

PPP forms committee
F.P. Report

LAHORE: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) on Friday formed a three-member fact-finding committee to investigate the defeat of Bilawal Bhutto in the NA-127 Lahore. As per details, PPP leader Hasan Murtaza said that the three-member committee comprises Asif Khan, Imtiaz Safdar Warraich, and Rana Iqram Rabani.



PESHAWAR: KP Chief Minister, Ali Amin Gandapur addressing during provincial assembly session.

PM directs launching programme to overcome child stunting

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday directed the authorities concerned to launch a nationwide programme, in coordination with the provincial governments, to overcome the challenge of child stunting.

The prime minister, chairing a meeting to discuss the issue of child stunting, also called for the formulation of a comprehensive plan for the protection of children against fatal diseases, for population welfare and for coping with the health sector issues. According to the World Health Organisation, child stunting refers to a child who is too short for his or her age and is the result of chronic or recurrent malnutrition. Stunting is a contributing risk factor to child mortality and is also a marker of inequalities in human development.

Prime Minister Shehbaz said that the Federal Government, in collaboration with the provincial governments, would take priority measures for better child growth to achieve the country's bright future. Similarly, a nationwide awareness campaign was also equally essential to do away with the issue of stunting, he added. He thanked the international experts participating in the meeting which featured the presentation of statistics on the children's growth by the World Bank.

The participants were told that a significant ratio of children in Pakistan suffered stunted growth caused by the lack of basic healthcare and nutrition, contaminated drinking water, poor cleanliness, and lack of awareness of children's growth. Besides, the statistics about the prevalence of TB, hepatitis, diabetes and other fatal diseases in Pakistan were also highlighted and suggestions were put forward to overcome them.

The prime minister instructed the relevant authorities to immediately present a comprehensive plan on the matter. Federal ministers Ahsan Iqbal, Ahad Khan Cheema, PM's Coordinator Malik Mukhtar Ahmed, Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission Jahanzeb Khan, World Bank Country Director Najy



Benhassine, UNICEF Representative in Pakistan Abdullah Fadil, Country Director of World Food Program Coco Ushiyama and other internationally renowned experts attended the meeting. The provincial chief secretaries Dr Zulfiqar Ali Bhutta, Dr Sajid Sufi, Dr Ijaz Nabi and other experts joined the meeting via video link.

PM invites Chinese firm to invest in mining; assures maximum facilitation: A delegation of Chinese firm MCC Tongsin Resources led by Chairman Wang Jaichen called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here whom he invited to invest in Pakistan's mining sector and manufacturing of export goods.

The prime minister assured the delegation that his government would extend all-out facilitation to the company from minerals exploration, and processing to the export of goods. He instructed the relevant federal ministers and officers to continue consultation with the Chinese firm, taking the Balochistan chief minister, provincial departments and stakeholders onboard.

The delegation members reposed trust in the prime minister's leadership and expressed keen interest in enhancing their investment in Pakistan's mining and minerals sectors. The company delegation briefed Prime Minister Shehbaz about construction of a mineral park in Pakistan and their future investment plans.

The prime minister welcomed the Chinese firm and highlighted the priority steps by his government to pro-

mote foreign investment in Pakistan. He said that being a time-tested friend, China supported Pakistan in every difficult hour for which the Pakistani nation was grateful to Chinese leadership and people. Federal ministers Ahad Khan Cheema, Dr Musaddik Malik, Rana Tanveer Hussain, Jam Kamal Khan and relevant senior officers attended the meeting.

PM urges PML-N's role for AJK progress, public relief: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharf on Friday urged the AJK chapter of Pakistan Muslim League-N to play its role in the progress and prosperity of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and strive for maximum public relief. The prime minister, talking to a delegation of PML-N AJK chapter led by President Shah Ghulam Qadir, assured that as the hearts of Kashmiris and Pakistanis beat in unison, he couldn't leave them in the lurch.

The delegation members thanked the prime minister for the immediate resolution of the recently developed situation in the AJK, and lauded the steps taken by his government for economic revival and attracting foreign investment. He told the party members that Pakistan was playing its role in highlighting the Kashmir cause globally and reiterated the resolve for continued moral, political and diplomatic support to Kashmiris. Discussing the PML-N affairs, the prime minister instructed the delegation to further activate the party in the AJK by enhancing public coordination.

Indian oppression root-cause of sufferings of Kashmiri families: FO

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Friday said that with over 22,000 women widowed and 107,000 children orphaned, the sufferings of the families in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) remained unended due to the unabated occupation and oppression of the Indian forces.

Foreign Office Spokesperson Muntaz Zahra Baloch, at her weekly press briefing, expressed solidarity with the Kashmiri families that remained divided and continued to suffer due to Indian oppression for the last several decades. "The estimates of widowed women and orphaned children exceed 22,000 and 107,000 respectively. Thousands of half-widows are awaiting the return of their husbands who have presumably been killed by Indian forces. The plight of the families of the victims of enforced disappearance is equally lamentable," the spokesperson remarked, referring to the annual International Day of Families observed on May 15.

Calling the ruthless Indian oppression the root-cause of the sufferings of Kashmiri families, the spokesperson urged India to allow Kashmiris to practice their right to self-determination as guaranteed by the United Nations Security Council's resolutions. Highlighting the diplomatic engagements that took place during the last week, the spokesperson start-

ed with the visit of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar to China to co-chair the Fifth Pakistan-China Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, where he also met with Chinese vice premier, and ministers for IDCPC and finance and others.

In the Dialogue, Pakistan and China agreed to strengthen mutual cooperation to safeguard common interests, promotion of peace and prosperity, enhance exchanges, and deepen ties in all areas of mutual benefit. Both sides also agreed to work for the upgraded version of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor by jointly building a growth corridor, a livelihood-enhancing corridor, an innovation corridor, a green corridor and an open corridor, by aligning them with Pakistan's development framework and priorities. The two sides agreed to accelerate progress on major connectivity projects, including upgradation of ML-1, the Gwadar Port, realignment of the Karakoram Highway Phase II, and to strengthen cooperation in agriculture, industrial parks, mining, information technology and other fields.

China reiterated its position on the Kashmir issue calling for its peaceful resolution in accordance with the UN Charter, relevant UN Security Council resolutions and bilateral agreements. She also apprised the media of the 6th Round of Pakistan-Latvia Bilateral Political

Consultations (BPC) held here wherein the two sides agreed to expand bilateral cooperation in trade and investment, energy, education and technology, and labour mobility.

At the Pakistan-US Counterterrorism Dialogue held on May 10, 2024 in Washington DC, she said both countries underscored the mutual cooperation in addressing the most pressing challenges to regional and global security, including Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and ISIS-Khorasan. About the 6th Round of Pakistan-United Kingdom Dialogue on Arms Control and Non-Proliferation held here on May 15, 2024, the spokesperson said the two countries shared their perspectives on issues concerning global and regional security, new and emerging technologies, including the military use of artificial intelligence and the peaceful applications of nuclear technology.

Spokesperson Baloch said that Pakistan supported the resolution passed by the UN General Assembly for full UN membership of Palestine. She said that the resolution determined that the State of Palestine was qualified for membership and recommended that the Security Council reconsider its request favourably. The spokesperson informed the media that Deputy Prime Minister Dar would visit Kazakhstan on May 20-21, at the invitation of his Kazakh counterpart, to attend the regular meeting of SCO Council of Foreign Ministers in Astana.

Pentagon has nothing to say on drone strike inside Pakistan

Jalil Afridi

WASHINGTON DC: The Deputy Spokesperson of Pentagon, Sabrina Singh said that "I do not have anything on that" when asked about rumors that there was a drone strike inside Pakistan's region of North Waziristan.

Miss Singh made these remarks while answering a question posed by The Frontier Post. To another question by The Frontier Post, whether Pentagon would support investigation against former Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and former Afghan National Security Advisor Hamdullah Mohib for being in touch with the Taliban prior to the US withdrawal from Afghanistan and whether they should be blamed for the deaths of 11 US servicemen at Kabul Airport blast.

Miss Singh replied by saying that multiple investigations were conducted by the CENTCOM and details are available online to check what was concluded in those investigations.

Pak Hockey team calls on COAS

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS), received the Pakistan Hockey team at General Headquarters Rawalpindi on Friday. The meeting was also attended by President Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) Tariq Hussain and other PHF officials.

During the interaction, the COAS commended the team for their outstanding performance, stating, "The hockey team has brought immense pride to the nation, and we are committed to providing them with comprehensive support to ensure their continued success." He extended his best wishes to the players for their future endeavors. The President of PHF expressed gratitude to the COAS for the opportunity to meet and interact with the team.

SBP injects Rs809.7b into market

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan, Friday, injected Rs 809.7 billion in the market through reverse repo purchase and Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based Open Market Operation (OMO) cumulatively.

According to OMO results issued here, the SBP conducted Open Market Operation, Reverse Repo Purchase (Injection) on May 17, 2024 for tenors of 7 and 28 days. The central bank received two quotes for 7-day tenor amounting to Rs 89 billion offered at the rate of return ranging between 22.09 to 22.10 percent and 13 quotes for 28-day tenor amounting to Rs 827.7 billion at the rate of return ranging between 22.05 to 22.10 per cent.

Of them, the SBP, accepted for 7-day tenor all the two quotes at 22.09 per cent rate of return p.a. While for the 28-day tenor 11 quotes amounting to Rs 658.70 billion were accepted at 22.07 % return rate.

Meanwhile, the central bank also conducted Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based Open Market Operation for tenors of 7 and 28 days. The SBP received three quotes amounting to Rs 62 billion for 7-day tenor at the rate of return ranging between 22.08 per cent to 22.11 per cent while no bid was received for 28-day tenor. The SBP accepted all the three quotes at cut-off rate of 22.08 per cent.

Gandapur gives Centre 15-day ultimatum

KP CM warns of lodging cases, jailing those snatching rights of masses

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gundapur has threatened to take over the Peshawar Electric Supply Company (Pesco) if it fails to extend relief to the people of the province within 15 days.

He was addressing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly on Friday. The KP CM said the Pakistan Tehreek Insaf (PTI) had been victimised and oppressed but the people gave the party mandate despite their symbol was snatched.

"The federal government's attitude is intolerable. We will not be silent. We are demanding our rights," he stated, adding that numerous requests were made to the centre but to no avail. The province needs Rs50 billion in two months, he added.

He said said FATA people were left alone due to operation against the terrorists. "We have not been

paid any money till date. The time of fooling the people has gone," he said. Talking about electricity outages, he said the federation had been collecting Rs1,510 billion from the KP.

"People of my province should not be called thieves and I will not tolerate these remarks against them," said the chief minister. "Nothing can break my leader as he is still facing the jail with utmost courage for the people," he held. The chief minister also said that he would not allow anyone to cut electricity connections across the province.

Pointing towards the Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda), Gandapur said: "Wapda officer is bound to serve the province. If he fails to provide relief to the masses, then I reserve power to take over his office." The KP chief executive also claimed that he would lodge cases and jail those people who tried to

snatch the due rights of the people. He gave a 15-day deadline to the Centre to find a way out via dialogues with the KP government.

CM Gandapur said that no one would be allowed to impose new taxes on the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata) and Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA) people without his permission in accordance with the 18th Amendment.

The chief minister announced improving the health insurance cards' scheme after sharp criticism. He also declared introducing a resolution against illegal recruitment. CM Gandapur promised that the provincial government would create employment opportunities for the citizens via technical education programmes. He also vowed that development projects would also be completed in the "Form 47" constituencies.

KP in grip of administrative crisis

Syed Adnan

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is currently embroiled in an administrative crisis, with significant delays in the implementation of the Chief Minister's directive to remove the Chief Secretary. Despite being issued two months ago, the summary to remove the Chief Secretary has not been acted upon.

Former senior retired Grade 22 officer commented on the matter, suggesting that there could have been a more effective method to facilitate the removal of the Chief Secretary. The administrative head of the province now finds himself in a precarious position, with unclear responsibilities, further complicating the functioning of the provincial bureaucracy. The process to remove the

Chief Secretary must commence with federal approval, which has yet to be granted.

The province is already experiencing heightened tensions. Nadim Aslam Chaudhry was appointed during the tenure of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) led interim government, which might be a factor in the current push for his replacement. On the other hand, the financial difficulties faced by the province remain unmitigated, and are intensifying. The Chief Minister has written nearly a dozen letters to the federal government regarding these issues.

The solution to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's challenges—militancy, poverty, underdevelopment, illiteracy, and lack of infrastructure—lies in the revival of economic

activities. If the provincial government is granted access to its rightful dues under various constitutional provisions, it could stabilize the province's precarious financial state and mitigate widespread destitution.

However, the Chief Secretary's office is currently sitting on numerous pending summaries, with the Chief Secretary unwilling to sign any of them. Grade 18 officers remain on Grade 17 positions, some districts have vacant Assistant Commissioner posts, and sources report that many Deputy Commissioners are engaged in unproductive activities rather than their official duties. Officers under inquiry continue to hold significant positions, with no progress in their cases.

KP govt gives final touches to ADP for fiscal year

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has given final touches to the draft of Annual Development Programme (ADP) for the fiscal year 2024-25. In this regard, the concluding round of four days long series of meetings, was held here at Chief Minister's House Peshawar the other day, with Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur in the chair, said a press release issued here on Thursday.

The meeting thoroughly reviewed and finalized all the ongoing and newly proposed projects to be reflected in the Annual Development Programme for the upcoming fiscal year. The chief minister made important policy decisions and issued necessary instructions in order to implement the proposed development programme in an efficient and befitting manner.

Addressing the participants, the chief minister said that the new Annual Development Programme has been drafted purely in the best public interest instead of any political expediency, adding that the Annual Development Programme will consist of such feasible projects that can be completed within the stipulated timelines.

"Ongoing development projects of public welfare would be completed on first priority," he said and added that special focus would be given to improving the public

services delivery in the far flung areas including the merged districts. Touching upon other priority areas under the new development budget, the chief minister said that green energy initiatives would be taken to deal with prevailing energy crisis in the country, under which, solarization of all public offices, educational institutions and other outlets would be carried out, whereas new road map would also be provided to utilize available hydro power resources in an efficient manner, thereby making this province self-sufficient in energy.

Beside, work would be initiated on establishing province-own transmission lines, grid stations and tariff systems. He maintained that providing tremendous employment opportunities to youth of the province, promoting industrial activities and attracting maximum investment towards potential sectors would also be among the top priorities of the incumbent provincial government. Locally produced electricity would be provided to industrial units at cheaper rates in addition to providing them with a conducive environment for investment in the province.

He made it clear that law and order, education, health, and food security were the priority sectors of the provincial government; the police force would be equipped with the latest arms and equipment, thereby enabling them to effectively deal with

the prevailing law and order situation in the province. Similarly, he said that self-sufficiency in agricultural commodities was another priority area of the government; plans were also in pipe line for constructing small and large dams at feasible sites of the province, so as to ensure efficient use of available water resources for this purpose. Innovative research techniques and modern farming would also be promoted to increase per acre yield of agriculture commodities in the province, he added.

Moreover, he said that an assets management system would be introduced to have better management of public properties, and the Minerals Development and Management Company would be established to take full advantage of precious mineral resources, which will resultantly increase the revenue stream of the province. Ali Amin Gandapur has termed significant increase in the forest cover area of the province inevitable to deal with the negative impacts of climate change; a scientific management system is much needed to ensure preservation of existing forests in addition to promoting large scale new plantations for that purpose. He further said that short and long term plans would be devised in order to balance the population and resources of the province, as the rapidly growing population has become a serious problem of this country.

Jane, Saleem discuss ways to strenthen Pak-UK ties

F.P. Report

LAHORE: British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Jane Marriott called on Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan at Governor House Lahore, on Friday. In the meeting, issues of mutual interest, ways to strengthen bilateral relations, climate change and important issues including wheat crisis were discussed in detail. Head of Lahore Office, Clara Strandhoj was also present during the meeting.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Punjab, Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said that Pakistan attaches great importance to its relations with Britain. He said that Britain has supported Pakistan in every difficult time including floods, earthquake, which is duly acknowledged by the Government of Pakistan. Governor Punjab further said that Pakistan has suffered a colossal loss in the form of flash floods due to climate change.

He said that climate change was also having adverse effect on the agricultural sector of Pakistan. Governor Punjab expressed hope that Britain would highlight the issue of Pakistan being affected by climate change in international forums.

He said that Pakistan is an agricultural country and it is very important to support farmers for the development of the agriculture sector. He said that Pakistan People's Party has always taken steps for the welfare of farmers and labour class. He said that the government was trying to resolve wheat crisis issue on priority and the situation had already improved.

Governor Punjab said that as a representative of the federation in Punjab, he would play a positive role in the improvement of Punjab. He said that the strengthening of the coalition government is very important for the stability of the country. Governor Punjab said that political stability is vital to boost the economy of the country. He reiterated that all parties should forget their petty differences and should be on same page for the development of the country.

British High Commissioner Jane Marriott said that Pakistan and Britain enjoy good relations. She said that was encouraging that the government was addressing the climate change issue on priority basis. She said that Britain would extend all out support to Pakistan to tackle climate change issue.

Meanwhile, Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan administered the oath of office to the new Chairman Punjab Public Service Commission. Governor Punjab congratulated Lieutenant General ((R) Muhammad Abdul Aziz on assuming the post of Chairman Punjab Public Service Commission and expressed his best wishes. According to the details, the solemn ceremony was held in the Darbar Hall of the Governor House Lahore on Friday. Secretary I&C read out the notification regarding the appointment of Chairman Public Service Commission. In the swearing-in ceremony, Secretary Punjab Public Service Commission and members of Punjab Public Service Commission and others were present.



LAHORE: British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Jane Marriott called on Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan at Governor House Lahore.

CM directs IGP to complete S-4 projec

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that with the political will of the government and the hard work of the police and Rangers Street crime has come down from 254 per day in January 2024 to 170 in April 2024.

