a meeting held in Peshawar regarding the Swat Motorway Phase-II project.

The meeting was attended by Provincial Minister for Forests and Environment, Fazl Hakim Khan, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister for Housing, Dr. Amjad Ali, as well as members of the National and Provincial Assemblies from Swat, along with project directors and managing directors of relevant authorities.

Detailed discussions were held during the meeting to ensure that the current construction design

and project align with public expectations.

During the briefing, it was revealed that the Swat Motorway Phase-II, costing approximately 36.50 billion rupees, will span almost 80 kilometers and include the construction of 9 bridges and 7 interchanges.

Additionally, 21.5 billion rupees have been allocated for acquiring the required land.

The Minister for Communications stated that following the success of Swat Motorway Phase-I, the provincial government has initiated the construction of Phase-II.

He reiterated that developmental projects are aimed at the welfare of the public, and wherever local communities face issues, the government is committed to resolving them diligently.

In this regard, a committee has been formed at the government level to address concerns related to local projects, improve designs, and align them with public needs.

The committee will present its recommendations in the upcoming meetings regarding Swat Motorway Phase-II, ensuring better coordination with public requirements.

SBBWUP, USEFP hold program to empowering women educators

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University Peshawar (SBBWUP) hosted the closing ceremony of the three-month program, "Leading Change: Empowering Women Educators through Excellence in Educational Assessment."

This initiative was conducted in collaboration with the United States Educational Foundation in Pakistan (USEFP) and was an Alumni Small Grant project led by Dr. Wilayat Bibi, Associate Professor at the Department of Education, SBBWUP.

The program aimed to empower women educators by providing them with advanced tools and knowledge in educational assessment.

Throughout its duration, participants exhibited remarkable resilience, creativity, and a sincere commitment to fostering positive change within the education sector.

The ceremony was graced by the esteemed presence of Mr. Ghulam Saeed, Special Secretary of the Higher Education Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In his address to the audience, he underscored the critical importance and necessity of women educators in the region.

Furthermore, he emphasized the need for implementing and replicating the acquired assessment techniques within the education department.

Prof. Dr. Safia Ahmad, the esteemed Vice Chancellor, commended the project team Dr. Wilayat Bibi,

Dr. Mehreen-ul-Hassan, Ms. Tashfeen Zia, Dr. Sundas, Ms. Sabahat and Ms. Maimona for their dedicated efforts and lauded the participants for their active engagement throughout the program.

She affirmed that the university authorities are always committed to supporting faculty and students from affiliated colleges in both academic and non-academic endeavors. Additionally, Mr. Sahibzada Amir Khalil, Country President of PUAN, attended the ceremony and praised the team's efforts and the skills employed, which contributed to the project's success.

The ceremony concluded with the distribution of souvenirs and certificates to the participants and chief guests, followed by a tea reception.



Taimoor Ayaz Khan an inspirational coach

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Taimoor Ayaz Khan, a distinguished professional squash player and World Squash Federation recognized coach, has made a profound impact on the sport.

His impressive achievements and contributions have brought recognition and pride to Pakistan. Notably, his co-coaching led Pakistan's junior squash team to a remarkable performance at the 2024 Australian Junior Squash Championship in

Melbourne, securing five gold medals and three bronze medals.

The contesting players and the Pakistan Squash Federation equally paid tribute to Taimoor for showcasing Pakistani talent and dedication on the global stage.

Born in Peshawar, the city of squash legends, 27-year-old Taimoor holds a master's degree in Sports Sciences. He emphasizes the vital role of a coach in a player's development and success, providing comprehensive support including

technical improvement, strategic guidance, mental preparation, personalized training plans, match analysis, injury prevention, competition preparation, nutrition, and recovery advice.

As a qualified and experienced coach, Taimoor Ayaz Khan can significantly enhance a player's progress and achievements. Inspiring young Pakistanis to pursue their passions and strive for excellence. His success story is a testament to his hard work and commitment, leaving a lasting legacy in the world of squash.



Time to unlock hydel potential for affordable electricity in country

PESHAWAR (APP): Installing a solar system on the rooftop of his house, Riazul Haq – a former PST teacher seemed satisfied after making a Rs 300,000 investment hoping to get relief from long hours of power outages mostly caused by direct hocks, non-meterization, and non-construction of dams that irked consumers.

"Today I am pleased to install a complete solar panel on investment helping me to run an AC and refrigerator for around 24 hours," he told APP after installation of the system at his hometown of Pabbi Nowshera.

Taking advantage of the decline in prices of the solar system, he said that solar panels are now within the common man's reach and people may take advantage of it as Wapda could not afford uninterrupted electricity to all domestic, agricultural, and industrial consumers due to increase of power pilferage and non-meterization in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said the menace of load shedding could not be addressed unless taking advantage of the massive hydel power potential in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Despite the 60,000MW hydel power potential of Pakistan including 30,000MW of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the energy crisis has deepened in recent years due to kunda culture, increase in prices of oil and petroleum products, high taxation, and non-construction of dams that adversely affected agriculture, economic and industrial growth in the country.

The untapped hydel power potential of KP has increased the gap between the supply and demand of electricity during the start of summer, resulting in an increase in load shedding mostly high line losses feeders in peripheries of

Peshawar, Bannu, DI Khan, Karak, Lakki Marwat and merged tribal districts.

Akhtar Hameed Khan, Chief Executive Officer of Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) Akhtar Hameed Khan said that load management was being done only in areas where line losses were high in KP. He said that there was no load management on more than 500 feeders with no line losses. There is zero load-shedding in Hayatabad, Peshawar Cantonment, Gulbahar, and other posh areas. He said that PESCO teams were regularly conducting operations across the province to reduce line losses.

He said that directives were issued to the field teams to accelerate operations to reduce load management. He said PESCO staff was further directed not to carry out any additional or unannounced

load management across the province. Under the aggregate technical and commercial losses (ATCL) formula, only scheduled load shedding was being carried out in areas with high ATCL losses such as Bannu, rural areas of Peshawar including Warak Road, Chagarmathi and Regi and DI Khan district. Swat, Swabi, Interior Peshawar, and Hazara were comparatively better in terms of low line losses and high recovery.

He said the non-merceterization and direct hocks in merged areas mostly overload the power distribution system besides causing fluctuation and tripping of electricity that often caused the burning of expansive transformers.

Prof Dr Zilakat Malik, former Chairman Economics Department of the University of Peshawar said that hydel energy was cost-efficient

for developing countries like Pakistan and underscored the need for the construction of water reservoirs and small dams for sustainable economic growth and flood mitigation in the wake of climate change challenges.

Dr Naeem said China had constructed about 98,000 dams and India 5,334 dams while Pakistan has built only 150 dams since its independence and no big dam after Turbella. He said that the rivers in northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab are most suitable for the construction of dams, especially small ones. 'Pakistan has about 60,000 MW hydel potential of which only 6,600 MW has been tapped so far with nearly half of it installed in KP ie 30,000MW.

Engr Zahoore Hussain, Director Projects, Wapda (North) besides the completion of 108MW Golen Gol dam in Chitral, said

work on Mohmand dam of 800MW with 1.293 MAF water storage capacity was accelerated that after completion would supplement/irrigate 160,000 acres of existing land and about 18,237 acres of new land with annual benefits of Rs2.23 billion.

KP Energy Department officials told APP that 36.6MW Daral Khwar HPP Madain Swat was completed and electricity generation with over Rs1.3 billion annual benefits started. Likewise, 300MW Balakot HPP worth Rs 85 billion approved by ECNEC would be constructed on River Kunhar in Mansehra.

About 10,000 MW projects are in different stages of implementation with a potential to generate about Rs100 billion annual revenue and efforts are on to utilize the remaining 14,000 MW through construction

of new hydropower projects.

Three hydropower projects (HPPs) amounting to Rs177.244 billion including the construction of 96 MW Batakundi amounting to Rs 40 billion and 188MW Naran of Rs70 billion Manshera would be developed with the collaboration of International Finance Corporation (IFC) in Shangla. Feasibility study of 20.8MW Shangla HPP completed.

496MW Spat-Gah HPP amounting to US\$ 1,015 million is being developed for which MoU between KP government having 26pc shares and M/S Korea Hydro and Nuclear Power Company (KHNP) with 74pc share was signed. Gabral Kalam and Madyan HPP having 245MW capacity would be constructed with Rs115 billion.

Modification in Malakand-III HPP amounting to Rs 778 mil-

lion initiated to generate an additional 154 GWh electricity with Rs 382 million annual benefits. Work on seven different HPP having cumulative generation capacity of 214MW including Koto 69MW, Karora 11MW, Jabori 10MW, Matioltan 84 MW, Lawi 69MW, Capri Charkhel 10.2MW and Barando 6.5MW with Rs eight billion annual economic benefits were in different stages of completion.

Malakand-III (81 MW), Daral Khwar (36.6MW), Ranolia (17 MW), Pehur (18 MW), Machai (2.6MW), Shishi (1.8MW) and Reshun (4.2 MW) with accumulative 161.2 MW generation commissioned to generate Rs5.4 billion revenue annually.

About 12.8 million units would be saved having Rs 203 million in annual economic benefits after converting 4,000 mosques to solar energy.



In brief

Four of a family killed in clash

KANDHKOT (INP): Four members of a family were killed and two others injured in armed clash over matrimonial issue here, police said on Friday. According to detail, marriage feud between two groups led to exchange of fire at Bakshapur Indus Highway in Kandhkot. In cross firing, four family members were killed while two others sustained bullet injuries. Heavy contingent of police reached the scene and brought situation under control. The bodies and injured were shifted to hospital for medico-legal formalities. The police registered a case against armed men of the two clashing groups and started raids for their arrest.

Eradication of polythene bags F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: An important meeting was held regarding the ban on polythene bags under the chairmanship of Additional Deputy Commissioner General (ADCG) Toba Tek Singh, on Friday. District officers and representatives of business community participated in this meeting. Additional Deputy Commissioner (G) Zeeshan Labha Masih said that in view of the harmful environmental effects of plastic bags, a complete ban has been imposed on the use and sale of single-use plastic from June 5, 2024 and in addition. Plastic forks, spoons, plates, disposable glasses, food boxes, plastic stickers, plastic flags, plastic banners will also be completely banned. He further said that the government of Punjab is determined to provide a clean and healthy environment to the citizens.

Fake teacher sentenced

SARGODHA (INP): A teacher in Sargodha has been sentenced to 20 years in prison and fined Rs. 4 lakh (approximately \$2,300 USD) by a special anti-corruption court. The teacher was found guilty of securing their position at Government High School Sheikh Mehmo o d w a l a Mianwali using a fake recruitment order. According to the Punjab Anti-Corruption Department, the teacher had been drawing a salary since their fraudulent appointment. The total amount amassed through this deception is estimated to be over Rs. 21 lakh (approximately \$12,300 USD).

Police arrests 12 alleged culprits F.P. Report

LARKANA: Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Larkana ordered raids on various villages including Ibrahim's Vandh near Madeji and arrested 12 suspects. suspects have been arrested. Speaking to the media on this occasion, SSP Larkana Mir Ruhul Khan Khoso said that after investigating the arrested suspects, the un_criminals will be released and founded criminals will be arrested, further he said that along with force raided the villages of Jeha and Jagirani to control continued their dispute. I clearly told to criminals that It is a message for you to be separate from crimes and if that they will not be spared if they do not commit crimes.

15 arrested

SARGODHA (INP): Sargodha police during a crackdown against the law violators and law breakers across the district here on Friday held 15 criminals. Police said that the police of different police stations raided at different localities under their respective jurisdictions.

Concentrated efforts on to douse fire at Dir mountains

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The district administration of Dir Lower on Friday in its report on fire eruptions at three separate places of the district said that severe fire emergency erupted at Osakai, Badwan, and Ghazo Mountains near Chackdara that necessitated immediate firefighting efforts.

The fire, which started on May 28, quickly escalated beyond human control due to the challenging terrain and weather conditions, prompting the need for aerial firefighting assistance. The District Emergency Officer Dir Lower and Malakand supervised the whole operation.

Upon the outbreak of the fire, firefighting operations commenced promptly. Given the severity of the situation, the District Administration sought assistance from the

Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) for helicopter support to extinguish the fire.

Around 5:00 a.m. the following morning, a team of 40 rescuers from Dir Lower, along with 30 rescuers from District Malakand were deployed for a fire extinguishing operation. Additionally, 18 rescuers from District Swat joined the operation.

The helicopter provided by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) also joined the operation and began firefighting procedures at around 12:00 p.m. Despite several attempts, the effectiveness of aerial water trips was limited due to thick smog, hindering visibility.

Despite challenges, ground firefighting efforts persisted throughout the day, involving 90 rescuers, forest officials, levies, FC and the local community. However, the fire remained uncontrollable. With dark-

ness setting in, the operation was paused for safety reasons the other night.

The firefighting operation resumed at 5:30 am on Friday with a comprehensive team comprising of 65 Rescuers from Rescue 1122 from Dir Lower (40 Rescuers) and Malakand (25 Rescuers), forestry & wildlife officials, FC, levies, Civil Defense volunteers, and members of the local community.

The district administration said the fire emergency at Osakai, Badwan, and Ghazo Mountains presented a significant challenge, requiring coordinated efforts from multiple agencies and communities. Despite initial setbacks, the commitment to controlling the fire remains steadfast, with a focus on resuming operations at the earliest opportunity. It hoped that soon with concentrated efforts fire erupted at these locations would be doused soon.

ANP blames govt for bad governance F.P. Report

WANA: Awami National Party (ANP) has condemned the deteriorating law and order situation as well as poor governance in South Waziristan, on Friday.

This was condemned by party's district president Ayaz Wazir while addressing press conference at Wana press club and criticized the current government for its failure to maintain peace and security in the region, stating that crimes such as theft, dacoity, and extortion have surged. It was alleged that the government is complicit in perpetuating insecurity and chaos, allowing unknown entities to control the district's affairs.

The ANP leader claimed that the party would not tolerate this state of affairs, as the public is already suffering from poverty, unemployment, and inflation. The deplorable condition of healthcare, education, agriculture, and forestry in the district was highlighted, with comparisons drawn to other areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The government was urged to take immediate action to address these issues, including the restoration of basic facilities like schools and healthcare centers, which have been reduced to ruins. The party also demanded the provision of amenities to farmers and gardeners, on par with those in other districts, and the revival of the dormant Wana Agri Park, which was built at a cost of billions of rupees.

If the government fails to address these issues, the party warned that it would be forced to launch a robust protest movement. A ban on illegal cutting of forests and the immediate provision of electricity from the Wana Gomal Zam Dam were also demanded.

Farmers pin poor mango crop

TANDO ALLAHYAR (INP): Pakistan's mangoes are normally a source of national pride and much-needed income, but farmers are blaming climate change for the parasites and extreme weather ruining much of this season's crop, says in media reports.

A white and orange scarf wrapped around his head in the scorching heat, farmer Muhammad Yusuf lamented the erratic weather. An abnormally long winter was followed by the wettest April in decades, while the country is now experiencing a heatwave with temperatures hitting up to 52 degrees Celsius (126 degrees Fahrenheit). "Buds didn't flower on time, many buds just died. Those that started growing were infected with (parasite) black hopper," said Yusuf, who has worked half his life growing mangoes. Now over 60 years old, Yusuf said "climate change has wreaked havoc" in his village of Tando Allahyar, around 200 kilometres (124 miles) northeast of economic hub Karachi.

Pakistan is the world's fourth-largest mango producer and agriculture accounts for almost a quarter of its GDP. Further south in Tando Ghulam Ali, Arsalan, who manages a 900-acre mango orchard, noticed the damage as soon as the harvest started this week. "We have production losses of 15 to 20 percent, and the picking has only just started so this figure will surely increase," said the 32-year-old.

PHC CJ took oath from newly elected cabinet of District Bar Abbottabad



F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: Ishtiaq Ibrahim, Chief Justice Peshawar High Court has stated that they will not deviate from their oath to uphold the Constitution and the law. He remarked that people do not come forward for their rights as they have lost trust in the system. To rectify this, the cooperation of lawyers is essential. There is no alternative to gaining the public's trust. The judiciary is facing challenges due to daily new legislations.

The Peshawar High Court's Abbottabad Bench will also hear cases via video link. Significant improvements in judicial reforms will be evident in three months. The judiciary cannot function without lawyers. There are four hundred thousand cases pending in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, to prevent unnecessary cases, public

prosecution training is urgently needed.

He expressed these thoughts while addressing the oath-taking ceremony of newly elected officials at the Abbottabad District Bar. On this occasion, Justice Ijaz Akbar, Justice Faheem Ali, Peshawar High Court Registrar Ikhtiyar Khan, District and Sessions Judge Muhammad Shoaib Khan, as well as additional session judges, senior civil judges, and lawyers were present.

Chief Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim emphasized the need for hard work to improve the system. He mentioned that more judges are being appointed by the federal government to expedite case resolutions and this gap will be filled with a focus on quality. He stated that criminal, civil, and family cases will be separated in court, which will enhance the judges' performance and provide

relief to the people.

The Chief Justice of the Peshawar High Court pointed out that new laws are being made daily in the country. Reforms are necessary but additional courts should be provided for this. If judges and lawyers work together better results will follow. He announced funding for the district bar and library. Earlier, the President of the Abbottabad District Bar, Atif Khan Jadoon, along with the newly elected cabinet, took their oaths, administered by the Chief Justice of the Peshawar High Court who also congratulated them. President of the District Bar Atif Jadoon, informed the Chief Justice about the issues faced by the bar and lawyers, which were assured to be resolved. The President of the High Court Bar presented commemorative shields to Chief Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and other guests.

Intense forest fire erupted in Buner's mountains

F.P. Report

BUNER: The valuable trees, herbs and birds are facing severe threats due to the fire in the forests of Pir Baba Dokda hills. The SDFO (Said Rahim) of the Forest Department Circle Daggar is there and trying to extinguish the fire along with his team.

But the intense heat, strong sun, dry grass and the light wind blowing in the mountain range are causing the fire to intensify every moment by giving fuel to the fire and still the process of extinguishing the fire is going on tilling the news report. But the fire extinguishing team members were facing difficulties. But the firefighting team is hopeful that the fire will be contained

and the fire will be prevented from spreading further.

It's pertinent to mention here that every year from the beginning of June to the end of July, the responsible officers of the Forest Department declare the season of fire in the forests and in this regard they also publicize it regularly on social media and other medias so that the people to minimize the possibility of fire in the mountains during the season.

It's advised to avoid throwing burnt cigarettes and matchsticks in the mountain ranges and hunters and tourists should also exercise caution during the fire and extinguish the fire completely when leaving the venue. It also advised to take make sure

during and after leaving the place so that no accident of fire occurs and precious trees, herbs, cattle and birds are safe.

But unfortunately, the people who have forgotten and especially the evil elements are aware of this message that now is the time, forests should be set on fire. So that if the herdsmen living on the mountains burn the old grass and set it on fire with the desire to sprout new plants, the rivals of forest department to responded negatively to this message, causing great damage to the forests. On the one hand, the national wealth harms the local greenery and rich tourism, on the other hand, by burning trees, herbs, birds and other insects.

Mushaira at Landi Kotal Press Club arranged

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: To encourage literary activities in the area, a mushaira (a poetic symposium) was held here in Landi Kotal press club, district Khyber on Thursday evening. The poetic event was organized by the local press club and poets from across tehsil Landi Kotal participated in it.

President Landi Kotal press club, Ahmad Nabi presided over the mushaira while renowned poet Professor Dr Tawab Masoor was the chief guest on the occasion. Participants' poets and writers including Tawab

Masoor, Kabir Khan Kabir, Abdul Ghafoor Ghafoor, Namadar, Iran Mazloom, Saleh Muhammad Saleh, Dilawar Khan Dilawar, Ayaz Masroor, Nadir Shah, Sher Zaman Adil, Muhammad Dost Cheshiti and others presented their pieces of poetry that were applauded by the audience.

Earlier, addressing on the occasion Dr Tawab Masoor congratulated the journalists for organizing the mushaira and said such kind of literary events would certainly promote poets and poetry in the area. Poets and writers are the neglected portion of the society therefore arranging mushairas for them is a

valuable effort that needs to be appreciated, he remarked.

