

KSA to test Flying Taxis
ISLAMABAD (PPI): Saudi Arabia is set to test Flying Taxis and drones during this year's pilgrimage to extend best facilities to the pilgrims. This was stated by Saudi Arabia's Minister for Transport and Logistic Services Saleh al-Jasser during an interview with state-run television Al Arabiya. The Minister said that currently a lot of competition among various transportation companies is taking place to provide a practical product in future.

 @thefrontierpost

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

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIXI No. 110 Regd. No. 241 ZIQAAD 04 1445 -- MONDAY, MAY 13 2024 PESHAWAR EDITION 12 PAGES PRICE. 30

PM convenes meeting on AJK situation today

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has convened a high-level meeting on Monday, which will discuss the ongoing situation in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK).

PM Sharif earlier on Sunday also spoke to the prime minister of AJK and directed the Pakistan Muslim League-N office bearers in the region to engage with the leaders of the action committee to find a peaceful resolution.

In a tweet, he expressed deep concern over the ongoing situation in AJK, urging all parties to adopt a peaceful course of action to resolve their demands.

The prime minister emphasized that while debate, discussion, and peaceful protests were beauty of democracy, there was no tolerance for taking the law into one's own hands and damaging government properties.

"Unfortunately in situations of chaos and dissent, there are always some, who rush in to score political points," he wrote on his X timeline.

"Despite the efforts of detractors, the matter is expected to be settled soon."

PM calls for peaceful resolution in AJK

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday expressed deep concern over the ongoing situation in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), urging all parties to adopt a peaceful course of action to resolve their demands.

The prime minister emphasized that while debate, discussion, and peaceful protests were beauties of democracy, there was no tolerance for taking the law into one's own hands and damaging government properties.

"Unfortunately in situations of chaos and dissent, there are always some, who rush in to score political points," he wrote on his X timeline.

"Despite the efforts of detractors, the matter is expected to be settled soon," he said.

Steps not taken under IMF pressure: Aurangzeb

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb said on Sunday that the government is taking decisions which seem tough but are in the larger interest of the country's economy and its people.

Addressing a Pre-Budget Conference FY 2024-25 jointly organized by the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) and Business Recorder at a local hotel, he said, "We are doing all this not under the pressure of the IMF (International Monetary Fund) but for Pakistan because the country is supreme to all of us."

He added that the government was taking all possible measures and ensuring institutional reforms to restore confidence of the business community in the tax revenue collection authorities, especially the FBR (Federal Board of Revenue). He said that effective steps were also being put in place to enhance financial support for various sectors out of which agriculture, information technology (IT) and SME (small and medium enterprises) are priority sectors.

He emphasised that the private sector would have to come forward and play a proactive role to steer the country out of present day economic challenges, asserting that the government's job is to improve governance and provide facilitation to businessmen and industrialists.

The Federal Finance Minister said that the industry should not depend more on government subsidies on various counts but to strive to transform into export-oriented entities, assuring that the government would provide all possible facilitation in this regard.

He said that comprehensive measures were being taken for proper enforcement in the FBR in addition to its reformation and structural changes in the tax collection mechanism. "Since March this year, we have started a campaign for tax registration," he said and dispelled the general perception among the people that when they come into the tax net, they will be 'harassed'. He cited that the government is providing relief in taxes and facilities on a number of other counts to tax filers. He, however, added that the government would negotiate but not back down from the tax registration campaign.

Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb said, "We are moving towards complete digitization as it will increase revenues and also bring transparency in the collection system." He was of the view that the track and trace system had failed because it was not implemented fully. He, however, added that relevant authorities were working on why the track and trace system did not work properly.

The Federal Finance Minister said that economic indicators have improved during the last seven to eight months, and at present, the current account deficit is less than one billion dollars, while the Pak rupee is also stable against the US dollar and inflation is coming down and the stock exchange is at an all-time high.

Responding to questions by the business community, he said that a lot of reforms have to be done on tax-to-GDP, energy and privatization matters.

"We have to eliminate electricity pilferage completely," he said and mentioned that private sector's representation is being ensured in the boards of directors (BoDs) of power distribution companies.

2.1m houses being built for flood affectees: Murad

F.P. Report

HYDERABAD: Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah, during a press conference on Sunday, highlighted a number of development projects being undertaken by his government across the province, in line with PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto's promise of fulfilling commitments made during his election campaign.



PPP. The CM highlighted that the provincial government was working for the complete rehabilitation of those affected by the devastating 2022 floods, stating that 2.1 million houses were being constructed for which funds had already been arranged.

The CM said that steps were being taken for the provision of free electricity to the marginalized segments of society, adding that an announcement in this regard would be made soon.

Murad said that during the next five years, his

government's focus would be on providing primary healthcare facilities across the province. He said that the government was also supporting private sector hospitals.

The CM said that his government was also focussing on the subject of education, adding that the education minister has assured that no school would be closed down due to a lack of teachers.

Murad said that his government was actively pursuing the establishment of special economic zones in the province.

The CM said that he was committed to resolving the issue of providing potable water to Hyderabad.

Regarding the subject of law and order, the CM said that measures were being taken to ensure the safety of every citizen across the province. He added that the crackdown on drug peddlers was ongoing.

Alvi says talking to Imran must for country's progress

LAHORE (PPI): Former president Arif Alvi said on Sunday that it was necessary to talk to former prime minister and ex-PTI chairman Imran Khan so that the country could be put on the path to progress.

Addressing a press conference in Lahore with party's Secretary Information Shaukat Basra sitting alongside him, Alvi

said the solution to strained relations between the two sides lay in negotiations.

He said that Imran was giving sacrifices for democracy in the country. "He has even sacrificed his ego," he said. The former president said he thought there was pressure on the judiciary. "I will continue to defend the Pakistan Army," he vowed.

He said there needed to be freedom of media in the country. "There is no gain-saying the fact that these are the people who have control over the social media," Alvi said. The former president further said that what was happening in Gaza these days was evident from the pictures coming from the occupied area.

Dar to arrive in Beijing today

BEIJING (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar will arrive here on Monday on an official visit to China and hold the fifth round of the China-Pakistan Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue.

From May 13 to 16, Ishaq Dar will visit the Chinese capital at the invitation of Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi.

This visit is the first official visit to China by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar after he took office. It is also an important part of the institutionalized interactions between the Chinese and Pakistani foreign ministries.

While commenting on the current relations with Pakistan and China's expectation for the visit, a Chinese foreign ministry's spokesperson said that China would like to work with Pakistan to take this visit as an opportunity to deliver on the important common understandings between the leaders, carry forward the traditional friendship, step up strategic communication and coordination, deepen practical cooperation in various areas, upgrade the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, deepen the China-Pakistan all-weather strategic cooperative partnership, and accelerate the building of an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era.

Fourth Indian arrested

OTTAWA (INP): Canada has arrested a fourth person and charged him with the murder of Khalistani Sikh Hardeep Singh Nijjar, Canadian police said.

According to Kashmir Media Service, Hardeep Singh Nijjar advocated for a separate Sikh state, known as Khalistan, carved out of India. On June 18, 2023, he was shot dead by masked assailants in the parking lot of the Sikh temple he led in suburban Vancouver.

The Integrated Homicide Investigation Team (IHIT) informed that they have arrested one Amandeep Singh and charged him with first-degree murder and conspiracy of Nijjar's killing.

Twenty two years old Amandeep Singh, an Indian national residing in Brampton, Surrey and Abbotsford, was already in custody in Ontario for unrelated firearms charges, said the IHIT.

"This arrest shows the nature of our ongoing investigation to hold responsible those that played a role in the homicide of Hardeep Singh Nijjar," said Mandeep Mooker, IHIT officer in charge.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, belonging to PPP called on President Asif Ali Zardari at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

UN chief urges 'immediate ceasefire' as 35,000 Palestinians killed

KUWAIT CITY (Aljazeera): The United Nations' Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has renewed his call for "an immediate humanitarian ceasefire" in the Gaza Strip as Israeli forces have killed more than 35,000 Palestinians in the besieged territory since the attacks began in October, say officials.

In a video address to international donors gathered in Kuwait on Sunday, Guterres also called for "the unconditional release of all captives held by Hamas as well as an immediate surge in humanitarian aid" into Gaza.

"A ceasefire will only be the start," he said in the video, cautioning that "it will be a long road back from the devastation and trauma of this war".

As Guterres repeated his plea, Israeli forces hit multiple points in Gaza, displacing anew hundreds of thousands of refugees already fleeing the war. Israeli tanks rolled into Jabalia, while multiple strikes killed dozens of people in Beit Lahiya in the north and Rafah in the south.

Palestinian news agency Wafa reported that at least 12 bodies arrived at Kamal Adwan Hospital in the

town of Beit Lahiya following what it described as the Israeli "carpet bombing".

Emad Oudeh, resident of Beit Lahiya, told Al Jazeera they did not know where to go as Israeli attacks intensified. "We are shocked. We do not know what to do. We are physically and mentally worn out. We are on the verge of going insane."

Al Jazeera's Tareq Abu Azzoum, reporting from Deir el-Balah in central Gaza, said Israeli tanks have started "to go deeper" into the Jabalia refugee camp.

Jabalia is the biggest of Gaza's eight refugee camps and is home to more than 100,000 people, most of them descendants of Palestinians who were driven from towns and villages in what is now Israel during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war that led to the creation of the state of Israel. "We have been hearing from eyewitnesses on the ground, in that very densely populated area, that military tanks are surrounding evacuation centres and residential buildings," Abu Azzoum said.

Those fleeing Israeli bombardment also have to contend with an acute shortage of food and medical supplies in areas where they have taken shelter.

Mahmoud Basal of the Palestinian Civil Defence in Gaza said there were no more medical services or humanitarian aid being provided to displaced people in the northern part of the Strip.

"We have lost 80 percent of our capabilities and no one is responding to the appeals we make to international institutions," the civil defence spokesman said in a statement.

Imad Abu Zayda, an emergency doctor in Jabalia, told Al Jazeera that most of the injured arriving at his hospital were women and children, describing the situation as dire.

"We are operating with minimum facilities. No light due to the lack of fuel and there's no medical supplement available as Israel has expanded their operation in the area. We have no oxygen to give to patients," he said.

In central Gaza, the civil defence department reported at least two fatalities, a father and son, both doctors, in an Israeli strike in Deir el-Balah on Sunday.

Further south in Rafah, Gaza's southernmost city along the border with Egypt, the Kuwaiti hospital said it received the bodies

of 18 people killed in Israeli strikes over the past 24 hours.

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, gave a similar estimate of "around 300,000 people" who have fled Rafah over the past week, decrying in a post on X the "forced and inhumane displacement of Palestinians" who have "nowhere safe to go" in Gaza.

Palestinians in Rafah, many of them displaced by the fighting elsewhere in the territory, piled water tanks, mattresses and other belongings onto vehicles and prepared to flee again. "The artillery shelling didn't stop at all" for several days, said Mohammed Hamad, 24, who has left eastern Rafah for the city's west. "There is no safe place in Gaza where we can take refuge."

Residents were told to go to the "humanitarian zone" of al-Mawasi, on the coast northwest of Rafah, though aid groups have warned it was not ready for an influx of people.

EU chief Charles Michel, however, said on social media that Rafah civilians were being ordered to "unsafe zones", denouncing it as "unacceptable".

Not to let Governor House become a hub of conspiracies: Kundi

F.P. Report

DI KHAN: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi, has pledged not to let the Governor House become a hub of conspiracies. Instead, he aims to build trust among the people of the province, resolve issues, and bring prosperity.

Speaking to the media at his residence, he reiterated his commitment to fight for the rights of the province, stating that he would serve as the province's advocate. He emphasized that the Governor House would not be a place for political orphans to become political martyrs.

Kundi assured the public that initiatives would be taken for economic stability, eradication of unemployment, and the welfare of the



people. He highlighted the importance of fulfilling promises made to address the grievances of the residents, including those from the erstwhile FATA region. He stressed the need to complete projects aimed at ending deprivation and promoting development in the region.

Regarding the utilization of funds, he questioned the

whereabouts of funds allocated under the 1991 NFC Award and emphasized the importance of transparency in expenditure. He also addressed issues such as the low salaries of KP Police and vowed to work towards their improvement.

Kundi underscored the significance of projects like the Left Bank Canal, stating that their completion would not only benefit the region but also contribute to global food security. He emphasized the need for collaboration between the federal and provincial governments to address challenges related to gas and oil resources.

Speaking about the floods, he criticized the previous federal government for not adequately responding to the crisis. He praised the efforts of Sindh for their proactive approach in handling flood-related issues

and emphasized the need for KP to follow suit.

Kundi also touched upon other promises, including the construction of an international airport in Dera Ismail Khan, and stressed the importance of providing justice to the victims of the Gandhara incident. He urged the formation of a judicial commission to ensure justice for the families of the victims.

In conclusion, Kundi expressed gratitude to President Asif Ali Zardari, Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, and Faryal Talpur for their trust in him and assured that he would fulfill their expectations. He reiterated that he is not a traditional governor but someone who would keep the doors of the Governor House open to the public.

Pakistan calls for UN-led cyber capacity building mechanism

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Pakistan has underscored the need for a permanent cyber capacity building mechanism under the UN, particularly in bridging the gap between the developing and developed countries, in an effort to promote trust and cooperation among states.

"International cooperation in the area of capacity building on an equal footing is a key measure for a safe, secure, stable and peaceful

ICT (Information and Communications Technologies) environment," Ambassador Munir Akram told the Global Roundtable on ICT Security Capacity Building.

"We support the idea of a permanent capacity building mechanism under the UN, as well as a dedicated funding mechanism to support capacity building projects in developing countries," the Pakistani envoy added.

The session was presided over by Singapore's UN Ambassador Burhan Gafour, who heads the Open-ended Working Group on Security of and in the use of ICTs.

Cyber security capacity building is aimed at equipping individuals and organizations with the knowledge, skills and tools they need to protect themselves and their digital assets.

"We are particularly concerned at the frequency of

cyber attacks on critical infrastructure," Ambassador Akram said, pointing out that Pakistan has been a particularly long-standing victim of its other threat — disinformation. Noting ICT technologies' vast positive potential, the Pakistani envoy said also highlighted their negative side — expansion of the domains of conflict, saying, "Cyber warfare has emerged as a new domain of warfare."

3 dead in Alabama shooting
STOCKTON, Ala. (AP): Three people were killed and at least 12 were wounded Saturday night in a shooting at party in south Alabama. Andre Reid with the Baldwin County Investigation Division told WALA-TV that about 1,000 people were attending a May Day party near Stockton when an altercation started and gunfire erupted. Reid said most of the victims were "younger people."



KARACHI: Kashmiri residents in Karachi hold a protest in favor of their demands outside KPC. —INP Photo

PPP workers sacrificed lives for sake of democracy

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Home Minister Ziaul Hasan Lanjar on Sunday said that the workers including of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) sacrificed their lives only for the sake of democracy on May 12.

In his message on the tragedy of May 12, he said that the workers, who laid down their lives for the sake of democracy on the day would always be remembered.

He said that a dictator fanned the flames of bigotry and bigotry turned Karachi red.

The Home Minister Lanjar said that the PPP workers did not bow before the dictator for the survival and democracy. He said, 'We have to take account of elements that exhibit negative character and action.'

He said that the policy of reconciliation, intellectual harmony and politics of brotherhood was very important for the country.

The Minister said that If we did not learn from the sad incidents of the past then the difficult situations would follow us everywhere. He said that they all had to work together for the development, prosperity and welfare of the people and the country.

Traffic warden hurt in firing incident

LAHORE (INP): A traffic warden injured in firing during attempt to settle dispute between two groups clashing over children fight passed away during treatment here on Sunday.

According to details, relatives of two groups were exchanging hot words over children clash in Lahore the other day when traffic warden Irfanullah along with his two brother Naeemullah, Samiullah and nephew Abdul Rehman reached the scene.

The traffic police official attempted to settle dispute between the clashing neighbours when accused Qamar Chattha, Shahid Chattha and two others started firing.

As a result of firing, Irfanullah and Naeemullah were injured. The attackers fled the scene of crime.

The injured were shifted to hospital where traffic warden Irfanullah succumbed to his wounds.

CTO Amara Athar has expressed deep grief and sorrow over the martyrdom of Irfanullah.

She said that the deceased was an honest and hardworking officer and Lahore Police was with his heirs in this critical time.

Man arrested

LAHORE (APP): Motorway Police M3 arrested a suspect who stole expensive wires of WAPDA near Smundari on Sunday.

According to the Motorway police spokesman, the officials also recovered wires, tools and vehicles worth lakhs of rupees. The accused and the stolen goods were handed over to the local police on the instructions of Sector Commander Shahbaz Alam.

Tessori sees off Hajj pilgrims at JIAP

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori on Sunday went to see off Hajj pilgrims travelling through PIA from Jinnah International Airport Karachi to Madinah under Road to Makkah Project.

Chairman Saudi Arabia's Immigration and Passports Lieutenant General Suleman Bin Abdul Aziz, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Nawaf Bin Saeed Al-Malkiy and senior officers of Ministry of Religious Affairs were also present on the occasion.

Governor Kamran Khan Tessori felicitated the Hajj pilgrims and presented bou-

quets of flowers to them.

Governor Sindh said this year government had ensured minimum expenses for providing facilities to the pilgrims.

The efforts of the government and the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony for this purpose are commendable, Governor said.

Governor Tessori said that all arrangements for Hajj were digitized and "Pak Hajj App" has been launched, this initiative will provide Hajj pilgrims with information and training material of all stages of Hajj on their mobile phones.

He said that Hujjaj will

be able to register their complaints through this app in case of facing any problem. The Governor said that the Road to Makkah project facility was available at the Islamabad airport for the past several years and this year it has also been started from Karachi.

Kamran Tessori said that 35,500 pilgrims from Karachi will benefit from this facility this year. Under this facility, the pilgrims will be able to receive the luggage at the hotel in Saudi Arabia after all the necessary clearances from the airport in Pakistan, Governor added.

LESCO detects 79,418 power pilferers in 233 days

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) detected a total of 79,418 connections from where customers were pilfering electricity in all its circles of five districts: Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara, in 233 days of the anti-power theft campaign.

A LESCO spokesman told the media here on Sunday that the company also submitted FIR applications against electricity thieves, out of which 74,409 FIRs were registered in respective police stations, while 30,597 accused have been arrested.

The LESCO has so far charged a total of 93,901,152 detection units worth Rs 3,459,012,656 to all the power pilferers.

Grand anti-power theft operations against electricity thieves are being conducted on the direc-

tives of the Federal Power Division and the LESCO Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Engineer Shahid Haider is supervising these operations.

The LESCO chief vowed that the operations would continue without discrimination until the complete end of electricity theft.

The electricity pilferers as well as the LESCO officers and employees who facilitate them are also being brought to justice.

The spokesman added, the LESCO found 397 customers stealing electricity through various means and 153 cases have been registered against the accused, while 31 accused were arrested during the last 24 hours.

On the 233rd consecutive day of the anti-power theft campaign, he mentioned that large commercial consumers were

found involved in electricity theft and all of them were also disconnected and charged with detection units. Among the seized connections, he explained, 14 were commercial, 01 agricultural, 01 industrial and 381 domestic, and all these connections were disconnected and charged with a total of 462,196 units as detection bill amounting to Rs 7.526 million.

Apprising the media about some major power pilferers, he mentioned that LESCO charged Rs 350,000 detection bill to an electricity pilferer on Empress Road area Rs 180,000 detection bill to another power pilferer in Naulakhha area; Rs 170,000 fine in the form of detection bill to a customer stealing electricity in Shahdara Town and Rs 127,000 fine to a power pilferer also in Shahdara Town.

Karachi city has been neglected, tells Haleem

KARACHI (PPI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Sindh President Haleem Adil Sheikh said on Sunday that those who plunged Karachi into bloodshed are now present in the assemblies under false mandates.

This he said while addressing a press conference at Insaf House Karachi on Sunday. He was accompanied by PTI Karachi General Secretary Arslan Khalid, PTI Sindh leader Rizwan Khanzada and others.

Haleem highlighted that the PPP also mourns on May 9th, but what about December 27th? He referred to the tragic incident of the assassination of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto on December 27th, which plunged the entire nation into mourning.

The aftermath saw the country in chaos for three days, with properties damaged and losses incurred, he said and noted that afterwards, Zardari raised the slogan of 'Pakistan Khapay' (Pakistan needed). He criticized politicians for dancing to the tunes of others and urged them to refrain from doing so.

Regarding the situation in Azad Kashmir, Haleem expressed concern, stating,

"While we have not seen improvement in the situation in Azad Kashmir over the past two to three days, recent developments are worrying. If the issue of Azad Kashmir is not handled properly, it could escalate into a major crisis, and Pakistan cannot afford to bear the brunt of it."