"When we took over [Sindh government] in the last week of February 2024, there were 152 cases of street crime per day and now, we have controlled them to 170 per day but we are not satisfied with the crime rate and controlling it further," he said.

The statement issued from the CM House said that the IG Police Ghulam Nabi Memon called on the Sindh CM and briefed him about the overall law & order in the province, particularly the street crime in Karachi.

The IG Police briefing the CM said that in January the street crime rate per day was 254, in February 252, in March 245 and in April it came down to 170. At this, the CM said that it was considerable that the street crime has come down, but it must be controlled further. Scrap dealers: To a question, IG police told the CM that the police had conducted a complete survey under which 3000 scraper dealers were working in the city, of them 354 have been identified as dealers of stolen scrap. He disclosed that 32 teams were constituted to keep an eye on them and were doing a good job.

The CM was told that the police have registered 77 FIRs, arrested several scrap dealers, and recovered engines and other stolen vehicle materials, and steel grills removed from the main roads. Mr Shah directed the IG police not to tolerate vehicle theft or lifting and to go hard against the culprits dealing with stolen material.

Dealers of stolen mobile phones: Sindh CM directed IG Police to start a similar action against the shopkeepers dealing with stolen mobile phones. "I want you [IGP] to start a crackdown against the shopkeepers purchasing and selling stolen mobile phones or their spare parts," he said. At this, the IG police told the CM that such action was in progress and its details would be shared with him within a week.

Security-4 project: The chief minister told the IG Police that he has already released Rs1.4 billion for the Security-4 project under which CCTV cameras are to be installed at all the Toll plazas of the city and other exit and entry points. At this, the IG Police Ghulam Nabi Memon told the CM that out of 48 toll plazas 40 have been equipped with CCTV cameras and connected with the main Command & Control Center at CCPO.

The CM was told that 90 per cent of CCTV camera installation work had been completed and the remaining would be completed within the next one and half months. At this the CM said that he would inaugurate the S-4 project by the end of June, therefore it must be completed accordingly.

Kidnapping of a child: The chief minister directed IG Police to intensify the ongoing operation against the dacoits in the Kutcha area. He said that the abduction of child Mohammad Hussain Arain from Pano Aqil was unacceptable. "How the dacoits dare to barge in the houses and kidnap the child," he questioned and directed the IG to get the child recovered and keep in constant touch with the family.

IGP meets police employees, issued relief orders

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar met police employees and their families at the Central Police Office here on Friday, listened to their requests and issued orders for immediate provision of relief.

He directed the AIG Admin to provide relief on the recruitment request of the son of Lahore Police's Sub-Inspector Ghulam Mohiyuddin (late). He forwarded the application of driver Constable Zameer Ahmad for assistance in the treatment of his son to DIG Welfare Punjab for processing. On the promotion request of constable Saleem Ahmed, IGP Punjab instructed DIG Establishment II to provide relief on merit.

The IGP directed DIG Welfare to provide relief on the request of financial assistance from the wife of ASI Naseer Ahmed Late.

Ghazi constable Tariq Mehmood's request for provision of Ghazi Medal and commendation certificate has been sent to CCPO Lahore for further action. IGP Punjab forwarded the application of 07 sub-inspectors of Rawalpindi for departmental promotion to DIG Establishment II with direction to provide relief according to merit. He directed SP Operations Cantonment Lahore to take action on the application submitted by ASI Muhammad Aslam. He directed officers to provide relief on all requests and send reports to the Central Police Office. IG Punjab said that the best welfare of police force and their families is the first priority, all supervisory officers provide maximum possible relief to the employees in personal and professional affairs under personal supervision.

Govt decides to bring in more buses in Sindh

KARACHI (PPI): The Sindh government has decided to bring in more buses for the entire province in the new financial year. A high-level meeting of the Transport Department was held in Karachi under the chairmanship of Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, Mass Transit, Excise, Taxation, and Narcotics Control Sharjeel Inam Memon. Secretary of Transport Asad Zaman, Sindh Mass Transit Authority MD Kamal Hakeem Dayo, and other officials participated in the meeting.

At meeting, Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the vision of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and President Asif Ali Zardari is to connect the tehils with the district headquarters. We are considering bringing the scheme under this vision.


Salman lauds new air ambulance service

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Minister for Health and Emergency Services Khawaja Salman Rafique has appreciated the introduction of the air ambulance service as a gift from Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif for the people of the province.

Presiding over a meeting at the Emergency Head Office on Friday, he underscored the government's commitment to enhancing welfare of Punjab's citizens through improved emergency services.

"Emergency Services is the department dedicated to welfare of the people of Punjab," the minister added. "We are focusing on capacity building for our field staff to ensure they can meet the demands of emergency situations effectively."

The minister highlighted ongoing efforts to review and enhance emergency services on motorways and improve the existing motorbike service. He also emphasised that public projects under the Department of Emergency Services Punjab will undergo weekly reviews to ensure their efficacy and progress.



GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA
PAKHTUNKHWA HIGHWAYS AUTHORITY, PESHAWAR
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Attached Departments Complex near Treasury Office, Khyber Road Peshawar

AUCTION NOTICE
AUCTION OF TOLL TAX COLLECTION RIGHTS FOR THE YEAR 2024 TO 2025

Pakhtunkhwa Highways Authority Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa invites sealed bids for Collection of Toll Tax for the following **Toll Stations from the Toll Tax Contractors registered with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) in Operators Category "0-5 or above" for the year 2024-25** as well as to possess NTN and to be on ATL of FBR after depositing registration fee of Rs. 20,000/- (**Non-Refundable**) for the current contracts only along with the bid.

S#	NAME OF TOLL STATION	Tender Entry/ Documents Fee	Earnest Money	Performance Security	Last date & time of submission	Date & time of opening
1.	Auction of Toll Tax Collection Rights on D.I. Khan - Darya Khan Bridge over River Indus Provincial Highway (S-8) Sub Head: Darya Khan Toll Plaza w.e.f 01-07-2023 to 30-06-2025	Rs. 2,000/- (Non-Refundable)	2% of Bid Cost	10% of Bid Cost	04/06/2024	On same day at 12:30 Hrs
2.	Auction of Toll Tax Collection Rights On D.I Khan Chashma Section of Provincial Highway (S-11) at Kacha Malikhel. Sub Head: Chashma Toll Plaza w.e.f 01-07-2024 To 30-06-2025					
3.	Auction of Toll Tax Collection Rights On Provincial Highway (S- 7) at Kohat Hangu Thall Parachinar Road. Sub Head: Kohat - Hangu - Thall Parachinar Toll Plaza w.e.f 01-07-2024 to 30-06-2025					
4.	Auction of Toll Tax Collection Rights on Tajazai Lakki Daratang -Chashma Section of Provincial Highway (S-11). w.e.f 01-08-2024 to 30-06-2025					

(2).Tender form including Terms and Conditions can be downloaded from Pakhtunkhwa Highways Authority website (www.pkha.gov.pk). (3).The bidders will have to submit Earnest Money, Tender Entry/Documents Fee, Registration Fee & Performance Security as mentioned above along with bid in shape of Call Deposit Receipt (CDR) in favor of Managing Director Pakhtunkhwa Highways Authority Peshawar, from a scheduled Bank of Pakistan payable at any Branch, failing which, bid will be considered as "**Non-Responsive**". (4). Bidders who were awarded contracts of previous year Toll Tax Collection Rights, will have to submit a certificate from the concerned Deputy Director PKHA regarding satisfactory performance with their bids. In case of failure, the bids will be considered as "Non- Responsive". (5). Bidders who have not cleared income tax or other payable amounts in connection with previous bids, up till the deadline for submission as mentioned in the above table will be considered as "**Non-Responsive**". (6). The bidder will submit the Financial Bid and other documents in 2 separate envelopes. 2% Bid Security, Performance Security, Registration Fee & Tender Entry/Documents Fee, shall be sealed in one envelop clearly marked as "Bid Security" & other documents in another envelope. (7). Sealed bids with sticking tap (not with stapler) of courier or by bidder. However, the open-able, face should be fully covered by sticking tap to make the envelope sealed. Any lapse in this regard will make your bid, "**Non-Responsive**." bids are required to be sent through courier/urgent mail service (UMS) up to 12:00 noon of **04-06-2024**, which will be opened on the same day at 12:30 pm in the presence of the bid opening committee and participant bidders/representatives. (8). The auction will be held in camera under video recording. (09). The bidder shall provide an undertaking on Judicial Stamp paper duly notarized that the bidder is not defaulter of any Government Department, Including PKHA, as well as not blacklisted anywhere from Pakistan. (10). The bidders providing unsubstantiated and/or incorrect information are liable to legal action and disqualification. (11). The successful bidder will have to deposit all taxes on prescribed rates fixed time to time by Government. (12). The successful bidder will have to submit "Post-Dated Cheques" of the installments amount & income tax amount in advance before taking over the rights for collection of tolls. Post-Dated Cheques will be returned to the contractor after the successful completion of the contract period. (13). For Toll Station at Serial No. 1, the successful bidder will have to deposit entire bid amount along with income tax in 12 equal monthly installments. 1 installment will be paid before taking-over the rights of foll collection at station. Remaining installments will be paid on or before 10th of each month. While at Toll Stations at Serial No. 2, 3 & 4, the successful bidder will have to deposit entire bid amount along with income tax in 06 (Bi-Monthly) installments for the as per the following schedule:

INSTALLMENT NO	FOR THE MONTHS	DUE DATE OF DEPOSIT
1 st	July, August	Before taking over rights of the toll collection
2 nd	September, October,	On or before 10th September
3 rd	November, December	On or before 10th November
4 th	January, February	On or before 10th January
5 th	March, April	On or before 10th March

(14). The successful bidder will have to sign the Contract Agreement within 15 days after issuance of the work Order, failing which the bid securities will be forfeited in favour of the Govt. (15). A Pre-bid meeting will be held in the office of the undersigned on **28/05/2024 at 11:00 am** for any other clarification regarding the auction. (16). The Authority may reject all bids at any time prior to the acceptance of a bid. The procuring entity shall upon request, communicate to any contractor who submitted a bid, the grounds for rejection of all bids.

INF (P) 983/24**Director-III**

Educational Testing & Evaluation Agency (ETEA)
NOTICE INVITING TENDERS
(NIT No. 10/2023-24 Date: 16.05.2024)

- Educational Testing & Evaluation Agency (ETEA) invites sealed bids from contractors for provision of "**Transport Service**" as per **Rule 31(A) framework contract** for transportation of staff and exam material to test centers located at different districts/cities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under Single Stage Single Envelope Bidding procedure.
- Bidder should be registered with Income Tax and relevant Sales Tax Departments of Government of Pakistan/KPRA and should 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 one day prior to closing date by submission of a fee (non-refundable) of Rs. 2010 through CDR or online deposit in Allied Bank Account # 001005556550010 in favor of **Educational Testing & Evaluation Agency (ETEA)** along with a written request/application on the letter head of the bidder.
- Bids shall reach to the office of the undersigned on or before the 5th June, 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 representatives who may like to attend.
- Bids must be accompanied by a bid security of Rs.100,000/- in shape of CDR in favor 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 cogent reasons. Advertisement is available on the websites of KPRA and ETEA as well.

Deputy Director Procurement (Educational Testing & Evaluation Agency (ETEA)
Plot # 22, Street # 13, Sector E-8, Phase-VII (Near Haji Complex), Hayatabad, Peshawar KPK
www.etea.edu.pk, Phone: 091-9219049-78
INF(P) 994/24



وزارت داخلہ حکومت پاکستان
ہیڈ کوارٹر منسٹر آف ہاؤسنگ اینڈ رجسٹریشن اتھارٹی (نادر)
نوش بوجہ غیر حاضری



آپ سماء کرن شاد (جو نیوا گزیکو) ای آر نیبر 75962، بنت شاد جی گل (پیدہ قوم نمبر (مروم) اور مگرور باو ولد عبدالرحیم ذہیر حاجی بدال دین (مروم) کے کلک جائیداد کے حلقے دار ہیں، انیسر خان، مجرید محمد مزید، ناظر، ناظر، محمد عزیز، عبداللہ، امرت تارہ اور کلثوم ہے۔ اس کے علاوہ دیگر کوئی وارث نہیں ہے۔ اگر کسی کو کسی قسم کا کوئی اعتراض ہو تو اس اشتہار کی اشاعت سے 15 دن کے اندر رابطہ کریں بصورت دیگر کوئی نظر ثانی قابل قبول نہ ہوگا۔

RHO/NADRA/Disp/08/HR/75962/First: 2024-03-15
Notice, Dated: 15-Mar-2024
RHO/NADRA/Disp/08/HR/75962/Second Notice: 2024-04-04
Dated: 04-April-2024

دو جہات کی وضاحت کرنے کی ہدایت کی گئی لیکن آپ ان کی تعمیل میں ناکام ہیں اور آپ کا یہ عمل مروم، رگولیشنرز (کارکردگی اور نظم و ضبط) 2020 کی صریحاً مخالف ورزی کے ضمن میں آتا ہے۔ آپ کو بذریعہ نوش بوجہ ہدایت کی جاتی ہے کہ آپ فی الفور حاضر ہوں اور تقریری طور پر اپنی غیر حاضری کی وضاحت پیش کریں۔ بصورت دیگر مروم رگولیشنرز (کارکردگی اور نظم و ضبط) 2020 کے تحت منظر قیادہ میں کاروائی میں لا کر آپ کو ملازمت سے برطرف کر دیا جائے گا۔

پروویجٹ ڈائریکٹر (میانزار ہنر)
رجسٹرڈ میونسپل ناہارا ای۔ او۔ بی۔ آئی بلڈنگ، پلاٹ نمبر 31 بکٹر 1-5 فیئر آباد پشاور
فون: 9217840-091

PID/No. 7009/23

اطلاع عام

عوام الناس کو مطلع کیا جاتا ہے کہ حاجی بدال دین ولد گل (مروم) اور مگرور باو ولد عبدالرحیم ذہیر حاجی بدال دین (مروم) کے کلک جائیداد کے حلقے دار ہیں، انیسر خان، مجرید محمد مزید، ناظر، ناظر، محمد عزیز، عبداللہ، امرت تارہ اور کلثوم ہے۔ اس کے علاوہ دیگر کوئی وارث نہیں ہے۔ اگر کسی کو کسی قسم کا کوئی اعتراض ہو تو اس اشتہار کی اشاعت سے 15 دن کے اندر رابطہ کریں بصورت دیگر کوئی نظر ثانی قابل قبول نہ ہوگا۔

0928-633013 فون: 0928-633013

LOSS OF ALLOTMENT LETTER (SERVICE BENEFIT PLOT ONLY) LETTER

Allotment (Service Benefit Plot Only) Letter of file REF No. 01/BTM/1K/000138, Sector 'Q', Plot No.857, Measuring One Kanal situated in Phase One issued by DHA Multan in the name Hafiz Ayyaz Ahmad son of Riaz Ahmed, R/O of House No.7-20/2 Mohallah Alamdard road Quetta has been lost. Finder may return the same to project secretary defence housing authority Multan. Otherwise after 7 Days original Allotment Letter shall be treated as cancelled.

Telephone: 061-6516036-38



Non-compliant hotels and restaurants

KPRA continues crack-down in Peshawar

Record of a restaurant in Peshawar Saddar confiscated

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: To improve tax compliance and discourage tax evasion, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority (KPRA) continued its raids on the business premises of non-compliant taxpayers in Peshawar, on the directives of DG KPRA Fouzia Iqbal.

A team of KPRA Peshawar including Assistant Collector Khalid Mansoor, Assistant Collector Roohullah Khan, Assistant Collector Shah Nawaz Khan, Assistant Collector Muhammad Imran Khan, Inspector Muhammad Afzal Abid, Auditor Hadi Hussain Bangash and

Auditor Sikandar Hayat conducted a raid on a restaurant located in Saddar Cantonment area and confiscated its record.

On the directives of Director General KPRA Fouzia Iqbal, KPRA has launched a crackdown against non-compliant taxpayers across the province. In Peshawar, the KPRA team confiscated record of a big and noted restaurant located in Cantt area in Saddar.

The restaurant was earlier served with notices and its management was asked to submit their records to KPRA. However, they did not respond to the notices, after which the KPRA

team conducted a raid on the restaurant and confiscated its record, as per KPRA rules and regulations, for examination.

DG KPRA Fouzia Iqbal in her statement said that they are forced to launch a crackdown against the non-compliant taxpayers.

"Tax evasion would not be tolerated at any cost and I would inform all the non-compliant taxpayers to start cooperation with the KPRA team and ensure complete tax compliance to avoid legal actions," she said adding they were observing persisting non-compliance from numerous taxpayers in Peshawar other areas and despite the issuance of several notices by KPRA certain hotels

and restaurants were still not compliant after which the crackdown was launched.

She said that KPRA teams will not only confiscate their records but will also opt for attachment of bank accounts, and even sealing of businesses if the restaurant and hotel owners continue to evade tax and remain non-compliant.

"To avoid strict actions from KPRA, all registered persons who have failed to deposit tax, made short payments, not issued proper sales tax invoices, or under-reported their sales must settle their tax liabilities and deposit the due tax promptly," said DG KPRA.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur chairing a meeting regarding formulation of ADP 2024-25

Chief Minister meeting with PESCO Chief

4 hours reduction in load shedding annuoned: Saif

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Information and Public Relations Barrister Dr. Saif has stated that under the leadership of Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, the provincial government is taking all possible measures to provide relief to the public.

In this regard, Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur held a special meeting with the Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) Chief to address the severe load shedding in the province.

During the meeting, Chief Minister Gandapur emphasized on PESCO authorities to take special measures to reduce load shedding in the province.

Consequently, PESCO authorities have announced a reduction in the duration of load shedding by 4 hours, with further measures to reduce it even more to be taken

later.

According to details, the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa took a stern stance against unbridled load shedding in the province and directed the PESCO Chief to take strict action to reduce it. The meeting was attended by other senior officials including the Chief Secretary and Inspector General of Police.

