

ATC approves KP CM bail
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Special Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Thursday approved the bail of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur in two cases of May 9. Judge Malik Ejaz Asif of the Special Anti-Terrorism Court pronounced the decision. Advocate Muhammad Faisal Malik and Sardar Abdul Raziq appeared on behalf of Ali Amin.



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PM stresses permanent solution to AJK issues

F.P. Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday calling the progress of Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir linked with each other, assured that his government, in collaboration with the AJK leadership, would ensure the implementation of mutual understanding and seek a permanent solution to the issues facing the Kashmiri people.

He, addressing the special cabinet meeting of the AJK during daylong visit here, instructed the formation of a committee to discuss issues like water charge, Neelum Jhelum and others for the benefit of the AJK people. Referring to the recent movement run by the AJK people for their rights, Prime Minister Shehbaz said the people raised their voices for their genuine demands but amidst that some miscreants tried to create riots and cause killings.

He condoled the killing of a police official and some citizens during the movement and announced that his government would support their respective grieved families under the Shuhada Package. He told the participants that Rs 23 billion approved by his government had been released to the AJK government and assured that, after the completion of IMF team's visit, the federal minister and secretary for power would consult with the AJK authorities to seek a permanent solution to the issues and prevent the recurrence of such incidents.

The prime minister asked his AJK counterpart Chaudhary Anwaar ul Haq to constitute a committee on his side for necessary consultation with the relevant Pakistani ministries and urged him to take personal ownership of the matter as he would do so in Pakistan. He instructed the relevant authorities to immediately complete the construction of bridge of Mangla Phase-2 project. Regarding Neelum Jhelum, he said federal Secretary Water and Minister for Kashmir Affairs Amir Muqam would discuss the matter with the Kashmiri leadership to formulate short, medium and

long-term solutions.

The prime minister appreciated President Asif Ali Zardari, Kashmir Affairs Minister Amir Muqam, AJK PM, Speaker of AJK Legislative Assembly, AJK Chief Secretary and IG Police for their constructive role and effective consultation to find an immediate solution to the people's demands. He said the package was approved in the meeting held on Monday in Islamabad and following that SBP was asked to release the fund, which had been complied.

He said the 250 million people of Pakistan always supported Kashmiri people and raised their voices at international forums, exemplifying the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar's address at the recently held OIC Summit in Gambia and its declaration highlighting the Kashmir issue. Prime Minister Shehbaz also highlighted the Indian atrocities in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and the plight of Kashmiris languishing in Tihar jail, and assured that Pakistan would continue extending its moral and diplomatic support to the Kashmir cause.

He said the Indian ruling party could not contest the election in IIOJK under its real name which showed their fear of public anger for Indian human rights abuses in the territory. In his remarks, AJK Prime Minister Chaudhary Anwaar ul Haq welcomed PM Shehbaz in Azad Kashmir, who was accompanied by federal cabinet members and senior government officers.

He informed that Rs 23 billion approved by him a couple of days ago, was received by his government showing an unprecedented swift implementation of the directives. He said that Prime Minister Shehbaz's visit to AJK manifested the value Pakistan accorded to Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

Shehbaz orders urgent inquiry into Neelum-Jhelum project's technical fault: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed for an urgent probe,

within days, into reasons for the technical fault in the Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project (NJHP) that led to suspension of power generation.

The prime minister issued the directives at the project site during his day-long visit to the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) where he was briefed by the officials of NJHP Company about the recent technical fault during the last month. The 969 megawatts project first faced suspension of power generation in 2022 due to the fault in head race tunnel and was later restored after a year in September last year, and the recent one in April this year due to the same technical fault.

The prime minister, while speaking on the occasion, expressed his displeasure that the findings of the inquiry into the recent fault were still awaited and directed the officials concerned to submit the report within days and restore the power generation after repair work as early as possible. He said it was unfortunate that \$5 billion had been spent on the project despite an initial estimate of \$40 million, but it was still facing technical issues.

"I am very much clear. I need a thorough probe whether lapses were in the design or in the construction, and the responsibility should be fixed. No more delay will be acceptable," he added. PM Shehbaz said it was a project of national significance in the power sector after Tarbela and Mangla dams with a huge cost and must remain functional for decades.

He directed that the inquiry should be carried out by third party experts and not by the designer or contractor of the project.

He also directed the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) and NJHP Company to complete the repair work of the tunnel at the earliest and resume generation. The prime minister appreciated the WAPDA chairman and his team for their efforts to repair the fault in the tunnel and resumption of genera-

(Continued on Back Page)



MUZAFFARABAD: A delegation of Hurreyyet leaders of Jammu and Kashmir called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

KP PA passes budget as Opp withdraw cut motions

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The session of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly chaired by Speaker Babar Salim Swati here Thursday passed eleven month excessive budget of Rs 1456 billion for 2023-24 after approving all demands for grants.

Ministers tabled demands for grants of their respective departments while opposition withdrew their cut motions on the request of treasury benches. Afterwards, the budget was passed when Speaker approved all 66 demands for grants. At the outset of session, treasury member, Mushtaq Ahmad Ghani, opposition members including Sobia Shahid of PMLN, Ejaz Muhammad and Rehana Ismail of JUI presented their cut motion when law minister tabled demands for grants of Rs 5.84166 billion that was being spent by caretaker setup.

Sobia Shahid demanded action against culprits of May 9 vandalism and said that monuments of martyred were damaged and building of Radio Pakistan was set ablaze on that day. She said that people might start protest again if perpetrators were not punished Mushtaq Ghani also demanded judicial inquiry on May 9 incident to sift fiction from reality. He withdrew cut motion later when Speaker placated him and said that budget would be revised if cut motions were accepted. All the members withdrew cut motion after assurance of law minister to accept demands of opposition members.

SC takes suo moto notice of Vawda's comments

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan has taken suo motu notice of independent Senator Faisal Vawda's hard-hitting press conference against Islamabad High Court (IHC) judges, sources told media on Thursday.

Vawda on Wednesday blasted the IHC judges over their letter alleging meddling by spy agencies in judicial affairs, saying that targeting of institutions should stop. "Stop targeting the institutions, enough is enough. If there is any interference by institutions, then provide evidence and we will stand together [against it]," the former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader had said during the presser.

Vawda, while speaking about the accusations by the IHC judges, reiterated that the names of agencies was being mentioned again and again. "Give evidence and we will stand beside you," he added. "Put a ban on social media. Do it for the whole Pakistan and not for your yourself. Make laws for social media but make them for everyone," said the senator. The sources privy to the development said a bench led by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa will hear the suo motu notice today (Friday). Justice Irfan Sadaat and Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan are also part of the bench, they added.

NAB amends case: Imran appears before SC

Parliament should be dissolved if ordinances are to be introduced, says CJP

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD/RAWALPINDI: If ordinances are to be introduced, then parliament should be dissolved, Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa remarked on Thursday, as the Supreme Court resumed hearing of arguments in the National Accountability (NAB) Ordinance 1999 amendment case.

The incarcerated founder of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) joined the proceedings through video link from Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail in light of the court order issued on the previous hearing. "Through ordinances, the will of one person is imposed on the entire nation. Isn't this against democracy? Shouldn't the president of the country provide detailed justifications along with the ordinances," the CJP said.

A five-member SC bench, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa and comprising Justice Aminuddin Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Athar Minallah and Justice Hasan Azhar Rizvi, heard the case. Unlike previous hearings, today's proceedings were not live-streamed, but images of the PTI founder went viral on social media. The news of PTI founder's viral image irked the court which ordered an investigation to penalise the rules violator.

At the outset of the hearing, Advocate Khwaja Haris came to the rostrum. The chief justice said he (Haris) was a counsel in the original case and his absence was strange. The CJP said the court would like to hear his stance. Haris said he would assist the court in the matter.

Advancing his arguments, federal government's lawyer Makhdoom Ali Khan argued that the NAB amendment case was sub judice before the IHC. At this point, Justice Isa asked him to present his arguments loudly so that the PTI founder could hear him on the video call.

Justice Minallah asked the lawyer, "Was the petition pending before the high court accepted for hearing?" The lawyer replied in the affirmative.

The chief justice then sought the complete record of the case in the IHC. He inquired when the petition against the NAB amendments was filed in the Islamabad High Court. The lawyer replied that the application was filed in the

Islamabad High Court on July 4, 2022, while the petition filed with the apex court was numbered on July 6, 2022, and the hearing resumed on July 19. The chief justice inquired as to why the main case had taken so much time, to which the lawyer said the entire year of 2022 was taken up by the arguments of the petitioner's counsel.

Justice Jamal Mandokhail, at this juncture, questioned how long it took to make the entire NAB ordinance. Attorney General for Pakistan Mansoor Usman Awan responded that [former president] Pervez Musharraf assumed power on Oct 12 and the ordinance was out in December, adding that Musharraf made the entire ordinance in less than two months. The chief justice asked why so much time was spent on hearing a few amendments, to which the federal government's lawyer replied that considerable time was spent on the debate over the admissibility of the case.

Justice Athar Minallah inquired how many hearings were conducted in the central case, to which Makhdoom Ali Khan replied that in all, 53 hearings were held. CJP Isa inquired how this case became admissible in the Supreme Court while being under hearing in the high court. "Did the court address this question in its decision on the central case," he questioned.

Makhdoom Ali Khan replied in the affirmative, saying the court had mentioned this matter in the decision. He also read the relevant paragraph of the Supreme Court's decision. CJP Isa remarked that it was quite astonishing that the NAB amendments case went on for 53 hearings. During the hearing, CJP Isa asked whether the chief justice [he] could remove any judge from the bench.

Justice Athar Minallah remarked that a seven-judge bench had ordered the conduct of elections within 90 days, but they did not happen. Justice Isa mentioned that under his leadership, a three-judge bench decided to hold elections within 12 days. "We issued the order of Practice and Procedure Act of the Court. The order for the 21st amendment was also an order of the court," he recalled. Justice Minallah remarked that whether delaying the Practice and Procedure Act was right or wrong, it was delayed by the order of this court.

572 security personnel martyred in 2023: NA told

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The interior ministry told National Assembly (NA) on Thursday that Pakistan had witnessed 1,514 terrorism incidents in 2023.

The interior ministry submitted a written report in the National Assembly regarding law and order situation of Pakistan. The report stated that 572 security personnel were martyred and 1292 were injured in the terror incidents in 2023, while 358 citizens lost their lives and 700 sustained wounds. The report highlighted the worsening law and order situation in the country specially in KP, where 858 terror attacks were reported that claimed lives of 402 security personnel and 178 civilians.

As many as 148 security personnel were martyred and 198 were injured in 626 terror attacks in Balochistan during the past year, the report of the interior ministry said. In Sindh, 8 security forces were martyred, 26 were injured, while 6 civilians also lost their lives in the terror incidents in 2023. Punjab witnessed eight terror incidents in 2023 that claimed lives of 11 security personnel and a civilian. Nine security officials and 2 civilians were

also injured. In Gilgit-Baltistan, three security officials and six civilians were martyred in three terror incidents.

Meanwhile, Minister for Petroleum Musadik Malik has said there is a ban on new gas connections in order to ensure provision of gas to the existing consumers.

Responding to a Calling Attention Notice in the National Assembly, he pointed out the gas reserves are depleting rapidly. The piped gas is annually depleting by fourteen to fifteen percent. He emphasized blending the domestic gas and the imported LNG to ensure uninterrupted gas supply to the people.

The Petroleum Minister said that a project has been launched at a cost of four point five billion rupees to improve gas supply to the areas of Kemari, Lyari and Malir in Karachi. He acknowledged that the middle and lower class should be prioritized in terms of gas provision. In his remarks, Minister for Finance Muhammad Aurangzeb told the House that no new legislation is being proposed to extend tax and duty exemptions for erstwhile FATA and PATA regions. He said these exemptions were continuing for six years and now

are coming to an end on the 30th June this year. The Minister said that the business community in their interactions on the budget is insisting on a level playing field for all the industries.

Various documents were also laid before the House today. These included the Report of the 1st biannual Monitoring on the Implementation of 7th NFC Award, the Mid-Year Budget Review Report for the Financial Year 2023-24, the Fiscal Policy Statement 2024, the Debt Policy Statement January 2024, the Performance Monitoring Report for the current fiscal year and Audit reports of the Auditor General of Pakistan relating to the Accounts of the Federation for the years 2021-22 and 2022-23.

The house is continuing discussion on the President's address to the joint sitting of the parliament. Gul Asghar said the President in his speech highlighted the importance of the charter of reconciliation and economy. He said reconciliation is important to take the country in the right direction and address problems of the people. Atif Khan said foreign policy should be discussed at the platform of the parliament.

No bar on dual citizenship of judge: IHC

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court's Registrar Office on Thursday responded to Faisal Vawda's letter a day after the senator expressed annoyance over the court's inability to respond.

The senator had requested information regarding Justice Babar Sattar's green card status before his appointment. In its response, the Registrar Office clarified that holding citizenship or residency in another country does not disqualify someone from becoming a judge under the Constitution.

The response further explained that the high court does not inquire about dual citizenship upon a lawyer's appointment as a judge. The response referenced a clarification by Justice Athar Minallah of the Supreme Court in the suo motu case involving six judges' letters. It was disclosed that the issue of Justice Babar Sattar's green card had been discussed in the Supreme Judicial Council, which ultimately approved his appointment.

However, the Registrar Office stated that records of these discussions are not maintained by court. The response informed Vawda that a press release from the high court had already clarified that Justice Babar Sattar had disclosed his green card status to the chief justice at the time of his appointment.

Accountability of elites vital after Dubai Leaks: JI

F.P. Report

MULTAN: Ameer Jamaate-Islami Hafiz Naeem Rahman has raised serious concerns over the revelation of the Dubai Property Leaks, which have shed light on the vast foreign properties and wealth owned by the ruling class of Pakistan. This scandal, following the Panama and Pandora Papers, has further deepened the scrutiny on the financial dealings of Pakistan's elite.

Hafiz Naeem Rahman has questioned the origins of this wealth and the legality of its transfer from Pakistan to Dubai.

New schedule for power outage to be issued for KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A high level meeting regarding prolonged power outages in the province was held here at Chief Minister's House Peshawar on Thursday with Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur in the chair.

It has been agreed in the meeting to issue a new schedule in order to reduce the duration of electricity load shedding across the province. According to the newly agreed schedule, in all areas currently experiencing 22 hours of load shedding a day, the duration of load shedding would be reduced to 18 hours, while in the areas where citizens facing 18 hours of load shedding, would be reduced to 14 hours a day.

Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry, IGP Akhtar Hayat Khan



Gandapur, Chief Executive Officer PESCO Akhtar Hameed Khan, Commissioner Peshawar Riaz Mehsud and other relevant officials attended the meeting. In order to ensure implementation of newly agreed schedule of power load shedding in the province, the chief minister has directed the PESCO authorities to devise a mechanism immediately in consultation with the chief secretary KP, adding that new schedule of load shedding must be shared with all the Deputy Commissioners as well as

District Police Officers across the province, so as to ensure monitoring of its implementation.

"In case of load shedding even one minute beyond the agreed schedule on a grid, an FIR should be lodged against the concerned XEN of PESCO", he directed. The chief minister said that he is ready to sit with the federal government in order to resolve the issues related to electricity in the province, but this could happen only, if people of this province get immediate relief in power load shedding.

AL summit calls for UN peacekeepers in Gaza

MANAMA: The Arab League on Thursday called for a United Nations peacekeeping force in the Palestinian territories at a summit dominated by the ongoing Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

The "Manama Declaration" issued by the 22-member bloc called for "international protection and peacekeeping forces of the United Nations in the occupied Palestinian territories" until a two-state solution is implemented. The declaration also called for "all Palestinian factions to join under the umbrella of the Palestine Liberation Organization," which is dominated by the ruling Fatah movement, and added that it considered the PLO "the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people."

It also called for an "immediate" ceasefire in Gaza and an end to forced displacement in the Palestinian territory. "We demand an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza, a halt to all attempts

at forced displacement, an end to all forms of siege and allowing full and sustainable access to aid," the final communique said.

It further "strongly condemned the attacks on commercial ships," saying they "threaten freedom of navigation, international trade, and the interests of countries and peoples of the world," and reiterated the Arab League's commitment to "ensuring freedom of navigation in the Red Sea" and surrounding areas. The King of Bahrain, Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, opened the summit by calling for an international conference for peace in the Middle East.

The king, as the summit's host, also reaffirmed his country's support for the full recognition of a Palestinian state and the acceptance of its membership in the United Nations. He stressed that the establishment of a Palestinian state will reflect positively on the region. Last week, the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly backed a Palestinian bid to become a full UN member

and called on the UN Security Council to reconsider the request.

The vote by the 193-member General Assembly was a global survey of support for the Palestinian bid to become a full UN member - a move that would effectively recognize a Palestinian state - after the US vetoed it in the UN Security Council last month. "What the Palestinians are facing requires a unified international stance," the King of Bahrain said.

During his opening remarks at the summit, Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman called for the establishment of an internationally recognized Palestinian state. The prince was among the Arab delegates who arrived in Manama on Thursday for the Arab League Summit. During his speech, the prince highlighted the Kingdom's efforts in alleviating the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, reiterating Saudi Arabia's support for issues of the Arab world. — Arab News

The Frontier Post

Bandits kidnap 2 watchmen

SHIKARPUR (INP): Two more persons were kidnapped from Shikarpur as rampant kidnappings by the gangs of bandits continued in district. A gang of bandits abducted two watchmen of a fish farm, Mohammad Saleh Pahore and Abdul Hameed Pahore at Faizoo Laro near Khanpur. The dacoits kidnapped two watchmen from the fish farm. The number of kidnapped persons has reached to 10 with this recent abduction incident.



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Interior, Mohsin Naqvi talking to media at GOR. —APP Photo

Governor, CM Punjab resolve to work together

LAHORE (APP): Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan met Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif and expressed determination to work together for sustainable development and improvement in quality of life of common man in the province during a meeting at Jati Umrah, here on Thursday.

CM Maryam Nawaz congratulated the governor on assuming his office and expressed her best wishes for him. Economic development, wheat crisis, governance, education, health facilities, law and order and other important issues including climate change were also discussed during the meeting.

Senator Pervaz Rasheed, Senior Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Information Minister Azma Zahid Bukhari and other officials were present.

Governor Sardar

Saleem Haider Khan and Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz reiterated their commitment to work together for welfare of people of Punjab during the meeting.

The governor said "our focus is to serve people and work together for development, prosperity and stability of the country. All political parties should put aside their differences and should be on the same page," he stressed. He also resolved to play his role in improving communication between the federation and the provincial government.

He expressed the hope that the Punjab government would resolve the wheat procurement issue on priority. He said that the Punjab government would get full support from the Governor's House to ensure implementation of the constitution and the

law. Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif said that every constitutional position was respectable adding that efforts would be made to ensure supremacy of the rule of law in the province. She said that the governor was a constitutional position, which was a link between the provinces and the federation.

The CM said that Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) was being made more effective across the province, adding that many projects of education, health, road infrastructure and information technology have been started in Punjab. She said that special social protection programmes had been launched to ease lives of the deprived sections and all possible efforts would be made to provide relief to people of the province.

Punjab govt to launch electric bus service in Lahore

LAHORE (PPI): Punjab Transport Minister Bialal Akbar today announced to launch electric buses in Lahore. Speaking at the Punjab Assembly's session, Bilal Akbar said that 27 electric buses will be plying on the roads of Lahore December 2024.

Punjab Assembly session was by Deputy Speaker Zahira Iqbal Channar in which the transport minister said that hybrid buses will also be launched in various districts of Punjab. Bilal Akbar said that a modern public transport system has been introduced in major cities of Punjab.

Earlier on May 10, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif inaugurated the Clinics on Wheels project. Under the project, 200 clinics on wheels will provide health facilities to 4 million people of the province.

Addressing the ceremony, the chief minister said these clinics will be deployed in densely populated areas of big cities where residents often face challenges in accessing hospital care. She further said provincial government is taking health facilities to the doorsteps of the people. Maryam Nawaz also announced to provide state of the art cardiology facilities in eight cities of Punjab including Mianwali, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Jhelum, Sahiwal, Murree and Layyah.

Five family members arrested

KARACHI (APP): The Special Investigation Unit (SIU) of Karachi Police on Thursday arrested seven drug peddlers including five members of a family and in a separate operation recovered more than seven kilograms of drugs.

According to SSP SIU Adeel Chandio, the SIU in its action in Magi Goth, arrested five of a family involved in the drugs trade and recovered 5.5 kg of hashish from them. They were identified as Khuda Bukhsh, Abdul Ghafoor, Asma, Gul Bano and Noor Saba. The arrested were inter-provincial drug traffickers who purchased drugs from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan and sold it in different areas of Karachi. Accused Abdul Ghafoor and Khuda Bukhsh used to bring drugs and the female members of the family used to sell them in different parts of the megalopolis.

Sindh govt, UNICEF to start child protection plan

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah and UNICEF Country head Abdullah A Fadil agreed to launch a Child Protection program to strengthen evidence-based policy and legislation.

In a meeting held here at CM House on Thursday, the chief minister and the UNICEF Country representative discussed matters related to Child protection program.

Minister of Health Dr Azra Fazal Pechuho, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, Secretary School Education Zahid Abbasi, Secretary to CM Raheem Shaikh, Secretary Health Rehan Baloch, Secretary Social Welfare Sajid Jamal Abro, PD Zubair Channa were also present on the occasion. The UNICEF delegation members include Chief Field Officer Prem Chand, Executive Officer Ms. Xene, health Specialist Dr Kamal and others.

The CM and the UNICEF Country chief after a thorough discussion, agreed that UNICEF would foster enabling environment to strengthen evidence-based policy and legislation under child labour survey, child protection policy, birth registration by-laws, protection from child online abuse and exploitation and prevention strategies would be carried out to reduce child protection violations and harmful traditional practices.

The key points of the program for child protection include prevention of child marriage, parenting packages for positive parent-child interaction, Child Online Protection- ethical and

safe use of cyber technology. Strengthening of community-based protection structures, Service Strengthening to deliver equity-based gender-responsive services for children and adolescents, Case management and referral system including Certified of Proficiency in information system management (CPMIS), Capacity strengthening of the child protection workforce and Community-based mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) including in humanitarian situation were discussed in detail.

The CM was told that UNICEF was supporting strengthening the health system for inclusive, resilient, equitable and gender-responsiveness within the framework of Universal Health Coverage (UHC). UNICEF also supports improving Maternal and Neonatal Child Health (MNCH) services for equitable access and utilisation," he said. The meeting agreed that UNICEF would support the health department for the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) for better immunisation services for full immunisation of all children.

In the meeting, the chief minister and the UNICEF Country chief agreed to launch a strong nutrition-responsive system in the health department to ensure optimal nutrition for mothers and children, improved nutrition for adolescents and middle-aged children, functional multi-sectoral coordination for Early Childhood Development (ECD) and

nutrition. UNICEF committed \$300,000 for a responsive system for which the CM directed the Health Department to fulfill the requirements so that funds could be channelized.

The chief minister said that the eradication of Polio was the top priority of the government. He added that his government with the support of UNICEF and other partners had controlled polio. Shah said that the Health Department was working for better integration of EPI and expanded delivery of additional services to priority communities, as well as cultivating opportunities for increased community engagement. The CM was told that UNICEF was working with the school education department on certain initiatives such as the Robust Out-of-School Children Initiative with a focus on social mobilization and institutional strengthening and scale-up of professional development of teachers.

The chief minister and the UNICEF Representative discussed the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) program. It may be noted that UNICEF provides technical support to the provincial government on climate-resilient infrastructure through urban and rural water supply and sanitation structures along with community mobilization for the sustainability of services. Moreover, UNICEF also provides technical support to the Government in improving monitoring, information management, climate resilience, and environmental degradation.

Chanzeb criticizes Nishtar Hall renovation, orders rectification

E.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Zahid Chanzeb, Adviser to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism, Culture and Archeology, paid a formal visit to Nishtar Hall Peshawar. He once again expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of the renovation project being completed at a cost of ten billion rupees in this big cultural center located in the heart of the provincial capital and especially with the quality of the new carpeting, washroom fittings and wall paneling laid in Nishtar Hall and ordered to redo the entire work at the contractor's expense in case of work done against specification or substandard materials used.

Chief Planning Officer of Tourism and Culture Department Zainullah Khan, Senior Planning Officer Kaleem Khan, Event Manager of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cultural and Tourism Authority Madam Haseena, General Manager Culture Ajmal Khan, Finance Manager of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Integrated Tourism Development Project (KITE) Hashmat Ali and Director Works Sports Engr Ahmed Ali were also accompanied him on this occasion.

