

NA session summoned
ISLAMABAD (PPI): President Asif Ali Zardari has summoned the session of the National Assembly at the Parliament House in Islamabad on Monday at 4:00 pm. The House will discuss issues of national and international importance besides transacting legislative business. The President summoned the session of the National Assembly in exercise of the powers conferred by Article 54(1) of the Constitution of Pakistan.

@thefrontierpost

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

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIXI No. 109 Regd. No. 241 ZIQAAD 03 1445 -- SUNDAY, MAY 12 2024 PESHAWAR EDITION 12 PAGES PRICE. 30



BAGHLAN: Dead bodies of Afghan people are placed on the ground after heavy flooding in northern Afghanistan.

Protesters, police clash in Muzaffarabad; cop killed

F.P. Report

MUZAFFARABAD: A police sub-inspector was killed in clash between protestors and the law enforcers during a strike in Muzaffarabad on Saturday.

A shutter-down and wheel-jam strike was observed in the city, seeking cheaper electricity and flour prices in the region. The strike call was given by People's Action Committee. Heavy contingents of police were deployed on the roads leading to Madina Market. During the clash, a police sub-inspector named Adnan Qureshi sustained bullet wounds and later succumbed to injuries.

Tensions escalated in Muzaffarabad as clashes between protestors and police erupted for the second consecutive day. The protestors, responding to the call by the Joint Awami Action Committee, took to the streets, expressing their anger over heavy police deployment around the planned gathering site at Medina Market.

Incidents of stone-pelting were reported in various areas of the city, including Tonga Stand, Aziz Chowk, and Shah Sultan, as protestors clashed with law enforcement personnel. In response, police fired teargas shells to disperse the crowds. The strike, called by the action committee, resulted in the closure of educational institutions, offices, and businesses across Muzaffarabad, rendering the roads deserted.

Amidst the unrest, allegations of police raids and torture on innocent civilians have surfaced, further exacerbating the volatile situation. A committee member warned that such tactics could fuel more violence among the youth. Deputy Commissioner Nadeem Janjua addressed the media, reporting that 28 individuals were arrested for their involvement in the clashes. He emphasized the government's commitment to maintaining law and order while assuring the public of measures to ensure the safety of lives and properties. The protests stem from demands for cheaper flour and electricity, highlighting underlying grievances within the community. As tensions persist, authorities urge cooperation from the public in identifying troublemakers, while efforts are underway to implement Section 144 and restore normalcy to the region's roads.

Afghanistan floods kill 153, ministry says

SHEIKH JALAL (Reuters): The official death toll from devastating flash floods in northern Afghanistan has risen to 153 people across three provinces, the Taliban's interior ministry said on Saturday, while the World Food Programme said it was double that.

The WFP, which operates throughout Afghanistan, said on X that floods had killed more than 300 people. It did not give a source for its figure. When asked about the WFP figure, a ministry spokesperson said its figure was still 153 - but the authorities have said the death toll could rise. At least 138 people have also been injured in the flooding across northern Baghlan, Takhar and Badakhshan, caused by heavy rains on Friday, the ministry spokesman, Abdul Mateen Qaniee, said. In Karkar village in Baghlan province, residents held funerals for people who had been killed by the floods.

"I lost five members of my family - two sons, two daughters, and their mother in a result of this devastating flash flood," said Gulbudeen, a mourner who provided only one name. "We were standing on the other side of the flood, but we could not help them, and eventually the flood took the lives of our loved ones."

Taliban authorities sent helicopters to try to assist civilians overnight after receiving reports that over 100 people were stranded. Many people had been left homeless and transportation, water and waste systems were "severely disrupted", the World Health Organisation said. "The impact has been profound, leading to loss of life and injuries, with many individuals still unaccounted for," the WHO's Afghanistan office said in a statement late on Friday. It added that four health centres had been damaged and one destroyed by the floods and said the agency was sending health teams to provide treatment in the inundated areas.

Meanwhile, the UN food agency said that flash floods from unusually heavy seasonal rains in Afghanistan have killed more

than 300 people and destroyed over 1,000 houses. The World Food Program said it was distributing fortified biscuits to the survivors of one of the many floods that hit Afghanistan over the last few weeks, mostly the northern province of Baghlan, which bore the brunt of the deluges Friday. In neighboring Takhar province, state-owned media outlets reported the floods killed at least 20 people. Zabiullah Mujahid, the chief spokesman for the Taliban government, posted on the social media platform X that "hundreds ... have succumbed to these calamitous floods, while a substantial number have sustained injuries." Mujahid identified the provinces of Badakhshan, Baghlan, Ghor and Herat as the worst hit. He added that "the extensive devastation" has resulted in "significant financial losses."

He said the government had ordered all available resources mobilized to rescue people, transport the injured and recover the dead. The Taliban Defense Ministry said in a statement Saturday that the country's air force has already begun evacuating people in Baghlan and has rescued a large number of people stuck in flooded areas and transported 100 injured people to military hospitals in the region.

Richard Bennett, UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, said on X that the floods are a stark reminder of Afghanistan's vulnerability to the climate crisis and both immediate aid and long-term planning by the Taliban and international actors are needed. Videos posted on social media showed dozens of people gathered Saturday behind the hospital in Baghlan looking for their loved ones. An official tells them that they should go and start digging graves while their staff are busy with preparing bodies for the burial ceremony. Officials previously said that in April at least 70 people died from heavy rains and flash flooding in the country. About 2,000 homes, three mosques, and four schools were also damaged.

Alvi: PTI founder to prefer imprisonment over 'deal'

F.P. Report

SIALKOT: Responding to allegations of backdoor talks, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader and former president Dr Arif Alvi said on Saturday that the party founder Imran Khan would choose to stay behind bars instead of striking any deal.

Alvi, however, urged for finding a solution to end political disputes among the parties via dialogue. He made the statement while addressing the district bar in Sialkot today. The former president said that he knew the PTI founder for a long time who he said always pri-

oritised the supremacy of the Constitution.

Referring to his meeting with the incarcerated Khan, Alvi said that he questioned the party founder that if they had entered a blind alley but the PTI founder was optimistic about a way out from the prevailing political crisis. The PTI senior leader claimed that he found no signs of fear on Khan's face when he met him in the jail. He added that the PTI founder was given "many offers but he rejected them all".

The jailed former premier insisted that there would be no end to the political uncertainty without

finding a "constitutional" solution, and only option left was holding dialogue, he added. The politico said that "only civilians can rule Pakistan". He termed the formation of the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N)-led coalition government as an "accidental democracy in Pakistan".

Regarding May 9 riots, Alvi claimed that no one should make unilateral decision to hold someone responsible, claiming the PTI has "evidence" of the events. Alvi added that his party welcomed high-level Saudi Arabia's delegates who are scheduled to arrive in Pakistan.

May 12 carnage is a day stained with sorrow: Bilawal

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said that the May 12 carnage is a day stained with sorrow, yet one that serves as a stark reminder of the consequences of political strife and violence.

In a press release issued by the Media Cell Bilawal House, Chairman PPP expressed his heartfelt condolences and paid homage to the Jiyalas, the dedicated workers of PPP, as well as activists from other parties, who either lost their lives or suffered during the tragic events of May 12, 2007. He emphasized their unwavering commitment to democratic ideals and their tireless efforts to advocate for a truly democratic Pakistan, which will be remembered forever.

Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari highlighted the critical importance of learning from past tragedies. He underscored that the pursuit of politics driven by stubbornness, ego, and violence only led to further division and suffering. He noted that history duly accounted for all those involved in such actions, serving as a cautionary tale for future generations.

Furthermore, Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari called upon all political stakeholders to unite with the spirit of harmony and reconciliation. He stressed the imperative of burying the politics of hatred, division, and violence, and instead, embracing a path that led towards a brighter and more prosperous Pakistan. "As we commemorate this solemn anniversary, let us honor the memory of those who sacrificed their lives on May 12, 2007, by renewing our commitment to building a nation founded on principles of peace, tolerance, and democracy," he concluded.

Zardari gets presidential exemption

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: An accountability court in Islamabad has granted President Asif Ali Zardari presidential exemption from the Park Lane and Toshakhana vehicles references.

Judge Nasir Javed Rana, presiding over the court, issued a written verdict, halting the case proceedings against the head of state. The verdict, issued on the basis of a petition filed under Article 248 (2) on behalf of President Zardari, stated that no proceedings could continue against him while he held the position of president. Notably, the prosecution did not oppose the president's petitions, and the court upheld that no case rulings or proceedings could be initiated against the head of state under Article 248 (2) of the constitution. Consequently, President Zardari's petitions for presidential exemption from the cases against him were accepted.

Meanwhile, PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif has also filed a petition against the Toshakhana vehicles reference. The accountability court has scheduled arguments on Nawaz Sharif's petition for May 23 and issued a notice in this regard.

Govt desire to attract UK's investment: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday expressed Pakistan's desire to attract investment from the UK and other countries, highlighting the country's vast potential in diverse areas including agriculture, food security, information technology, tourism, and mining.

He was talking to British High Commissioner to Pakistan Jane Marriott, who called on him at the PM House. The meeting was also attended by Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar and Chief Economist and Director of the Economic and Evaluation Directorate, Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, London, Professor Adnan Khan.

The prime minister said, "Pakistan and the United Kingdom enjoy long-standing relations that are further strengthening with the passage of time." He also emphasized the government's commitment to improving governance structures and introducing institutional reforms. He said that the government was taking measures at the micro and macroeconomic levels to recover the country's economy. Moreover, he said the digitization process of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) was in a final stage. The British delegation felicitated the government's initiative to declare an education emergency in the country and expressed support for Pakistan's recovery efforts.

Shehbaz appreciates National Hockey Team's performance: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday appreciated the outstanding performance of the players of Pakistan National Hockey Team in the Azlan Shah Hockey Cup, 2024, played in Malaysia.

The prime minister said that due to the brilliant performance, the national team reached the final game. "They also played well against Japan in the final. Win and loss are a part of the game. The national team has won the hearts of entire nation." PM Office Media Wing, in a press release, quoted the prime minister as saying.

He further observed that after a long time, the national team had reached the final of a mega tournament which was very encouraging. The prime minister reiterated that the government was taking all steps for the promotion of sports in the country; particularly of the national game of hockey. Japan won the final

position after beating Pakistan in the nail-biting contest through penalty shootouts with a margin of 4-1 that followed the scheduled match which ended in 2-2 draw.

Meanwhile, in an interview with a Saudi TV channel, the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif praised the extraordinary relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, calling it a unique and special bond that has no parallel in the world. He underscored the deep-rooted historical ties between the two nations, spanning centuries. He emphasized that the two nations share a rich history and cultural heritage that spans centuries. The prime minister highlighted the success of the World Economic Forum in Saudi Arabia, where he met with Saudi authorities and agreed to cooperate in various fields, including the training of Saudi Air Force pilots.

He stressed that the two nations are like family and will support each other in times of need. Sharif expressed admiration for Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's accomplishments in the IT sector and expressed Pakistan's interest in leveraging Saudi expertise in this field.

He outlined areas of mutual interest and cooperation, particularly in solar energy investment discussions held during Pakistan's delegation visit to Riyadh. Reflecting on the economic landscape of Pakistan, the premier emphasized the nation's potential for growth, especially in agriculture, and referred to it as "Pakistan Speed."

He credited Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman with transforming Saudi Arabia's landscape and hailed his policies as an inspiration for leaders worldwide. PM Sharif also welcomed the historic opportunity for business communities from both nations to connect, which will drive development and growth in both countries.

Furthermore, he highlighted the historic opportunities arising from increased business interactions between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, facilitated by visits from Saudi officials, including the Foreign Minister. He lauded Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's sincerity in fostering strong relations with Pakistan, emphasizing the mutual benefits derived from such collaboration.

War of words between KP Governor, CM intensify

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The war of words between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Governor Faisal Karim Kundi and KP Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur intensified on Saturday.

"You have nothing to do with politics as you are only holding a constitutional office," CM Gandapur said, while addressing the governor outside a court in Dera Ismail Khan. The

chief minister warned the governor of not sanctioning budget and grant for the Governor House.

"The Governor House is not your property. I can declare it a national heritage and change it into the museum," CM Gandapur said. Even the fuel of governor's official vehicle is dependent on the budget sanctioned by the chief minister, Gandapur added.

Earlier, Governor Kundi had said that he knew very

well how to deal with the people like Gandapur. "The security of Governor House is my responsibility and I'll protect it at any cost," said Kundi. A day earlier, Kundi has said that he would not impose the governor's rule in KP. "I'll not make him a political orphan by imposing the governor's rule," he said. I want to talk about the rights of KP with the centre and the provincial government should support me in this cause, he added.



D I KHAN: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur administering oath to newly elected cabinet of High Court Bar Association D I Khan.

Total receipt estimate for fiscal year 2023-24 is Rs1456.712b: KP CM Advisor

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The total receipt estimate for the fiscal year 2023-24 is Rs 1456.712 billion with a notable increase of 9 percent while the total budget estimates for the fiscal year 2023-24 is Rs 1360.4 billion demonstrating a moderate 2 percent increase as compare to previous financial year, with a surplus of Rs 96.3 billion achieved underscoring prudent fiscal management and economic reforms.

These views were expressed by Advisor to Chief Minister on Finance Muzamil Aslam and Minister Law and Finance Aftab Alam while addressing the post-budget 2023-24 press conference at Civil Secretariat Peshawar here on Saturday. Finance

Secretary Aamir Sultan Tareen and Special Secretary Khuda Baksh were also attended the briefing. Adviser Finance Muzamil Aslam while detailing the current budget estimates for 2023-24 said that the total expenditure is Rs. 1059.3 billion against Rs. 913.8 billion with a 16% increase while total settled districts current budgeted is Rs. 942.4 billion with an increase of 19%.

KP Advisor on Finance explaining the details that among the main features of the ongoing expenditure for the settled districts includes Rs. 1.5 billion for Ehsas Eid package, 0.5 billion rupees for providing shelters, Rs. 2.8 billion for relief measures, 26 billion rupees for Sehat card, 47.8 billion rupees for wheat subsidy, 3.4 bil-

lion rupees for procurement of machinery for police and 6.0 billion rupees for provision of free textbooks.

He said that total Merged Areas current budgeted is Rs. 116.9 against Rs. 124.0 billion showing decrease of 6%. Such as decrease of 0.3 % in Provincial Salary and increase of 23 % of Tehsil Salary, decrease of 17 % in Provincial Non-Salary budgeted and decrease of 9% in Tehsil Non-Salary budgeted and pension expenses have increased by 297% in current fiscal year.

Adviser on Finance Muzamil Aslam, giving details regarding the Development Budget 2023-24, said that total Development budgeted is Rs. 301.1 billion against Rs. 418.2 billion

with decrease of 28% such as settled Provincial ADP of Rs. 86 billion against Rs. 185 billion previous showing decrease of 54%, settled District ADP of Rs. 17 billion with same decrease of 54% are the part of current fiscal year. Mr. Muzamil Aslam said that under the annual development program of the merged districts, 26 billion rupees are included with an increase of 30% against previous 20 billion.

Advisor on Finance Muzamil Aslam said that caretaker government has no mandate to spend the development budget while they released 113 billion rupees in the first four months, 112 billion rupees in the second four months, while the current political government released 86 billion

rupees in current fiscal year. Muzamil Aslam said that the federal government has done an agreement with the IMF to give a surplus of 450 billion rupees Of the whole country, in which Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's share becomes Rs. 96 billion, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has a surplus of 65 billion rupees in 9 months, while Sindh province, which is double of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has only Rs. 77 billion surplus and Punjab which is double of Sindh is only Rs. 150 billion surplus.

KP Adviser on Finance said that electricity bills have bankrupted almost every citizen in Pakistan, while Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is providing cheap electricity to the federal government at Rs 1.1 per unit and the

federal government sells it at Rs 30 to 60 per unit while the Federal Government did not release these funds on time.

Muzamil Aslam said that the federal government provides only 66 billion rupees for the merged districts while only salary expenditure of the merged districts are 96 billion rupees in current fiscal year. In this regard, several letters have been sent to the federal government. During briefing Secretary Finance Aamir Sultan Tareen said that the province has received 101 billion rupees in the last five years under the AIP program which is very less compared to five hundred billion rupees and 101 billion rupees of ADP has also been received.



KARACHI: Chairman Millions Smiles Foundation Zeeshan Afzal given briefing during Fundraising Dinner for Gaza Relief at a local hotel. —APP Photo

Provide glasses, hearing aid to students:

CM Punjab approves project

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif accorded an approval to the project for providing glasses and hearing aids to 700,000 students.

Students in schools across Punjab will be subjected to medical check up of their eyesight and hearing abilities. Students having weak eyesight and weak hearing abilities will be provided with spectacles and hearing aids. The screening process in the government and private schools across Punjab will be launched soon.

A famous institution, ATScale, will provide Rs. 500 million financial assistance in this regard. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Saturday met an ATScale delegation in which matters pertaining to Internet services in schools and other affairs were discussed. Matters relating to steps being undertaken to meet nutritional needs among school children also came under review. Health nutrition and other matters were reviewed and the need for making collaboration with the department concerned was emphasized.

It was agreed to undertake steps for the enhancement of school teachers capacity building. The Chief Minister said a first government school for

children suffering from autism in Punjab will be established in Lahore. "I want to serve the people of Punjab in a true spirit instead of adopting the traditional manner. A positive change is only possible by invoking a new thinking in a modern era. It is the right of every child to attain education according to international standards. A 'Packet Milk Project' is being launched in collaboration with a private sector to meet nutritional deficiencies of the students. We have resumed a free emergency Wi-Fi facility in Lahore," she added.

The ATScale delegation while paying tributes said that the public service vision of CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif is highly praiseworthy. Senator Pervaiz Rasheed, Senior Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Provincial Minister for Education Rana Sikandar Hayat, MPA Nausheen Adnan and others were also present.

German delegation calls on CM: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has said that cooperation between TUV Rheinland and the Punjab government will further solidify mutual relations between Germany and Pakistan. In a meeting with Mr. Benedik Aneselmann, Regional Executive Vice President of TUV

Rheinland Company, Germany, here on Saturday, the CM discusses matters related to the provision of their technical assistance for welfare projects in Punjab, including third party monitoring, project management, certification and auditing of development projects were discussed in the meeting.

The Chief Minister invited them to benefit from rich business opportunities in Punjab. Mr. Benedik Aneselmann assured the Chief Minister of his support for welfare projects in Punjab. It was decided in principle to collaborate for making the monitoring of development projects more effective with the use of modern technology. It was also agreed to provide technical assistance and expertise for the successful completion of projects in Punjab.

Benedik Aneselmann appreciated the vision and dedication of the Chief Minister for the welfare of people in Punjab, and expressed his determination to play a constructive role in this regard. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif appreciated the commitment of TUV Rheinland for providing innovation and sustainable solutions in Punjab. Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Chief Secretary, Chairman P&D and other relevant officers attended the meeting.

PPP Punjab announces party plans

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan People's Party Punjab President Raja Pervaz Ashraf has announced party's strategy for reorganisation in the province.

In a press conference held at the PPP Central Punjab office here on Saturday, he emphasised the importance of meritocracy and pledged to bring forward capable individuals, including women and youth, for key roles within the party.

He said that the reorganisation process aims to strengthen the party's presence from the tehsil to the provincial level within 100 days. He expressed optimism for future elections in Punjab, dismissing perceptions of the PPP's weakness in the province. Additionally, he highlighted the crucial role of Punjab Governor Sardar Salim Haider Malik in fostering economic development and political stability.

He affirmed President Asif Ali Zardari's confidence in Malik's abilities to advance national interests and promote prosperity. The event was attended by several prominent PPP members, signaling a united effort towards revitalizing the party's presence in Punjab.

Parents arrested in killing case

LAHORE (APP): The Virtual Women Police Station has taken swift action in a case of honor killing, arresting the parents of a young girl who was murdered in the Barki area.

A citizen reported the girl's murder to the Virtual Women Police Station without revealing her identity. The girl's family had attempted to hide her murder as a heart attack. However, a female citizen came forward and reported that the girl had been murdered by her own family. The Virtual Women Police Station immediately dispatched police to the scene, who took the body into custody and sent it for a postmortem. The police arrested the parents on suspicion, who later confessed to murdering their own daughter during the investigation.

CM approves additional budget

— 200 more PGs seats for JPMC

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that the budget for Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC) would be enhanced as it has become a 2200-bed facility apart from increasing the seats of graduates (PGs) to cater to its growing needs.

This he said in his meeting with the Executive Director of JPMC Prof. Dr. Shahid Rasool, who called on him here at CM House on Saturday.

The Executive Director Prof. Shahid Rasool gave a detailed briefing to the chief minister and said that the JPMC was a 16-bed

hospital and now it has become 2200-hospital but there was an acute shortage of doctors. The chief minister keeping in view the requirement of the doctors approved additional positions/seats of Prost Graduates (PGs) by 200. After the approval of new 200 PG seats, the number of PGs reached 953.

During the discussion, Murad Shah directed Prof. Shahid Rasool to establish a central warehouse of medicine at JPMC. The provincial government would provide him with additional funds in the ADP. Now JPMC will have a central warehouse shortly.

Prof. Shahid Rasool requested the chief minister to help JPMC construct a parking plaza for which it has considerable space.

The CM approved the request and said the schemes would be included in the ADP.

The CM directed the JPMC chief to further improve services and expand OPD so that more patients could be given to the patients.

He also approved the expansion of the administration block of the JPMC.

The executive director thanked the chief minister for his unflinching support and patronage.

Sindh govt aims to complete Red Line BRT work within 18 months



F.P. Report

Inam Memon on the project.

Speaking at the meeting, Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, mentioned that President Asif Ali Zardari is paying special attention to the Red Line BRT project. Both President Asif Ali Zardari and Chief Minister Sindh Murad Ali Shah want the work on the Red Line BRT to be completed soon.

He emphasized that the Red Line BRT is among the priority projects, and the Sindh government will allocate all necessary resources for its completion.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that the caretaker government did

not pay attention to such a significant public project. Due to the caretaker government's lack of interest, work on the Red Line project was halted for several months.

He mentioned that the Sindh government aims to complete the Red Line BRT work within 18 months, emphasizing its significance. "The Red Line BRT is very important, and we want the people to benefit from it soon," he added.

Sharjeel Inam Memon highlighted that due to inflation and other issues, the beneficial projects for the people are already delayed. He emphasized that they cannot afford any further delays and urged for immediate resolution of all issues related to the Red Line BRT project.

Technology has facilitated human existence: moot told

F.P. Report

KARACHI: A monthly meeting of Hamdard Naunehal Assembly Karachi chapter, organized by Hamdard Foundation Pakistan (HFP), was held yesterday at Bait-ul-Hikmah Auditorium in Madinat al-Hikmah titled: "Is technology the way of progress?" Renowned journalist and author Faizullah Khan was invited as a chief guest. The meeting was presided over by Ms. Sadia President HFP.

Ms. Sadia Rashid in her presidential address said that the significance of technology was undeniable to any rational individual. From education to sports, agriculture to industry, trade to medicine, every aspect of life has been impacted by



modern technology. Undoubtedly, technology has facilitated human existence, yet it has profoundly altered our lifestyle, influencing our culture, conversations, and thoughts.

She further said that without transitioning to digital systems and acquiring proficiency in technology and scientific disciplines, neither can the defense of the country be

ensured nor the survival of the nation. The Internet has revolutionized numerous social spheres, encompassing business, financial transactions, politics, journalism, and education. Embracing modern education is imperative to cultivate an ethical and skilled workforce capable of confronting future challenges. Increased screen time impacts negatively on the

mental and physical well-being of users. Therefore, it is imperative to use technological gadgets only for learning purposes.

She added that Shaheed Hakim Mohammed Said's renowned words, "pursue science to progress," resonate deeply. Pakistan has reached a significant milestone: iCube-Qamar has successfully entered lunar orbit. This achievement is a source of immense pride for our nation, underscoring our commitment to advancement and excellence.

Chief Guest Faizullah Khan praised the young speakers for their command of Urdu words and poetic verses. He attributed the outstanding speeches of the Naunehal speakers to the distinctive platform of Hamdard Naunehal Assembly, where children are encouraged to express their thoughts independently.

This platform was founded by the remarkable and esteemed individual, Shaheed-e-Pakistan Hakim Mohammed Said, to foster the intellectual growth of the nation. Although renowned as a distinguished physician, it was his profound sense of patriotism that distinguished him. Shaheed Hakim Mohammed Said dedicated himself to molding the minds and characters of the new generation, providing unparalleled and exceptional national service.