The PESCO Chief briefed the Chief Minister on the new load shedding schedule in the province. Under the directives of the Chief Minister, the duration of load shedding has been reduced from 22 hours to 18 hours. Barrister Dr. Saif further mentioned that the provincial government will closely monitor the implementation of the new schedule, and strict action will be taken against any violations.

Additional measures will be taken to further reduce the duration of load shedding. The Chief Minister instructed the

PESCO Chief to ensure relief for the public in their responsibilities as well.

He added that as per Imran Khan's vision, Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur is undertaking several initiatives to provide relief to the public in the province. In this regard, the price of bread has been reduced from Rs. 20 to Rs. 15, and significant reductions have been made in the prices of flour and other commodities. Furthermore, additional measures are also being taken.

Government initiates wheat purchase from punjab farmers

Barrister Dr. Saif, the Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Information and Public Relations, announced that the KP government has commenced wheat procurement from Punjab farmers. Approximately 300,000 metric tons of wheat will be purchased from Punjab cultivators by June 30. Wheat will be

procured from Punjab farmers at a rate of Rs. 3,900 per maund.

He stated that the KP government is actively present in the field to assist Punjab farmers against the commission mafia. Punjab farmers have been burdened with a debt of Rs. 300 billion by this mafia. Instead of penalizing the mafia, the administration has resorted to crackdowns on farmers, while the Raj Kamari scheme is being falsely portrayed.

The KP government is addressing the grievances of Punjab farmers, whereas the Raj Kamari police is busy in fashion shows. The KP Food Department has also extended a gesture of goodwill by initiating banners for Punjab farmers.

Barrister Saif emphasized that instead of threatening the farmers with violence, gratitude should be expressed to the KP government. If the KP government also neglects to assist Punjab farmers, where will these poor farmers go?

Gadoon Officers Organization elects new Cabinet



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The elections of Gadoon Officers Organization were held, under the supervision of Prof Dr Haider Shah, former vice chancellor of Islamia College University.

The members of the organization participated in the election process. Prof. Dr Muhammad Iqbal, Dean Faculty of numerical and physical sciences university of Peshawar was elected as president while Dr Gulzar



Jalal, head of English department Edwardes college Peshawar as general secretary of the organization. The other cabinet members are Mr. Umar Daraz Khan, S.P.Police department, as senior vice President, Dr Sher Rahman, vice President for Peshawar, Mr. Mian Zaman Khan, vice President for Gadoon, Swabi, Mr. Fiaz Muhammad Khan, vice President for Islamabad, Dr. Asghar Khan, deputy General Secretary, Engr. Pir

Muhammad, Finance Secretary, Dr. Gul Nabi Khan Press & Information Secretary.

Dr. Muhammad Amin, Dr.Amir Rahman, Dr Muhammad Idrees, Engr. Lalbadshah, Engr. Gulzeb Khan, Gohar Rahman and Jehanzeb khan would be members of the advisory council. Prof Dr Haider Shah, former vice chancellor of Islamia College University and Mushtaq Jadoon Former secretary health would be jointly the Patron-in-Chiefs of the organization. The newly elected cabinet thanked all the members of GO-ON and made it clear that they would put their efforts for the betterment of the organization. It was also decided that the oath taking ceremony of the newly cabinet would be held at Gadoon District Swabi.

Earth Science Pakistan conference on June 2

PESHAWAR (APP): The National Centre of Excellence in Geology (NCEG) University of Peshawar (UoP) will arrange the Earth Science Pakistan Conference at Summer Camp Bara Gali from 2nd June 2024.

The NCEG has a long-standing tradition of hosting international conferences in the field of Earth Sciences at the Bara Gali Summer Campus of the University of Peshawar for the last two decades. NCEG has so far organized Earth Science Pakistan (ESP) in 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2022 with major focus on earth sciences related challenges in Pakistan.

A press release said on Friday that the ESP 2024 will provide a platform for national and international scientists to showcase their research in various fields of Earth and Environmental Sciences.

A special workshop will be organized for stakeholders from public and private sectors, focusing on topics such as climate induced hazards and associated risks for critical infrastructure, in collaboration with Bristol University (UK), Himalayan University Consortium (ICIMOD, Nepal) and Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS). Dedicated sessions will cover areas including economic mineral resources, energy & petroleum resources, structural geology, applied geophysics, and emerging technologies. International scientists from the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, China, and Nepal will also participate and present their ideas and research contributions.



PESHAWAR" Chief Traffic Officer Saud Khan presenting commendation certificate to PRO city traffic police Shahab Khan for being the 'most punctual officer'.

RMC wins Second RMI Sports Gala

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The second Rehman Medical Institute (RMI) Sports Gala concluded on a high note with a splendid ceremony on Friday. The week-long event saw enthusiastic participation in cricket, futsal, basketball, badminton, table tennis, and volleyball. Rehman Medical College (RMC) emerged as the overall champion with a total of 90 points, winning the finals in most events.

Rehman College of Allied Health Sciences secured second place with 60 points, while Rehman College of Dentistry claimed third.

The other two teams, Rehman College of Dentistry (RCD) and Rehman College of Nursing

(RCN), scored 35 and 25 points, respectively. The closing ceremony was held at RMI, with Director General of Peshawar Development Authority (PDA), Captain Khalid Mahmood, as the chief guest.

Distinguished attendees included CEO RMI Shafiq ur Rehman, COO Colonel (R) Muhammad Tariq Khan, Dean RMI Dr. Bakhtiar Zahid, Dean Allied Health Sciences Dr. Muhammad Bin Afzar Jan, Principal RMC Dr. Mukhtiar Zaman, Principal RCD Dr. Ghulam Rasool, Principal RCRS Dr. Muhammad Bilal, Principal RCN Dr. Aurangzeb, and Principal RCAHS Muhammad Danish. Medals and trophies were distributed among the win-

ners and runners-up in a vibrant ceremony.

RMC dominated the points table, winning the women's finals in basketball, volleyball, table tennis singles and doubles, and badminton singles, as well as the men's finals in basketball and badminton doubles.

Rehman College of Allied Health Sciences secured second place by winning the men's finals in cricket, futsal, and volleyball. Capt. Khalid Mahmood, Director General of Peshawar Development Authority (PDA), graced the occasion as the chief guest.

He emphasized the importance of healthy activities for raising a healthy mind. Capt. Mahmood highlighted PDA's commit-

ment to providing youth with access to good sporting facilities. He praised the efforts of the Directorate of Sports RMI and congratulated them on organizing an outstanding tournament.

CEO RMI stressed the role of sports in healthy lifestyle and urged the audience to promote sports and adopt healthy lifestyles.

He emphasized the need to encourage youth to move away from mobile phones and engage in physical activities.

He proposed offering scholarships to attract talented athletes who could represent RMI. He commended the efforts of the Directorate of Sports RMI and hoped that the annual sports gala would continue to grow and attract wider participation.



Noor Alam defends Ph.D thesis



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Junior Auditor Noor Alam at University of Peshawar successfully defended his Doctorate Philosophy (Ph D) in Management Sciences (Finance) thesis from Qurtuba University of Science and Information Technology, Peshawar.

The scholar was supervised by Dr. Naveed, Associate Professor, City University of Science and Information Technology, Peshawar while Co supervisor was Dr. Muhammad Kashif Saeed, Associate Professor, Department of Economics, University of Peshawar.

Prof. Dr. Muhammad Mudassir Khan, Abbottabad University of Science and Technology was external examiner for Ph. D thesis defense.

TEVTA, OEC join hands

PESHAWAR (APP): Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Overseas Employment Corporation (OEC) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on Thursday for searching employment opportunities for skilled youth in foreign, teaching them various languages and mutual cooperating in exporting them for abroad.

The MoU signing ceremony in this regard was held in the Conference Room of the Industries, Commerce and Technical Education Department with Special Assistant to KP CM Abdul Karim Khan Tordher in the chair.

Besides, Secretary to KP Govt Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Zulfikar Ali Shah, Managing Director (MD) TEVTA, Aamir Afaq and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) OEC Mohammad Akbar Khan, other senior officials also attended the ceremony.

During the function, MD TEVTA and CEO OEC formally signed the memorandum of understanding. Under the memorandum TEVTA KP will get access to the job portal of the Overseas Employees Corporation to keep the youth of the province informed regarding employment opportunities abroad and so they could get timely information regarding different kinds of attractive opportunities in various countries.

Similarly, measures would also be taken to teach Korean, Japanese and German languages to the

graduates of TEVTA. Furthermore, coordination between OEC and TEVTA would also be strengthened to remain informed about new trends in the international human resource market to prepare skilled workers in accordance with it.

Speaking on the occasion, the Special Assistant to KP CM on Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Abdul Karim Khan Tordher termed the signing of the MoU between TEVTA and OEC a milestone towards employing the youth and export of the skilled manpower of the province abroad.

He said that on behalf of the provincial government, TEVTA KP is determined to implement the memorandum and is interested in further cooperation in this regard.

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In brief

Kuli Kachery arranged
F.P. Report

TIRAH: Deputy Commissioner, Khyber Capt. (Retd) Sanaullah Khan held a Kuli Kachery(open court) on Thursday in tehsil Jirga hall, Tirah to tackle the pressing issues faced by the rural communities. Addressing on the occasion, he said that dealing with the collective matters being faced by the residents of Tirah Valley is the top priority of the district administration and they are taking every possible step in that regard. He also pledged to continue organizing Kuli Kacheris in remote areas to address residents' concerns effectively. A large number of tribal elders and representatives from different tribes including Koki Khel, Zakha Khel, Kamar Khel Malikdin Khel and others presented their concerns and grievances. Capt. (Retd) Sanaullah Khan provided immediate instructions to the relevant departments to initiate actions for resolving these issues. DC attentively listened to complaints and issues concerning health, education, public health, link roads, concern of compensation survey, permission of wood collecting in forests, resuming of mobile net service, installing of solar lights in the bazaar etc. On the spot instructions were issued to the relevant departments for swift and efficient resolution. Additional DC (finance) Haseebur Rehman, Additional DC (relief) Numan Ali Shah, Assistant Commissioner Bara Shahbuddin, Tehsil Chairman Muft Kafil and officials of line departments were also present on the occasion. The locals thanked the district administration for organizing the open court to address them on the spot.

Drive against under-age drivers
F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: District Traffic Officer (DTO) Asif Rahim Butt said that the crackdown against under-age drivers is going and license centres have been established across the district, on Thursday. This he claimed while talking to The Frontier Post and added that where licenses are being issued immediately. The Traffic police are performing their duties honestly. Indiscriminate actions are being taken against under-age drivers and drivers of motorcycles and other vehicles without license due to accidents, who are facing legal action with heavy fines. Citizens are requested not to drive a motorcycle or vehicle without a license. Driving License centres have been set up in every city, visit them today to get your license to reduce traffic accidents significantly.

Drive against encroachments
F.P. Report

LARKANA: Mayor Larkana Anwar Ali Luhar's strictest response to the public unrest and complaints against the encroachment in different areas by the mafia including Pakistani Chowk, Jails Bazar, Shahi Bazar, Resham Gili Bandar Road. On the instructions of Anti-encroachment cell in-charge GM Jhanjhan, anti-encroachment operations were intensified across the city, which are ongoing in Chandka Bridge, Sheikh Zayed, Baqrani Road, Lahori Mahalla, Rail Road and other areas of the city. However, the preparations for conducting a grand operation on a large scale have been completed soon, in this regard, the process of informing the citizens is also going on, while talking to the media on this occasion, Mayor Larkana Anwar Ali Luhar said that urban roads, streets and footpaths.

CM aide for govt, people collaboration to boost tourism



F.P. Report

MANSEHRA: Advisor to Chief Minister on Tourism and Culture Zahid Chanzab said on Friday that launching a 'Responsible Tourism Awareness Campaign' was the need of the hour to explore and exploit the tourism potential in every nook and corner of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for the benefit of people.

"The people should come forward and help supplement the efforts of government for boosting tourism in the province," he said while speaking at the launching of 'Responsible Tourism Awareness Campaign' held at a private educational institution here.

Besides Commandant Tourism Police Syed Imtiaz Shah, Director Administration Saiful Islam, District Police Officer, Mansehra, Shafullah Khan Gandapur, principal and students of the school and

other stakeholders attended the event. Zahid Chanzab said that Tourism Police were providing security and facilities to the tourists at the scenic spots across the province.

He said that launching the awareness drive was meant to safeguard the natural beauty of tourist destinations and explore the new sites to develop them along modern lines.

The advisor emphasized the pivotal role of collaboration between the people and the KP government in fostering responsible tourism development in the province. He said that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) planned to extend the reach of the awareness campaign to educational institutions and various locations across KP.

The primary objective, he added, was to raise awareness about responsi-

ble tourism practices and underscore the importance of preserving the natural beauty of tourist destinations. The students participated in the ceremony and showcased various models representing the diverse natural beauty of the province. These models depicted iconic tourist attractions, cultural heritage, artifacts, traditional musical instruments and wildlife.

It may be mentioned that the KP government has commenced an ambitious initiative to safeguard the natural beauty of its tourist destinations. The campaign aimed at creating awareness among the public about the importance of preserving the province's natural beauty. The drive seeks to engage the people in the preservation efforts and enhance their understanding of the significance of the region's natural and tourism assets.

Mother's Day celebrated at Afghan refugee camp

F.P. Report

BUNER: International Mother Day celebrated at Afghan refugee camp Buner with the support of Helvetas Pakistan in which Assistant Commissioner Mandanr Maryam Bakhtawar was the participated as chief guest, on Friday.

A large number of refugee women from the camp participated in the ceremony. A cake was cut on this occasion. In a brief address to the participants, the Assistant Commissioner said that she was very happy to participate in the Mother's Day event. He further said that in our society the selfless love and dedication of mothers is recognized.

And everyone admires them and every woman gets the privilege of becoming a mother at her right time and she becomes the backbone of her families and communities as a mother.

Assistant Commissioner Madam Maryam Bakhtawar appreciated the efforts of Helvetas International for empower-

ing women and working for their economic development and providing education and health facilities in Afghan refugee camp, tehsil Mandanr, Buner.

Meanwhile, the Salarazi tribe have staged protest demonstration at Jowar Chowk against the imposition of section four on their agricultural lands for the establishment of Marble City. The protestors blocked Jowar Chowk for all kinds of traffic for an hour. Due to which there were long queues of vehicles going to Swat, Pir Baba and Swari.

The protestors were holding placards on which the slogans of disapproval of the establishment of the marble zone and disapproval of the administration were written. The local elders including Saeedur Rehman Mufakir, Qateb ur Rehman advocate, Muhammad Amin, Khaliq Dad Siddiqui, Ali Rehman, Muhammad Alam, Mumtaz Khan, Aziz Khan and others addressed. They claimed thousands of families are getting their meal from these 1000 kanals of

agricultural lands and lamented the district administration for snatching meal from them by force.

The protestors termed the imposition of section four as signing the license to the economic murder of thousands of Salarazi farmers and their families. They described their eviction from agricultural lands as injustice and the continuous pressure to take possession was described as cruelty. They pledged all kinds of sacrifices for protection their agriculture lands.

The speakers severely criticized the role of the elected members from Buner and reminded that thousands of Salarazi them helped them elected by giving thousands of votes. But when the land owners of Salarazi faced difficulties, these elected members turned their backs, they complained. They warned that if the members do not support the people at this important point, they will be boycotted socially and their entry will be banned on the soil of Salarazi.

Clinic on Wheal opened

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Former Federal Health Minister Saira Afzal Tarar inaugurated Chief Minister's Clinic on Wheal at Hafizabad. Deputy Commissioner Sundas Irshad, CEO Health Umer Sharif Ratohor and DHO Faiq Ali Tarar were also accompanied. Saira Afzal Tarar said on this occasion that Clinic on Wheal was a revolutionary and relief-oriented steps of the Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz and under this programme, Health Department would be held medical camp in city areas on daily basis whereas free of cost all medicines and other treatment facilities would be provided to the people at their doorsteps.

Former Federal Minister said that the Punjab government was given 14 ambulances for Clinic on Wheal Programme and test facilities of ECG, ultrasounds, sugar, hepatitis B and C tests blood pressure etc. would be available in ambulances. CEO Health told that family planning camp with collaboration of Population Welfare and Health Departments would also be arranged to improve nutrition deficien-

cy in pregnant women and children. He further told that a doctor, dispenser, nurse, LHV and other paramedical staff would be deputed with Clinic on Wheal each.

Poll for student councils concluded: Polling to elect students councils in male and female high and elementary school held peacefully in the district Hafizabad. Deputy Commissioner Sundas Irshad, CEO Education Muhammad Anwar Javed visited Government Double Section Girls High School and witnessed process of election.

Principal of the School Madam Shahida Shamshad gave briefing about arraignments made for holding election of President, Vice-President, General Secretary and Finance Secretary of Students Councils. CEO Education Muhammad Anwar Javed said that school councils will be responsible to assist school administration for promoting co-curriculum activities, promoting books reading, maintaining discipline of the schools and making efforts for resolving students' problems with the help of school administration.

CEO said that school

councils would be proved a best platform for highlighting hidden talent, leadership qualities and character building of students so that students could lead the society in practical life in future and enable to take active part in progress and prosperity of the country.

Admn organizes mock exercises: District administration Hafizabad conducted a mock exercise to review pre-flood arraignments made by different departments to combat likely flood situation during monsoon season, on Thursday at Sagar Canal Head. Health, livestock, Municipal Committee, District Council, Civil Defence, Education and other department setup camps with necessary equipment.

Deputy Commissioner Sundas Irshad reviewed expertise of Rescue 1122 and other department's personals in mock exercise. District Rescue Office Adnan Nawaz, CEO Education Muhammad Anwar Javed, CEO Health Dr. Umer Sharif Rathore, Chief Officer District Council Shahzad Akhtar and Deputy Director Development Tasswar Abbas were also present on the occasion.