The adviser to KP Chief Minister on tourism and culture made it clear to the authorities that he wished that the Chief Minister of Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur after formally inaugurate the renovation scheme of Nishtar Hall and the cultural activities kick started in it next month, he could see vivid changes here, image of the department be enhanced and we also had ease in getting more resources for cultural activities over here. Henceforth he directed for certain remedial measures on part of the tourism department in this regard asking them that all the bottlenecks in the renovation works should be rectified on urgent basis.

Zahid Chanzeb during the detailed inspection of Nishtar Hall for several hours, went round the art gallery, washrooms, main hall, artist and make-up rooms, basement, control and generator rooms, store rooms, parking lot, lawns and reception of the cultural center. He carefully reviewed the renovation and construction works including carpeting, wall paneling, ceiling, sanitary fittings, tiling, electronic equipment and wiring, sound and lighting systems executed under the project. He praised the improvement in them, but pointed out the flaws in most places and issued orders on the spot to rectify it.

Zahid Chanzeb clarified that although this project is a scheme to repair and beautify this mega and important cultural center, which was completed with an interest-bearing loan from the World Bank

in view of the limited financial resources of the province, he did not see beauty anywhere in it. He said that in the main hall there are visible broken and damaged parts near the repaired areas which might not be included in the project specification but how bad impression it gets to the visitors and public that we should also have an idea of it.

Zahid Chanzeb also asked the Chief Planning Officer and other concerned authorities present on the spot that any scheme should not be planned on a whim but in the light of comprehensive requirements and ground realities so that its durability and sustainability could be ensured and the public might also acknowledge its beauty.

The Tourism Advisor emphasized on chalking out a precise parking plan based on innovation and the construction of the parking area by adopting modern techniques due to the limited parking space at Nishtar Hall. He clarified that if 805 people can sit in Nishtar Hall and in special events hundreds of thousands of more people are gathered to participate, then there should be at least 250 to 300 vehicles parking capacity as he said our planning should be based on future rather than immediate needs. He also emphasized the need to adapt the reception door and security system of Nishtar Hall to modern IT requirements.



INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

For MTI/Hayatabad Medical Complex

Under National Competitive Bidding (NCB) For the Financial years 2024-25

Hospital Director Hayatabad Medical Complex Peshawar invites sealed bids under National Competitive Bidding from reputed national and authorized agents of the following head, to meet the requirement of the hospital, through **Single Stage-One Envelope bidding procedure** on FOR Basis as per Rule 6(2a) of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (KPPRA) Procurement Rules 2014, during financial year 2024-25.

The rates will be valid till 30th June 2025 as per KPPRA Rule 31(A) framework contract.

Sr. No.	Name of Items	Bid Security
Single Stage One Envelope Rule 6(2a) on FOR Basis only.		
1	Purchase of Surgical Instrument for Various unit	(50000)
2	Purchase of Laboratory Chemical & ACD / Blood Bags	200000
3	Purchase of X-Ray / CT / MRI Films and Cassette	(100000)
4	Purchase of i. Surgical Medical Disposable. ii. Anesthesia Disposable	(50000)
5	Purchase of ENT Disposable & Instruments	(50000)
6	Purchase of Gastro Disposable & Neuro Shunts	(100000)
7	Purchase of Eye Disposable & Instrument	(50000)
8	Purchase of Bedding Clothing & Security Uniform Items	(50000)
9	Purchase of Echo Cardiology items	(50000)
10	Purchase of Miscellaneous items	(50000)
11	Purchase of Washing Material Items	(50000)
12	Purchase of Dental Material & Instruments	(50000)
13	Purchase of Hospital / Office Furniture & Repair	(100000)
14	Yearly Contract of Local Purchase	(100000)
15	Purchase of Stationary Items	(100000)
16	Purchase of Printing Items	(100000)
17	Purchase of Cardiac Surgery Disposable items for CABG	(100000)
18	Purchase of Disposable Items for Stroke Intervention & Peripheral Vessel Disease	(100000)
19	Purchase of Angiography Items	(100000)
20	Purchase of Electrophysiology Items	(100000)

- The rates approved will remain effective till 30-06-2025.
- Bidding documents can be obtained from Material Management Department Hayatabad Medical Complex Peshawar in personal / representatives during office hours before the tender opening.
- Original company prescribing letter pad sealed & signed (Every Page) should be submitted in words & figures.
- Tender opening will be held on 06-06-2024, in the Conference of MTI-HMC, at 11:00 am.**
- Bids shall be delivered at the address given below before 11:00 am.**
- Any bids received late shall be rejected as per KPPRA rules (37-4).**
- All the firms shall be registered with **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority (KPRA)** where applicable.
- Tender / bid will be opened by the tender / selection committee of MTI/HMC, in front of Firm / bidders in the conference room of MTI/HMC.
- The firm must be on FBR Active Tax payer list.
- All taxes will be deducted as per rules.
- The firms must provide detail of NTN #, Sales Tax #, Income Tax # and professional Tax # & all other Taxes to HMC.
- No conditional tender will be acceptable.**
- During Selection of the above heads the firms shall bring the sample (Mandatory).**
- Those firm who have Pending against Supply order to MTI/HMC, shall not be considerate as eligible & shall be considered as non-responsive.
- All the firm participating in bidding process with MTI/HMC shall submit **"Integrity Pact"** on judicial stamp paper of **Rs: 100/-** given in the SBDs of MTI/HMC (Mandatory), failing which the firm shall be considered non responsive.
- HMC FTN # is 9015405-6.**

Note: The competent Authority has the right to reject all bids under the rule 47 of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (KPPRA) Procurement Rules 2014.

Tender Submission/Opening: Hayatabad Medical Complex, Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Tel: 091-9217140-46, 091-9217919 Fax: 091-9217189 www.hmcp.gov.pk

INF(P)#937/24

HOSPITAL DIRECTOR
Hayatabad Medical Complex, Peshawar

TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tenders for the supply of Raw Ration, Medicines/Equipment, Raw Material and others miscellaneous articles for use in District Jail Mansehra are invited from the registered/pre-qualified Contractors/Firms of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority (KPRA) for the **Financial Year 2024-25**. Tender Forms along with prescribed schedule of the required items/articles which will be supplied to the District Jail Mansehra during the **Financial Year 2024-25** can be obtained from the office of the Superintendent District Jail Mansehra on or before **06-06-2024** on any working day during office hours.

1. Tender forms alongwith schedule of required items (duly completed) and sealed envelopes should reach through latest by **07-06-2024** (10:00 am) in the office of the **Superintendent District Jail Mansehra** and will be opened on the same day i.e. **07-06-2024 at 11:00 am** in the office of the **Superintendent District Jail Mansehra** in presence of members of the committee and tenderers/their authorized representative who opt to be present. 2. The concerned firms/ contractors are required to submit earnest money amounting to **Rs.14,00,000/- (Fourteen Lac only)**, in the shape of call deposit/CDR in the name of Superintendent District Jail Mansehra at the time of collection of tender forms. In the absence of earnest money, no tender form will be issued. 3. Income Tax, Sale Tax, Professional Tax, Stamp duty etc or any other tax levied by the Governments will be deducted from the bill of contractors/suppliers in accordance with the rules/policy. 4. The Inspector General of Prisons Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Peshawar and members of the purchase committee reserve the right to reject the tender of any contractor after assigning reason. 5. In case of failure in supply or supply of substandard items or failure to abide by the rules/terms and conditions of contract, the concerned contractor / supplier will be blacklisted and his earnest money / security will be forfeited to the state besides levying of fine.

SUPERINTENDENT DISTRICT JAIL MANSEHRA
Phone & Fax: 0997-540884 INF(P) 946/24

Educational Testing & Evaluation Agency (ETEA)

Notice Inviting Tenders (NIT No. 9/2023-2024 Date: 10.05.2024)

- Educational Testing & Evaluation Agency (ETEA) invites sealed bids from suppliers/ contractors for provision of services "Collection of Mobile Phones/Electronic Devices etc. at test centers" located at different districts/cities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under Single Stage One Envelope Bidding Procedure.
- Bidder should be registered with Income Tax and relevant Sales Tax Departments of Government of Pakistan/KPRA and shall be reflected on the Active Taxpayer Lists (ATL) of FBR and KPRA.
- A complete set of Bidding Documents Comprising Terms and Conditions, Specification and Evaluation Criteria can be obtained from the office of the undersigned on any working day from date of publication of this invitation in the newspaper till closing date by submission of a fee (non-refundable) of Rs. 2010/- through CDR or online deposit in Allied Bank Account # 0010055556550010 in favor of head of the bidder.
- Bids shall be opened to the office of the undersigned on or before the 31st May, 2024 10:00 AM.
- Bids shall be opened on the same date at the office of the Director (Admin/Finance) ETEA at 11:00 AM in the presence of the bidders or their authorized representative.
- Bids must be accompanied by a bid security of Rs. 200,000/- in shape of CDR in favor of Educational Testing & Evaluation Agency (ETEA). Bids without appropriate bid security shall be declared as non-responsive.
- ETEA reserves the right to cancel the bidding process by assigning consent reasons. Advertisement is available on the websites of KPPRA and ETEA as well.

Deputy Director Procurement (Educational Testing & Evaluation Agency (ETEA))
Plot # 22, Street # 13, Sector E-8, Phase-VII (Near Hajj Complex), Hayatabad, Peshawar KPK
WWW.etea.edu.pk, Phone: 091-9219049-78

INF No. (P) 937/24

Rasm-e-Qul Dr. Diyar Khan held

E.P Report

PESHAWAR: The Rasm-e-qul of Pakistan's Ambassador and renowned diplomat, Dr. Diyar Khan, who passed away due to a heart attack in Argentina, was held in Peshawar on Thursday. His funeral prayers were offered in Peshawar, and later he was laid to rest in his ancestral village Tawas Banda. Floral wreaths were laid on his grave by the 23rd Common

officers, Foreign Minister, and Foreign Secretary.

The spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs termed his untimely death a great loss for the country. On the occasion of Rasm e qul, a condolence reference was held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in which senior officials and former ambassadors participated in large numbers, praising the late diplomat's outstanding academic and national services.

Ban imposed on throwing solid waste

KARACHI (APP): Commissioner Syed Hassan Naqvi has imposed a ban on throwing/littering solid waste and garbage in the Nullahs in the jurisdiction of Karachi Division with immediate effect and directed to register complaints against the violators under section 188 PPC.

In exercise of powers conferred under 144 (6) Cr. PC delegated by the Home Department, the Commissioner has imposed a ban on littering and

throwing garbage/solid waste, dumping of debris and other material into the Nullahs by waste pickers, scavengers, recycles of any other individual for two months with effect from 15th May to 14th July 2024 with immediate effect. According to the notification, the Station House Officers of concerned Police Stations were authorized to register complaints under 188 PPC in writing against the violation of Section 144 (6) Cr. PC.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Pakistan Defence Officers Housing Authority Karachi city. It is to Inform the general public that Mr. Khaliq Dad S/O Muhammad Hayat Late (resident of village Sodhi Jay Wali The Naushera Distt Khushab having plot reference plot file No U- Res- 65295 The plot in DHA Karachi City has expired on 24July 2022,His following heires have applied for transfer of the above plot in their names. S.No.Names of legal Heirs relationship. Sahib khatoon mother (Zainab Bibi) widow (Haseeb Khaliq) son (Maryam Bibi, Sania Noreen) Daughters (Any one hairy any claim/ objection should notify Director Transfer and record DHA City Karachi.In writing with in foren days after which no claim/ objection shall be entertained by this authority.





PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi talking to PPP MNA Asma Alamgir and Vice President PPP Gulf and Middle East Syed Matloob Hussain Shah during a meeting.

Action against adulteration mafia in KP intensified

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority, with the onset of summer, has intensified its crackdown on the adulteration mafia involved in the production and sale of counterfeit and hazardous beverages. In a series of raids carried out in the districts of Swabi, Mardan, and Lower Dir, hundreds of liters of fake drinks were seized and discarded, with heavy fines imposed on violators, according to the authority's spokesperson.

According to details issued by the spokesperson, in Swabi, during raid, over 1,000 liters of counterfeit

beverages were seized from a warehouse in Jalasi. In Tehsil Takht Bhair of Mardan, the team confiscated 50 liters of fake drinks from a wholesaler and mislabeled soft drinks from a shop. Additionally, illegal items were discovered and seized during another raid.

Furthermore, food safety team of Dir Lower also conducted inspection at the canteen of Malakand University and various hotels, juice shops, bakeries, and general stores in the local market. During these inspections, over 65 liters of expired beverages were found and discarded on the spot.

The team also imposed

huge fines for violations of hygiene standards and issued notices for improvement.

Director General of the Food Safety Authority, Wasif Saeed, lauded the successful operations and emphasized the ongoing crackdown against substandard and counterfeit beverage shops across the province. He assured that those endangering public health would be dealt with iron hands.

Provincial Minister for Food, Zahir Shah Toru, has directed the food safety teams to take stringent disciplinary action against the adulteration mafia and show no leniency towards such anti-human elements.

Tariq Amin defends Ph.D Thesis F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A Doctorate of Philosophy (Ph. D) Scholar Tariq Amin successfully defended his thesis at the Pakistan Studies Centre, University of Peshawar, on Thursday.

The title of his research was: "Consensus Politics and Democratic Stability in Pakistan: An Analysis of the Charter of Democracy between PMLN and PPP."

Assistant Professor, Pakistan Studies Centre Dr. Khan Faqir supervised him in the completion of his research work. The examination committee included Dr. Khurshid Assistant Professor, Department of International Relations, UP, Dr. Youas Khan Assistant Professor, Department of Pakistan Studies, ICP, and Dr. Shahbaz Khan Director, Pakistan Studies Centre, examined his dissertation.

The scholar was declared eligible to receive his PhD degree by the examiners. The defense was attended by a large number of scholars, students, teachers, and professors from different departments of the University of Peshawar.

Commissioner visits Peshawar Bar Room

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Commissioner Peshawar Riaz Mehsud visited New Bar Room on requested bar association, on Thursday, in which lawyers' issues and matters related to the administration were discussed in detail.

The meeting aimed to find solutions to the problems faced by lawyers and to address issues such as the allocation of specific timings for lawyers to meet with revenue officers.

The meeting was attended by the President of the

High Court Bar, Fida Gul Advocate, and other office bearers of the Peshawar Bar Association.

It was agreed that monthly and weekly meetings would be held to discuss and resolve issues faced by the legal community.

'Dr' title allowed to DPT degree holders

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Allied Health Professionals Council (AHPC) has authorized the 5-year degree holders of Doctor of Physiotherapy (DPT) to use 'Dr' title with their names.

This recommendation was approved in 5th meeting of the governing body of the council. As per the decision, now the DPTs

will be allowed to use 'Dr' title as prefix with their names.

It is to be mentioned here that this development has done as a result of the efforts of Pakistan Physical Therapy Association (PPTA).

The physiotherapy community throughout the country has welcomed this decision and thanked the AHPC that it played a prominent role in consid-

ering the importance and value of DPTs for society.

Dr Altaf-ur-Rahman (PT), Member BoD, Pakistan Physical Therapy Association KP chapter, has also thanked the AHPC for this decision and commented that it would not only encourage and motivate the physiotherapists to serve the ailing humanity, but will also increase the importance of DPT degree.

AIL commits for rule of law F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Association of International Lawyers (AIL) Worldwide, Pakistan's Coordinator Muhammad Nasir Ghilzai advocate chaired a meeting at Kohat Division at the District Bar, on Thursday.

The meeting was attended by office bearers and members from all districts of Kohat Division, including Kohat, Karak, and Hangu. AIL members including coordinator international relation Ayub Ghilzai advocate, Peerzada Ishfaq, Ismail Khattak, Animullah Jan and Ismail Halimzai advocates were present in the meeting. AIL discussed human rights, women's rights, and children's rights, and future plans for AIL Kohat Division.

PHC orders removal of name from ECL after completion of conviction

Hamayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice SM Attique Shah and Justice Syed Arshad ordered Ministry of Interior to remove name of Ali Khan from Exit Control List (ECL) after completion of conviction.

The verdict authored by Justice SM Attique Shah stated that a perusal of record reflects that the petitioner was charged in a criminal case FIR No.233, dated 13.04.2017, registered under sections 302/324/148/149/297/109 PPC read with section 11-ww / 7 ATA at Police Station Sheikh Maltoon, District

Mardan and; as such, his name was placed in the ECL.

After completion of trial, worthy Judge, Anti-Terrorism Court, Hazara Division, Camp Court, Central Prison, Haripur, convicted and; sentenced the petitioner for 03 years along with fines vide judgment dated 07.02.2018.

The applicant was represented by Malik Shahbaz advocate while seeks removal of petitioner's name from the ECL on the ground that he has since been completed his imprisonment awarded to him in the ibid case FIR and; has been released from jail on 03.02.2023, therefore, the respondents be directed to remove his name

from the ECL enabling him to renew his passport from the concerned authority. When confronted, learned DAG could not controvert such factual aspect of the case.

In a situation, where the petitioner has been released from jail, after completion of imprisonment awarded to him in the ibid case FIR, then, we understand that his name should be excluded from the ECL in the peculiar facts and; circumstances of the case.

PHC divisional bench allowed instant writ petition in terms of directing the respondents to remove the name of petitioner from the Exit Control List.

EUTA annoyed at govt attitude towards higher education

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Engineering University Teachers Association (EUTA) general body rejects the government non-seriousness towards the higher education. The General Body expressed deep concern regarding the government's decision to implement salary cuts, fearing that this policy may jeopardize the

quality of higher education in a province already grappling with the aftermath of terrorism and inflation.

During these challenging times, the university faculty is already making sacrifices to serve the nation; otherwise, these budget cuts may compel the faculty to seek opportunities overseas.

Surprisingly, education, once deemed a priority by

the PTI government, has been compromised only in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, unlike the Sindh government, which has supported universities by allocating 21 billion rupees.

As per 18th amendment, the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa must fulfil its constitutional obligation to constitute a provincial HEC rather than demanding cutting of pay. Any step

towards a cut on salaries in such an irrational manner will be considered an attack on the autonomy of higher education and will influence the university to political pressures and interference.

EUTA general secretary Dr. Atif Sardar presented the meeting agenda before general body while issued press statement to media personnel in this regard.

Govt activating helpline to prevent domestic violence

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A meeting was held regarding the Helpline PEHEL-911 under the chairmanship of Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Zakat and Ushar, Social Welfare and Women Empowerment Mashal Azam Yousafzai and Additional Chief Secretary Home Abid Majeed.

The meeting was attended by Secretary Social Welfare and Women empowerment Syed Nazir Hussain Shah, representatives of UNICEF and UNFPA.

In the meeting, the participants were informed about the background of

establishment of helpline PEHEL-911 and its performance till now.

Speaking in the meeting, Advisor to Chief Minister Mashal Azam Yousafzai said that steps are being taken to prevent domestic violence, Child Abuse and drug abuse. We are digitizing Darul aamaan in the province. With the support of UNFPA, we are activating a helpline to prevent domestic violence against women which will be linked to PEHEL-911.

The meeting was informed during the briefing about PEHEL-911 that emergency rescue, police, National Highway and Motorway Police and other important helplines are

linked with PEHEL-911. Easy access to helpline is being provided. In this way, very soon the helpline for the prevention of domestic violence, including other helplines will be connected with PEHEL 911.

In the meeting, the functionality of the PEHEL-911 and suggestions for further improvement were discussed. Advisor to Chief Minister Mashal Azam Yousafzai further said in the meeting that the provincial government is taking measures for the welfare of children and women, rehabilitation of drug addicts and drug prevention. Measures are being taken to prevent domestic violence against women.

PHC acquits one from murder charges F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench comprising of Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Shaibzada Asadullah has accepted the appeal of a convict, Adil Khan, who was sentenced to 25 years in prison and a fine of Rs 500,000 for murder, on Thursday.

According to the prosecution, the accused had murdered Isfaq Sikenah Kalu Khan in 2021 due to an old enmity. The Additional District and Sessions Court had convicted the accused in 2023.

However, the accused's lawyer, Syed Mubbasher Shah advocate argued that there were contradictions in the medical report and the crime scene sketch, and that the pistol recovered from the accused had already been proven to be not linked to the crime.

The lawyer pointed out that there were many doubts and suspicions in the case, and therefore, the accused's sentence should be overturned.

PHC accepted the appeal and acquitted the accused, giving him the benefit of doubt and ordered the release of accused by overturning the conviction and sentence after conclusion of arguments.



PESHAWAR: Advisor to Chief Minister for Social Welfare Mashal Yousafzai and Chief Field Officer UNICEF Radoslaw Rzehak in a group photo with participants during closing ceremony of Child Protection Case Management Foundation training.

Time to unlock KP hydel potential for affordable electricity

PESHAWAR (APP): Installing solar system on rooftop of his house, Riazul Haq-a former PST teacher is seemed satisfied after making Rs 3lac investment hoping to get relief of the long hours power outages mostly caused by direct hocks, non meterization and unconstruction of dams in KP that irked consumers.

"Today I am pleased to install a complet solar penal on Rs300,000 investment helping me to run an AC and refrigerator around 24 hours," he told APP after installation work at his hometown of Pabbi Nowshera.

Taking advantage of decrease prices of solar system, he said that solar panels are now in the common man reach and people may take advantage of it as Wapda could not afford uninterrupted electricity to all domestic, agriculture and industrial consumers due to increase of power pilferage and non meterization in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He said the menace of load-shedding could not be addressed unless taking advantage of massive hydel power potential in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Inspite of 60,000MW hydel power potential of Pakistan including 30,000MW of the Khyber Pakhtukhwa, the energy crisis has deepened in recent years due to kunda culture, increase in prices of oil and petroleum products, high taxation and non-construction of new dams besides poor energy

policies of the past governments in KP that adversely affected agriculture, economic and industrial growth in the country.

The untapped hydel power potential of KP has increased gap between supply and demand of electricity during start of summer, resulting an increase in load shedding mostly high line losses feeders in peripheries of Peshawar, Bannu, DI Khan, Karak, Lakki Marwat and merged tribal districts.

Akhtar Hameed Khan, Chief Executive Officer Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) Akhtar Hameed Khan said that load management was being done only in areas where line losses were high in KP.

He said that there was no load management on more than 500 feeders with no line losses. There is zero load shedding in Hayatabad, Peshawar Cantonment, Gulbahar and other posh areas.

He said that PESCO teams were regularly conducting operations across the province to reduce line losses.

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

Under aggregate technical and commercial losses (ATCL) formula, only scheduled load shedding was being carried out

in areas with high ATCL losses such as Bannu, rural areas of Peshawar including Warak Road, Chagarmathi and Regi and DI Khan district. Swat, Swabi, Interior Peshawar and Hazara was comparatively better in term of low line losses and high recovery.

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

Prof Dr Zilakat Malik, former Chairman Economics Department of the University of Peshawar said that hydel energy was cost efficient for developing countries like Pakistan and underscored the need for construction of water reservoirs and small dams for sustainable economic growth and floods mitigation in the wake of climate change challenges.

Dr Naem said China had constructed about 98,000 dams and India 5,334 dams while Pakistan has built only 150 dams since its independence and no big dam after Turbulla.

He said that the rivers in northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab are most suitable for construction of dams especially small ones. 'Pakistan has about 60,000 MW hydel potential of which only 6,600 MW has been tapped so far with nearly half of it installed in KP ie 30,000MW.

Engr Zahoor Hussain, Director Projects, Wapda

(North) said that over 80 percent work on multipurpose Kurram Tangi (Stage-I) Bannu and North Waziristan has been completed and expected to be inaugurated by the end of this year. He said design and feasibility studies of its stage-II was under process that would be completed with a loan assistance of Asian Development Bank.

Engr Zahoor said that 1.2 million acres feet water would be stored and 80.9MW electricity to be generated from Kurram Tangi Dam.

He said that over three million people of southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would be directly benefited from Kurram Tangi dam.

He said that the credit for Kurram Tangi dam goes to former Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif who had laid its foundation stone on March 3, 2017.

Besides completion of 108MW Golen Gol dam in Chitral, he said work on Mohmand dam of 800MW with 1.293 MAF water storage capacity was accelerated that after completion would supplement/irrigate 160,000 acres of existing land and about 18,237 acres of new land with annual benefits of Rs2.23 billion.