Haleem accused the Sindh government of unleashing a crackdown on peaceful protesters, arresting over 23 PTI workers on May 9th protest across Sindh, while police did not take any action against dacoits of the Kacha area who openly shared a video of kidnapped innocent children.

He pointed to the worsening law and order situation in Sindh and said people of Sindh were facing 16-18 hours of load shedding daily despite severe heat. Sheikh also criticized the government's decision to approve a budget of Rs162 million for the Prime Minister's House, while the common man struggles to make ends meet due to inflation. He alleged that corruption worth Rs300 billion occurred in the wheat sector during the caretaker government.

The PTI leader warned that international compa-

nies like P&G, Pfizer, and Uber are leaving their businesses in Pakistan due to political instability. He quoted the IMF as saying that political stability was essential for economic stability, and the country could not progress without it.

Haleem said that Imran Khan had repeatedly said that the people and the army are both ours. Imran Khan is the leader of the Muslim world, and such a personality is being targeted by a few corrupt politicians. In response to a question, Haleem said that there was no division in the party as the entire organization was on one page. If there was a division, PTI would not have won the election on February 8.

Haleem emphasized that respecting the public mandate was crucial for political stability and accused the government of trying to divide the nation. He criticized Governor Faisal Karim Kundi for using inappropriate language against Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur, and reminded everyone that Ali Amin Gandapur was a real parliamentarian according to Form-45, and such statements against him were unacceptable.

CM honors Gaza, Kashmir mothers on Mother's Day

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has said that Mother's Day should be attributed to the resolute and courageous mothers of Gaza and Kashmir.

In her message on International Mother's Day being celebrated on Sunday, the CM said, "I salute the dignity of mother as being the epitome of affection, care and love."

The chief minister said mother is an embodiment of solace and comfort in the face of troubling difficulties of life. Allah Almighty elevated the rank of mother by ascribing a simile of His love and care with that of a mother. A mother is a manifestation of true emotions and kind relationship, she maintained.

Maryam Nawaz said mothers are the foundation stone of a family life and a strong pillar of a society, adding that Mother's Day is the day to deeply acknowledge extraordinary love and sacrifices displayed by mothers across the globe. She said "I extremely feel the absence of my great mother everyday and especially on Mother's Day.

I feel profoundly grateful to my mother Mohtarma Kulsoom Nawaz Sharif for showing her tremendous love and affection on me. Today I am holding the present position due to sole prayers of my respectable mother. Those who strictly adhere to the golden principle of serving their parents turn out to be successful in this world and the world hereafter."

Watercourses to be cemented across province: Maryam: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has said that in the first phase 1,200 watercourses would be cemented with Rs 10 billion, besides cementing 7,000 watercourses in second phase across the province.

Punjab Irrigation minister Kazim Pirzada met Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz here on Sunday and during the meeting matters pertaining to Irrigation department were discussed.

The steps to put the irrigation system on the modern lines were also reviewed. The proposals with regard to timely provision of water to the farmers up to the canal tail were

mulled. Progress on the programme regarding cementing watercourses across the province was also reviewed in the meeting.

The CM said that with the grace of Allah Almighty watercourses would be cemented in coming five years. Surplus water would be provided to the farmers at the canals tail-ends with the cementing of watercourses.

We are going to launch solar tubewell project for the farmers soon, she added. The canal water theft would not be tolerated under any circumstances and an effective crackdown would be launched for its eradication, she added. Provincial Minister for Irrigation Kazim Pirzada said, "Under the able leadership of CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the cabinet and the whole team was working day and night for public well-being." He further said that with the grace of the Allah Almighty and as per the vision of Quaid Mian Nawaz Sharif, mission aimed at ensuring the welfare of farmers would be accomplished.

Naan association agrees to sell roti at Rs15

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Food Minister Bilal Yasin has said that the government's foremost goal is to provide affordable, high-quality food to people and this objective will be achieved through collaboration with all stakeholders.

Talking with a delegation of the roti and naan association, who called on him here on Sunday, the minister convinced the association to sell naan and roti as per the government notification across Punjab.

Aftab Gill, the President of Naan Roti Association, along with the delegation, Secretary Food Muazzam Iqbal Sipra, Director Food Punjab Shoaib Khan Jadoon and others were present.

The minister said the mission to facilitate the common man through a reduction in flour prices was successful and the price of flour had been significantly reduced last month.

He announced that after successful negotiations with the Naan-Roti Association a consensus was developed to sell roti at Rs.15 across Punjab, adding that the association should ensure the sale of naan and roti as per the government notification at tandoors across Punjab.

The minister said that the price of flour has never decreased so significantly in the history of the country. In the last one month, the price of a 20 kg flour bag reduced by Rs1,000 to Rs1,200, while the price of a 10 kg flour bag reduced by Rs500 to Rs600.

President of Naan-Roti Association Aftab Gill also recorded a video message in the presence of the Food Minister. He said that the government had given a lot of relief in the price of flour, which he appreciated and ensured his cooperation. He said that they were with the government in providing relief to the people and would sell Roti for Rs.15 across Punjab. He assured that all tandoors would sell roti and naan as per the government notification.

EU ambassador visits Nasser Bagh art gallery

LAHORE (APP): British-era garden. Originally named Bandstand Garden, it was later rechristened Municipal Garden on the construction of Victoria Jubilee Hall (later Town Hall). The park also earned the moniker Gol Bagh due to its circular layout.

Following the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, the garden was renamed Nasser Bagh in tribute to Gamal Abdel Nasser, the longstanding president of Egypt. The diplomat was further informed that the gallery aims to become a dynamic hub for art enthusiasts and connoisseurs alike.

Additionally, Riina Koinka was briefed on various initiatives taken by the department. These include organising sporting events, establishing a pioneering Bonsai museum and yoga center at Racecourse Park, and revitalising the Butterfly House at the Botanical Garden.

Separately, the PHA has also announced plans to establish a public sculpture garden at the Nasser Bagh. The sculpture park will comprise an outdoor garden featuring sculptures and other artworks crafted from durable materials within landscaped surroundings.

Expected to be operational by early next month, the proposed facility will operate in conjunction with The Barracks.

Initially, the department has commissioned renowned artists such as Imran Qureshi, Risham Hosain Syed, Talat Dabir, Shahid Sajjad, Rasheed Araeen, Rashid Rana, Tahir Mahmood, and Meherunnisa Asad for the project.

The concept of a sculpture garden, the piece de resistance of the park, has been in development for many years. The Barracks now aims to expand artistic endeavors within the Nasir Bagh precinct, the PHA spokesperson said.

World Nurses Day: Sharmila says nurses are the heart of healthcare

KARACHI/ISLAMABAD (PPI): PPP MNA Dr Sharmila Farooqui said on Sunday that nurses play a pivotal role in improving the health of patients and that is why nurses are the heart of healthcare.

"Investing in nurses is imperative to achieve efficient, effective, resilient and sustainable health systems, she said in a statement issued in connection with the International Nurses Day observed today. The International Nurses Day 2024 theme announced is 'Our Nurses. Our Future. The economic power of care', she informed.

The successive PPP governments have always raised salaries and other benefits for nurses to encourage this medical profession. She said that they not only provide essential care but also play a critical

role in shaping health policies and driving primary health care. Sharmila said that nurses are the foundation of healthcare as they play a vital role in providing care and comfort to patients and their families.

She said: "Nurses provide care to patients in the toughest times. Historically, as well as today, nurses are at the forefront of fighting epidemics and pandemics - providing high quality and respectful treatment and care. They are often the first and sometimes the only health professional that people see and the quality of their initial assessment, care, and treatment is vital."

She said that nurses account for more than half of all the world's health workers, yet there is an urgent shortage of nurses worldwide with 5.9 million

more nurses still needed, especially in low- and middle-income countries.

Sharmila said that the Covid-19 pandemic is a stark reminder of the vital role nurses play. Without nurses and other health workers, we will not win the battle against outbreaks, we will not achieve the Sustainable Development Goals or universal health coverage."

"By developing our nursing workforces, we can achieve the triple impact of improving health, promoting gender equality and supporting economic growth. Strengthening nursing will have the additional benefits of promoting gender equity (SDG5), contributing to economic development (SDG8) and supporting other Sustainable Development Goals," she concluded.



LAHORE: People drinking thirst-quenching cold drinks outside the press club to reduce the intensity of the heat. —APP Photo



PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism and Culture Zahid Chanzeb talking to MNAs and MPAs from the southern districts.

Govt commences procurement of 300,000 metric tons of wheat, amounting Rs. 29bn: Minister

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Food, Zahir Shah Toru, stated that despite ongoing economic challenges, the KP government has commenced the procurement of 300,000 metric tons of wheat, amounting to approximately Rs. 29 billion.

The procurement began on May 7 and is scheduled to continue for two months. Minister Toru conveyed these remarks during his visit to the wheat godown and procurement center in Abbottabad, last day, accompanied by Provincial Assembly member Iftikhar Jadoon.

Emphasizing the government's dedication to providing relief to local farmers amidst economic difficulties, Minister Toru stressed the importance of transparency in the procurement process.

The District Food Controller of Abbottabad briefed the Minister on the arrangements made for wheat procurement, including the installation of CCTV cameras in the godown with a storage capacity of 18,000 metric tons of wheat.

Minister Shah instructed officials to adhere strictly to the principles of "first come, first served" in the wheat procurement process.

He underscored that the decision to purchase wheat from local farmers was made to benefit the community, projecting savings of Rs. 12 billion for the province.

Minister Zahir Shah Toru further warned that individuals found involved in corruption in the procurement process would face severe consequences.

Furthermore, Minister Toru reiterated the government's commitment to combating corruption, echoing the zero-tolerance policy advocated by the founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Imran Khan.

The City School holds graduation ceremony

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The annual graduation ceremony was held at Cantt Senior Branch School, where students were awarded certificates for their outstanding achievements.

The ceremony began with a recitation from the Holy Quran, followed by national and school songs performed by the students. The young graduates showcased their talents on stage, adding vibrancy to the event.

Headmistress Naima Walter addressed the students, encouraging them to develop leadership and creative skills. She emphasized the importance of prioritizing education and fostering forward-thinking and positive attitudes.

Parents were also urged to participate in non-academic activities alongside educational engagements to ensure their children excel in all fields and contribute to the nation and society.

The hard work and competence of the teachers were acknowledged, and special guest Mehwish Jehangiri, along with Headmistress Naima Walter, distributed certificates among the graduates.



Beekeeping marred by climate change induced weather patterns in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Fixing steelnail in woden bees-boxes under a shadow of shisham tree on the bank of River Kabul, Ataur Rehman -a poor beekeeper is making determined efforts to repair it before the sunsets.

Wake up early in the morning, the motivated beekeeper visited his farmhouse constructed at north side of bank of river Kabul in Nowshera where he began fixing steelnail to repair 100 beesboxes that were badly damaged by the last month torrential rains and floods.

Enjoying "Dil Dil Pakistan" national song through his mobil set with co beekeepers, Ataullah was busy like a honeybees in his work to repair all damaged boxes before disappearing of the sun behind Koho Hindukash mountains terrains.

Unaware of the black tea brought by son being cold, Ataur Rehman said the recent torrential rains and flash flood in River Kabul has brought substantial economic losses to beekeepers of Nowshera, Charsadda and Peshawar districts, who were now looking for KP Govt assistance.

"I was living a happy life until the last month torrential rains and floods have badly damaged my 100 bees boxes, and was eagerly looking towards the KP government for financial assistance help to relaunch my climate change hit business," he told APP on Sunday.

He abandoned education after death of his elder brother Hidayatur Rehman due to cancer and entered the stinging business of beekeeping to support own and brother family during unprecedented price hike in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

"My entire family was in deep shock after the death of my brother leaving six children and I had no idea what to do? However, I recollected myself and started this painstaking business on the advice of my mother," he said.

"Initially, I purchased 30 bee-boxes and by the grace of Allah Almighty, it increased to 120 boxes within two years due to my consistent hard work and dedication," he said.

"As the flood struck my village, our entire family rushed towards River Kabul's farmhouse to shift bees boxes to safer places, but within moments we saw ourselves stranded in floodwater that badly damaged my 100 boxes, and swept away 20 others."

Claiming to have suffered Rs six lakh loss, the embattled beekeeper said he would restart his business soon after repair of boxes and arrangements of new bees colonies. He demanded of provincial government to give interests free loans and fix honey rates so that the rains and floods hit beekeepers could benefit from their labour.

Ataullah was planning to go to Punjab and Azad Kashmir where abundance of bee-flora plants were available for bees to increase honey production.

Sher Zaman, General Secretary of the All Pakistan Beekeepers Association, said the recent torrential rains and flood had adversely affected beekeeping industry in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

"The torrential rains and subsequent flash flood had caused substantial economic loss to the beekeepers, exporters and honey traders and the loss could hardly be overcome without the support of government," he added. Demanding compensation for the floods affected beekeepers, he said about 7,000 to 10,000 honey farms existed in the province and if compensation and loans were not provided, more than 100,000 people associated with bee farms in the province may be faced with starvation.

He said demand of Pakistani honey is always on the rise in Gulf states, particularly Saudi Arabia and UAE due to its better quality and low sugar contents and the country's economic woes may be addressed by promoting beekeeping.

He said Pakistani honey is a preferred in the Middle East to that of other countries due to its better quality and urged government for provision of interest-free loans under Islamic banking system to encourage the beekeeper community and climate change affected beekeepers.

"The climate change has also affected the local bee population scientifically known as Apis florae (small bee) due to loss of bee-flora plants," an official of Agriculture Research Institute (ARI) at Tarnab, Peshawar.

Besides floods, he said one of the reasons in its decrease could be the presence of two queens in the same bee-box or colony as the younger queen often kills the eldest or the latter leaves the bee-box or colony taking some of bees with herself.

However, he says there is every possibility of losing an average of five to ten kg out of 1000 kilogram of honey production if preventive measures are not taken for their preservation and protection.

"There is a possibility of losing the wild bees in future if proper attention was not given to their preservation and management of natural forest," said Dr Mumtaz Malik, former chief conservator of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Wildlife Department.

"Wild bee is a big source of quality honey that needs proper strategy and mechanism to get maximum production and protection from flood and torrential rains," Dr Malik said, adding that honey business could be developed as a non-wood-forest product for the locals living near forests to raise their income through preservation of wild bees population.

He stressed the need on capacity building of beekeepers to face any situation like flood and raising nurseries of bee-flora plants for promotion of honey industry.

Dr Mumtaz suggested issuance of cards to beekeepers for their identification while migrating from one district to another in the wake of climate change weather patterns.

He said focus on conservation of Apis Dorsata (wild bee) should be made as it has the ability to produce 35 to 40 kg honey from each comb, adding that the wild bees usually made their nests in tall trees or buildings in reserved forests.

Iftikhar Khalil, former director non timber forest products KP said data of rains affected beekeepers may be collected for financial assistance.

He said rains and floods have also affected beekeepers most in Swat, Charsadda, Tank, DI Khan and Charsadda.

Iftikhar said that about 1,50,000 wild bees remain busy in one-metre long and a half metre wide comb on 1-20 degree angle.

He said Pakistan has huge potential of producing over 7,500 to 8,000MT honey from about 300,000 colonies per year and diversion of financial resources to climate change's mitigation was need of the hour.

Admitting climate change's effects on the population of Apis Flori and Apis Dorsata commonly known as "Swat bees", he said Apis mellifera was imported from Australia in 1977 owing to her speedy growth and increased power of honey production.

A research project was launched at Agriculture Research Institute Tarnab, Peshawar, Faisalabad and National Agriculture Research Centre Islamabad in 1979 to analyze mellifera's properties.

"Mallifera produces about 20 to 25 kg honey per box against six to eight kg by native bees two times in a year."

Apis Dorsata has an ability to produce 40kg to 45 kg honey from each hive mostly in tall trees and buildings," he said, adding around 120,000 to 150,000 wild bees were busy in one meter-length and half-meter wide comb making 120 degree angle and their honey generation powers affected in case of torrential rains and floods due to loss of plants and destruction of their hives.

"The bees collect pollen and nectar within a five-kilometer radius of their hives and the majority prefer to get food while staying close to their combs. One bee produces 1/12th of a teaspoon of honey in her life and flapping their wings 11,000 times per minute besides using her tiny hairs to take pollen and stomach to carry 70mg nectar."

Iftikhar said honey bees were the lifeline of Pakistan as they play 80percent percent of the pollination process besides making a significant contribution in food chain and life saving medicines and its protection from floods was equally important from floods.

He said about Rs 43 billion revenues could be generated and over 100,000 new jobs to be created after achieving 70,000MT honey target, adding 10,009 exotic bees has a potential of producing 100 tons honey per year with financial benefits of Rs75 million.

Annually, he said 10 tons of honey can be produced from indigenous bees with annual economic benefits of Rs38 million and collectively Rs113 million income from the beekeeping sector in KP. He said about 5.2 million ber trees could be planted in Karak, Kohat, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Tank and DI Khan districts. A new type of honey "Margalla" was introduced by Pakistan Council of Agriculture and Research (PCAR) mostly useful for asthma and allergy patients while "Ber and Kalongi" honey was also brought in markets keeping in view of its numerous health benefits.

Qasim directs setting up heatstroke units

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In response to the recent surge in temperatures across the province, the Health Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Syed Qasim Ali Shah, has issued directives to the health department to take immediate actions.

The provincial minister has instructed the health department to establish cool spaces in hospitals to prevent heatstroke, set up heat stroke treatment units in all hospitals of the province, and ensure the immediate establishment of heatstroke treatment units in hospitals above the Category D level.

Furthermore, the Health Minister has taken steps to ensure the availability of ORS and other essential medicines in all hospitals for immediate access. Additionally, he has directed all District Health Officers (DHOs) to appoint focal persons for heatwave preparedness at the district level, in coordination with all Deputy Commissioners (DCs).

Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah has emphasized the importance of conducting awareness campaigns on heatstroke at the district level, urging the health department officials to take necessary measures.

Moreover, he has instructed to ensure the availability of chilled water for patients in hospital wards and waiting areas. Adequate provision of shaded waiting areas for attendants in hospitals has also been mandated.

The health minister has underscored the importance of ensuring ample availability of ice packs in heatstroke treatment units and ensuring the presence of medical staff.

In light of Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah's directives, the Health Department has issued advisories for the prevention and treatment of potential heatwaves in the province. Citizens have been advised to consume homemade drinks and ORS to prevent heatstroke.

Meanwhile, The Health Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Syed Qasim Ali Shah, undertook a visit to health centers located in Peshawar. The occasion saw the presence of Minister for Higher Education, Meena Khan Afridi, and local leadership accompanying him. They visited the Kohati Hospital, Peshawar General Hospital, and the maternity center located in Hashnagri.

Upon arrival at Peshawar General Hospital, the administration provided the health minister with a briefing. It was highlighted that all specialties in the hospital provide treatment and diagnosis on a ten-rupee voucher.

Additionally, it was mentioned that the laboratory, equipped with technical machinery, conducts between two to three thousand tests daily, while breast cancer screening facilities are also available at the hospital.

The health minister commended the health facility and cleanliness maintained by the staff and administration of the hospital. Accompanied by the Minister for Higher Education, the Health Minister inspected all the facilities available at the health centers. Speaking to the media personnel on this occasion, Health Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah stated, "The Kohati Hospital will be opened for the public very soon. Our aim is to provide better healthcare facilities to the people. We are actively addressing the shortage of doctors, nurses, and other staff in all hospitals of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The provision of healthcare services in all hospitals of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is being improved."

Maryam accused of copying KP's healthcare program

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Members of the National and Provincial assemblies from the southern districts called on the Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism and Culture Zahid Chanzeb at the CM House Peshawar and discussed with him the plans and budget proposals for the promotion of tourism, culture and archeology in the southern and merged districts of the province. They also put forth some suggestions and recommendations on their behalf as well to establish tourism in KP on strong footings.

They included Member of National Assembly and former KP Local Government Minister Faisal Amin Gandapur from Dera Ismail Khan and newly elected MPA Usman Khan Bettani from Tank.

Assuring that the recommendations of the legislatures from southern districts will be made part of the tourism plan, Zahid

Plan budget proposals for boosting tourism: Zahid

Chanzeb revealed that in the provincial budget for the new financial year to be presented in June, it was decided to allocate sufficient funds for the development of tourism in the entire Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, wherein the southern and merged districts are also at the top.

He admitted that like the rest of the province, these areas are also rich in tourism and cultural treasures with enormous healthy and spacious places where proper investment can not only make them attractive for international tourists but also the tourism Industry can be developed double by day and quadruple by night.