Giving comments President Press club, Ahmad Nabi said that besides their professional engagements, the local media persons set up mushaira to contribute in literary activities and vowed that the events would be organized on a regular basis in future.

At the end a resolution was also passed, demanding of the Inspector General Frontier Corp (IGFC) that like renovation works done to Hamza Baba complex, a tomb should be constructed of the famous, Pashto poet, Khair Afridi.

DRC to play fundamental role in redressal of dispute

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Commissioner Mardan Shaukat Ali Yousafzai inaugurated the Alternate Dispute Resolution Council at the Commissioner's Office on Friday while Additional Commissioner Naeem Akhtar and Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Fayaz Khan Sherpao were also present on this occasion.

Secretary-to-Commissioner and focal person of ADR, Sara Tahab, while giving a briefing on the occasion, said that the ADR system will play a fundamental role in resolving disputes and through this, people will get rid of the cycles of the police station. He said that the system is already operational at the

district level and six applications were received under the ADR system in Tehsil Mardan last month which were amicably resolved with the consent of the parties. He said that people can register their complaints at the district level and also in the commissioner's office.

Commissioner Mardan Division Shaukat Ali Yousafzai said that the alternative dispute resolution system has legal protection and a formal act regarding it has been approved by the provincial assembly. He said that the people should use the ADR system in their respective districts or in the commissioner's office to resolve their disputes so that they get relief from the problems of the police station and their problems are resolved

through mutual negotiation. Meanwhile, on the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Assistant Commissioner Takhtbhai Aftab Alam Khan along with raided grain warehouses. The confirmed sources informed that sugar, grains and flour are stored in various warehouses in Takhtbhai which increases the shortage and rate in the market.

AC checked the stock register and warehouse registration certificates and also checked the quality and quantity against which legal action was taken, he said that check and balance against hoarders will continue and the hoarders will be dealt with iron hands. Public circles welcomed the ongoing operation and demanded it to continue.

Minister argues NHA for early completion of underpass

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Finance Minister argued early construction of underpass at Khairmatoo-Dhoda crossing on Indus Highway in Kohat. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Finance and Law Aftab Alam Afridi Advocate has stressed on the National Highway Authority (NHA) authorities to implement the demand of the people of Khairmatoo and Dhoda for the construction of a flyover or underpass on the Indus Highway crossing as their demand is highly genuine.

Similarly underpasses should be constructed at Jarma Chowk, Double

Chowk and interchanges at Indus Highway for Bazid Khel and KDA to prevent accidents on this busy highway. He expressed these views during the meeting with the delegation representing the people of Khairmatoo and Dhoda.

The provincial minister said, he along with Shahryar Afridi MNA and other colleague members have also brought these important issues into the notice of the authorities of the NHA but they could not yet implemented.

He said that unfortunately more than 50 precious lives have been lost so far on Khairmatoo-Dhoda crossing in various accidents, so we all the

elected public representatives are with our people in these legitimate demands. He said that risk of accidents further increased due to the dualization of Indus Highway.

It may be recalled that the people of Khairmatoo and Dhoda stopped the work of the NHA for the non construction of flyover or underpass at the crossing, but the NHA resumed work without fulfilling the demand due to which there is great public concerns. Provincial Minister Aftab Alam Afridi will soon visit the spot to express solidarity with his people and draw the attention of NHA towards these important demands.

Clinic on Wheel to provide health facilities

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Deputy Commissioner Sundas Irshad said that Clinic on Wheel programme of the Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif for providing free of cost medicines and other treatment facilities to the people at their doorsteps is an ideal and people friendly steps in its nature while under this programme, ultrasound, ECG, Sugar, Hepatitis and other tests facilities are being provided to patients and a large number of citizens are getting free of cost treatment facilities.

She expressed these views while visiting medical camp arranged under Clinic on Wheel Programme. CEO Health Dr. Umer Sharif Rathoor, In-charge Programme Dr. Rai Shahrooz Ahmad were also accompanied by the

DC. She reviewed different facilities being provided to patient in the Medical Camp and she also took feedback from female patients regarding Clinic on Wheel Programme of the Chief Minister Punjab. The patients thanked the Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, district administration and health department for holding free medical camp in the city and providing free of cost medicines and other treatment facilities to the patients.

Meanwhile, DC Sundas Irshad directed the price magistrates to take strict action against profiteers and ensure sale of naan, roti and other edible items on fixed prices. She issued these directions while presiding over the meeting of Price Control Magistrates held at district complex. She also directed the price

magistrates to ensure past of flaxes inscribed with rate list in front of tandoors and hotels at prominent places for providing relief to citizens.

Students committed to fight deforestation: President Young Students Federation Rana Khurram Ejaz said that it is need of hour to take sloid steps to contain deforestation to overcome climate change challenges as well as keeping environment pleasant and human friendly.

While talking to media, he said that according to recent estimate, Pakistan has lost a large part on its forests and over the past few decades, our country's forest covers only two percent area which was significantly below the recommended threshold of 25 percent for environmental balance.



GAZA STRIP: Palestinians make their way as they inspecting the damage after Israeli forces withdrew from a part of Jabalia refugee camp.

Kenya hears ‘heartbreaking’ claims against UK soldiers

NAIROBI (BBC): A landmark public inquiry into allegations of human rights violations by British troops in Kenya has been hearing "heartbreaking" testimony from those who say they were mistreated.

Dozens of people have this week given evidence to the parliamentary inquiry into the alleged misconduct of soldiers from the British Army Training Unit Kenya (Batuk). Among them are the family of a young woman allegedly disabled in a hit-and-run by a British Army truck, a mother who says she was abandoned when pregnant and a man who was mauled by a lion in the wake of fires allegedly started on an army training exercise.

The Batuk base in Nanyuki, about 200km (125 miles) north of the capital, Nairobi, and was established in 1964 shortly after the East African nation gained independence from the UK. Kenya's Defence Minister Aden Duale has said that Kenya will seek prosecutions for any British soldier alleged to have broken the law during deployments over the decades. The UK High Commission in Kenya told the BBC it was aware of the proceedings and that it - and Batuk - intended to co-operate with the inquiry. Hundreds of people have this week flocked to the four public hearings held near the Batuk base to listen to emotional accounts of alleged misconduct by British soldiers. Memusi Lochede testified that British officials promised to look after her 22-year-old daughter Chaula Memusi, who is in a wheelchair after allegedly being injured by a British army truck in a hit-and-run incident in January 2019.

"They sent a representative to tell me that they don't want a court case and that they would take care of my daughter," the 45-year-old mother told one of the hearings held outdoors under a marquee in Archers Post, where the British army conducts infantry exercises. Under an agreement with the Kenyan government, up to six infantry battalions per year carry out eight-week exercises in Kenya. Ms Lochede said they paid for her daughter's hospital bills for two years, but had failed to pay compensation as promised. Lino Lemaramba told the BBC he witnessed the accident and was shocked to see the British army truck drive away after the collision. He stopped to help Ms Memusi.

"It was a Batuk truck, I tried to stop it but it kept moving," he alleged. "It was a tragic scene, blood all over, her bones were crushed... people were afraid to touch her," he said, describing how difficult it was to lift her into his pick-up and take her to the hospital. Another emotional testimony at that hearing came from 28-year-old Generica Namoru, who was accompanied by her five-year-old daughter. She told members of the inquiry, established by Kenya's parliamentary defence committee, that she became pregnant while she was in a consensual relationship with a British soldier stationed at Batuk. When she informed him she was pregnant, he ended the relationship and left Kenya, leaving her to raise the child by herself.

They kept in touch for a while and she told him about the birth of their daughter, but then all communication had stopped. "All I want is child support so that my child can go to school and have [a] better future," she said. The hearings also heard evidence from a string of people who said they had suffered from serious health problems following a fire allegedly started by British soldiers during a training exercise being hosted at a wildlife sanctuary in 2021. The blaze, said to have lasted for four days, destroyed more than 12,000 acres (4,856 hectares) of land and left at least one person dead. Lipaso Legei, who was wearing a traditional Maasai outfit at the hearing, testified that he was lucky to be alive after being attacked by a lion that came closer to human settlements after the fire had destroyed its natural habitat.

"I was mauled by a lion. Under these shuka [Maasai cloth] I have injuries on my back, I nearly died." He added that farming had also become impossible: "We can't plant maize, animals keep invading, our dogs have been mauled by hyenas and leopards." Several people said they had developed serious respiratory and eye problems. Simon Kaburu presented his medical records to the MPs and explained that he had to have medication to deal with "chest problems after smoke inhalation".

More than 7,000 local people are believed to have started legal action

against the British army following the fire. The inquiry has largely been prompted by the shocking case of Agnes Wanjiru. Her body was found in a septic tank in 2012 after the 21-year-old had apparently been spotted with a group of British soldiers on a night out.

A 2019 inquest concluded that she was murdered by one or two British soldiers. The public inquiry this week heard further allegations that Batuk and the Kenyan authorities were involved in a cover-up of her death. Ms Wanjiru's niece Esther Njoki told one of the hearings, at Nanyuki Social Hall, about the family's frustration over the delay in any prosecution. "We want closure, we are demanding justice," she said.

Kenya's Directorate of Criminal Investigations has opened an inquiry into the death, but not charged anyone and Kenya has not asked for the extradition of suspects. The UK has indicated it would not oppose any request for a suspect to be extradited. MP Nelson Koech, chair of Kenya's parliamentary defence committee, told the BBC some of the allegations heard at the hearings were "new and heartbreaking".

"It has hit me that things have been happening here, whether they are true or not, we will see," he said. The defence minister said in an TV interview this week that Kenya had benefited from the historic defence partnership with the UK and said more than 1,500 local people were employed at Batuk. But Mr Duale said the current inquiry could lead to the government seeking closer engagement with the UK over issues raised, adding: "All criminal acts committed on our soil will be dealt in the host country, that is Kenya."

A spokesman for the UK High Commission in Kenya said: "We are aware that Kenya's National Assembly Defence, Intelligence and Foreign Relations Committee is conducting a parliamentary inquiry into the activities of Batuk in Kenya. The British High Commission in Nairobi and Batuk intend to cooperate with the inquiry." The UK-Kenya defence partnership is one of the great strengths of our relationship and our joint training and operations with the Kenyan Defence Forces are keeping both Kenyan and British people safe."

Spain passes bill granting amnesty to Catalan secessionists

MADRID: Spain's parliament has greenlighted a bill granting amnesty to hundreds of Catalan secessionists involved in a botched breakaway bid seven years ago.

The controversial bill, passed 177-172, will see courts annul the legal records of hundreds of officials and activists involved in crimes related to Catalonia's secessionists push from 2011, paving the way for a return of the movement's exiled leader, Carles Puigdemont.

The act of pardon draws a line under Spain's worst political crisis in decades, which saw Catalan pro-independence leaders, who had won the 2015 regional election in Catalonia, hold a full referendum in 2017 that was declared illegal by Spain's constitutional court.

The bill, opposed by the conservative Popular Party (PP) and far-right Vox, has had a rocky ride through parliament. Initially approved by the lower house in March, it was vetoed in the upper house, where right-wing parties hold a majority, earlier this month. But the lower house pushed it through regardless.

Even though it has now been passed, it is likely to face legal challenges. Earlier this week, a PP spokesman said that the party would do everything to "overturn" the law, whether through appeals to the Constitutional Court or "social pressure" on the street. The law must also be applied by courts on a case-by-case basis, with individual judges deciding whether the amnesty applies.

They have two months to raise issues with the Constitutional Court or the European Justice system which could delay its implementation for some time. "Forgiveness is stronger than resentment," said Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez after the bill was passed. Sanchez had put forward the amnesty proposal in exchange for support in parliament from Catalan secessionist parties enabling him to stay on as prime minister after an inconclusive election last year. The new law paves the way for the return of independence figurehead Puigdemont, leader of Together for Catalonia (JxCat), one of the parties that had backed Sanchez's coalition government.

Puigdemont led the 2017 secession drive before fleeing the country and going into self-exile in Belgium, where he has resided ever since while evading extradition. Other pro-independence leaders are also exiled. — Aljazeera

Co lombo and Moscow discuss issue

COLOMBO (AP): Sri Lanka and Russia are starting talks to resolve the issue of Sri Lankans fighting alongside Russians in the war against Ukraine, after at least 16 people were reported missing in action.

Junior Foreign Minister Tharaka Balasuriya said that the Sri Lankans, mostly retired soldiers, had been duped into traveling to Russia with promises of good salaries and privileges including Russian citizenship. "The situation in Russia is very unfortunate," Balasuriya told reporters, adding that he is working with the defense ministry to ascertain the number of people fighting in Russia.

South Africa's ANC on course to lose majority

CAPE TOWN (BBC): South Africa's ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC), is on course to lose its majority in parliament for the first time since it came to power 30 years ago, partial results from parliamentary election suggest.

With results from more than 50% of voting districts counted so far, the ANC is leading with 42%, followed by the Democratic Alliance (DA) with 23%. The the uMkhonto weSizwe Party (MK Party) of former President Jacob Zuma has received nearly 11% of the vote and the Economic Freedom Fighters party, nearly 10%. Final results are expected over the weekend.

Many voters blame the ANC for the high levels of corruption, crime and unemployment in the country. The respected Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and the News24 website have projected that the party's final vote will be around 42%, a big drop from the 57% it obtained in the 2019 election. This would force it go into a coalition with one or more of the other parties in order to form a majority in parliament. The DA has liberal economic policies, while both the EFF and MK favour more state intervention and nationalisation, so the choice of partner would make a huge difference to South Africa's future direction.

It is unclear whether President Cyril Ramaphosa will remain in power, as he could come under pressure from the ANC to resign if the party gets less than 45% of the final vote, said Prof William Gumede, chairman of the non-profit Democracy Works Foundation.

"The ANC could turn him into a scapegoat, and a faction within the party could push for him to be replaced by his deputy, Paul Mashatile. The EFF and MK are also likely to demand his resignation before agreeing to any coalition with the ANC," Prof Gumede told the BBC.

South Africans do not directly vote for a president. Instead they vote for members of parliament who will then go on to elect the president. The initial results show that the ANC is suffering heavy losses to MK, especially in KwaZulu-Natal, where Mr Zuma's party has been leading with 43% of the vote to the ANC's 21%. Mr Zuma caused a major shock when he announced in December that he was ditching the ANC to campaign for MK. KwaZulu-Natal is the home region of Mr Zuma, and the province with the second-highest number of votes, making it crucial in determining whether the ANC retains its parliamentary majority. Although Mr Zuma has been barred from running for parliament because of a conviction for contempt of court, his name still appeared on the ballot paper as MK leader. If MK wins KwaZulu-Natal, it would be a "major upset" and herald the "potential decimation" of the ANC in the province, Prof Gumede said. The ANC also risks losing its majority in the economic heartland of Gauteng, where the party currently has 36% to the DA's 29%. Election saw long lines of voters outside polling stations late into the night across the country. According to the electoral commission, the last

polling station closed. One electoral official in Johannesburg told the BBC the queues were reminiscent of the historic 1994 election, when black people could vote for the first time. Sifiso Buthelezi, who voted in Johannesburg's Joubert Park - the biggest polling station in South Africa - told the BBC: "Freedom is great but we need to tackle corruption."

Change has been a recurring sentiment, especially among young voters. "The turnout amongst them was high, and they voted against the ANC," Prof Gumede said. Ayanda Hlekwane, one of South Africa's "born-free" generation, meaning he was born after 1994, said despite having three degrees he still did not have a job. "I'm working on my PhD proposal so that I go back to study in case I don't get a job," he tells the BBC in Durban. But Mr Hlekwane said he was optimistic that things would change. Support for the ANC is expected to be higher among the older generation. One 89-year-old woman, Elayne Dykman, told the BBC she hoped that young people in South Africa did not take their vote for granted. A record 70 parties and 11 independents were running, with South Africans voting for a new parliament and nine provincial legislatures.

The DA has signed a pact with 10 of them, agreeing to form a coalition government if they get enough votes to dislodge the ANC from power. But this is highly unlikely, with the ANC expected to remain the biggest party, putting it in pole position to lead a coalition.

Britain's Labour bars another left-winger from election

LONDON: Britain's Labour Party has barred prominent left-winger Faiza Shaheen as a candidate in the upcoming election after she allegedly liked social media posts that raised questions about her suitability to run, most notably one allegedly downplaying anti-Semitism.

Shaheen told the BBC programme Newsnight that the party's National Executive Committee had emailed her that evening to remove her as a candidate for the Chingford and Woodford Green seat in northeast London, having previously questioned her about 14 social media posts.

The programme highlighted one post in particular, which referenced a Jon Stewart sketch on freedom of expression in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Shaheen had liked the post, prompting the Jewish Labour Movement to complain its members were "concerned" about the "tone" of the Labour candidate's social media posts in a quote read out on air. The offending post, published on X, read: "Every time you say something even mildly critical of Israel, you're immediately assailed by scores of hysterical people who explain to you why you're completely wrong, how you're biased against Israel."

"Moreover, you can't easily ignore them because those are not just random people. They tend to be friends or people who move in the same circles as you. Those people are mobilised

by professional organisations," it added. Shaheen responded that she could not remember liking the post. "I know what's wrong with it, the line that's there about the ... you know ... they're 'professional organisations'. It plays into a trope, and I absolutely don't agree with that and I'm sorry about that," Shaheen said.

The party, she said, had informed her of her deselection after briefing the press. Among the 14 social media posts, the party had also taken issue with content relating to her experiences of Islamophobia in the party. "Like, how am I not allowed to talk about my experiences of Islamophobia and the double standards that I've seen?" she said. The Labour Muslim Network said on X that Shaheen's deselection was "unacceptable". Labour's election campaign has been overshadowed by internal chaos over selections for the July 4 election, causing observers to question whether the party is conducting a purge of left-wingers.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle, representing Brighton Kemptown, was suspended over what he claimed was "a vexatious and politically motivated complaint". And doubts have been raised over the candidacy of Apsana Begum, who is supposed to be standing again for the Poplar and Limehouse constituency. Referencing Shaheen's deselection, Labour's Diane Abbott -

Britain's first Black female lawmaker - accused Keir Starmer of an "appalling" cull of left-wingers in a post on X. Abbott had herself claimed Labour had not allowed her to defend her Hackney North and Stoke Newington seat in the election despite lifting a suspension that was enacted last year due to her comments on racism.

The lawmaker had been reinstated as a Labour MP after the completion of a party investigation into comments she had made in a letter to The Observer newspaper, stating that Jewish, Irish and Traveller people "undoubtedly experience prejudice", but do not face racism "all their lives". However, Labour leader Keir Starmer later denied the claim, saying "no decision" had been taken to bar the left-winger, a close ally of Jeremy Corbyn who led the party from 2015 to 2020. Under Corbyn's leadership, the party was investigated by the equalities watchdog, which found serious failings in the way the party had tackled anti-Semitism.

Corbyn was replaced as party leader by Keir Starmer, who has sought to crack down on the claimed anti-Semitism. Corbyn is also barred from running as a Labour candidate after he said anti-Semitism in the party had been "dramatically overstated" for political reasons. Last week, he announced that he would run as an independent candidate. — Aljazeera

Slovenia's government approves recognition of a Palestinian state

LJUBLJANA: The Slovenian government has approved a decision to recognise an independent Palestinian state, Prime Minister Robert Golob said, following in the steps of Spain, Norway and the Republic of Ireland. "Today the government has decided to recognise Palestine as an independent and sovereign state," he said at a news conference in Ljubljana.

The government's decision still requires the approval of the European Union member country's parliament, which is set to vote on the motion. "The session is scheduled for Tuesday from 4pm (14:00 GMT)," parliament speaker Urska Klakocar Zupancic told a press conference in

Ljubljana.

Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz said he hoped Slovenian lawmakers would reject the motion. "The Slovenian government's decision to recommend that the Slovenian parliament recognise a Palestinian state rewards Hamas... I hope the Slovenian parliament rejects this recommendation," Katz said on X.

The move is part of a wider effort by some European countries to coordinate pressure on Israel to end the conflict in Gaza. Golob also called for the immediate cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hamas in Gaza and the release of all hostages. "This is the message of peace," he

said. The Slovenian government raised a Palestinian flag alongside the flags of Slovenia and the EU in front of its building in downtown Ljubljana. On May 28, Spain, Ireland and Norway officially recognised a Palestinian state, prompting an angry reaction from Israel.