Likewise, 300 million gallons water per day will also be provided to Peshawar for drinking purpose with benefits of Rs.957 million from Mohmand dam. Mohmand dam would save Peshawar, Charsadda and

Nowshera from floods having annual benefits in terms of flood mitigation was estimated at Rs1.467 billion besides producing 2.86 billion units of environment-friendly electricity to the National Grid every year with annual revenue of Rs. 45.76 billion. The overall annual benefits of the project stand at Rs. 51 billion.

Hamza Khan, PMLN Nowshera President, accused the PTI government for its poor policies that led to electricity crisis in the country including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. "Had the PTI rulers completed Mohmand and Bhasha dams timely, the present energy crisis would not have surfaced today."

He claimed that over 100 mini micro hydel power stations constructed by the PTI government with the help of NGOs in northern KP were either destroyed or damaged by the 2022 floods due to poor selection of sites thus huge taxpayers money wasted.

On the other hand, he said PML-N had always been taking a proactive approach to end the energy crisis.

The construction work on a high voltage direct current (HVDC) converter station was in progress at Azakhel Bala Nowshera district under the CASA-1000 Project for transmission of 1300 MW inexpensive, clean, and environment-friendly electricity from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan via Afghanistan to Pakistan.

The CASA-1000 Project car-

ried a great example of mutual cooperation between the governments of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan aimed at harnessing clean energy trade and building a shared regional electricity market, fighting climate change, and increasing standard of living for their populations.

The HVDC converter station Nowshera would be linked by an HVDC transmission line to efficiently transmit electricity from hydropower-rich Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan via Afghanistan and onward via Torkhum to Afghanistan.

He said that Rs205.38 billion were allocated for power sector projects (HPP) in the budget 2023-24 include 2,160 MW Dasu HPP (Rs. 58,597 million), 1,410 MW Tarbela IV Extension (Rs. 590 million), 969 MW Neelum Jhelum (Rs. 4,828 million), and 1,530 MW Tarbela V Extension (Rs. 4,449.463 million).

Major transmission projects such as CASA-1000 (Rs. 16,099.255 million), Dasu Evacuation (Rs. 5,667.094 million), Suki Kinari Evacuation (Rs. 13,800 million), and AMI IESCO project in the distribution sector (Rs. 3,000 million) in budget 2023-24.

Additionally, eight projects for supplying electricity to Special Economic Zones (SEZs) have been allocated a total of Rs. 7,267.352 million and by the end of June 2024, the transmission sector is expected to have an additional capacity of

3,750 MVA on the 500kV grid and 6,900 MVA on the 220kV grid. The transmission lines will be extended by 522 km on the 500kV level and 668 km on the 220kV level.

Resultantly, 6,985 villages would be electrified and 1,403,592 consumers for Distribution Companies (DISCOs) to be facilitated besides extending distribution lines of 132 kV by 1,843 km, and the capacity of 132 kV grids would be strengthened.

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

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

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



In brief

Traders to taxes in Malakand F.P. Report

SHANGLA: Likewise, traders of other districts of Malakand division business community in Shangla also rejected imposition of custom duty and taxes in the region while committed for joint efforts to ensure collective benefits for the people. The traders claimed that residents of Malakand had multiple facet disasters from natural calamities to terrorism which had adversely impacted business in the region. They argued for fulfillment of agreement chalked during annexation Yousafzai State and Khanate of Dir in Islamic Republic of Pakistan in 1969. The business community blamed parliamentary elected from Malakand division for arrogance and negligence in protecting rights of the people. They argued lawmakers to uphold their grievance otherwise public wouldn't forget the arrogance.

Education right of every child F.P. Report

WANA: Member National Assembly (MNA) elected from South Waziristan Zubair Khan held a crucial meeting with the District Education Officers to introduce revolutionary changes to the education sector in the South Waziristan. MNA Zubair Khan announced that in the first phase, officers from the Lower Waziristan Education Department would be deployed to Wana, the headquarters of Lower Waziristan, along with their staff. He emphasized that this year, all non-functional government schools in both districts would be made functional, and no one would be allowed to slack off. "Special attention will be given to girls' and boys' schools in both districts to ensure that no child is left out of school," he stressed. He also promised to start first-year classes at Government Girls' High School Chagmalai in the Upper Waziristan district. The MNA further stated that all facilities would be provided at Government High Schools in Angoor-Adda, Azam Warsak, Spin, Sam, Shaki, and Makin, and all possible efforts would be made to include these schools in the list of best schools. Notably, most of these schools have already been granted higher secondary school status. In the near future, the shortage of teachers in these schools will be addressed, and higher secondary classes will soon commence.

Woman commits suicide

SHEIKHUPURA (PPI): A woman, who was reportedly fell victim to a gang rape by security guards at Children's Hospital Sheikhupura, has tragically ended her own life, local police revealed on Thursday. According to authorities, the victim had visited Children's Hospital Sheikhupura to inquire about her niece's health. Upon arrival, she was lured into a separate room under the guise of her niece's medical examination, where she was allegedly raped by three security guards. Subsequently, the victim, in a state of despair, committed suicide by taking poisonous pills. District Police Officer (DPO) Bilal Zafar Sheikh informed that initially, a kidnapping case was registered based on the victim's disappearance, which was later amended to incorporate charges related to rape. A special investigation team, under the supervision of Additional SP Farhat Abbas, has been formed to probe the matter. Furthermore, DPO Sheikh highlighted that the security personnel employed by the hospital were not subjected to clearance procedures by Special Branch and other intelligence agencies.

Distribution of free textbooks in schools begins

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Distribution of free textbooks among students of public sector schools began here on Thursday. The sub divisional education officer female Timergara sub division Ms Yasmin Begum and assistant sub divisional education officer Talash cirle Muhammad Inam supervised the distribution of free textbooks at Government Girls' Primary



school Shobaba Talash. All the girls' school, according to the officials, in Talash and Timergara circles were provided textbooks.

Talking to this reporter, ASDEO Mohammed Inam said the schools' administration would further distribute these books among students from K.G to grade 5th. The official said the whole process of books' distribution would complete on Friday (today).

Similarly other circles in the Lower Dir district also started books' distribution among government schools students. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government was being blamed for delaying the provision of free textbooks to students this year and there were speculations that if the government would provide books or not.

Though the academic session started from April 15 yet the students and their

schools in the province would also be provided with free textbooks.

Christians' issues: The additional assistant commissioner Revenue Tariq Khan on Thursday resided over a meeting regarding various issues like, graveyard for Christian community, job quota for special persons, minorities, women, ramps and wheel chair for special persons and various issues faced by transgender community. The forum was informed that the district administration had already completed all codal formalities for the establishment of a graveyard for Christians Community and the case had been forwarded to the Auqaf Department Peshawar with the request to visit the proposed site and proper approval. The Christian Community appreciated the role of District Administration, AWAZ -II and Rahim Shah Akhunkhel, founder of the Sir Foundation.

The meeting was arranged by AWAZ - II Coordinator Riaz Muhammad and attended by representatives of minorities, social workers, Deputy DHO, social welfare officer and other stakeholders. The AAC assured all out support from the district Administration and appreciated the efforts of AWAZ - II coordinator Riaz Muhammad and his team for taking interest in resolution of issues faced by minorities and special persons.

Students play decisive role in eradication of corruption

F.P. Report

QUETTA: National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Balochistan region in collaboration with University of Balochistan arranged a seminar on the important topic of "Role of Students in Eradication of Corruption", on Thursday.

The event was attended by faculty members and fair gathering of students. Khuram Shehzad, Deputy Director NAB delivered talk and described the working methodology of NAB. He shared his valuable insights and expertise on the subject topic. He emphasized the importance of students' participation in combating corruption and

encouraged them to play their part in curbing this evil.

Deputy Director NAB highlighted that people can play significant role in promoting transparency and accountability in society. In addition, he referred various Islamic verses on accountability, emphasizing the moral and ethical imperatives to combat corruption. He was of the view that everyone must know the dark sides of corruption.

The question and answer session also arranged wherein students and faculty members interacted with the NAB's guest speaker while seeking clarification on various aspects of

accountability. Khuram Shehzad Deputy Director responded to all the queries, providing detailed information and clearing the misconceptions in their minds.

The guest speaker on behalf of University of Balochistan, Professor Faiza Mir in her speech also stressed that corruption has been deep rooted in our society and has been taken as norm. She said students has the power to bring the change. The seminar was a resounding success, and the university hopes to organize more such events in the future to raise awareness and spearhead anti-corruption efforts among students.

KKKUK hold seminar

F.P. Report

KARAK: Khushal Khan Khattak University (KK-KU) Karak Quality Enhancement Directorate successfully organized a one-day seminar on Thursday, focusing on the vital topic of Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms in Higher Education Institutions.

Director Quality Assurance Cell Higher Education Archives and Libraries Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Imran Ullah Marwat was the Resource Person of seminar, who delivered detailed presentation on quality assurance frameworks and mechanisms. Imran explained Internal and External Quality Assurance processes which are assisting in maintaining and enhancing educational standards.

During the seminar, He said that efforts are underway to establish a Quality Advisory Council in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa



Universities Act. He emphasized the importance of aligning with the quality standards set by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and Higher Education Department (HED) to ensure excellence across educational institutions.

In his welcome address, the Director of QEC Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak, Dr Muhammad Anwar extended a warm welcome to the participants and program team members for making the seminar as productive exchange of ideas. Registrar Dr. Rafi Ullah Khan reaffirmed the university's commitment to implementing quality standards prescribed by regulatory bodies, underscoring the institution's dedication

to academic excellence.

Dr. Nasir Iqbal, Deputy Director, QEC urged timely completion of all assigned tasks by the University's Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC) and its affiliated colleges. He emphasized on the crucial role they play in upholding quality standards. Heads of Academic Departments, QEC teams from various university departments, and representatives from Quality Teams of Affiliated Colleges participated in the seminar. Dr. Jamshed ur Rehman, Assistant Director of QEC played a role of coordinator and ensured smooth conduct of the seminar. The seminar served as a platform for knowledge sharing collective efforts towards enhancing the quality in higher education institutions.

Free medical camp held

F.P. Report

ZHOB: Oil and Gas Development Company Limited under its Corporate Social Responsibility programme and Al-Shifa Eye Trust Hospital organized a three-day free eye medical and surgical camp here in bordering town Zhub. Thousands of patients suffering from eye ailment benefited from the camp set up at the district headquarters civil hospital.

Assistant Commissioner Zaheer Ahmed Zehri flanked by the Regional

Director OGDCL Ikramullah Kasi, camp supervisor Abdul Jabbar Memon, Aqeel Khoso and general secretary Para medical staff association Qasim Khan Mandokhail inaugurated the camp. Prominent ophthalmologists and surgeons participated in the three-day camp, where thousands of patients from far-off areas were examined, and received free medicines and glasses.

According to the OPD data, 2294 patients have been screened and provided them free medicines and

glasses, while 220 cataract surgeries have also been carried out during the camp. Regional Director OGDCL Ikramullah Kasi told journalist Rafiullah Mandokhail that OGDCL in collaboration with Al-Shifa Eye Trust Hospital organizes free eye camps in different remote parts of Balochistan, with the aim at providing free eye care services to the poor and needy patients belong to the marginalized communities. "Besides free examination of patients in the camp, cataract surgeries are also performed.



HYDERABAD: Youngsters bathing in canal to get relief from hot weather.

Bugti seeks suggestion to form youth policy F.P. Report

QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bughti on Thursday said the Balochistan Youth Policy would be the manifestation to give effective representation to the youth of Balochistan; therefore, suggestions from all stakeholders be sought for framing the policy.

These views were expressed by him while chairing a meeting held at Chief Minister Secretariat regarding the Balochistan Youth Policy-2024. Domki said that counselling of youth in right direction was essential, adding Balochistan Youth Policy be framed in accordance with the requirements of Balochistan's youth.

Gender equality be kept into consideration in Balochistan Youth Policy, he said, adding that providing opportunities to the youth to demonstrate their abilities be made the part of Balochistan Youth Policy. He directed the authorities of Sports and Youth Affairs Department, Balochistan to submit draft recommendations for framing Balochistan Youth Policy within a period of ten days. The meeting was attended by MNA Nawabzada Jamal Raisani, Chief Secretary Balochistan, Shakeel Qadir Khan, Secretary, Sports and Youth Affairs Department, Javed Anwar Shahwani, Chairperson Balochistan Women Commission, Fozia Shaheen and others.

Job fair started at UET Mardan F.P. Report

MARDAN: Commissioner Mardan Shaukat Ali Yousafzai and inaugurated the Final Year Project Exhibition and Job Fair 2024 at University of Engineering and Technology Mardan along with Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Imran Khan. The event was attended by Registrar Dr. Murtaza, Prof. Dr. Usman, Chairman of Department of Computer Science, Prof. Sadaqat Jan, Dr. Tariq, Director Orak, and heads of all teaching departments of UET Mardan and other sections of the university.

On this occasion, students from various engineering disciplines showcased their final year projects, which showcased outstanding innovation and technical expertise. The participants included students and teachers from various colleges and universities of Mardan, Islamic International College, Peshawar Model College, and University of Technology Nowshera, while various industries of Pakistan also participated in the job fair, interviewed students of UET Mardan.

And appreciated the outstanding quality of their projects. UET Mardan is the country's premier and leading university that continuously promotes and encourages academia and industry linkages for the betterment of the community and Pakistan. Commissioner Mardan Division Shaukat Ali Yousafzai appreciated the organization of project exhibition and job fair and appreciated the quality of project models presented in it.

Imposition of taxes APC announces resistance in Malakand

F.P. Report

BUNER: All-Parties Conference was held against the implementation of Tax and Customs Act in Malakand Division, at district Buner Press Club. APC organized by Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam. In the APC the presidents and leaders of all political parties, traders' federation, doctors, paramedics, marble industry, private educational institutions, transport Union leaders participated in large numbers.

The APC participants unanimously rejected the implementation of the Tax and Customs Act in Malakand Division and gave a clear message that if the government did not withdraw its unilateral and treaty-breaking decision in view of the public backlash, the APC would bring the people to the roads.

The APC decided and announced a decisive movement will be launched, like the Kashmiris to reconsider the decision of joining Pakistan and will remain on the roads until the demand is accepted and to achieve this goal, all parties and all

unions will be held in Swari on the 19th of this month and on 23rd of this month, it has also announced to start a national movement by organizing a large protest demonstration in the main square in the business hub of Swari Buner.

All-Parties Conference was hosted by Mufti Fazal Ghafoor of JUI and presided over by Qaumi Jirga President Mian Syed Laiq Bacha. Those addressed included Former JUI candidate for National Assembly Maulana Halimur Rehman, former MPA and Ameer District Mufti Fazal Ghafoor Saeedur Rehman Mufakir, Arifullah, Awami National Party Mian Syed Laiq Bacha Ex-MPA Qaiser Wali Khan Ex-Candidate Provincial Assembly Afsar Khan, District president Karim Babak, Jamaat-e-Islami Engineer Nasir Ali Khan, General Secretary Akbar Khan Advocate, Muslim League President Haji Salar Khan, Awami Workers Party Usman Fanoos Gujjar, PPP Rafiqullah Khan Advocate, Qaumi Watan Party Asghar

Khan, PTI Johar Ali Khan, Traders Federation Fazal Rabi, Doctors Association Dr Ameer Taj Khan, Paramedics Bihar Ali Bacha, President of Private Educational Institutions Nisar Ahmad Khan and social personality Wahab Rashid Khan and president of Petroleum Dealers Association Sultan Rum Khan and many others addressed.

The participants presented suggestions in the light of which the leaders formed committees with the names of Rahbar Action and divisional coordination for the future.

The committees would be responsible to coordinate and organize the national movement. APC appealed Journalist community for giving full coverage so that the voice of the people could be conveyed to the Parliamentarians and the Government functionaries to prevent the implementation of the Tax and Customs Act in Malakand Division in larger public interest and peace in the region as well.

DPO emphasizes pivotal role of DRC

F.P. Report

MARDAN: DPO emphasized the pivotal role of Dispute Resolution Council (DRC) in resolving public disputes and longstanding enmities. He expressed his commitment to enhancing the effectiveness of DRCs and ensuring full cooperation from the police.

During his visit to the DRC City Circle, DPO Zahoar Babar Afridi was welcomed by District Conciliation Council Chairman Ehsan Bacha, Haji Alamzeb Khan, and other members. The meeting, attended by SP City Shafiu Rehman, DSP Circle Ijaz Khan, and other police officers, focused on various issues, including the performance of the council.

Chairman DRC presented a performance report, and members provided suggestions to enhance the council's effectiveness. DPO Zahoar Babar Afridi commended the establishment and performance of DRCs, emphasizing their significance in Pakhtun culture.

He stressed the importance of sending disputing parties to the conciliation council by mutual consent and resolving conflicts through legal means. Members of the Conciliation Council were urged to play a neutral and fair role in facilitating reconciliation between parties. DPO Afridi issued instructions to police officers to extend full cooperation to DRCs and take proactive measures to enhance their functionality. He emphasized that active DRCs would contribute to timely conflict resolution, fostering peace and harmony in society.

Anti-encroachment operation held: On the special instructions of Deputy Commissioner Mardan Fayaz Khan Sherpao, Assistant Commissioner Tehsil Rustam Rashid Ali Khan along with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa



Highway Authority and TMA Rustam staff conducted an anti-encroachment operation from Rustam Main Chowk to Shireen Khan Chowk.

Admin removed temporary encroachments in front of shops while notices have been issued to the owners of shops for the demolition of permanent encroachments for one week so that they remove the encroachments by themselves, after which the permanent encroachments will be removed using heavy machinery. He said that this will end the problems in the flow of traffic while on the other hand, pedestrians will also find it easier to travel.

Awareness a key for eradication of drug from society: A seminar was organized in Abdul Wali Khan University in connection with the awareness campaign of Mardan Police for the eradication and harm of drugs, especially Ice-drug, with the support of District Administration and Youth, on Thursday.

Addressing the participants DPO Zahoar Babar Afridi said that awareness campaign regarding the prevention of drugs, especially ice, is an important requirement of the present day especially by protecting students from the epidemic of drugs especially ice, their future can be secured. The use of drugs, especially ice etc. in educational institutions is a matter of concern for us. Education gives us awareness so we don't

encourage students to use drugs. Active action to eradicate drugs, especially ice dealers and freeing the society from the epidemic of drugs is one of our top priorities.

The youth generation is the valuable capital of the country and the nation, the anti-social elements want to stake the future of the youth trapped in the swamp of drugs especially ice to thwart their conspiracy and support public awareness activities. In this regard, parents and teachers should fulfill their national duty to make the future of the young generation successful. All students should pay attention to their education and training, avoid the use of drugs and especially ice and become a civilized and efficient citizen in the society.

Make serving the country and the nation your motto. The purpose of the special drug awareness campaign by the Mardan Police is to inform the students of schools, colleges and universities about the types of drugs and their harms and to advise every member of the society to avoid them. The organizers and participants of the seminar paid tribute to the anti-narcotics awareness campaign by the police and pledged full cooperation with the police against drugs. At the end of the seminar, an honorary shield was also presented to DPO Mardan by the university administration.



Friday, May 17, 2024

Aid agencies warn Gaza on brink of catastrophe

GAZA: Israel has continued its military push in across Gaza, with fierce urban gun battles between Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups taking place in the Jabalia camp in the north to the southern city of Rafah, which borders Egypt.

In the northern Jabalia district, now widely destroyed, residents said Israeli tanks had destroyed clusters of homes but were facing heavy resistance from fighters with the Palestinian group Hamas, which governs Gaza and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) armed group. "They are bombing houses on top of their inhabitants," said Abu Jehad.

The PIJ claimed it killed some Israeli soldiers in Jabalia, while Israel's military said it eliminated many fighters in the area. Israel sent troops back into areas in northern Gaza earlier this week after claiming they had defeated Hamas three months ago. Israel's military ordered more evacuations from the al-Manshiya and Sheikh Zayed neighbourhoods in northern Gaza. The United Nations estimated that some 100,000 people have been forcibly expelled from the north in recent days. In Gaza City, several people were killed after Israeli forces struck a group of Palestinians at the intersection of Jalaa Street and al-Oyoun Street, the official Palestinian Wafa news agency reported. At least three bodies arrived at al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City, as well as a number of critical cases, Wafa said. The number of dead from this attack, which targeted a gathering point for internet access, is expected to rise, according to Al Jazeera's Hani Mahmoud. "This is not the first time we see this pattern of attacks on civilians gathering in large groups,

either at a food distribution or internet connection points, or even at a solar-powered point to charge their phones or computers," Mahmoud said. Palestinian health officials said at least 82 Palestinians were killed in the previous 24 hours.

Hamas decried attacks against civilians across the Strip, saying they are "fascist and vengeful" acts that reflect the Israeli army's state of "defeat". In Rafah, Israeli tanks have been massed around the eastern edges of Rafah and in recent days, have been probing into built-up areas of the city, where hundreds of thousands of displaced people have sought shelter from bombardment elsewhere in Gaza. Residents said Israeli forces had pushed into three neighbourhoods and Palestinian fighters were trying to prevent soldiers and tanks moving towards the centre. Aid groups including the International Rescue Committee (IRC) warned they are facing significant disruptions in their humanitarian operations as the Israeli army moves into the city to conduct its widely criticised ground offensive. "I have recently returned from Gaza, where the scale of the crisis defies imagination. Facilities across southern Gaza have been repurposed into makeshift shelters overflowing into the streets," Kiryn Lanning, IRC team lead for the occupied Palestinian territory, said.

"This displaced population is now facing acute shortages of basic necessities such as food, water, and adequate sanitation," Lanning added. Last week, after the Israeli army seized and shut down the Palestinian side of the Rafah border crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt - a vital entry point for humanitarian aid - the UN's agency

for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, warned that southern Gaza's hospitals had only days of fuel left to run their operations, and that the entry of fuel into the Strip was essential to prevent more deaths. Sporadic aid deliveries into Gaza by truck have slowed to a trickle since Israeli forces took control of the Gaza side of the crossing on May 7. A convoy carrying humanitarian relief goods was ransacked by far-right Israelis after it had crossed from Jordan through the occupied West Bank. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has claimed there is "no humanitarian catastrophe" in Rafah, where about 450,000 people have been driven out of their places of shelter since last week, according to the UN. As the fighting intensifies, ceasefire talks mediated by Qatar and Egypt have hit an impasse, with Hamas demanding a permanent end to attacks and Netanyahu's government saying it will not stop until the group is annihilated. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken urged Israel to produce a clear plan for Gaza's post-war future. Netanyahu has opposed the creation of an independent Palestinian state, which most foreign powers see as the only long-term solution. He said that any move to establish an alternative to Hamas as the government of Gaza required that the Palestinian group first be eliminated, and demanded this goal be pursued "without excuses". His remarks, in a video statement posted online, followed a public challenge by Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, who accused the government of having avoided a serious discussion of a proposal for a non-Hamas post-war Palestinian administration. — Aljazeera

Two officers dead in France prison fire

PARIS (AP): A massive search was underway in France for armed assailants who ambushed a prison convoy, killing two prison officers, seriously injuring three others and freeing the inmate they were escorting. The prime minister vowed the gang would be caught, saying, "They will pay."

"We are tracking you, we will find you and we will punish you," Prime Minister Gabriel Attal said in parliament, to applause from lawmakers. The escaped convict, Mohamed Amra, 30, has a long criminal record, with at least 13 convictions for robbery and other crimes, the first when he was 15, prosecutors said.

International policing agency Interpol issued a Red Notice to find Amra. The notice flags people deemed fugitives to law enforcement worldwide and is one of Interpol's most important tools. French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said "unprecedented" efforts were being deployed. Hundreds of officers were mobilized in the search for Amra and the assailants who rammed a car head-on into the prison van transporting him and opened fire. The violence shocked France. Prison workers held moments of silence to commemorate the officers killed.

"I haven't closed my eyes all night. I cried so much that I have no more tears left in my body," the father of 34-year-old slain officer Arnaud Garcia, Dominique Garcia, told BFM-TV. Darmanin, speaking on RTL radio, said 450 officers had been deployed in the region in Normandy in northern France to search for the assailants. "The means employed are considerable," he said. "We are progressing a lot." The attack appeared to have been carefully prepared. The convoy was transporting Amra back to jail in the Normandy town of Evreux after a hearing with an investigator in Rouen when it was ambushed at a toll booth on the A154 freeway. The Paris prosecutor's office said the car had been stolen and had gone through the toll booth a few minutes ahead of the prison convoy and then waited. Another car followed behind the convoy, seemingly boxing it in. Assailants sprang from the cars and opened fire, Paris prosecutor Laure Beccau said. Two burned cars were found. The other officer killed was a 52-year-old captain in the prison service, Beccau said.