He also said that Hakim Said initiated the publication of Monthly Hamdard Naunehal, a venture that has enriched multiple generations and endures to the present day. Despite the vast expanse of Urdu literature, there has been a notable absence in children's literature. Even in contemporary times, newspapers, magazines, and journals often lack dedicated sections for children.



پاکستان ایئر فورس بیس کے اطراف فلائنگ زون میں کبوتر بازی پر پابندی

پاک فضائیہ قوم کا سرمایہ افتخار ہے جو کہ پاکستان کی فضائی حدود کی حفاظت کے لیے ہر وقت دشمن کے دانت کھٹے کرنے کے لیے تیار ہے۔ پاک فضائیہ کے اثاثہ جات خصوصاً جہازوں کی قیمت اربوں روپے ہے جبکہ جہاز کی فلائنگ کے دوران پرندہ نکرانے سے نہ صرف جہاز تباہ ہو سکتا ہے بلکہ جہاز کے پائلٹ کی جان کو خطرہ بھی ہو سکتا ہے۔ اس کے ساتھ ساتھ آبادی پر جہاز کے گرنے سے بھاری جانی و مالی نقصان ہو سکتا ہے۔

حکومت پاکستان کے فیصلے کے مطابق ہوائی اڈوں کے اطراف میں کبوتر بازی، کبوتر رکھنے، اڑانے اور کبوتر کے بیچرے اور بانس چھتوں پہ رکھنے پر فوری طور پر پابندی عائد کی گئی ہے۔

آپ کو مطلع کیا جاتا ہے کہ آج کے بعد اس فیصلے کی خلاف ورزی کرنے پر کریمنل ایکٹ کے تحت سخت قانونی کارروائی کی جائے گی۔



آپ کے تعاون کے متنی
ڈائریکٹوریٹ آف فلائٹ سیفٹی
پاکستان ایئر فورس



TENDER NOTICE

Sealed Tender is required to the undersigned for the Supply of Feeding Charges for Govt: Horses of FRP HQrs: Peshawar for the financial year 2024-25.

Detail of feeding Charges are as under:-

- Dry crashed Maize (Jujar - without water) 9.072 KG and green gram 22 KG per Horse.
- Crushed gram 1.361 KG
- Chokar 1.134 KG
- Duly thrashed gram (Dalya) 2.040 KG
- Salt 0.028 KG
- Hayrick 1.361KG
- Iron Clip for the legs per horse once in a month (Quantity 4 No's)
- Hair cutting per horse once in a year.

Cost estimate approximately Rs. 9,000,000/-

Conditions:

- Every item of the ration shall be mentioned separately
- Grinding machine will be the property of their or bidder
- The following documents duly attested must be attached with the tender
 - Income Tax Certificate with CNIC photocopy
 - Five years experience Certificate of Feeding Supply for horses with any Govt: Department.
- Tender of the above must reach to this office on 05-06-2023 before at 11:00 which will be opened in the presence of the Bidder on the same day at 02:00 pm. The agreement duration will be up to 30-06-2025.
- Call Deposit 4% should be attached with the Tender in the name of Commandant FRP HQrs: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Peshawar
- If the Bidder refused from the given amount mentioned in the tender, will be consider black list and his Advance payment/Call deposit would be stand confiscated.
- The only low rates cannot be reviewed, but the experience of Tender owner and the financial stability and previous performance will be considered
- Taxes if any should be deducted from Ration, Nalbandi and Hair Cutting under the existence rules.
- Contractor must be registered with the Income Tax, Sale Tax Department, In case of Consulting Work, Services & non consulting Services registration with (KPRA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Revenue Authority is required where applicable, and there license must be renewed.
- Tender form alongwith specification can be obtained from this office on any working day.

(Asif Bahadar) PSP
Deputy Commandant,
For Commandant,
Frontier Reserve Police,
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Peshawar.

IN(P) 907/24

Operationalization of Azhakhel Dry port stressed to increase imports, exports

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chairman Standing Committee of Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) on Dry port, Zia ul Haq Sarhadi has stressed upon the government to make Azhakhel Dry port operational for increasing imports and exports of the country.

Due to its suitable location, operationalization of Azhakhel dry port can play a very effective role in creation of large scale livelihood opportunities through promotion of Pak-Afghan trade and increase in commercial activities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa because of its proximity to CPEC route,

Zia opined.

In a press statement issued here on Saturday, Zia ul Haq Sarhadi who also holds the designation of Coordinator Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI) said the Azakhel dry port had been constructed at a cost of Rs. 600 million with the objective of promotion of trade in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He said Khyber Pakhtubkhwa has been blessed with precious resources including gems, marble, honey, tobacco, match, furniture, carpet.

If these resources are properly projected in international markets and businessmen are given some

incentives, the economic predicament of the country can be resolved to a larger extent.

He said the businessmen of KP are exporting these items but due to lack of cargo train at Azkhakhel dry port are facing much difficulties in sending of goods to Karachi sea ports.

At time of inauguration of Azhakhel dry port, the business community was assured that apart from modern facilities, one window service would also be provided and a special cargo train between Karachi and Peshawar be launched.

The promise of special cargo train is still not fulfilled despite passage of

several years, Zia laments.

Coordinator Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry also demanded early completion of phase II of CPEC and ML-1 Railway so that the business community could reap the benefits of these mega projects.

The ML-1 is inevitable for improvement of communication links and for commercial activities in the country, he stressed.

The Azha Khel dry port can serve as game changer in economic development of the country due to its proximity with Peshawar Motorway, Rashakai Industrial Zone and Bacha Khan International Airport, Zia reiterated.



PESHAWAR: Advisor to Chief Minister on Finance Muzamil Aslam and Minister Law & Finance Aftab Alam addressing a press conference regarding budget.

Air pollution causes by marble factories irked residents

PESHAWAR (APP): Engulfed by thick air pollution mostly caused by an unchecked marble factories, the Warsak Road residents, who were exposed to serious health hazards here Saturday demanded of the KP government to order for its shifting to the Mohmand Marble City.

Cutting large slabs of marble and granite in different sizes to fulfill the customers placed orders, the labourers in most factories work without safety measures, thus exposing themselves to serious ailments including the fatal chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases.

The air pollution could be seen even with a naked eyes while going from Warsak Road to Michani Mohmand tribal district from where large marble slabs are being transported to these marble factories mostly operating without recycling opratus.

“The air pollution has increased on Warsak Road’s areas due to unplanned marble factories in last few years that needed to be checked by the relevant government departments including Environmental Protection Agency (EPA),” said Farhat Ameen, a resident of Warsak Road Peshawar.

She said the unplanned and mushroom growth of marble factories in high populated area of Peshawar had resulted in ecological issues in the vicinity besides causing air, water and land pollution.

The marble liquid waste emanating from these factories have started polluting water channels in the area that is also posing serious threats to aquatic species besides causing environmental and water degradation.

Farhat claimed that milky slush discharged from marble factories drains into water bodies and irrigation channels without treatment.

Marble factories are not only swallowing agricultural lands but effluents discharged from these units without treatment are contaminating the remaining lands and water channels and its shifting should be given top priority,” she said.

“I have established a marble and granite processing unit eight years with an estimated cost of Rs27 million and its shifting and operationalization at Mohmand Marble City would cost additional Rs20 million that was beyond of his financial power,” said a marble factory owner Ali

Khan at Warsak Road Seeking Govt patronage and assistance to promote marable and granite business,

He claimed that inter provincial businessmen were preferring Warsak road factories rather than Mohmand district due to security reasons.

More than 400 marble and granite factories are currently functioning along both sides of Warsak Road. Each factory has capacity to process approximately 20,000 square feet marble per month amid uninterrupted and poor power supply.

“Air pollution mostly caused by marbles and bricklins may leads to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) that could prove fatal,” said senior chest and medical specialist of Govt hospital

world countries including Pakistan.

Kharay Bibi (70), a resident of Pabbi Nowshera district, who was brought in precarious condition at Lady Reading Hospital due to shortness of breath, had lost battle for life after she was diagnosed with COPD.

“My mother was busy at breakfast when she suddenly fell down and became unconscious. We rushed her to Lady Reading Hospital Peshawar where she was diagnosed with 4th stage of COPD and malaria positive that later proved fatal for her life,” said Shageef Bibi, the daughter of the victim while talking to APP.

Battling for life for nearly 15 days at LRH, Kharay Bibi alias Hussan Zadagai spent her last days at different wards including emergency, acute medical unit (AMU) and pulmonary

treat flare-ups while oxygen was mandatory for people who have severe COPD.

He said most people linked COPD with asthma and used wrong medicines that complicated treatment of the former at a later stage.

“The estimated prevalence of COPD and asthma mostly caused by toxic air are about 2.1% and 4.3% respectively in third world countries including Pakistan,” Dr Riaz said, adding existing care at public health facilities at tehsil and districts level needs to be improved both in coverage and quality for facilitation of patients.

He said nearly 90% of COPD deaths in those under 70 years of age occur in low- and middle income countries due to unhealthy lifestyle and air pollution.



Pabbi, Dr Riaz Khan.

He said COPD is a common lung disease, which restricts airflow by causing severe breathing problems of a patient due to air and household pollution.

The incurable disease first damages patient’s lungs or clogged with phlegm with persistent cough, severe difficulty in breathing, wheezing and tiredness.

“COPD is the third leading cause of death in the world that claimed about 3.23 million lives in 2019 globally,” he said, adding approximately 148,512 people died from the killer disease in 2020, making it the sixth overall leading cause of mortality rate behind heart, cancer, COVID-19, accidents, and stroke.

In Pakistan, he said about 138.2 per one lakh males and 41.3 per 100,000 among females die due to COPD and Asthma related diseases. In mild to moderate COPD, most deaths occur due to cardiovascular disease and lung cancer, but as COPD severity increases, respiratory deaths also increase mostly in third

wards unconscious and finally left the mortal world on the fateful day of September 6, 2023.

“The doctors tried to save my mother’s life but the cruel COPD caused by pollution deprived me from beloved mother forever,” she said while tears rolling down her face.

“COPD is not curable but its symptoms could be improved by avoiding smoking, exposure to air pollution and vaccination to prevent such fatal infections through better medication, oxygen and pulmonary rehabilitation. If COPD is diagnosed at an early stage, a patient could easily live for 10 to 20 years after diagnosis,” said Dr Riaz.

He said several treatments are available for its patients including inhaling of medicines that open and reduce swelling in airways, adding bronchodilator inhalers was the most important medicine for its treatment as it keeps the airways open for a longer time.

The steroid pills and antibiotics are often used to

Tobacco smoking accounts for over 70% of cases in high income countries while in lower middle income countries tobacco smoking contributes for 30 to 40% of cases where household air pollution is a major risk factor.

The experts underscored the need to check the overall condition of marble factories, health of vehicles plying on roads, and demanded a ban on smoke emitting transport in big cities like Peshawar to eradicate ENT, Chest and COPD.

Similarly, brick kilns operating in the surrounding of Peshawar and stone crushing marble factories on Warsak Road should be shifted to Mohmand Marble City. The experts urged the media and civil society to create awareness among masses against air pollution and fatal disease.

They urged writers, columnists and feature writers besides digital media to continuously write and prepare videos against air pollution for education of the masses.

Appointment of Pro-VC of Bannu varsity canceled

PESHAWAR (APP): The appointment of Pro Vice Chancellor of Bannu University was canceled after one day the Higher Education Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa withdrew the recent appointment of Dr. Aurangzeb.

In this connection, the Higher Education Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has issued notification for the appointment of Pro-Chancellor in four universities on Friday, last. However, Prof. Dr. Aurangzeb, who was included in the notification, has been de-notified from the post of Pro-Vice-Chancellor in the University of Science and

Technology, Bannu. Soon after the appointment, Dr. Aurangzeb also took charge of this post.

The declaration was withdrawn by the Higher Education Department soon after on the complaint of an MPA, an official of the HED, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa said, on the condition of not to be named.

Earlier, the provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has appointed pro-vice chancellors for four government universities and the temporary charge of vice chancellor of three universities has been transferred to other officers through a notification issued on Friday, last.

Professor Dr. Jahanzeb of the Department of Psychology has been appointed as the Pro-Chancellor of Peshawar University, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Tahir has been made the Pro-Chancellor of Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan, Maqsood Haider has been appointed Vice-Chancellor

of FATA University and Prof. Dr. Aurangzeb Khan as Vice-Chancellor of University of Science and Technology Bannu.

The additional charge of the Vice Chancellor of the University of Chitral has been assigned to the Vice Chancellor of Shaheed Benazir Women University, Sheringal, the notification said.

The additional charge of Vice Chancellor of Mardan Women’s University has been assigned to Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, Vice Chancellor of Peshawar Women’s University.

The additional charge of the Vice Chancellor of the University of Engineering and Applied Sciences regarding the Vice Chancellor of the University of Engineering and Technology Peshawar, the notification said.

The additional charge of Vice Chancellor of Mardan Women’s University has been assigned to Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, Vice Chancellor of Peshawar Women’s University.

Promotion, transferred in C&W Dept KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The Department of Administrative Affairs Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Saturday promoted and transferred the Superintendent Engineers of Grade-19 to the posts of Chief Engineers in Grade-20 on permanent basis, said a notification issued here.

Chief Engineer Jalaluddin Mehsud has been posted as Principal Design Engineer (R&B) Chief Engineer (CDO) C&W Peshawar as Chief Engineer North C&W Swat. Engineer Muhammad Ali posted on deputation in the Education Department to Chief Engineer (Foreign Aid) C&W Peshawar.

Superintendent (Headquarters) Office Chief Engineer (Maintenance) C&W Peshawar Engineer Mansoor Qadir has been posted as Chief Engineer (DTL) Office Chief Engineer (Centre) C&W Peshawar.

Chief Engineer North C&W Swat Naveed Iqbal appointed Chief Engineer (Foreign Aid) C&W Peshawar. Superintendent Engineer C&W Circle Peshawar Engineer Nursaheb Khan has been posted as Chief Engineer One C&W Peshawar. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Department of Administrative Affairs has issued a notification in this connection.

One killed due to old enmity

PESHAWAR (APP): A person was killed in Safid Deri, Peshawar’s Pishtakhara area when five 5 people poured petrol on a person named Mohammad Ishaq and set him on fire, Police said here Saturday.

Ishaq was shifted to Hayatabad Medical Complex Hospital Burn Unit, where he succumbed to his injuries, Police said. Police have started a search operation to arrest the five accused who set Ishaq on fire. The previous enmity between the two sides was still going on, Police confirmed.

The incident took place late last night while the injured person died at 5:20 am in the early morning, Police said.

Teacher injured due to fan falling

PESHAWAR (APP): A fan fell in a classroom at Government Girls Primary School Choghhalpura, school with a teacher third grade and received critical head injuries, an official of the Rescue 1122 said here on Saturday.

According to detail, a ceiling fan suddenly fell on the head of a class teacher who was teaching in the third grade at Government Girls Primary School Choghhalpura and her head was hit by a falling fan, resulting in the cutting of her ear as well as critical head injuries.

Soon after the incident, fear and panic spread among the students due to the fall of the fan. The school building was built in 1916 and was in dilapidated condition with the walls about to collapse, other teachers told media men during a visit.

The injured teacher was shifted to the hospital, informed the department about the incident, SDEO Shamim Akhtar told media men. Shamim Akhtar accepted that the school building is in dilapidated condition and a summary has already been sent for speedy renovation.

Alumni Association meeting to held today

PESHAWAR (APP): Alumni Association of University of Agriculture Peshawar to organize a grand gathering today (Sunday).

A large number of university graduates from all over the country will participate.

On this occasion registration for association will be done from former students.

Alumni Association is an integral part of universities whose establishment is aimed at the welfare of the institution and development and stability along with solving the problems faced by it.

The meeting will also decide on the establishment of an endowment fund and regular data collection of alumni of the institution who graduated from the country and abroad.

These gatherings will act as a bridge between the University of Agriculture Peshawar and its graduates.

Vice Chancellor of Agricultural University Peshawar Professor Dr. Jahan Bakht will specially attend the Alumni Association meeting.

Collective efforts vital to eradicate drugs addiction, lungs cancer

PESHAWAR (APP): Naimat Ullah (54), an employee of Wapda was living a blissful life unless he became a victim of lung cancer apparently caused by an excessive use of narcotics since his teenage.

“We were busy in breakfast when suddenly my ‘papa jan’ started omitting with bleeding and was rushed to government hospital Pabbi where he was declared a suspect of lung cancer and referred him to Lady Reading Hospital Peshawar for further diagnosis,” said Saddam Khan, son of the narcotics victim while talking to APP.

“After preliminary radiology and CT scan, it was confirmed by the doctors that lung cancer has badly affected both lungs of my father and declared him untreatable.

Later, my papa left us forever within four months after diagnosis of the killer disease,” said Saddam while tears rolled down his cheeks.

“The excessive use of hashish deprived us of a loving father who has a great desire to see me and my elder brother as doctor and electrical engineer,” he said, although he could not materialize his dream but his brother fulfilled his wish and became an electrical engineer who is currently serving Wapda,” he said.

“My father started hashish in deep shock after losing his younger brother in road accident and continued it in anxiety and frustration that was later proved fatal,” he said, adding normally he used three hashish cigarettes and later increases to five cigarettes “just a few months before his death.

Professor Dr Ziaullah Khan, Incharge Medical Ward, Lady Reading Hospital said that all those patients whose bloods were polluted by life-threatening drugs including heroin or hashish were prone to lung and throat cancers.

Lung cancer is a lead-

ing cause of cancer-related deaths in Pakistan, accounting for approximately 10 per cent of all cancer cases, Dr Ziaullah said incidence of such cancer is particularly high among smokers men, with a rate of 11.2 per 100,000 populations as compared to 2.7 per 100,000 population among women.

“The excessive use of tobaccos including cigarettes and narcotics contrabands increase risks for lung cancers and it was seen that most of rehabilitated victims restart it unless properly looked after by their families,” he maintained.

“The drug patients often complain about stomach pain, diarrhoea, cholera, sleeplessness, weakness and starting water from eyes and ears besides depression, anxiety, panic attacks”, Dr Zia said.

“Even educated women and men associated with different professions take drugs through injections while many use tablets

and once developed pains in the kidney consult doctors.

Such patients were prone to lose kidneys besides becoming victims of HIV AIDs, TB and Hepatitis C. Most of ice abusers were youth and students of colleges and universities and two to one month are required for rehabilitation of ice addicts after admission,” he added.

The treatment of drug addicts was expensive and around Rs50,000 to Rs 200,000 per patient was being spent to recover, he said.

“Globally, there are great concerns about polio and HIV AIDs but no serious efforts took place to eradicate the menace of drug addiction and its illicit trafficking affecting about 35 million people worldwide every year,” he said.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) report revealed that about 271 million people aged 15-64 used drugs in 2017, which

is 30pc higher of people that took drugs substances in 2009 while some 35 million people suffered from drugs disorders at global level and only one out of seven drugs patients received medical treatment.

Globally, around 11 million people injected drugs in 2017 of whom, 1.4 million become victims of the killer HIV AIDs and 5.6 million of hepatitis C.

The opioids drug users stand at 53.4 million, which is 56 percent higher than the previous year estimate and is responsible for two-third of 585,000 people who died due to drugs addiction in 2017.

Uninterested for their future and families, dozens of drugs addicts can be seen laying mostly unconscious near railway track at Faqirabad, under Gul Bahar flyover on GT, bridge at Central Jail Peshawar, Tehkal and Karkhano market after they were apparently abandoned by the society.

Alarmed by an increasing number of drug addicts, the provincial government and various organizations have waged a war against drug addiction to rehabilitate its victims and sensitize people about the perils of social evil.

But it is welcoming and promising that provincial authorities and welfare organizations are not oblivious to the situation and relentlessly endeavoring for betterment of addicts and to provide them room to adjust and become a respectable part of the society.

“Waging war against drugs is not meant to merely rehabilitate addicts but it should be taken with a broad perspective to provide them hope and ample chances to earn respectable livelihood and become useful part of society”, said Syed Ali Naqi, Deputy Manager Dost Welfare Foundation.

Dr Amjad Khan, Incharge Social Welfare Department’s Drugs and Treatment

Rehabilitation Centre (DTRC), Peshawar said that approximately 6.7 million people aged 15-64 suffered from drug addiction in Pakistan.

About 78 percent male and 22 percent female were diagnosed of taking various types of drugs including opium, cocaine, heroines, ice, medicated and non medicated and injectable drugs.

In KP, he said the numbers of drugs addicts had risen to 1.6 million people including 78 percent male and 22pc female during 2013.

Professor Dr Irum Irshad, former Chairperson Psychology Department, University of Peshawar said that relapsing is a major problem that emanates from the indifference and discouraging attitude of society towards rehabilitated addicts, who often face contempt of people living around them.

She opined community mobilization and changing the mindset of people to support drug

addicts, would help in giving them confidence of having social support and courage to survive with self-esteem.

Dr Amjad said that 11 detox units and drugs rehabilitation centres including Mardan, Peshawar, Nowshera, Charsadda, Kohat, Karak, Swabi, Swat, Malakabd and DI Khan districts were established for treatment and psychological services to such patients.

Detoxification and rehabilitation centres were set up in 12 districts of the province while a model such centre was established at Lakki Marwat.

He said the numbers of beds at DTRC would be increased from existing 120 to 500.

Four pronged strategy was adopted focusing on supply reduction, controlling illicit drugs trafficking, treatment and rehabilitation measures besides enhancing cooperation with national institutions and enforcement agencies to win fight against drugs.



In brief

Two killed in Khyber firing F.P. Report

KHYBER: At least two people were killed and three others injured in firing of armed men over personal enmity here on Saturday. According to details, the culprits sprayed bullets at rival in Murad Dand area of district Khyber of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Two people were killed in the firing while three others sustained bullet wounds. The attackers fled the scene. The bodies and injured were shifted to hospital for medico-legal formalities and police after registering a case against accused involved in firing started raids to arrest the culprits.

One commit suicide in Buner F.P. Report

BUNER: In the remote Chaghorzai tehsel of Buner district, a young man namely Shah Hassan has allegedly hanged himself dead with Cheer tree out side home in Pukhtnu Mira Chghorzai. His dead body hanging with a Cheer tree in nearby forest on Saturday. According to the details shared by the local sources, Shah Hassan, a resident of Pakhtnu Mira after exchange of hot words with elder brother had left home late evening on Friday. The family members started searching for him next morning and found his dead body hanging with a Cheer tree in the near by forest. The heirs brought the body down from the tree branch and brought it home. According to local sources, the cause of Shah Hassan's alleged suicide is being said to be the result of a repeated quarrel with his brother. According to the sources, the local police arrived at the murder scene, registered the case and started investigation to unearth whether he had committed suicide or killed.

Mother, daughter killed in Swabi F.P. Report

SWABI: Mother and daughter were killed by firing by rivals on Jalsai Road here on Saturday, police said. According to details, Mukhtiar Ali lodged report in Chota Lahor Police Station that his wife and daughter were on way to home of their relative when their rivals including Tariq Basit, Haris and Rabnawaz shot them. The reason behind the killing was stated to be an old enmity arisen over a domestic issue relating to women. Case has been registered and investigation has been started to arrest the culprits.

Couple shot dead in Malakand F.P. Report

MALAKAND: Unidentified armed men gunned two people including husband and wife here on Saturday and escaped the scene. Unknown culprits sprayed bullets at a couple in Bazai area of Malakand. As a result of firing, the couple was killed on the spot and assailants fled the scene. The bodies were shifted to hospital for post-mortem. Police said that the incident seems to be outcome of personal enmity. However, a case has been registered against unidentified attackers and investigations were underway.

Three killed

JHANG (INP): At least three people were killed and three others injured due to debacle in Urs of Hazrat Shah Jeevana Latham Imram on Saturday. A sudden rain created chaos among the people attending the events on the occasion of Urs of Hazrat Shah Jeevana in Jhang.



HARIPUR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Higher Education, Archives and Libraries Meena Khan Afridi in a group photo with the participants during 3rd convocation of University of Haripur.

College Professors Convention held

Anees Takar

MARDAN: Professors from Government Colleges across Mardan Division, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Professor Lecturer Association (KPPLA) members from various regions gathered on May 11, 2024 at the historic Govt Post Graduate College (GPGC), Mardan for the "Voice of Professors Convention".

The KPPLA Election 2024. It was organized by KPPLA Mardan Division. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Professor Lecturer Association (KPPLA) Convention held at Govt Post Graduate College (GPGC) Mardan on May 11, 2024, was a significant event attended by professors and educators from government colleges across Mardan Division, along with KPPLA members from different parts of the province.