Of the 27 members of the European Union, Sweden, Cyprus, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria have already recognised a Palestinian state. Malta has said it could follow soon. Britain and Australia have said they are also considering recognition, but France has said now is not the time. — Aljazeera

With prolonged Gaza war, Israel's Netanyahu may outlast Biden

WASHINGTON: The Israeli army will be fighting in Gaza for the next seven months at least, Israel's National Security Adviser Tzachi Hanegbi said earlier this week. The prediction drew concern over the fate of the Palestinian territory, which is already facing famine, mass displacement and daily Israeli violence that has killed more than 36,000 people since October 7.

A prolonged war also would harm Joe Biden's re-election campaign in November, experts say, as the United States president already faces plummeting public support for his unequivocal backing of Israel. Khalil Jahshan, executive director of the Arab Center Washington DC think tank, said an Israeli offensive in Gaza that stretches beyond the US election on November 5 could mean Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu outlasts Biden.

"I would love to say that scenario is unrealistic, but I can't. That scenario is real. And it could happen on November 5," Jahshan told Al Jazeera. For months, advocates have warned that Netanyahu has a personal political interest in prolonging the war to boost his political standing at home.

The reverse is true for Biden. Several public opinion polls in the US currently favour former Republican President Donald Trump to beat Biden in November - albeit by relatively a small margin. Recent surveys in Israel also show Netanyahu recovering popularity and edging out his main rival, war cabinet minister Benny Gantz.

Josh Ruebner, a lecturer at Georgetown University's Justice and Peace programme, said there is no doubt that the war on Gaza will diminish Biden's re-election chances.

"The signs are clear. The writing is on the wall," Ruebner told Al Jazeera.

"And should Biden decide to continue this lockstep support for Israel for another seven months, it's not only going to kill tens of thousands more Palestinians, but it's also going to lose him the election."

A poll by the Arab American Institute (AAI) showed that Arab American support for Biden in key swing states is at 18 percent, down from 60 percent in 2020, largely because of his Gaza policies. James Zogby, AAI's president, said it would be politically "dangerous" for Biden and the Democratic Party if the war continued through the US election in November.

"It means that, if there is not something very dramatic the president does, then this is not going to be an easy election for him," he told reporters during a virtual news briefing. Zogby added that Biden does not only risk losing the support of Arab voters. "Young people, Black people, Asian people are following this on a daily basis, seeing a genocide unfolding. They're not insensitive to what they're seeing," he said. "They're horrified. And then the president says, 'No red line was crossed. Let's just continue doing what we're doing.' It is infuriating and hurtful."

Still, Biden is not showing any signs of changing course in his pro-Israel policies, even as Netanyahu openly defies the White House's calls to avoid civilian casualties and not invade Rafah, a city in southern Gaza. The US president, for instance, signed off on an additional \$14bn in aid to Israel last month. And this May, after threatening to withhold weapons shipments if Israel launched a major offensive in Rafah, media reports emerged that the Biden administration planned to nevertheless go through with a \$1bn arms sale. Ruebner said the Biden campaign is in denial about

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Digital terrorism and TFP's eight-years advocacy

IN the contemporary era, the internet has become a double-edged sword. While it connects the world and offers unprecedented access to information, it also serves as a platform for digital terrorism. Digital terrorism involves the use of digital tools and platforms to conduct activities that spread fear, manipulate public perception, and incite violence. This phenomenon can include hacking, spreading extremist propaganda, coordinating terrorist activities, and conducting cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure. As the digital landscape evolves, so too do the tactics of those who seek to exploit it for malicious purposes.

The concept of digital terrorism encompasses a broad range of activities. One of its most insidious forms is the dissemination of extremist ideologies and propaganda through social media. Terrorist organizations utilize these platforms to recruit members, disseminate propaganda, and even coordinate attacks. The anonymity and reach of the internet allow these groups to spread their messages to a global audience, making it difficult for authorities to track and counteract these activities.

Moreover, digital terrorism includes cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure such as power grids, financial systems, and government networks. These attacks can cause widespread disruption, economic loss, and even physical harm. For instance, a cyber-attack on a power grid could lead to prolonged blackouts, affecting millions of people and potentially causing chaos and panic.

The rise of fake news and misinformation also falls under the umbrella of digital terrorism. By spreading false information, perpetrators can manipulate public opinion, create divisions within societies, and destabilize governments. This form of digital terrorism is particularly concerning because it can erode trust in democratic institutions and processes.

Political parties also exploit social media platforms to promote their agendas. They use these tools to reach voters, shape public opinion, and mobilize supporters. While this can enhance democratic engagement, it also opens the door for manipulation and misinformation. Political campaigns may spread exaggerated or false claims about opponents, leading to increased polarization and mistrust within the electorate.

The Frontier Post has been at the forefront of highlighting the dangers of digital terrorism for the past eight years. Through its rigorous journalism and unwavering commitment to truth, the publication has shed light on how digital platforms are being used to undermine national security and societal cohesion. The Frontier Post has consistently raised awareness about the tactics employed by digital terrorists and the need for robust countermeasures.

One of the key issues that The Frontier Post has been advocating for is the regulation of social media platforms. The publication has emphasized the responsibility of these platforms to monitor and remove extremist content. It has also called for greater cooperation between governments and tech companies to combat digital terrorism effectively. The Frontier Post's coverage has included investigative reports on how terrorist organizations exploit social media and the internet to further their agendas.

Furthermore, The Frontier Post has been vocal about the need for individuals and organizations in Pakistan who profit from social media to contribute to the national economy. The publication has advocated for a flat 25 percent tax on incomes generated from social media platforms. This proposal is grounded in the belief that those who benefit financially from the digital landscape should also bear some responsibility for maintaining its security and integrity. The tax revenue could be utilized to bolster national security measures, fund digital literacy programs, and support initiatives aimed at countering digital terrorism. Such a tax would provide an easy revenue stream for the government and would support citizen journalism by legitimizing their income, thus encouraging more responsible and credible reporting.

The recent Formation Commanders Conference, presided over by General Syed Asim Munir, highlighted the ongoing concerns about digital terrorism in Pakistan. The conference underscored the need to address politically motivated digital terrorism, which aims to sow discord among national institutions and the public through fake news and propaganda. The forum expressed serious concerns over the cross-border violations from Afghanistan and the use of Afghan soil for orchestrating terrorism against Pakistan. These issues reflect the complex nature of digital terrorism, which often involves both domestic and international actors.

The forum also discussed the importance of socio-economic development in regions like Balochistan to counter externally propagated narratives and prevent the radicalization of youth. This approach aligns with The Frontier Post's advocacy for comprehensive strategies to address the root causes of digital terrorism, including poverty, lack of education, and political disenfranchisement.

In conclusion, digital terrorism represents a significant and evolving threat in the modern world. It exploits the very tools that have revolutionized communication and connectivity. The Frontier Post has been a steadfast advocate for addressing this issue, emphasizing the need for regulation, cooperation, and accountability. As Pakistan continues to navigate the challenges posed by digital terrorism, the insights and advocacy of The Frontier Post remain invaluable in shaping effective countermeasures and ensuring a safer digital future.

Important Notice

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



Time to call Putin's bluff

Adam Kinzinger and Ben Hodges

THERE seems to be a doctrine within the National Security Council in the Biden administration: escalation aversion. These "escalationists" seem deeply worried that any increase in support for Ukraine could lead to World War III.

France and Germany on Tuesday took the important step of joining the UK and other countries in saying the weapons they supply Ukraine could be used in strikes on Russian soil. Predictably, Russian President Vladimir Putin responded that these moves could lead to "serious consequences," particularly for "small and densely populated countries." This threat has been made by Putin again and again, often referencing Russia's nuclear weapons, as the West has upped it's support for Ukraine. The US needs to stop taking it seriously. Let's revisit some history from the last couple of years.

Ukraine requested Javelins and Stingers before the full-scale war began when Russia invaded Ukraine in February of 2022. Initially, they didn't receive the large quantities they wanted amid fears of escalation. Eventually, they received more, used them effectively, and then received even more. No nuclear war occurred.

After the battle of Kyiv was won, Ukraine requested MiG-29s, which Poland agreed to provide in exchange for Western fighters. The Biden administration blocked this initially, but later relented, and no nuclear war occurred. Ukraine requested F-16 fighter jets to help protect its skies. The administration initially said no, then changed its stance, and no nuclear war occurred.

Ukraine requested Patriot missiles to defend against relentless Russian air attacks. The administration initially said no, then changed its stance, and no nuclear war occurred. Many lives were saved. Ukraine requested HIMARS rocket launchers, the advanced missile/artillery system, to attack Russian supply lines. The administration initially said no, then changed its stance, and no nuclear war occurred.

Ukraine requested Abrams tanks and Bradley infantry fighting vehicles for trench warfare in the east. The administration initially said no, then

changed its stance, and no nuclear war occurred. Ukraine requested ATACMS missiles, with a range of about 190 miles, to attack Russian targets. The administration initially said no, then changed its stance, and no nuclear war occurred.

In almost every one of these cases, Russia threatened escalation, an attack on NATO or the use of nuclear weapons. Each time, the bluff was called, and Ukraine was able to better defend its territory. While Russian threats should not be taken lightly, history shows us that these threats are often hollow.

been shown not to be a real concern. Just as we slowly ratchet up pressure, so could Russia slowly increase its pain tolerance and have chosen to react at any point.

All of this is important to remember as Ukraine repeatedly requests permission to strike military targets inside Russia with American weapons. So far, they have been denied, but let's make a prediction: They will eventually be granted this permission. So why wait? Why delay while Ukrainians continue to lose their lives?

We understood the prohibition on attacks on Russian soil when Ukraine

tial crisis, much latitude should be given to Ukraine to determine how best to defend its land and save lives.

We have heard Ukrainian soldiers repeatedly tell stories of Russian columns attacking, being repelled, and retreating to safe Russian territory to regroup, have a hot meal, plan and attack again. In logical warfare, it is precisely at the moment of retreat and regroup that you would double down and strike harder, creating chaos, panic and crushing fighting strength and morale. Ukraine cannot win if Russians can attack civilian targets with impunity and call "time out" in their own territory.

Ukraine fights primarily for its survival, but they also fight for the collective West and the post-World War II order. With such serious implications on the world stage, the Biden administration needs to articulate, or at least have a clear internal understanding of, what the US aims to achieve through its support. A clear strategic objective, which the US failed to establish in Vietnam and Afghanistan, can lead to victory. But does the US support a Ukrainian victory? If so, what does that look like, and what needs to happen to achieve these ends as quickly as possible? Or is it simply supporting a war of attrition until Russia comes to the table?

As any military expert or general (or sergeant, for that matter) will tell you, destroying the enemy is, of course, the most important element of victory, whether in direct combat or where they are grouping, planning or executing the war. The idea that, as of today, Russia can essentially consider its own territory a "safe haven" against US weaponry runs counter to the objective of a Ukrainian victory.

Ukraine has been prevented from attacking legitimate military targets because of a paralyzing fear of escalation, despite the law of armed conflict giving Ukraine the right to defend itself in such a way. The Biden administration deserves credit for its actions in Ukraine, especially given the alternative of former President Donald Trump's threat to abandon the country. However, the fear of escalation, while noble, is actually making a victory for Ukraine less likely.

CNN

Implications of AI for regional security

Ehteshan Shahid

If innovation strengthens national security, artificial intelligence magnifies it. Think of AI as the magnifying glass that takes the power of human ingenuity and focuses it into a laser beam of efficiency and precision. Across the Middle East, governments are waking up to this potential and integrating AI into their security frameworks with a sense of urgency and ambition.

The exceptional ability of AI to quickly analyze vast amounts of data means it is a game-changer for intelligence gathering, threat detection and decision-making. It can sift through mountains of information, spotting patterns and anomalies humans might miss. This capability transforms the speed and accuracy of responses to security threats.

But the impact of AI goes beyond mere data crunching; it is also about the automation of security operations, reducing the chances of human error, and increasing the efficiency of surveillance, cybersecurity and defense operations. AI-powered systems can predict potential threats by analyzing patterns and enabling proactive measures that can keep us safer.

Countries across the Middle East are betting big on AI to enhance security. The stakes are high. PWC estimates the potential financial contribution of AI to the region at a staggering \$320 billion, with annual growth of these contributions expected to hit between 20 and 34 percent. "The Middle East is expected to accrue 2 percent of the total global benefits of AI in 2030," it predicts.

Let us look at some of the key components of AI that are enhancing regional security. Take smart surveillance systems, for instance. These are not your run-of-the-mill cameras; AI-powered surveillance uses facial recognition, behavioral analysis and anomaly detection to monitor public spaces and critical infrastructure.

Imagine drones buzzing through the skies over borders, equipped with AI for real-time monitoring and threat detection. These are no longer ideas from science fiction, they are part of the new security reality.

In terms of cybersecurity, AI systems are the new front-line soldiers. They can identify and respond to threats such as malware and phishing in real time, often before humans even notice a problem. Such systems are able to predict potential cyberattacks and vulnerabilities by analyzing data, allowing for pre-emptive strikes.

Communications data, including social media, is another treasure trove for AI. It can sift through this data to gather intelligence and monitor for signs of radicalization or unrest. AI-enabled autonomous systems redefine defense strategies, through the use of the technology in equipment such as unmanned combat vehicles and missile-defense systems. These platforms provide military and defense personnel with simulations, predictive models and real-time data analysis, turning strategy sessions into high-tech war games. Automated border control is another critical area. AI technologies can streamline verification of biometrics at checkpoints, enhancing security while easing the flow of people. They are also able to monitor and detect unauthorized activities

along borders and coastal regions, ensuring a watchful eye is always present.

AI promises to revolutionize counterterrorism operations in countries across the Middle East. It delivers the tools to analyze communications networks, financial transactions and patterns of movement to identify and disrupt terrorist activities. AI also supports first-responders by providing them with real-time data and situational awareness during crises, turning chaos into coordinated responses.

American government and military contractor Booz Allen Hamilton summarizes the situation as "more data being collected in increasing variety and with greater speed every day," suggesting that the total value of data is through the application of AI to support intelligence analysts.

However, one must remember that overreliance on big data and AI can also lead to vulnerabilities. Technical failures, biases in algorithms, or malicious data manipulation can cause incorrect conclusions to be reached, resulting in flawed security measures.

This is not just about the technology. It is also about people: the engineers designing AI systems, the security personnel using them, and ordinary citizens living safer lives because of them. The story of AI in the Middle East is one of ambition, innovation and human potential. It is about the visionaries, engineers and citizens transforming their countries.

Take the launch of the Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority or the UAE's Artificial Intelligence and Digital Wellbeing Council. These initiatives are committed to leveraging the power of AI for national security and defense, reflecting a broader regional strategy to address modern security challenges with advanced technology.

Of course, this rapid integration of AI raises concerns about privacy, ethics and potential misuse. These issues need careful regulation and appropriate oversight to ensure that AI is a force for good. In cities such as Singapore, known for its smart city initiatives, AI-powered surveillance is used extensively for traffic management, public safety and urban planning. The Middle East is following suit by ensuring security measures are effective and adaptable to emerging threats.

The integration of AI into the Gulf Cooperation Council's regional security strategy is more than a technological upgrade, it's a commitment to a safer, more stable future. The regional story of AI is not only about machines but about people, making it a narrative of human ingenuity and resilience aimed at creating a better, more secure world for everyone.

Imagine a security officer patrolling a bustling market in one of the region's many happening city centers. As he makes his way amid the crowd, he receives an alert on his AI-powered device about a suspicious individual whose behavior matches a potential threat pattern. Within minutes, his team intercepts the person, thereby preventing a possible incident. This illustrates the human aspect of AI: a tool that empowers individuals to act swiftly and decisively, making our cities safer.

Arab News

South Africa's election won't be business

Mariama Diallo

WHILE some voters know who they'll be casting their ballots for on Wednesday's elections in South Africa, others are still undecided. One voter on the streets of Johannesburg told VOA he wants continuity and will cast his ballot for the African National Congress, the party that has been governing in South Africa since 1994, when Nelson Mandela was elected president following the end of apartheid in the early 1990s. "Thirty years of democracy is probably 30 years of policy. We need another 30 years of implementing those policies and seeing them come through to fruition," Thabo Molobi said.

But for Karam Ezzideen, the ANC has not delivered on its promises. "Enough is enough," he said, adding that he'll vote for the Democratic Alliance because "that party is all

about change."

Analysts told VOA that parties like the DA, the IFP [Inkatha Freedom Party], and a few others have strong core support bases in certain ethnic groups and certain regions. Many of the opposition candidates have accused the ANC of being corrupt and lacking a strategic vision for the country, which they said is in crisis and needs to be rescued.

In a promo video released earlier in the campaign, ANC leader Cyril Ramaphosa, who's seeking a second term, said they've made progress in meeting the basic needs of the people of South Africa. "We are putting South Africa to work by investing in our people to ensure that no one is left behind," he said in the video. And in a televised address to the nation Sunday, Ramaphosa reiterated the steps his administration has taken to improve the country's economic prospects.

That, he said, would be exciting for those who feel the ANC has mismanaged the country, but he notes South Africa has not had

Those prospects were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected the world at a global level and exacerbated high levels of inequality in South Africa. Lloyd Kuveya from the University of Pretoria told VOA earlier this year. Daryl Glaser, associate professor in political studies at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg said this year's election is going to be the closest since the era of inclusive democracy began in South Africa three decades ago. "All the opinion polls are suggesting there's a very serious chance the ANC is going to fall below 50% of the vote and that it's going to be forced into some kind of coalition," he said.

That, he said, would be exciting for those who feel the ANC has mismanaged the country, but he notes South Africa has not had

good experiences with coalitions at a local level. Glaser, Kuveya and other analysts told VOA that anger over power outages, allegations of corruption, and disunity within the ANC - the liberation movement that once led the struggle against racism and oppression by the country's white minority rule - have helped the opposition gain ground. That includes the Economic Freedom Fighters party led by Julius Malema, a former ANC youth leader, and a newly formed party, for which former president Jacob Zuma has been campaigning. "Zuma's party uMkhonto we Sizwe or MK has been a completely unexpected surprise. It arrived on the scene quite late in the run up to the elections and completely scrambled everything... The EFF certainly appeals to a certain audience, and it's been growing ... In some ways, MK is much of a

threat to the EFF as it is to the ANC because it's capturing some of the discontented," Glaser said.

Nine days before the election, South Africa's top court ruled that Zuma was not eligible to run for parliament because of a past criminal conviction. The ruling came two days after Zuma told thousands of supporters at a rally in Soweto that his MK party would help ease joblessness among other issues if it won. South Africa's unemployment rate has reached 32% according to the World Bank, making it issue No. 1 for many voters, including Kathryn Defenn, who told VOA, "our biggest challenge as a country is our rate of unemployment, which is one of the biggest in the world." Another voter, Oupa Muhadi will be voting for "Action SA because it's a party that has got what we want in the country. Right now, we have a problem with crime... there is no work."

Kuromola Manilall is still undecided, but for her, the problems facing her country that matters the most are poverty and joblessness, plus "the lack of maintenance of infrastructure is another pressing issue," she said. Nearly half of the country's 62 million people have registered to vote, said Thabo Masemola, an Independent Electoral Commission official. "We have the highest voters' roll since the voter's roll was established in 1999. The certified voter's roll is currently sitting at 27.7 million and we use the voter's roll as the basis to prepare and plan for the elections. So, all the relevant materials are in place." He said the IEC has accredited 160 organizations, both domestic and international, to observe the election and ensure its transparency. South Africans in the diaspora have already voted in 111 missions abroad, he said.

VOA

Battle against drug and arms smugglers critical to Jordan’s national security

THE escalating influx of arms and drugs into Jordan represents a pressing concern that cannot be ignored. This surge in smuggling activity demands immediate attention and effective countermeasures to safeguard the nation's security and stability. The proliferation of illicit goods not only poses a direct threat to internal security but also to the stability of the region, and it undermines Jordan's economic prosperity and social cohesion. The trade in arms and drugs fuels criminal activities, breeds violence and destabilizes communities. Moreover, it erodes public trust in institutions and hampers efforts for sustainable development.