Accused sentenced to death by court in Dir
F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The court of additional session judge Samarbagh Amjad Hussain at a camp court in Lal Qila sentenced one Zahid Khan 44 s/o Juma Khan, a resident of Jam Dherai Maidan to death under section 302 (b)/311 PPC and to pay a fine of Rs 2 million as compensation under section 544-A of the PPC to the legal heirs.

The accused was also sentenced to undergo rigorous imprisonment for three years and to pay a fine of Rs 5000 under section 15 AA. The accused according to the judgment would be hanged by the neck till he is dead. The accused, however, can file an appeal against the verdict in the Peshawar High Court Mingora Bench within seven days.

Young doctors: The deadlock between the Young Doctors' Association (YDA) and administration of the district headquarters hospital Timergara ended after successful talks were held between the hospital MS and YDA representatives here the other day. The YDA was demanding an adequate probe into the misuse of funds under the Sehat Sahulat programme during the last tenure.

A three-member probe committee was formed for appropriate inquiry into the matter on which the YDA expressed satisfaction. The patients and their attendants also expressed pleasure in resolving the problem between the young doctors and hospital management.

Special counter for aged patients setup
F.P. Report

MARDAN: A special counter has been set up for sixty-five-year-olds in the district headquarters hospital of Mardan, where the treatment of patients over 65 years of age has been started as per directives of Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

If on one hand the provincial government provides the facility of health card to the common people, on the other hand the people expressed their happiness and appreciated the efforts of the government for starting the special counter facility for the elderly. Regarding this special counter, MS and District Health Officer of the hospital Dr Javed Iqbal said that this counter has been made for 65-year-old people to provide them with the best services.

All facilities up to lab test, ECG, Echo, X-ray, MRI will be provided free of charge and along with stretcher, wheelchair will be available at all times. So, bring your national identity card with you while coming to the hospital.

Prize distribution ceremony held at the Fazal Haq College: Annual prize distribution ceremony in Fazal Haq College Mardan, Secretary Primary and Secondary Education Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Masood Ahmed was the special guest of the ceremony Chairman of Mardan Board Farid Ahmed Khattak participated in the ceremony as guest of honor.

On this occasion, Secretary Primary and Secondary Education Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Masood Ahmed distributed prizes to the students who took prominent positions. And in his address, he praised the outstanding progress and achievements of Fazal Haq College and termed its status as a symbol of educational excellence in the region.

He appreciated the joint efforts of educators, students, parents and communities in advancing the cause of quality education and fostering a culture of learning and innovation. Masood Ahmed also emphasized the fundamental importance of developing research thinking skills in students and recognized them as fundamental to their educational journey and future success. He further appreciated the principal of the college Madam Samina Khan and acknowledged her unwavering dedication and hard work in shaping the success of the institution.

Mayor Mardan argues CM to end dysfunctional status of LG

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Member of the Local Councils Association Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Himayatullah Mayar has demanded of the chief minister to take prompt and effective steps for early resolution of their issues and problems.

Talking to The Frontier Post, Himayatullah Mayar said that all tiers of Local Governments in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had been facing challenges and issues pertaining to their powers, functions and funds. "We have submitted a written application before the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief minister Mr. Ali Amin Gandapur while requesting him to take keen interest for resolution of our issues and challenges," he added.

He disclosed that the members of Local Councils Association Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had also demanded of the chief minister for giving time to hold a meeting with them so that they could easily discuss their challenges, issues and hurdles on the occasion.

The members of LCA strongly believed that the said meeting would bear positive results for a strong, robust and effective local government system in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Mayor while

talking to this scribe made the following several demands from the incumbent PTI provincial government.

Restoration of Local Government Act 2019 and to make rules of business (ROBs) consistent with the provisions of the Act as mentioned in section 112 sub section 3 clauses a,b,c,d of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa LGA 2019.

Release of funds to Tehsil / city / metropolitan local governments and Village and neighborhood councils. The Tehsil local governments and TMAs and VC/NC are dysfunctional due to non-availability of funds, delivery of social and municipal services are at halt since 2021. The Tehsil local governments and VCs/NCs in MDs(merged districts) are deprived of offices, human and logistical resources which shall be taken on priority to ensure availability of offices and mentioned resources in MDs.

The elected representatives are deprived of rightful legal honoraria and other benefits since their assumption of charge of offices. The rent of offices of VC/NC has been enhanced , notification issued but not implemented.

The Movable and

Immobile properties of Tehsil and City Local Governments has been occupied or possessed by other departments or officers which shall be handed over to the respective local governments as mandated under sections 38 and 121A of the local government act .

The P&D guidelines may be amended and thereby Chairman/ Mayor shall be appointed as Chairman Tehsil/ City Development Committee. The present formation is in deviation of spirit of the LGA and previous practice. Establishment of Tehsil offices of devolved departments at Tehsil level must be ensured in the shortest possible time.

Nomination of Tehsil Chairmen and Chairmen NC/VC in BOGs, BODs, DRCs and other committees, boards at Tehsil, VC / NC level. Transfer of pending property/ UIP tax to Tehsil Governments. Equal distribution and transfer of Octroi (GST) share amongst Tehsil Local Councils and VCs / NCs. Execution of developmental projects up to Rs 2.5m through project committees. Extension of tenure of Local Governments for further two years due to dysfunction in previous two years.

Terrorists attack under construction girls' school

F.P. Report

WANA: Unknown terrorists attacked the under-construction Girls' High School in Dabkot village of South Waziristan, which was being built with the financial support of Wana Welfare Association. The leaders of Awami National Party, Ayaz Wazir, and People's Party South Waziristan, Amanullah, and elders of Ahmadzai Wazir, vehemently condemned the government for its failure to prevent the attack and demanded that it take decisive action against the perpetrators.

The political leaders emphasized that terrorists had targeted girls' schools repeatedly, and the government's inaction had only emboldened them. The leaders accused some elements of fearing the progress and empowerment of tribal areas and deliberately denying girls' education. They expressed their unwavering support for Wana Welfare Association

and vowed to restart the construction of the school and ensure its protection, as it was a shared asset and beacon of hope for all the tribes living in Lower Waziristan.

They warned that the government's failure to take concrete steps to stop the current wave of terrorism would engulf Lower Waziristan in unrest, making it impossible to acquire education and conduct business in a peaceful environment.

DHQ Hospital faces severs crisis: District Headquarters Hospital Wana, a vital lifeline for thousands, faces an unprecedented crisis. Three years of unpaid salaries and severe budget cuts have pushed the hospital to the brink of collapse, leaving employees without pay for eight months and patients without access to critical medical services.

Despite providing 24-hour emergency services and performing numerous surgeries daily. But, the

lack of funds and delayed salary payments have put the hospital in a precarious situation, with staff and patients bearing the brunt of the crisis. The closure of Sheikh Fatima Hospital in Shulam due to lack of funding has exacerbated the crisis, with patients' families outraged over the non-availability of ambulances after 6 pm due to security concerns.

The public urgently needs vaccinations, but the government is failing to provide them, and the hospital is in dire need of vaccines, insulin, and other essential medicines not being supplied by the government. The people of Wana demand immediate action from the government to address the crisis and alleviate the sufferings of tribesmen at the district headquarter hospital Wana. The community urges the authorities to take sustainable action to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe hovering over the hospital.

KUST & KKKUK sign MoU with OGDCL

F.P. Report

KARAK: The Vice Chancellor of Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak, and the Vice Chancellor of Kohat University of Science & Technology (KUST), Prof. Dr. Muhammad Naseer Ud Din, recently held productive meetings with representatives of Oil and Gas Development Corporation Limited (OGDCL) in Islamabad.

The Vice Chancellor was accompanied by a delegation from KUST and Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak. The Vice Chancellor met with OGDCL General Manager Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Abdur Raziq Khattak, and other senior officers of the company. The OGDCL authorities expressed their willingness to extend assistance to both universities in plantation initiatives and other projects aimed at benefiting students and the local populace.

Memorandum of understanding (MoU's) were also signed between KUST and OGDCL as well as KKKUK and OGDCL showing the commitment between the universities and OGDCL. Prof. Dr. Muhammad Naseer ud Din expressed his gratitude to the OGDCL authorities for their support towards the well-being of students and communities in oil and gas-producing districts.

Prof Dr Dr Muhammad Naseer Ud Din informed the OGDCL authorities that



Prof Dr Dr Muhammad Naseer Ud Din informed the OGDCL authorities that

the two universities would incorporate market-oriented courses into their curricula to better prepare students for meeting the demands of the industry. The OGDCL authorities reiterated their commitment to provide full support to the students of both universities and the broader community.

This collaboration marks a significant step towards creating beneficial linkages between academia and industry, ultimately contributing to the socio-economic development of the region.

Anti-encroachment operation directed in Kohat

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kohat ordered removal of encroachments in order to improve the cleanliness conditions while an important meeting was held in this regard, on Friday.

The meeting was also attended by district administration officials, police, Tehsil Municipal

Administration's staff, Secretary Regional Transport Authority, Water and Sanitation Services Company Kohat and officials of the concerned departments. The meeting was briefed on improvement of cleanliness conditions and comprehensive plan for the removal of encroachments.

Deputy Commissioner directed the WSSC Kohat

to further improve the sanitation situation in their zones and areas and submit a complete report along with maps to solve the problem of encroachments. He also issued directives regarding the elimination of illegal parking and encroachments within the city, especially in the main market and adjacent roads.



Violence rages in New Caledonia



PARIS (AP): Violence raged across New Caledonia for the third consecutive day, hours after France imposed a state of emergency in the French Pacific territory, boosting security forces' powers to quell unrest in the archipelago that has long sought independence.

French authorities in New Caledonia and the interior ministry in Paris said five people, including two police officers, were killed after protests earlier this week over voting reforms pushed by President Emmanuel Macron's government turned deadly. At least 60 members of the security forces were injured and 214 people were arrested over clashes with police, arson and looting, the territory's top French official, High Commissioner Louis Le Franc, said.

"Everything is being done to restore order and calm that Caledonians deserve," French Prime Minister Gabriel Attal said after a meeting at the Elysee presidential palace in Paris. He said that in addition to 1,700 security forces troops that have already been deployed to help police, 1,000 more are on the way but the situation "remains very tense, with looting, riots, arson and attacks, which are unbearable and unspeakable." Two mem-

bers of the island's Indigenous Kanak community were among the five dead, French Interior and Overseas Territories Minister Gerald Darmanin said as he vowed that France "will regain total control." He said 10 people, all allegedly from the pro-independence movement known as The Field Acton Coordination Unit, were under house arrest. In April, the group had backed several protests against French authorities on the island.

Still, Darmanin claimed the movement is a "small group which calls itself pro-independence, but instead commits looting, murder and violence." Leaders of a Kanak Workers Union in Paris appealed for calm and said they were deeply saddened by deaths in their far-away homeland. "We wish to see the French government make a strong political statement rather than send troops," a union leader Rock Haocas told reporters. "Starting a conversation would be a strong political statement."

In New Caledonia, The National Council of Chiefs of the Indigenous Kanak people condemned "all acts of vandalism and gun violence," but rejected the allegations that the pro-independence movement was involved in the deadly violence. Grand Chief

Hippolyte Sinewami-Htamumu expressed full support for the pro-independence group, which has mobilized more than a hundred thousand people "of all ages and from all backgrounds" in peaceful protests in recent months in the capital, Nouméa, and throughout the island. "This is not a 'terrorist group' or 'mafia group,' as certain political leaders want us to believe," he said in a statement.

The state of emergency will be in place for at least 12 days as French military forces were being deployed to protect ports and airports and to free up police troops. The curfew has been extended, said Le Franc, the high commissioner. The territory's political parties also appealed for calm on both sides - those who support independence and those who want the island to remain part of France. The last time France imposed emergency powers on one of its overseas territories was in 1985, also in New Caledonia. The measures enable French and local authorities on the archipelago to tackle unrest, authorizing house detentions for those deemed a threat to public order, allowing for searches, weapons seizures and restricting movement, with possible jail time for violators.

Hungary will vote against UN resolution

BUDAPEST (AP): Hungary will vote against a United Nations resolution commemorating the 1995 genocide of Bosnian Muslims at Srebrenica, the foreign minister said, arguing that it would inflame tensions in the Balkan country and the surrounding region.

Péter Szijjártó was hosting Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik in the Hungarian capital of Budapest, where Szijjártó accused the UN, as well as the high representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, of taking steps to destabilize the country that was devastated in the 1992-1995 war. During that conflict, more than 8,000 Bosniak Muslim men and boys were executed by Bosnian Serb troops in Srebrenica, an eastern Bosnian enclave. The victims' remains were dumped in mass graves and later reburied to hide evidence of atrocities.

Szjijártó said Hungary would vote against the planned UN resolution on the genocide - which he called the "Srebrenica tragedy" - because it "intentionally or unintentionally would demonize the entire Serbian nation."

"We believe that international political actors should end the escalation of tensions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, end the threat of sanctions and end the violent interference in its internal affairs," Szijjártó said. The UN resolution is supported by Bosniak politicians in Bosnia along with a number of European countries and the United States. Proposed by Germany and Rwanda, it would designate 11 July as the "International Day of Reflection and Commemoration of the 1995 Genocide in Srebrenica." Bosnian Serbs and neighboring Serbia have strongly opposed it, saying it would brand the Serbs as a "genocidal nation." The Serbs are supported by Russia and China. International courts in The Hague, Netherlands, have branded the crime in Srebrenica a genocide, Europe's first since World War II. Bosnian Serb top army officers and political leaders also have been convicted of genocide by UN judges. Dodik, the Bosnian

Serb separatist leader of the Serb-majority entity of Republika Srpska, has denied that the massacre in Srebrenica was a genocide. He was placed under US sanctions in 2022 that accused him of "corrupt activities" that threaten to destabilize the region and undermine a US-brokered peace accord from more than 25 years ago. Dodik said the Serbian side "does not dispute that a terrible crime took place in Srebrenica," but that the UN resolution would "destabilize the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina to the extent of completely paralyzing any possible relations." He thanked Szijjártó for taking a position against it. In a post on X, head of the Srebrenica Memorial Center Emir Suljagi? called Hungary's position "a deeply troubling stance that cannot be ignored." He blamed the country's nationalist prime minister, Viktor Orbán, for aligning Hungary "with forces of denial and revisionism, undermining international efforts to acknowledge and learn from this tragedy."

Houthi rebels acknowledge attacking a US destroyer

DUBAI (AP): Yemen's Houthi rebels claimed targeting a US Navy destroyer and a commercial ship in the Red Sea. However, the attack on the warship apparently happened nearly two days earlier and saw the vessel intercept the missile targeting it.

The latest statement from the Houthis comes as their attacks on shipping, which have disrupted trade through a vital corridor leading onto the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean Sea, have slowed in recent weeks. Though the rebels have not acknowledged the slowdown, the US military has suggested its airstrikes and interceptions of Houthi fire have disrupted their assaults and chewed into their weapon stockpiles. Recently, the Houthis have

been claiming days-old attacks.

Houthi military spokesman Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree said the rebels targeted the USS Mason with missiles and launched an attack on a ship he identified as the Destiny. Multiple vessels have that name in shipping registries. The Mason, an Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer, has been in the Red Sea and the wider region as part of a US-led coalition trying to prevent Houthi attacks on shipping. The Mason "successfully engaged and destroyed one inbound anti-ship ballistic missile launched by (the) Iranian-backed Houthis from Yemen over the Red Sea," the US military's Central Command said. The US

Navy's Mideast-based 5th Fleet did not immediately respond to a request for comment regarding the claimed attack on the Destiny. The Houthis say their attacks on shipping in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden are aimed at pressuring Israel to end its war against Hamas in Gaza, which has killed more than 35,000 Palestinians there, according to local health officials. The war began after Hamas-led militants attacked Israel on Oct. 7, killing 1,200 people and taking some 250 others hostage. The Houthis have launched more than 50 attacks on shipping, seized one vessel and sunk another since November, according to the US Maritime Administration.

Russian troop numbers insufficient for Kharkiv breakthrough

BRUSSELS (Reuters): NATO's top commander said he did not believe Russia's military has deployed enough troops to make a strategic breakthrough in the region around Kharkiv in north-eastern Ukraine.

General Christopher Cavoli, NATO's supreme allied commander Europe, said he was confident Ukrainian forces would hold their lines in the region. Russia last week opened a new front in the Ukraine war when small groups of highly mobile units pushed swiftly over the border into the Kharkiv region, forcing Ukraine to rush in troops from other areas. "The Russians don't have the numbers necessary to do a strategic breakthrough," Cavoli told a press conference at NATO headquarters in Brussels after a meeting of military chiefs from across the transatlantic alliance.

"More to the point, they don't have the skill and the capability to do it, to operate at the scale necessary to exploit any breakthrough to strategic advantage," he added. "They do have the ability to make local advances and they have done some of that. They've also made some local losses." He did not give any figures for the number of troops Russia has deployed in the area. Admiral Rob Bauer, the chair of NATO's military committee, told the press conference he expected "serious improvements" soon in the amount of ammunition Ukrainian forces would receive. Russian forces have been outshelling Ukrainian troops sometimes by a ratio of 10 to one, according to officials.

Ukraine's ammunition shortage was partly down to a months-long delay in getting a major military aid package for Ukraine through the US Congress. Cavoli said Ukraine's allies were now shipping "vast amounts" of ammunition and short-range air defence systems and "significant amounts" of armoured vehicles that would help fight the Kharkiv advance. "I'm in very close contact with our Ukrainian colleagues. And I'm confident that they that they will hold the line," he said.

French police hunt killers behind prison van ambush

PARIS (AFP): French police were hunting for a group of gunmen who killed two prison officers in an attack at a motorway toll that freed a convict linked to gangland drug killings.

The killings and dramatic getaway by the perpetrators have shocked France, with authorities under pressure to catch those responsible, who all remain at large. "We have put a lot of resources into finding not only the person who escaped", but also "the gang that released him under such despicable circumstances," Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin told the RTL broadcaster.