Another Biden admin staffer quits

WASHINGTON: Another staffer in United States President Joe Biden's administration has publicly resigned in protest of the US's continued support for Israel amid its war on Gaza. The Associated Press news agency reported.

Lily Greenberg Call, a special assistant to the chief of staff in the US Interior Department, wrote in her resignation letter that she could not "in good conscience continue to represent" the administration, AP reported. Call, who is Jewish, also condemned comments Biden has made since the Gaza war began in October, including one where he warned "there wouldn't be a Jew in the world who was safe" without the existence of Israel.

"He is making Jews the face of the American war machine. And that is so deeply wrong," she told the news agency in an interview. A handful of Biden administration officials and appointees - including a former US Army officer - have publicly stepped down over the US's Gaza policy since the conflict began on October 7. The resignations have come amid widespread anger in the country about Biden's unequivocal support for Israel, despite the mounting death toll in the Gaza Strip and accusations that Israeli forces are committing genocide against Palestinians in the enclave.

More than 35,000 Palestinians have been killed since the conflict began, and Israel's continued assault and siege on the territory has created a dire humanitarian crisis. — Aljazeera



PARIS: Prison workers gathered during a protest outside the Corbas prison, outside Lyon. A massive manhunt was underway in France for an armed gang that ambushed a prison convoy, killing two prison officers, seriously injuring three others and springing the inmate they were escorting.

Sudan's people are trapped in 'inferno of brutal violence'

UNITED NATIONS (AP): The Sudanese people "are trapped in an inferno of brutal violence" with famine, disease and fighting closing in and no end in sight, the top UN humanitarian official in the war-ravaged country said. Clementine Nkweta-Salami told a UN press conference that "horrific atrocities are being committed with reckless abandon, reports of rape, torture and ethnically motivated violence are streaming in," communities and families have been torn apart, and almost 9 million people have been forced to flee their homes in what is now the world's largest displacement crisis.

Earlier this month, the UN food agency warned Sudan's warring parties that there is a serious risk of widespread starvation and death in Darfur and elsewhere in Sudan if they don't allow humanitarian aid into the vast western region - a view echoed by Nkweta-Salami. Sudan plunged into conflict in mid-April 2023, when long-simmering tensions between its military led by Gen. Abdel Fattah Burhan, and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces commanded by Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, broke out into street battles in the capital, Khartoum. Fighting has spread to other parts of the country, especially urban areas and the vast western Darfur region, and the UN says over 14,000 people have been killed and 33,000 injured.

The paramilitary forces, known as the RSF, have gained control of most of Darfur and are besieging the key city of El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur and the only capital they don't hold. Nkweta-Salami told a UN news conference that hostilities in El Fasher have been escalating and clashes over the weekend and early this week caused dozens of casualties and displaced many more of the 800,000 people still in the city.

She said there are just six weeks before "the lean season" begins, when food becomes less available and more expensive. It also coincides with the rainy season when reaching people is very difficult because water-logged roads become impassable, and the end of the planting season when the UN needs to provide seeds to farmers, she said. The UN humanitarian coordinator for Sudan urged "more funding and fast." On April 15, donors pledged \$2.1 billion in humanitarian aid for Sudan, but Nkweta-Salami said the UN's \$2.7 billion humanitarian appeal -- to help nearly 15 million of the country's 58 million people -- is just 12% funded.

"Without more resources, we won't be able to scale up in time to stave off famine and further deprivation," she warned. Leni Kinzli, the UN World Food Program's regional spokesperson, said on May 3 that at least 1.7 million people in Darfur were experiencing emergency levels of hunger in

Sudan in December, and the number is expected to be "much higher" now. "People are resorting to consuming grass and peanut shells," Kinzli said. "And if assistance doesn't reach them soon, we risk witnessing widespread starvation and death in Darfur and across other conflict-affected areas in Sudan."

Nkweta-Salami demanded unfettered access to the millions in need, urging more aid deliveries from Chad which borders Darfur, and across conflict lines. She said food, water and medicine are desperately needed in El Fasher, which is now completely surrounded. As an example of the difficulties the UN and other aid agencies face, she said a UN convoy with more than a dozen trucks carrying critical supplies for 120,000 people left Port Sudan on April 3 but still hasn't reached El Fasher because of insecurity, checkpoints and delays in getting clearances. Nkweta-Salami urged the parties engaged in fighting in and around El Fasher to step back to prevent what would be "a catastrophic impact on the civilian population." "And most of all, we need more engagement to end this war" and to hold the parties to the conflict accountable, she said. "The international community cannot stand by as this crisis spirals out of control - as the noose of this conflict tightens its stranglehold on the civilian population."

California Varsity will heed student call to boycott Israel institutions

CALIFORNIA: Sonoma State University, a public school in northern California, has said that it will not enter partnerships with Israeli universities, heeding a call from pro-Palestine student groups pushing to boycott Israeli companies and institutions amid the war in Gaza.

The decision, announced, comes after a recent wave of campus protests spread across the United States, with encampments and demonstrations cropping up at schools like Columbia University and the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). As part of their demands, student activists aimed to sever school ties with academic bodies and companies perceived as complicit in Israel's war and decades-long occupation of the Palestinian territory.

In an email to students, Sonoma State's president, Mike Lee, said the school had reached an agreement with the protesters, who set up an on-campus encampment three weeks ago.

Sonoma State would do more to disclose its contracts and seek "divestment strategies", Lee wrote. It would also not pursue partnerships that are "sponsored by, or represent, the Israeli state academic and research institutions". In exchange for the concessions, student activists agreed to dismantle the cluster of tents on campus. Many universities have responded to the demands of antiwar activists with police crackdowns on encampments. But those efforts have done little to dim calls for divestment, and campus activists have likened their efforts to historic student protests against the Vietnam War and apartheid South Africa.

Several pro-Palestine university encampments have disbanded after negotiations over divestment demands with administrators. In late April, for instance, protesters took down their tents at Brown University in Rhode Island, after the Ivy League school's

board of governors agreed to consider divestment in a vote this October. However, calls for divestment can be controversial in the US, where Israel enjoys strong political backing. Israel receives \$3.8bn in military aid from the US every year, and US lawmakers have, with the encouragement of pro-Israel groups, moved to penalise and even criminalise calls to boycott Israel. In Texas, for instance, Republican Governor Greg Abbott responded to students' divestment demands directly, saying earlier this month, "This will NEVER happen." Under his leadership, the state passed a law that prohibits government entities from contracting with firms that boycott Israel.

Jewish groups and a handful of state politicians have likewise condemned Sonoma State's decision, saying that it represents an attack on Israel and the Jewish community. Some tied the university's decision to the Boycott,

Divestment and Sanctions Movement (BDS), which seeks to pressure Israel into protecting Palestinian rights through nonviolent means. It also aims to draw attention to companies seen as complicit in rights abuses in the Palestinian territory. BDS's critics, however, consider the movement anti-Semitic for its targeting of Israeli companies and groups. "Yesterday the President of Sonoma State University aligned the campus with BDS, a movement whose goal is the destruction of Israel, home to 7M Jews," California state Senator Scott Wiener said in a social media post.

In another post, the Jewish Community Relations Council Bay Area said the decision by Sonoma State was in "clear violation" of California's 2016 anti-BDS law. It called on the chancellor of the California State University system - of which Sonoma State is a member - to "rectify" the situation. — Aljazeera

SA's Ramaphosa signs health bill before election

JOHANNESBURG: South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has signed into law a bill that aims to provide universal health coverage. The president hailed the law as a major step towards a more just society two weeks before an election that is expected to be fiercely competitive.

"The provision of healthcare in this country is fragmented, unsustainable and unacceptable," he said at the signing ceremony at the Union Buildings, the seat of government in Pretoria. "For those who would like to see (their) privileges continuing, sorry, you are on the wrong boat. The boat we are on is about equality," he said.

The National Health Insurance (NHI) Act takes aim at a two-tier health system, in which a publicly funded sector that serves 84 percent of the population is overburdened and run-down while some people have access to better treatment through private insurance. The legislation will gradually limit the role of private insurance, create

a new public fund to provide free access for South African citizens, and set the fees and prices that private doctors and healthcare suppliers may charge for NHI-funded benefits. Critics said the plan will drain already stretched public finances, limit patient choice, undermine the quality of care and drive talented doctors out of the country. Opponents have promised to challenge it in court and described it as a ploy for votes - which the presidency denied - before the election. The May 29 elections are expected to be one of the country's most highly contested. Ramaphosa's governing African National Congress (ANC) faces the possibility of receiving less than 50 percent of the vote for the first time since it came into power in 1994. Concerns have also been raised about the affordability of the law and possible tax increases to fund it.

The official opposition Democratic Alliance said that it would legally challenge the new law. The civil

society group AfriForum has also announced plans to challenge the constitutionality of the law while some business forums have described it as unworkable and unaffordable. The Health Funders Association (HFA), an organisation representing stakeholders involved in funding private healthcare, said it would take significant time before the plan comes into effect. "There will be no immediate impact on medical scheme benefits and contributions nor any tax changes. The HFA is well prepared to defend the rights of medical scheme members and all South Africans to choose privately funded healthcare where necessary," spokesman Craig Comrie said.

Others welcomed the law. The NEHAWU labour union, part of the country's COSATU federation, which is in an alliance with the ANC, urged Ramaphosa and the Treasury to put their full political weight behind the NHI to ensure it is properly resourced. — Aljazeera

Canada wildfires spur evacuation orders, warnings

TORONTO: Thousands of people have been evacuated as enormous, out-of-control wildfires scorch large swaths of territory in western Canada, with the country grappling with what could be another devastating fire season.

This week, residents of the small town of Fort Nelson, in northeastern British Columbia, were forced from their homes as a blaze grew "dramatically" in only a few days and was moving towards the community. In the neighbouring province of Alberta, authorities gave people in parts of Fort McMurray - a town at the heart of the Canadian tar sands region - about two hours to leave due to an approaching wildfire.

Canada saw its most intense fire season on record last year, with hundreds of wildfires burning in provinces and territories across the country in a crisis experts said was worsened by climate change. Here's

all you need to know about the current wildfires. More than 130 wildfires are currently burning across the country, according to a tally by the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre (CIFFC). Of those, 40 were considered out of control. So far this year, Canada has experienced more than 1,000 wildfires that have burned approximately 336,000 hectares (830,000 acres) of land, the CIFFC found.

Most of the blazes are in British Columbia and Alberta, the CIFFC says on its website. Others also have broken out in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and the Northwest Territories, among other parts of the country. About 3,500 people were evacuated from Fort Nelson and Fort Nelson First Nation, in northeastern British Columbia, due to the Parker Lake wildfire. The blaze had grown to more than 8,400 hectares (20,700 acres). Authorities in Alberta also

issued evacuation orders for the Abasand, Beacon Hill, Prairie Creek and Grayling Terrace areas of Fort McMurray. The town itself, which was engulfed by a devastating wildfire in 2016, is currently under an "evacuation alert", which means residents should be ready to leave if an evacuation order is issued.

The Alberta Wildfire agency said that favourable winds were expected to push the fire away from Fort McMurray while crews continue to work to contain the blaze. Meanwhile, people have also been evacuated in parts of northern Manitoba, in central Canada. An out-of-control wildfire near the small towns of Flin Flon and The Pas - near the province's border with Saskatchewan - has grown to 31,600 hectares (78,000 acres). Generally, wildfires in Canada are caused either by lightning strikes or human behaviour. — Aljazeera

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Leadership and Responsibility in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

In the politically sensitive region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), bordering Afghanistan, the role of Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur requires a nuanced approach to governance, particularly in dealing with public service issues like power outages. Recently, Gandapur's aggressive stance on the prolonged loadshedding problem in KP has raised concerns about the appropriateness of his methods and the tone of political discourse he employs. Gandapur's threat to take over the Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) if the federal government fails to resolve the issue of loadshedding by his set deadline is a clear demonstration of a confrontational approach that might not serve the best interests of KP's people. While his frustration with the unannounced power cuts is understandable given the essential nature of electricity, his methods of addressing this grievance can be seen as overly aggressive and potentially destabilizing. For KP, a province that is not only geographically but also politically sensitive due to its proximity to Afghanistan, what is needed is not the rhetoric of a gangster but the deliberative tone of a statesman.

The Chief Minister's role is pivotal in fostering coordination and political harmony, both within his province and between the provincial and federal governments. Threats to take unilateral actions against state-owned enterprises do not reflect the responsible governance needed to address systemic issues like power supply effectively. It is essential for Gandapur to channel his evident passion for defending the rights of his constituents into more constructive and collaborative efforts. Instead of issuing ultimatums, he should focus on creating a platform for dialogue with all stakeholders involved, including the federal government and PESCO. This collaborative approach not only aligns more closely with democratic principles but is also more likely to yield sustainable solutions to the power crises plaguing the region. Moreover, his call for stakeholders to sit together to find a solution is a step in the right direction, but it contradicts his simultaneous threats of takeover. It sends mixed signals to both the public and other government bodies about his actual intent and the seriousness with which he regards the cooperative process. KP and its people deserve a leader who acts with the gravity and diplomacy expected of a Chief Minister. Gandapur needs to act not just with urgency but with a vision that seeks long-term solutions through cooperation, rather than through conflict. Ensuring the provision of essential services like electricity in KP should indeed be a priority, but it must be approached methodically and legally to ensure stability and continuity in service provision. In conclusion, while Chief Minister Gandapur's commitment to addressing the grievances of KP's residents is commendable, his approach needs reevaluation. The people of KP require a leader who provides stable and thoughtful leadership, especially given the province's strategic importance and sensitive location. By fostering a more cooperative and harmonious political environment, Gandapur can better serve his province and contribute to the broader stability and development of Pakistan.

Washington breaching its legal commitments

For a long time, the United States has openly claimed that preserving the "status quo" across the Taiwan Strait is in its, and every stakeholder's, best interest. In the name of safeguarding peace, Washington has issued persistent warnings against any party seeking to "unilaterally change the status quo".

The alarm is being raised again as the island prepares to inaugurate a new team of leaders on Monday. But this time it is Beijing's turn to say that to Washington. Because what the latter has been doing may effectively make the present state of affairs across the Taiwan Strait status quo ante. Each time when a representative of the Democratic Progressive Party becomes leader of the local authorities on the Chinese island, Beijing reiterates it will have no truck with independence seekers.

But such a warning carries greater weight this year with Washington openly pushing for far-reaching changes to the "status quo". The joint military drills the US conducted with Taiwan in April only provided an additional reason for Beijing to question Washington's commitment to the three joint communiqués the two governments have so far recognized as being the cornerstone of the China-US relationship. No matter how Washington interprets the US' "one-China" commitment, it has a legal obligation to not develop official relations with the island.

Although the April drills were dubbed "unplanned sea encounters", they were patently anything but. They reportedly involved a half dozen vessels, including frigates and supply and support ships, lasted for days, and covered operations from communications to searching for underwater targets. They certainly were not "I am dining in this restaurant, and you also happen to be here", as some sources in Taiwan tried to spin them to be. Last month, the island's "naval chief" visited the US to discuss how to boost cooperation. This month, the Taiwan armed forces "chief of general staff" attended the change-of-guard ceremony for the US' "Indo-Pacific" Command in Hawaii.

Beijing has protested the increasingly brazen ties between the US military and the island's armed forces, which are clearly intended to be a demonstrative snub of its communicative commitments without crossing, technically, Beijing's redline. Nonetheless, it is a betrayal of bilateral obligations and a violation of international law.

But Washington's latest attempts at reinterpretating UN General Assembly Resolution 2758 are a more direct challenge, because they are aimed at the jurisprudential foundation of the one-China principle. Though the US' proclaimed purpose is to facilitate Taiwan's "meaningful participation" in international organizations, it is intended to do more than that, with US officials calling Taiwan's status "undetermined" and calling for Taipei's "meaningful participation" in the United Nations system. Like the US' recent claim that UN Security Council Resolution 2728 demanding an immediate cease-fire in Gaza is "nonbinding", the US' distorting of UN General Assembly Resolution 2758 shows its hubris in placing itself above international law. But no matter what it tries, the US cannot change the fact that Taiwan island is part of China.

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Lessons can be learned from China's pragmatism

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

In an era characterized by geopolitical uncertainties, conflicts and economic complexities, the world seeks guiding principles that can steer nations toward stability, cooperation and progress. Amid this quest, China's pragmatic policy can offer invaluable lessons for the international community.

At its core, China's approach emphasizes three fundamental pillars: prioritizing economic development, fostering mutually beneficial partnerships, and embracing adaptability and flexibility. By dissecting each of these pillars, we can unravel a blueprint for cooperation and global prosperity that transcends borders and ideologies.

First and foremost, China appears to have unwavering commitment to economic development, which underscores a crucial truth: prosperity is the bedrock upon which sustainable progress is built.

In a world where economic interdependencies shape the geopolitical landscape, prioritizing economic growth is not merely a national endeavor but a global imperative. China's meteoric rise from a struggling economy to an economic powerhouse serves as a testament to the transformative power of prioritizing development. By channeling resources, expertise and innovation into economic advancement, other nations can uplift their citizens and narrow socioeconomic disparities.

In addition, China's emphasis on pragmatic approaches highlights the importance of leveraging unique strengths and resources to foster growth and stability. Rather than subscribing to rigid ideological dogmas or one-size-fits-all solutions, countries ought to tailor their strategies to suit their unique contexts and challenges.

In other words, in a world marked by diversity and complexity, there is no single path to prosperity. Instead, nations must embrace policies and initiatives that are pragmatic, adaptable and responsive to the ever-changing dynamics of the global landscape. Through pragmatic governance and decision-making, countries can harness their comparative advantages, mitigate vulnerabilities and chart a course toward sustainable development and prosperity.

Secondly, China's strategy underscores the significance of forging mutually beneficial partnerships based on shared interests and cooperation, rather than solely pursuing unilateral agendas. In an era marked by geopolitical rivalries and zero-sum mentalities, China's approach appears to offer a refreshing alternative: cooperation over con-

and stimulate growth in partner countries. Far from a zero-sum game, the Belt and Road Initiative embodies a vision of shared prosperity, in which all participants stand to gain from increased connectivity and cooperation.

China's evolving engagement with a multitude of nations, spanning from Latin America to Africa, is

role in multilateral institutions and frameworks is critical. By embracing multilateralism, nations can pool their resources, expertise and influence to tackle complex global issues that transcend borders and ideologies.

Finally, China's pragmatic policy underscores the importance of adaptability and flexibility in responding to evolving global challenges and opportunities. In a world characterized by rapid technological advancements, geopolitical shifts, conflicts and environmental uncertainties, static and rigid approaches are bound to falter. Instead, nations must embrace agility, resilience and innovation to navigate the complexities of the modern world.

China's success is anchored in its ability to adapt and evolve in response to changing circumstances, which is a testament to the power of flexibility and pragmatism.

Whether through its embrace of digitalization and artificial intelligence or its proactive responses to past global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, China has demonstrated the importance of staying ahead of the curve through innovation and adaptation. By continuously reassessing and adjusting strategies, countries can anticipate emerging challenges, capitalize on new opportunities and remain resilient in the face of uncertainty. In a rapidly changing world, adaptability emerges as a strategic imperative, enabling nations to thrive amid turbulence and uncertainty.

In a nutshell, in spite of the criticisms voiced by skeptics, China's pragmatic policy appears to offer a compelling blueprint for global progress and cooperation in an era defined by uncertainty, conflicts and complexity. Through its emphasis on economic development, mutually beneficial partnerships and adaptability, China has demonstrated the transformative power of pragmatism in shaping a more inclusive and prosperous world.

As nations navigate the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century, they can take some lessons from China's approach and embrace pragmatism, economic security interests, cooperation, innovation and adaptability as guiding principles.

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frontation, dialogue over discord.

By prioritizing partnerships grounded in mutual respect, trust and benefits, nations can transcend traditional power politics and pursue win-win outcomes that uplift all stakeholders. Whether through bilateral trade agreements, regional alliances or multilateral initiatives, collaboration emerges as the cornerstone of global stability and progress.

Critics often portray China's rise as a threat to the established world order, fueling fears of hegemony and dominance. However, a closer examination reveals a different narrative: one of cooperation, connectivity and shared prosperity. China's Belt and Road Initiative, for example, exemplifies its commitment to forging partnerships based on mutual benefit and cooperation.

By investing in infrastructure, connectivity and development projects across Asia, Africa and Europe, China seems to be seeking to promote economic integration, enhance trade flows

primarily rooted in its pursuit of economic security and prosperity. This strategic approach underscores Beijing's recognition of the interconnectedness of global economies and the importance of securing reliable access to resources, markets and investment opportunities.

In Latin America, for instance, China's investments in infrastructure projects, energy resources and trade partnerships not only serve its economic interests but also contribute to regional development and stability. Moreover, its engagement with Caribbean nations underscores its efforts to diversify trade routes, expand market access and enhance regional connectivity.

Furthermore, China's policies on the global stage appear to demonstrate that Beijing is advocating for multilateralism, which underscores a commitment to inclusive and cooperative approaches when it comes to global governance. In an age marked by rising unilateralism and protectionism, China's engagements and

Politics of outer space mirroring those on Earth

Khaled Abou Zahr

WILL the moon or space be a victim of a nuclear attack before Earth? This is a question that is being asked following Russia's veto last month of a UN resolution aimed at preventing a nuclear arms race in outer space. Sponsored by the US and Japan, the resolution called for nations to refrain from developing or deploying nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction in space, which are already prohibited under a 1967 treaty. US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield questioned Russia's motives, stating that, if it was abiding by the rules, it should support the resolution.

Last week, the US expressed concern over a Russian satellite named Cosmos 2543, which has been an ongoing worry over the past few years. Russia claims that the satellite is for testing electronics, yet its unusual orbit and elevated radiation levels have raised suspicions. US officials worry that Cosmos 2543 could be part of Russia's efforts to create a nuclear weapon for space, potentially targeting satellites and disrupting communication, navigation and surveillance systems. As of now, this capability remains undeveloped and there is no immediate threat. However, the situation warrants continued monitoring and analysis to fully understand Russia's intentions and capabilities in terms of space weaponry.

Increasing Western fear is the fact that, in August 2022, only six months after a catastrophic start for Moscow in the Ukraine war, Russia conducted an antisatellite test. This involved launching a missile that successfully destroyed one of its satellites. It was significant because it was Russia's first official intercept using its current antisatellite system, known as Nudol.

Unlike previous rocket tests, this mission impacted a real target — a defunct Soviet satellite called Cosmos 1408. The resulting space debris poses a threat to astronauts aboard the International Space Station. The technological implications of this test highlight Russia's capabilities in space warfare and underscore the need for continued monitoring and analysis of such activities. Here too, we must say that the US, China, India and Israel have conducted similar tests. Yet, the last similar American test was in 2008, after which it outlawed the practice.

Going back to the UN vote, Russian Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia criticized the resolution as "absurd and politicized." He proposed an amendment to ban all weapons in space, which in turn was rejected by the US. While 13 countries voted in favor of the initial US-Japanese resolution, Russia opposed it and China abstained.

The US highlighted the catastrophic consequences of a nuclear explosion in space, including the destruction of vital satellites. All parties also know that, just like with nuclear weapons on Earth, total destruction could be Russia's asymmetric response to maintain and protect its interests. This, in turn, serves China in its own challenges with the US.

Both Russia and China emphasized the need for a comprehensive ban on space weapons. The reality is that trust is no longer in the equation, whether on Earth or in space. The US does not trust Russia or China and the opposite is also true. In that environment, the logic would be to ban the most dangerous weapons and this explains the US proposal. The same happened during the Cold War.

Notably, the Limited Test Ban Treaty of 1963 prohibits nuclear weapons tests "for any other nuclear explosion" in the atmosphere, outer space and underwater. Other agreements followed and, over the decades, the US and Russia signed various arms control agreements to manage their rivalry and limit the risk of nuclear war. This led to the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty of 1987, which allowed for the elimination of intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Europe. Although the Limited Test Ban Treaty did not have much effect, it aimed to end the contamination of the environment with radioactive substances and was a significant step in arms control during the Cold War.

And so, this raises the question of why many of these agreements are no longer in effect. Moreover, why is this all happening in space now? Why is there tension rising in outer space as much as on Earth? There are several answers. First, during the Cold War, space superiority symbolized the superiority of each side ideologically and technologically. Today, satellites and space are key components of the defense and security of nations.