Addressing this critical threat therefore requires a proactive and coordinated response from both the regional and international communities, encompassing comprehensive strategies for border security and counterterrorism. King Abdullah's recent call for Arab states to address the alarming increase in drug and arms smuggling underscores the gravity of the situation. "We should confront armed militant groups who commit crimes above the law, especially smuggling drugs and arms, which is what Jordan has been thwarting for years now," he said.

His assertion, made during a summit in Bahrain attended by key leaders from the region, highlights the urgent need to confront armed militant groups engaged in criminal activities that transcend borders. Jordan's longstanding efforts to thwart such illicit activities demonstrate the nation's commitment to safeguarding its citizens from external threats and upholding the rule of law. However, the scale and complexity of the challenge necessitate enhanced cooperation and collaboration among Arab states to effectively combat transnational crime

networks.

By fostering partnerships and sharing intelligence, regional authorities can strengthen their collective capacity to disrupt smuggling operations, dismantle criminal syndicates and promote regional stability. According to Jordanian officials, the smuggling operations are orchestrated by pro-Iranian militias entrenched in southern Syria, and Hezbollah in Lebanon. Syria, Iran and Hezbollah deny any involvement in smuggling. Nevertheless, the allegation underscores the complex geopolitical dynamics at play and the need for a coordinated regional response to tackle the root causes of the issue.

Jordan's state news agency, Petra, recently reported that an attempt by "foreign-backed militants" to smuggle arms into the kingdom was foiled in March this year. While authorities in the country have managed to intercept numerous smuggling attempts, the fact that some weapons slip through undetected underscores the need for continuous vigilance and the enhancement of border-control measures.

The porous nature of borders in conflict-prone regions poses a persistent challenge that requires innovative solutions and sustained efforts. As a result, investment in advanced technologies, improved inter-agency coordination, and enhanced intelligence capabilities are also essential in efforts to effectively address the evolving threats posed by smuggling networks.

Such illicit activities not only pose a direct threat to Jordan's security but also exacerbate tensions in the region. Therefore, addressing the underlying forces and drivers behind smuggling, including political instability, sectarian conflicts and external interference, requires a holistic

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

approach that addresses both the symptoms and root causes of the problem.

The smuggling of arms by these groups directly undermines Jordan's internal security in several ways. It poses a grave threat to the safety, security and well-being of its citizens. Furthermore, such illicit activities fuel instability, breed violence and undermine the rule of law.

In addition to the direct threat posed by arms smuggling, the influx of drugs into Jordan represents a multifaceted challenge with significant socioeconomic and public-health implications. The proliferation of illicit drugs not only provides a lucrative revenue stream for criminal organizations, it also perpetuates a cycle of addiction, crime and social degradation.

The availability of drugs fuels criminal activities, from drug trafficking to related crimes such as violence and organized crime, thereby undermining public safety and security. Moreover, the prevalence of drug addiction not only destabilizes communities but also places a heavy burden on healthcare systems, as addiction-related illnesses and overdoses strain resources and exacerbate existing public-health challenges.

Additionally, the social consequences of drug addiction, including broken families, lost productivity and stigmatization, further compound the socioeconomic challenges Jordanian society faces.

As a result, addressing the multifaceted challenges arising from drug and arms smuggling requires a range of actions, including enhanced border security, intelligence sharing, and regional and international cooperation. Jordan can also strengthen its institutional capacities and collaborate with regional and interna-

tional partners to effectively combat transnational crime networks operating in the region.

Furthermore, cooperation with other Arab states is essential, as the threat posed by drug and arms smuggling extends beyond Jordan's borders, imperiling the stability and security of the entire region. A unified approach involving collective action and shared intelligence is indispensable in efforts to mitigate the risks posed by criminal enterprises and safeguard the well-being of the people in the region. By fostering regional cooperation and coordination, Arab states can enhance their collective resilience against the threats posed by drug and arms smuggling, promote peace and stability in the region, advance shared social, political and economic interests, and boost prosperity.

The battle against drug and arms smuggling is an imperative for both Jordan's national security and regional stability. This critical threat, compounded by the involvement of transnational criminal networks and geopolitical complexities, underscores the urgency of the need for a coordinated response. The proactive efforts of Jordanian authorities, exemplified by the interception of smuggling attempts and calls for regional cooperation, demonstrate a firm commitment to safeguarding citizens. However, the persistence of smuggling activities, coupled with the interconnected nature of security threats, necessitates sustained vigilance, innovation and collaboration among regional and international authorities. By strengthening border-security measures, enhancing intelligence capabilities and fostering greater regional cooperation, Jordan and its Arab neighbors can take action to effectively disrupt smuggling networks, dismantle criminal enterprises and mitigate the risks posed by such illicit activities.

It’s the Tories who broke Britain, but now they want teenagers to pay for it

Gaby Hinsliff

ONCE upon a time, elections used to be all about kissing babies. But for parents of teenagers, this one has felt more like a smack in the teeth. Last weekend, our children were threatened with compulsory national service, for no obvious reason beyond keeping nostalgic pensioners happy. Now, just in the middle of their GCSE revision, Rishi Sunak is threatening to scrap one in eight degree

places. "You don't have to go to university to succeed in life," tweeted the prime minister, who to be fair is currently proving that you can go to lots of universities - he has a degree from Oxford and a master's from Stanford - and still see your career end in failure. The money saved by slashing 130,000 supposedly "Mickey Mouse" places would, he promised, fund 100,000 apprenticeships. Though given the enduring failure to get these off the ground over the past decade, it would be unwise to bin the Ucas form just yet. Meanwhile, the education secretary, Gillian Keegan, called the apprenticeship she did at 16 her "golden ticket" but failed to mention her subsequent degree in business studies, followed by a master's.

Doubtless all this tests well with the roughly one in 10 voters threatening to back Reform, around whom this defensive Conservative campaign now revolves: mostly older non-graduates inclined to see students as woke layabouts. It's wrong to stereotype all baby boomers as selfish, when so many people care deeply about their own grandchildren and other people's, but a campaign centred on punishing the young to please a specific and grumpy subset of older voters will do nothing to ease generational tensions.

So far, the Tories have earmarked at least £4.5bn in a week for just two policies: that much-derided national service, plus shielding pensioners from the tax implications of the triple lock pushing up pensions. Having failed to gen-

erate the economic growth that would pay for all this, apparently now it's time to claw some money back by dashing a few teenage hopes.

Ministers insist they are targeting only so-called "rip-off" degrees with high dropout rates and low future earning potential, arguing that one in five are no better off financially for going to university. Obviously, there's more to education than can be captured in a PAYE slip.

This country needs creative people to enrich our cultural lives, even if a fine art degree is never going to make you rich, and the value of a degree is less in what was studied than how. The intellectual curiosity, analytic skills and creative thinking gained from a good degree course may, if anything, command a premium once AI takes over easily systemised and predictable tasks. But all that aside, the idea that universities are full of kids dabbling in Taylor Swift studies is - if it was ever true - risibly outdated.

Cash-starved universities have been slashing more esoteric courses, from the performing arts to medieval languages, for months now precisely because of falling generation Z demand. Kids who face a lifetime of student debt are playing it safer, which is why business and management are up and English literature down; fashion or fine art are becoming luxury choices for rich kids. And while there undoubtedly are some poor courses taught by poor lecturers offering dubious value for money, Sunak's criteria of high dropout rates and low earnings seem tools too crude to identify them.

Universities have been a rare example of levelling up actually working, with Ucas applications from disadvantaged students up by 30% in 10 years. But lower-income students tend to favour studying near home because it's cheaper, which often restricts them to institutions that don't attract Oxbridge salary premiums; they're also more likely to

be juggling essays around paid work or (for mature students) childcare, leaving them at higher risk of dropping out. It's worrying, of course, that 8% of students now fail to complete their courses. But for apprenticeships, the drop-out rate is nearer one in two.

If degrees don't pay as they once did, meanwhile, that may have something to do with a flatlining economy. US college fees are ruinously high but the rewards are correspondingly so, with the average graduate starting salary this year projected to hit \$68,516 (£53,700). In Britain, average graduate starting salaries were between £24,000 and £27,000 in 2020-21, the last year for which official Higher Education Statistics Agency figures are available. The broader picture is of a nation seemingly in decline, but with the blow still cushioned for those with a degree; graduates still earn on average just over £11,000 more than non-grads.

If they were confident apprenticeships offered just as good a deal, many families would jump at them, but what's on offer looks patchy and unconvincing. Apprenticeship starts for 19- to 24-year-olds have nearly halved since 2017, when a new training levy was slapped on employers, with companies complaining that government-approved schemes are too difficult to set up. Meanwhile, apprentices are dropping out because they can't live on the £6.40 an hour they're paid. It's not snobbery that puts families off apprenticeships, but reality.

Electorally, the Tories can probably afford to alienate 18-year-olds who mostly weren't going to vote for them anyway. But what they seem to have forgotten is that students have parents, who do reliably vote and are furious at the idea of their children carrying the can for everything that has gone wrong over the past 14 years. Our teenagers didn't break it, but somehow they're being expected to fix it. Who, exactly, is ripping off whom?

The Guardian

America is joining its frenemies back in the fossil fuel club

David Fickling

GEOGRAPHY, it's often said, is destiny. The paths nations follow though history are written like a script on the patterns of their rocks, rivers, plains and coasts, in ways that often confound the views of the people who inhabit them. It's rare for a country to escape that geological fate.

Over the past weeks, we've seen dramatic examples of this happening in five countries covering more than a third of the planet's land mass.

Most notable has been President Joe Biden's brutal round of tariffs against Chinese clean technology imports. At a time when core inflation in the US is at its highest level in nearly 30 years and disposable income growth is sputtering, pushing up the cost of consumer goods such as solar panels and electric vehicles seems perverse. It makes more sense when you look at the other side of the energy picture. In December, US crude oil output reached 13.3 million daily barrels, the highest level of any country in history. Natural gas hit a similar global record of 106.5 billion cubic feet per day.

Biden's justification for the tariffs is that they're a pro-climate initiative, which will buy the US time to scale up and compete with China's formidable clean-technology industry. You should take that with a pinch of salt, given how Washington's wavering commitment to clean technology has seen it squander early leads in solar panels and EVs. It's America's strength as a fossil fuel producer that allows it to be so lackadaisical about cleaning up its act - and so willing, now, to suppress alternative technologies.

For most nations, the energy transition isn't just sought for climate reasons: It's also a strategic and economic necessity, reducing dependence on foreign exporters and the burden of imported fuel spending on the budget and balance of payments. The US, as by far the world's biggest fossil-

fuel producer, sees things differently.

The same dynamic explains why China has been so much quicker to exploit the energy transition. Switching to battery-powered vehicles makes a lot more sense when you have to import some 90% of your petroleum. Maximizing your output of cheap renewable power seems an obvious move when domestic gas reserves are minimal and coal resources appear to be declining in both quality and affordability.

Would-be exporters see China's shortage of indigenous energy supplies as an opportunity. In Canada, the 34 billion Canadian dollar (\$25 billion) Trans Mountain Expansion crude oil pipeline was scheduled to load its first cargo, bound for China, just recently. The federally funded project, the most expensive in Canadian history, might seem an odd investment for the government that introduced one of the world's most stringent carbon taxes. And yet Canada is the world's largest oil exporter after Saudi Arabia, the US and Russia.

If you believe geography (rather than the popular will) is destiny, it shouldn't surprise you that North America's two liberal democracies are now making common cause with authoritarian petrostates.

In Australia, meanwhile, the government laid out a natural gas strategy that envisions a role for the hydrocarbon "through to 2050 and beyond." Canberra bills its plans as consistent with a path toward net zero, but that's a triumph of wishful thinking over reality. Such a world will see demand for gas that lacks carbon capture and storage fall nearly 90%. Australia's liquefied natural gas - a premium product that costs more to produce than about 95% of all the gas produced globally - is unlikely to survive such a shift.

Piped gas is usually cheaper than LNG and Russia's President Vladimir Putin was in Beijing recent-

ly touting Power of Siberia 2, a proposed line that would feed China from the same fields that were destined for Europe until the Ukraine war cut that route. President Xi Jinping, however, seems reluctant - in no small measure because China's domestic renewables and green hydrogen potential, combined with its aggressive contracting of LNG supplies and piped gas from smaller, more easily manipulated Turkmenistan, means it now has little need of Russian methane.

That sounds like a world where fossil fuels are on the march - but it's not quite as simple as that. Demand for such products is peaking or has already.

Petroleum was the cheapest, most useful form of power in the 20th century and the countries best-equipped to access it became the preeminent nations of that era. Most of the world, however, is fundamentally short of energy. Alongside China, that's true of the 10 developing nations who'll account for about half the world's population growth between now and 2050, including most of Asia and Africa. They have far more to gain from cheap, locally produced clean power than from fossil fuels that damage the health of their citizens and put them at the mercy of wealthy exporters, who seem more keen than ever to throw their weight around.

Beneath Washington's fear of Beijing's clean-technology success, that's the deeper worry. Just as Britain's early lead in coal made it the indefatigable power of the 19th century and US dominance in oil made it a hegemon for the 20th century, China's advances in green energy give it a formidable position in the 21st. Oil-rich America has found itself strangely entangled with crude-exporting frenemies in the Middle East through their common interest in petroleum. In the decades ahead, a decarbonizing China will find many allies whose interests are just as well-aligned with its own.

The Japan Times

Global Security Initiative promotes peace

Zhang Chi

DURING the ongoing 21st Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, defense leaders and senior military officers from many countries are going to exchange ideas on security issues in the Asia-Pacific region and the world as a whole.

China once again has sent a high-level delegation, led by the Minister of National Defense, to attend the dialogue. Against the background of the fast-changing international situation and increasingly complex power competition, peace and development are the most precious international public goods. Facts have proved that China is an active protector of peace and development in the Asia-Pacific and the world. The implementation of the Global Security Initiative is essential to peace and development.

Notably, the Asia-Pacific has been among the most peaceful and stable regions in the world during the past four decades, thus becoming the fastest-growing region in terms of economic and social development. A key reason is that most Asian countries are committed to handling state-to-state relations based on openness and inclusiveness, mutual respect, mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence.

The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, which emerged in Asia 70 years ago, embodies the values of benevolence and equality of the Asian people, and echoes the Chinese traditional idea of "peace among all nations". For 70 years, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence have been recognized by all countries in the world for its importance in international relations because it vividly reflects the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and endows them with a visible, feasible and traceable connotation, which not only represents the new expectations of Asian countries for international relations, but also embodies the spirit of international law in which the rights, obligations and

responsibilities of all countries are unified. The five principles have thus become an important criterion in international relations and contributed to the correct handling of state-to-state relations.

More than 20 years ago, China and the 10 ASEAN member states signed the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, which demonstrates the collective wisdom and spirit of cooperation between China and the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and become an event of great significance in the history of international relations.

Over the past 20 years, China and ASEAN have gradually found an effective path of enhancing mutual trust and managing differences within the framework of "10+1", accumulating experiences of successfully carrying out dialogue, cooperation and common governance, thus maintaining overall peace and stability in the South China Sea. In contrast, the United States and NATO have caused wars and disasters in Europe and the Middle East over the past four decades. Nowadays, the US is trying hard to extend NATO into Asia-Pacific security, which will add to the destabilizing factors in Asia and may even trigger conflicts, undermining stability and prosperity in the region.

At present, as the global economic recovery is weak, regional conflicts occur frequently, and global problems are aggravating. The world is entering a period of turbulent changes, and the Asia-Pacific region's peace and development are facing new challenges. Particularly, some small geopolitical circles have widened the differences and contradictions among regional countries.

The US, ostensibly waves the banner of "freedom and openness", while actually it still suffers from the outdated cold war mentality. It is

keen to manipulate ideological issues and spreading the "China threat" theory, in order to maintain its global hegemony and contain the development of other countries.

In East Asia, the US has been hyping up sensitive issues including the Taiwan question and South China Sea disputes, and has built exclusive circles such as QUAD and AUKUS, and pushed the Philippines to take provocative actions against China, seriously impacting the regional cooperation framework with ASEAN as its center. The "Indo-Pacific Economic Framework" advocated by Washington not only excludes China, but also deliberately includes seven of the 10 ASEAN members. By excluding the other three ASEAN members and China from the framework, it is undermining the unity of ASEAN and the Asia-Pacific regional order.

The US' intention is to create camp antagonism and promote regional tensions, so as to induce and intimidate regional states to take sides between China and the US, strategically encircling China. In the Middle East, the US has repeatedly vetoed UN Security Council draft resolutions on the Israel-Palestine conflict, drawing condemnation from the international community.

The more volatile the world is, the more we must actively implement the Global Security Initiative to safeguard the hard-won peace and development. In recent years, China has made a profound proposal to help build a global community with a shared future, and put forward the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative, promoting the building of a better world.

China has always practiced true multilateralism, which is rooted in the open and inclusive Chinese civilization, and is crucial for peace

and development. In particular, the Global Security Initiative has gained international consensus on pursuing security through cooperation, advocated a new security path of dialogue rather than confrontation, partnership rather than alliance, win-win rather than zero-sum, and provided Chinese solutions to the international security challenges, which has been acknowledged by more than 100 countries and international organizations. Also, the Global Security Initiative provides a viable way to resolve conflicts and control risks. China has been actively implementing the initiative, and has contributed greatly to the reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Iran, as well as the efforts to end the Ukraine crisis and the Israel-Palestine conflict. Such efforts have contributed China's wisdom and strength to the maintenance of regional and global peace.

China firmly supports ASEAN's centrality in regional cooperation, is opposed to "taking sides", group confrontation and a "new Cold War", and persists on peacefully resolving differences and disputes among countries, demonstrating that it is a responsible major country. Today, China and ASEAN are comprehensive strategic partners and largest trading partners to each other. China-ASEAN relations have become the most successful, fruitful and dynamic model of regional cooperation, providing a vivid example for building a global community with a shared future. With China's development entering a new era and ASEAN's development entering a new stage, China continues to use diplomacy to develop foreign relations, placing ASEAN in a priority position, and is willing to work with ASEAN members to maintain the UN-centered international world order, expand practical cooperation and jointly safeguard regional peace and development.

The China Daily

Trump verdict keeps this bedrock American ideal alive

Norman Eisen

A gasp surged through Courtroom 1530 of the Manhattan Criminal Courthouse when, at 4:37 p.m., Judge Juan Merchan took the bench in the prosecution of former President Donald Trump and announced, "We have a verdict." Trump stood trial for document falsification charges in an illegal repayment scheme to conceal the \$130,000 hush money payment made to adult film actress Stormy Daniels. The payment was made to keep her silent in the midst of the 2016 presidential election campaign, regarding allegations that she and Trump had a sexual encounter (which Trump denies) years before. The felony counts cover each of the 11 invoices, 12 ledger entries and 11 checks (nine signed by Trump himself) involved in the conspiracy.

For those of us present in the courtroom, hundreds of millions of Americans and, indeed, people around the world, the conviction of Trump on these 34 counts of falsifying business records is a milestone. For the first time in American history, an occupant of the highest office in the land has

been found by a jury of his or her peers to have committed crimes.

The announcement that there was a verdict came just minutes after Merchan had planned to send the jury home for the day, and the audible reaction caused the judge to warn the audience of about 60 journalists to remain silent when the verdict was read. But that enforced hush was, if possible, even more impactful when, at 5:05 p.m., the foreman of the jury read that verdict for count one - "guilty" - and repeated it for all 34 counts.

And as successfully argued by Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg's team, it was a crime connected to the former president's attainment of that office: falsifying documents to cover up a conspiracy to influence the 2016 election by paying hush money. It feels strange not to write the word "allegedly" in that sentence after so many years of doing so, dating back to when I investigated this misconduct as part of the first Trump impeachment in 2019.

We've never had a trial of a president before. And yet, the trial was about one of the oldest

American ideals: that no one is above the law. We overthrew a British king and put a constitution in his place. And with all of our ups and down as a nation, we have ever kept that idea alive. Having a president subject to the same laws, rules and procedures as any other American is a powerful reaffirmation of that idea.

I was struck by the jury's attitude on Thursday morning during their requested read-back of pages six to 35 of the judge's instructions. Those instructions dealt with both general principles guiding deliberation, such as the meaning of reasonable doubt, as well as the technical elements of the conspiracy and cover-up felonies here.