The CM's Aide said that the development of tourism is also the vision of Imran Khan, the founder chairman of PTI, while investment in the tourism industry is likely to increase the income and employment opportunities in the province so many times.

He asserted that considering the traditional hospitality and colorful culture of this region, our soft image will also be reflected all over the world with streamlining the tourists' activities in nook and corner of the province.

He said that like other mountainous regions of the province including Malakand and Hazara, all our southern and merged districts right from Kohat to Dera Ismail Khan and from Khyber to Orkzai and Bajaur, have been blessed with the tremendous treasures of health-enhancing environmental and religious tourism.

Whereas proposals are being considered to make them attractive for foreign tourists by improving the infrastructure and improving the law-and-order situation all where in KP.

He acknowledged that in the past, this sector was not given sufficient attention, but under the dynamic and prudent leadership of Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, tourism as an industry will be promoted along with all other sectors during the next five years.

KP to showcase its carbon credits potential

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province with its rich potential of carbon stock due to large forest cover is heading towards tapping of the resource by entering into global carbon credit markets as the technical feasibility of stocks in the province is near completion.

"The Forest Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in cooperation of Sustainable Energy and Economic Development (SEED Pakistan) is working over preparation of a baseline survey of carbon stock of KP to attract carbon offset buyers and to create a gateway for national and international investors," informed Mazhar Iqbal, Focal Person Reducing Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) plus Initiative.



vation of Apis Dorsata (wild bee) should be made as it has the ability to produce 35 to 40 kg honey from each comb, adding that the wild bees usually made their nests in tall trees or buildings in reserved forests.

Iftikhar Khalil, former director non timber forest products KP said data of rains affected beekeepers may be collected for financial assistance.

He said rains and floods have also affected beekeepers most in Swat, Charsadda, Tank, DI Khan and Charsadda.

Iftikhar said that about 1,50,000 wild bees remain busy in one-metre long and a half metre wide comb on 1-20 degree angle.

He said Pakistan has huge potential of producing over 7,500 to 8,000MT honey from about 300,000 colonies per year and diversion of financial resources to climate change's mitigation was need of the hour.

Admitting climate change's effects on the population of Apis Flori and Apis Dorsata commonly known as "Swat bees", he said Apis mellifera was imported from Australia in 1977 owing to her speedy growth and increased power of honey production.

A research project was launched at Agriculture Research Institute Tarnab, Peshawar, Faisalabad and National Agriculture Research Centre Islamabad in 1979 to analyze mellifera's properties.

"Mallifera produces about 20 to 25 kg honey per box against six to eight kg by native bees two times in a year."

Apis Dorsata has an ability to produce 40kg to 45 kg honey from each hive mostly in tall trees and buildings," he said, adding around 120,000 to 150,000 wild bees were busy in one meter-length and half-meter wide comb making 120 degree angle and their honey generation powers affected in case of torrential rains and floods due to loss of plants and destruction of their hives.

"The bees collect pollen and nectar within a five-kilometer radius of their hives and the majority prefer to get food while staying close to their combs. One bee produces 1/12th of a teaspoon of honey in her life and flapping their wings 11,000 times per minute besides using her tiny hairs to take pollen and stomach to carry 70mg nectar."

Iftikhar said honey bees were the lifeline of Pakistan as they play 80percent percent of the pollination process besides making a significant contribution in food chain and life saving medicines and its protection from floods was equally important from floods.

He said about Rs 43 billion revenues could be generated and over 100,000 new jobs to be created after achieving 70,000MT honey target, adding 10,009 exotic bees has a potential of producing 100 tons honey per year with financial benefits of Rs75 million.

Annually, he said 10 tons of honey can be produced from indigenous bees with annual economic benefits of Rs38 million and collectively Rs113 million income from the beekeeping sector in KP. He said about 5.2 million ber trees could be planted in Karak, Kohat, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Tank and DI Khan districts. A new type of honey "Margalla" was introduced by Pakistan Council of Agriculture and Research (PCAR) mostly useful for asthma and allergy patients while "Ber and Kalongi" honey was also brought in markets keeping in view of its numerous health benefits.



In brief

Two killed in Torwarsak
Abid Buner

BUNER: The cousins Khalid and Afzal in village Torwarsak have allegedly shot dead their cousin Hanif Khan over family disputes and thrown his dead body in a nearby graveyard the other day. While some unknown person has reportedly shot dead Anwar Ali in the suburb of village Anghapur early evening out side home and escaped from the crime scene. The Dagar police station on the complaint of Akram Khan brother of the deceased Hanif Khan charged the alleged accused and arrested them within hours after the murder. Dagar police have yet to trace killer of Anwar Ali and to arrest him. double murder cases have been registered and the investigation teams are investigating .police confirmed .

Kohat Police
arrest 18 suspects

KOHAT (APP): Eighteen suspects including two drug dealers were arrested during the search operation here in different areas of Kohat, a spokesman of the Police said here Sunday. According to details, Kohat police have revealed that 13 pistols, dozens of cartridges, 2400 grams of hashish, 270 grams of ice and 3 bottles of alcohol were recovered from the possession of the arrested persons. The search operation was conducted in Regi Shinokhel, Quraishabad, Kalu Khan Banda and in Banda Maluk Shah. The Police team led by DSP City Hafeez Yousafzai and SHO City Saifullah along with a heavy contingent of Police and Elite Force participated in the search operation. During the search operation, the detained persons were shifted to City Police Station for investigation. Cases were registered against the persons arrested during the operations

MWMC hires
500 sanitary staff

MULTAN (APP): Multan Waste Management Company (MWMC) hired 500 sanitation staff on a contract basis to meet the shortage of manpower for swift cleanliness arrangements in the city. Manager Admin/HR MWMC Aqeel Ahmad told this news agency that the hiring of sanitary workers and drivers was made in a transparent manner after completing all processes. He said that the induction of new staff was made on the posts lying vacant after the death or retirement of the staff from 2013 until now. Mr. Aqeel said that at least 1700 candidates participated in the interview process, of which 375 sanitary workers and 125 drivers were hired on a one-year contract basis on extendable conditions.

JUI-F Chaman
chief dies

CHAMAN (INP): Head of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) Chaman district, Maulana Hassamuddin Deobandi passed away in a road accident. A large number people including the party leaders and workers attended the funeral prayers of the deceased after which he was laid to rest at ancestral graveyard. Provincial Chief of JUI-F Maulana Abdul Malik along with other office bearers of the party visited the residence of late Maulana Hassamuddin, offered fateha and condoled with the bereaved family. They acknowledged the services of the deceased for party and prayed for departed soul to rest in eternal peace and courage for bereaved family to bear this irreparable loss with equanimity.

Zahid Khan admits
differences with
ANP leadership

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Awami National Party central spokesman and former senator Zahid Khan has said that despite differences with his party has not yet decided to join any other party.

He was addressing the party workers from the Timergara and Balambat tehsil at Odigram as chief guest here on Sunday. The workers from both the tehsils mandated Mr Zahid Khan for taking any decision and they would follow him.

The meeting discussed party weaknesses and workers' disinterest during the Feb 8 general elections and sought suggestions from the participants.

The ANP spokesman said that he had differences with the party for the past several months but he had not decided to

leave the party.

He said that he would decide about his future after due consultation with party workers. The ANP leader said that personal interests were dominant instead of national interest in the present day politics.

He said the alliance of opposition parties was unnatural and it would not bear fruits.

He said the major parties had violated the constitution in the past. Mr Khan said that he had never compromised on public services and would never leave the people of Dir alone. He vowed to continue serving the masses and work for the area's development.

Some insiders told this reporter that the ANP stalwart Zahid Khan had made a mind to join another political party for which he was preparing grounds.

CHILDREN

INJURED: Two children were injured in firing when two groups clashed over a property ownership dispute at the Khadang area in the jurisdiction of Khall police station here on Sunday, residents and police said.

They said that the injured children were shifted by locals to the district headquarters hospital Timergara. Dozens of local residents including burqa-clad women and children blocked the main road against the incident for some time.

Long queues of vehicles were seen on the road due to road blockade. The protesters were demanding immediate arrest of the persons involved in the firing. A heavy contingent of police reached the site and registered cases against seven accused. Later the protesters dispersed peacefully.



HYDERABAD: Youngsters jumping and bathing in the canal to get relief from hot weather in the city.

Buledi for steps to address
challenges faced by nurses

QUETTA (APP): Advisor to the Chief Minister Balochistan for Women Development Department Dr. Rubaba Khan Buledi has said that nurses play a vital role in the healthcare sector. "The nursing staff faces numerous challenges, and comprehensive measures are needed to address these issues," she said in a message issued on the eve of International Nurses Day.

Dr. Rubaba Khan Buledi paid tribute to Begum Rana Liaquat Ali Khan, the founder of the nursing profession in Pakistan.

She noted that it is encouraging that the number of nurses in Pakistan

has increased by 70% over the past decade, but this number is still insufficient according to global health standards.

In Pakistan, there is a ratio of 5 nurses per 10,000 population, which is inadequate.

Dr. Buledi stated that the number of nurses in Balochistan is alarmingly low compared to the established medical chart, and Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti has decided to establish standard nursing institutions to address this shortage.

The provincial government is determined to establish recognized international standard nursing

institutions in Balochistan. Dr. Rubaba Khan Buledi said that special measures are being taken to address the shortage of nurses in Balochistan.

The government will provide a safe environment for nurses working in government and private hospitals. There is zero tolerance for harassment, and a desk has been activated to support affected nurses and women staff, she added.

Dr. Buledi urged nurses and women staff who face harassment to contact the Anti-Harassment Secretariat for support. The government will provide full assistance to affected nurses and women.



SIALKOT: Laborers busy moving building material from the ground to the third floor using lift.



QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti chairing high level meeting on security at Afghan border.

Difference
in ANP
Mardan
surface
F.P. Report

MARDAN: Severe differences surfaced in Awami National Party (Mardan chapter) as one the party tehsil urban general secretary has resigned from party basic membership and his office here on Sunday.

Speaking to journalists in a press conference held in Mardan Press Club, the ANP Mardan tehsil urban general secretary Qaiser Ali Durani announced to part his ways from the party after developing strong differences with party relevant key leaders and members over some important issues. On the occasion, he was also accompanied large number of other party members and workers. He alleged that Awami National Party had remained no more as a political party.

He claimed that he affiliated with ANP for the last fifteen years and work hard to promote the philosophy of great Pakhtun leader Khan Abdul Ghafar Khan alias as Bacha Khan Baba.

On one hand, he quitted ANP but on the other hand he announced to launch a new movement with the name of great Pakhtun leader titled as Abdali Qumi Itihad.

Mr. Qaiser Durani alleged that ANP had become as "Rajwara" party, adding that the party had divided in several groups across the district Mardan, adding that the party leadership did not bother to take any appropriate and effective steps with the purpose to remove those differences as well as reorganized the party.

Despite of the fact, he and other several party members expressed their genuine reservations before the party leadership about those issues but to no avail.

He blamed that the party leadership had become weak that was why it has lost its power of decision. He revealed that it was the differences within the party ranks which had become caused to the failure of ANP in the last general elections.

He, however, lauded the role of ex- chief minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ameer Haider Khan Hoti. He reminded that the former CM Ameer Haider Khan Hoti carried out several mega projects in Mardan district. Residents of the district would never forget his those good developmental projects during his tenure.

Man
strangles
wife to death

RAHIM YAR KHAN (INP): A man strangled his wife to death over domestic disputes in Mouza Wahi of Rahim Yar Khan and escaped the scene, police said on Sunday.

According to details, accused Badaruddin who was staying in another city for employment returned to hometown the other day.

An exchange of hot words took place between the couple over domestic disputes after which accused strangled his wife Atifa Bibi 32, to death and escaped the scene.

The body was shifted to hospital for postmortem and police after registering a case against the murderer started raids for his arrest.

WUM organizes
colloquial on post covid
challenges, opportunities

MULTAN (APP): Women University Multan (WUM) English department organized one day international colloquium titled "Post-Covid Challenges & Opportunities" aiming at reflecting on how Covid has affected higher education and what key challenges academicians, students and institutions had to face during Covid and post Covid era as well. The event titled "Teaching and English Language Literary Studies in 21st Century."

Addressing the event, WUM VC Dr Kalsoom Paracha, said that the steps taken by the government to meet the challenges during and post COVID are commendable. During the pandemic situation the Women University Multan played its lead role and arranged online classes and examinations to facilitate the students.

Despite having limited resources the university played a commendable role especially IT professionals guided the students and teachers to shift to online education, she informed.

Due to their tireless efforts the WUM was ranked on top among other women universities for providing quality Learning Management System to students.

Dr. Zia said that the pandemic has helped us to realize that even with minimum resources we kept our educational institutions functional which in itself is a big achievement. Conventional teachers also learnt that digitalization is important.

They also learned to integrate technology into teaching. Other panalist includes Dr. Muhammad Afzal, Dr. Naveed Chaudhry, Dr. Asif, Dr. Asim, Dr. Adnan, Dr. Tayyab, Dr. Fouzia, Dr. Ahsan, Dr. Shabbir, Dr. Ayesha, Dr. Mansoor, Dr. Abrar, Dr. Mazhar, Dr.

Glulam Murtaza, Dr. Safer and other eminent academic experts.

The participants exchanged different practices and solutions, explored and discussed existing challenges in transition and post-Covid-19 scenario to frame acceptable policies to impart knowledge and skills to students and outcome-based assessment in both cognitive and psycho motive domains based on set principles to adopt and live in a virtual world.

Chairperson, Department of English Dr. Mamoon Khan, highlighted the significance of formation of LitCon society. She said that promoting knowledge of languages, literature, learning about new ideas and modern trends was the pressing need of the hour. Dr. Mamoon Khan concluded the session and thanked the literary figures and scholars for their valuable knowledge.



MULTAN: Chairman Senate Syed Yusuf Raza Gillani in a group photograph with Christian community after lunch.

Gilani extols traders' crucial
role in economic growth

MULTAN (INP): Chairman Senate Syed Yusuf Raza Gillani on Sunday commended the indispensable role of the business community in driving both economic and social progress in the country.

Addressing a diverse array of delegations, including representatives from the Tanzeem Tajraan Pakistan, various political and social workers, Gillani lauded the efforts rendered by traders in fostering Pakistan's prosperity. He added that traders were the backbone of the country's economy, whose unwavering dedication had consistently propelled Pakistan

towards growth and matchless development.

During the discussions, Chairman Senate assured the business community of his complete support in addressing their concerns, while emphasizing the importance of collaboration for the country's advancement. The chairman senate stressed that economic prosperity relied heavily on the active participation and cooperation of the business fraternity.

Gilani also reflected on his past endeavours, highlighting significant investments in education and healthcare during his tenure as Prime Minister, particu-

larly in South Punjab.

Gilani reiterated his commitment to regional development and pledged to continue prioritizing the welfare of the people. Among the attendees were notable figures such as Khawaja Suleman Saddique from the Tanzeem Tajraan Pakistan, Sheikh Javaid Akhtar President Tanzeem Tajraan Pakistan South Punjab, City President Khalid Qureshi, Peer Syed Zahoor Shamsi, Advocate Maulvi Mansoor Alam, Malik Shahzad Anjum, Shakeel Labar, Ahmed Bappy, and numerous other social and political activists.

Mansehra police arrest man for uploading
aerial firing Video on social media

MANSEHRA (INP): Police arrested an individual for uploading a video on social media where he fired shots in the air. The action comes after District Police Officer (DPO) Mansehra ordered a crackdown on such displays of weapons and celebratory gunfire.

According to police officials, the arrest was made by the Buttal police station. They acted upon DPO's directives to take strict action against those who glorify violence and endanger public safety by showcasing firearms and firing them on social media.

The report further encourages citizens to report similar activities in their area. People can anonymously send photos and videos of such incidents to DPO Mansehra's designated WhatsApp complaint number (03058500313). The police department assures confidentiality to those who provide information.



US pilot arrested in Australia worked with Chinese hacker

SYDNEY (Reuters): A former US Marine pilot fighting extradition from Australia on US charges of training Chinese military pilots to land on aircraft carriers, unknowingly worked with a Chinese hacker, his lawyer said.

Daniel Duggan, 55, a naturalized Australian citizen, feared requests by Western intelligence agencies for sensitive information were putting his family at risk, the lawyer said in a legal filing seen by Reuters.

The lawyer's filing supports Reuters reporting linking Duggan to convicted Chinese defense hacker Su Bin.

Duggan denies the allegations that he broke US arms control laws. He has been in an Australian maximum security prison since his 2022 arrest after returning from six years working in Beijing.

US authorities found correspondence with Duggan on electronic devices seized from Su Bin, Duggan's lawyer Bernard Collaery said in the March submission to Australian Attorney General Mark Dreyfus, who will decide whether to surrender Duggan to the US after a magistrate hears

Duggan's extradition case.

The case will be heard in a Sydney court this month, two years after his arrest in rural Australia at a time when Britain was warning its former military pilots not to work for China.

Su Bin, arrested in Canada in 2014, pleaded guilty in 2016 to theft of US military aircraft designs by hacking major US defense contractors. He is listed among seven co-conspirators with Duggan in the extradition request.

Duggan knew Su Bin as an employment broker for Chinese state aviation company AVIC, lawyer Collaery wrote, and the hacking case was "totally unrelated to our client."

Although Su Bin "may have had improper connection to (Chinese) agents this was unknown to our client," Duggan's lawyer wrote.

‘OVERT INTELLIGENCE CONTACT’

AVIC was blacklisted by the US last year as a Chinese military-linked company.

Messages retrieved from Su Bin's electronic devices show he paid for Duggan's travel from Australia to Beijing in May 2012, according to extradition documents lodged by the

United States with the Australian court.

Duggan asked Su Bin to help source Chinese aircraft parts for his Top Gun tourist flight business in Australia, Collaery wrote.

The Australian Security Intelligence Organization (ASIO) and US Navy criminal investigators knew Duggan was training pilots for AVIC and met him in Australia's Tasmania state in December 2012 and February 2013, his lawyer wrote.

ASIO and the US Navy Criminal Investigation Service did not respond to Reuters requests for comment on the meetings. ASIO has previously said it would not comment as the matter was before the court.

"An ASIO officer suggested that while carrying on his legitimate business operations in China, Mr.Duggan may be able to gather sensitive information," his lawyer wrote.

Duggan moved to China in 2013 and was barred from leaving the country in 2014, his lawyer said.

Duggan's LinkedIn profile and aviation sources who knew him said he was working in China as an aviation consultant in 2013 and



He renounced his US citizenship in 2016 at the US embassy in Beijing, backdated to 2012 on a certificate, after

"overt intelligence contact by US authorities that may have compromised his family safety," his lawyer wrote.

His lawyers oppose extradition, arguing there is no evidence the Chinese pilots he trained were military and that he became an Australian citizen in January 2012, before the

alleged offenses.

The United States government has argued Duggan did not lose his US citizenship until 2016.

Swiss fans get ready to welcome Eurovision winner Nemo back home

BERLIN (AP): Swiss Eurovision fans were getting ready Sunday to give a hero's welcome to singer Nemo, who won the 68th Eurovision Song Contest with "The Code," an operatic pop-rap ode to the singer's journey toward embracing a nongender identity.

The singer, who is Swiss but currently lives in Berlin, was to land in Zurich on Sunday night, national broadcaster SRF said.

Switzerland's contestant beat Croatian rocker Baby Lasagna to the title by winning the most points from a combination of national juries and viewers around the world.

Nemo, 24, is the first nonbinary winner of the contest that has long been embraced as a safe haven by the LGBTQ community. Nemo is also the first Swiss winner since 1988, when Canadian chanteuse Celine Dion competed under the Swiss flag.

At a post-victory news conference, Nemo expressed pride in accepting the trophy for "people that are daring to be themselves and people that need to be heard and need to be understood. We need more compassion, we need more empathy."

Nemo's hometown of Biel congratulated the newly-crowned star online and said the residents were ready to celebrate them.

"Congratulations! The city of Biel is extremely proud and says: Bravo and Merci Nemo for the fantastic song and performance and also for carrying the colors of Biel out into the world!," the town said on its website. "Your city will celebrate and welcome you."

Biel, with a population of around 60,000, is located around 100 kilometers (60 miles) southwest of Basel on Lake Biel. The town is bilingual, German and French, and is considered the watchmaking capital of Switzerland.

"Nemo creates and moves freely between classical, alternative and popular culture," the town's culture official, Glenda Gonzalez Bassi, said. "A wonderful example of the dynamic and inclusive culture that we are proud of in Biel."