Secondly, the development of commercial activities in space with dual-use capabilities has changed the dynamic and important interests that space represents in the economy. Imagine the destruction of global navigation satellite system satellites such as GPS — the economic loss would be in the trillions. Moreover, it could disrupt utility sites, leading to catastrophic events.

A last determining factor is the moon and what it represents for the future of the space economy. The renewed interest in lunar exploration and clear plans for settlements have sparked intense competition between countries and organizations. China and Russia's plan for a joint moon base and NASA's Artemis II and Artemis III missions reflect the global race to establish a foothold on the moon. We must also mention India's ambitions.

The dual-use nature of space bears the risk of military confrontation. Hence, the Artemis Accords, an international framework for lunar exploration led by the US, play a crucial role in guiding cooperation and sustainable activities on the moon. This framework has been rejected by China and Russia.

The politics of outer space are mirroring geopolitics. And, with concrete applications, space might not be the diffusing event like during the Cold War with the Limited Test Ban Treaty, but the igniting one. Hence, it is important to find ways to reestablish trust and avoid conflicts. And this seems even more difficult than rocket science.

England local elections

Eleni Courea

Leader Keir Starmer's comments during a televised interview, in which he appeared to approve the Israeli government's cutting off of water and power to Gaza, have led a large number of Muslim voters and students, who care about human rights and the Palestinian struggle for liberation, to move away from the party.

Of course, it is not only students and Muslims who care about human rights and want Labour to change their stance on Israel's war. A YouGov poll commissioned by Action For Humanity last month found that 56 percent of the general UK public — and a whopping 71 percent of those who intend to vote Labour — support halting arms sales to Israel. The same poll showed that an even higher 59 percent believe that Israel is violating human rights in Gaza. All polling shows that the

majority of the UK public now wants the brutal war on Palestinians in Gaza to come to an end; it seems they merely differ on how highly they prioritise the issue when deciding on who to vote for in the next general election. As the war continues to cause catastrophe to civilians, it is reasonable to expect more and more voters to move away from politicians who appear to support Israel's assault on Gaza. This means Gaza will become an even bigger problem for Labour in the coming months if party leaders cannot reverse the widespread public perception that they are supportive of Israel's war on the Palestinian enclave.

Under the first-past-the-post voting system in the UK, a party needs to win 326 constituencies to win a majority in the House of Commons and govern alone. To achieve this,

Labour needs to secure 127 more seats than it did in the 2019 election. However, the 9.5 percent swing the party enjoyed in the local elections, if applied as is to general elections, would net them fewer than 100 seats, leading to a hung parliament.

Public figures who came out strongly with their condemnation of what is going on in Gaza and distanced themselves from the central Labour Party's policy, like Andy Burnham and Sadiq Khan, won comfortably in their mayoral races for Greater Manchester and London respectively. Independents and Green Party candidates, who made their antiwar on Gaza stance a focal point of their campaign, defeated and took votes from the Labour Party.

It is clear what Keir Starmer's Labour needs to do now to achieve the election victory they have long been waiting for: assume a

clear, moral and principled position on Israel's continuing assault on Gaza.

If the party wants to ensure a victory in the next general election with a margin that would result in a Labour majority, it must swiftly announce that once in government it would not only stop selling arms to Israel and call for an immediate and unconditional end to the war on Gaza, but also unilaterally recognise the state of Palestine.

Therefore, for the Labour Party, opposing this war is not only an electoral necessity, but a moral responsibility. As the world watches with disgust the horrendous, impossible-to-imagine suffering being inflicted on Palestinians in Gaza, Labour needs to do the right thing, and demand an immediate end to Israel's atrocities, not just to be on the right side of the electorate, but also to be on the right side of history.

The evacuation of Rafah is yet another form of Israeli torture

Eman Alhaj Ali

WHEN on May 6, news spread that Hamas had accepted a truce proposal, celebrations broke out across Gaza. People took to the streets cheering, believing the war – the seven months of hell – was over. I was sceptical, but I too teared up at the thought that the horror may be over.

Soon it became clear that only one side had accepted the deal. The other was dead set on continuing its brutal massacres of Palestinians. Israel pushed ahead with its invasion of Rafah, where more than a million people from the north and central part of the strip had sought refuge, believing Israeli assurances that this was a “safe zone”.

On May 7, the Israeli army captured the Rafah border crossing with Egypt, the only way out for Palestinians who could find the means to evacuate and the injured and sick who have managed to get Israeli permission to leave. It was also the main access point for the little humanitarian aid Israel was allowing to get into the strip.

My family and I had been trying to find a way out of Gaza. The news struck down what little hope we had of leaving. We truly have nowhere to go now as we face death by bombing, starvation or disease.

Israel is presenting its evacuation orders to the rest of the world as care for Palestinian civilians. But Israel knows that pushing people from place to place every few weeks is a form of torture.

More than half a million Palestinians have fled Rafah, the United Nations reports. Families

who have already been displaced multiple times have had to pack their belongings once again and head into uncertainty. Contrary to its claims made to Western media, Israel has not made any provisions for the evacuation. People who flee have to pay for private cars or animal-drawn carts to move them. Those who have no money try to walk. Some are too impoverished or have sick or elderly family members and cannot make the trip.

The half a million people who have left Rafah have had to move in with relatives – if they are lucky – or set up tents wherever they find space.

No food, water or other basic necessities are provided for them. Most of all, there is no guarantee of safety. Just a day ago, a family who had just fled Rafah was killed when the Israeli army bombed a house in Nuseirat camp.

The movement of this huge number of people puts immense strain on the communities they move into. Fights have broken out at queues for water and bread. The price of basic food-stuffs has skyrocketed. This constant forced eviction of people is tearing apart the social fabric of Palestinian society.

Life in displacement is what no child, no adult should experience. People are crammed into rooms or tents, sometimes more than a dozen of them. There are no toilets, showers, proper sanitation. There is no privacy or personal space.

Diseases, once eradicated, are now widespread. People contract hepatitis and stomach

viruses regularly.

As temperatures soar, heat stroke is claiming lives, including of babies and children.

Israel’s constant forced evictions of already displaced Palestinians are also breaking what little semblance of normalcy parents try to establish for their children.

A month ago, I visited one of the camps in Rafah. There I met Nesreen Ayoub, who had been forced to flee her home in Gaza City with her family.

Having lost so much, she found some solace in her daughter, Tasneem, attending classes in a makeshift school and returning to their tent with a glimmer of joy, a rare commodity in these desperate times.

Teachers and university graduates were volunteering to teach children, hoping to lift their spirits amid the despair. I also met Samia al-Khor, an Arabic teacher, who had also fled from the north.

Her yearning for the familiar rhythm of the classroom had pushed her to gather children eager to learn and teach them the Arabic language on a piece of rubble she had transformed into a blackboard.

The camp was one of the first areas in Rafah that Israel ordered to evacuate. The makeshift classrooms have been dismantled, the joy of learning – denied.

Palestinians must be deprived of even the smallest moments of happiness. Such is the Israeli thinking. Remember the outrage on Israeli media at the scenes of Palestinian children trying to cool down in the sea amid the

sweltering heat? There must be no respite for Palestinians. They must be condemned to eternal suffering.

As Palestinian author Susan Abulhawa recently reminded us in an essay, Israel Shahak, a survivor of the Holocaust and an Israeli intellectual, was one of the first to see a reflection of Nazism in Israel. In a 1983 essay, he wrote that he noticed the Israeli tendency towards what he called “Nazification” as early as 1968, a year after the Israeli army occupied the West Bank and Gaza.

“It is now a commonplace to assert that most of the horrors of Hitler could have been prevented had the Nazis’ intentions and early practices been recognized for what they were.

The same is true for Israeli Nazism. It can yet be stopped if it will be seen for what it is,” Shahak wrote.

For four decades, his warning was not heeded. And we have arrived at the point where Israel is carrying out genocide in Gaza, unperturbed by global outrage.

Gaza is “hell on earth”, as the UN has said. The sound of drones and fighter jets, the roar of bombing and shelling, the smell of decomposing bodies and raw sewage, the sight of levelled neighbourhoods, the convulsions of starvation and thirst, the agony of the loss of loved ones reign supreme across this small strip of land.

The prevailing emotions are not of resilience but of anguish, despair and terror. The myth of Palestinian endurance is collapsing in the face of the unimaginable suffering inflicted on Palestinians by Israel.

Its weakness on Gaza may cost UK Labour a majority in the next election

EARLIER this month, across England and Wales, people went to the polls in local and mayoral elections in what was seen by many as a trial run for the next United Kingdom general election expected later this year.

At first glance, the results appeared to be in line with the widespread predictions of a Labour landslide at the upcoming general election. The main opposition party won big, while the governing Conservatives lost in more than half of the races they fought. However, a closer look at the voting trends, especially in areas that hold strategic importance, revealed a different reality that must concern the Labour central office: The party did not win big enough margins to feel

Mohamed Chebaro

led a large number of Muslim voters and students, who care about human rights and the Palestinian struggle for liberation, to move away from the party.

Of course, it is not only students and Muslims who care about human rights and want Labour to change their stance on Israel’s war. A YouGov poll commissioned by Action For Humanity last month found that 56 percent of the general UK public – and a whopping 71 percent of those who intend to vote Labour – support halting arms sales to Israel. The same poll showed that an even higher 59 percent believe that Israel is violating human rights in Gaza. All polling shows that the majority of the UK public

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It is clear what Keir Starmer’s Labour needs to do now to achieve the election victory they have long been waiting for: assume a clear, moral and principled position on Israel’s continuing assault on Gaza.

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The Labour Party’s approach to Israel’s war on Gaza has been found wanting since the beginning. Indeed, the official party line has often been supportive of the inhumane assault that has been inflicted upon the 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza throughout the past seven months, which has seen the death and injury of almost 100,000, half of whom are children. Especially Labour Party Leader Keir Starmer’s comments during a televised interview, in which he appeared to approve the Israeli government’s cutting off of water and power to Gaza, have led a large number of Muslim voters and students, who care about human rights and the Palestinian struggle for liberation, to move away from the party. Of course, it is not only students and Muslims who care about human rights and want Labour to change their stance on Israel’s war. A YouGov poll commissioned by Action For Humanity last month found that 56 percent of the general UK public – and a whopping 71 percent of those who intend to vote Labour – support halting arms sales to Israel. The same poll showed that an even higher 59 percent believe that Israel is violating human rights in Gaza.

assured that it would be able to form a majority government under the United Kingdom’s first-past-the-post electoral system in the coming months.

Indeed, while the Labour Party unquestionably increased their vote in most areas, and even won control of councils in places they have not won for decades, they also saw a decrease in their vote in crucial areas with a high number of students and Muslims.

These two demographics, who have traditionally been loyal to the party, have been clear as to why they have decided to move away from Labour: Gaza.

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However, the 9.5 percent swing the party enjoyed in the local elections, if applied as is to general elections, would net them fewer than 100 seats, leading to a hung parliament.

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in government it would not only stop selling arms to Israel and call for an immediate and unconditional end to the war on Gaza, but also unilaterally recognise the state of Palestine.

The scenes of death and destruction unfolding in Gaza, where an unprecedented number of children have been maimed, killed and orphaned, have horrified the world. Israel’s promised ground offensive in Rafah, where more than a million displaced civilians are sheltering in an area not much larger than London’s Heathrow Airport, is expected to unleash further suffering on an already traumatised population. Meanwhile, the World Food Programme has already declared a “full-blown famine” in Gaza.

Therefore, for the Labour Party, opposing this war is not only an electoral necessity, but a moral responsibility. As the world watches with disgust the horrendous, impossible-to-imagine suffering being inflicted on Palestinians in Gaza, Labour needs to do the right thing, and demand an immediate end to Israel’s atrocities, not just to be on the right side of the electorate, but also to be on the right side of history.

Sino-Russian ties in the new era benefit global peace

Xu Wenhong

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin’s ongoing visit to China has garnered global attention.

As the Russia-Ukraine conflict has entered its third year, it’s no surprise that the United States and the European Union persist on “urging” China to “persuade” Russia to help resolve the crisis. What the US and the EU refuse to accept is that China is a third party, which neither triggered the conflict nor can resolve it. Instead of sitting idly by and waiting for further deterioration, China has been actively engaged in promoting peace. The Chinese envoy is currently conducting his third round of shuttle diplomacy in an effort to reach a political solution to the Ukrainian crisis.

As a nation with a 5,000-year history and culture, China has its own strategic autonomy and behavioral logic. In fact, it made clear its position on the Russia-Ukraine conflict in a document, “China’s Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukrainian Crisis”, it released on Feb 24 last year. Equally important, it has been trying its best to broker peace between Moscow and Kyiv.

China believes that the most important thing to do now is to make Russia and Ukraine declare truce and hold peace talks, because talks are the only way to resolve the Ukraine crisis.

That’s why it supports the convening of an international peace conference which both Russia and Ukraine have agreed to attend to find a negotiated settlement to the conflict. An international conference on Ukrainian issues is scheduled to take place in Switzerland in June. However, the West is reportedly planning to exclude Russia from participation. China advocates for an international conference that includes both Russia and Ukraine.

As for sanctions, China opposes the imposition of unilateral sanctions on any country without the authorization of the

United Nations Security Council. So countries, in the interest of global governance, should stop using “long-arm jurisdiction” and abusing their economic and military might to impose unilateral sanctions on other countries.

More important, since the UN Security Council has not passed any resolution preventing countries from conducting economic exchanges with Russia or Ukraine,

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As for sanctions, China opposes the imposition of unilateral sanctions on any country without the authorization of the United Nations Security Council. So countries, in the interest of global governance, should stop using "long-arm jurisdiction" and abusing their economic and military might to impose unilateral sanctions on other countries. More important, since the UN Security Council has not passed any resolution preventing countries from conducting economic exchanges with Russia or Ukraine, China has maintained normal economic exchanges with both countries. In fact, many Chinese enterprises and individuals are still running their businesses in Ukraine and thus helping meet the daily needs of the Ukrainian people. Besides, thanks to years of efforts, China and Russia have become each other's most important strategic partners, and their cooperation in different fields has been deepening.

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Besides, thanks to years of

efforts, China and Russia have become each other’s most important strategic partners, and their cooperation in different fields has been deepening. The basic principles on which the Sino-Russian comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era is based are non-alignment, non-confrontation and non-targeting of third parties.

As for sanctions, China opposes the imposition of unilateral sanctions on any country without the authorization of the United Nations Security Council. So countries, in the interest of global governance, should stop using "long-arm jurisdiction" and abusing their economic and military might to impose unilateral sanctions on other countries. More important, since the UN Security Council has not passed any resolution preventing countries from conducting economic exchanges with Russia or Ukraine, China has maintained normal economic exchanges with both countries. In fact, many Chinese enterprises and individuals are still running their businesses in Ukraine and thus helping meet the daily needs of the Ukrainian people. Besides, thanks to years of efforts, China and Russia have become each other's most important strategic partners, and their cooperation in different fields has been deepening.

“Non-alignment” means learning the lessons from major power relations and preventing “hot wars” and “cold wars” now and in the future. “Non-confrontation” is the basic starting point of all diplomacy between China and other countries, especially Russia.

The secure and stable Sino-Russian relationship the non-

confrontation principle has helped the two sides build its their greatest contribution to Eurasia’s security and stability. And non-targeting of third parties means not targeting any country, enterprise or individual. By not targeting or being affected by third parties, China and Russia have built a rock solid partnership, shattering the US-led West’s dream of seeing “China and Russia part ways”.

China has always said unilateral hegemony and double standard are the root causes of geopolitical upheavals. Hence, upholding multilateralism, which major powers such as China, Russia, France and other countries have been doing, and opposing the use of double standard are the only way to help democratize international relations and achieve long-term peace in the world.

If, as anticipated and promoted by the US-led West, Russia is pushed into a state of isolation or a corner, the protracted conflict between Russia and Ukraine actually caused by the US and its allies could become a source of turmoil in the Eurasian continent, potentially escalating into a significant threat to global peace and security.

Before Vladimir Putin’s visit to Beijing, President Xi Jinping’s visit to France, Serbia and Hungary, and the visits of US and German officials to China, all parties were engaged in exchanges at all levels, with China trying its best to play the role of a mediator to help stabilize the international situation.

In this context, the strategic significance of Putin’s visit is unprecedented — it signals a new start for Sino-Russian relations and their efforts to maintain global peace and development.

The views don’t necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

The author is deputy secretary-general of the Center for Belt and Road, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

— China Daily

A Tale of Two Kingdoms

Faisal J. Abbas

BETTER late than never, as they say, and it is indeed positive to see the relationship between the UK and Saudi Arabia finally heading in the right direction.

On Tuesday and Wednesday this week, Saudi Arabia welcomed the largest business, trade, culture and sport delegation sent by the UK to any country in the world in the past decade, and the largest ever to the Kingdom. There were 450 representatives from internationally known businesses such as British Airways and HSBC, and even the England football legend Rio Ferdinand.

I say better late than never because the UK had an opportunity for involvement eight years ago when Saudi Arabia launched the Vision 2030 reform pro-

gram — but Britain blinked.

It is understandable that many countries, particularly in the West, were skeptical in the early days of the reforms: although for many, that skepticism has now turned into genuine fear of missing out on the opportunities as Saudi Arabia opens up, diversifies away from oil and taps into new sectors and industries. What is not understandable is that it has taken the UK this long at a time when it desperately needed its closest friends and trading partners in the aftermath of Brexit.

But that was then and this is now. As Deputy Prime Minister Oliver Dowden put it at this week’s conference in Riyadh: “Britain doesn’t just endorse Vision 2030, we want to be a part of it.” Dowden told Arab News

that Britain’s aim was to increase the value of annual trade with Saudi Arabia from the current £17 billion (\$21.5 billion) to £30 billion by 2030.

It is important to put this in context for those who are unaware of how the two kingdoms might have traded places in recent years. The immediate assumption by many is that Saudi Arabia has always had a lot of money, and that this week’s event was nothing more than a charm offensive to persuade Riyadh not to spend it elsewhere.

That is inaccurate, for several reasons. One is that a key aim of this week’s conference, along with separate efforts by key Saudi officials, was to show that the relationship is indeed multifaceted, mutually beneficial, and goes beyond the mere

transactional to vested interests in supporting each other’s reforms and economic plans.

For instance, only a few years ago Saudi Arabia might have had to rely on the UK for everything from defense to automobiles, and from industry to education. Today, while some of those needs remain, the Kingdom is now localizing much of its defense needs, manufactures its own cars and welcomes universities from overseas — including Strathclyde University in Glasgow, which will be the first from Britain to open a campus on Saudi soil.

The UK itself is not what it used to be. It has lost or sold off many of its iconic brands and much of its manufacturing capability, and its appeal to over-

seas investors has waned because of the political uncertainty of recent years. The UK has solid institutions and I have no doubt that it will bounce back, but it needs friends. And in Saudi Arabia, not only will it find a friend in need, but a friend that could give it an edge ... indeed!

The two kingdoms have enjoyed great friendship and a positive past. Unlike many countries in the region, Saudi Arabia was never a British colony, and the relationship between the two royal families has always been cordial, built on deep mutual respect and appreciation.

Just look at some of the partnerships launched this week, such as the £3 billion worth of new Saudi investment in the northeast of England. Will this make a difference? Well, try ask-

ing fans of Newcastle United, the football powerhouse of England’s north-east that was languishing near the bottom of the Premier League and constantly facing relegation — until Saudi ownership propelled the club up into the elite of the European Champions League.

Trading aside, Britain can also benefit from the Saudi experience in reforming, repositioning and reinventing itself. Just look at the transformation in just eight years: Saudi Arabia went from not even issuing tourist visas to receiving more than 100 million visitors, exceeding the target set for 2030; female participation in the workplace rose from 19 percent in 2016 to nearly 36 percent in 2022, again meeting the 2030 aim ahead of schedule; and a survey by mar-

ket researchers Ipsos suggested that Saudis were the second-happiest people on the planet last year. Is the situation ideal in Saudi Arabia? Far from it, but there are constant pulse checks and reassessments of targets and key performance indicators. But what we do enjoy in the Kingdom, and is perhaps lacking in Britain, is the comfort and confidence of knowing the direction in which we are heading.

What does the UK need now? Well, just as Saudi Arabia has protected Vision 2030 by implementing proper governance and aligning all government tools and assets to achieve it, Britain must protect and safeguard the accomplishments of this week’s event in Riyadh against those who want to play political football with the relation-

ship. This means a bipartisan consensus on the importance and mutual benefits of this relationship, while of course and at all times allowing for differences of opinion and disagreements on some issues.

This consensus is important for Saudi Arabia — but not crucial, since it is not short of options for trading partners. But it is a lot more important for post-Brexit Britain, which the same Ipsos market research company named this year as the second-most miserable nation in the world — with the economic recession, cost of living crisis and collapse in trust in political leadership given as the main reasons.

So, here’s to great futures, to Vision 2030 successes and to the ambition of making Britain great again!



PSX stays bullish, gains 266.72 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bullish trend on Thursday, gaining 266.72 points, a positive change of 0.36 per cent, closing at 74,930.70 points against 74,663.98 points the previous trading day.

A total of 407,625,139 shares valuing Rs 16,978 billion were traded during the day as compared to 572,420,772 shares valuing Rs 25,947 billion on the last day.

Some 377 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 161 of them recorded gains and 194 sustained losses, whereas the prices of 22 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were P.I.A.C (A) with 34,846,148 shares at Rs26.20 per share, Pak-

Electric with 28,542,422 shares at Rs 26.47 per share and World Call Telecom with 24,078,585 shares at Rs 1.38 per share.

Sapphire Fibers limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 57.78 per share price closing at Rs 1,549.95, whereas the runner-up was Mehmood Textile Mills Limited with Rs 23.11 increase to close at Rs 486.11.

Nestle Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 100.00 per share closing at Rs 7,280.00, followed by Hallmark Company Limited with Rs 42.59 decline to close at Rs 525.30.

Rupee loses 14 paise against Dollar

Pakistani Rupee on Thursday lost 14 paise against US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.40 against

the previous day's closing at Rs 278.26.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market stood at Rs 277.45 and Rs 280 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by Rs.1.46 to close at Rs 302.70 against the last day's closing of Rs 301.24, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese Yen went up by 02 paise to close at Rs 1.80; whereas an increase of Rs2.56 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs 353.00 as compared to the last closing of Rs350.44.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal increased by 04 paise each to close at Rs 75.79 and Rs 74.23 respec-

tively.
Gold rates up by Rs1,600 per tola to Rs245,600

The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs 1,600 and was sold at Rs 245,600 on Thursday compared to its sale at Rs 244,000 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs 1,371 to Rs 210,562 from Rs 209,191 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs 193,016 from Rs 191, 758, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewelers Association reported.

The price of per tola silver increased by Rs.80 to Rs2,730 whereas that of ten gram silver went up by Rs.68.59 to Rs2,340.53.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$25 to \$2,390 from \$2,365, the association reported.

Petition against CCP disposed off

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad High Court has allowed the Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) to proceed with its enquiry against M/s Transworld Associates for alleged abuse of dominant position.

The CCP initiated the enquiry and sent letters to M/s Transworld regarding its suspected abuse of dominant position, potentially violating Section 3 of the Competition Act, 2010.

M/s Transworld had challenged the CCP's letters in court and obtained a stay order, halting the CCP from concluding its enquiry. During the court proceedings, the CCP informed the court that it had internally concluded that the complaint against Transworld raised suspicions of breaching Section 3 of the Act, warranting an enquiry.

The Court recognized the CCP's stance and allowed it to continue with the enquiry. However, it directed the CCP to communicate with Transworld by issuing a rectificatory letter, outlining the gist of the reasons for initiating the enquiry as held by the Honourable Supreme Court in the Dalda Foods Case.

In Dalda Foods Judgment, the Supreme Court of Pakistan upheld the CCP's statutory powers regarding the gathering of information and conducting of enquiries. SC 3-member bench emphasized that there is no restriction on the CCP's general regulatory powers to gather information. The Court also emphasized the obligation of undertakings to fully comply with the CCP's directives for the provision of information. The case was dismissed by Supreme Court in CCP's favour.

Gas theft crackdown: Another 92 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 92 connections; Rs 2 million fine imposed.

In Lahore, the team disconnected 31 connections on illegal use of gas while another 6 on use of the compressor. The team also imposed fine of Rs 0.93 million against gas theft cases.

In Multan 07 connections were disconnected on illegal use by the regional

team.