It was dry, to say the least, but the attention the jurors paid to the judge as he read could not have been more rapt. Indeed, it was downright reverent. In every case where a judge does a good job, jurors come to like and listen to the judge. That certainly happened here.

Merchan responded to the verdict just as he has done throughout this case: with extreme pro-

fessionalism. He thanked the jury for their hard work in the case, saying that they "gave this matter the attention that it deserved, and I thank you for that." Trump's lawyer Todd Blanche stood up to move for a completely spurious acquittal notwithstanding the verdict, saying, "There is no way this jury could have reached a verdict without relying on Michael Cohen - he lied, in this case. He cannot be used to convict President Trump." But Merchan quickly and effectively shut him down: "I am sure you misspoke. I do not know that anyone committed perjury in this case ... your motion is denied."

Now we move on to questions of this verdict's impact on the election, the content of sentencing (which Merchan has scheduled for July 11 at 10 a.m.) with each count carrying a potential term of up to four years of imprisonment, and whether the other three criminal cases against Trump. But that is for another day. For today, the enormity of Trump being finally held accountable by a jury of his peers after so many allegations resonates across the nation and around the world.



KARACHI: The Judges of the 11th UBL Literature and Arts Awards along with celebrity Presenters and Mr. Zia Ijaz (Center), Deputy CEO UBL in a group photo taken at the event.

Haier's scholarships for students

A step towards empowering dreams, building futures



F.P. Report

KARACHI: In a world where access to education can often be a barrier to success, Haier is stepping up to make a difference. With a firm belief in the power of education to transform lives, Haier launched a groundbreaking CSR campaign aimed at empowering talented students with limited resources to reach their full potential.

The concept is simple yet profound: Haier will sponsor the education of deserving students at Punjab University, providing them with the

opportunity to pursue their dreams without the burden of financial constraints.

By identifying students who have demonstrated exceptional performance despite facing obstacles, Haier aims to give them the support they need to strive for a better future.

Haier's CSR campaign represents a bold step towards creating meaningful change in the lives of young people. Haier is able to reach a wider audience and make a greater impact than ever before. Haier Pakistan also signed an MOU with Punjab University for the smooth, transpar-

ent and merit-based scholarship. The MOU ceremony was attended by Dr. Khalid Mahmood Vice Chancellor, Dr. Sobia Khurram Director External Linkages, Punjab University, Mr. Hamayoun Bashir Director Marketing, Mr. Tan Weiyong Director Sales, Mr. Zafar Iqbal Director Operations, Mr. Shahid Alvi Director HR and Mr. Jamshed Ali Senior Manager Marketing Haier.

The dedication of Haier to support young students perfectly aligns with its core value of "More Creation, More Possibilities."

By investing in education, Haier is not only providing opportunities for individual students but also nurturing an environment where creativity can flourish.

Education is the key to unlocking new possibilities, and Haier's scholarships pave the way for students to explore their passions, pursue their dreams, and make a positive impact on the world.

In conclusion, Haier's Scholarships for Talented Students: Empowering Dreams, Building Futures is a testament to the company's dedication to creating positive change in the world and being a responsible brand. By investing in young people to pursue their dreams, Haier is illuminating futures and creating endless possibilities for generations to come.

UBL announces winners of 11th Literature & Arts Awards

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The 11th UBL Literature and Arts Awards were held in Karachi at a five-star hotel, attended in large numbers by writers, literary and media personalities, socialites, and celebrities. At every event, the celebrated awards recognize and celebrate the best of Pakistani writers and artists, honoring a longstanding commitment to arts and literature.

The various award categories received hundreds of nominations from all over Pakistan. The competition was open to all Pakistani authors who had published their original work in 2021 and 2022. Entries were shortlisted by an esteemed panel of judges. The jury members in the Urdu categories were Dr. Asghar Nadeem Syed, Dr. Arfa Syeda, Dr. Anwaar Ahmed, Ms. Kishwar Naheed and Dr. Nasir Abbas Nayyar, while jury members for the English categories included Dr. Naazir Mahmood, Dr. Aroosa Kanwal and Mr. Harris Khalique.

The winners in each

category as declared at the Awards are:

"Children's Urdu Literature presented to Mr. Ahmed Adnan Tariq for 'Dastaan-e-Ameer Hamza'

"Children's English Literature presented to Ms. Marzieh Abbas for 'Nadia and Nadir Series'

"Translation into Urdu (joint awards) presented to Mr. Inam Nadeem for 'Aaina Si Zindagi' and Ms. Yasmeen Hameed for 'Janubi Asia Ki Muntakhib Nazmein'

"Urdu Poetry award presented to Mr. Mohsin Shakeel for 'Kuch Ishq Kiya'

"Pakistani Languages award given to Dr. Syed Wiqar Ali Shah for his work 'Abdul Ghani Khan - Zhwand Au Zamana' in Pushto language

"Online Literature award presented to Mr. Nayyar Mustafa for his work 'Rangon Main Sochnay Wali Larki'

"Song Lyrics Award presented to Mr. Sabir Zafar

"Drama Script presented to Mr. Hashim Nadeem for his play 'Parizaad'

"Urdu Debut presented

to Mr. Ahmad Jahangir for 'Shah Darya'

"English Fiction presented to Mr. Haroon Khalid Akhtar for his work 'Liar's Truth'

"English Non-Fiction award given to Mr. Tariq Rehman for 'Pakistan's Wars: An Alternative History'

"Urdu Fiction Award presented to Dr. Aurangzeb Khan Niazi for his book 'Urdu Abad - Maholiyat Tanazur'

"Urdu Non-Fiction award given to Mr. Shaheen Abbas for his work 'Leema Yakka Ban'

The awards also included a special category to celebrate the wide reaching impact of a celebrated artist who has produced exemplary work across a long distinguished career.

The prestigious 'Lifetime Achievement' award was awarded to the exemplary Ms. Zaheda Hina.

The awards were interspersed by light entertainment and ended with a lavish dinner for all the participants. It was hosted by well-known celebrities Mr. Sajjad Hasan and Ms. Faiza Gillani.

Mr. Zia Ijaz, Deputy CEO UBL, in his message during the awards, said "As a responsible Corporate Citizen UBL has played its part in the betterment of society through many of its own efforts. The UBL Literature & Arts Awards have been a cornerstone of one of our initiatives of giving back to the society through the recognition of indigenous talent across the country."

With each iteration of the award, the UBL Literature & Arts Awards support, motivate and celebrate talented Pakistani writers. The Bank recognizes the importance of arts and literature in helping society feel fulfilled, inspired and proud of its roots.

It encourages budding Pakistani artists to continue producing their works in a variety of different genres, knowing that there are celebrated local platforms where they can be recognized. It is through such ventures that the literary tradition lives on and benefits the current and future generations.

IBA-CEE hosts 'The Future of Dispute Resolution in Pakistan'

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Karachi in collaboration with the Singapore International Mediation Center (SIMC) and the Commercial Law Development Program (CLDP), U.S. Department of Commerce successfully hosted a seminar titled 'The Future of Dispute Resolution in Pakistan: Embracing the Singapore Convention on Mediation and Green ADR', at the National Institute of Banking and Finance (NIBAF) in Islamabad. The event brought together distinguished legal experts, climate change advocates, and key stakeholders to discuss the future of dispute resolution in Pakistan with a focus on mediation and sustainable practices.

Kamran Bilgrami, Director IBA-CEE and SIMI Accredited Mediator, delivered the welcome address, setting the stage for an engaging and informative session.

Eric Ives, Attorney Advisor, Commercial Law Development Program (CLDP), U.S. Department of Commerce, shared insights into the U.S. government's services and assistance to Pakistan's ADR movement. This was followed by an enlightening explanation of the Singapore Convention on Mediation by Sidharth Jha, Legal Counsel at the SIMC.

Amin Lakhani, Honorary Consulate General to Singapore in Pakistan, provided his perspective on the convention, and Dr. S Akbar Zaidi, Executive Director, IBA Karachi, highlighted the ADR initiative by IBA and expressed his commitment to future of ADR in Pakistan through the IBA ADR International Center (IBA ADIC).

A significant milestone of the seminar was the signing of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) of IBA ADIC with the Ministry of Law and Justice of Pakistan, the Directorate of Legal Education, Pakistan Bar Council, and the Islamabad Bar Council.

MCCI delegation discusses traders' issues with PM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Mardan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) and Provincial General Secretary of Tanzeem Tajir Zahir Shah met the Prime Minister of Pakistan Mian Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif at the Prime Minister House Islamabad. On this occasion, the presidents of various chambers and representatives of associations were present, besides Ministers of Industry, Commerce, Petroleum, Finance, Power and Electricity, Secretaries and other officials were also present.

While thanking the Prime Minister of Pakistan Zahir Shah presented useful suggestions regarding the budget for the current financial year along with offering effective and concrete suggestions for the improvement and stability of the economy, the existing tax burden, the sales

tax system was simplified making and related problems and suggestions for its solution.

Apart from this, there was a detailed discussion on the barriers that are hindering imports and exports, on many of the proposals, the Prime Minister of Pakistan issued orders on the spot, which the officials of the Chambers and Associations appreciated and said that the economy of the country is moving towards improvement, which is a substantial result of petroleum products, daily food items.

It is coming in the form of reduction in prices which the business community and common people have breathed a sigh of relief.

An effective change has also come out in terms of foreign exchange and GDP. President MCCI Zahir Shah also expressed concerns about the businessman-friendly (Tajir Dost Scheme) scheme for small

businessmen.

It is not known what will be the terms of the small businessmen regarding this scheme till now and doubts and concerns are being found among the small businessmen.

If the representatives of all the small traders are taken into confidence and the characteristics of this scheme are clarified, then all the small traders are willing to pay taxes voluntarily to contribute to the economy of the country.

The Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mian Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif, while addressing the guests said that the role of the business community in the development of the country's economy is very important which cannot be denied, so our first priority will be to take the country's economy on track provide all facilities to the businessmen and industrialists, then the country economy will march toward development.

Penalty increased for fraudulent use of Starbucks Marks

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Appellate Tribunal (CAT) has dismissed the appeal filed by M/S Options International (SMC-Pvt.) Limited, a Pakistani company penalized by the Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) for the fraudulent use of the international coffee chain STARBUCKS' branding in its restaurants.

In its decision, the CAT increased the penalty from the originally imposed Rs. 5 million to Rs. 6 million. STARBUCKS, a globally recognized chain of coffee-houses registered in the State of Washington, lodged a formal complaint that the Lahore-based restaurant, Options International, was selling "Starbuck Coffee" while fraudulently using "STARBUCKS MARKS," in their branding thereby deceiving consumers and harming its business interests.

STARBUCKS clarified that it had not opened any franchise in Pakistan.

The CCP's enquiry concluded that Options International had prima facie violated Section 10 of the Competition Act by disseminating false and misleading information, deceiving consumers, and harming the business interests of the complainant. During the enquiry, Options admitted the violation.

During proceedings, CCP passed an interim order on STARBUCKS' request, directing Options International to stop using the labelling and packaging bearing the STARBUCKS trade name and logo without authorization.

In its final order, CCP's bench noted that although Options had stopped using STARBUCKS MARKS and committed to complying with its directions, yet the unauthorized use of the STARBUCKS MARKS

spanned a substantial period. Consequently, the bench imposed a penalty of Rs. 5 million on the company.

Additionally, the bench directed Options International to inform the general public through newspaper advertisements for three consecutive days about its fraudulent use of the STARBUCKS MARKS.

Options International filed an appeal against the CCP's order before the CAT, which dismissed the appeal and increased the penalty amount on the basis that Options continued using the trademark even after filing commitment before CCP.

This decision underscores the CCP's commitment to curb deceptive marketing practices through fraudulent use of trademark, firm name, or product labelling or packaging of a local or foreign business concern.

Aramco completes acquisition of 40% stake in Gas & Oil Pakistan

F.P. Report

DHAHRAN: Aramco, one of the world's leading integrated energy and chemicals companies, has made further progress in its global retail expansion by completing the acquisition of a 40% equity stake in Gas & Oil Pakistan Ltd. ("GO").

GO is a diversified downstream fuels, lubricants and retail store operator in Pakistan with a network of more than 1,200 retail fuel stations.

The acquisition, first announced in December 2023, represents Aramco's first Downstream retail investment in Pakistan and signals the Company's growing retail presence in high-value markets.

In March, Aramco also acquired a 100% equity stake in Esmax Distribución SpA ("Esmax"), a leading



diversified downstream fuels and lubricants retailer in Chile.

Yasser Mufti, Aramco Executive Vice President of Products & Customers, said: "Our global retail expansion is gaining pace and this acquisition is an

important next step on our journey. Through our strategic partnership with GO, we look forward to supplying Aramco's high-quality products and services to valued customers in Pakistan.

We are also delighted to

welcome another high-caliber addition to Aramco's growing network of global partners, and look forward to combining our resources and expertise to unlock new opportunities and further grow the Aramco brand overseas."

Nestlé Pakistan, UVAS ink research partnership on dairy nutrition, IVF in cows

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Nestlé Pakistan has collaborated with University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences to extend support on research and development projects on food science, food safety, livestock, animal health and breeding programs.

Research based projects will also focus on dairy innovation, nutrition profiling, qualitative and quantitative analysis of raw milk and products. While signing the MoU, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Younus, Vice Chancellor, University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, reiterated the need for strong academia-industry relations.

"The last decade has observed a massive change in livestock sector with increased challenges to fulfill the demand for ever escalating population.

There is need for commercialization of research and expertise from that can



significantly contribute towards economic growth and business opportunities within country," he said, thanking Nestlé Pakistan's efforts towards academic research.

Jason Avanceña, Chief Executive Officer Nestlé Pakistan said, "Nestlé has made significant contributions to Pakistan's dairy value chain over the last three decades, and our partnership with UVAS is another milestone towards

the betterment of livestock sector in Pakistan."

He also emphasized on the use of In Vitro fertilization (IVF) technology for developing high genetics embryos that can improve the cows' productivity and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

"Quality research on nutrition profiling will be a step in fostering robust nutrition, health and wellness culture in Pakistan," he further added.

The collaboration will also focus on importance of dairy nutrition especially on fortification of dairy product in curbing the nutrition deficiency related to Vitamin A, D, Iron and Zinc in Pakistan. Additionally, the Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition (FSHN) at UVAS will extend support to Nestlé Pakistan in terms of product innovation and research-based technical projects.

IsDB organizes 4-day workshop

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A four-day workshop conducted by the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) in Islamabad, focusing on Country Procurement, Integrity, and Financial Management concluded here the other day.

The event, held from 27th May to 30th May, brought together key stakeholders to enhance the transparency, efficiency, and effectiveness of financial management and procurement processes in Pakistan.

The workshop saw active participation from international partners, executing agencies and Provincial departments across the country, including represen-

tatives from Government Ministries and Departments. The collaboration between these entities and the IsDB underscores Pakistan's commitment to adopting international best practices in financial management and procurement to ensure sustainable development. Key Highlights of the Workshop:

Comprehensive Training: Participants received in-depth training on the latest procurement policies, financial management strategies, and integrity measures essential for ensuring transparent and efficient use of public resources.

Expert Facilitation: The workshop was facilitated by

experts from the Islamic Development Bank who provided valuable insights into global standards and practices, as well as tailored advice to address Pakistan's unique challenges.

Interactive Sessions: The program included interactive sessions, case studies, and practical exercises designed to enhance the skills and knowledge of the participants, fostering a deeper understanding of procurement and financial management processes.

Collaborative Approach: The workshop promoted a collaborative approach, encouraging dialogue and knowledge sharing among participants, which is crucial for implementing cohesive and effective

financial strategies across different regions and departments. Dr. Kazim Niaz, Secretary, Ministry of Economic Affairs inaugurated the workshop on 27th May, 2024 and Mr. Muhammad Humair Karim, Special Secretary, EAD concluded the workshop and awarded certificates to the participants on 30th May, 2024 and extended gratitude to all participants and facilitators for their dedication and contributions to making this workshop a success. Speaking at the closing ceremony, Mr. Humair Karim emphasized the importance of robust procurement and financial management systems in achieving shared development goals.



In brief

Islamabad, Rangers move in Memorial Basketball semis

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad and Punjab Rangers have qualified for the semifinals of All Pakistan Muhammad Majid and Abdul Nasir Memorial Basketball Tournament at Siddique Memon Sports Complex, Karachi. On the fourth day of the pool round matches, Islamabad boys continued their journey of another consecutive victory in the tournament pool round matches by defeating Sindh Yellow by 52-14 points to qualify for the semifinal round, said a press release. Ali Kazmi was the top player for Islamabad, who scored 19 points while Momin Javed scored 15 points. For Sindh Yellow Daniyal Khan scored 08 points for the losing team. Top team Wapda also continued their outstanding performance to move ahead in top-four stage along with PAF, Rangers and Islamabad, as they thrashed Punjab Rangers in the last pool round match by 82-71 points. Kaleemullah and Muhammad Israr scored 22 and 17 points respectively. Sindh Whites outclassed Balochistan in the third match on day four by 87-46 points. Pakistan Wapda would face Islamabad in the first semifinal on Saturday while Pakistan Air Force will play Punjab rangers in the second semifinal of the tournament.

Punjab qualify for finals

ISLAMABAD (APP): Punjab team has qualified for the final of the 1st PNSC Inter-Provincial Women's Softball Championship at KPT Sports Complex football ground. The decision of the second team of the final would take place on Saturday after the match between Sindh and Balochistan, said a press release. The final match would be played on Saturday evening. Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Qaiser Sheikh would be the chief guest on the occasion. Earlier, two matches were played in the ongoing championship under the supervision of Softball Federation of Pakistan and managed by Sindh Softball Association. In the first match, Punjab defeated Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by eight runs in the third innings and made it to the final, while in the second match, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa overcame Sindh after a sensational match. On behalf of Punjab, Iram and Kiran scored two each while Fiza, Noor, Mehek and Ramsha scored one run each. On behalf of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Hina, Sidra and Aasia scored two runs each while Nayab scored one run. In the match played in the second session, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa overcame Sindh 10-9 in the fifth innings after an interesting contest. From Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Nayab scored three runs, Nasra and Ayman scored two runs each, while Hina, Shawal and Ayesha scored one run each and played an important role in the success of their team. From Sindh, Farasha and Sunita, and Tuls, scored two runs each, while Muqaddas, Zainab, and Merceline scored one run each.

Kyber Pakhtunkhwa overcame Sindh after a sensational match. On behalf of Punjab, Iram and Kiran scored two each while Fiza, Noor, Mehek and Ramsha scored one run each. On behalf of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Hina, Sidra and Aasia scored two runs each while Nayab scored one run. In the match played in the second session, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa overcame Sindh 10-9 in the fifth innings after an interesting contest. From Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Nayab scored three runs, Nasra and Ayman scored two runs each, while Hina, Shawal and Ayesha scored one run each and played an important role in the success of their team. From Sindh, Farasha and Sunita, and Tuls, scored two runs each, while Muqaddas, Zainab, and Merceline scored one run each.

Bagnaia dominates Italian MotoGP practice

MUGELLO (APP): Francesco Bagnaia began his home Italian MotoGP weekend in style, Ducati's double world champion topping the times in practice on Friday. Mugello is one of the Turin-born star's favourite circuits and he came within a tenth of a second of the lap record he set last year. With his best time of 1min 44.938sec he led the way from Spanish duo Alex Rins (Yamaha) and rookie Pedro Acosta (GasGas).

Babar defends loss in England, vows to step-up Pakistan performance

ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan skipper Babar Azam on Friday defended the cricket team's performance against England, vowing to fix all mistakes ahead of the Twenty20 World Cup scheduled to begin on June 2.

England thrashed Pakistan by seven wickets at the Oval on Thursday in their last match before the race for the T20 World Cup title begins. Victory gave England a 2-0 win in a four-match T20 series with two games washed out without a ball bowled.

"I agree that we made mistakes in the middle overs during battling and bowling both," Azam said at a press conference on Friday. "We will try and fix this as soon as possible."

The skipper said it was important to take chances during high-scoring matches, adding that all team members would sit and discuss how they had read the situation wrong and succumbed to pressure after losing back-to-back wickets.