The convention began with a keynote address by Mardan Division President KPPLA, Professor Hayat Shah, from Govt College Takht Bhai. Professor Jamshed Khan from Govt College Peshawar was announced as a candidate for the President position in the upcoming KPPLA Elections. Muhammad Saqib, the KPPLA Finance Secretary, was also declared as a candidate for the General Secretary seat.



Speakers applauded the successful struggle of professors led by KPPLA President Jamshed Khan to oppose and defeat the previous Govt policy of the Board of Governors and the privatization of government colleges under pressure from International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Several key issues were addressed during the convention. Speakers vehemently rejected the government's plans, particularly under pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), to end pensions and increase the retirement age for professors. They applauded the ongoing struggle led by Jamshed Khan and KPPLA team for timely promotion and training of govt college professors.

The speakers emphasized the government's responsibility to prioritize education and allocate adequate funds for higher education. They urged college professors to stand united in the face of these challenges. Additionally, full

support was pledged to the All Government Employees Grand Alliance (AGEGA) and their charter of demands.

A critical issue highlighted during the convention was the illegal occupation of GPGC Mardan by Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan (AWKUM). Speakers stressed the importance of democratic elections within their association and warned the government of potential province-wide protests if the issues faced by professors were not addressed promptly. Jamshed Khan praised the organizing committee of the event and thanked the professors of Govt Post Graduate College Mardan for their warm reception and hospitality. In conclusion, the KPPLA Convention at GPGC Mardan served as a platform for professors and educators to voice their concerns and unite in their efforts to safeguard their rights and the future of education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The speakers emphasized the government's responsibility to prioritize education and allocate adequate funds for higher education. They urged college professors to stand united in the face of these challenges. Additionally, full

Dir traders observe shutter down strike

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The traders and labourers' organization on Saturday announced a complete shutter down strike on May 14 against the government for its plan to impose income tax and custom act in the tax-free Malakand division from July 1st. The announcement was made during a joint meeting held at the Timergara Rest house with president Anjum Tajir Tajir Timergara Haji Anwarud Din in the chair.

The district and tehsil heads of petroleum association, vehicle bargain association, hairdressers, chemists and druggists and hotel association attended the meeting. Speaking on the occasion Haji Anwarud Din, Liaq Zada, Dost Rehman, Mian Ali Jan, Ibrahim Khan, Aminullah and others said that according to a constitutional provision the region had been declared tax-free zone for 100 years since the merger of Dir, Swat and Chitral former states. They said the caretaker prime minister Nasirul Mulk had also rectified the provision during his tenure.

The speakers said the region was affected by militancy, flash floods, earthquakes and military operations in the past. They said the region had remained backward as compared to other parts of the country. They said the government had planned to impose income tax, professional tax and custom act in the region from July 1st which would be strongly resisted. The meeting decided to observe a complete shutter down

Newly elected tehsil chairman takes oath of office in Dir F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The newly elected tehsil chairman Balambat Shakir Shuiab took the oath of office during a function held at the district assembly hall here on Saturday. The deputy commissioner Wasil Khan administered the oath.

The Pakistan Tahreek Insaf MNA Muhammad Bashir Khan, special assistant to chief minister on population welfare Malik Liaqat Ali, MPA Azam Khan, additional assistant commissioner Tariq Khan, PTI's village council chairmen and area elders were also in attendance.

Earlier the tehsil chairman was taken to the hall in a workers' procession. Speaking on the occasion MNA Bashir Khan, MPA Azam Khan and others said the PTI candidate had defeated the candidate backed by five political parties in the by-election that proved that masses stood behind the PTI. They said the PTI had launched its campaign for the release of Imran Khan and he would soon be released. The speakers said the PTI lawmakers would fully support the Balambat tehsil chairman in development.

Child found dead: A 5-year old child Muhammad Saad s/o Salahud Din, a resident of Tiknai Bala village in Adenzai was found dead in a deep well here on Saturday. The child went missing from his home the other day. The Rescue 1122 emergency team pulled out the body from the 110 feet deep and narrow well at Tiknai Bala in the jurisdiction of Ouch police station. Police registered a case and started further investigations.

strike on May 14 across the district and hold a protest rally at Timergara which would also be attended by local lawmakers.

Hospital development: Special assistant to chief minister on population welfare MPA Malik Liaqat Ali has said that the government is paying special attention to the health and education sectors. He was addressing a function after inaugurating construction work at the Category C hospital Lal Qila in Maidan as chief guest here the other day.

The lawmaker said the

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government was providing basic health facilities in the backward areas to bring them at par with developed areas. The project will cost Rs 450 million. The district health officer and director public health services Dr Irshad Ali Rughani, MNA Muhammad Bashir Khan and others also spoke.

Dr Irshad said that work on the construction of a modern medical complex with the support of the government of Saudi Arabia at a cost of Rs 600 million was in progress and it would be completed soon.

KP govt to integrate cyber security into university curricula F.P. Report

HARIPUR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Higher Education, Archives and Libraries Meena Khan Afridi on Saturday emphasized the government's commitment to prioritizing higher education in the province. He said the Government aims to integrate cyber security and artificial intelligence into university curricula to empower the youth and enhance their societal significance.

These sentiments were articulated during the third convocation of Haripur University, where students were awarded Associate Degrees in various disciplines, including BS, M.Phil and Ph.D. Afridi, alongside University Vice Chancellor Shafiqur Rahman and MPA Malik Adeel Iqbal, encouraged students to utilize their acquired skills for the advancement of their province and country.

He underscored the government's dedication to enhancing the higher education sector in line with the vision of the Chief Minister. Additionally, Afridi addressed financial challenges faced by some universities in the region, highlighting Haripur University's commendable self-sufficiency. He assured that the issue regarding agricultural land for research purposes at Haripur University will be promptly addressed through the provincial cabinet.

Free medical camp held in Hyderabad F.P. Report

HYDERABAD: In a remarkable display of community spirit and medical expertise, Aga Khan Hospital, Hyderabad, in collaboration with the Hyderabad Municipal Corporation, organized a highly successful free health camp at the Hyderabad Club. The event, held to commemorate Mother's Day, brought together a team of esteemed medical professionals and civic leaders to provide vital health services to the local population. The event was formally inaugurated by Mayor Hyderabad Kashif Hussain Shoro.

The health camp offered a wide range of medical consultations, including Women's Health, Children's Health, Heart Health, Eye Care, Endocrinology, Internal Medicine, and Physiotherapy. Additionally, complimentary services such as ECGs, blood sugar tests, and eye examinations were provided to enhance access to quality care for the patients.

The event witnessed an impressive turnout, with approximately 300 patients benefiting from the medical services. The camp was made possible through the dedication and expertise of renowned medical professionals, including Dr. Nigar Jabeen, Dr. Qamarunnisa Mohabbat Khan, Dr. Atiya Unar, Dr. Hefarmani Lohana, Dr. Sofia, Dr. Gulshad, Dr. Muhammad Shafique Bughio, Dr. Muhammad Saleem, Dr. Abeer Memon, Dr. Rizwan Channa, and Dr. Raheel Shaikh, among others.

KP Governor vows work together for betterment of KP

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Governor Faisal Karim Kundi has said he would rather work for the betterment of the province than indulge in any political confrontation.

He stated this while addressing a public gathering held here at the residence of MNA Naima Malik to welcome him to his home town after being appointed governor. He said that all-out efforts would be made to improve the province, and everyone would be taken on board for the purpose.

Kundi said he himself went to all the political leadership in the KP to ask them to work collectively

for the betterment of the province. He said the doors of Governor House and his home would always be opened to the people, as serving the masses was their motive.

Responding to KP Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur's statement regarding the possibility of Governor Rule in the province, he said that his political opponents were worried about their own incompetence, which is why they were spreading rumors about Governor Rule. He told Gandapur, "You have become the chief minister and now serve the people and work for their welfare."

He also warned KP chief minister Ali Amin

Gandapur against 'eyeing' Governor House, saying, "He knows the way to safeguard Governor House." "If you try to occupy the Governor House, come and try it, but you will be dragged through the streets," he warned. "I wanted to play a role as a bridge between the province and the federation, as we have to deliver masses," he vowed. The gathering was also addressed by MNA Sardar Fateh Ullah Khan Miankhel, MPA Ahmad Kundi, MPA Ehsan Ullah Khan Miankhel, PPP Tehsil Mayors Humayun Miankhel, Fakhar Ullah Miankhel, and PPP Youth's Muhammad Rehan, among others.

Muqam pledges swift development for G-B

F.P. Report

GILGIT: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs & Gilgit-Baltistan and SAFRON, Engr. Amir Muqam, vowed on Saturday to fast-track development projects in Gilgit-Baltistan, harness the region's mineral resources, and prioritize its progress.

Addressing the media alongside former Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan, Hafiz Hafeez-ur-Rehman, and Member National Assembly MNA from Kohistan, Muhammad Idrees, at local hotel in Gilgit, he expressed appreciation for the warm reception in Gilgit-Baltistan. He pledged to increase the capacity of the Hanzel Hydropower Project to 40 MW as a significant step towards the region's progress.

Underlining the tourism prospects of Gilgit-Baltistan, he emphasized its status as a prime tourist destination. Directives have been issued to the Chief Secretary and other officials to expedite ongoing development projects. Expressing concern over frequent flight



cancellations causing inconvenience to the populace, he announced plans to request the Prime Minister for the deployment of C-130 aircraft. Initiatives are in progress to secure constitutional rights for the people of Gilgit-Baltistan, including the appointment of judges to the Supreme Appellate Tribunals.

Traders involved in Pakistan-China trade will receive support and have their concerns addressed. He commended the people of Gilgit-Baltistan for not participating in the conspiracy to disrespect the martyrs on May 9, 2023, stating that such abhorrent acts could not be committed by true patriots.

He emphasized the nation's admiration for its armed forces and assured that those responsible for the events of May 9 would face consequences. Responding to a query, he affirmed his respect for all workers who recognize former Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif as their leader, emphasizing unity among PML-N members.

Earlier, Engr. Amir Muqam, accompanied by Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Gulbar Khan, in a meeting, agreed on the importance of improving coordination between the Gilgit-Baltistan government and the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan.

Focus on to provide maximum relief to farmers

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has issued special directions to take result-oriented measures to provide maximum relief to farmers and focus on wheat procurement from farmers and to address growers' grievances on priority basis.

This was stated by Federal Additional Secretary National Food Security and Research Waqas Ali Mehmood while talking to media at Hafizabad, on Friday during visit of PASSCO Wheat Procurement Centres. He reviewed arrangements made by the PASSCO and district administration to ensure purchase of wheat from farmers at the centres on merit and transparently.

Waqas Ali Mehmood

said that Prime Minister has enhanced target of wheat purchase of 1450000 bags to 2100000 bags and now PASSCO would continue procurement of wheat according to new target of 2100000 bags.

He also listened problems of farmers and issued directions to concerned officers to address all complaints of farmers earliest. While giving briefing to the Additional Secretary, DC Sundas Irshad told that 'bardana' (empty bags) are being provided to farmers on merit and wheat was being purchased in transparent manner after checking land ownership record of farmers.

Meanwhile, there is need hard to raise awareness among public for prevention of Thalassemia and patients suffering from

Thalassemia deserve special attention from society as they require regular blood transfusions, which is a painful process whereas genetic testing before marriage can prevent Thalassemia and donating blood can help Thalassemia patients.

These views were expensed by Pattern-in-Chief of Sundas Foundation Hafizabad Col. (R) Ali Ahmad Awan while addressing a seminar held at Press Club Hafizabad. Press Club Hafizabad arranged blood donation camp and took out awareness walk. People belongs to different segments of society including prominent social worker Abdul Jabbar Raza Ansary, Amjid Pervaiz Chathab participated seminar and walk.

Ex-Khasadar, Levies force seek rights

F.P. Report

JAMRUD: Former FATA Khasadar and Levies force demanded of the Chief Justice of Pakistan, President, Prime Minister, Army Chief, Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to bestow on them their rights, guaranteed by the law in a protest sit-in held at Bab-e-Khyber, Jamrud district Khyber on Saturday.

Under the banner of All FATA ex-Khasadar and Levies Force Committee, a protest camp was organized that was attended by scores of former Khasadar and Levies personnel. Speaking on the occasion office bearers of the committee including Said Jalal Wazir, Jahangir Afridi, Wazir Khan, Ayaz Khan and others said that the Khasadar and Levies had rendered matchless sacrifices in the line of duty, however no importance was given after



merging.

Stop injustice to the former force they added and asked for materializing of promises made during the Apex committee moot. They maintained that the FATA Khasadar and Levies had been legally merged into the police force of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa therefore all incentives being enjoyed by the KP police should be granted to them.

It was not an issue of the job of thirty five thousand forces but a matter of thousands of families affiliated with them, they regretted.

They went on that the former Khasadar and Levies persons comprised educated persons that could deal with challenges of the modern era.

They asked for provision of their Constitutional rights and said the Army was the granter during the pledge made to them therefore the former should play its due role to settle the matter. They threatened that if in near future their 22 points demands were not accepted then they would formulate a future strategy for continuous agitation.



Sunday, May 12, 2024



ST. PETERSBURG: Emergency responders work to recover victims of a bus crash in this Russia city.

Poland's PM vows to boost security at border

WARSAW (AP): Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk on Saturday traveled to the country's border with Belarus, which is also the European Union's external border with the autocratic state, and pledged to do more to strengthen security along its entire eastern frontier.

Tusk accused Belarus, Russia's ally, of intensifying what he called a "hybrid war" against the West by encouraging migrants to try to cross into the EU. He vowed that Poland would spare no expense on its border security. "I know that there are more and more illegal crossings every day," Tusk told reporters at the border, where he met with Polish army soldiers, border guard officers and police. He also cited "the growing threat resulting from the Russian-Ukrainian war, Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the uncertain geopolitical situation."

The visit to the border, Tusk's first since he took office in December, comes after a Polish judge defected to Belarus this month. He claimed he was facing

persecution in Poland, a democracy, but officials have denounced him as a traitor and he is being investigated on suspicion of espionage. Tusk replaced a national conservative party at odds with the EU over rule of law issues. That party, Law and Justice, took a strong stance against migration in a way that set it at odds with other European allies when it first took power in 2015.

Since then, though, the general mood against migration across Europe has toughened. While Tusk does not use some of the harsh anti-migrant rhetoric of his predecessors, he too is opposed to unregulated migration. "This is not only Poland's internal border, but also the border of the European Union. Therefore, I have no doubt that all of Europe will have to — and I know that — invest in its security by investing in Poland's eastern border and in the security of our border," Tusk said.

He added that he made a declaration to the commanders of the security forces at the border "there

are no limits on resources when it comes to Poland's security." The visit comes weeks ahead of next month's elections for the European Parliament, and Tusk seemed intent on sending a message to voters that his political party, Civic Coalition, favors border security and supports the uniformed officers there.

"I came today primarily so that both commanders and their subordinates have no doubt that the Polish state and the Polish government are with them in every situation, here at the border," he said. A crisis erupted along the EU's eastern border with Belarus in 2021 when large numbers of migrants from the Middle East and Africa began arriving there. The EU accused Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko of encouraging the migration to destabilize the EU after it imposed sanctions on the country for an election widely viewed as fraudulent. Poland's previous government responded to the crisis by constructing a tall steel wall.

Bus plunges off a bridge in Russian city, killing 7

ST. PETERSBURG (AP): A bus veered off a bridge and plunged into a river in St. Petersburg, Russia's second-largest city, killing seven people, officials said.

The Investigative Committee, Russia's top criminal investigations body, reported the death toll. It did not state how many others were injured, but the emergency ministry earlier said that six people removed from the bus were in critical or serious condition. Russian news reports said there were 15 people on the city bus when it broke through a barrier and plunged into the Moika River in central St. Petersburg. Six of those who were onboard climbed out of the water on their own.

A surveillance video released by the Russian media showed the bus driving fast, making a sharp turn onto the bridge and colliding with another vehicle before breaking through the barrier and falling into the water. Authorities in St. Petersburg said that the owner of the bus had been fined 23 times for various violations. Private companies run most of the city's bus services. The bus driver was detained by police. His wife was quoted by Russian media as saying that managers forced him to work a morning shift after working for 20 hours the previous day and getting virtually no rest. Authorities opened a criminal investigation into alleged traffic violations and unsafe travel services.

Xi leaves Hungary

BUDAPEST (AP): Chinese President Xi Jinping left Hungary, concluding a tour of three European nations meant to reinforce China's growing influence on the continent. Xi's plane took off from Budapest airport, after five days in Europe that began with a visit to France and then Serbia.

Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said on the social platform X that Xi had concluded his three-day state visit to Hungary, the last stop on his Europe visit, hailing the development of the two nations' "strategic partnership."

Kenyans feel devastated by floods and brutalized by govt's response

NAIROBI (AP): Winnie Makinda, 35, says she is facing the worst crisis and lowest moment of her life because of the Kenyan government's response to floods that devastated her poor community in the capital of Nairobi. The floods and mudslides swept away people and inundated homes, killing at least 267 people and impacting more than 380,000, according to government statistics. The floods are fueled by unusually heavy rainfall during Kenya's rainy season which starts in March and sometimes extends up to June. Hardest hit are people living close to rivers, including the Mathare River running through Nairobi.

In order to save lives in the future, the government last week ordered evacuations and the demolition of structures and buildings that had been built illegally within 30 meters of river banks. Officials say at least 181,000 people have been moved since last week and that measures have been taken to provide temporary shelter, food and other essentials. But the demolitions have only led to more suffering as those affected say they are being carried out in a chaotic and inhumane way. At least three people have died in the past week when bulldozers brought down structures on top of them, according to rights groups, family members of the deceased and residents who spoke to The Associated Press.

Among those killed was Makinda's 17-year-old Ian Otieno, who was crushed to death when an excavator brought down a wall of the Pentecostal Evangelistic Fellowship of Africa church while he was inside helping save property. "The driver of the excavator refused to listen to the pleas by the women that there were children inside the church," Makinda said amid sobs.

Otieno was the only one of her eight children attending school and he carried the family's hopes for a better future. A single parent of four sons and four daughters, Makinda faces forceful eviction this week from the \$15-a-month tin shack she calls home in Kenya's populous Mathare slums. One of her children is suffering from sickle cell anemia that often

leaves her bed-ridden and in need of costly treatment and her youngest needs frequent medical attention after being scalded by boiling water around the torso.

Overwhelmed by her situation Makinda tried to jump into the raging waters of the Mathare River to "end the stress." Luckily, her neighbors stopped her and calmed her by giving her a local moonshine called "Changaa" popular in rural and low-income areas of the capital. Makinda makes \$2 day washing other peoples clothes and says she can barely afford one proper meal a day for her children let alone pay hospital bills. And now she has to raise money for her son's burial, a costly exercise for most people in western Kenya, and move to a new house.

"My son's body is lying in the mortuary without preservation because I have not paid. I cannot even afford transportation to the morgue," she said. Like hundreds of poor Kenyans whose houses are being demolished, Makinda feels betrayed and abandoned by the government. Some say they were evicted without the legally recommended three-month notice period that should be given before action is taken.

They also say they have not received the \$75 in aid to look for alternative accommodation that President William Ruto has pledged. Millicent Otondo, 48, a mother of three, lost both her home and her 20-year-old business during this week's demolition.

The caretaker of a five-story building that was brought down, Otondo recounted how engineers marked the building housing her shop and home for demolition, which prompted people to break into it and steal her entire stock. "I am really bitter because police stood by as people looted my belongings," Otondo said from a local primary school where she has received temporary shelter. Otondo says she has not received the \$75 and even if she did, it wouldn't cover her rent and is a drop in a bucket compared to the \$6,000 in losses from her property that was looted. She also wondered why the building was demolished despite having been

found not to be in within 30 meters off the river bank.

The government has defended itself against opposition accusations it was ill-prepared for the impact of the floods despite early warnings.

"The magnitude of the weather extremes we are facing, I don't think anyone would be prepared for the weather extremes we are seeing," Environment Cabinet Secretary Soipan Tuyu said in an interview with local broadcaster Citizen TV. "Some parts of this country have never seen floods before." Experts say the devastating rains are a result of a mix of factors, including the country's seasonal weather patterns, human-caused climate change as well as natural weather phenomena.

However, observers point out that the government received early warnings of the floods from the metrological department in October. "This is hypocrisy, and insensitivity of the highest order," said rights activist Boniface Mwangi. "The government knew the floods were coming, and even set aside 10 billion (\$76 million) to prepare a nationwide response. What happened to those funds?"

He said the government also abdicated its responsibility by allowing the building of houses on land near rivers and swamps. "Greed is the reason people are dying. Corrupt civil servants approved, and issued title deeds for riparian lands," he said. And amid the death and destruction caused by floods, the government is demolishing houses in the name of bringing development through a government affordable housing program, he said.

"Demolishing people's homes in the name of affordable housing is a sign that we have a tone deaf government. People living in shanties can't afford to pay for houses costing millions. Their entire life's wages can't buy any of the houses the government is building," Mwangi said. But it is the bulldozing of people's homes during a rainy season that he calls the most inhumane. "Why would you kick someone out of their home in this season?" Mwangi asked. "Poor people have been violated by the weather, and brutalized by their government."

Brazil floods drive thousands from their homes

PORTO ALEGRE (BBC): "When I left for work, I could still get through the water-logged street with my car. By the afternoon, the army was rescuing people with a truck," says Porto Alegre resident Magda Moura. That was the day that the floods which have devastated parts of southern Brazil cut off the building she lived in.

"By, the water had reached [a height of] 1.7m (5ft 6in)," she recalls. The 45-year-old physiotherapist is one of 408,100 people who have been displaced by floods triggered by torrential rain in the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul. At least 116 people have died across the state and, with many towns still cut off by the flood waters, hopes of finding the more than 140 people who are still missing are dwindling.

Much of the state capital, Porto Alegre, has been plunged into darkness by the flood, which has damaged power and water treatment plants, also leaving most residents without drinking water. Magda, 45, and her husband, 49-year-old Angelo Tarouco, spent two days rescuing neighbours cut off by the flood waters which surrounded their high-rise buildings. "Of all the occupants of the towers, only a young couple remained on the premises," she says.

The couple told her that they had enough provisions to last them for a week but with food and water scarce

in the city she cannot help but worry about them. About 70,000 people are living in temporary shelters. Roselaine da Silva is one of them. She is staying in an evangelical church with her three children, one of whom has autism. Their two dogs are with them, but she says she's had to leave her two cats behind in her flooded Sarandi neighbourhood. "I didn't know the water would take over like this," she says, her voice choked with emotion. "I've cried so much, blaming myself for leaving them in what I thought was a safe place."

In her makeshift bedroom in the church, Roselaine - surrounded by donated clothes and other displaced families - says she has found some comfort in the support of strangers who have opened their doors to those in need. In the northern zone of the city, the evangelical church has become a lifeline for dozens of families like Roselaine's huddled in the halls. They too have lost everything to the floodwaters, their homes submerged, their possessions destroyed.

Pastor Dari Pereira, overwhelmed by the influx of displaced people, says he is doing his best to provide for everyone's needs. "We offer four meals a day, hot showers, medical and psychological assistance," he explains, his voice weary but determined. "But the demand keeps growing, and we ran out of space. We now

have to relocate people to other shelters."

He believes it is important to offer shelter not only to people but also to their pets, adding that it is crucial for families' emotional healing. "We didn't separate people from animals because separating them would take away everything they had," he says. "Today the vet said these animals could not stay inside because of the risk of transmitting diseases. But the school across the street has given us the gymnasium so we can build a kennel and a cattery."

While some volunteers stockpile water, others sort donated clothes by size, and part of the team distributes the dozens of hot meals that have just arrived, also as donations. Given the extent of the devastation, Marcelo Dutra da Silva, professor of ecology at the Federal University of Rio Grande (FURG), says that this time the public response needs to change radically. "It's no use trying to rebuild everything that was destroyed in this current event trying to make it as it was before. That doesn't work any more."

According to Mr Dutra da Silva, the reconstruction of Rio Grande do Sul will need to be planned by taking into consideration which areas are safer and more resistant to extreme climate variations and which are here to stay. "Entire cities will have to change location," he says.

On 2nd anniversary of Abu Akleh killing, press advocates push for justice

WASHINGTON: In 214 days, Israel has killed 142 journalists in Gaza, approximately one every 36 hours. The staggering death toll makes the war the deadliest conflict for journalists in modern history. But activists say the case of renowned Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, a United States citizen, underscores the fact that Israel has been killing journalists with impunity long before the current war.

Saturday marks the second anniversary of her death after she was shot by Israeli forces while reporting in the occupied West Bank on May 11, 2022. The lack of accountability in her killing helped pave the way for the rampant Israeli abuses taking place in Gaza, said Youssef Munayyer, head of the Palestine/Israel Program at the Arab Center Washington DC.