In Peshawar the company disconnected 25 connections on account of direct use of gas and illegal use of gas and amount of Rs 0.39 million have been booked against gas theft cases.

The regional team of Shiekhpura disconnected 08 connections on illegal use of gas and also booked an amount of Rs 0.03 against gas theft cases. The team also lodged 1FIR against gas pilfers.

In Bahawalpur the team disconnected 05 connections on illegal use of gas and also imposed a fine of

Rs 0.63 million against gas theft cases.

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

In Mardan the team disconnected 04 connections on illegal use of gas and also imposed a fine of Rs 0.11 million against gas theft cases.

The regional team of Faisalabad disconnected 02 connections on illegal use of gas and booked an amount of Rs 0.05 million against gas pilfers.

In Sahiwal the team disconnected 03 connections on illegal use of gas.

Int'l Maarif Schools hosts interactive session



F.P. Report

KARACHI: The management of the International Maarif Schools had the honor of hosting an interactive session by the Country Director Turkish Maarif Foundation, Harun Küçükaladagli, Assistant Director Omer Aydin and

Principal Ms. Zerfishan Adnan.

Esteemed guests from the media industry, such as Khalid Azim, Shahid Ajmal, Salman Ali, Muhammad Tariq Aziz, Abid Ali Khan, Abdul Salam Wazir, Imran Siddiqui, Ijaz Khattak and Muhammad Irfan also

joined to enhance the occasion.

During the session, they discussed the friendship and cultural values shared between Pakistan and Türkiye, highlighting the collaborative efforts of both governments and nations to enhance the quality of education in Pakistan.

Economic sovereignty directly linked with exports: FCCI president

FAISALABAD (APP): Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) President Dr Khurram Tariq said on Thursday that economic sovereignty was directly linked with exports and the government should provide all facilities to Pakistani exporters, which were currently being enjoyed by exporters of other countries.

He was addressing a special function on "Export Dialogue Pakistan", which was also attended by leading economists, policy makers and businessmen in addition to former Governor State Bank Reza Baqir and Federal Tax Ombudsman

Dr Asif Mehmood Jah.

Dr Khurram Tariq particularly mentioned the boom in PSX and said that some economic indicators have also improved and hence there was no justification to maintain policy rate at 22 per cent.

He said that distortions in government policies have played havoc with the exports while the government and FBR failed to enhance the tax base despite best efforts.

About the energy sector, he said that no industry could earn profit by consuming costly electricity at the existing tariff, hence the government should revisit its policies to facilitate industries with a focus

on the textile sector.

He said that exporters are reluctant to get new orders as their capital has been stuck up in the refund regime while the finance available at market rate is unbearable.

He demanded that the government must ensure immediate payment of all refunds in addition to lessen the burden of cross subsidies.

Dr Khurram Tariq also mentioned his ambitious program to transform Faisalabad from textile to technological hub of Pakistan and said that we could easily double our exports by exploiting untapped potential of services, IT and AI.

He said that FCCI has hired the services of world class faculty to train young graduates in the emerging field of generative AI. "The skilled manpower could also play a key role in reorganizing local industry on modern scientific lines in addition to exporting globally compatible IT and AI programs", he added.

President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) also appreciated the organization of "Export Dialogue Pakistan" and said that this event would help policy makers to give workable recommendations for the upcoming federal budget.

software firm Sage Group was the heaviest faller on poorly-received earnings.

"European markets have failed to follow the bullish theme set in the United States," noted Scope Markets analyst Joshua Mahony.

"The FTSE 100 in particular has been hindered by the heavy weighting of energy stocks" as a large component of the index.

US inflation came in at 3.4 percent in April on an



KARACHI: Chief Operating Officer Hamdard Pakistan Nadeem addressing Hamdard Shura Karachi. Gen (r) Moinuddin Haider and Ms. Sadia Rashid, president of Hamdard Foundation Pakistan also present on occasion.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Four ships, Maersk Cabo Verde, Scio Spirit, Alba Gas and Hv Alice carrying Container, Palm Kernel, LPG and Coal, berthed at Container Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal, Sui Southern Gas Terminal and Bulk Terminal respectively on Wednesday.

Meanwhile six more ships, Obe Queen, Advantage Paradise, Chan Shen-303, Pan Ivy, World Virtue and Flag Filia carrying Fertilizer, Gas oil, Chemicals and Coals also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim during last 24 hours.

A total of ten ships were engaged at POA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them four ships, Maersk Cabo Verde, Asia Inspire, Jag Pavitra and Hv Alice are expected to sail on today afternoon.

Cargo volume of 135,189 tonnes, comprising 118,226 tonnes imports cargo and 16,963 tonnes export cargo carried in 1,670 Containers (1,480 TEUs Imports and 190 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 12 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them five ships, Aljalaa, Pan Ivy, Chemroad Journey, World Virtue and America & two more ships, San Diego Bridge and Gaslog Sydney scheduled to load/offload Fuel oil, Chemicals, Palm oil, Coal, Container and LNG are expected to take berths at FOTCO, FAP, LCT, PIBT, QICT and EETL on today, while another containers ship 'Clemens Schulte' is due to arrive at Port Qasim on Friday.

Tokyo stocks end higher

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks closed higher on Thursday following Wall Street rallies after US consumer price inflation eased. The benchmark Nikkei 225 index was up 1.39 percent, or 534.53 points, to end at 38,920.26, while the broader Topix index was up 0.24 percent, or 6.66 points, at 2,737.54. The dollar fetched 154.18 yen, against 154.83 yen in New York on Wednesday.

Overnight on Wall Street, all three major indices rocketed to fresh all-time highs after US inflation data came in slightly below expectations, boosting the chances for Federal Reserve interest rate cuts.

The Tokyo market "started trading higher with investors taking cues from Wall Street record highs linked to cooling US inflation," IwaiCosmo Securities said.

Led particularly by rallies of semiconductor-linked shares, the market continued to move upward, although somewhat curbed by a stronger yen, the brokerage added.

annual basis, down from 3.5 percent in March, data showed Wednesday.

The April reading was in line with forecasts and capped a run of three straight months above estimates that had forced investors to reel in their rate cut hopes.

Sentiment was given an extra boost by figures showing retail sales well below expectations, suggesting consumers were taking a step back.

Hamdard Shura proposes measures for people's friendly budget

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Members of the Hamdard Shura Karachi Chapter emphasized that proposing a budget favourable to the people during such economic difficulties is achievable only if measures are taken to reduce luxury and unnecessary imports and strict action against corruption during the meeting of the Hamdard Shura Karachi, titled "The Conditions of IMF and People-friendly Budget: Is it Possible?" held at the Hamdard Corporate Head Office. Speaker Gen (r) Moinuddin Haider chaired the proceedings, with Ms. Sadia Rashid, President of Hamdard Foundation Pakistan, in attendance.

The guest speaker Faisal Nadeem, Chief Operating Officer of Hamdard Pakistan, said that unfortunately, corruption, political instability, and financial mismanagement have made the country's economic situation worse. It's very hard to create a budget that benefits the people during this financial crisis, but it's not impossible. To do this, the country needs a strong policy to collect revenue in the country. Currently, Pakistan has only four million people who pay direct taxes. The cash economy, which is not officially recorded, is twice as big as the documented economy. Government needs to ensure that wholesale/retail and agriculture sectors pay taxes. In fact, everyone regardless of their respective sector should be brought into the national tax net.

He further said that circular debt and state-owned enterprises are causing financial strain on the country. To ease this, circular debt needs to be reduced and privatization should be expedited. Pakistan is constantly dealing with trade and budget deficits. The economy lacks innovative thinking, entrepreneurship, and creative solutions. It's important to inspire young people to start online businesses and to train skilled workers to increase remittances. Without increasing the tax-to-GDP ratio, achieving growth and financial stability is unlikely. Meeting the IMF's conditions can help improve our economy. Pakistan's economy can be classified as trad-

ing with the absence of robust manufacturing sector. It's crucial to support manufacturing and keep the economy separate from politics. Pakistan's defense is under serious threat, with India's defense budget surpassing \$65 billion. Pakistan must also maintain its defensive capabilities.

The esteemed members Senator Abdul Haseeb, Engr. Anwar-ul-Haq, Zafar Iqbal, Engr. Pervez Sadiq, Justice (r) Zia Pervaz, Prof Dr Tanveer Khalid, Dr. Amjad Jaffri, Engr. Ibn-ul-Hassan, Cdre (r)Sadeed Anwar Malik, Prof Dr Shaheen Habib, Rizwan Ahmed and Shahla Ahmed articulated that sales tax puts a heavy load on the poor. Amnesty schemes that allow converting black money into clean money give unfair disadvantage to those who regularly pay taxes. It's in the country's best interest to fulfill the IMF's requirements. The energy crisis is damaging the manufacturing sector. National policies should prioritize the country and its people, especially the poor and middle class, rather than benefiting only the privileged class.

Japanese Visa Application Center launched

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Gerry's Visa, the leader in Visa outsourcing in Pakistan proudly announces the launch of its Japanese Visa Application Center, unveiling a suite of Value-Added Services designed to streamline the process for travelers to Japan. With a commitment to enhancing efficiency and accessibility, these solutions promise to further redefine the process and ease for all those who wish to travel to Japan.

Akram Wali Muhammad, Group Managing Director of Gerry's Group, expressed his enthusiasm for the launch, stating, "At Gerry's Visa, we believe in harnessing the power of



technology to simplify complexities and enhance user experiences. Out innovative Visa Facilitation Solutions for Japan reflect this ethos, offering a seamless and efficient process for travelers."

HATTORI Masaru, Consul General of Japan, commended Gerry's Visa for its commitment to enhancing bilateral rela-

tions through streamlined visa facilitation, stating, "The launch of this milestone in fostering closer ties between out nations."

The Gerry's Visa Center for Visa Facilitation Solutions for Japan is located at Bahria Complex, Karachi and Gerry's Building Chatta Bakhtawar, Islamabad.

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COURT NOTICES

BUNER

IN the Court of Saima Ehsan Civil Judge II/Allaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar, Case No. 15/12/2 Institution.14/11/2023, date of hearing 3/6/2024. Alamzeb VS Habibur Rehman etc. Khurshed .Notice to no.2 Sharifur Rehman s/o Sadar Khan.5.Sabiha d/o Sadar Khan. 13/1.Saidur Rehman. 13/2.Azizur Rehman. 13/3.Latifur Rehman sons of Hijab Khan.16/1. Jihanger.16/2.Ali Rehman. 16/3. Mohamad s/o Umer Khan. 13/10/2. Salem s/o Mst.Banu.22. Auragezh.23. Sultanzeb sons of Mst Gorgora resident of Torwarsak thesels Daggar district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.00 am dated 18/5/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

SWAT

In the court of Kiran Noor civil judge IV. Ilaqa Qazi district Swat. Case #. 2/12/2 institution 2024. Next Hearing date 29/5/2024. Amer zaib VS Umad khan etc. Notice to.3) Raham zaib s/o Alamzeb d/o Mst. Raham saba.5) Mst. Yasmeen widow's. 6) Mst. Farhat. 7) Mst. Shafaa.8) Mst Shaguftha daughters Alamzeb r/o shangardar ghailgail thesils barikot district Swat (Presently England). In above mentioned case

the respondent can't be served in the ordinary way, it is therefore proclaimed that if said respondents will not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8:30 am dated 29/05/2024. ex-parte proceeding will be held against the mentioned respondents under my hand and seal of this court.

KOHAT

In the Court of Maliha Allaudin Senior Civil Judge Family Court Kohat. Suit no. 11/FC Date of hearing 17-05-2024, Titled:- Bibi Afshan Vs Amir Saeed. Notice against:- Amir Saeed Son of Syed Qayyum R/o Nasrat Khel District Kohat presently R/o (in.Abroad Room no. u.1.21 Italy International City Dubai UAE) (Defendant) Whereas the above plaintiff has instituted a family suit of Dissolution of Marriage on the basis of Khula against you defendant in which date of hearing 17-05-2024 is fixed for your appearance Since your intimation/service is not possible through ordinary means/mode therefore you defendant is intimated through this publication to appear before this court by person or by pleader on date fixed 17-05-2024 otherwise court shall be proceeded in accordance with law order Issued on 07-05-2024 (Court of S.C.J.F.C, Kohat)



In brief

PFF NC attends AFC Congress

ISLAMABAD (APP): A delegation from Pakistan, led by Haroon Malik, Chairman of the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) Normalization Committee (NC), attended the 34th Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Congress at Thailand. The delegation included members of the Normalization Committee (NC), Muhammad Shahid Khokar and Saud Hashmi, said a press release issued here Thursday. President AFC, Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa, addressed the congress, which was also attended by FIFA chief Giovanni Infantino as a special guest. A minute of silence was observed to condole the loss of lives in Palestine. The Pakistani delegation met with top officials from FIFA and AFC, and discussed the progress made towards PFF elections. The FIFA and AFC officials expressed satisfaction over the progress made and praised Pakistan's positive efforts, which will be considered as a model case. The delegation also met with officials from Saudi Arabia and Qatar, and held talks with representatives from several countries, including Palestine, Syria and Afghanistan. The 34th AFC Congress provided a platform for the Pakistani delegation to engage with the international football community and discuss matters related to the development of football in the region.

Chhetri to retire from int'l football

NEW DELHI (AFP): India captain Sunil Chhetri said Thursday he will retire from international football aged 39, ending a record-breaking career for his country spanning two decades. The attacker has hit 94 goals in 150 appearances for India, behind only Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi in the list of active international goal-scorers. He is also India's most-capped player. In a video message on social media platform X, Chhetri said the 2026 World Cup qualifier against Kuwait in Kolkata on June 6 will be his last international outing. "It's not that I was feeling tired, not that I was feeling this or that," he said. "When the instinct came that this should be my last game, I thought about it a lot and eventually I came to this decision," he said. India are second in qualifying Group A with four points, behind Qatar. "The game against Kuwait demands pressure, we need the three points to qualify for the next round. It's hugely important for us," the skipper said. "But in a strange way, I don't feel the pressure because these 15-20 days with the national team and the match against Kuwait is the last," he added. Across club and country, Chhetri's goal tally stands at 252 from 515 appearances, averaging almost a goal every two games. He scored a penalty in India's most recent outing, a 2-1 World Cup qualifying defeat to Afghanistan in March. "The phases, the faces, the eras and battles — he's been the one constant through it all," Chhetri's Indian Super League club Bengaluru FC said on X after the announcement. "He's going to do it one last time, and we can never be grateful enough for the giant that walked amongst men." "Sleeping giant" Football has struggled to find its feet among the 1.4 billion people of India, where the sport's local following is dwarfed by the nation's longstanding cricket obsession.



NORTHAMPTON: Pakistan's players work on their flexibility, England Women vs Pakistan Women.

Pakistan team intensifies training for FIH Nation's Cup

ISLAMABAD (APP): The training camp of the national hockey team is in full swing here at the Nasir Banda Hockey Stadium as the players gear up for the FIH Nation's Cup, scheduled to take place in Poland from May 31 to June 9. According to national coach Usman Sheikh, the players are training rigorously to ensure they are in top form for the upcoming tournament. The team comprise a talented pool of players, including: two goalkeepers — Abdullah and Muneeb-ur-Rehman, six defenders — Usman Bashir, Athisham, Mohammad Abdullah, Sufiyan, Abu Bakar and cap-

tain Shakeel Butt. Midfielders Salman Razaq, Arshad Liaqat, Moin Shakeel, Zakriya Hayat, Murtaza Yaqoob, and Ghazanfar Ali have also been selected. Forwards Abdul Rehman, Hanan, Rana Waheed, and Ejaz Ahmed complete the squad. Meanwhile, seven players have been selected as standbys, including Akmal Hussain, Aqeel Ahmed, Arbaz, Hammad Anjum, Abdul Rehman Jr., Abdul Manan, and Rooman. The team officials comprise Coach: Usman Sheikh, Assistant Coaches: Zeeshan Ashraf and Nadeem Lodhi and Manager: Waqas

Mehmood. Pakistan team also tour the Netherlands before the FIH Nation's Cup. The Green Shirts would face the Dutch national side, followed by two to three fixtures against the local clubs in the Netherlands. With just weeks to go before the Nations Hockey Cup, the team is leaving no stone unturned in their preparation, determined to make a mark on the international stage. It may be mentioned here that Pakistan team qualified for the final of the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup for the first time in 13 years and bagged a silver medal in the mega event.

President PTF meets Chairman Air Sial

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) President Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi and Chairman of Air Sial, Fazal Jilani held a meeting at Sialkot to discuss collaborative efforts between PTF and Air Sial for the promotion of tennis in Pakistan. Jilani while welcoming Aisam-ul-Haq, agreed to sign memorandum of understanding (MoU) aimed at promoting tennis across the country. Fazal Jilani also showed interest that Air Sial and PTF were considering to work as official partners in future. Both the organizations to jointly boost sports activity across Pakistan. President PTF expressed his gratitude to Jilani for his generous invitation. He emphasized the federation's intention to work diligently with Air Sial to advance tennis and nurture emerging talent in Pakistan. The meeting was also attended by Khawaja Khawar SVP-PTF (marketing) and Zain-ul-Haq Qureshi.

Minister ranks Pakistan among top teams in World of Blind Cricket

ISLAMABAD (APP): Sindh Provincial Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs, Sardar Muhammad Bux Khan Mahar, has rated Pakistan among the top teams in the world of Blind Cricket. He said our blind cricketers have been showcasing outstanding performance across all formats of international cricket, he said in a statement issued here. He said this during a meeting with the Chairman of the Pakistan Blind Cricket Council (PBCC), Syed Sultan Shah, at his office. It was also attended by Provincial Secretary Sports Jalaluddin Mahar, Chief Engineer Aslam Mahar,

Media Advisor of Pakistan Olympic Association Asif Azeem, and Secretary of Sindh Olympic Association Ahmed Ali Rajput. Provincial Minister for Sports said to host the upcoming Fourth T20 Blind Cricket World Cup in Pakistan was an honour. Government of Sindh is prepared to host this mega event in Karachi. I will play my full role in organizing the World Cup in Karachi, he said. He expressed confidence while talking to PBCC Chairman Sultan Shah that he would talk to Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah in this regard, ensuring that we do not miss this

important opportunity. Hosting the Blind Cricket World Cup will not only further facilitate the revival of international sports in the country but will also provide our players with the opportunity to showcase their abilities in front of their home crowds and spectators, he said. During the meeting, PBCC Chairman informed the Provincial Sports Minister that the matches of the 4th T20 Blind Cricket World Cup would be held from November 22 to December 3. Seven countries, including India, have confirmed their participation in this prestigious event.

McIlroy shares early lead at emotionally testing PGA C'ship

Louisville (AFP/APP): Rory McIlroy grabbed a share of the early lead in Thursday's first round of the PGA Championship during an epic test of emotional resilience at Valhalla, where his most recent major win came 10 years ago. Less than 48 hours after his Monday shock divorce filing from wife Erica became public, second-ranked McIlroy birdied the par-5 10th and par-4 13th holes to join a lead pack at 2-under. McIlroy, cheered before sending his first tee shot into left rough at 10, dropped his approach six feet from the hole and sank the birdie putt. The 35-year-old from Northern Ireland sank a birdie putt from just beyond 10 feet at 13 to join a lead group that includes Norway's Viktor Hovland, Scotsman Robert MacIntyre and Americans Xander Schauffele, Doug Ghim, Sahithi Theegala and Jordan Spieth. McIlroy, top-ranked Masters winner Scottie Scheffler and defending champion Brooks Koepka top the list of favorites to lift the Wanamaker Trophy at the 7,609-yard, par-71 layout. The focus and concentration so often shown in shot-making by McIlroy was set

for a supreme perseverance challenge after the four-time major winner's decision to end his seven-year marriage. Asked on the eve of the tournament about his energy and how he was doing personally, McIlroy replied: "I'm ready to play this week." He'll need to be if he is going to end a decade-long major win drought that has seen 20 top-10 finishes in majors without a triumph since his Valhalla victory -- including seven of his past nine major starts. McIlroy's game enters on form after triumphs in his past two events, a PGA Tour pairs event last month with Irishman Shane Lowry and last Sunday's fightback victory at the PGA Wells Fargo Championship. It is not the first time McIlroy has sought golf success after personal turmoil. In 2014, he ended his engagement to Danish tennis star Caroline Wozniacki, then won the European Tour event at Wentworth four days later. McIlroy went on to win the British Open and PGA at Valhalla as well as a WGC tournament over the next three months. Five-time major winner Koepka, among 16 LIV Golf

players in the field of 156, began on the back nine and birdied the 12th hole. Fellow American Spieth, a three-time major winner who would complete a career Grand Slam with a victory at Valhalla, birdied 10 and 12 to match the leaders. Third-ranked Schauffele, the reigning Olympic champion, seeking his first major title, birdied the par-3 11th from inside three feet and sank a 13-foot birdie putt at the par-4 13th to share the early lead. Tiger Woods, a 15-time major champion and 2000 PGA Championship winner at Valhalla, missed the green and made bogey at 11 but answered with a 15-foot par putt at 12 and an 18-foot birdie putt at 13. Sweden's Ludvig Aberg, runner-up at the Masters last month in his major debut, opened with four pars on the back nine. - Scheffler starts late - Scheffler, a winner in four of his past five starts, was set for an afternoon start off the first tee alongside two other 2023 major champions from the United States -- US Open winner Wyndham Clark and British Open winner Brian Harman,

Malik opines on Pakistan's opening pair for T20 WC

NEW YORK (Monitoring Desk): Senior all-rounder Shoaib Malik commented on the ongoing debate regarding Pakistan's opening pair for the upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024, scheduled to take place in the West Indies and USA in June. Malik, while speaking at a media conference held at the newly-built Nassau County International Cricket Stadium here on Thursday, suggested considering Saim Ayub for the opening slot for high-scoring games. "Look, Saim Ayub is the kind of player who plays a high-risk game. Any batter who plays with high risk has fewer chances of consistent performance, but there is a lot of talent in him," stated Shoaib Malik. "You need to see that if high-scoring matches are happening, then you will have to open with Saim Ayub. "But if high-scoring games are not happening, then it depends on the conditions, if it's those 160-170 score matches again, then I guess Babar and Rizwan should open," he added. For the unversed, batting prodigy Saim Ayub has been under a lot of scrutiny as the left-handed opener is yet to score a half-century in the international circuit. After bursting into the national side at the back of a remarkable domestic season and notable performances in the various franchise leagues across the world, Saim Ayub replaced Babar Azam as the opener in Pakistan's away T20I series against New Zealand in January. He then opened the innings for Pakistan with skipper Babar Azam in the home series against New Zealand before the opening slot once again got altered for the Ireland T20Is which saw him and Mohammad Rizwan starting the proceedings for the Green Shirts. Notably, the Pakistan men's cricket team on Wednesday, reached England to play a four-match T20I series to finalize their preparations for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024, starting on June 2.

Edgbaston stadium to become 'Fan Park' for India-Pakistan Clash

ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): England's famous Edgbaston Stadium will transform into a "huge Fan Park" on June 9 where thousands of spectators from India and Pakistan will watch their teams battle it out in New York in a T20 World Cup clash, the Warwickshire County Club said this week. The June 9 T20 World Cup clash in New York between arch-rivals India and Pakistan is one of the most anticipated cricket matches this year. Millions are expected to tune in worldwide to watch one of the sports' fiercest rivalries take centerstage in New York. The Edgbaston Stadium, one of the leading venues in world cricket, has been the home of Warwickshire County Cricket Club since 1885. For over 100 years, it has hosted first-class and international cricket in Birmingham. Warwickshire County Club announced on Wednesday that over 8,000 fans are expected to gather

at the Edgbaston Stadium to catch the action live on a giant screen. "For the first time ever the ICC are giving UK fans an opportunity to watch it live from Edgbaston Stadium where the piazza will be turned into a family festival of cricket," Warwickshire County Club said in a press release. "Fans will be able to watch the action on a big screen and enjoy the build-up as comedian and cricket commentator Aatif Nawaz takes to the stage alongside former India and Pakistan players." Edgbaston Chief Executive Stuart Cain said the stadium was the only venue in England chosen by the ICC as a T20 World Cup fan zone, terming the development as "amazing." "It's an opportunity for our local communities to really feel part of the T20 World Cup experience and I'm sure it will be a fantastic occasion," Cain said. "Pakistan and India fans

generated an electric atmosphere here in the 2019 Cricket World Cup and I've no doubt we can get close to replicating that in the Fan Zone." Apart from watching the match on the large screen with live commentary, fans will also be able to access a large family picnic area with activities including cricket skill challenges and cultural performances from both Indian and Pakistan communities, the press release said. "Fan parks are an important part of bringing World Cups to more people across the globe," ICC's Head of Events Chris Tetley said. "I am sure there will be a great atmosphere on the day and based on previous India and Pakistan matches that have taken place at Edgbaston it will be an occasion not to be missed." Gates are scheduled to open for fans at 1:00 p.m. GMT before the live feed of the match starts at 3:0 p.m. GMT.