"We need to settle down after losing wickets to gain momentum again."

Babar admitted that the team was struggling throughout the middle overs and urged his teammates to step up and take responsibility for the loss. He said though the team had collapsed during batting and bowling, their confidence remained high as they got to learn new things after facing a series loss.

When asked if the team was selected on merit, Azam

said no one was given an extra edge and all players were chosen after a thorough discussion between seven selection committee members. "We have to back the players that got selected," Azam said.

Azam assured that the cricket team was right on track and that winning and losing were part of the game. However, he accepted that even though all the players were performing well individually, they were "unable to click as a team."

"We are performing individually but not as a team," he concluded. "We are lagging here." The Pakistan team flew out to the United States earlier today, Friday, for the T20 World Cup series.

Swiatek eyes French Open birthday boost, Sinner, Gauff into last 16

PARIS (AFP): Reigning champion Iga Swiatek celebrated her 23rd birthday by brushing aside Marie Bouzkova to reach the French Open last 16 on Friday, while Coco Gauff eased into the second week for a fourth straight year and Jannik Sinner also powered through.

Later, Carlos Alcaraz will bid to reach the last 16 and edge closer to a semi-final meeting with Sinner, who saw off Russian Pavel Kotov 6-4, 6-4, 6-4.

Sixth seed Andrey Rublev suffered a shock exit at the hands of unheralded Italian Matteo Arnaldi, losing his cool repeatedly as anger at his performance boiled over.

Swiatek had to save a match point to avoid an upset defeat by fellow four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka in a second-round thriller, but she was never in trouble during a 6-4, 6-2 win over Czech Bouzkova.

"I feel good physically, I had a day off yesterday," said Swiatek. "I don't feel like the match (against Osaka) stayed with me but we'll see at the end of the tournament." The world number one is a red-hot favourite to lift the Coupe Suzanne Lenglen for a third straight year and become only the fourth woman to win four Roland Garros titles in the Open era.

She was much closer to her best form on Friday, hitting 34 winners and making only 19 unforced errors.

Swiatek will play Russia's Anastasia Potapova in the next round on Sunday.

The Polish star's win-loss record at the tournament stands at 32-2 and she has never failed to reach the second week. Gauff held off a late fightback from Australian Open semi-finalist Dayana Yastremska to win 6-2, 6-4 in the first match of the day on Court Philippe Chatrier.

The reigning US Open champion has an excellent record at Roland Garros, having previously reached two quarter-finals and the 2022 final which she lost to Swiatek. The 20-year-old failed to serve out the match when leading 5-2 in the second set, but saved three break points in the 10th game before getting over the line.

"When it was time to close out and the games were getting close and tight, I was trying to just remind myself I'm in the better position," Gauff said. "I'm the one up a set and double break, so I was just reminding myself of that."

Gauff will play Elisabetta Cocciaretto for a last-eight berth, after the unseeded Italian beat Russian 17th seed Liudmila Samsonova in straight sets.

Angry Rublev crashes out

Rublev became the biggest casualty in the men's draw so far, as he fell to a surprise straight-sets defeat by Italian Matteo Arnaldi. Rublev, who lifted the Madrid Open title last month, repeatedly smashed his racquet in frustration as he made 37 unforced errors in an erratic display.

"Completely disappointed with myself the way I behaved, the way I performed," admitted the Russian. "The problem is the head, that today basically I killed myself, and that's it." Arnaldi will face either former runner-up Stefanos Tsitsipas or China's Zhang Zhizhen in the last 16.

Sinner barely had to break sweat, though, saving the only break point he faced in a dominant display against Kotov. The Australian Open champion, who will overtake Novak Djokovic as world number one if he reaches the final, will next take on either home hope Corentin Moutet or Austrian Sebastian Ofner for a place in the quarter-finals.

Sinner, who has only lost two matches so far this year, is yet to drop a set in the tournament. Elsewhere in the women's draw, Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova ended the run of Frenchwoman Chloe Paquet, winning 6-1, 6-3.



PARIS: Coco GAUFF of United States of America during the Day 6 of Roland Garros at Roland Garros on May 31, 2024 in Paris, France.

Pakistan earn stunning draw against Malaysia FIH Hockey Nations Cup

KUALA LUMPUR (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan Friday came back from three goals down in the first quarter to share the spoils with Malaysia as the FIH Hockey Men's Nations Cup Poland 2023/24 started with an eight-goal thriller.

Pakistan have a poor start in the match as they conceded three early goals in the first quarter. Fitri Saari put Malaysia ahead in the fourth winner through a penalty stroke.

Three minutes later Abu Kamal Azrai made it 2-0 for Malaysia as Pakistan

came under immense pressure. Pakistani defenders continued to commit blunders and conceded two penalty corners and a penalty stroke in the first quarter. Malaysian's pressure paid off once again as they made it 3-0 when Faizal Saari scored from a penalty corner.

Similarly, the Pakistani forward line was also unimpressive as despite winning penalty corners they remained unsuccessful in scoring a goal.

The second quarter was a goalless affair with both teams trying to penetrate

each other's defence but failed to score as the first half ended with a 3-0 scoreline in Malaysia's favour.

In the third quarter, Abdul Ramzan opened the account for Pakistan through a field goal in the 32nd minute. However, again restored a 3-goal lead of Malaysia in the 42nd minute through another penalty stroke. Sufyan Khan gave Pakistan their second goal in the 43rd minute through a penalty corner as the third quarter ended with a 4-2 goalline in Malaysia's favour.

The fourth quarter start-

ed at a brisk pace with Pakistan forwards trying their best to get another opening. Their efforts paid off when Hannan Shahid scored a third goal for Pakistan in the 52nd minute.

The match was about to end with Malaysia winning 4-3 but in the dying moments Pakistan's forwards earned a penalty stroke and Abu Bakar Mahmood made no mistake to convert the opportunity into a goal in the final 60th minute that earned Pakistan a stunning 4-4 draw in their tournament opener.

Malik boosts Pakistan's 'morale' ahead of WC

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Veteran all-rounder Shoaib Malik came out in support of the Pakistan Men's cricket team after their 2-0 series defeat against England just ahead of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024.

Taking to X, formerly Twitter, Malik termed the England series a tough one but highlighted how the national team dealt with similar situations in the past. "Tough series! Remember: we've been in tough spots before & came out stronger," Shoaib wrote.

He then offered a piece of advice to Pakistan's white-ball captain Babar Azam and urged him to bat at No.3, coining the right-handed batter the "best option" to rotate the strike in the middle overs.

"IMO [In my opinion] Babar should bat at no 03! We need someone in the middle overs to rotate strike, you are our best option, with your guidance our middle order will do a lot better," Malik added.

Rashid says England in a 'good place' for T20 World Cup defence

LONDON (AFP): Adil Rashid believes England are well-placed ahead of their T20 World Cup defence after a seven-wicket win over Pakistan at The Oval on Thursday secured a 2-0 victory in a rain-affected four-match Twenty20 series.

England begin their quest to retain the title against Scotland in Barbados on June 4. But their preparations were hampered when games against Pakistan in Leeds and Cardiff were both washed out without a ball bowled.

Jofra Archer, however, did make his long-awaited return to international cricket between those abandonments when the England fast bowler took two wickets in a 23-run win in the 2nd T20 at Edgbaston.

Archer was able to form an express double-act with Mark Wood at The Oval, the Durham quick reaching a speed of 96 mph and dismissing both Azam Khan and Naseem Shah with sear-

ing bouncers in south London. And Sussex speedster Archer also continued his return from a run of right elbow injuries by taking the key wicket of Pakistan captain Babar Azam for 36 as the tourists slumped from 59-0 to 157 all out, leg-spinner Rashid finishing with figures of 2-37.

England captain Jos Buttler (39) and Phil Salt (45) all but put the result beyond doubt with a rapid opening stand of 82 in a match their side eventually won with 27 balls to spare.

England will now travel to the Caribbean in upbeat mood as they look to keep hold of the title they won in 2022 and atone for a woeful defence of their 50-over crown at last year's World Cup in India.

"We feel confident and we're positive," Rashid said. "It is different conditions and obvious playing in a tournament there is different pressure as well, but we're in a good place."

Whether England can keep both Archer and

Wood, who each have a long history of injury problems, fit throughout the course of a tournament remains to be seen.

But there was no denying their impact at The Oval, with Rashid saying: "Seeing Jof and Woody, when you watch them bowl it is exciting. Seeing the ball zip off the pitch, the keeper taking it really high and it's exciting to have two quality, world-class bowlers in our squad," the 36-year-old added.

Pakistan were outplayed in all facets at The Oval, with paceman Harris Rauf's 3-38 a rare highlight of an often shoddy display in the field. England beat Pakistan in the 2022 T20 World Cup final and Azam said: "When you play a big tournament, your confidence is always high."

"Our confidence is still high and we will try our best." Pakistan's tournament opener is against co-hosts United States in Dallas on June 6.

Peshawar Region leads in Women competitions in KP U23 Games

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar Region was leading with medal tally in the ongoing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Khyber U-23 Games when it defeated strong Hazara Region in the Badminton final played at Abdul Wali Khan Sports Complex Charsadda with hundreds and thousands of spectators witnessed the thrill-packed final.

Adviser to the Chief Minister on Sports and Youth Affairs Syed Fakhre Jahan was the chief guest on this occasion and witnessed the final. Director General Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Abdul Nasir Khan, Chairperson of the Organizing Committee Additional Director General Sports Miss Rashida Ghaznavi, international badminton player Syed Sadaqat Shah, District Sports Officer Charsadda Mishal Malik, Ex-DSO Tahsin Ullah Khan, badminton coach Bushra Khan, players and spectators were also present during the final.

Peshawar Region led in women's competitions when it defeated the strong Hazara team by 3-0 in the final. In the first singles Faryal of Peshawar Region overpowered her strong rival Mehraj from Hazara Region by 2-1, the score was 21-19, 18-21 and 27-25.

Both Faryal and Mehraj played well against each other and some good overhead smashes were also witnessed which was largely enjoyed by the sitting spectators. After taking lead by winning the first singles, Faryal and a 12-year-old Khola Khan defeated Haleema and Mehraj of Hazara Region but the overall Peshawar Region team dominated the proceedings and did not give much time to their rivals to strike back.

It was in the third singles in which Tanzeela, the top seeded and national ranking player, represented Peshawar Region by defeating Haleema in straight sets, the score was 21-18 and 21-19.

In the Volleyball final played between Hazara and Mardan region, in which Hazara won 3-0, the score was 25-23, 27-25 and 25-

22. The final of the volleyball women produced great thrilling for the sitting spectators in the indoor hall of the Abdul Wali Khan Sports Complex and at the end Mardan team played well and won the match by 3-0. Similarly, in the final match of the table tennis event, the players of Peshawar, having services of international player Alishba, who is selected for the national team to represent Pakistan in South Asian Table Tennis Championship to be played in Sri Lanka, played a key role for Peshawar and succeeded in defeating Mardan 3-0.

The final match of hockey was played at Peshawar wherein Mardan won the battle by defeating Peshawar in the final by 2-0. Saira and Sumayyah scored one goal each for Mardan while Peshawar failed to score. The Peshawar team goal-keeper Tayyaba Khan played well and thwarted some goal-fetching moves.

Tayyaba was also selected in the team going for Turkey and before that she also represented Pakistan in Oman and Malaysia in the Pakistan Board Hockey Teams.

In the squash final Peshawar won the trophy by defeating Hazara, Hira Aqeel, Nimra and Manahil won their respective singles in straight sets against Hazara players including Javeria, Nida and Tabasum.

The chief guest of the closing ceremony, Advisor to the Chief Minister on Sports and Youth Affairs, Syed Fakhhar Jahan, distributed medals and cash prizes among the winning players. DG Sports Abdul Nasir Khan, Additional Director General Miss Rashida Ghaznavi, Tahsinullah, DSO Charsadda Mashal Malik, Mian Sadaqat Shah of Badminton, coach Bushra and other personalities were present.

On this occasion, Sports Adviser Syed Fakhhar Jahan addressed the ceremony. He said that the province is being made a sports hub, before that the Inter-Madaras, Person with Different Abilities Games were held, now the series of U-23 games is going on, next month they are hosting the Inter-Provincial Games by inviting all the provinces including Gilgit-Baltistan, Islamabad and Azam Jammu and Kashmir.

Protester chains himself to goalposts at Scotland v Israel match



GLASGOW (Agencies): A protester chained himself to the goalposts before Scotland's Women's Euro 2025 qualifier against Israel at Glasgow's Hampden stadium.

The match was delayed by about 45 minutes after the man used a heavy duty lock to secure himself to the posts in protest at Israel's military operation in Gaza. The teams then returned to the dressing rooms. The match is being played behind closed doors for security reasons, but some reports said the demonstrator may have been mistaken for a steward as he had been wearing a high-vis vest.

About 400 people, some carrying small coffins and Palestinian flags had earlier gathered outside the doors

of the main stand.

When the match kicked off demonstrators booed and blew whistles, and a number of fireworks were let off. A handful of counter-protesters also demonstrated before the group B2 game. Players were seen discussing a second warm-up and whether it was safe to return to the pitch shortly before the match got back under way. When it did, protesters could be heard chanting from outside the national stadium.

Last week, the SFA said it had been left with "no option" but to bar supporters from attending "following extensive security consultations with all key parties". Public demonstrations against Israel's military operation in Gaza have been happening regularly

across the UK. One group - the Gaza Genocide Emergency Committee - arranged a protest before the game at Hampden and called for the matches to be cancelled. Police Scotland said: "Appropriate policing plans are in place to maintain public safety and minimise any disruption to the community."

Israel was banned from hosting any football matches by Uefa for security reasons in the aftermath of the 7 October attack by Hamas and the Israeli government's military response. Instead, the Israeli national side and its club teams have played fixtures at neutral venues in Hungary. Tuesday's return game between Scotland and Israel in Budapest will also be played behind closed doors.



In brief

IRSA releases 279,900 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) Friday released 279,900 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 321,800 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1468.67 feet and was 70.67 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 132,600 cusecs and 120,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1188.35 feet, which was 138.35 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 54,300 cusecs and 25,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 193,900, 168,900, 137,000 and 43,100 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 85,000 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 23,500 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Police arrest two bike lifters

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested two bike lifters and street criminals and recovered eight stolen motorcycles and other items from their possession, said a Police spokesman here on Friday. He informed that a team under the supervision of SHO, Gungmandi Police Station managed to net two bike lifters namely Hamad and Tasawar Riaz, and recovered eight stolen motorcycles and other items from their possession. A case has been registered against the accused while further investigation is underway. Superintendent of Police, Rawal, Faisal Saleem said the accomplices and facilitators of the accused would also be sent behind bars.

ICT cracks down in Tarnol

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a coordinated effort to enforce traffic regulations, the Islamabad Capital Territory Administration Friday has conducted a vehicle inspection drive in Tarnol area. According to the spokesman of ICT Administration, on the instructions of the Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon, the Assistant Commissioner Sadder, along with teams from the police, Islamabad Traffic Authority (ITA), and the Excise Department, carried out the operation. The inspection focused on several key violations. Vehicles found without proper registration and fitness permits were impounded. Drivers were fined for failing to display notified routes and fare information. Additionally, vehicles with tinted windows and unauthorized flash lights were penalized. The operation aimed to ensure compliance with traffic regulations and improve road safety, this crackdown was part of a broader effort to maintain order and safety on Islamabad's roads, he added.

PNCA announces Summer Art Camp

ISLAMABAD (APP): Continuing its past practice of engage young minds in learning of creative arts, the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) has announced Summer Art Camp for kids and students during their vacation period. The summer camp is being arranged by the council to develop artistic skills in the children through enrollment in Guitar, key Board, Violin, Singing, Calligraphy, Drawing and painting classes. According to the PNCA, the age limit for the art classes is Group I (4-12 years), Group II (13-25 years) while for Calligraphy, Music.

PM's coordinator, German delegation discuss climate resilience collaboration

ISLAMABAD (APP): Head of Development Cooperation at the German Embassy, Sebastian Paust, along with his team on Friday called on Prime Minister's Coordinator on Climate Change Romina Khurshid Alam.

Both sides discussed various areas for collaboration to achieve environmental sustainability and climate resilience in various socioeconomic fields of bilateral interest, a news release said. Paust said that his country and organisation were well aware of the climate risks being faced by Pakistan and showed interest to work with the Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Ministry to address the environmental and climate change challenges.

The PM's coordinator thanked the German delegation and assured them her and the ministry's all-out support to launch any initiative that helps Pakistan achieve sustainable development goals, particularly related to climate change, education, health, environment and disaster risk management.

Spelling out the areas of interest for bilateral cooperation, Romina Khurshid Alam told the German delegation that climate-resilient building, e-waste management, climate tourism, climate sports, SDGs, disaster management and mainstreaming women into climate risk management were the main areas wherein the ministry would support the Development Cooperation to plan and implement any project that helps build up Pakistan's climate resilience and achieve environmental sustainability.

PAF, Navy supporting civic agencies along IWMB to extinguish inferno at Margalla Hills: Romina: Prime Minister's Coordinator on Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam on Friday said the helicopters of Pakistan Air Force (PAF) and Pakistan Navy team were supporting the civic agencies along with Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB) to extinguish glaring inferno at Margalla Hills National

Park near sector E-9.

She said that there was fire at two places on Margalla Hills whereas it was of high intensity spiking up in front of E-9 Hills, a news release said. The Chairman NDMA was contacted by the PM's Coordinator whereas a Pakistan Air Force helicopter was dispatched to the affected area to put out the fire, she said. She added that the team of Pakistan Navy was also participating in the effort to control the fire alongside the team of Islamabad Municipal Corporation involved in the effort to smother the fire.

The Sixth Aviation Squadron was also requested to send a helicopter, she said, adding, "The Ministry of Climate Change is in touch with all relevant agencies. I am monitoring the situation myself," Romina Khurshid Alam said. A second helicopter was also dispatched by Pakistan Air Force to the affected area, she added. "I am very grateful to NDMA and Pakistan Air Force and Pakistan Navy," the PM's Coordinator said.



ISLAMABAD: German delegation led by head of development cooperation Sebastian Paust called on PM's Coordinator on Climate change Romina Khurshid Alam at her office. —APP Photo

Operation underway to douse fire on Margalla Hills: DC

ISLAMABAD (APP): An operation to extinguish a fire on Margalla Hills is currently underway after the blaze reignited on Friday.

Speaking to a private news channel, Deputy Commissioner of Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon said that the district administration, CDA offi-

cial, and the Pakistan Navy were actively engaged in efforts to control the fire.

The DC was confident that the fire would be controlled soon, despite challenges posed by strong winds and hot weather.

Meanwhile, the CDA spokesperson said that the Director General of

Environment was overseeing the operation under the guidance of the authority's Chairman.

He said that over 80 firefighters were involved in the operation, with additional teams dispatched to expedite the fire extinguishing efforts.

The operation also

includes multiple fire brigade vehicles and a Pakistan Navy helicopter, which is assisting in dousing the flames from the air.

Joint teams from the District Administration, CDA, and Pakistan Navy are present at the scene, working collaboratively to bring the fire under control.

Over Rs 16 billion disbursed among beneficiaries under Benazir Kafaalat scheme

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has disbursed over Rs.16 billion among over 15,00,000 beneficiaries from across the country so far under the Benazir Kafaalat quarterly payments (April-June).

"Till May 30, over Rs. 16 billion has been disbursed among over 15,00,000 beneficiaries which makes 46 percent of the total beneficiaries", said an official source.

The disbursement of the quarterly tranche (April-June) of Benazir Kafaalat cash assistance to the beneficiaries is continued across the country in two phases to disburse Rs. 10,500 per household among over nine million registered beneficiary families. In the first phase, the payments are being issued among the beneficiaries in all districts of Islamabad, Balochistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan.

The payments are also being disbursed in Peshawar, Mardan and all districts of Malakand and Hazara Division in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, all districts of Karachi

Division and District Hyderabad in Sindh province and Gujranwala, Sahiwal, Rawalpindi and all districts of Sargodha Division and District Vehari in Punjab. While payments to the beneficiaries in the remaining districts are being issued in the second phase.