"What we have seen Israel do in terms of killing a record number of journalists in Gaza is directly connected to the lack of accountability for Shireen," Munayyer told Al Jazeera. "If you can kill an American citizen, who was among the highest profile journalists in the Arab world, on camera and get away with it, that sends a very clear message about what's permissible." Dressed in a blue vest marked with the word "press", Abu Akleh was killed while covering an Israeli raid in Jenin, a city in the northern part of the West Bank.

Initially, then-Israeli Prime

Minister Naftali Bennett falsely accused Palestinian fighters of shooting her — an allegation that was quickly disproven by independent reports. Immediately after Abu Akleh's shooting, the administration of US President Joe Biden called for accountability, saying that "those responsible for Shireen's killing should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law". But Washington shifted its position after Israel admitted that its soldiers killed Abu Akleh and dismissed the incident as an accident, refusing to open a criminal investigation. By September 2022, the US dropped its demand that the perpetrators be prosecuted.

Accountability, officials said, could instead be accomplished by Israel changing its rules of engagement — a demand that was openly rejected by Israeli leaders. Washington has also rejected calls for an independent probe into the incident, arguing that Israel has functioning institutions capable of investigating the case. But Palestinian rights advocates have long said that Israel rarely prosecutes its own soldiers for abuses and should not be trusted to investigate itself. To Munayyer, the Biden administration paved the way for Israel to allow the killing to fade into the background.

"It really sent a very dangerous message and, I think, contributed to an open season on Palestinian journalists in Gaza," Munayyer said.

Even when Al Jazeera referred the Abu Akleh case to the International Criminal Court for investigation, the US publicly opposed the court's involvement, reiterating its stance that Israel should take up the matter itself. The Biden administration also failed to condemn the Israeli assault on Abu Akleh's funeral in Jerusalem, wherein armed officers beat her pallbearers with batons. With no meaningful accountability for the killing of Abu Akleh, Israeli attacks on press freedom — and Al Jazeera specifically — have worsened with the outbreak of its war in Gaza.

In January, for instance, an Israeli drone targeted an Al Jazeera crew in Khan Younis, a city in the southern Gaza Strip. Israeli forces then prevented medics from reaching cameraman Samer Abudaqa, who was wounded in the strike. Abudaqa, who was described by his colleagues as fearless, hard-working and joyful, eventually bled to death. The network's Gaza bureau chief Wael Dahdoudh was injured in the same attack. Israel also has killed several members of Dahdoudh's family, including his son Hamza, a journalist who contributed to Al Jazeera.

Earlier this month, Israel — which has blocked foreign journalists from entering Gaza — banned Al Jazeera from operating and broadcasting within its borders. That decision prompted an outcry from some US politicians, for whom Abu Akleh's

death signalled a trend of attacks against press freedom. "Two years ago, Israeli forces assassinated American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh and then brutally attacked her funeral," US Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib told Al Jazeera in an email this week. "Since then, the Biden Administration failed to hold the Israeli government accountable and let them operate with complete impunity. Now, the Israeli apartheid regime has shut down Al Jazeera's coverage to stop the world from seeing their war crimes."

"I will continue to demand justice for Shireen and every journalist killed by the Israeli government." Reporters Without Borders, known by its French acronym RSF, called the killing of Abu Akleh a "chapter in the story of Israel's relentless attack on the Al Jazeera channel". It also decried the persistent "impunity" for killing journalists, including in the ongoing Gaza war. "This pattern endangers the lives of journalists throughout the world and the public's right to free, independent and pluralistic information," Jonathan Dagher, head of RSF's Middle East desk, said in a statement.

The Biden administration, meanwhile, expressed "concern" earlier this month over the Al Jazeera ban. But Munayyer said toothless criticism is often ignored by Israeli leaders. "The Israelis do not care that the

United States is concerned. They don't take those words seriously," he said. "And the only time that we've seen any shifts in Israeli behaviour — particularly over the last seven months — was when serious consequences were threatened." Israel receives at least \$3.8bn in US military aid annually, and Biden approved \$14bn in additional aid to the country last month despite a growing outcry about the war in Gaza, which has killed nearly 35,000 Palestinians.

Abu Akleh's family has pushed the US to pursue accountability in her death, by meeting with legislators and officials and speaking out about the issue. "The past two years feel like it went by very fast, but unfortunately two years later and we still don't have justice, we still don't have accountability," Lina Abu Akleh, the slain journalist's niece, said at an event in Washington, DC, this week. "The US administration has failed our family, has failed Shireen, an American citizen and journalist, a female journalist."

Late in 2022, several news reports indicated that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) had opened its own probe into the incident. But the Justice Department, which oversees the bureau, declined to confirm that such an investigation exists. "The last thing we know is that the FBI opened an investigation just a few months after Shireen was killed, but we still

don't know where that investigation is heading towards." We haven't received any updates," the younger Abu Akleh said. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) urged transparency from the FBI about the supposed probe.

"It is time to break Israel's longstanding impunity in journalist killings, which have only multiplied in the Israel-Gaza war," CPJ programme director Carlos Martinez de la Serna said in a statement. "The FBI needs to disclose a timeline for the conclusion of its investigation, and Israel must cooperate with the FBI probe and any future ICC probe." Last year, on the first anniversary of Abu Akleh's killing, the CPJ released a report detailing how Israeli forces killed 20 journalists in the two decades prior, in what it called a "pattern".

"No one has ever been charged or held accountable for these deaths," it said. That pattern of impunity appears to have intensified with the war on Gaza. But advocates say they will continue to push for justice for Abu Akleh, particularly as the number of Israel violations against press freedom grows. "We're not going to forget. And an important reason we're not going to forget is because the consequences of these failures to achieve accountability for the killing of Shireen are on display in Gaza every day," Munayyer said. — Aljazeera

The Frontier Post

Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

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

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

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

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

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

Hungary, China working together

THE 'welcome home' greeting Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban extended to visiting Chinese President Xi Jinping upon his arrival at Budapest Airport on Wednesday night highlights the friendly relations between the two nations. In his signed article published on Wednesday in the Hungarian newspaper Magyar Nemzet, President Xi wrote: "Our bilateral relationship is at its best in history, and has embarked on a golden voyage."

That China and Hungary are good friends and good partners with deep mutual trust is not incidental. Hungary was one of the first countries to recognize and establish diplomatic relations with China in 1949. Together, the two countries have set a fine example of building a new type of international relations featuring mutual respect, fairness, justice and win-win cooperation. The bilateral relationship has since been developing steadily with tangible results, and was elevated to a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2017.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of diplomatic ties between the two countries. It is expected that Xi's visit, the second in 15 years, will not only witness the deepening of the traditional friendship toward a bilateral community with a shared future, with a series of economic and trade cooperation projects and cultural exchange programs to be unveiled under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative and other mechanisms. Hungary is a top investment destination for Chinese investment in the European Union, as well as its important trading partner in Central and Eastern Europe, with their bilateral cooperation being strong, fruitful and dynamic.

China is pursuing high-quality development and promoting high-standard opening-up. Hungary on its part is also making every effort to advance its development. To further tap into their complementarity, the two countries need to forge greater synergy between their development strategies and strive to make new achievements in practical cooperation so as to accelerate the construction of the Budapest-Belgrade railway link and other significant cooperation projects. The two countries have great potential and space to strengthen their cooperation in clean energy, artificial intelligence, the digital economy, green development and other areas.

China highly appreciates Hungary upholding its strategic autonomy on the world stage as well as within the EU. Sound China-Hungary ties are conducive to keeping the relationship between China and Central and Eastern Europe as well as the overall China-Europe ties advancing in the right direction. China and Hungary have similar views and positions on international and regional situations. By remaining committed to solidarity and collaboration, Beijing and Budapest can jointly champion true multilateralism and promote peace and development. The two countries should advocate for an equal and orderly multipolar world and inclusive economic globalization that benefits all. It is to be hoped that no matter how the international landscape evolves, China and Hungary will always view and approach the bilateral relationship from a broad perspective and with a long-term view.

Urgent air defense lessons

IT was barely a month ago that Iran attacked Israel with 170 drones, 110 ballistic missiles and 30 cruise missiles. This nighttime barrage was remarkable not only for its scope but also for the fact that it represented the first direct Iranian attack on Israel from the Islamic republic's own territory. Even more impressive, though, was the allied response: No Iranian weapons hit their targets in Israel, many having been shot down before even reaching Israeli airspace. This saved lives, set the stage for de-escalation between Israel and Iran — and illuminated new realities about 21st-century air defense. The United States would be wise to incorporate the lessons into its own military planning.

The defense of Israel was a truly multinational and joint operation, mounted by several countries from air, land and sea. Pilots from Israel, the United States, Britain, France and Jordan worked together to down scores of Iranian drones and missiles. Two US Navy destroyers intercepted unmanned aerial vehicles and at least six ballistic missiles. Ground-based defense systems, including the Patriot and the Israeli systems Arrow, David's Sling and Iron Dome — all developed jointly with the United States — intercepted nearly all the rest, Israeli and US officials say.

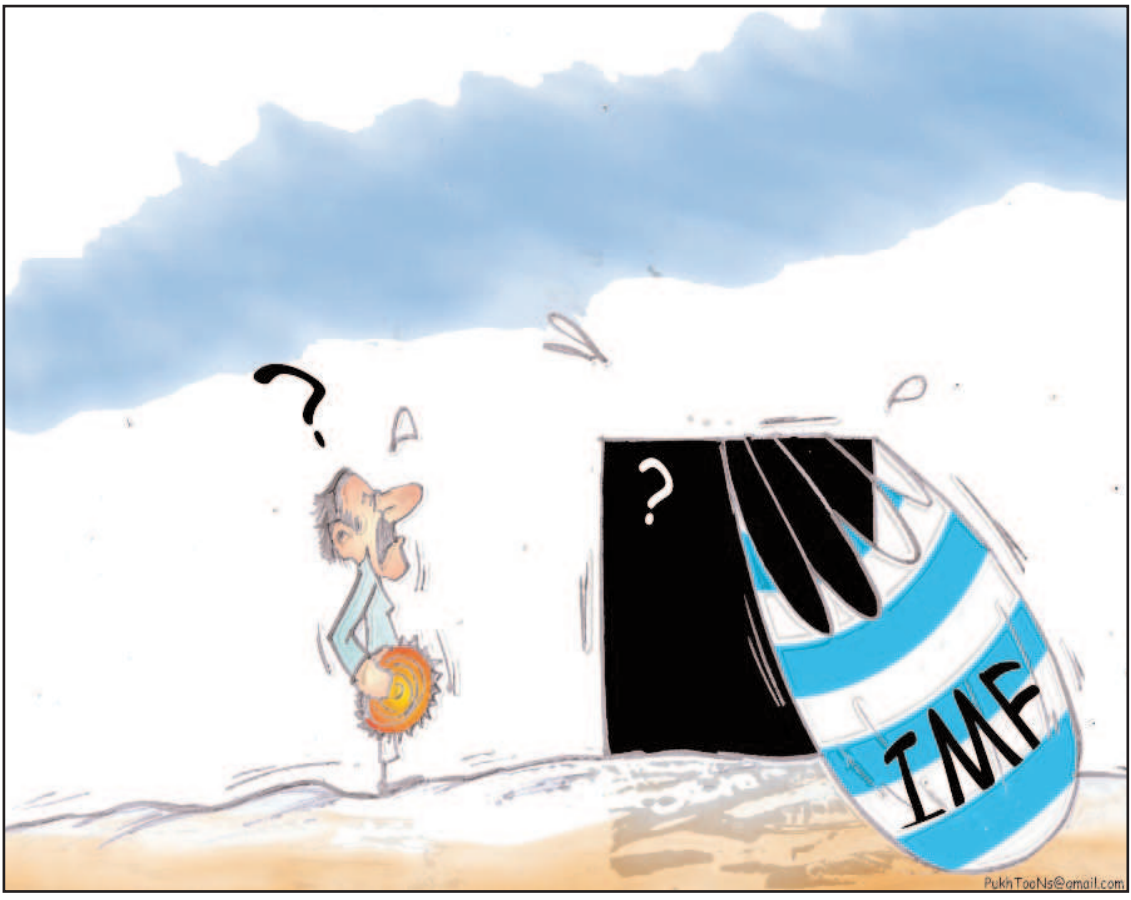
To be sure, there was an element of good fortune: Iran's attack was not the worst-case scenario, which would have been an outright surprise attack. For days ahead of the attack, Iran had been promising retaliation for a deadly Israeli strike on an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps headquarters in Syria. This gave Israel and governments aligned with it time to move ships, launchers and aircraft into position. The Iranians did not deploy their most sophisticated drones and missiles, and many failed in flight or never launched at all.

The Defense Department is trying to improve. The Army has set up a two-week training "school" at Fort Sill, where officers put soldiers, sailors and Marines deployed to overseas bases and ships through basics of air defense. One drill involves arraying soldiers on a firing range and then unleashing swarms of drones on their positions. Troops from US international security partners have visited to share their knowledge and learn from our forces. It's the kind of training that should be replicated elsewhere in the military.

Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks was smart to launch the Replicator program last year, dedicating \$500 million to develop and manufacture cheap offensive drones for the battlefield. This week, the Pentagon announced its first Replicator order: Switchblade, a loitering munition made in California and already in use in Ukraine. Now, the Pentagon needs a similar approach for air defense. Too many different agencies, running too many different programs, are developing sensors, networks and counter-drone systems. The Pentagon's Joint Counter-small Unmanned Aircraft Systems Office lacks the authority and funds it needs to keep the individual services from thinking only about protecting their own forces. Ms. Hicks and her boss, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, should seize on the fresh experience of thwarting Iran's attack to change that. It is time to identify the best systems and get them into the field for testing. The United States and its allies can't count on a week's warning before the next big drone attack.

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.



It is time to seek justice for environmental war crimes

Margot Wallström & Mary Robinson

WAR is horrific for people, communities and nations. The abuses they suffer demand our immediate attention, compassion and action. While some violations are clear and there are mechanisms and institutions to investigate them and offer recourse, others are not so apparent. One example of the latter is environmental war crimes.

We are only beginning to understand the full extent of wars' impact on air, water and the natural environment; on soils and agriculture; on energy and water infrastructure; and ultimately, on public health and safety. The challenge is that much of this cannot be easily seen and has not yet been sufficiently studied, and it is likely that the victims of this less visible side of war may be far greater in number than imagined.

Where there are crumbled buildings, there may be deadly asbestos and silica dust dispersed into the air. Where there are landmines and unexploded ordnance, or damaged industrial sites, there may be leaks of heavy metals and other potent pollutants, some of which last for generations. Where lakes and farm fields are poisoned, food security suffers.

Today's international law already includes tools to prosecute war crimes that do disproportionate damage to the environment, but prosecutions for such crimes have been rare in either local or international courts. Reparations for this damage has also been far too limited, with claims in international tribunals meeting evidentiary roadblocks.

There are some positive signs that this could change. The UN General Assembly brought attention to this issue in an important resolution in 2022 on the protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts, which notes the responsibility of states to provide full reparations for environmental damage due to wrongful acts in war. On March 1, the UN Environment Assembly passed a consensus resolution that called for better data collection on the environmental damage associated with armed conflict.

The prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Karim Khan, also recently announced that his

office is developing a comprehensive policy on environmental crimes, with a firm commitment to advance accountability for these crimes. A real challenge is to track environmental damage even while a conflict is under way. But this is essential in order to protect public health and take urgent measures to limit damage, such as stop-

On top of this, one-third of Ukraine's territory is now suspected to be contaminated with landmines or unexploded ordnance, surpassing any other country in the world, according to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. We have been part of an effort to bring these environmental concerns to the world's attention by joining a bold initiative by the president of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

ping active leaks of deadly pollutants into rivers or farmland. Documenting the damage is also important in order to ensure full reparations are eventually paid, as is required if it is caused by illegal acts of war, and so that individual perpetrators can be held to account.

An important contribution in this area is emerging in Ukraine. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has had a terrible impact on the natural environment. Ukraine is a country with impressive biodiversity and important nature reserves, but the war has devastated many areas. Soils and waterways have been polluted with chemicals, while farmland, forests and green spaces have been ravaged by shelling, fires and floods.

The destruction of the Kakhovka dam a year ago, presumed to have been an intentional act by the occupying Russian forces, flooded villages and farmlands and caused widespread ecological damage all the way to the Black Sea. On top of this, one-third of Ukraine's territory is now suspected to be contaminated with landmines or unexploded ordnance, surpassing any other country in the world, according to the International Campaign to Ban

Landmines. We have been part of an effort to bring these environmental concerns to the world's attention by joining a bold initiative by the president of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

The president created the High-Level Working Group on the Environmental Consequences of the War in Ukraine, of which we are

Investigators and prosecutors should adopt a victim-centred approach to understanding environmental damage and the redress needed. Human rights investigations in Ukraine should give special attention to environmental damage and the risks to public health, as they assess rights violations.

Finally, the working group points to the imperative of sustainable reconstruction, incorporating development strategies that are friendly to the climate and to the environment. Efforts to apply these principles must begin now, as rebuilding is already under way in some parts of Ukraine.

Green justice and green recovery in Ukraine will be to the benefit of all countries affected by conflict around the world. When Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine two years ago, the Kremlin put the international legal order at risk. Its actions are a clear violation of international law and the UN Charter. The future of this international order, and the expectation of justice for such flagrant violations, will be determined by how the world continues to respond to this aggression, including the terrible and disproportionate attacks on the environment.

We all know that environmental threats do not stop at borders. The risk of a significant nuclear radiation disaster that hangs over Ukraine — due to the Russian occupation of the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant, Europe's largest — is one worrying example of the regional threat. Another is the war's impact on the Black Sea, where environmental damage is having deadly effects on sea life and impacts all countries bordering this important body of water.

Now that the world is awakening to the scale of environmental crimes in conflicts, we must work to ensure that accountability follows, addressing both individual crimes and the responsibility to repair the harm by the perpetrator state. Justice is due in Ukraine. And justice is due equally in all conflicts where force exceeds agreed legal limits. Let us work together for a green, just and peaceful future for those nations now suffering such attacks.

Aljazeera

New military coup in Myanmar a growing threat

Dr. Azeem Ibrahim

AS the crisis in Myanmar continues to escalate, with the military losing ground to the People's Defense Force and other insurgent factions, the specter of another military coup looms ominously over the nation. The disquiet among senior military officers, some of whom have defected, regarding the leadership of Prime Minister Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing underscores the fragility of the current junta's grip on power. However, what is even more alarming is the prospect that any new coup leader might be even more brutal and repressive than the current regime.

The past year has witnessed a remarkable display of resilience and defiance from the people of Myanmar. In the face of escalating violence and widespread human rights abuses perpetrated by the military regime, they have continued to demand democracy and justice. The emergence of the People's Defense Force, many of whose fighters are civilians and disgruntled military personnel, has further complicated the situation for the junta. With each passing day, the regime finds itself increasingly isolated and on the defensive.

Yet, amid the chaos and uncertainty, the possibility of another military coup cannot be discounted. The fracturing of the military establishment, as evidenced by defections and dissent among senior officers, has created a fertile ground for internal power struggles. Hlaing's leadership has come under intense scrutiny, with growing disillusionment over his handling of the crisis and his failure to quell the insurgency. This discontent within the ranks of the military could potentially pave the way for a coup orchestrated by disaffected generals seeking to assert control.

However, the prospect of a new military regime coming to power is a chilling one, particularly considering the escalating brutality unleashed upon civilians by the current junta. There is a genuine fear that any new leader emerging from a coup could adopt even harsher measures to suppress dissent and maintain control. The atrocities committed against peaceful protesters, including arbitrary arrests, torture and extrajudicial killings, serve as a stark reminder of the ruthlessness of the military's tactics.

The international community must not underestimate the potential ramifications of another military coup in Myanmar. The crisis has already sparked a humanitarian catastrophe, with millions facing displacement, food insecurity and persecution. A new wave of violence unleashed by a reinvigorated military regime could exacerbate the suffering of the civilian population and plunge the country into further turmoil.

It is imperative that the international community, and particularly the region, take proactive steps to pre-

pare for such a scenario. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, as a regional bloc, must play a central role in coordinating a concerted response to the crisis in Myanmar. While efforts to engage with the junta diplomatically have thus far yielded limited results, ASEAN must demonstrate firmness and unity in its approach to the situation.

First and foremost, ASEAN must reaffirm its commitment to the principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The bloc should unequivocally condemn any attempts to subvert the will of the people through military means and call for the restoration of civilian-led governance in Myanmar. ASEAN's credibility as a regional arbiter hinges on its ability to uphold these fundamental values in the face of tyranny and oppression.

Additionally, ASEAN should explore avenues for diplomatic mediation and dialogue to facilitate a peaceful resolution to the crisis. This could involve convening talks between the junta, the civilian opposition and other relevant stakeholders to negotiate a way forward. While the prospects for dialogue may seem bleak at present, sustained diplomatic pressure, coupled with incentives for cooperation, could eventually yield tangible results.

Furthermore, ASEAN must be prepared to deploy humanitarian assistance to mitigate the suffering of the civilian population in the event of renewed violence. This includes providing essential aid such as food, shelter and medical supplies to those affected by conflict and displacement. ASEAN member states should also be ready to offer refuge to those fleeing persecution in Myanmar, demonstrating solidarity and compassion in the face of adversity.

At the same time, the international community must send a clear message to the military junta that any further escalation of violence will not be tolerated. This may entail imposing targeted sanctions on individuals and entities complicit in human rights abuses, as well as intensifying pressure through multilateral forums such as the UN. The junta must understand that there are consequences for its actions and that the world is watching closely.

The possibility of another military coup in Myanmar is a stark reality that cannot be ignored. As the junta continues to lose ground to insurgent forces and faces internal dissent, the risk of a power grab by disaffected military officers looms large. However, the international community, and ASEAN in particular, must be prepared to confront this scenario head-on. By reaffirming its commitment to democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and by actively engaging with all stakeholders to seek a peaceful resolution to the crisis, ASEAN can help avert further bloodshed and suffering in Myanmar. The time to act is now.

Arab News

Smiling Israeli soldiers on the wrong side of history

Jonathan Gornall

JUDGING by an extraordinarily tone-deaf collaboration between a New York photographer and the Israeli army, the past seven months have been an endless round of fun and laughter for the Israeli soldiers delivering death and destruction on an industrial scale in Gaza. Shot against the background of the carnage in Gaza, the images of "The Smiling Soldiers Project" have to be seen to be believed.

So far, photographer Menachem Geisinsky has taken more than 15,000 photographs showing the young men and women of the Israeli army smiling, laughing, kissing and generally having fun, "just like any other 20-year-olds." The aim, according to Geisinsky, "is to show the world the humanity of the IDF, the true side — the happiness, the smiles, that the world media tries its

best to hide."

The effect, however, is to convey the impression of a force of young conscripts so surreally detached from the reality of its bloody handiwork that it appears to have given up all pretense of being a disciplined, professional army and instead become little more than a trigger-happy mob. Forensic analysis last week by the BBC of the shooting of an unarmed 8-year-old boy in the West Bank is among the most graphically documented evidence to date that the Israeli army, whose rampage through Gaza has so far claimed a shockingly disproportionate 35,000 lives, is a morally bankrupt force operating entirely outside the accepted parameters of modern warfare. Ben Saul, the UN special rapporteur on human rights, has said the shooting of the child has all the hallmarks of a war crime.

On Monday, -seven

independent UN human rights experts issued a joint statement condemning "the continued and systematic onslaught of violence committed against Palestinians in Gaza." The irony of the timing of this statement, issued one day after Israeli Jews commemorated Holocaust Remembrance Day, appears to have gone largely unrecognized in Israel.

The closing ceremony of Israel's Holocaust Remembrance Day was held at a kibbutz in northern Israel called Lohamei Hageta'ot, "the ghetto fighters." The community was founded by survivors of the Warsaw ghetto uprising of 1943, which cost the lives of only a handful of German soldiers but saw an estimated 60,000 Jews killed or deported to death camps. Eighty-one years later, a disturbingly similar disproportionality is evi-

dent in Gaza.

The Israeli army says that, as of May 6, 266 Israeli soldiers have been killed since the start of ground operations on Oct. 27. Compare this to the 34,488 Gazans, including 14,500 children and 9,500 women, who had been killed by the end of April. This is not the work of a professional, disciplined force. It is inconceivable that the taking of innocent lives on such a scale can be considered as anything other than a war crime.