Nemo — full name Nemo Mettler — bested finalists from 24 other countries, who all performed in front of a live audience of thousands and an estimated 180 million viewers around the world. Each contestant had three minutes to

Nepal's 'Everest Man' beats own record by climbing summit for 29th time

KATMANDU (Aljazeera): One of the world's most skilled climbing guides on Mount Everest has reached the Earth's highest peak for the 29th time, beating his own record for most times to the summit, according to expedition organisers.

Kami Rita reached the 8,849-meter (29,032-foot) peak early morning on Sunday, said Mingma Sherpa from Seven Summits Treks.

He was reported to be in good health and already on his way down to lower camps of the mountain. Mingma Sherpa said the weather on the mountain was good and favourable for climbing to the summit.

"Back again for the 29th summit to the top of the world...One man's job, another man/woman's dream," Rita posted on his Instagram from base camp last week.

Rita had climbed Mount Everest twice last year, setting the record for most climbs on his first expedition and adding to it less than a week later.

He and fellow Sherpa guide Pasang Dawa have been competing with each other for the title of most climbs of the world's highest peak. Dawa has made it to the top of the



mountain 27 times.

Rita first climbed Everest in 1994 and has been climbing to the top almost every year since, earning the nickname "Everest Man". He has built a reputation for being a vital guide for foreign climbers.

He builds on his father's legacy, who was among the first Sherpa guides. Hundreds of people will be attempting to climb the mountain this month, with Nepalese authorities

issuing hundreds of climbing permits to foreign climbers.

Nepal is home to eight of the world's 10 highest peaks and welcomes hundreds of people each spring, when temperatures are warm and winds are light.

Last year, more than 600 climbers made it to the summit of Everest but it was also the deadliest season on the mountain, with 18 fatalities.

The man who took on the coal industry to save a forest - and won



NEW DELHI (BBC): The moment Alok Shukla first saw the forest in central India stretching out before him, he knew two things instantly.

One: that this forest - known as the lungs of Chhattisgarh, home to thousands of tribespeople, endangered animals and rare plants - was one of the most beautiful places he had ever seen.

And two: that he would dedicate his life to stopping the multi-billion dollar companies hoping to uproot it in search of the coal beneath its soil.

The only question was, how?

Twelve years later, Alok can smile at the memory. After all, what he has achieved in the intervening years has been impressive.

On Monday, the 43-year-old was awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize, otherwise known as the green Nobel.

But it started with small steps.

Back in 2012, the Hasdeo Aranya forest in Chhattisgarh state and its 657 bio-diversity rich square miles (1,071km sq) were under threat, thanks to its massive coal deposits - totalling an estimated 5.6

groups together effectively for the first time.

But it wasn't easy. In 2020, more coal mines were proposed.

With Covid racing across India, Alok once again began organising.

Community pressure led to three of the mines being shelved that September. The next month, the community fought to have almost a million acres designated as an elephant reserve.

Then central government stepped in to push forward plans to auction off 21 coal blocks under emergency provisions.

It would take another 18 months - along with an online campaign united under the hashtag #SaveHasdeo, a march on the state capital, and even a tree hugging sit-in - for the 21 coal blocks to finally be cancelled.

None of it has been easy. The 12-year battle, he admits, has taken a steely resolve on his part, and on the part of the forest communities.

"This is a fight in some sense between the people's lives and livelihoods and forests on the one hand, and the corporate profits on the other hand," he explains.

"Naturally any company whose profits and viability is at stake will try to do all kinds of steps to make sure that they get the land."

And even now, there are still fights to be won - land which needs to be rejuvenated after being destroyed and trees which are still in danger.

Alok hopes winning the Goldman prize, which recognises a handful of grassroots campaigners from around the world each year, will inspire other movements globally - and once again focus attention on the forest.

"Any tree being cut in Hasdeo Aranya is wrong, and our effort will be to save every tree," he vows.

India court grants bail to Delhi leader

NEW DELHI (BBC): India's top court has granted interim bail to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, more than a month after he was arrested in a corruption case.

The court said that the bail is applicable until 1 June after which he must surrender to authorities again.

A former anti-corruption crusader, Mr Kejriwal was arrested in connection with a now-scrapped alcohol sales policy in March.

He has denied the charges against him and has called his arrest "illegal".

The chief minister moved the Supreme Court after the Delhi High Court refused to give him bail last month. His bail was strongly opposed in court by India's financial crimes agency, the Enforcement Directorate.

On Friday, a bench of Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Dipankar Datta said Mr Kejriwal would have to surrender on 2 June, two days before the results of India's general election are due. The court has said Mr Kejriwal would be allowed to campaign for the election upon his release but will not be allowed to perform official duties during that time.

A member of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Mr Kejriwal was arrested on 21 March, days after the election dates were announced. He was the third AAP leader to be jailed in the case.

The ED accused him of favouring liquor barons in exchange for kickbacks. The party has denied the allegation.

Critics said the action against Mr Kejriwal and several other opposition parties was politically motivated and denied them a level playing field in the parliamentary election. The Indian government said the investigative agencies were just doing their work.

Thousands of civilians flee northeast Ukraine

VILCHA, Ukraine (AP): Thousands more civilians have fled Russia's renewed ground offensive in Ukraine's northeast that has targeted towns and villages with a barrage of artillery and mortar fire, officials said Sunday.

The intense battles have forced at least one Ukrainian unit to withdraw in the Kharkiv region, capitulating more land to Russian forces across less defended settlements in the so-called contested "gray zone" along the Russian border.

By Sunday afternoon, the town of Vovchansk, with a prewar population of 17,000, emerged as a focal point in the battle. Volodymyr Tymoshko, the head of the Kharkiv regional police, said Russian forces were in the outskirts of the town and approaching from three directions. A Russian tank was spotted along a major road leading to the town, Tymoshko said, illustrating Moscow's confidence to deploy heavy weaponry.

An Associated Press team, positioned in a nearby village, saw plumes of smoke rising from the town as Russian forces hurled shells. Evacuation teams worked non-stop throughout the day to take residents, most of whom were elderly, out of harm's way.

At least 4,000 civilians have fled the Kharkiv region since Friday, when Moscow's forces launched the operation, Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said in a social media statement. Heavy fighting raged Sunday along the northeast front line, where Russian forces attacked 27 settlements in the past 24 hours, he said.

Analysts say the Russian push is designed to exploit ammunition shortages before promised Western supplies can reach the front line. Ukrainian soldiers said

the Kremlin is using the usual Russian tactic by launching a disproportionate amount of fire and infantry assaults to exhaust their troops and firepower. By intensifying battles in what was previously a static patch of the front line, Russian forces threaten to pin Ukrainian forces in the northeast, while carrying out intense battles farther south where Moscow is also gaining ground.

It comes after Russia stepped up attacks in March targeting energy infrastructure and settlements, which analysts predicted were a concerted effort to shape conditions for an offensive.

Meanwhile, a 10-story apartment block collapsed in the Russian city of Belgorod, near the border, killing at least two people and injuring 20 others. Russian authorities said the building collapsed following Ukrainian shelling. Ukraine has not commented on the incident.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that halting Russia's offensive in the northeast was a priority, and that Kyiv's troops were continuing counteroffensive operations in seven villages around the Kharkiv region.

"Disrupting the Russian offensive intentions is our number one task now. Whether we succeed in that task depends on every soldier, every sergeant, every officer," Zelenskyy said.

The Russian Defense Ministry said Sunday that its forces had captured four villages on the border along Ukraine's Kharkiv region, in addition to five villages reported to have been seized on Saturday. These areas were likely poorly fortified due to the dynamic fighting and constant heavy shelling, easing a Russian advance.

Ukraine's leadership

has not confirmed Moscow's gains.

A Ukrainian unit said that they had been forced to retreat in some areas and that Russian forces had captured at least one more village late Saturday. Tymoshko said Russian tactics in Vovchansk mirrored those used in the battles for Bakhmut and Avdiivka in the Donetsk region in which heavy aerial attacks were accompanied by droves of infantry assaults.

In a video Saturday evening, the Hostri Kartuzy unit, part of the special forces' detachment of Ukraine's national guard, said that they were fighting for control of the village of Hlyboke.

"Today, during heavy fighting, our defenders were forced to withdraw from a few more of their positions, and today, another settlement has come completely under Russian control. As of 20:00, fighting for the village of Hlyboke is ongoing," the fighters said in the clip. The U.S.-based Institute for the Study of War said Saturday that it believed claims that Moscow had captured Strilecha, Pylna, Pletenivka and Borsivka were accurate, and that geolocated footage also appeared to show that Russian forces have seized Morokhovets and Oliynykove. It described the recent Russian gains as "tactically significant."

In the war's early days, Russia made a botched attempt to quickly storm Kharkiv but retreated from its outskirts after about a month. In the fall of 2022, seven months later, Ukraine's army pushed them out of Kharkiv. The bold counterattack helped persuade Western countries that Ukraine could defeat Russia on the battlefield and merited military support.

The Frontier Post

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 415-3704551

Time for Seoul to reassess its borrowed policy

While the planned visit of Republic of Korea Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul to China from Monday to Tuesday is not expected to mend the bilateral relationship, it is anticipated that it will at least help both sides work toward that end.

Cho's visit comes at a time when the ROK has a trade deficit of \$18 billion with China, which was previously the source of its largest trade surplus. This is the first trade deficit the ROK has had with China since the two sides forged diplomatic ties in 1992. The reason is political rather than economic.

As ROK-based East Asia Daily pointed out, China imported \$4.48 billion worth of semiconductors from the ROK in 2023, 20.3 percent lower than in 2022. This is due to the United States cajoling the ROK to limit its chip exports to China. In other words, it is the ROK that has suffered most heavily by faithfully heeding the US' call for its allies to cut their chips supply to China.

Thus when the ROK Foreign Ministry told the media that the two nations would talk about "issues of common interest, from bilateral relations, the trilateral summit and the Korean Peninsula, to regional and global issues", they need to know the plain truth that the two nations' common interest can only be ensured by Seoul pursuing an independent foreign policy. That applies not only to trade but also security considering its worsening relationship with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

With the ruling People Power Party performing poorly in the congressional election in April, the Yoon Suk-yeol government has almost become a lame duck. It needs to uphold strategic autonomy that serves the nation's own interests rather than those of the US. Thus Seoul is accelerating its steps to improve relations with its neighbors.

The fact that the ninth China-Japan-ROK leaders' meeting is scheduled to be held in Seoul on May 26-27, according to ROK sources, offers the opportunity for the three countries to find ways to work together for their mutual benefit.

Seoul deserves credit for actively promoting the resumption of the meeting mechanism that has been suspended since 2019. Yet the challenges faced by the trilateral relations over the past five years should remind Seoul, as well as Tokyo, that it is imperative to carry out exchanges in good faith if the three neighbors are to delve into the issues where their ties really rub, and work together to deliver on their potential with concrete and earnest actions.

With friends like US, who needs enemies

The US Commerce Department's Bureau of Industry and Security added 37 more Chinese entities to the Entity List, claiming that the move demonstrated its commitment to safeguarding US national security. Tellingly, it also said that the new additions were in support of US foreign policy, which, as evident to all, aims to curtail China's development.

The new additions bring the number of Chinese entities the Joe Biden administration has put on the Entity List to 355 - more than any prior administration, as a statement announcing the move proudly boasts.

Highlighting the political nature of the administration's latest additions to the list in the run-up to the presidential election in November, 11 entities were added for their involvement in China's "High Altitude Balloon" program, which BIS said poses significant national security concerns.

Despite later acknowledging that the balloon that entered US airspace early last year was a wayward meteorologic balloon, it seems that the administration is going to hype up its scaremongering on that score ahead of the election. The latest additions build on previous actions the US took in February 2023 to target China's aerospace programs. The distance between a weather balloon and aerospace cause just exposes the extent to which the US is ready to stoop to a new low to contain China's technological progress.

Other Chinese entities being targeted include 22 for their participation in China's quantum technology advancements, which is aimed at trying to thwart China's progress in quantum technology research, development and application, where the US side has no obvious advantages over China.

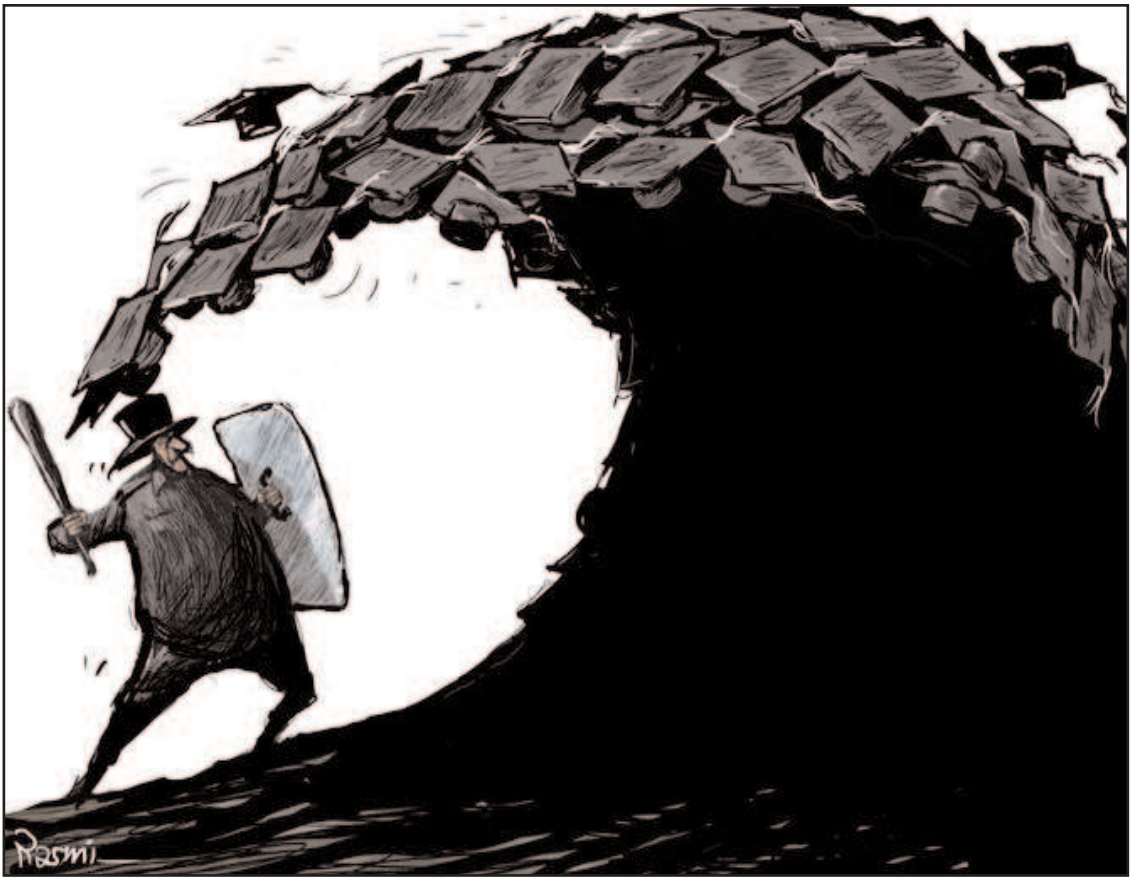
Meanwhile, along with the enlarging of the Entity List, US media report that the Biden administration is to raise tariffs on electric vehicles from China from 25 percent to about 100 percent in the coming days, and batteries and solar panels from China will also be targeted. These protectionist moves cannot spearhead US green technology's competitiveness, and they will only hinder global green transitions as a whole.

Such "blatant economic coercion and bullying in the field of technology", as Beijing described the moves, came shortly after US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen wrapped up their visits to China, supposedly as part of the Biden administration's efforts to repair ties and manage differences responsibly by leveraging the role of consultation mechanisms in such areas as diplomacy, economy, finance and commerce that have ostensibly agreed to restore or establish to resolve bilateral disputes.

Biden has repeatedly claimed that his administration does not want to curtail China's development, and does not seek "decoupling" from China. But the latest rounds of new sanctions and threats of exorbitant tariffs on Chinese green products clearly show that the Biden administration is hellbent on saying one thing and doing another in handling China relations, feeling no qualms about overdrawing further on its already bankrupt credibility. That leaves China no choice but to take necessary measures to resolutely safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese enterprises, and reevaluate the US' commitment as well as its own input to repair ties.

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.



The right to protest is sacrosanct but not all methods of doing so are legitimate

Yossi Mekelberg

During my considerable time in academic teaching politics at various universities, including American ones, I have had many wonderful students who cared deeply about their studies and the issues discussed in class.

However, I have also complained to them about their reluctance to become proactive in terms of political activity. Where previous generations took to the streets, they prefer to log on to social media to protest.

It might be the case that individualism has descended upon our societies, making the younger generation less enchanted by the prospect of mass gatherings. Or it may be a perception that politics is beyond repair, especially when true leadership is hard to come by these days. There is also the unbearable ease with which social media can give us an impression of engaging in political activism without leaving our armchairs.

However, the latest round of horrific hostilities between the Israelis and Palestinians has incentivized hundreds of thousands of people to take to the streets and protest. On many college campuses, especially in the US, students have become political activists in large numbers, which is something to be welcomed.

Nevertheless, this development has also highlighted the binary nature of the message behind these protests, and in too many cases produced ugly manifestations of antisemitism and Islamophobia, which are utterly unacceptable.

In the US, these phenomena are even more accentuated due to the very loose interpretation of the First Amendment. Its almost illogical interpretation of absolute protection for the right of freedom of speech, one can argue, allows and encourages hate speech, and leaves no room for incitement and expressions of hate to be censored, punished or even restrained within the education system.

On the positive side, what we have seen emerge over the past seven months is the fact that young people are desperately looking for a cause to rally around, and this is something society especially needs because the challenges that lie ahead, whether they arise from climate change, wars and conflicts, or the growing inequalities in our societies, are endangering not only our security but also our humanity.

Criticism of Israel for the killings and devastation it is inflicting on Gaza with little care for civilians, from the very young to the elderly, is understandable, because it is impossible to watch the horrific images from the Strip and remain indifferent to them, regardless of the terrible atrocities committed by Hamas on Oct. 7.

Who among us has the moral right to question the legitimacy of the calls for an immediate ceasefire and the release of hostages, and the demand for sufficient humanitarian aid to reach more than 2 million Gazans, who have been literally trapped for years in the crossfire between an occupying and blockading force and a fundamentalist regime, both of which have

deprived them of their most basic needs, rights and dignity?

Israeli authorities, through their self-defeating policies, have "earned" the wrath of ordinary people and states around the world. Moreover, support for the Palestinian cause and calls for the establishment of a Palestinian state is not an antisemitic act,

Yet, among some of the protesters there are also clear manifestations of antisemitism, the misrepresentation of Zionism, and a questioning of the right of Israel to exist, as well as incitements against Jews more generally. And this is where a line should be drawn.

There are recorded incidents of antisemitic slurs

The White House description of the call for an intifada as “hate speech” was misplaced, because to rise up against an occupation is not necessarily to call for suicide bombings, as was claimed; this was certainly not the case during the First Intifada. Yet, among some of the protesters there are also clear manifestations of antisemitism, the misrepresentation of Zionism, and a questioning of the right of Israel to exist, as well as incitements against Jews more generally. And this is where a line should be drawn. There are recorded incidents of antisemitic slurs directed at Jewish students and academic staff, and many of them report that they are afraid, for example, to wear a Star of David necklace for fear of being attacked by pro-Palestinian protesters. Extremely disturbing has been the support expressed, albeit by a small minority of the protestors, not only for Hamas as a political movement but for the crimes it committed on Oct.

7. There have also been several cases of physical attacks, although it has been reported that at UCLA it was pro-Israel activists who resorted to violence against pro-Palestinian protesters. This is a worrying trend that jeopardizes the pursuit of common ground and peaceful dialogue that would be much more helpful to both Israelis and Palestinians than exporting this bitter conflict around the world. What has become apparent in the anti-Israel protests is that they have “empowered” those who never believed in a two-state solution, or never believed that Israel should exist in the first place (and equally those pro-Israelis who have always opposed a Palestinian state). Much of the influence on the protesters stems from the academics who subscribe to the theory-ideology of the moment of “decolonization.”

but a call for a solution that would enable both Israelis and Palestinians to live peacefully, side by side.

The White House description of the call for an intifada as “hate speech” was misplaced, because to rise up against an occupation is not necessarily to call for suicide bombings, as was claimed; this was certainly not the case during the First Intifada.

directed at Jewish students and academic staff, and many of them report that they are afraid, for example, to wear a Star of David necklace for fear of being attacked by pro-Palestinian protesters.

Extremely disturbing has been the support expressed, albeit by a small minority of the protestors, not only for Hamas as a political movement but for the crimes it committed on

Oct. 7.