"We are putting in considerable resources, we are making a lot of progress," he added. More than 450 police officers and gendarmes were mobilised just for the search in the northern department of Eure where the attack took place, he said. Two prison officers were killed in the attack and three others wounded, Paris prosecutor Laure Beccuaud said. One of the injured men was fighting for his life in hospital and two more were receiving critical care, she said. The incident took place at a road toll in Incarville in the Eure region of northern France.

The inmate was being transported back to his prison in the town of Evreux after he was questioned by a judge in the regional centre of Rouen in Normandy. The prosecutor said the prison van was rammed head-on by a stolen Peugeot vehicle as it went through the toll crossing. But the van and another vehicle in the prison convoy were also followed by an Audi. Gunman emerged from the two cars and shot at both prison vehicles. "We will be uncompromising," President Emmanuel Macron said on X, describing the attack as a "shock".

Chairman PRCS Shahid visits Qatar Red Crescent HQs in Doha

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Red Crescent Society Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari visited the Qatar Red Crescent Society headquarters in Doha on Wednesday. He was warmly received by Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) Secretary General, Faisal Mohamed Al-Emadi, and the head of programs.

Chairman PRCS Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari held talks with the top officials of QRCS. The meeting shed light on bilateral humanitarian relations and the current humanitarian picture across the region.

Speaking on this occasion, the Chairman highlighted the steadfast support from brotherly Qatar through both good and challenging times. He praised the Qatar Red Crescent Society's relentless dedication, which has been crucial in their collaborative efforts to address major crises in Pakistan. He specifically mentioned the consistent and invaluable assistance provided by QRCS during the 2022 monsoon floods, which significantly helped affected communities nationwide. With the support of Red Cross and Red Crescent partners, PRCS reached millions of flood-affected people and is now engaged in extensive recovery efforts for these communities.

Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) Secretary General, Faisal Mohamed Al-Emadi, remarked on the long-standing, time-tested relationship between Pakistan and Qatar. He emphasized the historical depth of Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) and Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) collaboration over the decades. Al-Emadi commended the exemplary services rendered by the PRCS and expressed appreciation for Chairman Sardar Shahid Ahmed



Laghari's leadership in advancing humanitarian initiatives. He also affirmed the commitment to extend all possible cooperation from QRCS. Laghari expressed his desire for the Qatar Red Crescent to reopen its delegation office in Pakistan, as it had in the past. He also extended an invitation to the President of QRCS to visit Pakistan and the PRCS National Headquarters.

The PRCS and QRCS signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to advance cooperation in disaster management, youth engagement, health and care, climate change, and other humanitarian efforts. The two sides also signed an agreement regarding the 2024 sacrifice (Qurbani) project. This MoU aims to strengthen their collaboration in delivering efficient humanitarian services to vulnerable communities.

The MoU was signed by the Secretary General QRCS Faisal Mohamed Al Emadi, and the Secretary-General PRCS Muhammad Ubaidullah Khan, in the presence of the Chairman Pakistan Red Crescent

Society (PRCS) Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari.

Chairman Laghari and Secretary General Khan also toured QRCS's Disaster Management and Information Center, where Mr. Al-Emadi provided an overview of QRCS global projects and programs. Key QRCS officials, including Head of Relief and Disaster Management Subhi Fahid Ejeh, Director of Relief & International Development Sector Dr. Mohammed Salah Ibrahim, and Head of Planning & Studies Aiham Ismaiel Sukhni, attended the meeting.

Al-Emadi briefed the PRCS delegation on QRCS's capacity-building initiatives, training personnel for deployment in various countries to support other National Societies in disaster management, WASH services, health care and rescue. The visit concluded with an exchange of commemorative shields and souvenirs between PRCS and QRCS. On this occasion, Chairman PRCS Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari also shared his impressions in the visitor book at the QRCS headquarters.

Filipino activists decide not to sail closer to disputed shoal

MANILA (AP): About 100 Filipino activists on wooden boats have decided not to sail closer to a fiercely disputed shoal in the South China Sea to avoid a confrontation with dozens of Chinese coast guard and suspected militia ships guarding the area.

Accompanied by journalists on four boats, the activists will distribute food packs and fuel to Filipino fishermen about 58 nautical miles (107 kilometers) southeast of Scarborough Shoal and then sail back home, Emman Hizon and other organizers said. Chinese and Philippine coast guard and accompanying ships have had a series of increasingly hostile territorial faceoffs at Scarborough, which is surrounded by the Chinese coast guard, and at Philippine-occupied Second Thomas Shoal since last year. The Chinese ships have used powerful water cannons and employed blocking and other dangerous maneuvers that led to minor collisions, injured several Filipino navy personnel and strained diplomatic ties.

The United States has repeatedly warned that it's obligated to defend the Philippines, its longtime

treaty ally, if Filipino forces, ships or aircraft come under an armed attack in the region, including in the busy South China Sea. That has sparked fears a conflict could involve Washington if the territorial disputes escalate out of control. The activists and fishing community leaders, who belong to a non-government coalition called Atin Ito, Tagalog for This is Ours, provided aid to Filipino fishermen and floated symbolic territorial buoys on their way to Scarborough's outlying waters to assert Philippine sovereign rights over the atoll. But two Chinese coast guard ships started shadowing them, according to Hizon and the Philippine coast guard. A group of 10 activists managed to evade the Chinese blockade by at least 46 ships in the outlying waters and distributed food and fuel to Filipinos fishing closer to the atoll. That was cited by the activists in declaring that their mission was a success.

"We managed to breach their illegal blockade, reaching the vicinity of Bajo de Masinloc to support our fishers with essential supplies," said Rafaela David, an activist leader

who led the voyage to the disputed waters. "Mission accomplished." The Philippine coast guard deployed three patrol ships and a light plane to keep watch on the activists, who set off from western Zamboales province. Dozens of journalists joined the three-day voyage. In December, the group mounted an expedition to another disputed shoal but cut the trip short after being tailed by a Chinese ship.

China effectively seized Scarborough Shoal, a triangle-shaped atoll with a vast fishing lagoon ringed by mostly submerged coral outcrops, by surrounding it with its coast guard ships after a tense 2012 standoff with Philippine government ships. Angered by China's action, the Philippine government brought the territorial disputes to international arbitration in 2013 and largely won, with a tribunal in The Hague ruling three years later that China's expansive claims based on historical grounds in the busy seaway were invalid under the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. The ruling declared Scarborough Shoal a traditional fishing area for Chinese, Filipino and

Vietnamese fishermen, but China refused to join the arbitration, rejected the ruling and continues to defy it.

Two weeks ago, Chinese coast guard and suspected militia ships used water cannons on Philippine coast guard and fisheries ships patrolling Scarborough Shoal, damaging both ships. The Philippines condemned the Chinese coast guard's action at the shoal, which lies in Manila's internationally recognized exclusive economic zone. The Chinese coast guard said it took a "necessary measure" after the Philippine ships "violated China's sovereignty." Aside from the Philippines and China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan have also been involved in the long-seething territorial disputes.

Indonesia has also had skirmishes with Chinese vessels in resource-rich waters stretching from its Natuna islands to the margins of the South China Sea, which Beijing has claimed virtually in its entirety. The Indonesian navy has fired warning shots in the past and seized Chinese fishing boats it accused of encroaching into Indonesian waters.

Zelenskyy postpones foreign trips amid Russian offensive

KYIV (AP): Ukrainian forces withdrew from some parts of the country's northeast and battled Russian troops in other areas, as President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's decision to postpone all his upcoming foreign trips underscored the seriousness of the threat his soldiers face.

Against that grim backdrop, visiting US Secretary of State Antony Blinken sought to reassure Ukraine of continuing American support, announcing a \$2 billion arms deal. Most of the money comes from a package approved last month. The top diplomat's trip comes as Russian troops press a new offensive in Ukraine's Kharkiv region. It began last week, marking the most significant border incursion since the full-scale invasion began in 2022 and forcing thousands to flee their homes. In recent weeks, Moscow's forces have also sought to build on gains in the eastern region of Donetsk. Taken together, the developments mean the war has entered a critical stage for Ukraine's depleted army.

Ukraine's General Staff reported that troops fell back from two areas in Kharkiv - Lukiantsi and Vovchansk - "in order to save the lives of our servicemen and avoid losses." Russia said it had captured Lukiantsi. It was not possible to independently verify either side's claims. Vovchansk - just 5 kilometers (3 miles) from the Russian border - has been the focus of much of the recent fighting, and Ukrainian and Russian troops battled in its streets. Oleksii Kharkivskyi, head of the city's patrol police, said Russian troops were taking up positions in the city, while the Ukrainian General Staff said its forces were trying to flush them out. Gunfire could be heard in the background of a video the police official posted on his Instagram page.

The Ukrainian presidential office said additional reinforcements were being deployed in the region, including army reserve units. At the dangerous juncture, Blinken was in Ukraine to highlight US support, though most of the money he announced, about \$1.6 billion, comes from the \$60 billion allotted to Ukraine in the supplemental foreign assistance legislation passed by Congress and signed by President Joe Biden, officials said. He said the money would be used for three purposes: to provide weapons in the short term, to invest in

Ukraine's defense-industrial base and to allow Ukraine to buy military supplies from other countries. At a news conference with Blinken, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said of the aid: "This is a very powerful message to both our friends and our enemies." Blinken said Washington understands the urgency of Ukraine's need for additional air defenses to protect against the Russian onslaught and was prioritizing them in its assistance. He added that the US has "not encouraged or enabled strikes outside of Ukraine" using American-supplied long-range weapons. That decision is up to Kyiv authorities, he said. The United Kingdom has said it placed no limits on Ukraine's use of weapons Britain supplies to hit targets on Russian soil, but Germany, another major supporter, has balked at that and ruled it out for fear of escalating the conflict. Russia is opening new fronts in order to stretch Ukraine's army, which is short of ammunition and manpower, along the about 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line, hoping defenses will crumble. Russian artillery and sabotage raids have also been menacing Ukraine's northern Chernihiv and Sumy

regions. The Russian Defense Ministry also claimed that its troops have retaken the village of Robotnye in the southern Zaporizhzhia region. Ukrainian forces had gained control of the village last August in what was seen as an important advance in a counteroffensive that eventually petered out.

Elsewhere in Ukraine's southern regions, an aerial attack on the central district of Kherson wounded 17 civilians, the regional prosecutor's office said. And a Russian missile attack injured six people in Mykolaiv, according to Ukraine's rescue service. Still, the Institute for the Study of War said that the pace of Russia's advance in the Kharkiv border region, where it launched an offensive late last week and has made significant progress, has slowed. The Washington-based think tank said Moscow's main aim there is to create a "buffer zone" that will prevent Ukrainian cross-border strikes on Russia's Belgorod region. Even so, Zelenskyy's office announced he canceled all his upcoming foreign visits and would try to reschedule them. Zelenskyy had been expected to visit Spain, and perhaps Portugal, later this week.

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The cost of conflict in North Waziristan

IN the remote, rugged landscapes of North Waziristan, the whispers of another drone strike stir a familiar dread among the local Pashtun population. This region, a former tribal area of Pakistan, has been a battleground for military and militant activity for over two decades. The recent uncertainty around alleged US drone activities, as highlighted by Pentagon Deputy Spokesperson Sabrina Singh's comments-or lack thereof-only adds layers to an already complex crisis. Singh's guarded statement, "I do not have anything on that," in response to inquiries from The Frontier Post, reflects a broader opacity surrounding military operations in the area.

The local Pashtun communities have borne the brunt of this enduring conflict. For the last twenty-five years, they have navigated a precarious existence amid the relentless push and pull of military offensives and terrorist insurgencies. The presence of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and ISIS fighters in these former tribal lands speaks to a harsh reality: the area remains a hotbed for extremism, drawing in yet more violence as various forces vie for control.

Recent US-Pakistan security dialogues, aimed at bolstering cooperative efforts against such threats, must also prioritize the safety and well-being of innocent civilians. These discussions are essential, given the history of the region and the heavy toll that military operations can exact on civilian populations. The memories of displacement, destruction, and death are still vivid for many local residents, reminders of the high costs of warfare.

Furthermore, the scrutiny surrounding former Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and former National Security Advisor Hamdullah Mohib's alleged prior contacts with the Taliban-potentially exacerbating the chaos during the US withdrawal from Afghanistan-suggests a pattern of oversight and misjudgment that has profound implications for regional stability. This scrutiny, while necessary, also underscores the need for greater transparency and accountability in how military and strategic decisions are made and executed.

As we consider the future of North Waziristan and its people, it is crucial to remember that any military strategy must be balanced with an acute awareness of its humanitarian impact. The international community, particularly entities like the US and Pakistani governments, must ensure that their actions do not further victimize an already vulnerable population. This includes strict adherence to international laws governing warfare, rigorous oversight to prevent civilian casualties, and a transparent, communicative approach that keeps local communities informed and engaged in their own defense.

The story of North Waziristan, as reported by Jalil Afridi, is more than a narrative of conflict. It is a poignant reminder of the human cost of war. It challenges policymakers and military leaders alike to rethink their strategies, not just in terms of eliminating threats but also in safeguarding the lives and futures of millions of innocent people. The Pashtuns of North Waziristan, resilient yet weary, deserve a strategy that prioritizes their safety and seeks to restore peace without further bloodshed. As operations continue, each move must be weighed with consideration for those who have suffered enough. Only through such conscientious planning can hope be restored in a region long shadowed by the specter of war.

Putin's China visit

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin is visiting China at the invitation of President Xi Jinping on Thursday and Friday. It has become customary for the two heads of state to make exchange visits, with the Chinese leader visiting Russia one year, and the Russian leader visiting China the following year. There is no official agreement on this, but this tradition has been maintained since the 1990s. Another significant aspect is that Putin chose China as the destination for his first visit after re-elected Russian president. This signifies the importance of cooperation between Russia and China.

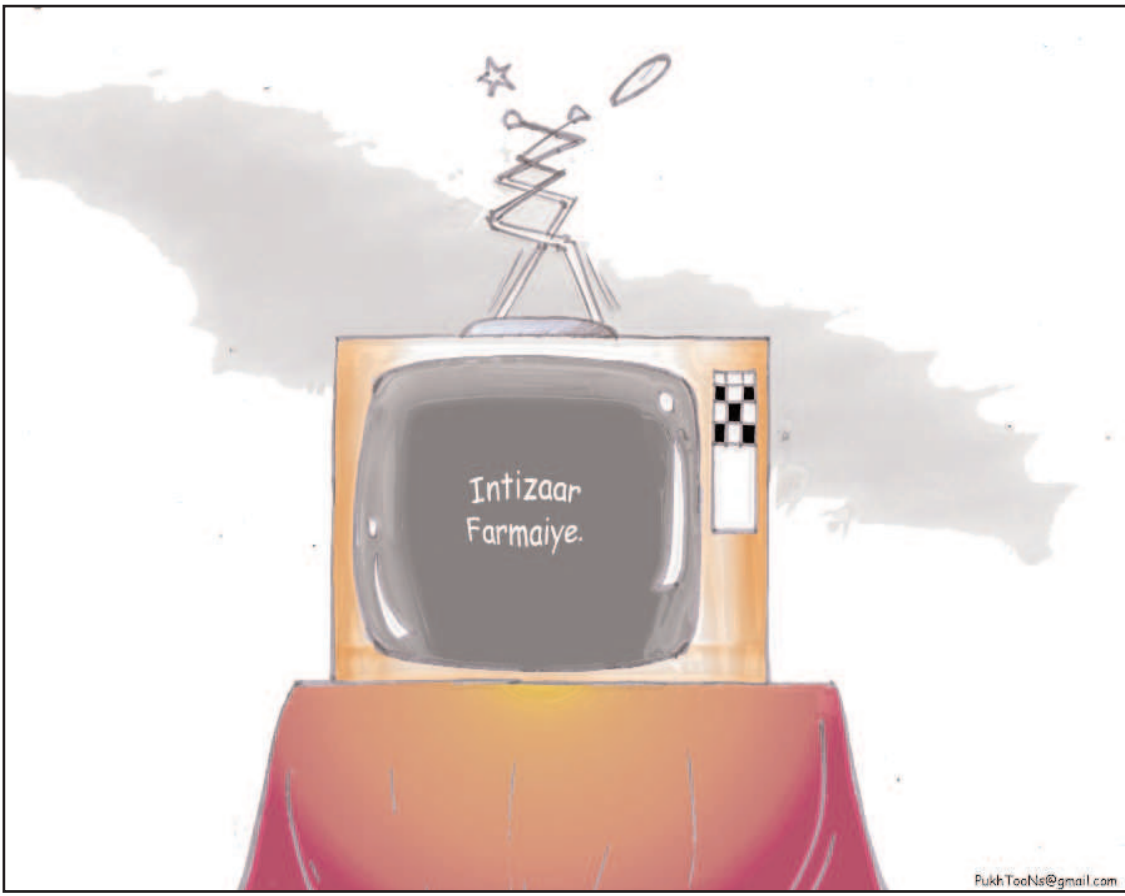
Putin's visit is very important because it shows that despite regional conflicts and outside pressure, Sino-Russian comprehensive strategic partnership remains firm and is developing steadily. During the visit to each other's country, the leaders usually discuss a wide range of international and bilateral issues. Apart from that, top ministers and company heads also sign dozens of trade and investment agreements in the presence of the countries' leaders, which gives these deals special importance. During Putin's visit, the two leaders have issued a joint statement and the two sides inked several cooperation documents in a range of areas.

The visit is particularly significant as this year marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, when the Soviet Union became the first country to recognize the PRC on Oct 2, 1949, the day after Chairman Mao Zedong announced the founding of the PRC in Tian'anmen Square. And when the Russian Federation came into being in late 1991, China swiftly recognized it as the legal successor to the USSR and supported Russia's bid to retain the Soviet Union's seat on the UN Security Council. As of now, both Russia and China are being targeted by the United States and its allies, in order to contain the development of the two countries and maintain a unipolar world order which no longer exists.