At Katyn in 1943, Soviet troops executed 22,000 Polish prisoners. At Srebrenica in 1995, more than 8,000 Muslims were murdered by Bosnian Serbs. Between 2014 and 2017, some 5,000 Yazidis died at the hands of Daesh. All of these massacres rightly earned the condemnation of the international community. Yet, Israel's

body count in Gaza is already far higher than the death toll in any of these outrages and, with Netanyahu's rejection this week of a ceasefire deal and the unleashing of an offensive against Rafah, is certain to grow even larger.

Justice is coming for the soldiers of the Special Air Service who were involved, their commanders who turned a blind eye and perhaps even for the politicians who tried to cover up the crimes. On its website, the British army boasts that it has "an excellent reputation across the world, built on trust." Its soldiers must "obey the law, all the time, wherever you are serving... You must always keep your self-control, however angry or provoked you might be, because no soldier is ever above the law."

Now, the murders of dozens of unarmed detainees in Afghanistan between 2010 and 2013 by members of Britain's most

elite fighting force is the subject of an independent judge-led inquiry, which is widely expected to lead to criminal prosecutions. The Israeli army has a similar website — illustrated with several photographs from "The Smiling Soldier Project" — devoted to promoting its "fundamental values," which include a commitment "to protect human dignity."

Every Israeli soldier, it says, is expected to "recognize the critical importance of human life and behave in a safe and measured manner at all times." They "will not use their weapon or power to harm unarmed civilians and prisoners and will do everything in their power to prevent harm to their lives, bodies, dignity and property." Except, it seems, in Gaza, where the young Israeli soldiers find themselves tragically and irredeemably on the wrong side of history.

Euro-Chinese relations changed a lot in 5 years between Xi’s visits

Andrew Hammond

THOUGH 2019 was not so long ago by most reckonings, it must seem like a different political epoch for China’s President Xi Jinping, who has just concluded his first visit to Europe for five years. During those years, the world not only experienced the trauma of the COVID-19 pandemic, the presumed origins of which in China remain shrouded in some mystery, but also witnessed the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which is tacitly supported by Beijing.

All of this means that much of Europe is in a different political space regarding China than it was in 2019. Aware of this change in mood, Xi chose the destinations for his three-leg European itinerary last week carefully. After a visit to France (China’s ties with which he described as a model bilateral relationship) on Monday and Tuesday, he traveled to Hungary and then to non-EU member Serbia, two of China’s supporters on the continent.

Xi has described Serbia as an “iron-clad” friend. Bilateral trade and investment ties between the nations have been growing, including a \$2.2 billion Chinese investment in wind and solar power plants and a hydrogen production facility. Within the 27-member EU itself, however, Xi’s strongest ally might be long-standing Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban. He favors deeper ties not only with China but also Russia, which makes him highly unusual among his counterparts.

During his visit to Hungary, Xi welcomed the fact that the nation has become a key production hub in Europe for Chinese automotive suppliers, including makers of electric vehicles. This might help Chinese firms navigate any EU tariffs on such vehicles in the future. Serbia and Hungary are outliers in contemporary continental opinions on Beijing. A position more reflective of the wider stance at the present time is that of European

Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, with whom Xi met on Monday in France, and who has led the political charge in Brussels toward what she calls a policy of “de-risking” from Beijing.

Certainly, even in France Xi received a respectful and warm welcome during a visit that coincided with the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Paris and Beijing, and met President

This might help Chinese firms navigate any EU tariffs on such vehicles in the future. Serbia and Hungary are outliers in contemporary continental opinions on Beijing. A position more reflective of the wider stance at the present time is that of European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, with whom Xi met on Monday in France, and who has led the political charge in Brussels toward what she calls a policy of “de-risking” from Beijing.

Emmanuel Macron as well as von der Leyen. But the underlying political mood music is very different now than it was during his 2019 visit to Europe. Back then, Xi was love-bombed by his Italian hosts, who became the first G7 country to sign up to Beijing’s Belt and Road infrastructure scheme. This was a controversial decision in the West, even then. It infuriated the Trump administration in Washington, which called it “legitimacy for China’s infrastructure vanity project.”

Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni’s administration, which came to power in 2022, withdrew from the agreement last year. This is a sign of the undeniable chill in EU-Chinese relations in recent years as a result of a wide-range of political and economic factors. These include Western assertions of human rights abuses by China in Xinjiang province, and concerns

that Beijing is “dumping” key products such electric vehicles, batteries, wind turbines and solar panels on the European market through the use of extensive state subsidies.

Worse still, top EU officials have grown increasingly concerned about whether the nature of China’s external interventions in Europe represents a divide-and-rule strategy designed to under-

This might help Chinese firms navigate any EU tariffs on such vehicles in the future. Serbia and Hungary are outliers in contemporary continental opinions on Beijing. A position more reflective of the wider stance at the present time is that of European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, with whom Xi met on Monday in France, and who has led the political charge in Brussels toward what she calls a policy of “de-risking” from Beijing.

mine the collective interests of the continent. EU foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell even asserted that Beijing is a “systemic rival that seeks to promote an alternative model of governance” to that of Europe.

Therefore, EU policies on China are clearly moving in a more hawkish direction. Even on issues in which breakthroughs have been made with Beijing in recent years, such as the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment, the “long grass” in Brussels has prevented ratification of the deal by the European Parliament owing to EU concerns about the behavior of China. Yet, despite these greater attempts to encourage more European unity, Brussels is still struggling to find common ground on Beijing across all 27 member states. This is what shaped Xi’s travel itinerary last week, including the choice of France as his first

stop.

While Macron has become increasingly hawkish about Russia since its invasion of Ukraine, China has welcomed a string of recent comments by the French president on wider issues. During a joint visit with von der Leyen to Beijing last year, for example, Macron deployed the language of economic reciprocity rather than de-risking. He has also moved away from prior French positions on Taiwan. Whereas von der Leyen asserted during their trip that “stability in the Taiwan Strait is of paramount importance” and that the “threat of use of force to change the status quo is unacceptable,” Macron said Taiwan is a “crisis that is not ours” and that Europeans should not be “America’s followers.”

While the full motivation for Macron’s comments remains unclear, his position is certainly out of sync not only with the EU position, but also key G7 statements on Taiwan that France signed up to. The Franco-China discussions last week were closely watched, therefore, not only in Europe but in the US, about a month before President Joe Biden is expected to make his own state visit to Paris.

Perceptions of a divided Europe have also been publicly highlighted by several Chinese officials, including the ambassador to the EU, Fu Cong, who cast doubts on whether all 27 member states fully back the agenda of Borrell and von der Leyen.

He recently said that “Europe has not formulated a coherent policy toward China” and it felt like “people quarreling with each other.” Taking all of this together, Xi will be hoping his tour last week marks an important reset in ties with Europe, post-pandemic. However, while his visits to France, Serbia and Hungary were very cordial, there is no disguising the fact that broader ties between Europe and China remain chilly and could yet go from bad to worse this year.

Onus on US to stop Gaza conflict and grant Palestine full UN membership

Li Yang

Palestinian people on their land. And even if the Hamas Oct 7 attack is taken into account, what the Israel has done in the region since the World War II must also be borne in mind as well, which clearly shows the right and wrong regarding the Palestinian question.

The world can see clearly that the statehood of Israel has not only been fully guaranteed but also the country has prospered. In the process, it has continuously expanded its influences to the Palestinian side beyond the 1967 borders, and even invaded neighboring countries, including Syria and Lebanon. Over the years, Israel, as the occupying power, has technically eroded the foundation of the two-state solution. The current conflict, which has lasted for more than seven months, is more likely to completely ruin the prospects of the two-state solution agreed by the international community.

So it is not the security or future of Israeli people that has become a question of grave concern, but that of the Palestinians, whose survival in Gaza has even become a question today thanks to Israel’s aggression indulged and supported by Washington, not to mention the overdue statehood of their country.

That Israel intensified its attack on Rafah on Saturday, under the US’ acquiescence, in response to the UN General

Assembly the Palestine-related vote the previous day, presents a grave provocation to the common will of the international community, and also serves to put an end to its peace talks with Hamas in Cairo that has lasted for days, in which Hamas had made big concessions for a ceasefire. Israel should stop its collective punishment of the Gaza people, stop advancing its military offensive in Rafah, and effectively remove all restrictions on the entry of humanitarian supplies into Gaza. In the West Bank, Israel should stop all settlement activities and effectively curb the intensifying settler violence.

Palestine should enjoy the same status as Israel, and the Palestinian people should enjoy the same rights as the Israeli people. It is the common responsibility of the international community, including the US, to support and promote the process of Palestinian independent statehood and provide a strong guarantee for the implementation of the two-state solution and the realization of lasting peace in the Middle East.

As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the US should put aside its own interests and work for world peace and humanity, undertaking its global responsibility. The UN Security Council is a platform to resolve issues and not create divisions or hijack the global peace agenda for one’s own narrow ends by abusing its veto power.

The China Daily

On an island still tormented by Troubles, Britain’s Legacy Act making things worse

Fintan O’Toole

FIFTY years ago, on 17 May 1974, my father, a bus conductor, was out on strike. That day, the Troubles arrived with a vengeance in my home town of Dublin. Three bombs exploded at different points in the city centre during rush hour. Because the buses were not operating, there were more people walking along those streets than usual. Twenty-three of them were killed and another three later succumbed to their injuries. Another bomb that exploded 90 minutes later in Monaghan, on the southern side of the border, killed seven people.

In 1984, when I was trying to write a piece for the 10th anniversary of the bombings, I called to the houses of some of the bereaved families. No one wanted to talk to me. They felt betrayed, abandoned, already forgotten. They had no trust in anyone. Marie Sherry, who was injured but survived, later described how, in the weeks and months after the massacre, she would ask her mother: “‘Mum, any news on those people who did the bombing? Was anybody charged? There never was news. There were no names. Nobody was charged. I lived my life thinking, ‘These guys are walking around. They could be sitting beside me in the cinema. They could be on the bus.’”

This torment continues to haunt tens of thousands of people who lost loved ones or who were themselves maimed in atrocities during the Troubles. Writing in 2021, Jon Boucher, who is now chief constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, noted how anniversaries mark not just the moments of death, but the intolerable passage of years of unknowing: “Anniversaries of such awful events as the devastating attacks in Dublin and Monaghan will continue to be unbearably painful

reminders of the distrust and disharmony that existed then and sadly, without answers for families, remains today.”

Distrust and disharmony linger because impunity goes deep. Figures obtained by the investigative website The Detail in 2018 show 1,186 of the 3,200 killings within Northern Ireland (thus not including those in the Republic of Ireland or Britain) remain unsolved. Of these, 46% were attributed to republican paramilitaries, 23% to loyalist paramilitaries and 29% to the security forces. This last figure is telling: the UK state is not, in all of this, a neutral presence. It has a lot of skin and bone and blood in the game.

It is right to remember that paramilitaries, including the IRA, of which Sinn Féin was the political wing, remain deeply embedded in this culture of impunity. Just last month, the inquest into the sectarian murders of 10 Protestant workmen at Kingsmills in County Armagh in 1976 noted that the IRA has continued to lie about its perpetration of the massacre. The coroner also put on record that the IRA refused to engage with the inquest and that there had been “no acknowledgement by the IRA of the utter wrongness of the atrocity, its impact on those bereaved or the damage caused to the entire community”.

This damage continues to be done through selective outrage. Some of those who demand accountability from the British state exempt themselves from the same strictures. In the absence of a comprehensive truth and reconciliation process, the fundamental right of all the bereaved to know what happened to their loved ones is weaponised for partial and partisan histories. Truth is pockmarked

with selective silences. Whataboutery reigns.

Yet democratic states ought to have higher standards than paramilitary killers. As Boucher, then investigating the multiple killings attributed to Freddie Scappaticci, who doubled as the IRA’s internal enforcer and as a British agent, put it in 2021: “Transparency and honesty is what sets democracies apart from those that committed these crimes. It is fundamental to our values as individuals, organisations, elected representatives and governments that we provide families with the truth.”

The truth about the involvement of British state actors in many killings remains murky. In the case of the Dublin and Monaghan bombings, for example, there have long been doubts about whether the Ulster Volunteer Force, which claimed responsibility in 1993, could have been capable on its own of such a complex and carefully coordinated operation. An official inquiry in the Republic concluded that although there was no direct evidence of involvement by British security force members, it was “neither fanciful nor absurd” to believe that it happened. Similar suspicions attach to dozens of other killings by the Glenanne gang that operated within the UVF and that certainly contained many members of the security forces.

The British government – against the opposition of every single political party in both parts of Ireland – has now used the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act to close down not just criminal inquiries into Troubles killings, but also inquests and civil cases taken by relatives and survivors, and instead establish an independent commis-

sion for reconciliation and information recovery. It has also separately announced that it will commission an official history of the Troubles as recorded on state files.

Some greatly respected people are involved in these initiatives: Sir Declan Morgan, who is chief commissioner of the independent commission, is a former lord chief justice of Northern Ireland and the co-chairs of the history project, Lord Paul Bew and Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid, are distinguished academic historians.

But the lifeblood of such institutional efforts is public trust, a confidence that is extremely difficult to establish in a context where the British state has such a lamentable record of obfuscation. Why should historians have access to government files that are not available to grieving families? Why, even if we have to accept that criminal trials are now extremely unlikely in most unresolved murder cases, should coroners’ inquests be scrapped too?

Keir Starmer has promised to revisit the Legacy Act. If and when he has the power to do so, he should start with three basic propositions. First, the rights of bereaved families and survivors are paramount. Second, any truth recovery process must be devised jointly by the Northern Ireland executive and the British and Irish governments – it has to have everyone’s trust. Third, and perhaps most painfully for an incoming Labour government, Britain has to drop the pretence that it is merely an honest broker in all of this. The state – including under Labour administrations – was a party to the conflict. It has a historic duty to submit its actions to independent judgment. Until it accepts that responsibility wholeheartedly, the poison of the past will continue to seep into the future.

The Guardian

Beijing, Brussels must uphold multilateralism

Hubet Kempf

THE Chinese top leader’s visit to Europe has instilled confidence in a world full of uncertainty, as evidenced by the Sino-French statements. French President Emmanuel Macron has emphasized that Europe has been “naïve” in its perception of the affairs of the world and that it is not up to the current challenges because “the rules of the game have changed”.

This statement is representative of the current mood of world leaders: the happy days of globalization are gone and a new era has started, fostering the current atmosphere of mistrust and defiance.

For Europe it is quite a shock. It had betted on increasing trade and greater economic integration to help build a safer world where everyone would benefit from more affluence and reap the fruit of peace. In retrospect, again using the words of Macron, this view is naïve — simply because the degree of opposition and animosity at the global level has increased manifold. Worse, the European Union has discovered that it is the most vulnerable among the developed economies. It is hugely dependent on imports of energy and raw materials, its supply chains show

that it is not self-reliant in many domains, and its capacity and capability to defend itself against external threats, a virus or an aggressive external power, is doubtful or simply inadequate. France is no exception, despite its diplomatic and military capabilities, which mitigate this somber (from a European point of view) diagnosis.

The paradox is that even though distancing oneself from the other players and augmenting one’s autonomy is the prevalent motto, it cannot go too far. The legacy of the happy days of globalization is that nowadays interdependence has grown so much that it is impossible to undo it systematically and consistently.

To put it bluntly, despite the rhetoric of some on isolationism and sovereignty, getting out of globalization is impossible. Globalization may have changed, the assessments of its merits and defects may have evolved. But the dependence of every player on the fate of the external world is inescapable. And there are two main reasons for that. The first one is the complexity of our world. If supply chains have increased, it is

not solely due to the discovery of the benefits of specialization. These have been known for ages. It is because of the increasing complexities of technologies. These complexities themselves are the direct consequences of the advances in ideas and scientific discoveries.

And ideas, by definition being intangible, cannot be stopped by walls. These advances make us necessarily dependent on the external world and force every region to remain open. Their consequences are a continuation of the intricacies of the global economy.

The second reason is the general recognition of global public goods. Economists define public goods as goods which are non-rival and non-excludable. Non-rival means the use of the goods by someone does not impair the capacity of others to use it, while non-excludable means no one can be barred from accessing the goods. Public goods are therefore the opposite of private (or marketable) goods. They cannot be managed through markets and pricing. This explains why we are not used to recognizing them and assessing them. It does not mean

they are not important. A global public good is a public good which affects any being living on this planet. Climate is a global public good. So is biodiversity.

Global public goods by their very nature make us interdependent. The realization that the natural world is rapidly deteriorating and recognition of the dire consequences of climate change force us to maintain links with our neighbors. In brief, two forces are now at work in the global economy. One is centrifugal: increasing self-reliance, untangling ties which now appear as threats. The other is centripetal: managing new interdependencies as a result of technological advances, or due to common threats such as climate change.

These forces create new tensions and new risks. It cannot be denied that the current situation is dangerous from a global perspective. The risks come from an escalation of threats and counter-threats which no one can stop and which would threaten everyone. Against these risks, it is essential to maintain open links and exchange channels. No, cooperation is not a dream from the past. It still has a future. The EU and China should work together to prove that.

IT is astonishing, when you consider recent history, that Sir Keir Starmer thinks he can credibly claim that Labour will bring down immigration – legal or illegal. This is a man who once claimed that a “racist undercurrent ... permeates all immigration law”. As a Remainer, he battled to keep free movement. As shadow immigration minister, he fought against changes to Tier 2 visas, including a £35,000 salary cap.

He also fought against attempts to bring down the number of overseas students and the dependants they were bringing to the UK, and called for an amnesty for illegal workers and those who employ them. “Fairness and common sense dictate that we should not support the criminalisation of employees themselves for illegal working,” he declared in 2015.

According to an analysis by the Henry Jackson Society, between 2015 and 2022, Starmer voted 14 times against a stricter asylum system and abstained 22 times, never voting in favour of stricter measures. Indeed, he actually tried to modify the law to allow Channel migrants who are “afraid to return” to their home countries to be eligible for asylum, and endeavoured to prevent small boats that reach UK waters from being turned back.

Perhaps he thinks that everyone has forgotten all this in the fog of the Tories failing to clamp down on the mass immigration that started with the last Labour government. But the figures are stark for the Tony Blair effect on Britain’s borders. As Karl Williams of the Centre for Policy Studies has set out, in the 25 years up until his election in 1997, cumulative net migration totalled just 68,000. Over the next 25 years, 1998 to 2022, it totalled at least 5.9 million – almost a hundredfold increase.

Against that backdrop, we’ve witnessed the smuggling gangs running rings around the Home Office, as many Left-leaning MPs, and charities, campaigners and lawyers have done everything in their power to keep illegal immigrants in this country, on top of the legal ones.

Such is the basketcase that our Border Force has become that we’ve effectively been witnessing an amnesty for those arriving across the Channel by barely inflatable dinghies. Just 155 migrants who crossed the Channel in small boats last year have been removed from the country.

Camilla Tominey

In pledging to scrap the Rwanda scheme should he become prime minister – even if it works – Starmer has laid bare the truth about Labour. Not only does the Opposition clearly believe, deep down, that there’s a cruelty to controlling immigration but, like the Tories, they also remain convinced that it increases economic growth, despite all the evidence to the contrary. The last quarter of a century was marked by a sclerotic GDP per capita growth rate of just 1.2 per cent. That’s barely half the growth rate of the preceding 50 years.

Even when factoring in an eye-wateringly high net migration rate of around 350,000 a year for the next five years, the Office for Budget Responsibility predicts that growth will “pick up to around 2 per cent in the middle of the decade as slack in the economy is taken up, before falling back towards its assumed trend rate of around 1.7 per cent by 2028”. It’s hardly a convincing economic argument for keeping our borders wide open.

So forget all this guff about migrant returns deals with the EU and Britain’s shores becoming “hostile territory” for smugglers – even if Labour somehow succeeded in “smashing the smuggling gangs”, it wouldn’t make much difference. Because they’d be following in Blair, Cameron, May, Johnson, Truss and Sunak’s footsteps in doing very little about the hundreds and thousands of migrants we let into the UK every year perfectly legally.

At least the Conservative prime ministers talked about reducing the number down to the “tens of thousands”. Starmer cannot even bring himself to do that. In fact, when the issue of legal immigration is brought up, the Labour leader and his wannabe home secretary Yvette Cooper seem to run for the hills.

Yet just as the Left has been forced to wake up to the reality that a woman cannot have a penis, in large part thanks to Dr Hilary Cass’s sanity-restoring report, so too must Labour accept that (largely unskilled) mass migration has done many of its own voters more harm than good. The Bank of England has now admitted what many had long suspected: that the housing crisis is being made significantly worse because of uncontrolled immigration.

According to the Bank’s chief economist, Huw Pill, higher interest rates were not responsible for record

hikes in rental costs, which jumped by 9.2 per cent in the year to March. Instead, he said, “quite large increases in immigration” were piling extra pressure on to Britain’s housing stock, after net migration hit a record-breaking 745,000 in 2022. “The population is growing,” he said. “To some extent, the rents are really a reflection of supply and demand factors [and] reflect things that aren’t to do with monetary policy.” Pointing out that delays in the planning sector have made a bad situation worse, he added: “We don’t really build enough houses in this country.”

With net migration continuing in the hundreds of thousands, will we ever be able to build enough houses? Since 2001, the UK population has increased by eight million, of which seven million were migrants. As former immigration minister Robert Jenrick pointed out this week, in a video with fellow Tory MP Neil O’Brien to highlight the perils of uncontrolled migration: “One home would have to be built every five minutes, night and day, just to cope with the record levels of immigration to England.”

Sorry for stating the obvious, but unprecedented population growth in a supply-constrained market causes prices to rise. But the Left has never been willing to join the dots, preferring instead to gaslight anyone suggesting that the unaffordability and unavailability of housing might be linked to mass migration. It’s been easier to brand people bigots and racists than accept the facts.

Ironically, the people who have lost out most from this state of denial are one of the Left’s most loyal voting groups: the young. Their futures are being trashed because of open borders. Mass migration has been linked to suppressed wages, and the working poor may be losing out most. Immigration has become a get-out clause for not bothering to fix welfare, leaving millions to languish on benefits. And it puts huge pressure on public services, which hurts those who can’t opt out with private healthcare or education the most.

Having spent his entire working life on the wrong side of this argument, Sir Flip Flop is now insisting that Left-wing activists who call for open-border migration are “wrong”. Really? Since Labour has been betraying its own voters on this issue for years – no one should believe a word Starmer says.

The Telegraph



Wheat purchase target may be further increased

FAISALABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Industries, Production and National Food Security & Research Rana Tanveer Hussain said that the target of wheat purchase may be further increased to ensure a fair price to the growers as the government is sincere about facilitating wheat growers at maximum extent.

During his visit to PASSCO Center Nia Lahore Jhang Road, Tehsil Gojra near here on Saturday, he said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had taken strict notice of unavailability of Bardana (gunny bags) to the growers despite clear instructions of the government to start a purchase drive. He assured that each and every grain would be lifted and interest of the farmers would be fully safeguarded.

He said that Pakistan Agricultural Storage & Services Corporation Limited (PASSCO) had been

directed to adopt a comprehensive strategy to purchase maximum wheat from the growers in a free, fair and transparent manner. In this connection, PASSCO has so far received 88,000 applications out of which 1500 applications were verified and the company started the procurement process, he added.

He said that PASSCO had established its procurement centers in 13 tehsils across Punjab where necessary facilities were provided for wheat growers and their apprehensions would be removed.

He said that Pakistan had witnessed a bumper wheat crop this year despite harsh weather and climate change. We are hopeful that current crop would not only cater to the domestic food requirements easily but we may also export its surplus, he added.

He said that the government had also decided to

provide fertilizer at cheaper rates so that the farmers could meet crop expenditures easily.

He also visited various sections of the PASSCO Center and directed the staff to deal with the growers politely and purchase their wheat produce under free, fair and transparent manner as no negligence or embezzlement would be tolerated.

PASSCO Managing Director Emad Nazir Ahmad briefed the minister about wheat procurement and said that PASSCO was issuing Bardana (bags) after registering growers from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily.

He said that Bardana of 8 bags was issued for one acre and one farmer could obtain maximum 100 bags. Bardana is being issued on a "first come, first served" basis after verification of registration and revenue record. He said that growers could get Bardana after

depositing Rs.530 per bag as security through pay order, demand draft and call deposit while the center would charge Rs.40 from the growers as delivery charges per bag of 100 kg weight. All these instructions were displayed at conspicuous places at all procurement centers of the PASSCO whereas the growers could also contact PASSCO toll free number 0800-72772, Assistant Commissioner (Revenue), Zonal Head, Project Manager or Center Incharge for more guidance, he added.

Deputy Secretary CM Office Rabia Mohsin, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Toba Tek Singh Muhammad Naem Sindhu, Assistant Commissioner Gojra Nauman Ali Dogar, Incharge PASSCO Wheat Purchase Center Nia Lahore Jhang Road Ameer Ali, Assistant Incharge Hafiz Nauman and others were also present.