Hyderabad, Karachi triumph in Sindh Judo Sports League finals

HYDERABAD (APP): The ongoing Men and Women Judo Sports League at Sindh Agriculture University, Tondojam came to an end on Thursday. In the men's competition, Hyderabad region, while in the women's competition, Karachi region took the field. Provincial Adviser Syed Najmi Alam distributed trophies and prizes among the successful players. The finals of men's and women's judo competitions, under the Prime Minister Youth Talent Hunt Program Sports League, were held at the sports complex, in which male and female players from five divisions of Sindh participated. According to the univer-

sity's spokesman, in the men's finals, the Hyderabad region secured first place by winning 7 gold medals and Karachi took second position by winning one gold medal, while Shaheed Benazirabad secured third place with 4 silver and 2 bronze medals. In the women's judo finals, the Karachi region clinched first place with 5 gold medals, 1 silver and 1 bronze medal. The Hyderabad region came second with 3 gold and 4 silver medals, while the Larkana Division took third position with 3 silver and 3 bronze medals. During the closing ceremony, Advisor to the chief minister for livestock and fisheries Syed Najmi Alam was the chief guest and dis-

tributed trophies and medals to the winning teams. In his address, Najmi Alam emphasized the importance of providing ample opportunities for girls from rural areas of Sindh to participate in sports. He praised Sindh Agriculture University for promoting healthy activities among the youth through such events. SAU Registrar Ghulam Mohiuddin Qureshi, Vice Chancellor's Consultant on media and heritage Dr. Mehmood Ul Hassan Mughal, Jam Kashif Sahito, Shaukat Hussain Sangi, Muhammad Umer Dasti and others were present at the event. Earlier, Director Sports Anwar Hussain Khanzada briefed the guests about the sports activities.

Murray makes victorious comeback in Bordeaux

BORDEAUX (AFP): Andy Murray made a victorious comeback from a serious ankle injury at the ATP Challenger event in Bordeaux. The 37-year-old Scot was leading world number 219 Kyrian Jaquet 7-5, 2-0 late Wednesday when the Frenchman was forced to withdraw with a left adductor injury. "I thought I did quite well," said Murray. "Coming back from injury, I guess it's not easy, and playing with a new racket." It was Murray's first competitive match since damaging tendons in his left ankle at the Miami Open in March. That injury raised questions about the three-time Grand Slam winner's participation at the French Open in what is likely to be

his final season although he has not announced what his final tournament might be. "My ankle feels really good," insisted Murray, who will play Gregoire Barrere in the round of 16 later Thursday after the Frenchman beat Spain's Albert Ramos-Vinolas 7-6 6-2. "It was quite a big injury, but the recovery was much better than what me and my team expected. "I worked really, really hard on the rehab. I trained it every day from when I got back from Miami to try to come back as quickly as possible. "I'm really proud of the effort that I put in and my team did a great job helping me get back." Murray added: "I've been practising really well. I haven't played against the highest level of players but

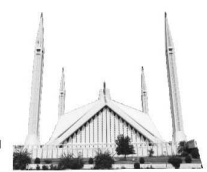
in practice since I've been here I've been doing well and feeling good." "I'm happy with how it's all going. Let's see, hopefully I can keep going." Murray added that a trip to the tennis courts of western Paris was very much on his radar. "I want to play the French Open again. I always love playing at Roland Garros, it's a special tournament," he said. "Of the four Grand Slams, it was a really difficult tournament for me because clay has always been the hardest surface for me. "I came really close one year (when he lost to Novak Djokovic in the 2016 final), and it would have been my biggest achievement if I could have won there. "It's great to have a chance to play there."

Celtics overpower short-handed Cavs to reach finals

LOS ANGELES (AFP/APP): Jayson Tatum scored 25 points as the Boston Celtics overpowered the injury-hit Cleveland Cavaliers 113-98 on Wednesday to complete a 4-1 series victory and book their place in the Eastern Conference finals for the third straight year. The top-seeded Celtics, who will face either the Indiana Pacers or the New York Knicks for a place in the NBA Finals, were pushed all the way by a battling Cleveland team. The Cavs' hopes of clawing their way back into the best-of-seven series were rocked earlier Wednesday after confirmation that three of their top six players -- Donovan Mitchell, Jarrett Allen and Caris LeVert -- were out with injury. But Cleveland shrugged off that setback to produce a battling performance that saw them get within three points of the Celtics midway through the fourth quarter. Evan Mobley was superb for Cleveland, pouring in a

game-high 33 points while Marcus Morris Sr. added 25 off the bench. Yet just when Celtics fans at the TD Garden were nervously wondering if a shock defeat was on the cards, Boston stitched together a decisive 13-2 run -- crowned by a three-pointer from Tatum -- that left them ahead by 14 points at 101-87. Tatum, who also added 10 rebounds and nine assists, said Boston had prepared for a dogfight despite Cleveland's injury-stricken line-up. "Anybody who's played in this league understands what happens when somebody's best players are out," Tatum said. "The rest of the guys have more freedom. They play with a different level of confidence and they play different. "Our mindset coming into this game was 'However long it takes, that's how long it takes.' We didn't expect to win the game in the first or second quarter. We grinded it out." Tatum said Boston were

now determined to snap their dismal recent record in the Eastern Conference finals. Boston have lost in the Eastern Conference finals in four of five appearances since the 2016-2017 season. "Each year presents different challenges," Tatum said. "Myself and the rest of the crew have been to the conference finals something like four or five times. We're battle-tested. We know what it takes. We just have to put the individual things aside and try and get over that hump." Tatum was one of six Boston players to finish in double figures on Wednesday, with Al Horford adding 22 points and Derrick White 18. Jue Holiday finished with 13 points while Jaylen Brown and Payton Pritchard had 11 apiece. Boston coach Joe Mazzulla meanwhile paid tribute to the contribution of Horford, who steadied the Celtics ship down the stretch to close out the win.



In brief

ANF seizes 32 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting five operations across the country managed to recover 32 kg drugs and arrested four accused, said an ANF Headquarters here on Thursday. He informed that 320 grams Ice was recovered from a parcel booked for Italy at a courier office in Rawalpindi. Twelve kilogram hashish was recovered from an accused rounded up in Hayatabad Peshawar while 9.6 kg hashish was recovered from a drug smuggler netted near Lakeview Park Islamabad. Nine kilogram heroin was recovered from an accused held near Wagah in Lahore. And 1.2 kg hashish and 270 grams opium were recovered from a smuggler near Babu Sabu Interchange Lahore. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused while further investigations are under process.

Police bust bike, car lifter gang

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi District Police have busted a bike and car lifter gang and arrested its two members, said a police spokesman. He informed that Cantt police netted two accused namely Umair Ali and Amanullah, allegedly involved in several bike and car lifting cases. Police also recovered a stolen Mehran Car, three motorcycles and other items from their possession. Superintendent of Police, Potohar appreciated the police team and directed to accelerate ongoing operation against bike and car lifters.

Transporters asked to reduce fares

RAWALPINDI (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rawalpindi Hasan Waqar Cheema has directed transporters to bring down fares by 5 per cent on all routes in Rawalpindi after the latest reduction in petroleum products and the cleanliness of the bus stands. The list of the fares should be displayed at prominent places at all bus stands, he directed. A special squad should be formed to check the fares daily to implement the reduction in fares, he said adding, the banners should be displayed at bus stands and Suzuki stops to provide awareness to the public regarding the reduction in the fares. A complaint cell should also be established in the office of the Secretary Regional Transport Authority (RTA) to register complaints regarding fares, he directed. DC instructed that a special attention should be paid to the cleanliness at the bus stands. Hasan Waqar Cheema said that on the directives of the Punjab government, certificates would be issued to the management of the bus stands for good cleanliness arrangements at the bus stands. Secretary RTA Rashid Mahmood on the occasion said that the citizens could register their complaints on number, 051-9270011.

Randhawa directs to complete work of parking Plaza

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) Muhammad Ali Randhawa Thursday said that no further delay will be tolerated in completing Blue Area Parking Plaza project and its deadline not to be further extended. During a visit to the Blue Area Parking Plaza, the CDA chief directed to complete the development work as soon as possible that will address the parking problems being faced by the residents and business community.



ISLAMABAD: H.E. Hamid Abbas Lafta, Ambassador of Iraq called on Minister for Defence & Defence Production Khawaja Muhammad Asif. —APP Photo

BISP intends to build a sense of pride in its beneficiaries

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Rubina Khalid has said that the BISP wants to build a sense of pride in its beneficiaries.

While highlighting the significance of skill training as a means to tackle the issue of youth unemployment, in a meeting with representatives of NAVTTC at the BISP Headquarters today, Rubina Khalid said that the major focus of their technical institutions should be to provide quality skill training and proper counselling so that youth could get jobs easily.

The meeting primarily aimed to deliberate on the operational modalities of the Skill Training Voucher (STV) program, a collaborative effort between BISP and NAVTTC. The initiative seeks to equip children of Benazir Income Support Programme beneficiaries

with the necessary technical skills to secure employment opportunities, both within Pakistan and abroad.

Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme Rubina Khalid emphasised the significance of training programs such as Hospitality Management, Graphic Designing, Gems and Stone Polishing, Beautician, Nurse Care, and Plumbing, stating that they are highly practical and in demand. These fields offer ample employment opportunities for youth, either in established industries or through entrepreneurship, allowing them to establish their small businesses, she added.

Secretary BISP, Amer Ali Ahmad, highlighted the pilot phase of the STV program as a pioneering initiative aimed at lifting people out of poverty. Under this phase,

he said that BISP will collaborate with NAVTTC to identify and provide data on eligible Benazir Income Support Programme beneficiaries for skill training. The formal launch of the pilot phase is imminent, he added.

Executive Director of NAVTTC, Muhammad Aamir Jan, outlined the plans for the pilot phase, stating that 1000 children of Benazir Income Support Programme beneficiaries from selected districts will receive technical skill training.

He said that upon completion of the program, they will be provided with employment opportunities, thereby contributing to their socioeconomic empowerment. Addl. Secretary BISP, Dr Muhammad Tahir Noor, DG (CI) BISP Saira Atta and representatives of PSDF, POEPA, and Akhuwat Foundation were also present in the meeting.

Committee formed to ensure hospital medicine availability

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Engineer Aamir Khattak on Thursday formed a special monitoring committee to ensure the availability of medicines and the functioning of machinery in the hospitals.

Presiding over a meeting to review the provision of health facilities, he said that a committee headed by the Additional Deputy Commissioner would confirm the availability of medicines and operational machinery in all the District and Tehsil Headquarters hospitals.

Khattak directed the officials of the health authority to continue the anti-dengue and anti-polio campaigns efficiently and no negligence would be tolerated. He informed that Polio environmental samples continuously tested positive third time, however, he directed the officials to ensure 100 per cent coverage of non-attended and missing cases during the recent campaign.

Aamir further added that 730 samples have been taken during 2,699 drug control raids from January 1, to date while the Drug inspectors lodged eight First Information Reports (FIRs), sealed 45 outlets and issued tickets to 167 on violations of the Drug Control Act. He said that provision of the best healthcare facilities to the people was the priority of the government and no compromise would be made on it.

IRSA denies news published in Daily 'Koshish'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday refuted a news item published in daily 'Koshish' Hyderabad and clarified that it based on misinformation.

"The contents especially, describing Member IRSA Sindh to have consented the opening of Flood Canal and did not oppose the water supply to Punjab through TP Link Canal are concocted and groundless," said a statement issued here. IRSA denies such irresponsible reporting and put forward decisions taken unanimously in its meeting held on May 13, it further said.

The decisions included, the water level at Tarbela dam shall be maintained at 1470 feet until June 30 while closely monitoring the water situation, instead of July 20, after which IRSA will be free to fill the dam as per the criteria.

However, WAPDA shall make efforts to fill the dam upto 1475 feet in next 10 days, if possible, to accommodate any variation in the river inflows. IRSA showed apprehension on the slow progress of TS construction activities and directed WAPDA to accomplish the task within the stipulated time of 33 months.

With immediate effect the shortages to the provinces is reduced to zero and distribution shifted to Para-2 of the Water Appointment Accord (WAA) 1991.

Ethiopia, Pakistan agree to collaborate in education sector

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ethiopia and Pakistan on Thursday agreed to collaborate in diverse sectors of education including science and technology, agriculture, health and Information and Communication Technology.

Both sides reached this consensus during a meeting between Special Envoy and Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ethiopia, Jemal Beker Abdula and Chairman of the Higher Education Commission (HEC), Dr Mukhtar Ahmed.

The meeting discussed the modalities to advance mutual cooperation in the education sector to exchange knowledge, skills and expertise.

Ambassador Jemal Beker said the Ethiopian government was keen to strengthen the already flourishing bilateral ties between the two nations through education diplomacy. "Collaboration in the education sector can be instrumental for estab-

lishing long-lasting and sustainable relations between the two countries," he said while recalling the eagerness of the Ethiopian medical experts.

He said a delegation from a top-class university in Ethiopia had visited Pakistan in 2023 showing there is a strong appetite in Ethiopia for establishing institution-to-institution collaboration between the two countries.

The Ambassador briefed the HEC chairman on a plantation campaign led by the Ethiopian Embassy in collaboration with the Ministry of Climate Change, universities, civil society and business community across Pakistan under the Green Legacy Initiative of Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Dr Abiy Ahmed for fostering fraternity between the two great nations. On the other side, the HEC chairman briefed the ambassador on advancement and digitalisation in the edu-

cation sector which included the establishment of digital libraries and smart classrooms giving access to education to the millions of students in Pakistan and abroad. He assured the ambassador of all-out support for strengthening cooperation and collaboration in the education sector between Ethiopia and Pakistan.

The HEC chairman also extended an invitation to the ambassador to visit the HEC Headquarters and also requested for facilitating delegations exchange between the two countries for further collaboration in the education sector. "Let us help each other in the education sector to build strong nations together for global prosperity," he remarked.

He informed the ambassador about the opening of Global Engagement Department at HEC which would have a desk for Africa with a special focus on Ethiopia.

IT sector's uplift key priority: Shaza Fatima

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja Thursday said that the development of IT sector was the first priority and the government welcomed this investment by Pak-Qatar Group in Pakistan's IT infrastructure uplift.

While addressing the inaugural ceremony of Pak-Qatar IT Tower, she said there were number of opportunities for our youth in this era of technology. She said the government is going to digitize economy, governance and society under National

Digitalization Plan, adding that digitalization would ensure transparency in the system and facilitation for the masses.

Shaza Fatima said that steps were underway for better IT and Telecommunication infrastructure and connectivity in the country. She said Pakistan and Qatar have brotherly relations and it is welcoming that investment from Qatar is moving towards IT sector.

She said that Pakistan needed foreign investment as the atmosphere for FDI was conducive. Meanwhile, addressing

the inaugural ceremony of Mars BPO, Minister of State for IT said Pakistan has huge youth population and the BPO sector has a great potential of creating jobs for them.

She said the government recognizes the BPO sector's strategic importance and remains firmly committed to its continued growth.

She said that Ministry of IT & Telecom was working under the vision of the Prime Minister of Pakistan, adding the government stands firmly behind the BPO sector and ensure Pakistan's BPO sector reaches even greater heights.

NDMA marks School Safety Day with safety kit distribution

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Gender and Child Cell (GCC) of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in collaboration with Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) and Aga Khan Agency for Habitat Pakistan (AKAHP) organized an event at Islamabad Model School for Girls to mark School Safety Day.

This event underscores the Authority's unwavering commitment to Comprehensive School Safety and Climate Change Adaptation and Risk Reduction (CCDRR/M), a news release said on Thursday. The NDMA's GCC has organized a three day refresher and Training of Trainers (ToT) under "Pakistan School Safety Framework" for Federal Directorate of Education Teachers.

Likewise drills for school children were conducted encompassing a variety of disaster scenarios, including earthquakes and fire emergencies, to ensure that students, teachers, and staff are well-versed in emergency protocols and crisis management techniques.

In a significant move to bolster disaster preparedness and proactive response mechanisms, the NDMA presented All-Inclusive School Safety Kit consisting 20 items to School Safety Committee.

The NDMA's Gender and Child Cell in partnership with key stakeholders including Education

Ministries, UNICEF, British Council, School of Leadership, and AKAHP, has meticulously developed the Pakistan School Safety Framework (PSSF).

The PSSF initiative aims to enhance awareness and preparatory measures among students and educational institutes. NDMA's PSSF is the most robust and comprehensive School Safety Framework in the Asia Pacific Region recently lauded during UNICEF Regional Knowledge Exchange on Child Centered DRR/M in Kathmandu.

The NDMA will evaluate availability of School Safety Kits in FDE-linked 432 schools and provide safety kits to each school with support of humanitarian partners.

Chairman PMYP calls for promoting national heritage

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman of the Prime Minister Youth Programme (PMYP) Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan on Thursday chaired a crucial meeting at the Ministry of Culture and Heritage, underscoring the importance of promoting and preserving Pakistan's rich cultural heritage.

During the meeting, the Chairman PMYP urged the Ministry of Culture and Heritage to play a proactive role in showcasing and promoting local culture and artwork.

He proposed the installation of proper display racks at airports and other busy stations to exhibit local cultural items alongside informative brochures, thereby providing visitors with a glimpse into Pakistan's vibrant heritage.

Furthermore, Chairman Mashhood Khan stressed the significance of promoting Pakistani culture both domestically and internationally, highlighting the Ministry's pivotal role as the face of Pakistan in shaping a pos-

itive and soft image of the nation on the global stage.

In line with the preservation of Pakistan's rich heritage, the Chairman advocated for the establishment of a Heritage Club and emphasized the importance of preserving heritage sites across the country.

Moreover, the Chairman discussed the need to recognize and appreciate the contributions of local poets and artists on a larger scale, proposing the institution of prestigious awards to honor their valuable work.

Lastly, the Chairman PMYP underlined the importance of promoting local handicrafts by displaying them at university-level exhibitions throughout the year, thereby fostering a deeper appreciation for Pakistan's diverse cultural heritage among the youth.

The Prime Minister's Youth Programme remains committed to supporting initiatives that celebrate and preserve Pakistan's cultural heritage, ensuring its legacy for future generations.

IRSA releases 192,000 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 192,000 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 200,400 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1470.57 feet and was 72.57 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 56,600 cusecs and 65,000 cusecs respectively.

The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1174.60 feet, which was 124.60 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet.

The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 56,700 cusecs and 40,000 cusecs respectively.

The release of water at Kalabagh, Tansa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 95,000, 101,200, 44,300 and 13,800 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 64,400 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 8,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Japan pledges emergency aid

KABUL (Ariana News): The Japanese Embassy in Afghanistan announced Thursday it will provide emergency relief to flood-hit people in northern Afghanistan. According to a statement issued by the embassy, relief will be provided through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in cooperation with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS).

World urged to help victims

KABUL (Khaama Press): Pope Francis, the leader of Catholics worldwide, has called on the global community to support the flood victims in Afghanistan with their aid. The Pope said he was deeply affected by the tragic consequences of the flooding in Afghanistan. He spoke early Wednesday in his public address, praying for the flood victims in Afghanistan in recent days, especially the children and their families.

Kabul opposes appointment of special representative

KABUL (TOLOnews): Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, the political deputy of the Prime Minister's Office, has reiterated that the Islamic Emirate does not agree to the appointment of a special representative for Afghanistan. Kabir, during a meeting with the Japanese Ambassador in Kabul, once again called for positive engagement and expanded relations with the world. The Deputy Spokesperson of the Islamic Emirate stated that during this meeting, the Japanese Ambassador assured that Tokyo is committed to cooperating with the Afghan people. Hamdullah Fetrat, Deputy Spokesperson of the Islamic Emirate, said: "Mawlawi Abdul Kabir in his recent statements mentioned that with the presence of UNAMA in Kabul, while there is a central government and no war, the Islamic Emirate does not agree to the appointment of a special envoy." On the other hand, several political experts consider the Islamic Emirate's extensive and positive interaction with the world crucial for resolving challenges in the country. Gul Mohammaddin Mohammadi, a political expert, said: "If the Islamic Emirate maintains good relations with regional countries, these relations will effectively impact other countries as well, and the Islamic Emirate should have positive interactions with neighboring, regional, and international communities."

Nooruddin Azizi meets with head of Tatarstan



KABUL (Ariana News): The Ministry of Commerce and Industry said Thursday acting minister Nooruddin Azizi met with the leader of Russia's autonomous republic of Tatarstan, Rustam Nurgaliyevich Minnikhanov, on the sidelines of a meeting in Kazan. According to the ministry, Azizi met with Minnikhanov on the sidelines of the Kazan Forum — the 15th International Economic Forum of Russia and the Islamic World. The two officials discussed bilateral trade relations, the establishment of the Russian Trade House in Afghanistan, the visit of Minnikhanov to Kabul, investment in electricity production, water transfer, mining, cultural and economic cooperation and other matters. This annual meeting is held by Russia and the 14th

Widespread destruction of poppy fields started

BADAKHSHAN (TOLOnews): Following protests in the districts of Argo and Darayim in Badakhshan, the widespread destruction of poppy fields has commenced. Local officials in Badakhshan report that approximately forty thousand acres of agricultural land have been cleared of poppy plants. Aminullah Taib, Deputy Governor of Badakhshan, stated, "An estimated 35,000 to 40,000 jeribs of land in these areas have been destroyed." Security officials in Badakhshan say that over two thousand security forces of the Islamic Emirate have been deployed to eradicate the poppy fields. Mahbubullah Hamed, an official of the Third Omar Division, said, "About a thousand from the national army are working on eradicating poppy cultivation." Farooq Nabard, an official of the Eighth Border Brigade, mentioned, "We have destroyed over two thousand jeribs of land in the Argo district and did not face any serious problems." Meanwhile, several farmers are urging the interim government to provide alternatives for cultivation.

Qatar extends aid to flood victims

KABUL (BNA): Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar Akhund, the Deputy Minister for Economic Affairs, held a significant meeting with the designated official responsible for humanitarian assistance from Qatar in Baghlan. The Deputy's office highlighted a pivotal meeting between Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar Akhund, the Deputy PM for Economic Affairs, and Mashaal Al-Hajri, the official responsible for humanitarian assistance from Qatar, in the district of Barka Baghlan. During the meeting, Deputy PM Baradar extended gratitude to Qatar for its humanitarian aid to the flood victims in Baghlan. He emphasized that such cooperation enhances and strengthens relations between the two countries. Meanwhile, Mashaal Al-Hajri, the official responsible for humanitarian aid from Qatar, conveyed solidarity with the victims of the recent floods, underlining Qatar's assistance to Afghanistan as a gesture of goodwill, aimed at alleviating the problems of the affected individuals in that province. Highlighting the robust political and economic ties between Qatar and Afghanistan, He stressed the importance of further expanding these relations across various fields. The fourth humanitarian aid shipment from Qatar, comprising 45.5 tons of essential food and non-food items to aid the recent flood victims in Baghlan, has successfully arrived at Mazar-i-Sharif International Airport. The authorities of the Afghan Red Crescent Society's northern zone have received and assumed responsibility for its distribution, ensuring timely assistance reaches those in need.



Hanafi meets with UNOPS chief

KABUL (Ariana News): Abdul Salam Hanafi, the Administrative Deputy Prime Minister met with Jorge Moreira Da Silva, the Executive Director of UNOPS. Hanafi extended a cordial welcome to Da Silva and his delegation, expressing gratitude for the organization's endeavors and the benevolent contributions of the United Nations toward the people of Afghanistan. He affirmed the Islamic Emirate's support for UNOPS initiatives within Afghanistan and reaffirmed the commitment to furnish all requisite resources to facilitate the seamless execution of its projects. Hanafi called on international aid organizations to cooperate in providing alternative crops to poppy cultivation and to help create job opportunities for Afghan youths. Da Silva meanwhile told Hanafi that the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) is planning to start a new solar driven irrigation system for agricultural land in Afghanistan.