China's Global Security Initiative, put forward by President Xi, is very close to Russia's vision for a future world order. It is also based on the idea that security is indivisible, which means the security of one country cannot be achieved at the expense of the security of another country. That's why security arrangements should be global and based on compromises by all sides. This common vision creates a solid basis for Sino-Russian cooperation. The leaders of the two countries have established close personal ties. Apart from formal visits, they also meet several times every year at various international events and other gatherings. Trade and mutual understanding between Moscow and Beijing have been growing for several decades and there is no reason for this momentum to change.

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Putin's lightning assault jolts Europe awake

Frida Ghitis

IT was a carefully choreographed show of force in Beijing Thursday as Russian President Vladimir Putin arrived for yet another meeting with his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping. They were all smiles. Meanwhile in Europe, the atmosphere could have hardly felt less jovial.

Slovakian Prime Minister Robert Fico was shot multiple times and gravely wounded in an assassination attempt. Fico is reportedly out of danger now, with many details about the shooting still unclear. But the dramatic event added to the foreboding sense of crisis across the region; the feeling that, as tense as the situation is, it's time to prepare urgently, because it might turn much worse.

In the 10 days since Putin was sworn in for yet another term - his fifth as Russia's president - his forces launched a surprise attack on northeastern Ukraine, drawing close to the country's second largest city, Kharkiv, and capturing several Ukrainian villages. Russia's lightning assault, according to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who cancelled all his foreign travel, aims to force Ukraine to stretch its defenses.

Tactically, Moscow's push strengthened its field position ahead of the arrival of promised US weapons to Ukraine. Politically, it comes months before the possible return to power of former President Donald Trump, who has indicated he will not continue President Joe Biden's level of support for Kyiv. Echoing the alarm among Ukraine's backers, British Foreign Secretary David Cameron called it an "extremely dangerous moment." Russia, he said, had effectively "invaded again."

Adding to the gloom, Europeans watched Putin allies in Georgia, a former Soviet Republic, ignore massive street protests and approve the so-called "foreign agents" bill, which is almost a carbon copy of one used by the Kremlin to crush the pro-democracy opposition. It was a victory for Moscow, and a defeat for the vast majority of Georgians who fer-

vently want their country to join the democratic European Union. Securing victories without going to war is cheaper. That's why Moscow is meddling in Moldova, another former Soviet Republic hoping to join the European Union, and why there's mounting evidence of ongoing Russian campaigns to interfere in the many elections playing out in Europe and elsewhere, injecting disinformation and stoking political tensions.

Interestingly, the Slovak foreign ministry accused Russia of interfering in the Slovakian elections that brought Fico - a Putin admirer - to power. (Moscow has denied the allegations.)

Speaking to the media outside the hospital treating Fico on Wednesday, the country's interior minister warned that Slovakia stands "on the edge of civil war" due to political tensions. The minister also described the attack as politically motivated, saying the suspect told law enforcement officers that he disagreed with Fico's policies. What started as a Russian invasion of Ukraine more than two years ago has turned into an epochal challenge for Europe. With Russia advancing in Ukraine, this entire region is waking up to the fact that this conflict is about more than the survival of a former Soviet Republic. Every day, the stark reality that what began in Ukraine will change Europe for years to come becomes more inescapable.

Earlier this week in Moscow, Putin launched another surprise move, removing long-time Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu. He replaced him with Andrey Belousov, a former government official who is an economist and well-versed in "military-industrial complex matters," according to experts, suggesting that transforming Russia into a full-fledged war economy is now the plan.

Now Europe, too, is accelerating its own preparations, not only to support Ukraine, but to defend itself. It wasn't long ago that Ukraine appeared to have the upper hand, push-

ing Russia out of territories it invaded. Now all that has changed. When far-right Republicans in the US House of Representatives stalled a package of military aid for a long six months, Russia turned the tide.

The aid was approved last month, but it was too late. It will take some time for the aid to arrive, and even then, the imbalance in military supplies will continue.

Russia's militarized economy, under a system that brooks no complaints, with Putin in full control, is not only receiving weaponry from Iran and North Korea and, according to the US, key help from China - which it denies, laughably claiming it is neutral. Russia is also producing three times as much artillery shells as Ukraine's backers. With Russian forces advancing, and with Putin framing the conflict as one against the West, Europe has launched a large-scale effort to prepare itself for the worst. When historians look back at this moment, they won't be able to claim that Europe ignored the threat, even if the long post-Cold War decades, as we now know, were marked by excessive optimism about the enduring power of peace and democracy.

Norway, which shares a crucial border with Russia in the Arctic, is a member of NATO but not the EU. It just announced a massive 12-year military expansion plan. By 2036, its defense budget will double in size and its army will have triple the number of brigades. In London, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak recently announced a big defense spending boost to move the country onto "a war footing."

In the Netherlands, where outgoing Prime Minister Mark Rutte is a favorite to become NATO's new chief, the defense budget is set to double, from \$15.6 billion in 2022 when Russia launched the war - to \$31.2 billion by 2029. Perhaps most dramatically, French President Emmanuel Macron has refused to rule out sending Western troops into Ukraine. Earlier this

month he said the question would legitimately arise if Russia breaks through the front line and Zelensky asks for reinforcements.

Macron's comments have been rejected by European allies who remain afraid of provoking Putin into a direct confrontation. In fact, that fear has become a major constraint for Ukrainian soldiers on the ground: The White House bans Ukraine from striking targets inside Russia with the weapons it provides. According to the Institute for the Study of War, the policy "is severely compromising Ukraine's ability to defend itself against Russian offensive operations," in the Kharkiv region, creating a "sanctuary" for Russia for attacking Ukraine from the border areas.

It's past time to loosen those restrictions. Ukraine should be allowed to defend itself, even if it means striking inside Russian borders. The cost of allowing Putin to subjugate Ukraine is, as is becoming increasingly clear, much too high.

Even as it rejects the notion of sending troops to Ukraine, Germany is apparently preparing to reintroduce mandatory military service. A leaked document revealed that Berlin is considering imposing conscription for 18-year-old men and women, a sign that the current crisis has become a turning point in views about national and regional security, with repercussions that will last for years, regardless of how and when this war ends.

Preparations for a possible war are most startling in Finland, which shares Europe's longest border with Russia, and one that already lost territory to Kremlin invasions. Finland has built up not only its shelters for civilians and its stockpiles of weapons, ammunition and fuel, but also of grain to feed the population. "Russia respects power," said Finnish Lt. Gen. Mikko Heiskanen, describing a multi-year plan to prepare for defending the country. Perhaps Putin and Xi find more reasons to smile right now, but Europeans want to make sure that is only a temporary situation.

CNN

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 foodstuffs 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 con-

tract 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.

Aljazeera

Trump's defense rocked Michael Cohen

Norman Eisen

AFTER a rocky start for former President Donald Trump's counsel on Tuesday, the continuation of testimony from the Manhattan criminal trial's star witness Thursday substantially improved in their favor. We finally saw stretches of the defense's cross-examination of Michael Cohen that were powerful and effective.

Lead defense counsel Todd Blanche turned around his earlier failures, repeatedly pressing Trump's former fixer over his prior lies - and arguing that Cohen was lying on the stand again today. Like in a heavyweight boxing match, blows were landed and the defense scored points - but in my view, Cohen stayed on his feet. He was rocked by one blow on the chin but there was no knock-out punch.

After a wasted half-hour of ineffective questioning about trivia such as whether the press may have been

informed by the prosecution about the filing of the indictment before Cohen was, Blanche finally got to where I would have started the day: Cohen's many prior lies under oath. Again and again, the defense lawyer pummeled Cohen about the fact that in those instances he had raised his right hand and taken an oath to tell the truth (just like here in this court) and betrayed it. To Congress. To special counsel Robert Mueller. And to the federal judge who sentenced Cohen when he said he was guilty (but later said he wasn't) of the crimes for which he was sentenced: his tax offenses and his false statements on his bank paperwork to get the hush money to pay Stormy Daniels, who alleges that she had a sexual encounter with Trump (which Trump denies). The \$130,000 payment to the adult film actress in 2016 is at the core of the 34 felony counts of falsifying business documents faced by Trump.

But cross-examination is not just about the questioning; it's also about the answers. And like a boxer holding his own - Ali withstanding the furious pummeling of a Foreman or a Frazier - Cohen refused to fall down even when rocked by hard hits. On his guilty pleas, he explained that he felt coerced because prosecutors gave him 48 hours to plead or his wife would be included in his Southern District of New York indictment. When Blanche attempted to assert that Cohen had also lied when he said he took responsibility for the crimes, Cohen pushed back: "No, sir ... I take responsibility, but I did not believe that it was ... a crime I should have been charged with."

After the climax of that sequence, Blanche meandered for over an hour before coming back with even greater force in a different line of questioning just

before the lunch break - the most intense of the trial.

Trump's defense lawyer circled back to what Cohen had testified on direct examination about an October 24, 2016, phone call he had with Trump's bodyguard Keith Schiller. Cohen told the court Monday that the bodyguard handed his phone to the former president for an update on Daniels.

Blanche argued that in reality the call stuck to another topic - a tsunami of incoming harassing phone calls. Blanche revealed phone and text records that he said demonstrated that the harassment was indeed the sole topic despite Cohen's claim that it also dealt with the Daniels matter.

The call was less than two minutes, and Blanche effectively questioned how there could have been time to discuss the harassing calls and pass the phone to Trump for the other conversation. It was

a fair point, and once again the lawyer landed blows. Cohen wavered, replying that he "believe[d]" he spoke to Trump. Like a punch landing, it staggered him - but he ultimately maintained his position about nature of the call. It happened. "That was a lie, you did not talk to President Trump - you talked to Keith Schiller, you can admit it," Blanche said, voice raised. "No sir, I don't know that it's accurate," Cohen responded, standing his ground.

I was watching the jury throughout the day, and in particular when the cross-examination was at its most intense, as on this point. Their scrutiny of Cohen and of Blanche was as intense as the questioning itself, at least at its hotter moments. Unlike prior points when their attitudes appeared more transparent - such as when Cohen candidly spoke directly to jurors Tuesday about his regrets for things he did out of loyalty to Trump - I could not read what they thought

today. Trials, like boxing matches, are about momentum - and the defense got some in that exchange. But no further punches landed on the chin in the afternoon as Cohen better withstood the onslaught. Moreover, my experience has been that juries don't decide based upon one moment - they base their judgment on an overall view.

And we are not done with Cohen. The prosecution on direct examination and throughout the case has meticulously corroborated him. On Monday, cross-examination will finish. When the prosecution comes back on redirect, they will refresh that corroborating evidence once more. Today was not sufficient to reverse the proof beyond a reasonable doubt that has been established over the weeks of the case in chief. The defense needed a knockout punch because they were behind on points and didn't get one. But it is a closer case.

Russia’s new defense minister faces thankless economic task

Nick Trickett

ANDREI Belousov's sudden elevation to defense minister has thrust the governance of Russia's economy back into the limelight. It also caps off a long-running effort on Belousov's part to break the economy out of its period of low growth, an effort now inseparable from the requirements of the war with Ukraine.

Even in a system driven by personal loyalties and self-interest, ideas matter. Belousov has long been one of Russia's most credible proponents of state intervention within a market economy. This credibility was won by decades of experience as a fore-caster sifting through the minutiae of economic statistics before joining the Economic Development Ministry and presidential administration.

He became a leading advisor within the Kremlin in 2013, when he rallied against fears of stagnation among the much-vaunted technocra-cy. His reasoning that Russia's stag-nation is a product of poor thinking rather than a lack of reserves matters a great deal today.

When a country like Russia has a large trade surplus it implies the existence of a large pool of savings because it is producing more than it is consuming. As a matter of somewhat simplified accounting, it follows that a nation's output exceeds its total con-sumption, investments, and govern-ment expenditures. The balance between savings and investment determines the trade balance. Surplus economies have savings to spare.

Under intense financial sanctions, the room to run down currency reserves to back spending becomes limited. But so long as oil exports sustain a large trade surplus, foreign currency and savings to invest are available. Little wonder why last year's three-year budget announce-ment was foregrounded with talk of the need to mobilize the country's financial resources for its develop-ment. Belousov's name is now asso-ciated with the buzz phrase "military Keynesianism." But this is an exag-geration. Russia's technocrats are so enamored with neoclassical thinking about state spending that anyone who suggests even the smallest amount of

intervention is Keynesian in compar-ison.

In the 12 years before 2022, Russia's collective consolidated budget ran a cumulative deficit of less than 1% of GDP. This is despite multiple external shocks and the immense need for social spending and capital investment the country faces. Even now, official budget tar-gets attempt to limit deficit spending to roughly 2% of GDP, showing an orthodoxy averse to Keynesian levels of spending.

Nor can the current economy be neatly described as wartime Keynesianism, despite the growth effect of military spending and con-sumption. Much of the wartime growth model's success has come from the perversely positive effects of Russia's poor demographics and past austerity policies on the labor market. For example, military spend-ing on regions lacking other sources of employment or high incomes has brought large numbers of Russians into the formal job market, including pensioners in need of extra income. But the few signs of success in Russia's wartime economy, like ris-ing wages, only expose its weaknes-ses and the unsuitability of the "wartime Keynesian" label. It is a shortage of labor and materials for construction and manufacturing - not money - that is causing Russia's eco-nomic challenges. While military-industrial output has risen dramati-cally since 2022, civilian output has largely remained flat. Most of the output increase has depended on maximizing what existing factories and assets can do or redirecting their capacity toward the war. Higher wages have allowed Russians to buy more imports or invest more in domestic real estate. Further increas-es require higher levels of investment outside of the defense sector and, most importantly, more people.

In short, Russia's economic con-straints are material, not financial. Shortages of labor may lead to high wages and greater tax revenues, but they also create large inflation risks as businesses raise prices to offset

labor costs. So do any increases in imports to buy consumer goods since they eat into the country's trade sur-plus, weakening the ruble.

Inflation is the primary restraint on how much the Russian state can spend as money collides with the lim-ited availability of labor and materi-als. However, the imposition of capi-tal controls has weakened traditional channels affecting inflation through the exchange rate. Economic Development Minister Maxim Reshetnikov has openly acknowl-edged the economy can develop with inflation running above the central bank's target. Clearly, a rethink of running the economy like this is underway, as previously held assumptions that keeping interest rates down is less important than maintaining demand have been shown to no longer work in wartime.

Belousov was the leading admin-istrator within the cabinet during Covid to articulate a rough system of inflation management for key com-modity inputs, namely grain and other foods and metals products used for construction. The state applies export duties at certain price levels for different commodities to force domestic producers to redirect their production to the domestic market. There, informal pressure, agree-ments, and controls on tariffs protect consumers by limiting further price increases among wholesalers and retailers.

Looking forward, similar arrange-ments may become more common-place for labor and elsewhere across the economy. Overseeing years of tax negotiations with the metallurgical sector is equally important given their role in supplying inputs for the war. Social unrest associated with rapid price increases must be minimized while maximizing production. Considering this, Belousov's rise illustrates the limits of the belief that there truly is an economic technocra-cy who are the adults in the room. That the current surge in defense spending has produced more growth than anticipated is a testament to how much the technocrats strangled

growth in past years when the econ-omy suffered a shortage of aggregate demand and capital investment into infrastructure and other needs.

Sanctions have undoubtedly harmed the Russian economy. Their unintentional legacy may have been to force Putin to fully commit to a new economic growth model after refusing to do so for more than a decade.

As early as 2016-2017, Rostec chief Sergei Chemezov lobbied the government to rely on military-industrial firms to diversify into civilian production. Observers should not for-get that in 2021, Putin signed off on nominal targets for half of the defense sector's production to be ori-ented toward the civilian economy by 2030. Defense spending's multi-plier effect will be stretched further. We can already see this thinking at work with the Defense Ministry, where Belousov has been tasked with managing the coordination and pro-curement of domestic and foreign dual-use goods. One way around inflationary bottlenecks for further growth is to find ways to leverage defense manufacturing sites that have become more efficient by necessity to produce more civilian goods, espe-cially dual-use ones, in tandem.

The more that is spent on the war, the more it drives the economy. The more the war drives the economy, the more interests are invested in contin-uing fighting and thus the new spend-ing and growth paradigm. Putin is not just settling into an industrial strug-gle. He is creating an enduring materi-al base for his regime from this "for-ever war."

Belousov's task today is thankless, akin to overseeing the acceleration of a model that is destroying future growth by transferring countless lives and resources to grisly ends or unpro-ductive uses. There is no viable way to sustain current conditions indefi-nitely, especially as the oil demand outlook shifts. Even if he cannot fix the economy, he will remain its chief fixer. The relatively easy part of adapting to sanctions is over. What comes next will require increasingly difficult tradeoffs.

The Moscow Times

Stalinism’s return threatens Georgia’s path to Europe

Davit Zedelashvili

MASS protests in Georgia following the government's reintroduction of a Russia-style "foreign influence" bill are making global headlines. A similar bill introduced last year had proposed requiring organizations to register as "foreign agents," echoing Russian legislation that has forced the closure of independent news outlets and civil society groups. The new bill's language has been changed to target entities working as "agents of foreign influence" rather than those acting as "foreign agents."

Like many others work-ing in Georgia's civil soci-ety sector, I believe this change is mere propaganda by the ruling Georgian Dream party, which seeks to hide the fact that its bill is ultimately inspired by repressive laws in Russia. That said, observers often narrowly focus on the draft bill while overlooking the internal dynamics of Georgia's political land-scape. Key to understand-ing the current political cri-sis is the fact that Georgia stands at a crossroads. It risks slipping deeper into authoritarianism and away from the Western insti-tutions to which Georgian people have long sought to belong. This troubling dynamic is part of a pattern seen throughout Russia and Eurasia.