BEIJING: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal and SAPM Tariq Fatmi meeting with president of EXIM Bank Mr. Ren Shenjun at EXIM Bank.

Solar panel prices decline further in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): The prices of solar panels in Pakistan have experienced a substantial decline, making solar energy a more viable option for individuals and businesses.

As per reports, the price of solar panels has fallen by 53% in just one year, from Rs 80 per watt to Rs 37 per watt.

This substantial decline is attributed to surplus supply within the domestic market and a decrease in international prices.

Over the past six months alone, prices have plummeted by approximately 30%, making panels from various brands available for roughly Rs 37 per watt.

As a result of this price adjustment, the price of a 5-kilowatt solar system has notably decreased to Rs 2,15,000 compared to the previous year. Consequently, the overall expense associated with acquiring such systems has diminished by a staggering Rs 4,30,000.

While the reduction in solar panel prices brings about positive implications for consumers seeking affordable renewable energy solutions, it's important to note that prices for inverters and batteries have remained unchanged amidst this shift.

Starlink satellites disrupted by solar storm

NEW YORK (Reuters): Starlink, the satellite arm of Elon Musk's SpaceX, warned on Saturday of a "degraded service" as the Earth is battered by the biggest geomagnetic storm due to solar activity in two decades.

Starlink owns around 60% of the roughly 7,500 satellites orbiting Earth and is a dominant player in satellite internet.

Musk said earlier in a post on X that Starlink satellites were under a lot of pressure due to the geomagnetic storm, but were holding up so far.

The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has said the storm is the biggest since October 2003 and likely to persist over the weekend, posing risks to navigation systems, power grids, and satellite navigation, among other services.

The thousands of Starlink satellites in low-Earth orbit use inter-satellite laser links to pass data between one another in space at the speed of light, allowing the network to offer internet coverage around the world.

Pakistan's cotton yarn exports to China surged

BEIJING (APP): Pakistan's cotton yarn exports to China have surpassed the \$166.37 million mark with an increase of 65.85%, in the first quarter of 2024.

General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC) data showed that in the first quarter of 2024, the imports of uncombed single cotton yarn containing 85% or above (commodity code 52051200) from Pakistan crossed \$ 99.12 million, compared with \$72.70 million in the same period, whereas the imports of cotton yarn (commodity code 52051100) crossed \$65.78 million, up from \$26.28 million in the same period last year.

General Manager of China Operations Keywin Trading Ltd, Sajjad Mazahir told China Economic Net (CEN) that China's increasing demand for Pakistan cotton textiles is because China's industry balances itself with both exports and local downstream orders. He said that a few years back, Pakistan's textile products were in demand only for exports but now it has taken a good market share in China's domestic market, too.

Currently, he said that Pakistan's supplies include cotton, cotton yarns, and Griegie fabric. They were preferred by many customers due to their competitive prices and quality. Yet, there is much to do for

Pakistan to diversify its textile exports, he added. He noted that the textile industry in Pakistan is facing challenges from the high cost of power and slow demand globally, and the Chinese market gives Pakistani exporters ample opportunities.

He further said that for diversification, Pakistan has to provide finished products to the local Chinese market, and a lot of effort is required to leverage the advantages of the Pakistan-China FTA. Though most of our products are covered under the zero duty structure, many do not enter Chinese markets in good volume, such as home textiles, towels, and apparel, he added.

FRIA wants economic plan from all stakeholders

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Ferozepur Road Industrial Association (FRIA) has called for a solid economic plan from all the stakeholders to speed up growth, terming the current fiscal year as the uncertain one in view of deteriorating energy crises following the tough conditionalities of the International Monetary Fund, making this period more complicated and unstable for the economy.

FRIA senior vice chairman Shahbaz Aslam pleaded for formulating economic plans aimed at reviving growth in large-scale manufacturing, small and medium-sized segments, the service sector, and exports. He stressed the need for a revisit of the economic policies, as the economic indicators remained very depressed amidst high inflation, low exports, depleting foreign reserves and continued uncertain position of the local currency. The FRIA leader said that almost all indicators of the economy continued to show poor performance, including volatile exchange rate, unprecedented hike in markup rate, repeated increases in electricity rates, gas shortage, price spiral, mismanagement and bad governance, becoming the hallmarks of the government.

FRIA senior vice chair-

man observed that besides increasing exports and controlling imports the government will have to take administrative measures, as a large demand of cash dollars are seen in the market. He argued that this devaluation of the currency was dictated by the IMF through prior actions and it has nothing to do with macro-economic fundamentals. He said that there was a complete breakdown of economic policymaking, as the country's fiscal policy had become subservient to monetary and exchange rate policies. He said that the monetary tightening and exchange rate depreciation resulted in higher inflation, public debt and debt servicing. The empirical evidence showed that the one percent monetary tightening hiked the inflationary pressure by 1.3 percent in the case of Pakistan, he added. The government needs to devise a strategy on war-footing to increase foreign investment in Pakistan so as to stop the upward trajectory of the dollar, he added. The rupee during the whole year remained uncertain, as the uncertainty pertaining to the IMF program was causing pressure on the Pakistani rupee while the country's foreign exchange reserves have also declined, which was another source of concern for investors, he said.

Shahbaz Aslam called for a fully-fledged and sound plan with a highly competent team to handle local challenges forthwith, but unfortunately, they have no solid plans or directions. He foresees this year full of challenges for businesses and industries in Pakistan due to political uncertainty on global and local fronts. The government should come up with drastic measures to give confidence to local industrialists-cum-entrepreneurs and foreign investors through industry-friendly and investment-friendly policies. In this regard, the interest rate should be gradually reduced to boost economic activity and industrialization within the country.

He observed the negative economic indicators and uncertainty over resumption of the International Monetary Fund program continued to push the rupee towards a new historic low against the US dollar especially in first half of the calendar year of 2023.

He urged the policy makers to concentrate on increasing tax-to-GDP ratio which was the lowest in Pakistan in the region in 2023. The FRIA leader warned if the govt failed to take appropriate measures for economic revival, the trade and industry will face a complete shutdown, asking the government to convene a conference, taking the business community onboard.

European stock markets hit records

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): Wall Street stocks largely shrugged off lackluster US consumer data on Friday, concluding a winning week mostly higher amid increased hopes of an easing in monetary policy.

Following an up day in Europe in which leading bourses hit all-time highs, the Dow rose for the eighth straight session in New York. The University of Michigan's index of consumer sentiment tumbled 13 percent to 67.4 for April, its lowest mark since November, with more consumers expressing worries about inflation, unemployment and interest rates.

The data comes on the heels of an uptick in weekly US jobless claims released on Thursday. Analysts have pointed to a tendency among investors to greet weaker data as boosting the odds of a Federal Reserve interest rate cut. A note from

Oxford Economics said the US labor market has been a "key pillar" of strength.

"So far, our conclusion is that the labor market is cooling from a rapid pace rather than about to enter a serious downturn that could derail the recovery," Oxford said.

European stock markets struck fresh record highs on growing hopes that central banks are close to cutting interest rates.

London, Paris, Frankfurt and Amsterdam all hit new heights, with shares also benefitting from strong first-quarter earnings. "European markets are on the rise despite concerns that a resurgence in UK growth could yet hinder hopes for a dovish pivot from the Bank of England in the months ahead," noted Joshua Mahony, chief market analyst at Scope Markets.

Britain exited a shallow recession with better-than-

expected growth in the first quarter, official data showed Friday, in a boost to embattled Prime Minister Rishi Sunak ahead of the country's general election this year. The Bank of England on Thursday signaled a rate cut this summer after keeping UK borrowing costs at the highest level in 16 years to tame inflation.

The European Central Bank is expected to cut its rates in June. With Wall Street performing strongly Thursday, Asian investors pushed regional stocks higher ahead of the weekend. Hong Kong continued an impressive run that has seen it enter a bull market after climbing more than 20 percent from its January lows.

The gains were boosted by news that city officials were considering a plan to exempt individuals from paying tax on dividends on mainland stocks bought through the Hong Kong exchange.

Douyin Pakistan Pavilion to promote Pak-China trade

BEIJING (APP): With the strong support of the Shanghai Municipal Commission of Commerce, Douyin Pakistan Merchandise Official Pavillion held a grand opening ceremony in Shanghai, China.

This event marks the beginning of a new cooperation journey between Douyin and its partners, such as the Shanghai Live Stream E-commerce Alliance, Shanghai Silk Road Selection Alliance, and Shanghai Waigaoqiao Global Hub, aiming to promote economic and cultural exchanges between China and Pakistan and bring more diversified commodity choices for consumers.

At the opening ceremony, guests from government departments, industry associations, enterprise representatives, and media reporters gathered together to witness this important moment. The leaders of the Shanghai Municipal Commission of Commerce delivered an enthusiastic speech, expressing warm congratulations on the

opening of the Douyin Pakistan Pavillion and expressing hopes for its role in promoting trade and cultural exchanges between China and Pakistan in the future.

The establishment of Douyin Pakistan Pavillion is not only a simple opening of an e-commerce platform but also carries profound cultural significance and commercial value, Aqeel Ahmed Chaudhry, a Pakistani jeweler based in Shanghai, told APP.

As a short video platform under the Chinese Internet giant ByteDance, Douyin has been committed to connecting global users through innovative ways, and the opening of the Pakistan pavilion is an important step in its globalization strategy.

He said that through this platform, Pakistani specialty products can be displayed to Chinese and even global consumers, enriching market diversity and providing a new sales channel for Pakistani manufacturers.

In the context of globalization, economic cooperation between China and Pakistan is becoming

increasingly close. Pakistan, as a country with abundant natural resources and unique cultural heritage, enjoys a high reputation in the Chinese market for its handicrafts, textiles, agricultural products, and more, he added.

The opening of the Douyin Pakistan Pavillion will undoubtedly open a door for these products to the Chinese market and also provide a window for Chinese consumers to directly contact and understand Pakistani culture. In addition, the participation of partners such as the Shanghai Live Stream E-commerce Alliance, the Shanghai Silk Road Selection Alliance, and the Shanghai Waigaoqiao Global Hub has provided strong support for the operation of Pavillion.

Aqeel Chaudhry said that these institutions have rich experience and resources in the field of e-commerce. Their participation will help Douyin better integrate the supply chain, improve logistics efficiency, optimize the consumer experience, and thus promote the healthy development of China-Pakistan

trade.

At the opening ceremony, Douyin also shared the future development plan. The company plans to attract more users to participate in the purchase and sharing of Pakistani products by organizing various online activities and challenges.

At the same time, Douyin will also use its powerful data analysis ability to provide Pakistani suppliers with market insight and consumer preference analysis to help them better position products and adjust market strategies.

In short, the opening of the Douyin Pakistan Pavillion is not only a new starting point for China-Pakistan economic and trade cooperation but also a new milestone for the Douyin global layout.

As more Pakistani goods enter the Chinese market through this platform, the friendly cooperation between China and Pakistan will be further deepened, and the mutual understanding and friendship between the two peoples will also be enhanced, he added.

China's consumer prices rise for third month

BEIJING (Reuters): China's consumer prices rose for a third straight month in April, while producer prices extended declines, signalling an improvement in domestic demand, as Beijing navigates challenges in its bid to shore up a shaky economy.

The closely watched numbers follow better-than-expected imports data for April, suggesting a flurry of policy support measures over the past several months may be helping consumer confidence.

Consumer prices edged up 0.3% in April from a year earlier, data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed on Saturday, versus a rise of 0.1% in March and a Reuters poll forecast for an

increase of 0.2%. "Strip out food and energy prices, and the consumer inflation data suggests a comeback in demand, especially in services," said Xu Tianchen, senior economist at the Economist Intelligence Unit.

Core inflation, excluding volatile food and fuel prices, grew 0.7% in April, up from 0.6% in March.

Overall the consumer price index (CPI) rose 0.1% from the previous month, beating a forecast fall of 0.1% in the poll and reversing a drop of 1% in March.

Most China watchers say Beijing still has its work cut out, though, and the momentum might prove unsustainable, as official surveys show cooling factory and services activity, while a lengthy housing crisis shows no sign of easing, boosting the case for more policy support.

"Price hikes by utility companies is another potential driver," Xu added. "The fiscal strains some

local governments are facing affect the subsidies they receive, which could be forcing them to pass the extra cost on to households to make ends meet."

Officials are grappling with municipal debt of \$13 trillion, and the State Council, or cabinet, has told heavily indebted local governments to delay or halt some state-funded infrastructure projects.

"The prices data suggests that domestic demand is recovering, supply and demand continues to improve and the outlook for domestic demand and price recovery is optimistic," said Zhou Maohua, a macroeconomic researcher at China Everbright Bank.

"However, consumer prices remain low and the industrial manufacturing sector is still under pressure, reflecting insufficient effective demand and that recovery in the sector is still not sufficiently balanced."



LAHORE: Traders and farmers sit on trucks loaded with watermelon as they bargain with dealers during auction as shopkeepers participating in bidding of fruit (watermelon) at fruit market.

PSGMEA team visits PCSUMEA

SIALKOT (APP): A Pakistan Sports Goods Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PSGMEA) delegation visited the Pakistan Cutlery Stainless and Utensils Manufacturing Association (PCSUMEA) to discuss the matters of mutual interest.

PSGMEA Chairman Arshad Latif Butt said that PSGMEA and PCSUMEA were different sectors but their industrial issues were the same which they could resolve by raising the voice jointly. The PCSUMEA chairman said, "We have common issues like, labour shortage, FBR, tax refunds along with e-commerce trainings."

PSGMEA Senior Vice Chairman Zarar Ahmed, Secretary General Mohsin Masood and others participated in the meeting.

Court Notice

In the Court of Abdul Halem Civil Judge-V/Alaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar. Suit No. 39/1, Institution 21/2/2024, date of hearing 16/5/2024. Abdul Ghani Vs. Jamel Khan. Notice to No. (5) Usman Ghani, (7) Fazal Ghani sons of Rehmat Shah, (10) Hazrat Husain, (12) Mst. Meraja Bibi, (13) Mst. Rebalmanon daughters of Said Ghani resident of Anghapur, (15) Ex-Tehseldar Daggar Sikandar Khan, (18) Abrarullah s/o Shamdad resident of Anghapur Tehsil Daggar District Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants cannot be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.00 a.m. dated 16/5/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Court Notice

In the Court of Javera Sartaj Khan Additional District Judge-II/Azafi Zila Qazi Buner at Daggar. Appeal No. 113/13, Institution 26/10/2023, date of hearing 13/5/2024. Mst. Rokhania etc. Vs. Mst. Islamia etc. Notice to No. (4) Nizamul Haq s/o Babar, (11) Bakht Zamin Shah s/o Sadiq Shah, (12) Mohammad Rashid Khan, (14) Mohammad Hanif Khan sons of Sanobar Khan resident of Shalbandai Tehsil Gagra District Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendant cannot be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendant will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.00 a.m. dated 13/5/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.



In brief

SA Gardens, Wapda move in National Challenge final

ISLAMABAD (APP): SA Gardens and Wapda have clinched their spots in the National Challenge Cup 2023 final, set to play on Sunday, here at the Jinnah Stadium of Pakistan Sports Complex. In the first semi-final, SA Gardens overcame HEC in a tense penalty shootout, securing a 3-2 victory. Despite two additional 15-minute periods after regulation time, the match remained deadlocked. SA Gardens' goalkeeper, Salman Kaka, emerged as a hero with a crucial save during the penalty shootout, propelling his team into the final. SA Gardens' goalkeeper Salman Kaka praised their strong opponent but reiterated his team's commitment to delivering their utmost effort in the final. In the second semi-final, Wapda secured a hard-fought 2-0 victory over Pakistan Army. The first half saw no goals but in the second half, Ahmed Faheem seized an opportunity with a stunning free kick, breaking the deadlock in the 58th minute. Shayek Dost further solidified Wapda's lead with a goal in the 90th minute, guiding his team to the final. Ahmed Faheem, reflecting on his performance, expressed gratitude to his teammates for entrusting him with the critical free-kick opportunity. He pledged to maintain the same level of dedication and spirit in the final clash against SA Gardens. The match for third and fourth place would take place between Pakistan Army and HEC on May 12 at 4:30pm at Jinnah Stadium.

Asian Legends League to start from May 27

DUBAI (INP): Leading sports broadcaster, Star Sports has announced its partnership with the Asian Legends League as the Official Broadcast Partner for the next three seasons, spanning from 2024 to 2026. The Asian Legends League, a platform for former retired cricket legends from Asian countries, is set to showcase the talents of iconic players in an exhilarating league format. The league, organized by World Sports Group (WSG), will feature five franchise teams representing renowned cricketing nations: Indian Royals, Sri Lankan Lions, Bangladesh Tigers, Pakistan Stars, and Afghanistan Pathans. The highly anticipated event is scheduled to take place from May 27th to June 4th, 2024. League Commissioner, Mr. Chetan Sharma, expressed his enthusiasm, stating, "We are delighted to partner with Star Sports, a pioneer in sports broadcasting, to bring the Asian Legends League to fans across the globe. This collaboration will undoubtedly enhance the viewing experience and elevate the stature of the league." The league schedule has also been unveiled, with league matches scheduled from May 27th to May 31st, followed by knockout matches commencing on June 1st. The pinnacle of the event, the Grand Final to determine the champion of the Asian Legends League, will take place on June 4th, 2024. The detailed schedule is attached for reference. As an added highlight, cricket fans will witness the legendary rivalry between India and Pakistan once again on May 29th, 2024, just before the commencement of the T20 World Cup 2024.



Danielle Gibson goes inside out during her 41 not out off 21 balls.

England recover to thrash Pakistan in first T20

BIRMINGHAM (Agencies): England recovered from a shambolic start to beat Pakistan by 53 runs in the first T20 at Edgbaston. The hosts slipped to 11-4 inside the first three overs, before Heather Knight and Amy Jones led a fightback to post 163-6.

Knight scored 49 and Jones 37 in a fifth-wicket stand of 67, before Danielle Gibson's entertaining 41 not out from 21 balls provided a late boost. In reply, Pakistan squandered a positive start with England leg-spinner Sarah Glenn's 4-12 sparking a drastic collapse from 66-2 to 110 all out. The visitors finished the powerplay on 57-2, in comparison to England's 29-4, before their middle-order fragility was ruthlessly exposed.

Glenn bowled beautifully, supported by seamer Lauren Bell's 3-22 as England expertly closed out a dominant victory, but their early batting collapse silenced an Edgbaston crowd of 12,241.

Maia Bouchier was caught at mid-off in the first over, Danni Wyatt picked out mid-on in the second and Alice Capsey was dropped first ball before she was caught out slogging for five. All-rounder Freya Kemp was calamitously run out for a duck on her return to the side from injury before the experience of Knight and Jones calmly dug England out of trouble.

Gibson whacked eight fours in her explosive finish which helped England end the innings with confidence, setting Pakistan the challenge of their highest-ever T20 run chase. The three-match series continues at Northampton on Friday.

Knight and Jones rescue disastrous start With the T20 World Cup approaching in the autumn, England's top order is an area of concern with its inconsistency, alongside their adaptability.

Star all-rounder Nat Sciver-Brunt was absent but England were crying out for her stability to support the relative inexperience of Bouchier, Capsey and Kemp.

England are committed to their aggressive approach under coach Jon Lewis, but on quite a sluggish pitch and against Pakistan's slow bowlers, they came unstuck in familiar fashion.

They did not commit to their shots, trying to force the pace, while Kemp's run out was an error in judgement, setting off for a single after a misfield when Knight at the non-striker's end did not move an inch. But, what Knight and Jones expertly demonstrated was calmness and stability, picking the bad ball when the fielders spread after six overs and running hard between the wickets.

Jones miscued a full toss to deep mid-wicket before Knight fell short of a half-century by slicing one to mid-off, but they had expertly dug England out of big trouble.

The side's young talent is promising, but they showed naivety in the conditions, and the partnership should give them a valuable blueprint from which they can learn.

Pakistan improve, but fall short England's top order wobble exposed their existing concerns but also highlighted a much-improved Pakistan, who came into the series off the back of a series hammering by the West Indies. Knight's side are expected to dominate but were immediately under pressure by seamer Waheeda Akhtar, who took 2-20, and a significant improvement in their fielding.

Later in the innings a few misfields crept in, but early on they looked assured under high catches, and showed impressive game awareness to stay calm amid the chaos of Kemp's run out. Their batters also came out firing with admirable courage, helped by some loose England bowling in the last few years have been able to do it and we are again in the latter stages," Guardiola said.

But ultimately England's class shone through and exposed the gulf in class, with the spin trio of Glenn, Charlie Dean and Sophie Ecclestone going from strength to strength as they twirled through the middle overs with relentless accuracy and control to halt Pakistan's scoring.

They buckled under the pressure, as Jones marked her 100th T20 cap with a player of the match performance by adding four catches to her match-winning runs.

Japan defeat Pakistan on shootout to win Sultan Azlan Shah Cup

IPOH (Monitoring Desk): In a dramatic conclusion to the 2024 Azlan Shah Hockey Cup on Saturday, Japan defeated Pakistan in a penalty shootout after a tense 2-2 draw, dashing the Pakistan team's hopes that had reached the tournament final for the first time since 2011 following a series of stellar performances.

Six teams participated in the event, including the tournament Malaysia, Pakistan, South Korea, Japan, New Zealand and Canada. Pakistan won the Azlan Shah Cup title three times in the past and was the second runners-up in the last edition which was also held in Malaysia two years ago.

Prior to facing Japan the second time in the tournament, Pakistan played against New Zealand on Friday in a match that ended in a tie.

"Today is the day we've all been waiting for," the Pakistan Hockey Federation exclaimed in a social media post prior to the match. "The FINAL showdown of the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup is here, and our beloved Green



Shirts are ready to take on Japan ... Let's rally behind our team with all our support and cheers as they aim for glory on the field!"

In a riveting showdown, Japan seized an early lead

with a field goal in the 12th minute, igniting a fierce contest that saw both teams neck and neck until the final whistle.

As regular time expired with the score deadlocked,

the match escalated into an electrifying shootout phase.

When the dust settled, however, Japan had triumphed with a convincing 4-1 victory, clinching the cup and retaining their top

position on the leaderboard where they already stood tall with 13 points right ahead of the final. Pakistan, despite a valiant effort, were on the second place with two draws.

Rafael Nadal eyes French Open bid despite early Rome exit



ROME (AFP/APP): Rafael Nadal said Saturday that he is leaning towards playing at the upcoming French Open despite being eliminated in the second round in Rome, 6-1, 6-3 by Poland's Hubert Hurkacz.

Clay-court icon Nadal had previously said that he would only play at the French Open, where he has won a record 14 titles, if he feels competitive after a raft of injury problems over the last two years which have left him languishing 305th in the world rankings.

And the manner of his elimination in his first ever encounter with Hurkacz was a step backwards after reaching the last 16 in Madrid, leaving a question mark hanging over his plans. "The decision, as you can imagine, is not clear in my mind today. But if I have to say what's my feeling and if my mind is closer one way or the other way, I going to say be in Roland Garros and try my best," Nadal told reporters.

"Physically I have some issues, but not probably yet enough to say not playing in the most important event of my tennis career. Let's see what's going on, how I feel myself mentally tomorrow, after tomorrow, and in one week." Nadal held his own in the first two games in the first set, which took 26 minutes to complete, but then fell away as errors handed Hurkacz points.

The 37-year-old twice gave away breaks of serve with

miscued drop shots in the first set which Hurkacz closed out in 49 minutes as he blew through five straight games. And the match was as good as done when Hurkacz, who didn't drop a single service game, broke Nadal in the third game of the second set to set up a famous victory. The level of dominance over Nadal on clay, much less a court where he has won a record 10 titles, would have been unimaginable a few short years ago.

Hurkacz will face Tomas Etcheverry in the third round after likely ending Nadal's love affair with Rome as the 22-time Grand Slam winner looks set to call time on his career at the end of the season.

However tournament organisers told media that Nadal turned down a post-match farewell celebration on court as Saturday's loss was likely his last appearance at the Foro Italico.

Nadal said that he was "98 percent, not 100 percent" sure that he would never again grace the Roman clay so would not accept the ceremony. Nadal's departure will be followed on centre court by second seed Daniil Medvedev, who kicks off his title defence against Briton Jack Draper before women's third seed Coco Gauff takes on lucky loser Jaqueline Cristian.

- Swiatek battles through - Iga Swiatek fought past Yulia Putintseva 6-3, 6-4 to reach the last 16 of the women's tournament. World number one Swiatek will next face either Angelique Kerber or Aliaksandra Sasnovich as she bids to become the first person since Serena Williams to claim a third title at the Foro Italico.