The beneficiaries can receive their payment through the nearest centers after receiving message from 8171. The beneficiaries, in case of any complaint, can approach the nearest BISP Tehsil offices or call the toll-free helpline number 080026477 of the Benazir Income Support Program. The special control room has been activated in the BISP headquarters to address the complaints of the beneficiaries promptly.

However, the beneficiaries can also contact the officials on WhatsApp numbers including 03018472841 (Hyderabad District), 03018472838 (Karachi Division), 03175370095 (South Punjab), 03202399616 (Central Punjab), 03028238564 (North Punjab), 03492883482 (Balochistan), 03155212820 (Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa), 03155213094 (Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan).

The messages from the Benazir Income Support Program are sent only from 8171, and messages from any other number should not be trusted. The officials of BISP have been directed to ensure the smooth disbursement of Kafaalat payments to the women without any deductions.

The staff has been deputed to monitor the process of payment disbursement and take immediate action against the agents responsible for deductions from the beneficiary's payments. The BISP is currently supporting 9.3 million deserving families and acting as a lifeline for those facing economic hardship.

The Unconditional Cash Transfers (UCT) program, also known as the 'Benazir Kafaalat Programme', is the core initiative of BISP and was launched in 2008. Since its inception, the UCT/Kafaalat initiative has grown to the extent that it is now the largest single cash transfer program in Pakistan's history.

Ministry deploys 300 buses for 24/7 travel of Pakistani pilgrims

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony has launched a comprehensive 24/7 transportation plan for pilgrims, involving 300 luxury buses to transport them directly from their residences to the Haram Sharif in Makkah, Saudi Arabia.

The bus service is available round-the-clock in order to provide Hajj pilgrims with the flexibility to travel at their conven-

ience. The all time available, bus service aims at alleviating inconvenience of the pilgrims allowing them to focus on their worship and spiritual journey.

Bus stops have been constructed at four entry points surrounding the Haram to ensure efficient and organized transportation. Ensuring a smooth flow of traffic and minimizing congestion in the area, these designated stops serve as pick-up and

drop-off locations for pilgrims. The government has assigned guides to assist pilgrims throughout their journey to further enhance the travel experience.

These guides help pilgrims travel through their designated routes, ensuring that they reach their destination without any difficulties. To address any concerns or queries the pilgrims may have, the guides also provide valuable information and support to them.

CEO IESCO holds Zoom meeting with media person

ISLAMABAD (APP): On the directives of Federal Minister for Energy Power Division, Sardar Awaiz Ahmad Khan Leghari and Federal Secretary Power, Rashid Langrial, Chief Executive Officer of IESCO, Dr. Muhammad Amjad Khan, held a Zoom meeting with representatives of print and electronic media to provide timely information regarding load management on 11 kV feeders, shutdowns for development work at the request of district administration, and voltage issues in the system.

The Chief Executive stated that the purpose of

this meeting was to enhance cooperation and timely information access between the organization and the media, as the media plays a crucial role in identifying and resolving consumer issues, said a press release issued here Friday.

He requested media representatives to directly inform him if they encounter any corruption, unscheduled load shedding, mistreatment of consumers by officers or staff, delays in providing electricity connections, etc., within the IESCO region, so that prompt action can be taken against lazy and inefficient

officers and employees, and consumer issues can be resolved in a timely manner.

The media representatives appreciated IESCO's initiative and assured their full cooperation. They remarked that while IESCO is indeed a customer-friendly company, there is still room for improvement in certain areas. Timely notification of power outages, prompt resolution of electricity-related complaints, and discouraging delaying tactics in providing new connections will undoubtedly foster a pleasant environment between the organization, the public, and the media.

Nine drug peddlers, bootleggers netted with 10 kg charras

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi district Police in an action against suspected drug peddlers and bootleggers on Friday arrested nine accused besides recovering 10 kg charras, 270 liters liquor and other items from their possession.

A police spokesperson said that Pirwadhai police held Abid Majeed for having 1650 grams charras and Babar Khan for possessing

1650 grams charras. Rawat police rounded up Nisar on recovery of 1260 grams charras and Husnain with 1250 grams charras.

Dhamial police arrested Jameel and recovered 2024 grams charras while Taxila police apprehended an accused namely Tahir Abbas for having 1250 grams charras.

Gujar Khan and Chaki police arrested Naem and Khurram with 1270 grams

charras. Airport police netted Azam and recovered 270 liters liquor from his possession. Separate cases have been registered against all the accused while further investigations are underway.

City Police Officer, Rawalpindi had directed the police officers to accelerate ongoing operations against drug peddlers, bootleggers and other lawbreakers, he added.

ANF recovers 331 kg drugs in five operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting five operations across the country managed to recover 331 kg drugs and arrested nine accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday.

He informed that 1.9 kg ice was recovered from a passenger going to Bahrain at Islamabad Airport. 282 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of five accused rounded up near Jamshoro Toll Plaza Hyderabad. In the third operation, 30 kg hashish was recovered from Jeewani Gwadar area.

12 kg hashish was recovered from an accused arrested in Kalma Chowk Chiniot. In the fifth operation, 6 kg heroin was recovered from two suspects netted on M-1 Islamabad. Separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process.

3-day int'l conference concluded at AIOU

ISLAMABAD (APP): The three-day international conference on 'Ijtihad bil Maqasid' at Allama Iqbal Open University concluded on Friday with several recommendations.

These included establishing an institution to address and contemplate new emerging issues facing the Islamic world, conducting research in universities on various aspects of Ijtihad bil Maqasid, and performing Ijtihad considering Maqasid al-Shariah (objectives of Shariah) to tackle modern medical, economic, social, and cultural challenges.

Special guests at the concluding session included Justice Dr. Syed Muhammad Anwar from the Federal Shariat Court, Sahibzada Muhammad Qamar-ul-Haq, President of Jamia Muhammadiyah Sharif, Chiniot, and Professor Dr. Tufail Hashmi, former Dean of the Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies.

He appreciated the suggestion of establishing an institution to ponder over new emerging issues, stating that the doors of the Shariat Court will always

be opened for legal support and guidance.

Sahibzada Muhammad Qamar-ul-Haq remarked that Ijtihad is the wealth of Islamic thought, and new issues can only be resolved through Ijtihad. He expressed a desire to collaborate with universities to meet societal needs and stated that Jamia Muhammadiyah Sharif, Chiniot, is willing to play a role in establishment of the institution to advance the process of contemplation.

Expressing gratitude, Professor Dr. Mohayyuddin Hashmi mentioned that during the three days of the conference, in addition to the opening and closing ceremonies, eight parallel sessions, a plenary session, an online session, and a discussion forum was also held, where in-depth discussions on Ijtihad and contemporary Muslim society took place.

He stressed parents leading role and said that healthy, tobacco-free youth are more likely to perform better academically, which translates into a more skilled and capable workforce in the future.

This fosters innovation, economic growth, and societal progress, as individuals can fully realize their lifetime potential without the ill health burden of tobacco use, he mentioned.

World no-Tobacco day stresses joint efforts of Society to end Smoking

ISLAMABAD (APP): Expert on World no-Tobacco day stressed the joint efforts of society, raise taxes and awareness drives of social media platforms to control the ever-increasing trend of smoking among youngsters as studies show that around 38 million young people aged 13-15 using tobacco globally.

Talking to PTV news channel, Consultant & Expert, Anti Drugs Narcotics Campaign Syed Zulfikar Hussain explained that tobacco day is an effort to control the consumption of Tobacco around the world, adding, aims to inform the public about the

health implications that are associated with the use of tobacco including lung cancer, heart disease, respiratory illness, and many more.

He said that Over 22 million people (20% of adults) in Pakistan smoke tobacco, 32% of men and 6% of women smoke. However, smokeless forms of tobacco, such as paan, gutka and naswar, are also popular. More than 1 in four young people (aged 13-15) are exposed to second-hand smoke in their homes.

This year, the theme is "Protecting Children from Tobacco Interference", underscores

the critical need to prevent future generations from falling prey to the harmful impact of tobacco use, he added.

Consultant Pulmonologist Anel Kumar mentioned that Pakistan's youth is a particular targeted group when it comes to the use of tobacco, which is why their involvement in raising awareness is need of hour, adding, Pakistan is among a few countries where tobacco production and consumption is increasing enormously, there is an urgent need for health promotion and anti-tobacco education for combating

the epidemic of smoking, he added.

About 8 million people die each year from tobacco-related diseases, accounting for 13 percent of deaths worldwide, he added.

He stressed parents leading role and said that healthy, tobacco-free youth are more likely to perform better academically, which translates into a more skilled and capable workforce in the future.

This fosters innovation, economic growth, and societal progress, as individuals can fully realize their lifetime potential without the ill health burden of tobacco use, he mentioned.

IEA to appoint new CG

KABUL (Ariana News): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) announced on Friday that Jaber Ansar has been dismissed as consul-general of Afghanistan in Iran's Mashhad city, adding that a new diplomat will be dispatched to secure the post. Zakir Jalali, Director of the Third Political Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, said on X that Ansar was involved in corruption. Jalaly's statement comes a day after Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman called on the officials.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

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Online exam in Kandahar

KABUL (BNA): The Kandahar Directorate of Information and Culture has announced that 200 individuals have participated in an exam for an online freelance program in the province. Qari Hamdullah Saeed, the head of the Youth Affairs Department of the Kandahar Directorate of Information and Culture, informed Bakhtar Agency that, through the efforts of the Deputy Ministry of Youth Affairs and in collaboration with the YHDO organization, 200 young people in Kandahar.

India says committed to supporting Afghans

NEW DELHI (Ariana News): India's Ministry of External Affairs spokesman Randhir Jaiswal says New Delhi is committed to supporting Afghans and this is the country's "stable" policy towards the people of Afghanistan.

Jaiswal stated that India uses Chabahar port to provide humanitarian aid to the people of Afghanistan and landlocked countries in Central Asia.

"It is our stable policy to support the people of Afghanistan, especially through humanitarian aid, food, medicine, etc. We use Chabahar for this specific purpose," he said.

This Indian official added that Chabahar port is an important project to establish connectivity in the region and provide humanitarian aid.

Earlier, other Indian officials had said that New Delhi would try to connect



Afghanistan and Central Asia through the Chabahar port and expand trade exchanges.

Chabahar is also an economic and commercial corridor. India's focus, which is more on Chabahar, is because India can gain access to Central Asia and increase its trade from Afghanistan to Central Asia. The income is better for all countries and Afghanistan can also export from Chabahar to India and other countries," said Mirwais Hajizadeh, deputy of the Chamber of Agriculture and Livestock.

Recently, India and Iran have signed a ten-year agreement for the development of Chabahar port, through which India can export its commercial goods to Afghanistan and Central Asian countries.

The development of Chabahar port is one of the tripartite projects between Iran, India and Afghanistan, the contract of which was signed in 1395 solar year between Kabul, New Delhi and Tehran.

Chabahar port is considered one of the options for Afghanistan and India to bypass Pakistan because, in recent years, trade and transit relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan have not been stable enough.

The Islamic Emirate also said that Chabahar port is one of the vital ports for Afghanistan and the country has a special place in the transit of the region.

Over 20 security cameras installed in Badakhshan

BADAKHSHAN (Ariana News): With the rise in security incidents in Badakhshan province, authorities have installed more than 20 security cameras in crowded places of the provincial capital Faizabad.

Provincial police say that they have installed 23 security cameras in Faizabad, which are active round the clock. According to police, the cameras are installed for the purpose of ensuring security and preventing crimes.

"Cameras have been installed by police in public places and crowded places of the city. The quality of the cameras is very good and covers several kilometers," said Azizullah Omar, the police chief of Badakhshan province.

Residents of Faizabad city welcome the move, saying it will improve security and help reduce crime rate. "They did a very good job; It is very useful to prevent theft and provide security," said Jalaluddin, a resident of Faizabad.

The security officials of Badakhshan say that with new measures, the security situation of the province has improved compared to the past and crime rate has also declined. They say that they plan to install security cameras in the districts as well to enhance security and prevent criminal offenses.

Consul General in Mashhad dismissed due to corruption: Jalali

KABUL (TOLONews): Zakir Jalali, director of the third political department of the Foreign Ministry, said that the former Consul General of Afghanistan in Mashhad has been dismissed due to corruption.

In response to the remarks made by the spokesperson of Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding adherence to international laws in the appointment of consulate staff, Jalali said that the appointment and replacement of consulate staff is the prerogative of the sending state.

Zakir Jalali said: "The main issue in Mashhad is administrative corruption, in which the former consul had a significant role. Regardless of who will replace him, the termination of Jaber Ansar's duties is entirely up to the Afghan government."

"His dismissal due to administrative corruption tarnishes Afghanistan's reputation," said Aziz Maariq, a former diplomat.

Earlier, Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs had requested the Islamic Emirate to act based on recognized Vienna laws in changing consulate staff.

Meanwhile, some international relations analysts and former diplomats said that to prevent corruption, the Islamic Emirate needs to appoint committed and diplomatically knowledgeable individuals to such positions.

"Many people become disillusioned and flee the country because when you do not employ deserving individuals, not only does the work lag behind, but the rights of more people are violated," Wahid Fakiri, an international relations analyst, told TOLONews.

"Professional cadres should be appointed in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and a commission of experienced and non-corrupt professionals and diplomats who genuinely see service to the nation and religion as their responsibility should be appointed," said Zakiullah Mohammadi, a university scholar.

have made efforts in this regard and shared the issue with the Ministry of Public Health, and I hope that in the future we can provide free medicine, diagnosis, and treatment for our compatriots, especially cancer patients."

According to statistics from the World Health Organization, more than 9.7 million people worldwide die from cancer each year. The organization predicts that by 2050, cancer will increase by 75%.

Anwar urges govt employees to prioritize national interests

KABUL (TOLONews): Noor-Ul-Haq Anwar, the head of the general directorate of the Islamic Emirate in Administrative Affairs, urged government employees to prioritize national interests over personal interests.

Noor-Ul-Haq Anwar said that all government employees have a duty to understand and fulfill their responsibilities when performing their duties.

Speaking at the graduation program of government employees from the National Procurement Authority-Afghanistan, Anwar said, "Here, personal interests and desires should not be considered; instead, public goals and national interests should be prioritized, and we are committed to national interests."

Mohammad Hanan Haqqani, head of the Administrative Office,



said: "The system demands honesty from you and me; not only should we not take bribes, but we should also be trustworthy in our writing."

According to the head of the general directorate of the Islamic Emirate in Administrative Affairs, correctly fulfilling responsibilities will lead Afghanistan to self-sufficiency and growth.

Anwar emphasized that

the Islamic Emirate values responsible employees and will support them in various sectors.

Anwar added: "We see some individuals have gained trust; some are very passionate and hardworking, striving to improve themselves in a short time. Such individuals should be supported, and this is a cause for happiness."

Meanwhile, a number of political analysts expect the

Islamic Emirate to simplify the operation of government offices so that people do not face challenges.

"Wherever you go, you are told to come back in the morning, and then come back in the morning again. This is one of the issues of administrative corruption. The Islamic Emirate should create an easy procedure for this so that people can get their work done easily," said Moeen Gul Samkanai, a political analyst.

"Whenever the rulers sacrifice their personal, party, linguistic, and regional interests for national interests, then we can say that governance is improving," said Javid Momand, a university professor.

Some citizens of the country still complain about the delay in addressing their challenges in government offices and the lengthy process of handling their cases.

Kazakhstan deports five Afghans attempting unofficial entry

KABUL (Khaama Press): Kazakhstan's media reported that five Afghan refugees, who were trying to enter Russia through unofficial routes, were arrested and deported back to Afghanistan.

Kazakh media reported on Friday, May 31, cited security officials saying that these individuals were abandoned near the border by the smugglers.

According to reports, their ultimate destination was Europe, and each had paid between \$5,000 to \$7,000 to smugglers.

Details announced revealed that none had visas for Russia or European countries.

The Kazakhstan judiciary also issued a ruling banning all five individuals from entering the country's territory for five years.

Kazakhstan's media reported a surge in refugees attempting to cross its borders to enter Europe via Russia.

In response, Kazakhstan established a new control post at its borders.

Kazakhstan has warned its citizens against aiding refugees to cross into Russia through unofficial routes.

Those who help

refugees in this manner could face up to seven years in prison.

Since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, most Afghans have sought refuge in European countries, often opting for unofficial routes that frequently lead to tragic events. This exodus occurs amid a dire humanitarian crisis, severe job shortages, and persistent security threats.

Health teams sent to flood affected areas in Afghanistan

BAGHLAN (Ariana News): The United Nations Population Fund have announced the provision of emergency medical services to women and girls affected by floods.

The organization said in a statement that with their help, 216 mobile medical teams are active and provide services for women in the maternity and mental health departments in rural areas and areas where access is difficult.

The United Nations Population Fund has said that in Baghlan Province, where the recent floods caused widespread destruction, four medical service teams are currently active and each team includes a doctor, a nurse, a midwife, a vaccinator and a medical specialist.



At the same time, the office of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Afghanistan said in a post on X that it has

provided emergency medical and shelter services to the flood victims in Baghlan together with the Afghan Ministry of

Health.

The ICRC said thousands of families in the province are in desperate need of assistance.

Badal marriage generally considered illicit, proved unsuccessful

ZARANJ (Pajhwok): Some victims of Badal marriages in the country have complained about their painful living conditions and demanded a strong fight against this unpleasant tradition.

Badal is a traditional way of marriage in which the exchange of bride and grooms takes place between the two families. A Badal deal marriage' usually means when a brother and sister from one family marry a sister and brother from another family. Kabul woman: My brother had no money and arranged a Badal marriage at my cost; he made his life but destroyed my life.

Neilli, not a real name hailing from the Kabul Airport locality, said: "When I was 13, my brother got married through a Badal deal and I was the victim, I was immature and my mother told me that every girl should get married one day."

She is now the mother of two sons and three daughters, said she was married to a man who was 25 years older than her, her husband was educated but an angry and aggressive person. He always lost his patience with her wife's mistakes and beaten her to the extent that his neighbors should have often come for mediation and dispute resolution.

Neilli said: "I lived a very bitter life, our economic conditions were bad, I slept hungry at night, I was sick, I didn't have money for a doctor, one day we had fought, I went to my mother's house but when I came back he had moved to another place and left the house, he warned her children not to inform me, but when I found him and went his house he divorced me."

She said her brother and brother's wife have a happy life. She dried up her tears with her shell and said this unpleasant tradition should be handled strictly and stressed that families, ulema, tribal elders and media outlets should play their role in the fight against Badal marriages.

The Badal deal marriage issues are not only in Kabul but it existed in other parts of the country as well. Maleha, 36, a resident of Kapesa province, said she was also the victim of Badal marriage and spent a painful life and lost her eyesight due to immense difficulties and problems.

"Twenty years ago my two brothers became friends with two Shiite girls, they escaped with my brothers because Shiites did not marry with Sunni people as a result the father of the two girls came to our house and demanded me from my

father and warned my father of consequences in case he refused the demand."

She said by the time of her Badal marriage she was 16 and was married to a 12-year-old boy against her will, it was the start of her painful life. "On the day of marriage I was very disappointed when I looked at my husband, he was shorter in height than me and when he stood with me they had to put something under his feet to be matched with my height, my cousins and other relatives made fan of me," she said.

With the time her husband was forced to work and now he is a taxi driver, they don't have economic issues but the dreams she had all remained incomplete. "The most disappointing thing is the childish behavior of my husband; he has no sense and could not understand my feelings. My brothers have happy lives with their wives," she said.

Sanba Gul, a resident of Zaranj City in Nimroz province, said: "The Badal marriage is practiced in our family for generations; I had a Badal marriage and did not get any good from my life." She said Badal is an illicit tradition that is not only practiced in her family but in other families of the village. Families organize Badal marriages in order to

reduce the cost of marriage.

"I was unlucky, my daughter was 4 days old when my husband promised his cousin to give her to his son in Badal, although they were my brother's children but still I was never happy about the Badal marriage," she said.

She said her daughter was 14 and her son was 16 when the other side demanded marriage and the reception was organized. But less than two years of their marriage differences emerged between the couple due to the age difference their marriage could not last and matter reached to divorce.

"Our children suffered due to Badal deal that we struck our friendship and relationship ended and now we are surprised what would happen to the future of our divorced children. I have no information about my brother, all our happiness had gone."