There have also been several cases of physical attacks, although it has been reported that at UCLA it was pro-Israel activists who resorted to violence against pro-Palestinian protesters. This is a worrying trend that jeopardizes the pursuit of common ground and peaceful dialogue that would be much more helpful to both Israelis and Palestinians than exporting this bitter conflict around the world.

What has become apparent in the anti-Israel protests is that they have “empowered” those who never believed in a two-state solution, or never believed that Israel should exist in the first place (and equally those pro-Israelis who have always opposed a Palestinian state).

Much of the influence on the protesters stems from academics who subscribe to the theory-ideology of the moment of “decolonization.” This views the Zionist movement as a whole as a colonial project, and the Jewish people, including those living within the international recognized Green Line and not only the settlers in the occupied West Bank, as committing “settler-colonialism,” hence delegitimizing the very right of Israel to exist.

While the Zionist movement has always been diverse in its ideology, and tragically the current Israeli government represents the most extreme right-wing and expansionist version of this, the attempts to tar the entire movement and those who support it with the same brush of illegitimacy, while claiming that so-called Jewish money and power is ensuring US and international support for Israel, is nothing short of incitement.

Universities and academics have the difficult task of providing their students with critical-thinking skills in the face of complex situations and events, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict presents its fair share of complexities.

What is required is to avoid the type of approach that is more applicable to sporting contests, in which one supports the “either-or,” “zero-sum” outcome. Not only is this unsuitable for dealing with war and conflicts, in which the various causes and outcomes are often opaque and entangled, but it causes obvious harm to the discourse surrounding a conflict and its ability to overcome differences on the path to resolving it.

There can be only one silver lining to what has taken place since Oct. 7, and that is the opportunity to internalize the fact that there is an urgent need for a completely new discourse over Israel and Palestine, one that discards prejudices, biases, hatred and, in the case of universities, avoids the artificial paradigms that are at best only partially relevant, and at worst highly damaging.

Instead, it is time for students, and the rest of us, to join forces and support those who want peace, coexistence and reconciliation, and marginalize the haters and those for whom a historical compromise for peace is a curse and not a blessing.

Euro-Chinese relations changed a lot in the 5 years between President 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

European Union, and concerns that Beijing is “dumping” key products such as 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 undermine 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

These include Western assertions of human rights abuses by China in Xinjiang province, and concerns that Beijing is “dumping” key products such as 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 undermine the collective interests of the continent.

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 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 Xinji-

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.

Gulf states on track with renewable energy investments

The Gulf states that are concerned with economic transformation are beginning to focus on diversification, with the development of robust infrastructure for renewable energy. As urban developments and populations expand across the Gulf region, the demand for electricity is growing rapidly and the region is predicted to need another 100 gigawatts of power over the next decade to meet this demand. Moreover, several avenues of economic diversification, such as artificial intelligence, smart cities and tourist attractions, are electricity-intensive, further adding to the need for sufficient and sustainable energy sources.

At the same time, as the number of residents increases in a region that faces high temperatures for most of the year, the increased demand for air conditioning will also put new pressures on electricity generation. Renewable energy is key to meeting this growing demand and, as per the International Energy Agency, will meet 35 percent of global power generation by 2025.

This region has shown a positive trend in this domain, as the Gulf states have actively established cross-border, regional and international cooperation to develop renewable energy infrastructure. On May 1, for example, the UAE's state-owned renewable energy company Masdar established a partnership agreement with Bahrain's energy and investment arm Bapco Energies to develop near-shore and offshore wind farms in Bahrain.

In the same week, Oman's green hydrogen company Hydrom signed agreements worth \$11 billion with international companies, including France's state-owned EDF. These will lead to the establishment of two new green hydrogen projects in Dhofar. Simultaneously, the

Kuwait Oil Company signed a memorandum of understanding with the Kuwaiti Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy to coordinate efforts to generate 1 GW of electricity from solar energy.

With abundant exposure to sunlight and wind and

Zaid M. Belbagi

and is therefore the cheapest option for power generation.

Boosting renewable energy generation is also part of the Gulf states' commitment to reduce carbon emissions and hit their net-zero targets. Through their

Boosting renewable energy generation is also part of the Gulf states' commitment to reduce carbon emissions and hit their net-zero targets. Through their participation in notable international environmental summits such as the UN Framework Convention for Climate Change's Conference of the Parties gatherings, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait and the UAE have committed to net-zero emissions by 2050. Further, having ratified the Paris Agreement and acknowledged their heavy reliance on fossil fuels, the Gulf states have actively put in place the necessary infrastructure and plans to reduce emissions. This commitment is also reflected in the states' national vision statements. As part of its Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia is working toward energy diversification and a circular carbon economy wherein, by 2030, renewable sources will provide 50 percent of the Kingdom's energy needs. Saudi Arabia's total installed renewable energy capacity tripled in 2023 and it continues to make significant investments in solar and wind projects. Similarly, the UAE's Energy Strategy 2050 aims to make the country carbon-neutral by 2050. Beyond the benefits of energy security and sustainability at home, their commitment to renewable energy has also allowed the Gulf states to boost international relations, as well as attract and provide foreign investment.

large tracts of unused land, the Gulf states are well positioned to leverage natural resources for sustainable energy. High sunlight exposure allows solar plants to operate for longer durations. It is worth noting that, in the Gulf Cooperation Council, solar photovoltaic power now costs less than 2 cents per kilowatt-hour to generate

participation in notable international environmental summits such as the UN Framework Convention for Climate Change's Conference of the Parties gatherings, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait and the UAE have committed to net-zero emissions by 2050. Further, having ratified the Paris Agreement and acknowledged their

heavy reliance on fossil fuels, the Gulf states have actively put in place the necessary infrastructure and plans to reduce emissions.

This commitment is also reflected in the states' national vision statements. As part of its Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia is working

Energy Strategy 2050 aims to make the country carbon-neutral by 2050.

Beyond the benefits of energy security and sustainability at home, their commitment to renewable energy has also allowed the Gulf states to boost international relations, as well as attract and provide foreign investment. In the first week of May alone, Saudi Arabia signed renewable energy partnerships with Azerbaijan, Mauritania and Uzbekistan. Notably, the Kingdom is also in talks with the EU to identify avenues for cooperation on renewable energy and carbon capture. It also hosted the Saudi Arabia Green Energy Week in March, when local and international industry leaders gathered to discuss the opportunities and challenges for the energy value chain.

The region is therefore on track to build a robust and sustainable infrastructure for renewable energy that can not only meet domestic demand but also potentially support international consumption. State-owned companies have been active in providing the necessary financial and regulatory support to this endeavor and, while the private sector has also played a role, there continues to be scope for further private-public partnerships. For instance, as per the UAE's Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement, the country needs investments totaling approximately \$36 billion to achieve its climate targets by 2030.

Today, renewable energy is not just an option but a necessity to enhance the socioeconomic transformations underway in the Gulf. It adds sustainability to economic development, allows significant opportunities for employment and skills development and increases international investor confidence in the region.

Emir's visit charts path ahead for Kuwaiti-Turkish relations

Sinem Cengiz

backed Türkiye's initiatives on this front, demonstrating their shared approach. Sheikh Mishal's visit, therefore, came at a significant time that likely provided Kuwait's new leader an opportunity to discuss with his Turkish counterpart how to end the ongoing war in Gaza.

Given the escalating tensions in the Middle East, Kuwait tends to cooperate with regional actors on security-related issues. The systemic pressures stemming from Israeli aggression, the ambiguous policies of the US and Iran's expansionist strategies compel Kuwaiti policymakers to seek partners capable of addressing the country's security requirements. Being a country that severely suffered from the Iraqi invasion of 1990-91, Kuwait has adopted a foreign policy line that is significantly shaped by its threat perceptions emanating from regional crises. In this context, Kuwait's decision last year to purchase

ceptions and visions. This understanding has led to the development of distinct cooperation agendas with each Gulf nation. Kuwait holds a particularly significant position in the considerations of Turkish policymakers, owing to its constructive role as a bridge during periods of tension between Türkiye and the GCC states.

Now, both sides need to leverage this positive history and improve other areas, such as economic and cultural relations, which can serve as a strong basis for the political dialogue. Türkiye aims to replicate the positive momentum it has established with Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE in its relations with Kuwait. Defense and economic cooperation are the main tools to reach that goal.

We cannot be sure if the Development Road project, recently announced by Türkiye, Iraq, Qatar and the UAE, came up during the talks between the Turkish and Kuwaiti leaders, but it is certainly a significant topic for both sides due to

Kuwait stands as a crucial pillar in Türkiye's GCC strategy. The relationship between Ankara and the GCC states has undergone a significant transformation since the signing of the AIUla Declaration in 2021. Turkish policymakers now acknowledge that each Gulf state has diverse threat perceptions and visions. This understanding has led to the development of distinct cooperation agendas with each Gulf nation. Kuwait holds a particularly significant position in the considerations of Turkish policymakers, owing to its constructive role as a bridge during periods of tension between Türkiye and the GCC states. Now, both sides need to leverage this positive history and improve other areas, such as economic and cultural relations, which can serve as a strong basis for the political dialogue. Türkiye aims to replicate the positive momentum it has established with Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE in its relations with Kuwait. Defense and economic cooperation are the main tools to reach that goal.

Turkish Bayraktar TB2 drones for \$367 million was significant.

During Sheikh Mishal's visit, the two sides also agreed on defense cooperation through the implementation of a protocol on defense procurement. There has been ongoing cooperation between the Turkish and Kuwaiti armed forces for years. Annually, delegates from both armies come together to organize military dialogue meetings and participate in collaborative activities aimed at enhancing the security capabilities of the two countries.

Kuwait stands as a crucial pillar in Türkiye's GCC strategy. The relationship between Ankara and the GCC states has undergone a significant transformation since the signing of the AIUla Declaration in 2021. Turkish policymakers now acknowledge that each Gulf state has diverse threat per-

their respective interests. Given the remarks of some Kuwaiti MPs and analysts, there is concern on the Kuwaiti side regarding the Development Road, which aims to link Iraq's Grand Faw Port — adjacent to Kuwait's Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port — to the Turkish border in the north. Türkiye could play a constructive role in easing the disagreements between Kuwait and Iraq over the project due to its good relations with both sides.

Türkiye and Kuwait's mutual commitment to deepen relations, which was solidified during this week's visit, reflects a shared vision for addressing regional challenges and leveraging opportunities for their mutual benefit. Moving forward, both countries can capitalize on their shared historical legacy to foster greater cooperation in practical, tangible domains.

New military coup in Myanmar a growing threat

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 underesti-

Dr. Azeem Ibrahim

mate 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 prepare 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 mili-

tary 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.

Jonathan Gornall

60,000 Jews killed or deported to death camps.

Eighty-one years later, a disturbingly similar disproportionality is evident 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.

And history teaches that such crimes, carried out with the willing or unwilling complicity of a multitude of players — includ-

ing, in this case, thousands of young Israeli conscripts, many of whom will doubtless be traumatized by the atrocities they have either witnessed or taken part in — will eventually be exposed.

Ultimately, the events still unfolding in Gaza will not only be added to the international roll call of shame that includes such infamous massacres as Katyn, My Lai, Bloody Sunday, Srebrenica and Sinjar, but will also dominate it, by virtue of the sheer scale of the killings.

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.

Smiling Israeli soldiers on the wrong side of history

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

dren, planting weapons on their bodies to justify their killing. 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 uninvolved 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.



Pak-Uzbek leaders agree for joint plan of action

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Uzbekistan Commodity Exchange leaders have agreed to adopt a joint future plan of action, regarding new capital market challenges through cooperation.

Pakistan and Uzbekistan have a lot of potential in commodity exchange which includes major sectors in the country's Gross Domestic Products (GDP), including agriculture and textiles, food and oil sector, grain, sugar and energy sector.

Pakistan Mercantile Exchange, Manager Business Development Habib Mamsa led the delegation to participate in the Tashkent International Investment Forum and visited Uzbekistan Commodity Exchange. The delegation was welcomed by Deputy Chairman of Uzbekistan Commodity Exchange Nabikhon Samatov.

The commodity exchange leaders, during the interaction, emphasised the joint action plan and initiative of the two commodity exchanges by adopting a joint future planning and action plan to face the challenges of the future market.

Meanwhile, Deputy Ch-

airman of Uzbekistan Commodity Exchange (USEX) Nabikhon Samatov said that Uzbekistan Commodity Exchange currently has 500,000 and 30,000 foreign clients at the national level and it has been 30 years since UCE was established.

The deputy chairman said that transactions worth \$14 billion are taking place in the Uzbekistan Commodity Exchange annually and 10,000 transactions are being made daily. He said that 55 per cent private sector and 45 per cent government are doing business in UCEX.

Nabikhon Samatov said that energy, oil, cement, cotton, sugar, grain and livestock are the major sectors to invest here.

He said that Uzbekistan is currently developing in the market economy and at this time Pakistan Mercantile Exchange and Uzbekistan Commodity Exchange want to benefit from each others experiences.

Senior business leader said that the capital markets of Pakistan and Uzbekistan have a lot of compatibility and many sectors are compatible on both sides, with

which both sides want to move ahead with cooperation by adopting a common plan.

He said, "in the modern capital market, we can benefit from the experiences of Pakistan for which bilateral coordination is very important". The deputy chairman said that not only the two governments but also the private sector should pave the way for mutual cooperation.

Similarly, both institutions should increase collaboration on the spot market and future market.

Deputy Chairman of Uzbekistan Commodity Exchange Nabikhon Samatov said that both sides want to work together on new trends like market innovation and meta-trading. He said that the series of mutual discussions on this agenda should continue in near future.

On this occasion, Habib Mamsa, Manager Business Development of Pakistan Mercantile Exchange,

urged to set a strategy for the Spot Market and Future Market by adopting a joint plan with Pakistan Mercantile Exchange, Uzbekistan Commodity

Exchange, and in this regard, the dialogue process should continue in the leadership of both sides.

Habib said that PMS is in the phase of evolution, and we currently have 60000 clients. He said that our market has increased by 20%, the volume of which is Rs2 billion and there are enough opportunities for mutual cooperation on both sides which need to be worked on.

On this occasion, the leadership of both sides emphasized online Zoom and face-to-face discussions between the leaders of both markets for the promotion of mutual cooperation and joint action plans in the future.

On this occasion, Senior Manager Product, PMEX Irfan Kasana and Advisor to Chairman UCEX, Hikmatullah highlighted the different aspects of the stock market of the two countries and shed light on the various avenues of cooperation on both sides.

They said that bilateral dialogue should continue by adopting a common strategy for the promotion of capital markets on both sides.

'Govt taking economic decisions'

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb said on Sunday that the government is taking decisions which seem tough but are in the larger interest of the country's economy and its people.

Addressing a Pre-Budget Conference FY 2024-25 jointly organized by the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) and Business Recorder at a local hotel, he said, "We are doing all this not under the pressure of the IMF (International Monetary Fund) but for Pakistan because the country is supreme to all of us."

He added that the government was taking all possible measures and ensuring institutional reforms to restore confidence of the business community in the tax revenue collection authorities, especially the FBR (Federal Board of Revenue).

He said that effective steps were also being put in place to enhance financial support for various sectors out of which agriculture, information technology (IT) and SME (small and medium enterprises) are priority sectors.

He emphasised that the private sector would have to come forward and play a proactive role to steer the country out of present day economic challenges, asserting that the government's job is to improve governance and provide facilitation to businessmen and industrialists.

The Federal Finance Minister said that the industry should not depend more on government subsidies on various counts but to strive to transform into export-oriented entities, assuring that the government would provide all possible facilitation in this regard.

He said that comprehensive measures were being taken for proper enforcement in the FBR in addition to its reformation and structural changes in the tax collection mechanism.

"Since March this year, we have started a campaign for tax registration," he said and dispelled the general perception among the people that when they come into the tax net, they will be 'harassed'.

He cited that the government is providing relief in taxes and facilities on a number of other counts to tax filers. He, however, added that the government would negotiate but not back down from the tax registration campaign.

Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb said, "We are moving towards complete digitization as it will increase revenues and also bring transparency in the collection system." He was of the view that the track and trace system had failed because it was not implemented fully. He, however, added that relevant authorities were working on why the track and trace system did not work properly.

The Federal Finance Minister said that economic indicators have improved during the last seven to eight months, and at present, the current account deficit is less than one billion dollars, while the Pak rupee is also stable against the US dollar and inflation is coming down and the stock exchange is at an all-time high.

Responding to questions by the business community, he said that a lot of reforms have to be done on tax-to-GDP, energy and privatization matters.

Chairman and CEO called on PM



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Chairman Jin Yongsheng and CEO Omar Saeed called on PM Shehbaz Sharif to thank him for the government's support to the tyre industry.

Servis LongMarch has committed a further investment of Rs 30b to double

its capacity and to increase exports to \$100m in 2025.

Servis LongMarch Tyres has also shown an intent to invest a further amount of Rs 30b to start a new project exporting specialised tyres from Pakistan to EU and USA.

PM promised continued support from all departments

and instructed relevant ministries to help export led growth in the country.

The meeting was attended by the Finance Minister, Commerce Minister, Minister for Privatisation and Investment, Information Minister, Secretary to PM, Secretary Commerce and Secretary BOI.

718 illegal gas connections disconnected by SNGPL

F.P. Report

LAHORE: During the ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, SNGPL continued raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad, disconnecting another 718 connections; Rs 24 million fine imposed.

In Lahore, the regional team disconnected 12 connections on illegal use of gas. The team imposed fine of Rs 0.13 million against gas pilfers and also lodged 2 FIRs against gas theft cases.

In Multan 08 connec-

tions were disconnected on illegal use while another 2 on use of compressor.

In Peshawar the company disconnected 28 connections on account of direct use of gas and illegal use of gas and amount of Rs 1.00 million have been booked against gas theft cases.

The regional team of Shiekhupura disconnected 423 connections on illegal use of gas while another 114 on use of compressors and also booked an amount of Rs 19.50 against gas theft cases. The team also

lodged 19 FIRs against gas pilfers.

In Bahawalpur the team disconnected 33 connections on illegal use of gas while another 96 on use of the compressor. The team also imposed a fine of Rs 3.09 against gas theft cases.

The regional team of Gujrat disconnected 01 connection on illegal use of gas.

In Gujranwala the team disconnected 1 connection on illegal use of gas and team also imposed fine of Rs 0.37 million against gas theft cases.

Zahoor maintain his relationship with Pakistan

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Renowned Political, social and business personality Shumaila Siddiqui organized a dinner at Islamabad Club in honor of the well-known Pakistani businessman and social personality Chairman Pakistan-France business forum Sardar Zahoor Iqbal based in France.

A large number of business and social personalities attended the dinner. Among those who attended the dinner were Chairman FPCCI Karim Aziz Malik, Chairman ICCI Khalid Malik, Chairman Islamabad Stock Exchange Zahid Latif, former President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce Aamir Waheed Sheikh, former Deputy Mayor Islamabad Zeeshan Naqvi, well-known businessmen Jamal Ansari, Naveed Malik, Saeed Ahmed, FPCCI advisor Afshan Malik, senior journalists Malik Manzoor Ahmed, Amir Ghauri and other important personalities participated.

Speaking on this occasion, Shamaila Siddiqui said that many Pakistani citizens move abroad and become successful and earn money, but they forget about their roots. But Sardar Zahoor Iqbal is one of those personalities who, despite being successful abroad, still maintain his relationship with Pakistan.

He also keeps in touch with the Pakistani community and actively serves them. Shumaila Siddiqui said that she wants to introduce such successful over-



seas Pakistanis to Pakistan's business and journalist community and play the role of a bridge between them and in this way she is trying to make foreign Pakistanis feel connected to their homeland. Shumaila Siddiqui herself has lived abroad and she says that it is important for Pakistanis from all over the world to be associated with Pakistan.

She emphasized that In the future, we have to bring the business community and the government together to provide better and better business opportunities for overseas Pakistanis to restore their confidence. She said that that we have to present, such successful businessmen as role models to the youth, dialogue and workshops will be planned with our new generation so that the new generation can be exposed to the hidden effective methods of success and our new generation can perform better and

do business.

Sardar Zahoor Iqbal said on this occasion that a Pakistani who goes abroad and works hard and becomes successful and Allah Almighty gives them success, then it is their duty to give back One has to serve one's family, one's village, one's region and one's country. Some time ago I created a platform called Pakistan France Business Forum of which I am also the chairman. I am trying my best to increase the trade relations between Pakistan and France through this forum. Through this platform, we encourage the French business community to invest in Pakistan.

He said that I started Shama Foods with one container and today we are doing business of more than 50 containers on a monthly basis and we have become the largest private rice brand of Europe this success is not only mine but also Pakistan's.