The 22-year-old came into the event having won the Madrid Open last weekend and will also be gunning for a fourth French Open crown later this month. She made harder work than expected of Saturday's match after comfortably taking the first set, finding herself 4-1 down and having to save four break points to stop unseeded Putintseva from serving for the second.

However Swiatek broke back before levelling the set and rattled off five games in a row to take her record against Putintseva to four wins without dropping a set. I'm happy with the way I played... I knew what I wanted to improve. At the end I'm happy that I finished in two sets," said Swiatek.

Four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka is also in the last 16 after beating 10th-seed Daria Kasatkina 6-3, 6-3 in the Grand Stand Arena. Osaka is ranked at 173 in the world after taking a break from the tour to have her first child but is in good form, yet to drop a set in her first Rome tournament in three years.

Gvardiol double sinks Fulham as Man City go top of Premier League

LONDON (AFP): Manchester City swept to the top of the Premier League as Josko Gvardiol's double inspired a vital 4-0 victory against Fulham on Saturday. Pep Guardiola's side are two wins away from lifting an unprecedented fourth successive English title after a commanding display at Craven Cottage. Gvardiol put City ahead early on before Phil Foden's 25th goal in all competitions this season increased their lead.

By the time Gvardiol netted his second, City were strolling to three priceless points on a sunlit afternoon on the banks of the River Thames. Julian Alvarez underlined City's superiority with a late penalty after Fulham's Issa Diop was sent off for fouling the Argentine.

Now two points clear of second-placed Arsenal, City will look for a favour from their arch rivals Manchester United, who host the Gunners on Sunday. If Arsenal fail to win at Old Trafford, City will be crowned champions if they beat Tottenham on Tuesday or West Ham in their final game on May 19.

"Gvardiol's goals were absolutely unexpected. He is unbelievable with both feet," Guardiola said. "We played really well and now



we recover, then come back to London to play the big final (against Tottenham) to try to retain our title."

Regardless of Arsenal's remaining results against United and Everton, City know two more victories will make it a remarkable six titles in the last seven seasons. "The great players enjoy playing with great pressure. These players in the last few years have been able to do it and we are again in the latter stages," Guardiola said.

"Our dream was to arrive in the last games with it in our hands, to play West Ham at home with the destiny belonging to us." City's 16th successive win against Fulham -- the longest run of consecutive victories over one team in English football history -- also mathematically ended third-placed Liverpool's title challenge.

Asked why he was wearing a jumper in the Arsenal

west London heat, the superstitious Guardiola added: "I used this outfit many times so we keep it as it is. Even if it is 45 degrees!" Guardiola had labelled the Fulham game as the first of four "finals" for City as they aim to clinch the title and then beat Manchester United in the FA Cup final.

They rose to his challenge in style and will head to Tottenham next week boasting a 21-game unbeaten league run, having also trimmed Arsenal's goal difference advantage over them to just two.

Relentless City A social media video of Fulham players flying a kite during training this week had raised questions about just how focused the hosts would be in a match that had little riding on it for them. Arsenal's fears were confirmed as City carved Fulham apart in typically swaggering style to

take the lead after 13 minutes.

Guardiola had revealed City practised on a dry pitch with high grass this week in a bid to prepare for a similar surface to the one that caused them problems on their previous visit to Craven Cottage.

City's preparation worked a treat as a flowing 19-pass move climaxed with Kevin De Bruyne clipping a pass to Gvardiol on the edge of the edge.

The Croatian defender took two deft touches as he glided through the Fulham defence before planting a composed low finish past Bernd Leno. Guardiola's men monopolised possession, with Manuel Akanji wasting a golden opportunity just before half-time with a wild swipe that sailed over from De Bruyne's corner.

City took complete control in the 59th minute as Bernardo Silva accelerated into the area, his progress halted by Joao Palhinha's tackle, only for the alert Foden to pounce with a perfectly-placed strike into the far corner. Guardiola's team struck again in the 71st minute as Gvardiol stretched to turn in Silva's cross with an agile close-range finish for his fifth goal in his last seven appearances.

James Anderson announces retirement from Test cricket



LONDON (Agencies): England's veteran pacer James Anderson announced Saturday that he will retire from Test cricket this summer, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) confirmed.

In a statement, the ECB shared that Anderson announced his retirement via a personal statement. "Hi everyone. Just a note to say that the first Test of the summer at Lord's will be my last Test," stated Anderson in an ECB-released statement.

"It's been an incredible 20 years representing my country, playing the game I've loved since I was a kid. I'm going to miss walking out for England so much. But I know the time is right to step aside and let others realise their

dreams just like I got to, because there is no greater feeling.

"I couldn't have done it without the love and support of Daniella, Lola, Ruby and my parents. A huge thank you to them. Also, thank you to the players and coaches who have made this the best job in the world.

"I'm excited for the new challenges that lie ahead, as well as filling my days with even more golf.

"Thank you to everyone who has supported me over the years, it's always meant a lot, even if my face often doesn't show it. "See you at the Test, go well."

Notably, Anderson's retirement came just a day after The Guardian's report which claimed that

Iftikhar 'hopeful' for Pakistan comeback

DUBLIN (Monitoring Desk): All-rounder Iftikhar Ahmed pinned his hopes on Pakistan to stage a comeback in the ongoing three-match series against Ireland after succumbing to a shock loss in the series opener at Clontarf Cricket Club here on Friday.

In a video statement released by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), Iftikhar Ahmed acknowledged the team's shortcomings in fielding, adding that they did not play at their full potential.

"When I came runs were needed and I played my natural game. The way our team is we didn't perform to that level. We lacked in fielding, we dropped a catch and gave away a couple of boundaries as well," stated Iftikhar.

"This is part of the game and we are hopeful that we will make a comeback in the series with two games remaining," he added.

He then went on to express his confidence in the team's ability to force a turnaround in the ongoing series against Ireland and win the England series to attain confidence before the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024.

"With the quality our team has, we can make a comeback against Ireland. We will try to win our next series against England and take confidence into the upcoming T20 World Cup," Iftikhar concluded.

For the unversed, Iftikhar Ahmed played a brief yet effective cameo against Ireland and bolstered Pakistan's total at the backend. The right-handed batter smashed three fours and as many sixes on his way to an unbeaten 37 off just 15 deliveries.

His blazing knock powered Pakistan to a competitive total of 182/5 but the touring side yet ended up on the losing side as Ireland chased down the target with a ball to spare, at the back of Andy Balbirnie's half-century. Pakistan and Ireland next face each other in the second T20I of the three-match series at the same venue on Sunday.

England Test head coach Brendon McCullum flew from New Zealand to have a one-on-one discussion with Anderson regarding his future in the side.

According to the details, McCullum informed Anderson over a round of golf that he foresees the future in a build-up to the Ashes 2025-26.

James Anderson is the only pacer in history to take 700 Test wickets. He achieved the milestone during England's fifth away Test against India, in March this year.

He is also the third in the list of players with the most Test wickets, only behind spinners Muttiah Muralitharan (800 wickets) of Sri Lanka and the late Shane Warne (708 wickets) of Australia.



In brief

185,600 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Saturday released 185,600 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 233,000 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1469.54 feet and was 55.54 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 55,700 cusecs and 40,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1170.50 feet, which was 120.50 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 73,700 cusecs and 42,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 97,300, 59,100, 41,000 and 11,900 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 72,100 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 22,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Saadat Hasan remembered

ISLAMABAD (INP): Renowned Urdu writer Saadat Hasan Manto was remembered on his birth anniversary on Saturday. He was born on May 11, 1912 in Samrala, Ludhiana. He migrated to Pakistan after partition in 1947. Most of his life-time, Manto resided in Lahore. Some of his publications are, Atishpare, Manto Ke Afsane, Dhuan, Afsane Aur Drame, Laazat-e-Sang, Thanda Gosht, Baghair Ijazat, Burque, Ratti, Masha and Tolah. He also wrote a number of famous letters to Uncle Sam, which were published in English language as well. He died on January 18, 1955. On January 18, 2005, the Government of Pakistan issued a postage stamp to commemorate his services on his 50th death anniversary. On August 14, 2012, Manto was also honored with Nishan-e-Imtiaz award by Pakistani government.

Edu essential for progress

RAWALPINDI (APP): Deputy Commissioner Murree, Agha Zaheer Abbas Shirazi said that only a nation equipped with the education can progress and with quality education we can shape our future. He expressed these views during his surprise visit to Government Boys Primary School Gulhara Gali on Saturday. During the visit the deputy commissioner reviewed the attendance register of the staff, the school management's plan for providing quality education to the children and examined the cleanliness of the school. He visited different classrooms of the school and inquired about the provision of education to the students. He also urged teachers to improve their attendance and performance. Our children are our future, he said. The visit was a follow-up of instructions given by Rawalpindi's commissioner to all administration officers regarding implementation of the Chief Minister's 'Good Governance' program.

Revamping in growth rapidly

ISLAMABAD (INP): Following the directives of Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) Muhammad Ali Randhawa, the revamping of the One Window Facilitation Centre (OWFC) in the federal capital is progressing rapidly. Counters at the One Window Operations directorate were now operational from 9:00 AM to 9:00 PM, providing extended hours for the convenience of the general public, said a news release.



ISLAMABAD: PM's Coordinator on Climate Change & Environmental Coordination Romina Khurshid Alam alongside Azerbaijani Minister & President designated to COP29 Mukhtar Babayev during their visit to Faisal Mosque, listening the recitation of Holy Quran. —APP Photo

ANF, Security Forces encounter hostile resistance during operation

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in collaboration with Government of Balochistan and FC (North) is undertaking a poppy elimination campaign in Balochistan, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Saturday.

He informed that poppy crop had been eliminated in District Loralai, Dukki and Quetta Division. The campaign started on Mar 25, this year in District Loralai and Dukki. From April 28, the campaign moved to District chaman and Qila Abdullah in Quetta Division. Administrative and security coordinated with Law Enforcement

Agencies (LEAs) & Civil Administration.

On May 6, while the poppy eradication party comprising members of Security Forces (SFs) and LEAs including ANF, Army, FC North, Police, Bln Levies and Excise Taxation and Narcotics Control (ET&NC) Dept were moving back from Khurgai, Tehsil Gulistan after clearing Poppy Crop, the force stopped by an angry mob at approximately five km short of Gulistan. As the negotiations with the leaders was in process, suddenly the mob started pelting stones and chanting slogans against the SF, however, the

situation was tactfully handled and the force resumed its move towards Gulistan, the spokesman said.

He informed that once the forces reached Gulistan Karezi, it was ambushed by armed tribesmen with, Light Machine Guns (LMGs) and Rocket Launchers (RLs). The convoy came under heavy fire from adjacent heights due to which 6 Security Forces personnel got injured who were shifted to CMH Hospital Quetta for a treatment.

It is important to emphasize that poppy cultivation, as per the CNS Act 1997, is a criminal offense. Despite facing challenging weather conditions, the forces

demonstrated exceptional courage and determination, ventured into far-flung areas to execute the operations like the Poppy Elimination Campaign.

Despite the risks posed by hostile incident, ANF and other forces remain steadfast in their commitment to upholding law and order and eliminating such large-scale cultivation which cannot be overstated, as it disrupts the supply chain of illegal narcotics. "We extend our thoughts and prayers to the injured officials and reaffirm our determination to continue our efforts in creating a drug-free environment," he added.

Commissioner Tent Pegging festival 2024 held

RAWALPINDI (APP): Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) Rawalpindi here on Saturday organized a 'Commissioner Tent Pegging festival 2024' at Gorakhpur.

Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Engineer Aamir Khattak also visited the venue and congratulated the DG PHA for the successful organization of the Tent Pegging festival.

Director General, PHA Ahmed Hasan Ranjha on the occasion said that PHA, Rawalpindi succeeded to organize a historic 'Commissioner Tent Pegging festival 2024' at Gorakhpur Nursery.

Tent pegging is a game where a person on a horse rides fast and uses a sword or a long stick to hit and pick up a wooden peg as a target.

Teams from Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa participated in the competitions. Ahmed Hasan Ranjha said that Tent pegging is a traditional sport that started from the 18th century and this sport presents 'our rich rural culture'.

Tent Pegging is very famous in the villages and fairs of Punjab and in recent years this sport is being watched and appreciated in the cities as well. The DG said that PHA is committed to providing sports and recreation facilities to the citizens.

Granting Palestinians full membership status: PUC hails United Nations resolution

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) has hailed the resolution passed by the United Nations General Assembly on Friday, affirming the eligibility of Palestinians for full membership status at the United Nations.

In a media interview on Saturday, Chairman PUC Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi expressed his appreciation for this gigantic move, emphasizing that it underscored the global community's unwavering support for the establishment of an independent Palestine and the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people.

He said that the world powers and all United Nations members need to advocate for Palestine's permanent membership and to take immediate and decisive action against Israel's egregious acts, halting the senseless massacre of innocent civilians.

Ashrafi conveyed gratitude to the nations instrumental in presenting the resolution, particularly highlighting the contributions of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Turkey, Iran and other supportive countries.

In addition, he appreciated the Route to Makkah facility launched at Jinnah International Airport

Karachi this year, following its successful implementation at Islamabad International Airport. He said this expansion would prove a crucial step in facilitating pilgrims traveling to the Kingdom for Hajj.

The Chairman PUC said the Route to Makkah initiative, a joint effort between the two nations, would streamline the immigration process for Pakistani pilgrims traveling to Saudi Arabia. By establishing dedicated immigration counters and facilities at the following airports, Ashrafi said the project would enhance the overall pilgrimage experience, reduce waiting times, and ensure a hassle-free journey for pilgrims.

He said the implementation of the Route to Makkah project at Jinnah International Airport Karachi was a good omen for thousands of pilgrims from Sindh and adjoining regions. With Karachi being one of the busiest airports in Pakistan, the availability of dedicated facilities for pilgrims expected to significantly alleviate congestion and enhance operational efficiency during peak travel seasons, he maintained.

Ashrafi said the expansion of the Route to Makkah project underscored the commitment of both the Saudi and

Pakistani governments to enhancing bilateral ties and promoting religious tourism between the two countries. He said this initiative not only served as a testament to the strong friendship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia but also demonstrated a shared vision for providing exceptional services to pilgrims undertaking the sacred journey to the holy land.

The PUC Chairman expressed hope that the Route to Makkah project would be expanded further to other airports across Pakistan as authorities are optimistic about its positive impact on the overall pilgrimage experience. By prioritizing the convenience and well-being of pilgrims, he said this initiative had reaffirmed the commitment of both nations to facilitating religious tourism and fostering closer ties between the people of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

In conclusion, Ashrafi underscored the efforts made by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif during his government's previous tenure to expand the Route to Makkah initiative. He also extended gratitude to the Saudi Crown Prince, Muhammad bin Salman, for issuing a directive to establish this facility at the Karachi airport.

NA Speaker summons meetings on Monday

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Assembly speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has called for meetings with parliamentary leaders on Monday, May 13, 2024, at 3:00 p.m. at Parliament House to discuss issues related to scheduling the first parliamentary year of the 5th session of 16th National Assembly.

The speaker has invited parliamentary leaders and chief whips from various

political parties, including Federal Minister for Law and Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Azam Nazir Tarar, Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Chaudhry Salik Hussain, and Members of the National Assembly such as Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, Malik Amir Dogar, Ijaz Hussain Jakhani, Syed Aminul Haque, Noor Alam Khan, Gul Asghar Khan, and

Khalid Hussain Magasi. The forum will discuss the scheduling of the motion of thanks for the President's address, as well as discuss the forthcoming budget meeting.

It's important to mention that President Asif Ali Zardari has summoned a session of the National Assembly on Monday, May 13, 2024, at 4:00 p.m. at the Parliament House.

Task Force demolishes site offices of illegal housing society

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Task Force formed to take strict action in accordance with the law against illegal housing schemes has demolished site offices and other infrastructure of Ruden Enclave.

According to a RDA spokesman, in compliance with the directives of the Divisional Intelligence Committee, the Task Force was conducting operations against illegal housing schemes.

In a recent operation against the Ruden Enclave scheme in Mouza Budhial, Rawalpindi, the Task Force demolished the site offices and other infrastructure.

He informed that the operation was being carried out under the supervision of Commissioner Rawalpindi Division

Muhammad Abdul Aamir Khattak, the Director General (DG) RDA, Kinza Murtaza, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rawalpindi, and the City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi.

The DG RDA said that upon the Commissioner's instructions, operations against all illegal societies would continue without any discrimination. Strict action would be taken against the rules violators, he added. She advised the citizens not to invest in illegal housing schemes and visit RDA website www.rda.gov.pk to check status of the housing schemes.

The spokesman informed that earlier, notices were issued to the owners and sponsors of

the Ruden Enclave scheme to stop illegal advertisements, booking of the plots, and development work. Despite warnings, the owners were found operating booking offices for the illegal scheme, in violation of rules. The joint operation team, comprising officials from the RDA, Saddar Berooni police station, and representatives from the District Administration conducted the operation.

Director MP&TE RDA Jamshaid Aftab, Deputy Director PHATA, Assistant Director Building Control RDA, Assistant Director Planning RDA, RDA Scheme/Building Inspectors, along with others took part in the operation.

FDE under criticism over against-merit appointments

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) is facing criticism over the out-of-turn appointments of Principals at ICT colleges.

The teachers accused the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) of disregarding seniority norms in these appointments.

In a recent development, Aamir Mumtaz, ranked at Serial No. 24 in the seniority list of associate professors, has been appointed as the principal of Islamabad Model College for Boys (IMCB) F-11/I.

This decision took place during the transition to a new acting Director General, prompting speculation about the timing and motives driving the move. This is not an isolated case.

In a series of appointments dating back several months, junior associate professors have consistently been chosen over their more experienced colleagues, disregarding the principle of seniority and merit.

The teachers voiced con-

cerns over the breach of merit and seniority principles in the appointments of college principals. They highlighted instances where junior associate professors were elevated to principal positions, disregarding seniority and violating established protocols.

An associate professor pointed out that Mr. Najeebullah, who was at serial number 65 in the seniority list of associate professors, was appointed as principal of IMCB G-11/I in September 2023.

Sharafat Ali Awan's appointment to IMCB Pakistan Town stands out as another glaring instance where seniority was disregarded, given his position at serial number 20 in the seniority list when he assumed the role of principal.

Similarly, Ghayur Hussain's appointment as the principal of IMCB Maira Bhagwal overlooked several deserving candidates, including Javed Iqbal Shah, Dr. Waheedu Zaman, Iranfanullah, Waseem

Ahmed Shah, and Dr. Muhammad Ilyas.

A senior associate professor, on the condition of anonymity told APP, that "Such appointments have not only fueled resentment and dissatisfaction among overlooked candidates but have also raised doubts about the fairness and objectivity of the selection process."

This deviation from the seniority principle and the practice of out-of-turn appointments prompted 14 associate professors to contest the FDE's decisions in the Federal Service Tribunal (FST) in December 2023.

Another associate professor lamented working under a principal junior to him, questioning the department's disregard for his decades-long service and expertise.

The teachers argue that these irregularities not only undermine institutional efficiency but also impact student learning and exam performances.

DCC meeting reviews performance of different departments

RAWALPINDI, May 11 (APP): Second District Coordination Committee (DCC) meeting held here on Saturday under the chairmanship of Chairman Qamar ul Islam Raja reviewed the performance of all the departments concerned.

The meeting was held in the committee room of the Deputy Commissioner's office. Member National Assembly, Malik Abrar, Daniyal Chaudhry, Deputy Commissioner, Rawalpindi Hasan Waqar Cheema, members of Provincial Assembly Punjab, Bilal Yamin Satti, Malik Ifthikhar, Imran Ilyas, Mohsin Khan, Raja Hanif Advocate, Malik Mansoor Raja, Sagheer Ahmed and others participated in the meeting.

In the meeting, a briefing was given regarding the performance of all the departments. A 6-point agenda was also discussed in the meeting. The performance of Health Department, Education Department, Punjab Revenue Authority, Building

Department, Police was also reviewed. Qamar ul Islam Raja said that the prevention of dengue needs to be done on an urgent basis and in the first phase, high-risk Union Councils should be targeted.

The first floor, second floor of Holy Family Hospital would be handed over to the hospital administration by May 15, the Chairman said adding, 80 percent of the work on the pathology lab in the basement had also been completed. The basement of Holy Family Hospital would be handed over to the hospital administration by May 22, he informed.

27 Schemes of Building Department were being completed, Qamar ul Islam Raja said adding, work was swiftly being completed on 24 schemes while work on one scheme was stopped due to revision.

Revamping of Kotli Sattian and Kahota THQ was in progress, the Chairman said and issued inquiry

orders regarding the irregularities in the promotions of some teachers.

Cell tax was being collected by the provinces themselves. So far, sales tax was being collected on 75 services including marriage halls, hotels, construction companies, consultants and other private sector, he added.

He directed that awareness should be ensured through social, electronic and print media to create awareness among the people regarding collection of the sales tax. He instructed the authorities that the district administration and police should play a key role to ensure the implementation of 'One Dish' orders of the Punjab governments. Indiscriminate action should be taken against the land grabbers, illegal societies and drugs, he directed the authorities concerned. Qamar ul Islam Raja also ordered the officers to prepare a plan for the establishment of the cattle markets in connection with Eid-ul-Adha.

WFP helps Afghan children

KABUL (Ariana News): The World Food Programme (WFP) said it can only support one in every three malnourished children across Afghanistan, highlighting the shortage of funding. WFP said on X that there are three million malnourished children in Afghanistan. "But we can only support 1 in every 3 malnourished children across Afghanistan," WFP said. "Children bear the brunt of the assistance cuts. Sustained funding is vital."

Goods transported via ARA

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Afghanistan Railway Authority (ARA) reports that since the beginning of Hamal (solar calendar), nearly 500,000 tons of commercial goods have been exported and imported via the four railways of the country. Abdul Sami Durani, the spokesperson for the Railway Authority, says that the majority of the transports are conducted through the Hairatan, Torghundi, Roznak, and Aqina railways.

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

Bennett urges aid for flood victims



KABUL (Khaama Press): Richard Bennett, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Afghanistan, has called for immediate aid for flood victims in the country.

On Saturday, Bennett wrote on his social media platform X that the recent floods in the country,

including in Baghlan where many lives were lost, remind us of Afghanistan's vulnerability to climate crises. He added, "Both immediate help and long-term planning by the Taliban and local actors are needed."

The provinces of Baghlan, Takhar,

Badakhshan, Samangan, Herat, and Ghor witnessed devastating and deadly floods. According to the reports, over 200 people have lost their lives due to the flash flooding in these provinces. The floods have wreaked havoc across several regions, resulting in the destruction of hundreds of homes. Families have been displaced, losing not only their shelters but also their possessions, further exacerbating the already dire humanitarian situation in these areas. This widespread devastation underscores the urgent need for increased disaster response and recovery efforts to assist those affected.

500 Afghan migrants returned

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation announced that in one day, 582 Afghan migrants were returned from Pakistan "forcibly and voluntarily." According to the ministry's newsletter, these migrants entered Afghanistan, through the Torkham crossing. On Saturday, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation stated in a newsletter citing border officials of the Taliban in Torkham that 67 families, comprising 336 individuals, were "forcibly" deported from Pakistan and another 48 families, consisting of 246 individuals, returned "voluntarily" to Afghanistan. The Taliban claim they have provided 10,000 Afghans in aid to each family. The newsletter states that the deported migrants from Pakistan have been referred to international organizations for assistance. The humanitarian situation in Afghanistan has reached a critical point, with widespread suffering exacerbated by ongoing conflicts, economic instability, and natural disasters. Millions of Afghans are facing acute food insecurity, with limited access to basic healthcare and education. The crumbling infrastructure and the harsh winters further compound these challenges, leaving vulnerable populations, especially children and the elderly, in desperate need of international aid and support.

The inadequate healthcare system struggles to cope with the needs of the population, exacerbated by a critical shortage of medical professionals and supplies. Educational facilities are also insufficient, with many children having limited or no access to schooling, further hindering the country's prospects for recovery and development. These compounding factors underscore the urgent need for comprehensive international support and a coordinated humanitarian response to prevent a deeper crisis.

400 licenses granted, says Ministry

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Ministry of Energy and Water said that in the past three years, about 400 private water purification companies have obtained operating licenses based on specific conditions of the ministry. Matiullah Abed, spokesperson for the Ministry of Energy and Water, said: "So far, about 400 water purification factories have been granted licenses by the Ministry of Energy and Water, and they have been advised by the Ministry to operate according to these guidelines."