Russia's 2008 war of aggression against Georgia made it difficult to imagine that a popularly elected Georgian government would one day openly emulate the Kremlin, let alone be commended by it. This rapprochement has been long in the making, not hid-den from the public eye but kept at a comfortable dis-tance for those who pre-ferred not to notice. Georgian Dream was built on deception from the out-set. Illiberal political regimes like this are run on public tolerance of obvious lies. Georgia in 2012 was no exception. That year, Georgian Dream made an electoral breakthrough, gaining control of the coun-try's politics. Its founder and chair, oligarch Bidzina Ivanishvili, meanwhile, consolidated power around himself. The party was his means to capture Georgia and impose his personal rule.

For many Georgians, it was convenient to pretend to believe the lie Ivanishvili's success was built on. They were told they could have their cake and eat it, living in peace and prosperity provided they did not "irritate" the Kremlin, even as Russia resurrected its imperialist ambitions. This approach, effectively pushing for a secret rapprochement with Russia, became the defin-ing feature of Ivanishvili's prime ministership.

Georgian Dream prom-ised they could advance Georgia's interests by neu-tralizing disagreements between the West and Russia over the country. Soon, it looked like they delivered. Everyone involved, including in the West, was relieved and embraced this outcome.

Western approval of what was presented as a balanc-ing act between great pow-ers only made the lie at the heart of Georgian Dream appear more credible: that if Russia were not antago-nized, it would not obstruct Georgia's widely held ambition to become closer to the European Union.

The political landscape in and around Georgia underwent a significant shift after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The pretense that Georgia could balance between the two great pow-ers on its doorstep - Russia and the West - was no longer sustainable.

At the same time, Georgia's chances of European integration have gone from remote to realis-tic, placing Ivanishvili's regime under intense pres-sure. Within the framework of a plebiscitary democra-cy, he was compelled, including through public protests, to take steps toward European integra-tion. Simultaneously, the EU demanded that Tbilisi enact swift constitutional and political reforms to meet the bloc's bench-marks.

One of the EU's main requirements for Georgia was "de-oligarchization" -

tively persecuting people for thought crimes.

In an April 29 speech delivered to a captive audi-ence of bussed-in public servants and other recipi-ents of public money, Ivanishvili revealed that the Georgian Dream was always built on lies. It has been a smokescreen of the dirty reality of his rule under the Kremlin's protec-tive umbrella. It paints the regime's opponents, civil society at large, as enemies within who should be crushed decisively.

In a predictable story of authoritarian consolidation and isolation from the West, the exact motivations of Ivanishvili's relations with the Kremlin no longer matter. His declared objec-tives, evident through these bills, and the regime he seeks to build are strikingly Putinesque.

Putin demolished the remnants of Russia's illib-eral democracy of the 1990s by enticing Russians with the obvious lie that

This amendment would strip Georgia’s constitution of its liberal democratic characteristics. The foreign influence bill would create a framework for total social control by imposing restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly, implementing censorship and effectively persecuting people for thought crimes. In an April 29 speech delivered to a captive audi-ence of bussed-in public servants and other recipients of public money, Ivanishvili revealed that the Georgian Dream was always built on lies.

indefinitely.

Only a full appreciation of Ivanishvili's intention to preserve his rule indefini-tely can untangle the appar-ent paradox of why a regime recently granted EU candidate status has unleashed an avalanche of illiberal laws and constitu-tional amendments that threaten Georgia's west-ward trajectory. Ivanishvili has shown clear signs of following in the Kremlin's footsteps. Emblematic of this is the proposed constitu-tional amendment "on the protection of family values and minors" to counter LGBTQ+ "propaganda."

The LGBTQ+ "propa-ganda" and "foreign influ-ence" bills were instantly recognized as "Russian laws" both inside and out-side Georgia. They are not only textually and substan-tively similar to their Russian equivalents, but also aim to achieve the objectives that the Kremlin cherishes: the isolation of Georgia from the West and the creation of a closed authoritarian regime in Russia's image. Russian laws have instrumental, symbolic and substantive means of accomplishing these ends. If it were to become law, the foreign influence bill would eradi-cate any organization the government does not like, exercising total control over civil society. It would additionally derail Georgia's integration into the EU and solidify its iso-lation from EU and Western institutions.

The first victims of this law are widely believed to be independent election monitoring organizations. Their erasure would free the regime's hands to manipulate elections until they are nothing but a staged performance like in electoral autocracies such as Russia. It would also accomplish Georgian Dream's declared intention to win a large enough majority to be able to change the constitution uni-laterally.

Wielding this power, Georgian Dream and Ivanishvili would finalize Georgia's transformation into an authoritarian regime. The amendment on the "protection of family values" would be the equiv-alent of Putin's constitu-tional formalization of autocracy in 2020. This amendment would strip Georgia's constitution of its liberal democratic charac-teristics. The foreign influ-ence bill would create a framework for total social control by imposing restric-tions on freedom of speech and assembly, implement-ing censorship and effec-

they could live in prosperi-ty under a benevolent per-sonalist dictatorship. When that lie exhausted itself, the regime augmented it with an ideological cocktail drawn from Russia's impe-rialist past, sparking a brutal war that could be waged only by a regime that makes a resurrected, mod-ernized Stalinism a central component of its ideology.

Illiberal democracies like Georgia harbor the seeds of authoritarianism, even if they are not readily visible. Russian political expert Andrei Kolesnikov says these regimes are sus-ceptible to collapsing into a state of "hybrid totalitarian-ism": a society that is gov-erned by both laws and violence. This term applies not only to Putin's regime after 2022 but also to Lukashenko's regime in Belarus. Georgia's illiberal democracy is also showing this alarming trend, descending into authoritari-anism at a rate reminiscent of the Stalin era.

Regime-dependent clients bussed-in to pack Ivanishvili's audience were not mobilized simply to show support, but to makethe regime's obvious lies that the bill was inspired by the US Foreign Agents Registration Act and is in Georgia's best interests appear true.

The regime has respond-ed to the spontaneous, youth-led protests of recent weeks with brutality. Thousands of protesters and their families have reported receiving intimi-dating phone calls from anonymous numbers that threatened them with death and rape. While this cam-paign was underway, the speaker of Georgia's parlia-ment announced the cre-ation of an incriminating database of the regime's opponents and vowed to take "appropriate mea-sures" against them.

Later that evening, prominent protest leaders and opposition voices were physically assaulted by thugs for hire who are de facto part of the regime's security forces. Others found their houses marked with graffiti and posters of their faces branding them "enemies of the people" or "agents nurtured by fore-ign grants." What we are witnessing is the re-enact-ment of brutal Stalinist practices used during col-lectivization and the Great Terror, adapted to modern technologies and social conditions. Whether an overwhelming protest movement can defeat the regime and conclusively reverse this dangerous tra-jectory will define Georgia's future.

Kennedy regarded as potential spoiler in US presidential election

Steve Herman

THERE are few things the presidential campaigns of Donald Trump and Joe Biden agree on. One is the presi-dential candidacy of activist-lawyer Robert F. Kennedy Jr. Both the Biden and Trump camps see Kennedy as a poten-tial spoiler in this November's election.

About half of registered voters have told pollsters that if given the chance, they would replace both Biden and Trump on this year's ballot. "If you picture what this country is going to look like in November if either President Trump or President Biden won, the division is going to continue," Kennedy said at a California cam-paign event to introduce his run-ning mate, 38-year-old attorney and philanthropist Nicole Shanahan. "The anger, the vitriol, the chaos, the polarization is going to worsen. The only way to end that is through my successful can-didacy."

Neither Kennedy nor Shanahan has ever held elective office. Kennedy's father was Robert F. Kennedy, a former US attorney general and a senator, and a major contender in the 1968 Democratic Party presidential primary until he was assassinated. His uncle was President John F. Kennedy, slain while in office in 1963.

"Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is not going to be the next president," predicts Georgetown University Associate Professor Hans Noel, echoing the consensus of his fel-low political scientists. What wor-ries the Biden and Trump cam-paigns is the possibility of Kennedy on the ballot in the half-dozen or so swing states where his mere thousands of votes could "change the outcome of that state. Then of course, that tips the direc-tion of that state - if that state is large enough - and the ultimate election is fairly close, which is what we expect. Then, it could change the outcome of the race," Noel tells VOA.

During a recent appearance on MSNBC, Kennedy declared "I'm going to be on the ballot in every state. I'll be on the ballot in every state by July." Kennedy's team declined VOA's request to make the candidate or a surrogate avail-able to respond to questions, say-ing "the campaign has decided to only grant interviews to U.S press with targeted US audiences at this time."

The Kennedy clan "is not happy at all that he's running, and they've made a number of efforts to make that very clear," notes Noel. Biden, during a recent campaign appear-

ance in the critical swing state of Pennsylvania, was surrounded by Kennedy family members, includ-ing the independent candidate's sister, Kerry Kennedy, who said "We want to make crystal clear our feeling that the best way forward for America is to reelect Joe Biden and Kamala Harris to four more years."

Candidate Kennedy's beliefs about vaccines, the origins of COVID-19, and the assassinations of his father and uncle have attract-ed some supporters, including those who said they previously voted for Trump or Biden. In recent weeks, Kennedy attracted the most media attention not for his positions on any political issue but for a revelation from a 2012 depo-sition for a divorce. In it, he said cognitive issues that had harmed his earning potential could have been "caused by a worm that got into my brain and ate a portion of it and then died."

In a social media post after the brain worm wriggled into the head-lines across the country, Kennedy quipped, "I offer to eat 5 more brain worms and still beat President Trump and President Biden in a debate." Political pun-dits are split on whether Kennedy poses more of a threat to Trump or

Biden. "Kennedy is much more popular among Republicans than he is among Democrats right now. But that's probably mostly because he's a Democrat or former Democrat who says bad things about other Democrats," said Noel. "And, so, Republicans like to hear that, and they think that sounds interesting. But they're not going to vote for that over Donald Trump."

The Republican National Committee, attempting to dissuade conservatives who oppose abortion from considering Kennedy as an alternative to Trump, stated, "There is exactly zero daylight between the abortion extremism of RFK Jr. and Crooked Joe Biden."

The Democratic National Committee filed a complaint against Kennedy in February with the Federal Election Commission alleging a political action commit-tee was illegally coordinating with the independent candidate's cam-paign to get him on additional state ballots. Biden's party also portrays Kennedy as a "spoiler for Donald Trump," according to Matt Corridoni, a DNC spokesperson. "RFK Jr.'s campaign isn't building a plan or a strategy to get 270 elec-toral votes. They're building one to help Trump return to the Oval Office," he says.

VOA

US-Japan semiconductor alliance of future

Joshua W. Walker

PRIME Minister Fumio Kishida's historic visit to Washington in April has opened a new era in technology cooperation between the US and Japan. While the role that tech-nology innovation plays was high-lighted as "driving the alliance in the 21st century," it is harder to wrap our minds around this com-pared to the more tangible mili-tary and space innovations cap-turing the headlines. In part, this is because in both countries, the private sector - not the govern-ment - will be key in galvanizing the progress.

It is also because there are so many actors, including corporate giants, pledging large cross-border investments per the impressive list of deliverables in the White House fact sheet, including Microsoft, Google, Daiichi Sankyo, Amazon Web Services, Toyota and Honda Aircraft, among many others. One key technology partnership with sig-nificant implications that deserves more attention is between IBM and Rapidus, a tie-up that is focused on the high-stakes area of critical and emerging technologies - semicon-ductors. The looming chip war that has exposed the enormous global vulnerability with China's progress in the sector and Taiwan's precarious geopolitical position in a critical supply chain has focused the US-Japan relationship toward the future.

Rapidus, a Japanese government-backed semiconductor manufactur-er, is developing "bleeding-edge" semiconductor manufacturing and adjacent technologies and is diversi-fying into this space through its part-

nership with IBM. The two compa-nies formed an agreement in late 2022 to jointly develop 2 nm-node technology. This partnership, led by two of the world's greatest allies and democracies, has the potential to reign as a global leader in this space and represents the very best of what the next set of solutions for humani-ty might look like.

The US and Japan have the capacity to go even further. Washington and Tokyo's infrastruc-tures in terms of dealing with tech-nology are not where they need to be to meet this moment. As was dis-cussed during the World Economic Forum, another "Industrial Revolution" is taking place. To cap-ture the benefits of the so-called 4th Industrial Revolution, the US-Japan relationship needs to take a page out of the Rapidus-IBM partnership so it is not all in vain.

What's most interesting about this partnership is that it's not just about two companies, but also two ecosys-tems - two governments, university networks and the local municipali-ties who are making 1+1=3. What powers this at the macro level is the major investment of the US Chips Act, which is a huge step forward in terms of investing in US-grown cut-ting-edge tech. This is also best rep-resented with IBM and its New York headquarters and through Rapidus' work with Hokkaido Prefecture in tandem as a public-private partner-ship.

Explaining all of this at the civil society level is critical. Most people know that technology has changed

their lives at the basic level, with iPhones and 5G allowing for greater connectivity. However, outside of allowing us to drive cars, have cell phones and use the many everyday tools that we take for granted in a modern economy, the chips that are at stake can power emerging con-cepts like the metaverse and broader artificial intelligence. How does this look when scaled and combined with the most powerful minds and partners from the US and Japan? With the leaders of both countries having carved out their new set of technology agreements between their administrations, and US Department of Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo and Japanese Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Saito Ken meeting for their economic "two-plus-two" talks, now is the time to follow the lead of IBM and Rapidus on the societal level. This means creating more space for the private, nonprofit and civil soci-ety sectors.

On the geopolitical side, the US-Japan alliance is on one side of the equation, with China on the other and Taiwan in the middle. This explains why the semiconductor industry is so important for our future. When it comes to technol-ogy, competition is an uncharted area and increasingly, unlike in the mili-tary or political domains, this is not being driven by the US government but by the private sector. In the same way, what Rapidus represents in Japan is a partnership marrying the public and private sectors - in stark contrast to business operations in

China. This is an even more attrac-tive and relevant reason for IBM, and the US more broadly, to look to Japan as a natural partner.

Just as in the 1980s when Japanese industrial policy was a dominant force that allowed Japanese automakers to come into the largest market, the US, we need that same capability to unify the free and open world. However, this time, instead of the competition being between the US and Japan, we are squarely on the same team and fully aligned for the future. The ultimate success of whether this partnership can produce chips that empower things that we cannot even imagine today will be whether we can go beyond the 1980s - the last time Japan's economy had the vibrancy it is showing today.

But just like the journey itself, the destination is the production of these chips and to align to bring like-minded companies, people and gov-ernments together. Success, even if you start with the end goal today in 2024, will be that we have the abili-ty to change dynamically over time to make each other better than the sum total of our parts. At Japan Society's Annual Dinner in June, the two CEOs of IBM and Rapidus will participate in a keynote dialogue to explain why their partnership is a model for the future of US-Japan relations. The hope is that the story of this compelling partnership will receive more attention from the broader US-Japan community, whose chapters are still being writ-en and in which we each play a key role.

The Japan Times



BAHAWALPUR: Laborers are collecting dry fodder for animals with the help of a thresher machine.

PSX stays bullish, gains 411.65 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bullish trend on Friday, gaining 411.65 points, a positive change of 0.55 per cent, closing at 75,342.35 points against 74,930.70 points the previous trading day.

A total of 496,699,517 shares valuing Rs 17.631 billion were traded during the day as compared to 407,625,139 shares valuing Rs 16.987 billion on the last day.

Some 386 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 212 of them recorded gains and 153 sustained losses, whereas the prices of 21 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Kohinoor Spinning with 44,618,981 shares at Rs4.85 per share, P.I.A.C (A) with 28,760,119 shares at Rs 24.31 per share and K-Electric Limited with 23,057,050 shares at Rs 4.57 per share.

Nestle Pakistan limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs149.82 per share price closing at Rs 7429.82, whereas the runner-up was Ismail Industries Limited with Rs 104.14 increase to close at Rs 1,548.92.

Services Industries Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 23.52 per share closing at Rs 778.03, followed by Khyber Textile Mills Limited with Rs 19.73 decline to close at Rs 460.73.

OGDCL enhances production in Karak

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) has announced a significant production enhancement at Nashpa Well-10, located in the Karak District of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as part of its production enhancement campaign.

Through a production

enhancement strategy, OGDCL has implemented rigless intervention techniques in various formations, resulting in a significant increase in hydrocarbon production.

With the successful optimization, the cumulative production from the well now stands at an impressive 1870 BPD of oil and 7.02 MMSCFD of gas. The extracted gas is

being efficiently injected into the Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) network.

Prior to the production enhancement, the well had been producing 1700 BPD of oil and 2.45 MMSCFD of gas. The Nashpa-10 production is projected to save \$30.67 million annually in foreign exchange as import substitution for the country.

For economic revival, job creation British Pakistani entrepreneur launches Trade Gate

ISLAMABAD (APP): UAE-based British Pakistani entrepreneur Shakeel Ahmad Meer has launched Trade Gate in Pakistan and other countries to stimulate local economic growth, generate job opportunities, and achieve self-sufficiency.

Conceived by Chairman Shakeel Ahmed Meer of the Meer Group, Trade Gate is being launched in sixty cities and districts across Pakistan and multiple international locations including Dubai, the USA, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UK, Australia, and New Zealand. Its objective is to empower talent, businesses, and investors, offering training and assistance to aspiring entrepreneurs in effectively managing their ventures.

In an interview, Shakeel Ahmed Meer stated that the Trade Gate platform is designed to link potential investors, educated youth, and job seekers in managing diverse projects under the supervision of Meer Group experts. Its primary goal is to revitalize local economic growth, create job opportunities, and advance global sustainable development, ultimately achieving self-sufficiency in the country.

Shakeel said the initiative, launched as part of the Vision Pakistan project, aims to generate a minimum of one million dollars per city within six to seven months of operation. Its overarching objective is to establish a sixty-billion-dollar economy within five years.

The launch of Trade Gate, the latest venture by the Meer Group, signifies another triumph for Shakeel Ahmad Meer and his team, who remain at the forefront of local economic advancement. As this groundbreaking concept gains traction worldwide, the prospect of collective development and sustainable growth appears increasingly certain.