SLIC declares special bonus for policyholders and cash dividend



F.P. Report

KARACHI: State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan (SLIC) is celebrating a record-breaking 2023 financial performance and is proud to announce the State Life Khushali Bonus; a special one-time profit bonus of PKR 10 billion for all with profit participating policies in force as at December 31, 2023. This special bonus adds to the 2023 Annual Profit Bonus allocation of PKR 109.7 billion, bringing the Total Annual Profit Bonus to an impressive PKR 119.7

billion, marking a 23% increase compared to 2022.

Furthermore, SLIC is pleased to report a substantial surge in the Total Profit Bonus allocated to policyholders of its UAE branch, reaching PKR 1.74 billion, reflecting an impressive 84% escalation compared to 2022.

In addition to the policyholder benefits, SLIC announces a Special Cash Dividend amounting to PKR 0.5 billion, disbursed to its shareholder, the Government of Pakistan (GoP). This dividend increment contributes to the Total Shareholder Cash

Dividend, which now stands at PKR 2.5 billion, illustrating a substantial 25% increase from 2022.

"The exceptional performance of the corporation in 2023 enables SLIC to declare a special Profit Bonus for our esteemed policyholders, alongside a special cash dividend to the Government of Pakistan," stated Shoaib Javed Hussain, CEO of SLIC. "SLIC's strong growth and financial standing serve as a testament to Pakistan's potential, leading to increased rewards and dividends that enhance the value we offer to our policyholders and the Government of Pakistan."

SLIC operates under a unique profit-sharing model, allocating an impressive 97.5% of its annual surplus as bonuses to participating policyholders, with the remaining 2.5% returned to the GoP. Each year, State Life shares its profits with policyholders through bonuses. These bonuses increase the value of SLIC policies and are paid out at maturity or claim settlement. This unique approach reflects SLIC's dual commitment to enhancing policyholder value and contributing to the nation's economic growth.

Govt asked to engage with industry

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Industrial & Traders Associations Front (PIAF) has proposed a collaborative approach between the government and the business community, stressing the government to engage with industry stakeholders to formulate successful economic strategies.

The PIAF Chairman Faheemur Rehman Saigol said that this collaboration is especially crucial in this economic unstable condition. It is imperative that the government involves the business community in shaping economic policies, he asserted. He argued that aligning the interests of the government and businesses is essential for creating an economic framework that is not only robust but also sustainable in the long run.

A cornerstone of the proposed economic initiatives is the advocacy for a comprehensive 5-year export policy. He emphasized that

such a policy would provide a roadmap for enhancing the country's global competitiveness.

He outlined that a strategic export policy is vital for diversifying the economy, creating job opportunities, and ensuring a steady influx of foreign exchange.

He said that PIAF serves as a rallying cry for a united effort towards economic progress. The call for transparent economic strategies, international engagement, and a collaborative approach between the government and the business community underscores the urgency of prioritizing economic development for the collective well-being of the nation.

Faheemur Rehman Saigol said all political parties should provide their economic stability plans to avert further losses and delays, warning that numerous global issues are impacting world economies. He said the upcoming government should prioritise

resolving the energy crisis by providing sufficient and affordable electricity and gas to industries. The import bill should be reduced by imposing bans on luxury products. He highlighted controlling inflation to ensure affordable living costs for the masses and containing the cost of production for businesses at a local level.

The PIAF Chief 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 policy-making, 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 em-pirical 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 through 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. At the core of national progress lies a well-defined economic agenda, he stated, underscoring the importance of a cohesive plan to put the economy on a track of sustained growth.

Govt must take proactive steps to tackle economic challenges: Anjum

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has stated that political uncertainty has rattled the Pakistan economy, asking the government to take proactive measures to encounter external and domestic challenges, besides stabilizing the economy.

In a statement issued here today, the BMP Chairman and FPCCI former president Mian Anjum Nisar observed that months after the elections that were expected to presage easing of all political uncertainty paving the way for economic stability that all stakeholders and associated media pundits insisted

would be a key factor in turning the economy around are having to deal with a major wheat scam that has Punjab farmers protesting on the streets, the acceptance by the State Bank of Pakistan that there were mistakes in the Urdu text on currency notes only after it was pointed out by the ombudsman and one conflict arising from the Punjab police heavy-handedness against the lawyers protest. The wheat scam, in a nutshell, can be traced back to the decision by the caretaker finance minister, no doubt supported by the caretaker prime minister who kept portfolio of National Food Security and Research, to allow the private sector to import wheat at a time when the project-

ed target for the coming season was enough to meet the country's consumption needs. The decision to import wheat, farmers lament, has disabled the Punjab government from procuring wheat and compelled them to sell at prices way below their costs. Disturbingly, the caretaker finance minister has reportedly refused to appear before the inquiry committee and the caretaker minister is defending his government's decision by insisting that he operated on information available at the time and that by allowing the private sector to import his government was not doling out cash for the purchase.

These three instances are independent of any

involvement of the opposition and reflect mismanagement at best, outright incompetence at worst. This in the face of ever-rising electricity rates as pledged to the International Monetary Fund in an attempt to attain full cost recovery (instead of improving the management of the sector as is required). It is, therefore, imperative that the government deals with scams by making heads roll, and those who refuse to appear before an inquiry committee as reportedly the caretaker finance minister refused, must face very serious consequences.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that the government should be committed to transforming the economy of the

country, as the process of transforming the economy is already underway in the country, acknowledging that structural reforms in every sector takes time.

He mentioned that the government will have to take joint action to combat currency smuggling and narrow the difference in dollar rates between official and open markets. It is the fact that the government has undertaken various initiatives for the betterment of the country. The trade deficit narrowed by 3.6 per cent to \$1.3 billion, demonstrating positive progress and expressed optimism that the government's efforts would lead to an expansion in export potential and the export market.

The FPCCI former pres-

ident said that the government would encounter the external and domestic challenges, which are enormous but the government will have to take proactive measures to overcome them. He said that the Pakistan Credit Guarantee Company had been formed for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), emphasizing that the companies had to stand on their own feet and should not rely on subsidies.

He stated that a substantial change should introduce to the FBR to enhance its performance with a view to raise the economic growth of this country. He said that the economic managers should diligently work on reforms in the FBR and ensure their

implementation. He praised the efforts of the caretaker government and urged consultations with the BMP in the fiscal budget-making process to facilitate the business community.

The Businessmen Panel chief outlined a comprehensive economic agenda aimed at steering the country towards progress. He emphasized the critical need for a strategic approach to economic development, calling for concerted efforts from both the government and political parties.

Turning his attention to the international stage, he highlighted the need for the country to actively engage with the global market. He argued that tapping into international opportunities is key to unlocking the full

potential of the economy. Encouraging businesses to explore and expand their presence in the global arena, he urged policymakers in the upcoming government to create an enabling environment for international trade and investment.

Furthermore, he called upon political parties to announce clear and robust economic strategies. He argued that these strategies should not only focus on short-term gains but also encompass a long-term vision for sustained progress. The BMP Chairman emphasized that such transparency from political leaders is crucial for instilling confidence in the business community and investors.



In brief

Pakistan outplays SL

ISLAMABAD (APP): The second day of the Central Asian Volleyball League saw Pakistan's team in top form as they defeated Sri Lanka 3-0 at the Jinnah Stadium of Pakistan Sports Complex here Sunday. The Green Shirts won the match in straight sets, 25-21, 25-23, 25-18. In another match, Turkmenistan beat Kyrgyzstan 3-0, winning in straight sets 25-19, 25-22, 25-21. The Central Asian Volleyball League is currently underway in Islamabad, featuring six teams from different countries competing in the extravaganza. The event is expected to be a thrilling display of volleyball skills, with top teams vying for the top honour.

Hamza suffers setback

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's ace squash player and world junior champion Hamza Khan suffered defeat in the first round of PSA World Squash Championship. According to details, Hamza lost to Switzerland player Nicolas Mueller by 3-1 to in the PSA World Squash Championship. The world's top squash event was underway at the Palm Hills Club in Egypt, Hamza a top ranked player from Pakistan couldn't do much during the match against 36 years old Nicolas Mueller. He lost the match by 9-11, 6-11, 11-5, 6-11 in 39 minutes. Hamza, who was the only Pakistani player to featy in the World Open Squash Championship, seemed to improve his individual ranking but the world junior champion was eliminated in the first match of the tournament.

Pakistan set to make a mark

DUBAI (INP): Led by former Pakistan World Cup-winning T20 captain Younis Khan and former Pakistan Captain Shahid Afridi, Team Pakistan Champions is set to make a mark in the league. The team comprises more Pakistani cricketers, adding to the excitement of Pakistani cricket fans. Team Pakistan Champions, poised to compete against international cricket legends from England, Australia, West Indies, South Africa, and India, are gearing up in style. Shahid Afridi, celebrated for his dynamic cricketing career and leadership, highlighted the team's readiness. "With the legends of the game coming together, each match will be a spectacle of skill and strategy. We are excited to bring our A-game to the field and make our mark in the WCL," Younis Khan, former T20 World Cup-winning captain, expressed his enthusiasm about the league and the team's prospects. "It's not just about cricket; it's about passion and legacy. We are here to compete but also to reignite that fire and spirit of cricket among fans around the world," he said. Kamil Khan, owner of Team Pakistan Champions, is a visionary entrepreneur highly respected in the cricketing community worldwide. With a background in hospitality and marketing, he has been involved in various sporting ventures and multicultural community events in Australia. Kamil Khan is also the CEO of a real estate company in Dubai. He spoke about the significance of the league and the team's role in it. "The WCL is not just a tournament; it's a celebration of cricket's greatest talents. We are proud to represent Pakistan on this prestigious platform, and today, we share a piece of this pride through our official merchandise."



Ireland's Lorcan Tucker plays the ball on the leg side against Pakistan.

PCB Chief Naqvi meets Pakistan cricket team in Dublin

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi met the cricket team in Dublin to boost their morale after losing the first T20I against Ireland.

Addressing the squad in Dublin, Ireland, Mohsin Naqvi, accompanied by Wahab Riaz from the selection committee, stressed the refusal to concede defeat against Ireland in the series opener.

The PCB chairman urged the national cricket team to elevate their fielding standards and exhibit unwavering determination.

Naqvi conducted an extensive two-hour session with the national team,

highlighting the upcoming series against Ireland and England preceding the T20 World Cup.

Encouraging a professional and passionate approach, Mohsin Naqvi emphasized the distinctiveness of T20 cricket, urging for an assertive demeanor on the field. While acknowledging the players' skill and professionalism, he underscored the need for enhanced focus on fielding.

Expressing confidence in the team's potential and its capacity to meet national expectations, Naqvi stressed the significance of collective effort, stating that unity among the eleven players would pave

Pakistan's path to triumph.

Naqvi concluded by urging the players to persevere until the final ball, showcasing a spirited competitive edge. He highlighted that the ultimate challenge lies ahead in the impending World Cup, following the fixtures against Ireland and England.

In a historic victory, Ireland secured their maiden win in men's T20Is against Pakistan in the series' inaugural clash, largely attributed to former Ireland captain Andrew Balbirnie's commanding 77 at the crease. The visitors' lackluster fielding performance was deemed pivotal by many observers.

Djokovic 'felt different' in shock loss after bottle incident

ROME (Agencies): Novak Djokovic says he felt hampered by the after-effects of being hit on the head by a bottle as he fell to a shock Italian Open defeat by Alejandro Tabilo.

The world number one was accidentally struck by the water bottle as he signed autographs following his second-round win over Corentin Moutet on Friday. He struggled to find any rhythm against Tabilo on Sunday, with the Chilean needing just 67 minutes to win the third-round match 6-2 6-3.

"That has really impacted me a lot. After that I got medical care, [and went] through half-an-hour [to] an hour of nausea, dizziness and blood," said Djokovic.

The Serb initially made light of the incident when he jokingly wore a bicycle helmet to training on Saturday, but says he will now have further scans.

"I managed to sleep OK, I had headaches. The next day, or yesterday, was pretty fine, so I thought it's OK. Maybe it is OK, maybe it's not," he added.

"The way I felt on the court today was just completely like a different player entered into my shoes.

"Just no rhythm, no tempo, no balance whatsoever on any shot. It's a bit concerning."

It was a first career victory over a top-10 ranked opponent for Tabilo, who is ranked 32nd in the world.

The 26-year-old was dominant throughout, breaking Djokovic's serve four times and not conceding a single break point.

"It's incredible. I came on court just looking around and soaking it all in, trying to process everything. I'm trying to wake up right now," said Tabilo.

"I was just trying to keep my nerves and keep swinging. Every time you feel like you are close to the end your arms get a little tighter. I was just trying not to think about it and take it point by point. It's crazy, I can't believe what's happened."

Tabilo is the first Chilean to beat a world number one since Fernando Gonzalez beat Roger Federer at the ATP Finals in 2007. He will play Karen Khachanov in the next round after the Russian 16th seed beat Argentina's Francisco Cerundolo 6-2 6-4.

It means six-time champion Djokovic will fail to reach at least the quarter-finals in Rome for the first time since 2006.

The 36-year-old, who is yet to reach a final in 2024, has played just six matches on clay this year as he prepares for the defence of his French Open title.

The tournament at Roland Garros begins on 26 May. Elsewhere, Aryna Sabalenka eased through to the last 16 in Rome with a comfortable straight-set win over Dayana Yastremska.

The Belarusian Australian Open champion did not drop a single service game as she beat Ukrainian Yastremska 6-4 6-2 in one hour 28 minutes.

She will play Ukraine's two-time winner Elina Svitolina or Russia's Anna Kalinskaya in the next round.

Fakhar, Rizwan guide Pakistan to victory over Ireland

DUBLIN (Monitoring Desk): Mohammad Rizwan and Fakhar Zaman scored half-centuries, followed by Azam Khan's blistering cameo helped Pakistan defeat Ireland by seven wickets in the second T20I of the three-match series here on Sunday.

Pakistan successfully chased the 194-run target with 19 balls to spare and levelled the series 1-1.

Pakistan opted to bowl first and reduced Ireland to 34-2 inside four overs, with Shaheen Afridi removing both opening batters in the same over.

Tucker and Harry Tector then joined hands to construct a 62-run stand before Abbas Afridi halted their progress as he dismissed the latter.

Tector scored an anchor-



ing 32 off 28 with the help of four boundaries.

Tucker was then joined by Curtis Campher (22) and they raised a quick 41-run partnership for the fourth wicket.

Abbas Afridi ended Tucker's brilliant innings of 51 runs from 34 balls, featuring five boundaries

and two sixes.

Delany then scored a quick 28 off 10 balls with the help of five boundaries, including two sixes, to propel Ireland to 193 in their allocated 20 overs.

For Pakistan, Shaheen Afridi claimed three wickets, and Abbas Afridi managed two wickets.

Pak White beats Pak Colour in Tchoukball

HARIPUR (APP): In a beautiful display of skill, Pakistan White Tchoukball team on Sunday emerged as victorious against Pakistan Color team in Tchoukball match organized by the district Sports Office at Sports Gymnasium Courts Ground here Sunday.

In the nail-biting contest, Pakistan White won with an impressive score of 61 points, while their opponents Pakistan Colour team managed to secure 53

points. The teams, comprised of talented players hailing from various regions across Pakistan, exhibited exceptional sportsmanship and determination throughout the game.

Jonathan Wijaya, President of the South Asia Tchoukball Federation, Regional Sports Officer Hazara Ahmad Zaman and District Sports Officer Haripur Muhammad Tauseef graced the occasion. Regional Sports Officer

Ahmad Zaman, in his interaction with the media, underscored the global recognition of Tchoukball, particularly in South Asia, highlighting its popularity in the KP and Hazara regions. He emphasized the game's inclusivity, noting its accessibility to individuals of all ages, and expressed optimism about its potential to ascend to the ranks of Pakistan's most beloved sports in the near future.

USA may give tough time to Pakistan, says Ramiz

LAHORE (INP): Renowned former Pakistan cricket team captain and commentator, Ramiz Raja has said that during the upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024, the United States of America (USA) can give a tough time to the national team.

This was stated by him in a video uploaded on his official YouTube channel after Pakistan suffered a shocking loss against Ireland in the first T20I of the three-match series.

Ramiz Raja questioned Pakistan's performance in the match against Ireland and their preparation for the T20 World Cup, scheduled in the USA and West Indies. "You can't defend losing against Ireland. The body language looks

weak, you have made combinations that have affected the team," he added.

The former Pakistan cricket team captain said, "The team was doing well, but the captaincy was changed and then the new captain was replaced with the previous one. In a World Cup year, the team has fallen to seventh position in the T20I rankings and this shows the actual condition of the team."

He further raised concerns over Pakistan's chances to win the World Cup, citing the team's recent performances.

"How will Pakistan win the World Cup, you don't have a combination, the opening pair is not set, the set batters lose their wick-

ets and the middle order doesn't function well. In the current situation, how will Pakistan go to the semi-finals?" Raja questioned.

The former PCB chairman also warned that co-hosts USA, who are set to play their first-ever T20 World Cup, might prove to be a difficult opposition for Pakistan due to the presence of expats from India and Pakistan in their squad.

"I think the USA might give tough time to Pakistan because they also have some expats from India and Pakistan playing for them," he added.

Notably, Pakistan will kick off their T20 World Cup campaign against the USA on 6 June in Dallas.

Softball gaining popularity in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): The President Softball Federation of Pakistan (SFP) Asif Azeem believes Pakistani youth was inclining towards softball during the recent years and the game was gaining popularity.

"The federation was working hard to attract youth to the game. Pakistani youth have been inclining towards baseball and softball in recent years, and the federation is working hard to attract them to the sport," he told APP.

He said the game of softball was rapidly gaining popularity among the youth of Pakistan, especially girls, who have

exhibited great talent in this regard.

The federation is keen to hone their skills and to take them to the international level, he said. Azeem said SFP was holding 15-day celebrations in connection with the 1st anniversary of World Baseball Softball Day which was on May 10.

A practice, scrimmage, and drills were held at the US Consulate Karachi by the SFP to mark the occasion, he said and added that a delegation of SFP also meet with US Consul General Conrad Tribble.

Azeem said sports have no boundaries, they bring people together irrespec-

tive of their colour, caste, religion or creed and it's all about promotion of the peace, tranquillity, and love among human beings at the international level.

The US Consulate and Softball Federation of Pakistan will also play a festival match to mark the Baseball Softball day.

Azeem also thanked the US Consulate Karachi for always extending full support to hold such healthy events for the development of softball.

These activities will create a special bond between the two nations as sports have a unique unifying power, transcending various limitations, he said.

AFC-PFF join hands to strengthen Pak football

ISLAMABAD (APP): The South Asia Unit of Asian Football Confederation (AFC) and Normalisation Committee of Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) have signed a mutually agreed upon document, encompassing assessment, action plan and monitoring of Pakistan football's future trajectory.

Lazarus Johnson, Head of AFC's Strategic Planning and Advisory Unit, Member PFF NC Muhammad Shahid Niaz Khokhar and Director Operations Muhammad Assaam Sany were also present on the occasion.

On this occasion,

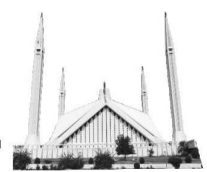
said a press release issued here Sunday. The document outlined a comprehensive strategy for the assessment, action plan and monitoring of Pakistan football's future trajectory.

Lazarus Johnson, Head of AFC's Strategic Planning and Advisory Unit, Member PFF NC Muhammad Shahid Niaz Khokhar and Director Operations Muhammad Assaam Sany were also present on the occasion.

On this occasion,

Malik provided a detailed briefing on significant events and initiatives to the visiting dignitaries, showcasing Pakistan's commitment to advancing its football landscape.

The collaborative effort between AFC and PFF was aimed at unlocking the vast potential of Pakistani football. The agreement marks a significant step forward in the collective mission to position Pakistan as a formidable force in the global football community.



In brief

AIOU to close admissions

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University Semester Spring 2024 admissions (phase 2) to be closed in two days. According to the AIOU, the students can take admission in Associate Degree (BA/BCom), BBA, BS (ODL) programs, teachers training programs (1.5, 2.5 and 4 Years B.Ed.), postgraduate diploma programs, and certificate courses till May 15. Admission forms and prospectuses for these programs are available on the university website. Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, hopes that those who want to pursue their education will avail the opportunity to register themselves by the given deadline. The students can either visit the nearest regional office or call the university's helpline 051-111 112 468 for any information.