Residents insist improve of services

ZARANJ (Pajhwok): Residents of northwestern Nimroz are complaining about what they say inferior quality internet service, while officials say the issue is being addressed. Allah Noor Rahimi, a resident of Chahar Burjak district, told Pajhwok Afghan News that telecommunications and internet services in their district were of low quality. "There are antennas of Roshan and Etisalat companies in our district, but even a voice call cannot be made and people are facing serious problems. We are also deprived of internet." Meanwhile, Abdul Samad, a resident of Chakhansur district, said: "Roshan antennas and connections do not work. The people of Chakhansur have shared this problem with the Department of Telecommunications many times, but so far it has not been paid attention despite assurances." He urged officials to address the issue. Sediqullah, a resident of Zaranj city, said internet service was weak in the city as well as in districts and people were facing problems. He added: "We hope that our problems will be solved, the quality of the Internet will be improved so people can use it well." Seyid Abdul Ali Yasinzai, director of Telecommunications Services in this province, says: "The people of Nimroz always complain about the low quality of internet services and telecommunication services and in our first measure, we started laying the fiber optic network."

Shafiq Rahman, a farmer, said, "Our request from the government is to facilitate job opportunities for the educated and to compensate farmers for their losses." Abdul Basit, another farmer, added, "there are no jobs, and people are desperate, turning to poppy cultivation out of necessity." Although exact figures on the land cultivated with poppies are unclear, local officials in Badakhshan assert that the campaign to destroy poppy fields will continue until their complete eradication in the province.

Helpless Badghis child workers willing to learn

QALA-I-NAW (Pajhwok): Some children working in northwestern Badghis have asked the government to provide them with education opportunities because according to them economic problems have forced them to leave schools and work. Abdul Sammad 14, who polishes boots on one of the Qala-i-Naw Roads, told Pajhwok Afghan News he was the only breadwinner of his six-member family and had no option but to work. "I polished shoes for the past three years, my father is old and has a spinal cord problem due to which he could not work, daily I earn 100 afis to 15 afis," he said. Getting an education was his only wish, but he could go to school due to economic problems, he asked the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA): "I want to study, and become a doctor in the future, I ask the IEA to provide me and children who are the breadwinners of our families like me education opportunities." Sher Ali, 12, another child who polishes shoes, said his father was a drug addict and currently receiving rehabilitation treatment. He said: "By polishing shoes daily I earn 80 afis to 100 afis which is used to buy food and some other items." He also asked the government to provide education opportunities for children like him and others. Sakhi Dad, 15, is another child in Qala-i-Now City who works as a blacksmith, he said: "I really want to study but I have to work and have no other option." He also urged the IEA to provide education opportunities for him. Experts, however, believed that these situations have negative consequences for society adding that it was the government's responsibility to provide learning opportunities for deprived children. Nisar Ahmad Akbari, Badghis University teacher, said the absence of these children from education causes problems at the family and community level, and the need for international assistance persists. The Acting Foreign Minister remarked during the meeting. He further emphasized the importance of aligning the type and distribution

Trans-Himalayan Forum: China invites IEA's Deputy Prime Minister



KABUL (Ariana News): Zhao Xing, the Chinese Ambassador to Kabul, has invited political deputy prime minister Mawlawi Abdul Kabir to participate in the upcoming Trans-Himalayan Forum meeting. The Chinese envoy said at a meeting Wednesday with Kabir that Beijing supports the Islamic Emirate in terms of attending international meetings, especially UN Security Council meetings. Zhao also said China was committed to cooperating with the Islamic Emirate. Kabir in turn expressed his gratitude for China's support and cooperation across numerous sectors and said that as a responsible government, the Islamic Emirate is bound by commitments made and tries to play an active role in regional issues and the stability and development of the region. Mawlawi Abdul Kabir also acknowledged China's support of the Islamic Emirate and said Beijing's cooperation can bring about positive changes and economic growth in the country.

Residents of Gilan District complain of lack of basic services

GHAZNI (TOLOnews): A group of residents from the Gilan District in Ghazni who have come to Kabul complain about the lack of health, telecommunication, and educational services. They state that this is why they have come to Kabul, to share their problems with the officials. The absence of school buildings, health services, telecommunication services, hospitals, and a shortage of drinking water are among the issues they have raised. Abdul Rahim Turk Abad, a resident of Gilan District, said, "Our request from the Islamic Emirate is to assist us in road construction." They also mention that during the previous government, the work to establish a district was completed; however, the Islamic Emirate has not paid attention to this matter so far. Haq Dad, a resident of Gilan District in Ghazni, stated, "Our request from the Islamic Emirate is to collaborate with us." Hakim Omari, another resident of Gilan District in Ghazni, added, "Our main problem is the establishment of the district, which was approved in 1999 to include eighty-five villages, and this large area should become a district." Meanwhile, a spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate talks about efforts to address the challenges of the residents of Gilan District. Zabihullah Mujahid, a spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate, said, "The districts have their own problems; however, their issues and some other matters will be resolved in the future. Schools must be effectively provided to them, and drinking water must be made available. We will share this issue with the officials to get more attention." Enayatullah Alkoza, spokesperson for the Ministry of Telecommunications and Technology, mentioned, "Around 31 telecommunication sites are planned for the thirteen districts of Ghazni Province. They should go to the districts and villages of Ghazni to provide their services, and currently, work on the majority of telecommunication sites in Ghazni Province is underway, which includes the Gilan District." Previously, some residents from remote parts of the country have also complained about the lack of public services.

Foreign Ministry and UN offices discuss aid and future plans



KABUL (BNA): In a promising development on Thursday, a pivotal coordination meeting was held in Kabul, bringing together top leadership from Islamic Emirate's officials and the United Nations. The meeting served as a platform for in-depth discussions on a range of crucial topics, including the diverse needs of the Afghan populace, the priorities of the Islamic Emirate, and the notable assistance rendered by the UN over the past year. During the meeting, Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi, the acting Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, emphasized the IEA's relentless efforts towards achieving economic prosperity and self-sufficiency. "Despite IEA strives for economic self-sufficiency and national resilience, its current financial capacity isn't enough to offset four decades of war damages and the need for international assistance persists." The Acting Foreign Minister remarked during the meeting. He further emphasized the importance of aligning the type and distribution method of international assistance with the needs of the Afghan people for its optimal utilization. At the end, the Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) stated that the organization is working on shifting the nature of humanitarian assistance to development aid and identifying areas where UN assistance is concentrated.

Helpless Badghis child workers willing to learn

QALA-I-NAW (Pajhwok): Some children working in northwestern Badghis have asked the government to provide them with education opportunities because according to them economic problems have forced them to leave schools and work. Abdul Sammad 14, who polishes boots on one of the Qala-i-Naw Roads, told Pajhwok Afghan News he was the only breadwinner of his six-member family and had no option but to work. "I polished shoes for the past three years, my father is old and has a spinal cord problem due to which he could not work, daily I earn 100 afis to 15 afis," he said. Getting an education was his only wish, but he could go to school due to economic problems, he asked the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA): "I want to study, and become a doctor in the future, I ask the IEA to provide me and children who are the breadwinners of our families like me education opportunities." Sher Ali, 12, another child who polishes shoes, said his father was a drug addict and currently receiving rehabilitation treatment. He said: "By polishing shoes daily I earn 80 afis to 100 afis which is used to buy food and some other items." He also asked the government to provide education opportunities for children like him and others. Sakhi Dad, 15, is another child in Qala-i-Now City who works as a blacksmith, he said: "I really want to study but I have to work and have no other option." He also urged the IEA to provide education opportunities for him. Experts, however, believed that these situations have negative consequences for society adding that it was the government's responsibility to provide learning opportunities for deprived children. Nisar Ahmad Akbari, Badghis University teacher, said the absence of these children from education causes problems at the family and community level, and the need for international assistance persists. The Acting Foreign Minister remarked during the meeting. He further emphasized the importance of aligning the type and distribution method of international assistance with the needs of the Afghan people for its optimal utilization. At the end, the Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) stated that the organization is working on shifting the nature of humanitarian assistance to development aid and identifying areas where UN assistance is concentrated. The future they will be a burden on the society, they may create security risks and it is necessary to prevent this problem." Tour Jan Khadami, head of the Work and Social Affairs Department, said that recently 50 children were rounded up and referred to the orphanage. He said: "The number of street children have increased, but the exact number is not known, and recently we collected 50 street children, seven girls and 43 boys, and we have different plans in the future to solve this problem." Without going into detail he said different programs would be launched in the coming week to address this problem.

PTI founder following int'l agenda: Shjarjeel

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Orange Line Extension, integrating the Orange Line and Green Line BRT systems, has been inaugurated by the Department of Transport, Government of Sindh. Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, Mass Transits, Excise, Taxation, and Narcotics Control, Sharjeel Inam Memon, inaugurated the Orange Line Extension at the Orange Line Depot in Orange Town, Karachi.

Speaking to the media on this occasion, Senior Minister of Sindh and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, Excise, and Taxation Sharjeel Inam Memon said that in consideration of public needs, the Sindh government has merged the Orange Line and Green Line systems.

Now, all Orange Line buses will travel to the Green Line Board Office Station, from where passengers can board the Green Line via a pedestrian bridge.

Additionally, passengers who wish to return to Orangi after disembarking from the Green Line can do so through the Orange Line bus. He said that the Pakistan People's Party is following the vision of its leadership, President Asif Ali Zardari, Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, transport department planning news schemes for the people in the light of the vision of the party leadership and the orders of the Sindh Government and Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, Pakistan People's Party believes in providing facilities to the people. The People's Party believes in tangible actions, not just slogans.

The integration of the Orange Line and Green Line will enhance the convenience of travel for the public. He said that automatic fare payment cards are now being issued, and the system is expected to be fully operational within a month, we aim to provide immediate relief to the people without



any inconvenience. In response to a question, Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the reduction in petrol prices by the federal government is welcomed, as it will provide relief to the people. However, it's noteworthy that even when the price of petrol increased, we refrained from raising the fares of the People's Bus Service.

The Sindh Government remains committed to maintaining the fares of the People's Bus Service under all circumstances. In response to a question, Sindh's senior minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the actions taken by the KP government yesterday reflect a narrow-minded approach, characteristic of small-minded individuals. The founder of PTI failed to instill values of tolerance and patience in the party's workers, embodying dictatorial tendencies himself. The decision of the KP Chief Minister to close the residence of Governor KP demonstrates a lack of foresight and maturity. Imran Khan's leadership has consistently promoted politics characterized by chaos, blame-shifting, falsehoods, propaganda, misogyny, and division.

The repercussions of Imran Khan's actions will inevitably catch up with him. Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the founder of PTI has

been following an international agenda, throwing dust in the eyes of the public since its launch. There is a master plan under which PTI is being run. It's funny and interesting that Israel, the genocidal perpetrator against innocent Palestinians, comments on the arrest of Imran Khan, alleging human rights violations in Pakistan. This shows who is behind Imran Khan. Imran Khan voted for a dictator like Pervez Musharraf in the referendum.

The rally of Imran Khan in Lahore is known to every child in the country, from where people were brought to participate in it. He said that I demand justice for the judicial killing of our great leader, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. Who will ensure justice for this? I demand to know why our leader, President Asif Ali Zardari, was kept in prison for 14 years without any crime. Who were the people involved in the judicial killing of our great leader, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto? When the court declared that Bhutto did not receive a fair trial, what punishment was given to those who obstructed the fair trial? He said that a parliamentary committee should be formed under the supervision of the Speaker of the National Assembly. The demands for justice of those who have been wronged should be addressed.

IHC orders Zartaj Gul to appear before court

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad High Court (IHC) today sought the record from Zartaj Gul's counsel on a petition seeking the name removal of PTI leader and MNA Zartaj Gul from the Exit Control List (ECL).

IHC's Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri heard the case on Zartaj Gul's name removal from ECL. During the hearing, the state counsel stated that Zartaj Gul's name has been included in the Provisional National Identification List (PNIL).

Upon inquiry from the court, the state counsel informed that Zartaj Gul's name was included in PNIL on the order of Islamabad and Punjab police, and the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) was responsible for including the name in PNIL. State counsel added that five cases were registered against Zartaj Gul in Islamabad and Punjab. The petitioner's counsel, Advocate Usama, disclosed that Zartaj Gul has been granted bail in those cases. He reiterated that the name was being included in the PNIL list despite being on bail.

During the hearing, Justice Tariq Jahangiri inquired about how many cases Zartaj Gul has been granted bail in and ordered the petitioner to appear before the court in the next hearing. Consequently, IHC has adjourned the case hearing until next week by directing Zartaj Gul's counsel to appear before the court in the next hearing with records.

Petition against Dar dismissed

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Pronouncing a reserved verdict, the Lahore High Court (LHC) on Thursday dismissed the petition filed against the appointment of Foreign Minister (FM) Ishaq Dar as the country's deputy prime minister.

Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan pronounced the reserved verdict on the petition filed by Ashaba Kamran in which she had argued that despite the fact that Dar already held the portfolio of a foreign minister, still he was appointed as the deputy prime minister. The petitioner was of the view that the office of the deputy prime minister was neither mentioned in the constitution nor had any legal strength. She prayed to the court to declare the appointment of the respondent as deputy prime minister unlawful and unconstitutional.

A law officer told the court that the foreign minister had only been nominated, and not appointed as the deputy prime minister. Replying to a court query, he also said that Dar was not drawing a single penny against the office of the deputy prime minister.

The court after hearing both the sides at length reserved its verdict. Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar was appointed as the country's deputy prime minister two weeks ago. "The prime minister has been pleased to designate Minister for Foreign Affairs, Muhammad Ishaq Dar as the deputy prime minister with immediate effect and until further orders," a statement from the prime minister's office said. It is pertinent to mention here that Dar's son is married to the daughter of a three-time Prime Minister and Shehbaz Sharif's elder brother, Nawaz Sharif.

Earlier, the minister took a round of various sections of the MCO, including the adjoining hospital of Hajj Medical Mission, and found them working and prepared to meet any situation up to the mark. The minister was accompanied by Additional Secretary Syed Dr Ata-ur-Rehman, Joint Secretary and Director of Facilitation and Coordination (F&C) Ahmed Nadeem Khan, and Director Hajj Madina Zia-ur-Rehman.

Six dead as boat capsizes on River

PIND DADAN KHAN (PPI): Six people, including four children and two women, tragically lost their lives on Thursday after a boat capsized on the Jhelum River on the outskirts of Pind Dadan Khan, according to local rescue sources.

Initial reports indicated that the victims, all belonging to the same family, were among more than 30 passengers on the overloaded boat. The boat was reportedly laden with a carry-van, motorcycles, and various other goods at the time of the incident. Rescue personnel and law enforcement swiftly responded to the scene, launching a search operation to locate any survivors.

The prime minister, in a meeting with a delegation of Hurriyat leaders of Jammu and Kashmir during his daylong visit here, said that Pakistan categorically rejected the Indian unilateral and illegal actions in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) regarding the revocation of its special status. He said Kashmir was an internationally recognised



ISLAMABAD: KP Governor, Faisal Karim Kundi, called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Xi, Putin hail ties as 'stabilising' force in chaotic world

BEIJING (AFP): Leaders Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin framed their nations' ties as a stabilising force in a chaotic world as they met Thursday in Beijing, where the Russian president is seeking greater Chinese support for his war effort in Ukraine and isolated economy. Putin was greeted by Xi at a grand welcoming ceremony outside Beijing's Great Hall of the People, footage by state broadcaster CCTV showed.

In a meeting, Xi then told his "old friend" Putin that China-Russia relations were "conducive to peace". "China is ready to work with Russia to... uphold fairness and justice in the world," Xi added. Putin, in turn, told Xi the two countries' relations were "stabilising factors in the international arena". "Relations between Russia and China are not opportunistic and not directed against anyone," Putin said, according to a Kremlin readout. "Together, we uphold the principles of justice and a democratic world order that reflects multipolar realities and is based on international law," he added.

Following closed-door meetings, the two leaders then signed a joint statement on deepening their countries' "comprehensive strategic partnership", state news agency Xinhua said. The Russian leader's arrival came hours after he hailed his country's troops for advancing on "all fronts" on the battlefield in Ukraine, following a major new ground assault. Xi has rebuffed Western criticism of his country's close ties with Moscow, enjoying cheap Russian energy imports and access to vast natural resources. But their economic partnership has come under close scrutiny from the West in recent months.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken warned China's support for Russia's "brutal war of aggression" in Ukraine had helped Russia ramp up production of rockets, drones and tanks — while stopping short of direct arms exports. China claims to be a neutral party in the Ukraine conflict, which it has never condemned and in which it has sought to frame itself as a



mediator. And in a statement to media following talks with Putin, Xi said the two sides agree on the need for a "political solution" to resolving the war.

"China's position on this issue has always been clear," Xi said in footage broadcast by Russian TV. That position included "respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries" as well as "respecting the reasonable security concerns of all sides", the Chinese leader added. The remarks echo a paper issued by Beijing last year, which Western countries said could enable Russia to hold much of the territory it has seized in Ukraine. China also "looks forward to the early restoration of peace and stability on the European continent", Xi said, promising Beijing would "continue to play a constructive role to that end".

Putin in response said he was "grateful" to Beijing for its efforts to help resolve the conflict. He also made reference to Beijing's complaints about growing security cooperation between the US and its allies in Asia, warning of "harmful" military

alliances in the region. China-Russia trade has boomed since the Ukraine invasion and hit \$240 billion in 2023, according to Chinese customs figures. But after Washington vowed to go after financial institutions that facilitate Moscow, Chinese exports to Russia dipped during March and April, down from a surge early in the year.

An executive order by President Joe Biden in December permits secondary sanctions on foreign banks that deal with Russia's war machine, allowing the US Treasury to cut them out of the dollar-led global financial system. That, coupled with recent efforts to rebuild fractured ties with the United States, may make Beijing reluctant to openly push more cooperation with Russia — despite what Moscow may want, analysts say. Putin's post-election trip to Beijing echoes Xi's own visit to Russia after his re-anointing as leader last year. He is also set to meet Premier Li Qiang — China's number two official — and travel to the northeastern city of Harbin for a trade and investment expo.

Israel says more troops to 'enter Rafah'

JERUSALEM (AFP): Israel's Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said that more troops would "enter Rafah" as military operations intensify in Gaza's far-southern city, in remarks issued by his office Thursday.

The operation "will continue as additional forces will enter" the Rafah area, Gallant said, adding that "several tunnels in the area have been destroyed by our troops... this activity will intensify."

"Hundreds of [terror] targets have already been struck, and our forces are manoeuvring in the area," he said according to a statement released by his office after he visited Rafah the previous day. Israeli forces took control earlier in May of the Gaza side of the Rafah crossing with Egypt, in a push launched in defiance of US warnings that around 1.4 million civilians sheltering there could be caught in the crossfire.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken told NBC

The United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, has said "600,000 people have fled Rafah since military operations intensified" in Rafah. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to launch a full-scale ground operation in Rafah in a bid to dismantle the remaining battalions of Hamas.

Gallant said that the military's offensive against Hamas had hit the militant group hard. "Hamas is not an organization that can reorganize, it does not have reserve troops, it has no supply stocks and no ability to treat the terrorists that we target," he said. "The result is that we are wearing Hamas down." However, Israel's top ally the United States has warned that it had not seen any credible Israeli plan to protect civilians in Rafah.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken told NBC

ATC extends KP MPA interim plea

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Special Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Peshawar Judge Syed Asghar Ali Shah extended the interim bail of Member Provincial Assembly (MPA) Malik Tariq Awan from Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) till 25th May in a terrorism case, on Thursday.

During the hearing, the court was informed that the accused had filed a petition in the Peshawar High Court seeking removal of the terrorism charge from the case, which is currently pending and fixed for hearing on May 22. Special ATC Peshawar Judge Syed Asghar Ali Shah adjourned further hearing on interim bail plea until May 25.

It is worth noting that PMLN MPA Malik Tariq Awan charged for attacking PTI leader and MNA Asif Khan convey and a terrorism case was registered against him along with others at the Fagirabad police station. After being nominated in the case, Tariq Awan had filed an application for interim bail in the ATC court.

FIA obtains physical remand against human trafficker: Special Judge Central Immigration granted two days physical remand to Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) for interrogation from human trafficker named Shahid, on Thursday.

According to prosecution, the alleged human trafficker had attempted to illegally send four individuals to Europe. The accused had planned to smuggle human through Iran and Turkey, but Iranian security officials arrested the four citizens and deported them back to Pakistan. The alleged culprit was arrested after disclosing by another accused based in Tehran. The alleged culprit had received 12 lakh rupees from the four affected individuals and further investigation is needed in this regard.

Salik expresses satisfaction over arrangements for Hujjaj

MADINAH AL-MUNAWWARAH (INP): Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Chaudhry Salik Hussain on Thursday expressed satisfaction over the arrangements made for extending maximum facilities to Pakistani Hajj pilgrims by the country's Hajj Mission and supporting team.

The minister was talking to media after visiting different sections of the Pakistan Hajj Mission's Main Control Office (MCO), working round-the-clock for facilitation of the guests of Allah Almighty, and getting a briefing from Director Hajj Madina Zia-ur-Rehman. "All the team present is working with full dedication. So far, by the grace of Allah Almighty, there is not even a single complaint which the ministry had been receiving in the past," he said.

He said providing accommodation to 100% Pakistani Hujjaj in the Markazia, from where Masjid Nabvi and Roaza-e-Pak (SAW) is hardly a 5-10 minutes walking distance, is one of the big achievements. He said best quality food was being provided to Pakistani Hujjaj, while a state-of-the-art medical facility, equipped with world-class doctors and paramedics, had been estab-

lished adjacent to the MCO.

Minister Salik Hussain thanked the Saudi authorities for extending all possible assistance and cooperation to Pakistan in making seamless Hajj arrangements for its citizens. "Our team will stay here until each and every Pakistani does not leave for the homeland after performing the religious obligation of Hajj, safely," he added. Expressing a strong commitment of the government for facilitation and well-being of Pakistani pilgrims, he said the entire team of Pakistan Hajj would remain active throughout the Hajj operation without repeating mistakes of the past.

Answering a question, the Religious Minister expressed confidence that next year, under the Road to Makkah Initiative, the Hajj flights would also start from Lahore, once a certain number of pilgrims was achieved for including the Lahore airport in the project. Currently, this facility is available from Islamabad and Karachi airports, under which the Saudi immigration was performed at the designated airports in Pakistan so that Pakistani Hujjaj could be secured from long queues at Saudi airports.

To another question, the minister said all Pakistanis,

who are staying, working, or visiting abroad, are ambassadors of Pakistan without any political divide or affiliation. Pakistan Muslim League (Q) President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, he said, has decided that all organizations of his party working in different countries other than Pakistan would be abolished.

Accordingly, he said, Chaudhry Shujaat has asked him to bring a draft legislation in the Parliament with the objective that "There should be no wing/section of any political party outside the country, as whosoever staying abroad is a Pakistani only." Commenting on the Hajj package offered by Pakistan to its citizens, he said it was the most cost-effective in the region as the government had made utmost efforts to make it affordable for them.

Earlier, the minister took a round of various sections of the MCO, including the adjoining hospital of Hajj Medical Mission, and found them working and prepared to meet any situation up to the mark. The minister was accompanied by Additional Secretary Syed Dr Ata-ur-Rehman, Joint Secretary and Director of Facilitation and Coordination (F&C) Ahmed Nadeem Khan, and Director Hajj Madina Zia-ur-Rehman.

No wheat crisis in Punjab: Maryam Nawaz

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz adamantly refuted assertions of a wheat scarcity in the province, underlining the government's proactive stance in combating corruption within the wheat procurement framework.

Speaking at a gathering in Phoolnagar, she said that the farmers would soon get ambitious aid package tailored for farmers, amounting to a staggering Rs400 billion over a span of four months. This initiative aims to provide substantial relief to the agricultural sector, with each farmer to receive Rs150,000 through the

innovative Kisan Card program.

Against the backdrop of mounting concerns over food security, Maryam reiterated her steadfast commitment to ensuring access to affordable bread for Punjab's expansive populace, numbering over 130 million. Emphasizing her unwavering support for the farming community, she articulated a vision of empowerment by pledging to equip farmers with state-of-the-art machinery, fostering increased productivity while prioritizing safety in agricultural operations.

In tandem with these agricultural interventions, she outlined a comprehen-

sive strategy for infrastructural development, promising significant enhancements in the province's road network. With a bold promise of zero road disparity within the next five years, she affirmed that repair initiatives are already underway, underscoring her administration's proactive approach to addressing critical infrastructure needs.

Then Punjab CM's resolute statements not only underscored her dedication to addressing pressing agricultural challenges but also signal a broader commitment to fostering sustainable development and prosperity across Punjab.