Sanobar, a resident of Herat city is another victim of Badal marriage. She said due to economic problems her family was unable to bring a bride for his brother therefore when she was 13-year-old she was married in a Badal deal so that her brother could be married as well. She said her brother persecuted his wife and always beat her until he divorced her.

Over ten people publicly punished in Khost

KHOST (Khaama Press): The Supreme Court of Taliban recently announced that over ten people in Khost province were subjected to corporal punishment in public.

On Thursday, May 30, the court announced in a press release that the individuals were punished with 39 lashes each for various accusations, including theft and so-called moral corruption, according to the statement.

The announcement from the Supreme Court of

the Taliban stated that among the individuals, six were sentenced to three years in prison.

The court's press release also mentioned that six accused were sentenced to 15 months in prison.

Meanwhile, in the past two days, 15 people were flogged in Khost, Ghazni, and Kunduz.

Previously, the spokesperson for the Supreme Court of the Taliban had stated that in the past month, over 40 people had been punished

for various charges in different cities across Afghanistan.

Since taking power, the Taliban have conducted corporal punishment, flogging, and executions in public. This happens amid a dire humanitarian crisis and severe poverty in the country.

The situation is worsened by the mass expulsion of Afghan refugees from Iran and Pakistan. This has exacerbated the country's already critical conditions.

Need for repeated SIM card registrations flayed



KABUL (TOLONews): Some residents in the capital complain about the process of registering their SIM cards by telecommunications companies.

Residents of the capital told TOLONews that although their SIM cards had already been registered by these companies, they are forced to visit the companies' representatives again to re-register their SIM cards.

They have requested the authorities address this

issue. "It's a bit of laziness, when we come once, our work is not done. This is the fourth time I have come here to register my SIM card," said Mohammad Ishaq, a resident of Kabul.

"People come here from four in the morning, get on the list and get a ticket, the employees come at seven in the morning and start working. People come from far away and their work is not done," said Rahman,

another resident of Kabul.

This is while the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology has spoken about addressing this issue and has added that it is working to provide more facilities to expedite the SIM card registration process.

Enayatullah Alokozay, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology, told TOLONews: "The Ministry of Communications had a meeting with the officials of the telecommunication companies and told them in this meeting that they should provide facilities to the people and complete this process soon so that people can register their SIM cards."

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology has reported receiving more than 8,000 complaints from citizens and has added that all complaints have been addressed.

Cancer cases increase in Northern Afghanistan



KABUL (TOLONews): A number of doctors at Abu Ali Sina-e-Balkhi Regional and Training Hospital in Mazar-e-Sharif reported an increase in cancer cases in the northern region of the country.

According to the doctors, in the first two months of 1403 (solar year), more than 180 cancer cases have been registered.

"In 1402 (solar year), we registered 785 new patients and provided multiple services to each of them, and in 1403, which is only two months in, we have registered approxi-

mately 180 new patients," said Kifayatullah, a doctor. Ainuddin, 37, who has been suffering from cancer for three years, said he sold everything he had for treatment and now cannot afford his treatment.

"I went to Iran for my illness and underwent four operations there. Our economic capacity was low and the cost of treatment in Iran was high. Then my father and brother said to come to Afghanistan, and somehow it would work out. I came here, got eight vaccines, and my father is covering my expenses. I

have a wife and children. All their expenses are also on my father. I don't know what will happen in the future. I have nothing left," Ainuddin told TOLONews.

A number of patients who have come from different provinces in the north to Abu Ali Sina-e-Balkhi Regional Hospital for treatment said they cannot afford their treatment and are asking for help from the interim government.

"Here, most of the patients collect money from their relatives to get their vaccines. I ask the Islamic Emirate to help these cancer patients with their medicines because we cannot afford to buy these medicines," said Khair Mohammad, a patient.

The deputy director of public health of Balkh spoke about efforts to address the needs of cancer patients and distribute medicines to them for free. Sheikh Mir Saddam, deputy director of public health of Balkh, said: "We



RAWALPINDI: Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan, Jeyhun Bayramov, called on General Syed Asim Munir, Chief of Army Staff, at GHQ.

Zakat funds to be spent on needy, poor: KP CM

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur has directed the quarters concerned to devise a sustainable model to ensure utilization of social security funds in a better, efficient and meaningful manner, with the aim to financially empower the deserving segments of society.

He has decided in principle to arrange a collective marriage programme of 4000 deserving females from across the province and directed the concerned authorities to complete homework in this regard. Under the program, a grant of Rs.0.2 million per girl would be provided from the dowry fund for this purpose, the chief minister added. He was chairing a meeting, held here at Chief Minister's House Peshawar on Friday to discuss the status and utilization of Social Security Funds.

MNA Dr. Amjad Ali Khan, Secretary Social Welfare Nazir Hussain Shah, Special Secretaries to Chief Minister Waqar Ali

Khan, Masood Younis and other relevant officials attended the meeting. The Chief Minister has directed the concerned authorities to collect the actual data of deserving girls from all the districts and to provide quota in proportion to the population of each district, so as to ensure that the decision regarding mass marriage program is implemented in an efficient and transparent manner.

"We need to have an efficient scrutiny mechanism in order to ensure that the only deserving girls are selected for that programme," he said and directed that members of the committees to be formed at Village Council level should be selected purely on merit for this purpose. He made it clear that political recommendations or personal likes and dislikes would not be tolerated in the disbursement of social security funds, adding that in case of any kind of corruption, misuse or fraudulent, concerned authorities would be held accountable.

Each and every penny of Zakat funds must be spent on the wellbeing of needy

and poor people, giving priority to orphans, widows and persons with disabilities," he directed. The chief minister also directed them to provide standard electric wheelchairs to the needy persons with disabilities, adding that the persons already registered with the department, should be given priority in this regard. He further directed to ensure representation of at least three female members in every forum of Zakat Committees.

He on this occasion, agreed to the proposal regarding creation of Philanthropic Contribution Fund, and said that he would The chief minister also directed the authorities concerned to come up with the draft of necessary amendments in the relevant. He further directed the elected public representatives to visit the Panahgahs and other social welfare centers and submit reports of facilities being provided in those centres. "These segments deserve our special attention, and we need to give them a sense of trust and ownership," he concluded.

PHC orders KP to remove MNA name from police report

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Syed Arshad and Justice Waqar Ahmad ordered the provincial government to remove the name of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader and Member of National Assembly (MNA) Shahid Khattak from police report on his plea against enlisting him in the Provisional National Identification List (PNIL), on Friday.

The counsel Alam Khan Adeenzai advocate argued that the petition name was included in the PNIL which had stopped MNA from travelling abroad.

Additional Director Legal Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Abdul Rehman Afridi informed the court that Shahid Khattak's was enlisted in PNIL on a police report. Justice Syed Arshad Ali remarked that the Sunni Ittehad Council (PTI) leading provincial government which has included Shahid Khattak's name in the list, and now it is their responsibility to remove it.

Justice Waqar Ahmed observed that the provincial government should know how to remove a name from the list. PHC directed the provincial government to remove Shahid Khattak's name from the police report and submit a report, after which the FIA will also remove his name from PNIL. Similarly, the bench also disposed of a petition filed by Salim-ur-Rahman, MNA from Swat after removal of his name from PNIL.

SC to hear SIC reserved seats case

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court has constituted a larger bench to hear the case concerning the allocation of reserved seats for the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC). A 13-judge bench, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa, will conduct the proceedings on June 3.

Except for the ailing Justice Musarrat Hilali, all other apex court judges will be part of the bench. Earlier in May, the apex court had suspended the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) decision to allocate SIC's reserved seats to other parties.

Justice Mansoor Ali Shah had, during the proceedings, remarked that the mandate given by the people should be properly represented in parliament. The court had sent the matter of reserved seats to the Judges Committee to decide whether the case would be heard by the same bench or a larger bench would be constituted.

On March 4, the Election Commission of Pakistan had accepted applications of the opposing parties and decided that the seats in the National Assembly and provincial assemblies would not remain vacant and would be allocated by a proportional representation process on the basis of seats won by political parties.

The development resulted in PTI-backed SIC losing a total of 77 reserved seats - 23 National Assembly seats (20 women and 3 minorities), 25 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly seats (21 women and 4 minorities), two Sindh Assembly seats (women) and 27 Punjab Assembly seats (24 women and 3 minorities). The Peshawar High Court had also rejected the petitions filed by the Sunni Ittehad Council for the reserved seats of women and minorities.

Biden urges Hamas to accept latest hostage deal

WASHINGTON (AP): President Joe Biden said Friday that Hamas is "no longer capable" of carrying out another large-scale attack on Israel as he urged Israelis and Hamas to come to a deal to release remaining hostages for an extended ceasefire.

Biden addressed the nearly eight-month Israel-Hamas war as the Israeli military confirmed on Friday that its forces are now operating in central parts of Rafah in its expanding offensive in the southern Gaza city. "This is truly a decisive moment," Biden said as he spoke of a three-phase deal that Israeli officials have offered Hamas.

"Israel has made their proposal. Hamas says it wants a ceasefire. This deal is an opportunity to prove whether they really mean it." Israel launched its war in Gaza after Hamas' Oct. 7 attack in which militants stormed into southern Israel, killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted about 250. Israel says around 100 hostages are still captive in Gaza, along with the bodies of around 30 more.

Ceasefire talks ground to a halt at the beginning of the month after a major push by the US and other mediators to secure a deal, in hopes of averting a planned Israeli invasion of

the southern city of Rafah. The talks were stymied by a central sticking point: Hamas demands guarantees that the war will end and Israeli troops will withdraw from Gaza completely in return for a release of all the hostages, a demand Israel rejects.

Reuters adds: Israel will not agree to any halt in fighting in Gaza that is not part of a deal that includes a return of hostages, a senior Israeli security official said on Friday.

The comment came after a statement from Hamas declaring that it would be ready to reach an agreement including an exchange of hostages for Palestinian prisoners, as long as Israel stopped the fighting in Gaza. "There will be no truce, or any halt in fighting whatsoever, in Gaza which is not part-and-parcel of a hostage-release deal," the official said in comments sent to Reuters. "Any ceasefire would arise solely within the framework of a deal."

Israeli forces have ended combat operations in the Jabalia area of north Gaza after destroying more than 10 kilometers of tunnels during days of intense fighting that included over 200 air strikes, the military said on Friday. At the south end of Gaza, Israeli forces pressing an offensive into Rafah found rocket launchers

and other weapons as well as tunnel shafts built by Hamas in the city center, the army said. Tank-led Israeli troops aim to break up Hamas' fighting formations in the city on the border with Egypt.

In an update on more than two weeks of intense fighting in Jabalia, the Israeli military said troops had completed their operation and withdrawn to prepare for other operations in Gaza. During the operation, troops recovered the bodies of seven of the 250 hostages Hamas-led militants abducted when they stormed over the border into Israel on Oct. 7 last year and killed around 1,200 people, according to Israeli tallies. Since then, over 36,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's air and land war in Gaza, its Hamas-run health ministry says, and much of the densely populated enclave lies in ruins.

In Jabalia, a densely packed urban district populated by refugees from the 1948 war of Israel's founding and their descendants, Hamas turned the "civilian area into a fortified combat compound," the military statement said. It said Israeli troops killed hundreds of militants in close-quarter combat and seized large caches of weaponry and destroyed rocket launchers primed for use.

Pak-Kuwait to sign a loan agreement \$25m in post JMC

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan and Kuwait signed a loan agreement worth US\$ 25 million in the 5th session of the Pakistan-Kuwait Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) convened in Kuwait.

The key outcomes of the session included the agreement to sign a loan agreement for US\$ 25 million on June 3, for the Mohmand Dam, with assurances of support from the Kuwait Fund for engaging the Arab Coordination Group in financing the Diamer Bhasha Dam, according to a press release issued here on Friday.

The 5th Session of the Pakistan-Kuwait Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) convened from May 28th to May 30th, 2024, in Kuwait, marking a significant stride in strengthening the ties between the two nations. Chaired by Mr. Abdul Aleem Khan, Minister for Privatization, and Omar Saud Al-Omar, Minister for Commerce and Industry of the State of Kuwait, the session underscored a shared commitment to enhance collaboration across various sectors.

A high-level delegation from Pakistan, representing key ministries including Economic Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Commerce, overseas Pakistanis and HRD, Interior, Board of Investment, Petroleum Division, and SIFC, engaged in fruitful discussions aimed at fostering mutual prosperity. Ziad Abdullah Al-Najem, undersecretary of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, extended a warm welcome to Pakistan's delegation, highlighting the pivotal role of the session in advancing bilateral relations. Additionally, the Fund expressed its willingness to consider the financing request from the Government of Pakistan for the Kachhi Canal project. During the JMC proceedings, significant strides were made with the signing of Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) and agreements in fields such as industrial cooperation, engineering councils, and the news exchange.

Moreover, consensus was reached to formalize MoUs for collaboration in agriculture, maritime, and ports; avoidance of double taxation; quality and safety standards; and high education commissions. Both sides also agreed to establish Joint Working

Groups (JWGs) to address matters pertaining to trade and investment as well as visa and consular affairs. Abdul Aleem Khan, Federal Minister for Board of Investment, Privatization, and Communication, Pakistan, expressed contentment regarding the convening of the 5th Session of the Pakistan-Kuwait Joint Ministerial Commission and highlighted the focal points of bilateral discussions. Khan underscored the significance of private sector engagement in strengthening economic ties and urged Kuwait to streamline visa procedures for Pakistanis, a crucial step in advancing economic partnership and facilitating meaningful interaction, given Pakistan's abundant pool of skilled professionals in diverse fields. He extended an invitation to Kuwaiti investors to leverage Pakistan's Special Investment Facilitation Council and identified key sectors ripe for investment. The minister commended the positive outcomes, including the establishment of joint working groups and the successful conclusion of memoranda in the fields of industry, engineering, and news exchange.

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Dr Shahzad resigns as anti-polio program head

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Dr Shahzad Baig, the Pakistan Polio Eradication Programme's national coordinator, said he was resigning from his post due to "personal reasons". Dr Baig, who was featured in the list of 100 world leaders in the field of health by Time magazine, himself confirmed the reason behind his resignation to media.

The development was confirmed by Dr Baig a few days after Islamabad decided to hire a government official to head the polio programme. The former national coordinator's resignation comes after he faced severe criticism for the spread of polio in the country with the virus confirmed in at least 153 environmental samples across 39 districts.

So far, three children have been affected by the poliovirus in Pakistan. Earlier on Friday, government officials told media that a bureaucrat will lead the National Emergency Operation Centre (NEOC) for polio after being perturbed by the resurgence of poliovirus across Pakistan in the last two years. "Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has decided to replace the incumbent National Coordinator of the Emergency Operation Centre (EOC), Dr Shahzad Baig, with a government official of BPS 21 or above to lead the operational side of polio eradication initiative following resurgence of poliovirus in recent years," an official of the National Health Services, Regulations, and Coordination (NHSR&C) told the publication.

Meanwhile, the official maintained that Dr Baig could continue as a technical advisor for the polio programme at his discretion, but administrative decisions would now be made by an official appointed by the government. According to the official, the wild poliovirus is spreading rapidly in Pakistan. In 2023, 126 environmental samples tested positive for poliovirus in 28 districts.



ISLAMABAD: A view of smoke rising from a fire erupted at Margalla hills forest near Faisal Mosque.

Govt sets Rs12,900b tax target to meet IMF conditions

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan's federal government is expected to unveil an ambitious tax target of Rs. 12,900 billion for the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) in the forthcoming fiscal year's budget, scheduled for presentation on June 10th.

The sources familiar with the budget reveal that this target represents a significant leap in tax revenue collection, necessitated by the IMF's requirements for financial assistance. The proposed measures to achieve this target are diverse and far-reaching, potentially affecting a wide range of businesses and consumers.

Key among the proposals are increased tax duties on imported goods, which could drive up the prices of these products and impact consumer spending.

Additionally, the government plans to eliminate sales tax exemptions on certain food items, a move likely to strain household budgets. Other significant measures include the expansion of withholding tax applications and the removal of existing sales tax exemptions on unspecified products.

Furthermore, higher customs duty rates are on the table, which could particularly affect industries reliant on imported raw materials and components. The elimination of sales tax exemptions on food items and other products is expected to generate substantial revenue, although it may also lead to increased costs for consumers. Expanding the scope of withholding tax and raising customs duties could similarly contribute to the revenue target but might impact specific sectors and overall economic activity.

While the precise details and final form of these budget proposals remain under wraps, the focus on raising tax revenue underscores Pakistan's commitment to meeting IMF conditions. This strategy is seen as a crucial step towards securing further financial assistance and stabilizing the country's economic situation. As the nation waits for the official budget announcement, businesses and consumers alike are bracing for the potential impacts of these sweeping tax reforms. The success of these measures in achieving the Rs. 12,900 billion target will be critical for Pakistan's financial health and its relationship with the IMF moving forward.

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Houthi claim attack on US aircraft carrier

AL-MUKALLA: Yemen's Houthi militia said on Friday that it fired a salvo of ballistic missiles toward the US aircraft carrier Eisenhower in the Red Sea in revenge for the US and UK airstrikes on Thursday, which it claims killed and injured 58 people.

Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Sarea said that 16 persons were killed and 41 injured in the last wave of US and UK mis-

sile attacks on the Red Sea province of Hodeidah alone on Thursday, which targeted Hodeidah Radio, a coast guard facility on Al-Saleef port. Other US and UK strikes hit the capital Sanaa, Sanaa province, Houthi-controlled sections of Taiz province, and two mansions in Hodeidah owned by former President Ali Abdullah Saleh and former Vice President Ali Mohsen Al-

Ahmer, injuring another person.

"This is an obvious targeting of civilian targets, a flagrant breach of all international law, and a full-fledged war crime," the Houthi spokesperson said in a televised statement. In reprisal for the strikes, Sarea said that its navy and missile forces jointly fired a number of ballistic missiles at the US aircraft carrier. — Aljazeera

Moscow warns West after Ukraine threat

MOSCOW (BBC): Russia has accused Nato and the US of "provoking a new level of tension" after the US and Germany became the latest allies to let Ukraine's military use Western-supplied weapons to strike targets inside Russia.

A Berlin spokesman said Germany was convinced Ukraine had the right to defend itself from Russia, especially from cross-border attacks on its second largest city Kharkiv. US officials said American-supplied weapons could be used to counter Russian fire near the Kharkiv region, either where Russian forces were "hitting them or preparing to hit them".

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky said the decision would help protect civilians living in villages close to the Russian border. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Nato countries, especially the US and several European countries, had "entered a new round of escalating tension and they are doing this deliberately", in remarks quoted by the Tass news agency. "They

are in every possible way provoking Ukraine to continue this senseless war."

Russian forces have made gains in the Kharkiv region in recent weeks after a surprise offensive in the area, close to the border with Russia. The UK and France had already signalled they were open to easing restrictions on Ukraine striking military sites on Russian territory, before US President Joe Biden said on Thursday night that American-supplied weapons could be used.

However a US official told the BBC: "Our policy with respect to prohibiting the use of Army Tactical Missile System [ATACMS] or long-range strikes inside of Russia has not changed."

German government spokesman Steffen Hebestreit said on Friday that Berlin was "jointly convinced" that Ukraine had the right to defend itself from Russian attack. "To do this, it can also use the weapons supplied for this purpose in accordance with its international legal obligations; including those supplied by us," he said.

Germany has not yet given Ukraine its powerful Taurus missiles, whereas the UK has provided Storm Shadow missiles and France has handed over its Scalp cruise missiles. Russia claimed on Friday that it had pushed Ukrainian forces back by up to 9km (6 miles) from the border in the Kharkiv region, adding that it now controlled hills near the village of Lyptsi. Kharkiv is little more than 30km from the Russian border. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken repeated his message from earlier this week, that the US would continue doing what it had done until now, "which is, as necessary, adapt and adjust".

He was speaking to reporters at a meeting of Nato foreign ministers in Prague, where the alliance's Secretary-General, Jens Stoltenberg, welcomed the decision to ease restrictions on Ukraine's use of weapons. Questions have also been raised by Nato allies about the possibility of US-made F-16 warplanes being deployed across the Russian border.