213,100 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 213,100 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 249,900 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1470.00 feet and was 72.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 59,700 cusecs and 49,900 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1171.55 feet, which was 121.55 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 69,000 cusecs and 42,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 131,800, 61,900, 41,000 and 13,500 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 87,100 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 20,800 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Four gamblers arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): In a recent operation, the police have arrested four gamblers over cockfighting in the jurisdiction of Gujjar Khan police station here on Sunday. The apprehended gamblers have been identified as Arshad, Naem, Hamza, and Nauman. The police also seized the cock, 03 mobile phones, vehicle and motorcycle from their custody. Police have registered separate cases against all of them under gambling act and further investigation was in progress. SP Saddam Muhammad Nabil Khokhar commended the police team and said that gambling was the root cause of other crimes. He underscored that those involved would not evade justice and would be held accountable under the law.

PRA accelerates operation

RAWALPINDI (APP): Punjab Revenue Authority (PRA) Commissionerate has accelerated its ongoing campaign against the tax defaulters. According to a PRA spokesman, the authority had sealed a manpower recruitment agent office for not payment of tax amounting to over Rs 3.3 million. The authority was taking action in accordance with the law the defaulters. He informed that the action against the tax defaulters would continue without any discrimination. Manpower recruitment agent located in the commercial market was the tax defaulter of more than Rs 3.3 million and PRA took action in accordance with the law, he said.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation led by president Pakistan Muslim League N Azad Jammu Kashmir chapter Shah Ghulam Qadir called on Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan Engr Amir Muqam. —APP Photo

Route to Makkah expansion Ashrafi hails facility at Karachi airport

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Sunday appreciated the Route to Makkah facility launched at Jinnah International Airport Karachi this year, following its successful implementation at Islamabad International Airport.

In an exclusive interview with the media, he said this expansion would prove a crucial step in facilitating pilgrims traveling to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for Hajj. Ashrafi said the Route to Makkah initiative, a joint effort between the two nations, would streamline the immigration process for Pakistani pilgrims travelling to Saudi Arabia. By establishing dedicated immigration counters and facilities at the following airports, he 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 is 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.

He 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. He 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.

In addition, Ashrafi welcomed the resolution passed by the United Nations

General Assembly on Friday, affirming the eligibility of Palestinians for full membership status at the United Nations. He 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 further urged world powers and all United Nations members 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.

He 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, Türkiye, Iran and other supportive countries.

Chairman DCC directs plan for cattle markets

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chairman, District Coordination Committee (DCC) Qamar ul Islam Raja has directed the authorities concerned to prepare a plan for setting up cattle markets conducive to Eid ul Adha.

According to a district administration spokesman, the Chairman while chairing the second DCC meeting held here instructed the district administration officers to finalize a plan to facilitate the citizens in the sale, and purchase of the sacrificial animals in connection with Eid ul Adha.

The meeting also reviewed the performance of the Health Department, Education Department, Punjab Revenue Authority, Building Department, Police and other departments. 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, and second floor of Holy Family Hospital would be handed over to the hospital administration by May 15, the Chairman said adding, 80 per cent 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 the Building Department were being completed, Qamar ul Islam Raja said adding, that work was swiftly being completed on 24 schemes. 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.

He said that sales tax was being collected by the provinces themselves. So far, the 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 the collection of the sales tax.

He instructed the authorities that the district administration and police should play a key role in ensuring the implementation of 'One Dish' orders of the Punjab government. Indiscriminate action should be taken against the land grabbers, illegal societies and drugs, he directed the authorities.

WASA accelerates preparations for Monsoon

RAWALPINDI (APP): Water and Sanitation Authority (WASA) Rawalpindi on the directives of the Secretary Housing and Urban Development has accelerated preparations for Monsoon.

According to a WASA spokesman, the Secretary had directed the third party to review monsoon preparations and drainage machinery.

He informed that the Superintending Engineer, Public Health Engineering Department Gujranwala Division, Qaiser Rashid visited WASA Rawalpindi along with the team here the other day and reviewed WASA's heavy machinery. The team declared the machines and arrangements used for the drainage satisfactory.

Plastic pollution threatens Pakistan's climate goals

ISLAMABAD (APP): As Pakistan tackles climate change, experts warn that plastic pollution poses a major hurdle, casting a shadow over the nation's efforts to protect its ecosystems and combat environmental degradation.

"Despite strides in environmental policy and activism, the pervasive presence of plastic pollution threatens to prolong the nation's fight against climate instability. From clogged waterways to compromised ecosystems, the detrimental effects of plastic cast a shadow over Pakistan's sustainability aspirations, underscoring the urgency of concerted action," warned a renowned environmentalist Dr Ejaz Ahmed, a former Director at WWF-Pakistan.

Dr. Ejaz Ahmed also advocated the potential of recycling initiatives and scientific advancements in transforming plastic waste into a valuable resource for the country's benefits. From co-processing fuel in cement production to construction materials, innova-

tive solutions promise to mitigate the plastic menace while reducing carbon emissions, he remarked.

Highlighting the adverse effects of plastic in everyday human life and health, Dr. Ejaz said the repercussions of plastic pervasiveness are manifold, from endangering aquatic life to clogging drainage systems and health woes. Despite concerted efforts to raise awareness and enforce regulations, the insidious spread of plastic persists, permeating daily life from household items to food packaging, he lamented.

Plastic pollution, omnipresent and insidious, is wreaking havoc and from production to disposal, its detrimental effects reverberate across ecosystems, posing a daunting challenge to Pakistan's sustainability efforts, he expressed dismay.

In Pakistan, where the specter of climate change looms large, the battle against plastic pollution has assumed paramount importance. With over 300 million tons of plastic churned out

globally each year, and a staggering half of it comprising single-use plastics, the urgency to stem this tide has never been more pressing.

While countries like Bangladesh, France, and Rwanda have taken decisive steps to curb plastic proliferation, Pakistan stands at a pivotal juncture, grappling with the highest percentage of mismanaged plastic in South Asia. The issuance of a Statutory Regulatory Order (SRO) banning plastic bags in key cities like Islamabad, Lahore, and Hunza marks a significant stride, albeit amidst a lack of comprehensive policy frameworks at the federal and provincial levels.

Shafee Muhammad Marwat, a Director at the Capital's civic body, that periodically launches campaigns against pollution, highlighted the dangers of plastic, citing its harm to both human and aquatic life, as well as its detrimental effects on infrastructure. Despite previous efforts to discourage its use through campaigns and fines, plastic remains pervasive, even

being used for food and waste disposal, he admitted.

Climate and Health experts echoed unanimous concerns on the dire health consequences of plastic proliferation, citing the emergence of lung diseases, cancers, and dermatological ailments as harbingers of a looming crisis.

Endorsing Marwat and DR Ejaz's concerns, Dr. Shazia Aslam, a well-known Lahore-based dermatologist, underscores the health risks posed by plastic, including the release of toxic chemicals when heated, leading to lung diseases and cancers.

Highlighting the dangerous effects of plastic on human health, Dr. Shazia Aslam stresses transition to biodegradable alternatives and also advocates to give critical importance to adopt sustainable practices to mitigate its harmful impacts.

As Pakistan navigates the treacherous waters of climate change, the battle against plastic pollution emerges as a defining frontier in its quest for environmental sustainability.

Speaker summons parliamentary leaders' meeting

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has called a meeting of parliamentary leaders on Monday at 3:00 p.m. at Parliament House to discuss issues related to scheduling the first parliamentary year of the 5th session of the 16th National Assembly.

The speaker has invited the 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 including Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, Malik Amir Dogar, Ijaz Hussain Jakharani, Syed Amin-ul-Haque, Noor Alam Khan, Gul Asghar Khan, and Khalid Hussain Magsi.

The meeting will discuss scheduling the motion of thanks for the President's address and planning for the upcoming budget session.

President Asif Ali Zardari has summoned a session of the National Assembly on Monday, May 13, at 4:00 p.m. at Parliament House. This session will likely address key legislative matters and government priorities.

Mothers honored globally on their special day

ISLAMABAD (APP): International Mother's Day, celebrated globally including in Pakistan, serves to acknowledge the significance of mothers, underscore their importance, cultivate feelings of respect and love, and pay tribute to their role.

The day is typically observed on the second Sunday of May in most countries worldwide. However, some countries choose to celebrate it in January, March, October, or November. Anna Maria Jarvis is recognized for founding Mother's Day in America in 1908.

It's a dedicated time to honor and express gratitude to mothers and maternal figures, acknowledging their sacrifices and unwavering commitment to raising children. The day reminds us that parents are our shelter, providing warmth that enables us to thrive and prepare for our future endeavors.

The day was filled with excitement as organizations and some schools organized entertaining programs for Mother's Day celebrations.

In Pakistan, Mother's Day has been celebrated with

great enthusiasm for several years, with people exchanging flowers, cakes, cards, and gifts to honor their mothers.

Social media is flooded with tributes to motherhood, as people and celebrities share photos and heartfelt stories of their hardworking mothers who have made countless sacrifices. Sunday's Google Doodle celebrates the special bond between a mother and child, as the search engine's logo is transformed in honor of Mother's Day worldwide.

Mother's Day is a time for families to come together, express love, and cherish memories. It honors mothers for their influence in shaping values and offers a moment to express gratitude for their selfless care and nurturing.

Mother's Day extends beyond biological mothers to honor all mother figures, including stepmothers, grandmothers, and adoptive mothers. Communities may celebrate with public events like concerts or parades dedicated to honoring and celebrating motherhood.

Mother's Day celebrates the invaluable role of mothers as the heart and anchor

of the family. It's a time to show love, appreciation, and recognition for their irreplaceable contribution to the family.

Mother's Day is aimed to thank moms for all they do and to celebrate the special bond between mothers and their children. It's an opportunity to honor and cherish the irreplaceable connection within the mother-child relationship. Celebrating mothers on this day nurtures their emotional well-being, affirming their role and efforts and fostering fulfillment, pride, and happiness in their vital role as nurturers.

Mother's Day celebrates the invaluable role of mothers as the heart and anchor of the family. It's a time to show love, appreciation, and recognition for their irreplaceable contribution to the family. Mother's Day serves as a moment for reflection and tribute, especially for those whose mothers have passed away. People may visit cemeteries or create tributes to honor their memory. Overall, Mother's Day celebrates love, appreciation, and gratitude towards mothers and mother figures.

Over 14,000 AMI meters installed

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) has successfully deployed over 14,000 cutting-edge Advance Metering Infrastructure (AMI) meters of all tariffs so far in Rawalpindi, marking a significant progress in its

ambitious up-gradation and digitization plan that would be completed by June 2026.

The company, under the plan, would install over 900,000 AMI meters, initially in Rawalpindi City Circle, Rawalpindi Cantonment Circle and Taxila (Division), Chief Engineer Operation IESCO Muhammad Aslam Khan told APP here Sunday while sharing latest data available upto April 14.

He said that the three-year duration project would be completed in June 2026, adding a contractor has already been hired and around 700-750 AMI meters were being installed on daily basis.

However, he said that after hiring of second contractor, around 2,000 AMI meters would be installed daily to carry forward the project on fast-track basis.

The project was being

executing with the financial assistant of Asian Development Bank (ADB), costing \$ 89 million, he said adding it was part of the second power distribution enhancement investment programme under bank's financing.

The contract for the project was signed on September, 3, 2022 while contract effectiveness date was January 2023, he added. Khan said that main data centre and back data centre have already been set up at the IESCO's head office and Gujjar Khan respectively.

He went on to say that switching over to the AMI system would bring about a permanent elimination of power pilferage with systematic control of transmission through round-the-clock monitoring of the electricity meters.

This technology would help reduce power sector losses, enhance the quality of billing and recoveries, control power load-shedding and also address the consumers' complaints of wrong or over-billing, the Chief Engineer told this agency.

Shedding light on significance of the project,

Aslam Khan said the AMI system would end human interventions in meter reading, enhance customer support, better measurements, more accurate billing, a degree of control of consumption and help improve IESCO's ability to reduce non-technical losses.

He said automated 100 per cent accurate and timely meter readings would reduce costs incurred on meter readings significantly. In case of any power theft, tripping, power failure, or defective meters, automated intimation would be received in the data centre with instructions to the concerned SDO for rectification in a short time.

The consumers will be able to control their electricity bills by monitoring their electricity consumption daily through a mobile application, he remarked.

Aslam Khan said round-the-clock monitoring of load on meters and transformers from the data centre would also ensure a significant cut in the burning rate of transformers, meters, and the operational costs of the organization.

Strict action against profiteers directed

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Engineer Aamir Khattak has directed the authorities concerned to take strict action against profiteers. The Commissioner said that the price of Roti had been fixed at Rs 15 for Chakwal district.

He informed that the officers had been instructed to reduce the price of Roti in other districts of the division as well. All the officers should keep their offices open to facilitate the public, the Commissioner said adding, all the Deputy Commissioners should ensure proper implementation of the good governance program of Chief Minister Punjab.

There is a directive from Chief Minister Punjab to

ensure merit as well as punishment process, the Commissioner said.

Engineer Aamir further informed that various indicators were developed to evaluate the performance of the administrative officers in the districts of the division. The work done by this healthy competition between the districts would provide relief to the people, he added.

All the DCs were directed to visit district headquarters hospital and Assistant Commissioners to visit Tehsil Headquarters at least once a week to review the facilities being provided to patients, he said.

Teacher attendance, missing facilities and student enrollment should also

be improved by enabling DMOs to monitor the education system, he instructed. Aamir Khattak ordered the officers of the Municipal Corporation that within the next three days, the street lights should be fully activated across the city.

The Commissioner said that according to the last report, 2200 lights were faulty out of which 1900 had been repaired.

According to a Commissioner Office spokesperson, the campaign launched on the directives of the Commissioner against hoarders and profiteers would continue and the administration would take strict action in accordance with the law against the rules violators.

Kabul police arrest Ex-MP

KABUL (Ariana News): Kabul police has announced that Allah Gul Mujahid, a former member of parliament, has been arrested in connection with a murder. Spokesman of Kabul police, said on X that Mujahid is a suspect in the murder of an individual named Saeedullah who was killed almost three months ago. He added that the investigation of the case requires that Mujahid's freedom be limited and it was decided that he remain detained until the court's verdict.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Ziqaad 04, 1445 — Monday, May 13, 2024

Truck access impossible

BAGHLAN (Khaama Press): The World Food Programme announced that most flood-affected areas in Baghlan Province are inaccessible by vehicles such as trucks. The organization published a picture showing aid workers transferring emergency supplies to Baghlan using donkeys. On Sunday, the World Food Programme wrote a note from X on its social media platform about the lack of easy access for flood victims in Baghlan.

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

Several states express solidarity with IEA

KABUL (Ariana News): Pakistan, Iran, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates have expressed with Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) after flash floods killed more than 300 people and destroyed hundreds of homes in northern Baghlan province. "The Government and the people of Pakistan express their heartfelt condolences on the tragic loss of life and widespread damage to property caused by heavy rains and flash floods in several provinces of Afghanistan," Pakistan's foreign ministry said in a statement. "Pakistan stands

in solidarity with the people of Afghanistan during this difficult time." Qatar's foreign ministry said: "The State of Qatar expresses its full solidarity with Afghanistan in face of the destruction caused by massive floods hitting the Baghlan province north of the country, which resulted in deaths and injuries." "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs stresses the State of Qatar's firm support to Afghanistan and its brotherly people, and voiced its complete readiness to cooperate with the relevant authorities in Afghanistan to provide all

means, to help overcome crises," it added. UAE's Foreign Ministry also expressed "its sincere condolences and sympathy with the friendly people of Afghanistan, and to the families of the victims, as well as its wishes for a speedy recovery for all the injured." UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres expresses his solidarity with the people of Afghanistan. "The United Nations and its partners in Afghanistan are coordinating with the de facto authorities to swiftly assess needs and provide emergency assistance," he said.

2nd lane road project top priority

KABUL (BNA): During a visit to the second lane of the Kabul-Jalalabad Road, the Deputy PM for Economic Affairs announced that the practical work on the project will begin following the esteemed approval from Supreme Leader. In this visit, key figures such as Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi, the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mullah Mohammad Esa Sani, the Acting Minister of Public Works, Mawlawi Aminullah Obaid, the Governor of Kabul, and Mullah Mohammad Naem Akhund, the Governor of Nangarhar, were also present.

During the visit, Mullah Abdul Ghani Akhund, shed light on the critical importance of the second lane of the Kabul-Jalalabad road as a pivotal artery for trade and commerce in the country. With hundreds of cargo and passenger vehicles traversing the first lane daily, he highlighted the pressing challenges of congestion and frequent road accidents, resulting in both human and financial tolls on citizens. He continued that for the same purpose, the construction of the second lane of this road is essential for reducing traffic accidents, timely transportation of commercial goods, and safeguarding the lives of citizens.

According to the statement, the Deputy Prime Minister, acknowledging the significance of this road, declared that the practical initiation of the second lane project for the Kabul-Jalalabad Highway ranks among their foremost priorities.

With the esteemed approval of the Supreme Leader, practical endeavors on this crucial road will promptly commence.

Rashid donates 1.5m Afghanis

KABUL (Khaama press): Rashid Khan, the Afghan cricket star, announced his donation of 1.5 million Afghanis to the victims of the recent floods in the country. The Afghan cricket star wrote on his Facebook page on Sunday, May 12, that this aid will be distributed to those in need through the Rashid Khan Foundation.

Khan added, "For 15 days, we will provide food supplies to 1000 flood victims daily." Concurrently, this announcement by the Rashid Khan Foundation has called on people to assist the flood victims in Baghlan province.

This is because the process of aiding the flood victims in Baghlan province has begun recently.

Maiwand Azizi, the owner of Azizi Bank, announced on Saturday, May 11, that he will donate 50 million Afghanis to the flood victims in Afghanistan.

Azizi stated on his social media platform X that he had ordered a relief team to be dispatched immediately to Baghlan province. He added that he decided to provide assistance given the high casualty figures.

The recent floods in the country, especially in Baghlan province, have left significant financial and human losses.

Aid for flood-affected provinces announced



KABUL (BNA): An emergency session of the High Commission for Disaster Management of the Islamic Emirate was held today at Marmarin Palace, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs. The session focused on assessing the recent flood-related losses suffered by citizens and outlining the necessary aid to be provided.

Commencing the session, Chairman of the Commission, Mullah Abdul

Ghani Baradar Akhund, expressed heartfelt condolences for the losses sustained by fellow countrymen in Baghlan, Ghor, Badakhshan, Faryab, and Takhar provinces due to the recent floods.

Deputy Prime Minister Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar Akhund emphasized Afghanistan's vulnerability to frequent natural calamities and stressed the importance of responsive institutions maintaining readiness to promptly assist

citizens during such crises.

During the meeting, committees were formed under the leadership of the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Public Health, and the Ministry of State for Disaster Management and Red Crescent.

The leadership of the commission directed the member ministries and agencies of the appointed committees to swiftly mobilize and deploy resources to the affected areas, ensuring

that immediate assistance reaches the injured citizens.

The Islamic Emirate has shown its commitment to addressing the needs of its citizens in times of crisis, emphasizing the importance of a well-prepared and responsive disaster management system. The formation of specialized committees and their prompt action demonstrates the government's dedication to providing relief and support to those affected by natural disasters.

Committee formed to preserve, restore Kabul's historical landmarks

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Information and Culture has announced the establishment of a committee dedicated to the preservation and restoration of historical sites in Kabul.

Khbab Ghufuran, the ministry's spokesperson, mentioned that the committee was established by a decree from the leader of the Islamic Emirate. It is scheduled to commence restoration efforts shortly, focusing on the Shahr-e-Kohna and buildings along the Kabul River.

The spokesperson for the Ministry of Information and Culture added: "At the recent meeting held by the committee, the restoration of the Old City of Kabul was discussed. Those

involved in the project include shopkeepers and others with businesses in the city, who have coordinated on this decision. It was also decided by the committee that some of the places that have been destroyed will be reconstructed in their former state."

Many residents of the Shahr-e-Kohna of Kabul applaud the ministry's efforts to restore the city. Mohammad Rauf, who has been preparing Bolani for customers in his old shop for years, expressed his happiness about the restoration of his shop.

Mohammad Rauf told TOLONews: "Our old area used to be very much a mud-brick home, the peo-

ple were very historical, but now some of them have left and the poor among us remain."

Najib, a resident of the Shahr-e-Kohna of Kabul, said: "They call it Shahr-e-Kohna because each street used to retain a name from the past. Each street had its own elder and leader, like the street of Sangkashan, Aashiqan O Arefan, and Wazir street and some more that people used to live in; we are now in Parancha street. All the mosques you see are historical."

Many residents of Shahr-e-Kohna and other parts of Kabul are pleased with the restoration of this historical area, and call for serious attention to the protection and restoration of

historical sites.

Weis, a resident of Shahr-e-Kohna, said: "We request that it be restored to its old condition. It is very good for the people, for us, and for the homeland."