An official from one of the water purification companies said that in 12PD of Kabul, they have been operational for over 10 years with 15 employees. "We transfer water for purification from Khaki Jabbar District of Kabul to the company by tankers, and for water storage, we have 6,000-liter storage tankers which are being unloaded, and we have a purification machine that purifies the water in three to four stages," said Mohammad Fahim Ata, an official of the water purification company. At the same time, several residents of the capital complain about the poor quality of water from some purification companies. They are demanding attention from the Islamic Emirate to this matter.

"Our request from the government is that they pay serious attention in this field; there are many companies, and it is possible that some companies may be fraudulent," said Zahedullah, a resident of Kabul. "We live in the textiles area; some companies have good water, and some do not have good quality," said Khial Mohammad, a resident of Kabul.

Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock of Afghanistan, the meeting discussed Japan's cooperation in these areas. According to a statement from the Ministry of

Floods in Baghlan: Emergency meeting held to address flood victims

KABUL (Ariana News): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations (MoRR) held Saturday an emergency meeting in Kabul attended by the humanitarian aid coordinator of the International Organization for Migration to instantly address the needs of recent flood victims in Baghlan province. The ministry quoted Abdul Rahman Rahmani, head of the assistance coordination of the ministry, as saying that the goal of the meeting was to provide emergency assistance to flood victims and how to consider first aid. According to reports, intense floods in Baghlan's many districts have left hundreds of dead and injured. The ministry stated that hundreds of houses have been destroyed and people are living in open space in the mountains. Meanwhile, the ministry added that the figures are not yet final and the process of rescue operations is still ongoing with the cooperation of health teams. At the meeting, Mohammad Omar Has-

hemi, the humanitarian aid coordinator of the International Organization for Migration, also assured that the organization is ready to provide urgent aid to the victims. BNA adds: In a remarkable display of bravery and dedication, personnel from the Ministry of National Defense embarked on a heroic and life-saving mission to rescue citizens affected by the devastating floods in the Jarkushk area of Baghlan province.



The Ministry's unwavering commitment to the safety and welfare of the people was evident as they took swift action to address the dire situation. The Ministry assigned personnel and units from the 217 Omari Army Corps with the vital task of rescuing both citizens and vehicles that were trapped in the flooded areas. With unwavering determination and utilizing every available resource, these courageous individu-

als are tirelessly working in the affected regions to ensure swift and effective relief efforts. Tragically, the province of Baghlan was once again struck by severe floods that swept through the districts of Pol-e Khomri, Burka, and central Baghlan. These catastrophic floods resulted in a heartbreaking loss of 50 precious lives. The devastating impact of the natural disaster has left communities in shock and mourning.

US envoy urges Taliban to lift restrictions on Afghan women

KABUL (Khaama Press): Rina Amiri, the US Special Envoy for Afghanistan's Women, citing the human and material losses from recent floods in several provinces, has called on the Taliban to lift the "paralyzing" restrictions on women and girls to combat the damages caused by climate change. Amiri wrote on her social media platform X, that the Taliban should utilize the capabilities of all Afghan people to address the damages caused by climate change. She has expressed sympathy with the victims and those affected by the recent

floods in Afghanistan. Aid organizations, upon which the lives of millions of citizens have depended since the Taliban's takeover, have repeatedly stated that the Taliban's restrictions against women are a barrier to providing assistance to the people. In some cases, these organizations have been forced to suspend their activities due to the Taliban's restrictions. Recent floods in the provinces of Badakhshan, Ghor, Sar-e Pul, Herat, Baghlan, Faryab, Takhar, Kunduz, Jowzjan, Kandahar, and other provinces

have caused significant human and material losses. This comes amid a dire humanitarian crisis, which the recent floods further exacerbate the situation. Some residents of the flood-affected areas said that several days have passed without receiving any assistance from the Taliban government or aid agencies. To date, the Taliban have not released a comprehensive report detailing the full extent of casualties and damages resulting from the recent floods. However, a spokesperson from the Ministry of Interior within

the group has confirmed significant losses in Baghlan province alone, where at least 50 individuals have lost their lives and more than 100 others have sustained injuries. The lack of detailed information and the emerging numbers from Baghlan underscore the severe impact of the natural disaster on the region. The reported figures highlight the urgent need for more transparent reporting and effective disaster response measures to address the ongoing crisis and prevent further loss of life and injury.

Street book exhibition organized in Herat City

HERAT (TOLOnews): A street book exhibition has been held in the city of Herat with the aim of encouraging youth to read. Most of the enthusiasts and visitors of this exhibition are girls deprived of education. "The holding of our book exhibition at the city level indicates that our society is an aware and cultural one, and there is security in this society," said Abdullah Momini, the organizer of the exhibition. Lalah Sahra, who is deprived of education after the ban on girls' education and the closure of universities' doors, told TOLOnews: "I was in my second semester when unfortunately, the university was closed. I love to read and despite the university being closed, I have not distanced myself from books."

A number of young people said that although they are interested in reading, they do not have the money



to buy the books they like. They believe that the only way to lead Afghanistan towards a bright future is to turn people, especially the youth, to reading books. "Reading is very beneficial for the youth to gain and learn something," said Mohammad Sefat Mushfeq, a resident of Herat. "Reading makes our minds more open to understanding past and future issues," said Najibullah Mohammadi, a student. This street book exhibition comes as, according to

booksellers, book sales in Herat have significantly decreased compared to previous years. The closure of schools and universities to girls is said to be one of the reasons for the cooling of the book-selling market in Herat.

Army corps praised for ensuring security

KABUL (BNA): In a momentous visit to the Khalid Bin Walid 201 Army Corps, the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mawlawi Amir Khan "Muttaqi," lauded the defense forces for their exceptional efforts in establishing security, stability, and protecting the lives of their fellow citizens. The visit, which took place in the eastern zone of the country, showcased the unwavering commitment of the officials and Mujahideen in ensuring the

well-being of the nation. Accompanied by Mawlawi Abdul Saboor Abu djaneh, the army corps commander, and other high-ranking officials, the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs expressed deep gratitude for the dedication displayed by the personnel of the Khaled Bin Walid 201 Army Corps. He commended their remarkable achievements, not only in securing the eastern frontlines but also in winning the hearts of the people through their stead-

fast commitment to protecting their fellow compatriots. During the visit, the delegation witnessed firsthand the exemplary work carried out by the Khaled Bin Walid 201 Army Corps. This included their tireless efforts in maintaining security, preserving stability, and defending the nation against threats. The Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs emphasized the profound impact of these endeavors, which had instilled a sense of trust and confidence among the populace.

fast commitment to protecting their fellow compatriots. During the visit, the delegation witnessed firsthand the exemplary work carried out by the Khaled Bin Walid 201 Army Corps. This included their tireless efforts in maintaining security, preserving stability, and defending the nation against threats. The Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs emphasized the profound impact of these endeavors, which had instilled a sense of trust and confidence among the populace.

Japanese envoy meets Minister for Agriculture



KABUL (Ariana News): The Japanese ambassador in Kabul, Takayoshi Kuromiya, met Saturday with Sader Azam Osmani,

the Deputy of the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock. According to a statement from the Ministry of

Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock of Afghanistan, the meeting discussed Japan's cooperation in these areas.

Domestic tourists choosing to visit Marmul District in Balkh

BALKH (TOLOnews): Marmul District in Balkh Province hosts a large number of domestic tourists. Tourists said that in the past years, due to insecurity, they were deprived of visiting beautiful and recreational areas in the country; but now they can visit the country's attractions with peace of mind. Pesta Mazar, a recreational area full of pistachio trees in Marmul District of Balkh Province, located 20 kilometers from the city of Mazar-e-Sharif, is where these days, youth and families engage in cooking and

other entertainments such as kite flying and ball games. "Here is peace, and there is eagerness with which people have come here, along with their families, and it's very good," said Zalmay, a resident of Mazar-e-Sharif. "It's a very good atmosphere; those who have come here with their families are having a great time," said Samiullah Sadeed, a resident of Mazar-e-Sharif. The increase in tourists and visitors in the Pesta Mazar area has also created

work opportunities for some residents of Balkh Province. "This is our first Friday, and until Eid al-Adha, we will be serving our compatriots on Fridays at this place," said Nesar Ahmad, a kite seller. "Thank God, it's very good; on Fridays, people come here for recreation, and we are happy with our work," said Gulbuddin, a driver. The Balkh security commander also pledged serious efforts aimed at providing better security in the province.

Abdul Raziq Rashid, Balkh's security commander, said: "Any of our compatriots from any corner of Afghanistan can come to the districts of Balkh Province day and night as the security is very good." Following continuous rains and the greening of plains and pastures, more citizens of the country spend their holidays in green and recreational areas, and since the beginning of the month of Hamal (first month of solar calendar), this trend has significantly increased in all provinces.



GAZA STRIP: Palestinians transport their belongings on the back of a van as they flee Rafah to a safer location.

PTI not holding backdoor talks: Qaiser

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Asad Qaiser said that they were neither holding any talks with any political party nor talking to anyone else via backdoor channels. "We are not talking to anyone, not even via backdoor channels," clarified the former National Assembly speaker while speaking. His remarks come after the party has time and again said that it was ready to hold negotiations with anyone except for three parties in the ruling coalition — Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P).

Qaiser said that the May 9 incidents were used as an excuse to target the party. "A fake government was formed by benefiting one party, however, we will not back out from our stance," said the PTI leader, adding that the country will move forward when there is a rule of law. It is important to note that the military has stated that there will be no talks with the planners and abettors of the May 9 riots.

Inter-Services Public Relations Director General (ISPR DG) Maj Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry said all political leadership and forces were respectable but no talks were possible with those political groups and leaders who attack their own armed forces, insult martyrs, create gulf and hatred between people and armed forces. He said that

such elements were left with the only option of sincerely apologising to the nation and pledging to give up politics of hatred and start constructive politics.

"We cannot talk with such groups which spread anarchy in the country and create gulf and hatred between people and armed forces," he said. Meanwhile, sharing his position on the ouster of Sher Afzal Marwat from top PTI bodies, Qaiser said that he is an important leader of the party who has performed his duties as well. However, Qaiser said that he does not know about Marwat's removal from the PTI's political and core committees.

He made these comments after the firebrand leader from KP was excluded from the party's top decision-making bodies reportedly on Imran Khan's orders. The development has widened rifts among the senior leadership. Earlier, PTI withdrew Marwat's nomination for the Public Accounts Committee chairmanship.

Meanwhile, former federal minister Fawad Chaudhry Saturday said that "better talks" can be held with Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif as he holds the party's reins instead of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. "Shahbaz has nothing, Nawaz can play a role in improving the country's political environment," Fawad said while speaking to the media at a district court in

Islamabad.

"Nawaz leads the PML-N and therefore better talks can be held with him," the ex-minister added. "Nawaz leads the PML-N and therefore better talks can be held with him," the ex-minister added in response to a question regarding negotiations with the PML-N. Fawad's remarks come as the three-time former prime minister is likely to reclaim PML-N's presidency during its general council meeting on May 28.

Nawaz's likely reinstatement as party's president was announced by PML-N Punjab chapter President. Furthermore, when asked about when he's rejoining the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Fawad reiterated his last month's remarks stressing that he never left the party to join it again. Stressing the need to stand with incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan, he said that the country "will lose if Khan loses".

"At this point, whether you're with the PTI or against it, whether you're part of it or not, the important thing is that if Khan loses [then] the country will lose. "Anyone who wants the supremacy of the people [he] will have to stand with the PTI founder [...] you have to support Khan not for his sake but for your own," Fawad added. On the issue of infighting and rifts among the PTI's ranks, he said: "The PTI is a big party [and is also] quite loud [...] even if it is something trivial there's a lot of commotion over it."

Pakistan flays India's treatment of Yasin Malik

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Foreign Office has raised serious concerns over the prolonged detention and alleged mistreatment of Kashmiri leader Yasin Malik. The Foreign Office has labeled Malik's imprisonment a "unfair" and a "denial of fair trial," sparking international attention to the human rights situation in the region.

Yasin Malik, a prominent figure in Kashmiri politics, has been held in custody under what Pakistan describes as a "30-year-old false case." His family, including his 11-year-old daughter Razia Sultana and wife Mashal Malik, have been vocal in their calls for his release, citing deteriorating health and lack of access to proper medical treatment.

According to reports, Yasin Malik is currently detained in the notorious Tihar Jail, where conditions are said to be inhumane. Pakistan has urged India to drop the charges against Malik and provide him with quality medical care.

The Foreign Office's statement highlights the deep concern over India's use of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) Act of 2008 against Malik, accusing India of exceeding "moral and legal limits." This move has garnered condemnation not only from Pakistan but also from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Liaison Group.

Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has pledged to continue advocating for Yasin Malik's rights at international forums, emphasizing the importance of upholding principles of justice and human rights. The Foreign Office urges India to allow Yasin Malik to reunite with his family and live freely, calling for an end to what it perceives as unjust treatment.

Opposition announces anti-govt protests

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The opposition alliance, Tehreek-e-Tahafuz-e-Ayeen-e-Pakistan, has decided to launch a nationwide protest campaign against the ruling government.

The group has also decided to approach the court against the administrations in Faisalabad and Karachi for not allowing them to hold rallies in the cities. According to details, important decisions related to the political situation of the country were approved in the important meeting of Tehreek-e-Tahafuz-e-Ayeen-e-Pakistan under the chairmanship of Pakhtunkhwa Mili Awami Party chief Mehmood Khan Achakzai. In the consultative meeting, the opposition alliance decided to launch a nationwide campaign and expressed its determination to carry forward the movement and struggle for real freedom. It also stressed that holding public gatherings was a constitutional, legal and democratic right, adding that the rallies would be held in any case. During the meeting, the anti-government alliance strongly condemned the killing of seven innocent people in a recent incident of terrorism in Gwadar and the brutal torture and arrests of lawyers of the Lahore High Court Bar.

Israel strikes Gaza as Rafah evacuations ordered

GAZA STRIP (AFP): Israeli strikes on Saturday hit parts of Gaza including Rafah where Israel expanded an evacuation order and the UN warned of "epic" disaster if an outright invasion of the crowded city occurs. AFP journalists, medics and witnesses reported strikes from the south to the north of the coastal territory, where the UN says aid is blocked after Israeli troops defied international opposition and entered eastern Rafah this week, effectively shutting two crossings. At least 21 people were killed during strikes in central Gaza and taken to Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir Al-Balah city, a hospital statement said.

Bodies covered in white lay on the ground in a courtyard of the facility. A man in a baseball cap leaned over one body bag, clasping a dust-covered hand that protruded. The feet of another corpse poked from under a blanket bearing the picture of a large teddy bear. In Rafah, witnesses reported intense air strikes near the crossing with Egypt, and AFP images showed smoke rising over the city.

Other strikes occurred in north Gaza, they said. Israeli troops on Tuesday seized and closed the Palestinian side of the Rafah crossing — through which all fuel passes into Gaza — after ordering residents of eastern Rafah to evacuate. Israel's military said it went into eastern Rafah to pursue Palestinian militants. Fighting continued on the Gazan side of the Rafah crossing, the military reported on Friday, before on Saturday expanding its evacuation order to more areas of Rafah's east.

The new order, posted on social media platform X by military spokesman Avichay Adraee, said the designated areas had "witnessed Hamas terrorist activities in recent days and weeks." The war began with Hamas's unprecedented October 7 attack on Israel, which resulted in the deaths of more than 1,170 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally of Israeli official figures.

During their attack, militants also seized hostages. Israel estimates 128 of them remain in Gaza including 36 whom the military says are dead. Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed at least 34,971 people in Gaza,

mostly women and children, according to the Hamas-run territory's health ministry. A US State Department report on Friday said Israel likely violated norms on international law in its use of weapons from the United States but it did not find enough evidence to block shipments.

The State Department submitted its report two days after President Joe Biden publicly threatened to withhold certain bombs and artillery shells if Israel goes ahead with an all-out assault on Rafah, where the United Nations said 1.4 million had been sheltering. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has pledged to "eliminate" Hamas battalions in Rafah and achieve "total victory," after the army in January said it had dismantled the Hamas command structure in northern Gaza.

But on Saturday Adraee said Hamas "is trying to rebuild" there, and ordered evacuations from the north's Jabalia and Beit Lahia areas. After rising criticism from Washington over the civilian impact of Israel's war against Hamas, the threat to withhold weapons was the first time Biden raised the ultimate US leverage over Israel — its military aid which totals \$3 billion annually.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Friday that Gaza risked an "epic humanitarian disaster" if Israel launched a full-scale ground operation in Rafah. While the army said it reopened Kerem Shalom crossing near Rafah on Wednesday, aid agencies cautioned that getting assistance through the militarised area remained extremely difficult.

A UN report late Friday cited Martin Griffiths, the UN's aid chief, as saying closure of the crossings "means no aid." Israel has said its Erez crossing into northern Gaza remains open. The State Department report said it was "reasonable to assess" that Israel has used American weapons in ways inconsistent with standards on humanitarian rights but that the United States could not reach "conclusive findings."

The report does not affect Biden's threat to withhold some weapons. On

Friday the White House said it did not yet see a "major ground operation" in Rafah but was watching the situation "with concern." Biden's administration had already paused delivery of 3,500 bombs as Israel appeared ready to attack Rafah.

More than 100,000 people fled the city after the initial evacuation order, the United Nations said on Friday. Israel on Saturday gave a figure of 300,000, as more Rafah residents piled water tanks, mattresses and other belongings onto vehicles and prepared to flee again. Malek Al-Zaza, with a trim grey beard, said he has been displaced three times now during the war and found "no food" and "no water" in central Gaza's Nuseirat camp where he has returned. "We only have God looking out for us," he said.

Israel said it had delivered 200,000 liters of fuel to Gaza on Friday through Kerem Shalom — the amount the United Nations says is needed every day to keep aid trucks moving and hospital generators working. Reiterating his calls for a ceasefire, Guterres said: "We are actively engaged with all involved for the resumption of the entry of life-saving supplies — including desperately needed fuel — through Rafah and Kerem Shalom crossings." The evacuation order on Saturday told residents to go to the "humanitarian zone" of Al-Mawasi, on the coast northwest of Rafah.

That area has "extremely limited access to clean drinking water, latrines, etcetera," said Sylvain Groulx, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) emergency coordinator in Gaza. The army late Friday said rocket fire from Gaza wounded an Israeli civilian in the southern city of Beersheba. It was the first time since December that the city had come under Palestinian rocket attack.

In New York, the UN General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to grant the Palestinians additional rights in the global body and backed their drive for full membership. Palestinian ambassador to the UN Riyad Mansour said the vote was historic, but Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz said the move told Hamas that "violence pays off."

Modi allowed to continue 'brazen violations': Opposition

NEW DELHI (Reuters): India's opposition said the nation's election commission was allowing Prime Minister Narendra Modi to continue "unchecked and brazen" violations by not taking action on opposition complaints of religious hate speech and misrepresentation.

More than halfway through India's six-week national elections, the world's biggest, the Congress party-led opposition complained in a letter to the Election Commission of India on Friday that "no meaningful action has been taken to penalise those who are guilty in the ruling regime."

This was a "complete abdication" of the commission's duty, it said. "As a result there has been an unchecked and brazen continuation of these violations, which are now committed with impunity and utter disregard." The watchdog is responsible for ensuring political parties do not violate election rules against promoting division along religious, caste or linguistic lines in the multiethnic South Asian nation.

In his campaign speeches, Modi, seeking a rare third consecutive term, has targeted the Congress, claiming it

wants to help minority Muslims at the expense of other socially disadvantaged groups. Representatives for the commission and Modi's Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) did not respond to requests seeking comment.

Election results in the world's most populous nation are to be announced on June 4. The commission on Tuesday ordered social media platform X to take down a video posted by a BJP state unit that accused Congress leaders of planning to extend welfare benefits to Muslims at the cost of other disadvantaged tribal and Hindu caste groups.

While not making any rulings on the complaints, the commission has sought a response from BJP chief JP Nadda for an April 21 speech in which Modi said the Congress planned to redistribute wealth from Hindus among Muslims, whom he called "infiltrators" and "those with many children". The commission has also sent a notice to the Congress regarding complaints by the BJP, which says it has filed three complaints.

"The delay puts a question mark

on the credibility of the election commission and therefore on the election process," said SY Qureshi, a former head of the three-member election commission. "Any damage to its reputation will cause incalculable harm to the legitimacy of India's democracy." The opposition letter mentions 10 complaints the Congress had lodged since April 6 against Modi and key aides for what it calls "divisive", "false" and "provocative" statements that sow sectarian division and misrepresent Congress' positions.

"We are not told what is the response, what is the action being taken," Congress lawmaker Abhishek Manu Singhvi told reporters after meeting commission officials on Friday. "This is an irreversible window," Singhvi said. "If they don't act promptly it would be a complete abdication of constitutional duty." Ashok Lavasa, who was an election commissioner during the 2019 general election, said the process from receiving a complaint to deciding on it "should not take more than three to four days because otherwise it loses purpose", as the campaign phase is quite short.

Fighting rages in Kharkiv region, Russia touts gains

KYIV (Reuters): Fierce fighting raged into a second day on the fringes of Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv region on Saturday as Moscow said it had captured five villages, while Kyiv said it was repulsing the attacks and battling for control of the settlements.

Russia launched the armoured incursion, an attack on a new front that may presage a broader push into Kharkiv region or aim to draw away overstretched Ukrainian forces from where Moscow's offensive is focused in the east. Kyiv has been on the back foot on the battlefield for months as Russian troops have slowly advanced mainly in the Donetsk region to the south, taking advantage of Ukraine's shortages of troop manpower and artillery shells. The Russian Defence Ministry told a briefing that Moscow's forces had taken the Kharkiv region villages of Pletenivka, Ohirtseve, Boryshivka, Pylina and Strilecha across the border from Russia's Belgorod region.

But Kharkiv's governor Oleh Syniehubov said that active fighting continued on the territory of all five of the frontier villages that are located within three to five kms (1.9-3.1 miles) of the border. "We clearly understand what forces the enemy is using in the north of our territory. Certainly, the escalation can grow, the pressure can increase, it can strengthen its military units, its military presence," he said. He said there was no imminent danger to the regional capital of Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city, and no need to begin evacuating its roughly 1.3 million inhabitants who continue to live there despite regular missile and drone strikes. "As of now the enemy keeps pressing in the north of our region. Our forces have repelled nine attacks," he told a news conference.

Kyiv rushed in reinforcements to deal with the incursion and Nazar Voloshyn, spokesman for Ukraine's eastern command, said on Saturday that Kyiv's forces had managed to contain Russia's forces in the borderlands where it is unclear who has control. "The enemy is localized in the 'gray zone', it is not expanding. However, there is the question of finally destroying it and catching it in the tree lines where it could hide," he said in televised comments.

Russian forces first attacked Kharkiv region in February 2022 during their full-scale invasion, but were routed from most of the province by a lightning Ukrainian counter-offensive in September of that year. Russia's neighbouring

Belgorod region has since come under regular Ukrainian drone and artillery strikes and Kremlin leader Vladimir Putin suggested in March that Moscow could try to establish a buffer zone inside Ukrainian territory.

ISPR chief promoted

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Three Pakistan Army major generals, including Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Major General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, have been promoted to the rank of lieutenant general.

The two other officers who were promoted to the rank of lieutenant general are Major General Omer Ahmed Bukhari and Major General Inayat Hussain. Chief of Army Staff General (COAS) Asim Munir has appointed the newly promoted officers to their new posts, the publication stated.

However, there was no official announcement of the promotions. Lt Gen Chaudhry will continue to perform his current duties as DG ISPR while Lt Gen Omer Bukhari will now serve as Commander 11 Corps (Peshawar) and Lt Gen Hussain as chief of logistics services (GHQ).

Kuwait emir dissolves parliament

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait's emir has dissolved the parliament and taken over some of its duties, state media reported, weeks after the Gulf country held elections. Emir Sheikh Mishal al-Ahmad al-Sabah and the royal-appointed cabinet will assume some powers of the 50-member National Assembly, he said, in an address broadcast on state television.

He also suspended some unspecified articles of the constitution for "a period of no more than four years", without elaborating. "The unhealthy atmosphere experienced by Kuwait in previous years has encouraged the spread of corruption to reach most state facilities, and unfortunately it reached the security and economic institutions," the 83-year-old ruler said, adding that "it has even affected the justice system". "We have faced difficulties and obstacles that cannot be tolerated," he said.

The elections in April were the first to be held under Sheikh Mishal, who came to power last December after the death of his half-brother and predecessor, Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah. Repeated disputes between the National Assembly and the cabinet have triggered dissolutions of parliament, curtailing investment and reforms aimed at reducing the country's reliance on oil revenue. — Aljazeera