Abdul Hamid, another resident of Kabul, said: "If it is damaged, it should be restored, so we can see how we once had a culture, how we had historical places, and this should be restored for us."

Previously, the Directorate for the Preservation of Historical Monuments of the Ministry of Information and Culture had announced the commencement of restoration work on historical buildings in the Andarabi alley in Kabul.

Ministry signs contracts for ruby, barite mines



KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum signed contracts for ruby mines in Jegdalek, Kabul, and barite in Herat with two companies.

Shahabuddin Delawar, the acting minister, stated that these two mines are valued at over \$33 million and have been contracted for a period of 15 years.

"The ruby mine is located in Surobi District of Kabul, covering an area of 6.8 square kilometers, with a total investment of \$27.5 million on this mine," the acting minister of Mines and Petroleum added.

Some of the investors who have invested in these mines pledged that the mining processes will also be carried out within the country.

Abdul Rahim, an investor, said: "One of the necessities for oil drilling is barite, which will be extracted and powdered by us in the future to be used in these wells, making us self-sufficient in this field in Afghanistan."

Several economic experts state that attention to the mining sector and the transparent awarding of contracts significantly

impact the country's economic growth.

Sayed Masoud, an economist, said: "In the mining sector, as it is non-renewable and used only once, it leaves a hole in the ground, which requires special conditions to operate and in fact involves assessing national benefits, regional prices, global issues, and transportation."

Statistics from the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum indicate that in the solar year 1402, fifteen major mining contracts were signed with domestic and foreign companies.

Flood victims call for immediate assistance



BAGHLAN (TOLONews): Flood victims in Baghlan Province are urgently requesting aid from the interim government and relief organizations.

They have reported that the devastating floods wiped out all their crops and livestock, and there is a need for the government and organizations to assist in rebuilding shelters and providing food supplies.

Abdul Baqi, a flood victim in Baghlan, told TOLONews, "All our hous-

es have been destroyed. I am disabled and was unable to move items out of the house."

Noor Khan, another victim, said, "Houses are filled with water, and people have moved outside towards the cemetery. We don't have shelters, and we are all sitting under the rain in the mountains."

Shams, who lost all his possessions, requested from the government: "We ask the Islamic Emirate to help and cooperate with us.

All our belongings are gone, and our family members are stranded behind the mountains." Although some flood victims have criticized the delayed arrival of aid, Alam Majidi, the spokesperson for the governor of Baghlan, stated that an emergency committee has been established to assist those affected.

The spokesperson for the governor of Baghlan added, "An emergency committee

was formed in the province where all officials from relief organizations and other sectors were present; they all promised that their teams would be organized in the field and would provide assistance and care for all areas."

While flood victims in Baghlan are demanding immediate help, the Ministry of Defense and various other governmental bodies and international organizations have started rescue and relief operations.

UNICEF to fund 20 new school projects Oruzgan province

KABUL (BNA): With the unveiling of plans to construct and renovate twenty school buildings in Oruzgan, a wave of optimism sweeps through the region. Thousands of students eagerly anticipate gaining access to modern, well equipped classrooms, paving the way for a brighter future.

Plans are underway to construct new buildings for thirteen schools and renovate seven others. This comprehensive initiative reflects a commitment to providing students with modern learning environments, ensuring that every child has access to quality education.

Noteworthy, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is generously funding the construction and renovation of these school buildings in Oruzgan.

On the other hand, Dr. Fawad, Provincial head of UNICEF, in a meeting with Mawlawi Mawladad Hassan, the Head of Economy of the province assured that construction of



20 schools in Oruzgan will finish this year, promising better learning environments for students.

Additionally, UNICEF pledged to assign teachers at these twenty schools in Oruzgan hold at least a bachelor's degree level of education.

The students eagerly anticipate

the construction of new classrooms, expressing satisfaction at the prospect of improved education quality. With access to suitable classroom spaces on the horizon, they envision a brighter future filled with opportunities for growth and learning.

12 killed, 8 wounded in Afghanistan last week

KABUL (Pajhwok): Last week, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) noted its engagement within the framework of humanitarian approach and constructive dialogue with Afghan officials.

Russia hoped the Kabul-Moscow interaction could lead to regional stability.

Casualties

At least 12 people were killed and eight others wounded in various incidents of violence across Afghanistan last week.

Local officials said unidentified gunmen shot dead a man in Badghis, a father and son in Faryab, a mother and her two children in Kapisa.

According to reports, a student gunned down his teacher inside a school in Baghlan, a man killed his brother in Nangarhar, while one child was killed and five others were wounded as a result of a landmine blast in Zabul.

Three people were killed and three others injured as a result of a clash between residents and security personnel over a piece of land in Nangarhar province.

Qureshi Badloon, deputy director of information and culture, told Pajhwok Afghan News: "The clash erupted on Thursday evening in the Kabul Camp area of Jalalabad due to a land dispute."

"Local Kochi residents tried to stop the construction of a retaining wall around 250 acres of land that belongs to the Nangarhar Customs Department. Three people were killed and three others injured in the clash," he added.

Meanwhile, some sources claimed that security forces opened fire on the Kochis.

In the previous week, 10 people had been killed and nine others injured in different incidents of violence in Afghanistan.

Before the regime change in Afghanistan on August 15, 2021, hundreds of civilians and members of warring parties were killed

and injured every week.

Engagement with IEA

Last week, OIC Secretary General Hissein Taha noted the organisation continued its engagement within the framework of its humanitarian approach and constructive dialogue with Afghan officials.

Russia's Ambassador Dmitry Zhirnov, in a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs Maulvi Abdul Kabir, said cooperation and interaction between IEA and Moscow could lead to stability in the region and Afghanistan's economic uplift.

At a meeting here on Sunday, the two sides also conferred on ways of further cementing bilateral relations between Moscow and Kabul.

Pakistani claim spurned

Pakistan Army spokesman Ahmad Sharif told a news conference in Islamabad that the suicide attack on Chinese engineers was planned in Afghanistan and the bomber was an Afghan citizen.

Five Chinese engineers and their Pakistani driver had been killed in the suicide bombing in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bisham sub-district on March 26.

But the Afghan Ministry of Defence rejected the Pakistan army's claim. MoD spokesman Enayatullah Khawarazmi scorned

the allegation as baseless and far from true.

The MoD spokesman wrote on his X handle: "The killing of Chinese citizens in a Khyber Pakhtunkhwa area, which is under tight security of the army, shows the weakness of Pakistani agencies or their abetment of the attackers. In both cases, responsibility rests with the Pakistan government."

He claimed: "We have strong evidence of Daesh militants infiltrating into Afghanistan from Pakistan and Pakistan's territory being used against us."

Fundamental projects

Last week, the construction of a 12-storey commer-

cial market on one acre of land began in the Mirwais Maidan (Kota-i-Sangi) area of Kabul, with an investment of \$4.5 million. A similar market was completed at a cost of 60 million afghanis in the Deh Afghanan locality of the capital.

In Laghman, with the financial support from the World Bank, a number of projects costing 280 million afghanis were put into service.

The projects included the construction of 57 kilometres of new roads, reconstruction of 370 kilometres roads, paving of 4.5 kilometres of streets, construction of a more than 7,000

metres long retaining wall and 280 kilometres canals.

In Kabul, a private factory — Shifa Milli Pharma Cetical, for the first time, exported 1.8 million bottles of serum worth \$580,000 to Iraq.

Continuation of humanitarian aid

The Chinese embassy in Kabul provided over \$100,000 in cash assistance to the Afghan Red Cross Society to support flood victims in the country.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) allocated \$3 million for the construction of shelters for returning Afghan refugees this year.

220,000 illegal immigrants deported from Balochistan since Oct 2023

F.P. Report

QUETTA: A high-level meeting was held at the Chief Minister's Secretariat on Sunday to review the Pak-Afghan border situation.

The meeting was chaired by Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfaraz Bugti and attended by Speaker Provincial Assembly Abdul Khaliq Achakzai, Minister for Interior Mir Zia Langove, MPA Zafar Agha, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Imran Zarkoon, Additional Chief Secretary Home Zahid Saleem, Additional IG Police Javed Dogar, DIG Zhob, and Deputy Commissioner Chaman.

During the meeting, a briefing was presented by the Home Department, stating that 220,000 illegal immigrants have been deported from Balochistan since October 21, 2023. It was also proposed to waive the passport fee for residents of the border area. New passport offices have been established in Chaman and Qila Abdullah, where local residents can obtain passports without any hassle.

The meeting also discussed the issues of small-scale businessmen

affected by the border closure. It was informed that data has been collected for 1432 individuals in the first phase and 3685 individuals in the second phase, and they will be provided with compensation of Rs 20,000 each. The process of payment to other affected individuals is also underway.

However, it was further stated that some issues have arisen in the second phase of compensation distribution due to the COVID-19 relief fund and first installment payment. These issues are being resolved through contact with the BISF.

The federal government has provided Rs 97 crore for this purpose, and efforts are being made to ensure transparent distribution of the funds. The Chaman Master Plan has been completed, which will boost economic activities at the local level.

Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti while addressing the participants expressed satisfaction over the steps taken so far and directed the high-level committee to hold talks with all stake-holders, including the Chamber of Commerce, Traders Association, and civil society, to resolve the issues. The committee, comprising

Speaker Provincial Assembly Abdul Khaliq Achakzai, Minister for Interior Mir Zia Langove, MPA Zafar Agha, Additional Chief Secretary Home Zahid Saleem, Additional IG Police Javed Dogar, DIG Zhob, and Deputy Commissioner Chaman, will visit Chaman today to hold meetings with all stake-holders.

Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti said that the one-document regime is a federal government decision, and the province is bound to implement it. He said that the affected people will be provided compensation of Rs 20,000 each under the Benazir Income Support Program.

The Chief Minister also said that the Chaman Master Plan will boost economic activities at the local level. He emphasized that the one-document regime is a constitutional requirement, and all stakeholders must cooperate to resolve the issues.

The Chief Minister announced that he will visit Chaman next week to review the situation and provide relief to the affected people. He said that the provincial government will take all possible steps to resolve the issues and ensure the rule of law.

Zardari urges all stakeholders to resolve AJK issues

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has urged all the stakeholders to exercise restraint and resolve the issues in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) through dialogue and mutual consultation.

He added that the political parties, state institutions and the people of AJK should act responsibly so that hostile elements could not exploit the situa-

tion to their benefit.

The President expressed these views during a meeting with a delegation of members of the AJK Legislative Assembly belonging to Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPP), who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr today.

The delegation briefed the President about recent happenings and unfortunate developments in AJK. Talking to members of the

AJK Legislative Assembly, the President highlighted that the demands of the people of AJK should be addressed as per law.

He said that he would take up/discuss the grievances of the people of AJK with the Prime Minister of Pakistan to find a way out of the current situation.

The President emphasized that priority should be accorded to the socio-economic uplift of AJK,

with special focus on the development of health, education, tourism and infrastructure. He underlined the need to bring the far-flung areas at par with other developed areas of the country.

The President regretted the current situation and offered condolences over the unfortunate death of the police officer and prayed for swift recovery of all those who were injured in recent clashes.

Madinah welcomes over 9,844 Pakistani Hujjaj by Sunday

MADINAH al MUNAWWARAH (APP): More than 9,844 Pakistani Hajj pilgrims have so far arrived in the city of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), under the government scheme, as part of their spiritual journey to perform their religious obligation – Hajj.

"Since May 9, different airlines operated almost 40 flights from major cities of Pakistan to transport the guests of Allah Almighty to the holy city of Madinah in first leg of their pilgrimage," Spokesman for Ministry of Religious Affairs Muhammad Umar Butt told APP while sharing details of the arrangements made for facilitation of Pakistani Hujjaj, performing the religious obligation under the government

scheme.

On Sunday, he said three flights were operated each from Islamabad and Karachi, four from Lahore and one each from Multan and Sialkot, transporting 3,254 Hajj pilgrims to the holy city of Madinah.

From May 17, Pakistani pilgrims who have completed their eight-day stay in Madinah will start departing for Makkah, the final convergence destination for faithful arriving from across the world.

They will travel to Makkah as "advanced caravans," wearing Ihram and reciting Talbiyah: "Labbaik Allahuma Labbaik (Here I am, O Allah, here I am!), Labbaik La Sharika Laka Labbaik (Here I am, no partner do You have, here I am), Inna Al-Hamda Wan-Ni'mata Laka Wal-Mulk

(Indeed, all praise, grace, and sovereignty belong to You), La Sharika Laka Labbaik! (No partner do You have, here I am!)."

The spokesman said the ministry has made elaborate arrangements to extend maximum facilities to intending pilgrims both in Pakistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Before the start of the pre-Hajj flight operation, the ministry held extensive training sessions for weeks to teach the intending pilgrims about the obligatory acts, necessary information to make their pilgrimage hassle-free, facilities including assistance at airports, transport to residential buildings, three-time meals, and medical healthcare.

Answering a question about arrangements for providing health cover to the

pilgrims, he said the ministry, under a dedicated Pakistan Hajj Mission, has established two full-fledged hospitals, one each in Madinah and Makkah, where doctors and paramedical staff perform duties round the clock in shifts.

A total of 66 doctors and paramedics have been deployed at the hospitals, where medical checkups are conducted and medicines are being provided free of cost.

In case of critical condition, the patient is referred to Saudi hospitals where they are provided with all kinds of treatment and even surgeries free of cost, in addition to making arrangements to complete their obligatory Hajj acts through different means, including air ambulance.



RAFAH: Israeli strikes on Gaza continued on Sunday after it expanded an evacuation order for Rafah despite international outcry over its military incursion into eastern areas of the city.

PML-N AJK backs talks to solve for key issues

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Azad Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday unanimously decided to actively engage with the "AJK's Joint Action Committee," for resolving issues through negotiations.

The leadership of PML-N Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) held an urgent meeting at the Kashmir Council here Sunday, with Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Engineer Amir Muqam in the Chair, to thoroughly deliberate on the present situation in Azad Ka

The federal minister stressed the importance of the PML-N and other parties in peaceful resolving the issue. He affirmed their commitment to address the concerns of Kashmiris and vowed to contribute positively in any capacity possible.

The meeting also called upon the Azad Jammu and Kashmir government to actively participate in resolving the problem. In a later segment of the meeting, the forum paid respects to the martyred police officer ASI Adnan Qureshi and conveyed heartfelt condolences to his family. They offered prayers and recited Fatiha for ASI Qureshi, while also praying for the speedy recovery of those injured. The meeting was attended by Shah Ghulam Qadir, the President of Pakistan Muslim League-N

Azad Jammu and Kashmir, along with former AJK Prime Minister Raja Muhammad Farooq Haider Khan, Secretary General Chaudhry Tariq Farooq, Vice Presidents Chaudhry Muhammad Aziz and Dr. Najeeb Naqi, Central Deputy General Secretary Abdul Khaliq Wasi and Information Secretary Barrister Iftikhar Gilani.

KP CM greets Pakistan Hockey team

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister (CM) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur on Sunday greeted the Pakistan hockey team for their excellent performance in the Azlan Shah Hockey Tournament. CM in a message of felicitation, congratulated the national team for their excellent performance in the tournament and termed winning the silver medal is commendable.

He said that after 13-year, Pakistan's Hockey team reached in the final of the tournament, which is encouraging. Pakistani team showed excellent performance, he added.

The national hockey team is expected to perform better in the coming days, CM said, adding, "May I pray for more success for the national hockey team in the coming days."

He hoped that the current hockey team will restore Pakistan's lost position in the field of hockey.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is taking concerted steps to promote national sports, the CM added. He said that the provincial government will provide full support to the talented players for the promotion of hockey.

Europe to lift ban on PIA next month

KARACHI (INP): The European Air Safety Committee is set to approve the renewal of PIA and Vision Air flights' Third Country Operators' Permits next month.

In a recent development, the European Commission and European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) forwarded the decision – related to the flight ban of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) in Europe – to the European Air Safety Committee.

The meeting of the European Air Safety Committee is scheduled to be held between May 14 and 16 in Brussels.

The European Commission spokesperson, Deborah Almerge, emphasized that there are no restrictions on other Pakistani airlines in European countries.

She further clarified that the ban on PIA and Air Vision was not imposed due to their addition in the European Air Safety List,

but rather due to safety concerns related to the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority.

The European Commission stated that the flight safety measures taken by the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority are being examined by the Review Board this month.

It is pertinent to mention here that after the pilots' license scandal, the European Aviation Agency had imposed a ban on all Pakistani airlines in July 2020.

Action against unregistered vehicles begins in Sindh

F.P. Report

KARACHI: On the instructions of Sindh's Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Excise, Taxation, and Narcotics Control, Sharjeel Inam Memon, the department is conducting a campaign against unregistered and tax-defaulting vehicles.

As part of the campaign, the Excise Police conducted road checking on unregistered and tax-defaulting vehicles in various districts.

During the campaign in Karachi, vehicles were checked at Clifton, Do Talwar, and Abdullah Shah Ghazi. Many citizens paid their taxes on time as a result of this initiative.

During the campaign, the Excise Department also removed illegal fancy number plates from vehicles.

Sindh's Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Excise, Taxation, and Narcotics Control, Sharjeel Inam Memon, has stated that our campaign against

unregistered and tax-defaulting vehicles will continue to be successful.

It is essential that citizens fulfill their civic duties by paying taxes on time. He emphasized that the Excise Police are taking diligent actions to ensure compliance with legal requirements.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon has appealed to citizens to cooperate with the authorities and contribute to the province's development by promptly paying their taxes.

Qatari officials meet US lawmakers

DOHA (Aljazeera): A delegation of senior members of the US Congress has held a meeting with Qatari representatives in Doha, according to the Qatari Foreign Ministry.

It said the two sides discussed "the latest developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, especially joint mediation efforts to end the war on the Strip".

Qatari Foreign Ministry spokesman Majed al-Ansari led the Qatari team. Additionally, the Amiri Diwan announced that a

delegation of US Congress members met with the emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

The US delegation was made up of a mix of Democrats and Republicans and included Representatives Salud Carbajal, Dave Joyce, Ami Bera, Derek Kilmer, Juan Vargas and Lance Gooden.

Meanwhile, The Palestinian Authority (PA) says the Israeli Finance Ministry is continuing to withhold tax revenues and, as a result, only part of public sector salaries

would be paid this week, keeping up a squeeze on payrolls that has lasted for months.

The PA said it would pay Palestinian public sector employees 50 percent of their March salaries on Tuesday after Israel withheld a transfer due for the month of April. It said the arrears would be paid once the financial situation allows.

The Israeli Finance Ministry confirmed it had decided not to transfer tax revenues this month but declined to provide details.

Afghanistan struggles to get aid after deadly floods

KABUL (Arab News): Survivors of the deadly flash floods that ripped through northern Afghanistan were still struggling without basic aid on Sunday, as the official death toll rose to over 300.

Heavy rains on Friday triggered flash floods across at least seven provinces, including Badghlan, Ghor, Badakhshan and Takhar, injuring more than 1,600 people and destroyed about 2,600 houses, according to the latest data from Afghanistan's Ministry of Refugees.

Many people remain missing and livestock were wiped out as survivors picked through muddy, debris-littered streets and damaged buildings over the weekend, while authorities and humanitarian agencies deployed aid and rescue workers.

"All available resources are being mobilized, and relevant ministries and agencies are actively engaged in delivering urgent aid," Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar Akhund, Afghanistan's deputy minister for economic affairs,

told survivors in Badghlan province on Sunday, as he reassured "unwavering support" from the Taliban-led government "until their lives are restored to normalcy."

But some people in the province, which bore the brunt of the deluges, said that aid has yet to reach them. "We haven't received any support from the government or aid organizations yet. Everyone comes and asks us questions, then they go back," Ghulam Nabi, who is from the province's Burka district, told Arab News in a phone interview.

"We lost our houses and our lives. Everything we had is under mud now. The agriculture land and livestock, our only source of livelihood, are also completely destroyed. We don't have the basic means to cook food for ourselves."

Since mid-April, flash flooding and other floods had left scores of people dead and destroyed farmlands across Afghanistan, a country where 80 percent of its more than 41 million people depend on agriculture to survive.

The South Asian nation is prone to natural disasters and is considered by the UN to be one of countries most vulnerable to climate change.

Aid group Save the Children said about 600,000 people, half of them children, live in the five districts in Badghlan that have been severely impacted by the recent floods.

"Lives and livelihoods have been washed away. The flash floods tore through villages, sweeping away homes and killing livestock. Children have lost everything," Arshad Malik, the group's country director in Afghanistan, said in a statement.

Most of the affected areas are still cut off on Sunday, inaccessible by trucks as roads and bridges were damaged by the floods, which also impacted other public infrastructure. People were struggling to access essential health services, the World Health Organization said in a statement, as "several health facilities remain non-operational."