Shakeel Ahmad Meer emphasizes that Trade Gate is a win-win situation for all involved. Investors gain access to promising ventures, businesses acquire the resources they need to thrive, and job seekers discover fulfilling opportunities.

It's a recipe for igniting billion-dollar local economic growth, one community at a time.

A fresh perspective on the impact of Trade Gate: Many job seekers in the area will now have access to current opportunities, enabling them to excel

and support local businesses. As a result, this talent pool is anticipated to attract additional investment, fostering a cycle of growth and economic prosperity.

Meer said, Trade Gate, a pioneering initiative aimed at global economic reform. This platform not only propels progress but also cultivates an interconnected network of investors, major projects, and job seekers, potentially injecting billions into local economies for sustainable, long-term growth.

Shakeel Ahmad Meer, Chairman of the Meer Group, asserts that the Trade Gate platform should be viewed as more than just a conventional platform; it acts as a catalyst for positive change. He emphasizes its ability to foster stronger connections among investors, businesses, and talent, essential for local economies to flourish and develop with the right momentum.

The unique aspect of Trade Gate lies in its ability to connect individuals with both capital and innovative ideas, enabling them to collaborate in bringing these ideas to fruition. Investors on the platform gain access to a wider array of vetted local business ideas, allowing them to invest in ventures and contribute to economic growth within their communities.

From time to time, Shakeel Ahmad Meer and the Meer Group collaborate closely in local economic development. Renowned for its diversified business portfolio, the Meer Group has consistently demonstrated loyalty to community growth.

Interestingly, with support from the same company, Trade Gate emerged as a significant digital hub where digital natives converge to contribute to the development of a thriving local economy.

Musk pushes plan for China data

SHANGHAI/SINGAPORE (Reuters): Tesla (TSLA.O), opens new tab is pushing ahead with plans to power the global development of its self-driving system with data from China that could be processed within the country, part of a strategic shift by Elon Musk, according to people with knowledge of the work.

As part of that effort, Tesla has been developing plans for a data center in China to train the algorithm needed for more fully autonomous vehicles, according to two people, who asked not to be named because the work remains private.

Until recently, Tesla has focused on efforts to secure approval from Chinese regulators to transfer data generated by its EVs in China out of the country for its "Full Self Driving" (FSD) system, according to the two people and an additional person with knowledge of the matter.

It was not clear if Tesla would proceed with both options for handling self-driving data from China - data transfer and a local data center - or if it was developing parallel plans as a hedge.

Tesla's efforts underscore the speed of the electric vehicle maker's pivot to bet on a breakthrough in AI at a time when EV demand has slowed and its competition has deepened.

Its push to make fuller use of data from vehicles in China to develop the automaker's artificial intelligence for driving comes as the U.S. government has tried to clamp down on the transfer of AI technology from U.S. firms to China.

Tesla has not been able to offer the full version of FSD, which costs the equivalent of almost \$9,000, in China.

A wider market for FSD in China would give a boost to the automaker's revenue and profits at a time when both are getting squeezed by pressure from Chinese rivals such as BYD (002594.SZ), opens new tab.

Tesla did not respond to a request for comment.

Setting up a data center in China for FSD development would require Tesla to work with a Chinese partner, two of the sources said. There is also a potential hardware-sourcing challenge.

It has had talks with Nvidia (NVDA.O), opens new tab about acquiring graphic processing units for a China data center, according to one of the people, who was briefed on the discussions. U.S. sanctions bar Nvidia and its partners from selling its most advanced chips in China.

Nvidia declined to comment on whether it had held talks with Tesla.

Tesla's campaign to make more use of data from China was kicked into high gear in a whirlwind trip by Musk to Beijing last month when he met with officials including Premier Li Qiang. In his meeting with Li, Musk sought to smooth permissions for Tesla's data transfer, two of the sources said. The potential of Tesla investing in a data center in China was also raised, they said.

Musk also discussed the possibility of Tesla licensing its FSD systems to Chinese EV makers, one person said. Musk had said in April Tesla was talking to another "major" automaker about licensing FSD without naming it.

FBR holds meeting with trade unions

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) on Friday

convened a meeting with representatives from various trade unions of the country aimed to addressing concerns raised by the trade and business community over implementation of the "Tajir Dost Scheme".

The meeting was attended by Chief coordinator of the Tajir Dost Scheme Naeem Mir and other senior officials to foster a collaborative approach towards the success of scheme, said a

press release issued by the FBR.

During the meeting, representatives of the trade unions emphasized the need for clear guidelines on taxation for newly registered traders under the Tajir Dost Scheme. They were of the view that retailers' reluctance to register stemmed from ambiguity surrounding the taxation regime, potentially hindering the scheme's effectiveness in enrolling traders.

Additionally, the representatives highlighted the absence of facilitation, tax exemptions or incentives to convince

retailers to register under the scheme.

FBR officials and the Chief coordinator of the Tajir Dost Scheme agreed to consider the trade community's reservations and recommendations. They asked them to submit a unified proposal within a week regarding the registration and taxation of traders under the scheme.

Furthermore, FBR affirmed its commitment to collaborate with all stakeholders involved in the registration drive to

enhance tax compliance nationwide. FBR also urged the Trade Unions to cooperate with the Government in facilitating the registration of traders under the Tajir Dost Scheme.

The meeting reflects the commitment of FBR towards promoting tax culture across the country for sustained economic growth and reiterated its dedication to fostering an environment conducive to trade and commerce, ensuring transparency and fairness in taxation policies.

China rolls out new measures to fix its property crisis, spur growth

BEIJING (AP): China announced a slate of fresh measures Friday to reinvigorate its ailing property industry after the latest data showed housing prices have slumped nearly 10% since the start of the year.

Among other things, the central bank said it would reduce the minimum down payment for mortgages and remove the floor on interest rates for first and second homes.

China's housing market has slumped after a crackdown on excessive borrowing by property developers several years ago, dragging along a wide range of other businesses — such as home furnishing, appliances and construction — and slowing growth in the world's No. 2 economy.

Dozens of developers, whose legions of high-rise apartments have transformed urban landscapes across China, have defaulted on their debts. Many projects have just stalled, unfinished.

He Lifeng, a vice premier, said officials would roll out policies to suit each city and "fight the tough battle of dealing with the risk of unfinished commercial housing."

"We will solidly advance key tasks such as guaranteed housing delivery and absorption of existing commercial housing," the official Xinhua News Agency cited He as telling a top level teleconference on property policies.

The effort to entice more families to buy homes has gained momentum after earlier moves such as interest rate cuts and government-backed financing failed to lure buyers into the market at a time when develop-

ers are struggling to deliver housing already promised and paid for.

Housing is a mainstay of investment for Chinese, given the low level of interest rates paid by banks, and many potential buyers might be waiting for the market to bottom out before considering new purchases. Also, layoffs and other disruptions from the pandemic have left many people wary of spending.

The announcement by the People's Bank of China said that effective Saturday, the interest rate for first-time housing provident fund loans for under 5 years will be cut by 0.25 percentage point to 2.35%. The rate for loans over 5 years was reduced by 0.25 percentage point to 2.85%.

Minimum down payments for loans for first homes will be 15% of the purchasing price. For second homes, it will be 25%, it said.

The latest efforts, which take the down payment levels and mortgage interest rates to historic lows, show Chinese leaders are determined to stabilize the real estate market, Chen Wenjing of China Index Holdings, a Nasdaq-listed company specializing in information about China's real estate market, said in a report. "Reducing the down payment threshold and home purchase costs for residents will likely boost their willingness to buy homes," Chen said. If major cities follow up with related measures, that will likely improve market sentiment even more, he said.

Officials should focus on ensuring home buyers get what they paid for, and when that is impossible the

courts may need to get involved, said Dong Jianguo, vice minister of Housing and Urban-Rural Development.

"In judicial proceedings, protecting the legitimate rights and interests of homebuyers should also be a top priority," Dong told a news conference in Beijing.

Earlier Friday, officials of the National Bureau of Statistics acknowledged that domestic demand — spending by consumers and businesses — remained "insufficient" and said the government was considering further ways to revitalize the property industry after housing prices sank 9.8% in January-April from a year earlier.

"The complexity, severity, and uncertainty of the current external environment are significantly increasing. There is insufficient effective domestic demand, high business pressure, and many risks and hidden dangers," said Liu Aihua, a spokesperson for the bureau.

"The foundation for recovery needs to be strengthened," Liu said. One of the key strategies being rolled out involves local governments buying apartments that have gone unsold due to weak demand, to be rented out as affordable housing in trial programs that appear to have become national policy.

As part of the latest policy relief, the central bank said it is setting up a 300 billion yuan (\$42 billion) fund to finance purchases of unoccupied housing by state run companies and local governments for use as affordable housing.

The Dow just crossed 40,000 for the first time

NEW YORK (AP): The Dow Jones Industrial Average just topped 40,000 for the first time, the latest pop in what's been a surprisingly good year for Wall Street.

But just like New Year's represents an arbitrary point in time in the Earth's revolution around the sun, such milestones for the Dow don't mean that much inherently.

For one, with just 30 companies, the Dow represents a tiny slice of Corporate America. For another, almost no one's 401(k) account sees its performance depend on the Dow, which has become more of a relic used for historical comparisons.

Here's a look at what the Dow is, how it got here and how its use among investors is on the wane:

It's a measure of 30 established, well-known

companies. These stocks are sometimes known as "blue chips," which are supposed to be on the steadier and safer side of Wall Street.

Not just industrial companies like Caterpillar and Honeywell, despite the name.

The roster has changed many times since the Dow began in 1896 as the U.S. economy has transformed. Out, for example, was Standard Rope & Twine, and in recently have been big technology companies.

Apple, Intel and Microsoft are some of the newer-economy names currently in the Dow. The financial industry also has a healthy representation with American Express, Goldman Sachs, JPMorgan Chase and Travelers. So does health care with Amgen, Johnson & Johnson, Merck and

UnitedHealth Group.

The Dow just crossed its latest 10,000 point threshold to top 40,000 briefly in midday trading on Thursday. It took about three and a half years to make the leap from 30,000 points, which it first crossed in November 2020.

It's kept chugging mostly higher despite the worst inflation in decades, painfully high interest rates meant to get inflation under control and worries that high rates would make a recession inevitable for the U.S. economy.

Companies are now in the midst of reporting their best profit growth in nearly two years, and the economy has managed to avoid a recession, at least so far.

No. The Dow represents only a narrow slice of the economy. Professional investors tend to look at broader measures of the

market, such as the S&P 500 index, which has nearly 17 times the number of companies within it.

More than \$11.2 trillion in investments were benchmarked to the S&P 500 at the end of 2019, according to estimates from S&P Dow Jones Indices. That's 350 times more than the \$32 billion benchmarked to the Dow Jones Industrial Average.

Investors' 401(k) accounts are much more likely to include an S&P 500 index fund than anything tied to the Dow. The S&P 500 crossed above its own milestone Wednesday, topping 5,300 points for the first time.

That's what more investors care about. Well, 100-point milestones matter for the S&P 500 as little as others, but the fact that the S&P 500 is higher than ever matters a lot.



ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry receiving Deputy Head of Mission UAE Embassy Mohammed Sultan Alkaitoob at Chamber House.



In brief

Man City will not cruise

MANCHESTER (AFP): Pep Guardiola has warned that Manchester City cannot take anything for granted as they seek to claim an unprecedented fourth consecutive Premier League title against West Ham on Sunday. City have the destiny of the title in their hands as they lead Arsenal by two points going into the final day of the season. However, Guardiola pointed to the dramatic final day two years ago, when City had to come from 2-0 down late on to beat Aston Villa 3-2 to deny Liverpool the title. The English champions were also made to sweat to beat Tottenham 2-0 on Tuesday despite many Spurs fans wanting their own side to lose to prevent north London rivals Arsenal claiming their first title for 20 years. "We would like to be 3-0 up after 10 minutes but that's not going to happen," Guardiola said at his pre-match press conference on Friday. "I'm ready for it to be a tough, tough game. I want to put in the mind of the players, 'Look at Tottenham, how they fought for every ball'. "It was the same with Aston Villa two years ago -- they were in the same position, they didn't have anything to play for -- and we know what happened. "Our people have to come here and be ready from the first minute, to be with us and do it together." City are attempting to become the first side in history to win four straight English top-flight titles and are on the brink of a sixth Premier League win in the past seven seasons. Guardiola batted away suggestions that his side do not get the credit they deserve for the scale of those achievements.

Police arrest Scheffler

LOUISVILLE (AFP): Golf world number one Scottie Scheffler was handcuffed and arrested by police early Friday after allegedly trying to drive around traffic controls outside the PGA Championship at Valhalla. In one of the strangest scenes ever at a major tournament, Scheffler was taken into custody by police, booked with a mugshot taken in an orange jumpsuit, released, then taken back to the course for breakfast and practice before finally teeing off in the second round. Scheffler was detained by Louisville Metro police when he drove onto curbing to try and get around an accident at the entrance of the golf course, one that resulted in the fatality of a pedestrian. Scheffler was charged with assault of a police officer, criminal mischief, reckless driving and disregarding signals from an officer directing traffic and released on his own recognizance. While on the driving range preparing to tee off, Scheffler released a statement about the incident. "This morning, I was proceeding as directed by police officers," Scheffler said. "It was a very chaotic situation, understandably so considering the tragic accident that had occurred earlier, and there was a big misunderstanding of what I thought I was being asked to do, 'I never intended to disregard any of the instructions.' 'I'm hopeful to put this to the side and focus on golf today. Of course, all of us involved in the tournament express our deepest sympathies to the family of the man who passed away in the earlier accident this morning. It truly puts everything into perspective."

FIFA orders legal review of Palestinian call to suspend Israel

BANGKOK (Reuters): Soccer's world body FIFA ordered an urgent legal evaluation on Friday of a proposal by the Palestinian Football Association (PFA) to suspend Israel over the war in Gaza, promising to address it at an extraordinary meeting of its council in July.

FIFA President Gianni Infantino took the decision at an annual Congress in Bangkok, where the PFA president made an emotional plea to delegates to hold a vote to suspend Israel from all club and national competitions, accusing it of multiple breaches of FIFA statutes.

The Palestinian proposal accuses the Israel Football Association (IFA) of complicity in violations of international law by the Israeli government, discrimination against Arab players, and inclusion in its league of clubs located in Palestinian territory. The IFA rejected that.

The request for sanctions against the IFA comes two years after FIFA's decision to suspend Russia, opens new tab from international competitions over its invasion of Ukraine.

"FIFA cannot afford to remain indifferent to these violations or to the

ongoing genocide in Palestine, just as it did not remain indifferent to numerous precedents," PFA President Jibril Rajoub said. "How much more must the Palestinian football family suffer for FIFA to act with the same urgency and severity as it did in other cases? Does FIFA consider some wars to be more important than others and some victims to be more significant?"

"FIFA cannot afford to remain indifferent to these violations or to the ongoing genocide in Palestine, just as it did not remain indifferent to numerous precedents," PFA President Jibril Rajoub said.

"How much more must the Palestinian football family suffer for FIFA to act with the same urgency and severity as it did in other cases? Does FIFA consider some wars to be more important than others and some victims to be more significant?"

'CYNICAL, POLITICAL AND HOSTILE'

The proposal was sent to FIFA in March and added to the Congress agenda with the support of the Algerian, Jordanian, Syrian and Yemeni federations.

The Asian Football Confederation

gave its backing on Thursday for action against Israel. IFA chief Shino Moshe Zuares said the proposal was based on motives and ambitions that "have nothing to do with the spirit of sports or the FIFA value of separating sports from politics".

"Today, maybe more than ever, I believe that football must be a key element in healing the fractures and the wounds, helping us and everyone to recover," he told the Congress. "Yet, once again, we are facing a cynical, political, and hostile attempt by the PFA to harm Israeli football.

"I am holding myself back and will not speak about the true motives out of respect for this institution," he said. Infantino expressed extreme shock over the Oct. 7 attacks and the offensives in Gaza and said due to the "obvious sensitivity of the issue", independent legal experts would be brought in urgently to analyse the Palestinian allegations. Those findings would be referred to the FIFA Council, its main decision-making body outside of the Congress, to convene an extraordinary meeting in July and take appropriate decisions, he said.

Pakistan beat Turkmenistan to win Volleyball League

ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan have defeated Turkmenistan in the final of the Central Asian Volleyball Association (CAVA) Nation's Volleyball League at the Liaquat Gymnasium in Islamabad today.

Pakistan claimed a 3-1 win with set scores of 25-21, 25-19, 20-25, and 25-14. The home side showcased strong offensive and defensive strategies, securing early leads in the first two sets. Turkmenistan made a comeback in the third set, taking it 25-20. However, Pakistan regained control in the fourth

set, decisively winning 25-14 to clinch the match.

Earlier, Kyrgyzstan won the third place game by beating Sri Lanka 3-1. Kyrgyzstan had kept dominance in the first two sets, claiming by 25-20 and 25-17. But, the Lankans made a comeback and claimed the third set by 20-25. Kyrgyzstan eventually had the fourth set by a margin of 25-23. It must be noted Pakistan remained unbeaten throughout the competition, beating every team in the competition.

Pakistan overcame Iran with a 3-1 victory to regis-

ter their consecutive fifth win on May 16. The set scores were 25-18, 23-25, 25-16, and 25-20, showcasing Pakistan's strong performance. They made a place in the final on May 15 after beating Kyrgyzstan 3-0 in their fourth match.

They defeated Afghanistan in their opening match on May 11 by 3-0. Their second win in the tournament came against Sri Lanka as the team defeated their opponents 3-0 on May 12, Sunday. Their third match was against Turkmenistan, which they won 3-1 on May 13.

Shaheen features in 50th PCB Podcast

LAHORE (PPI): Pakistan fast bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi was a special guest on the 50th edition of the PCB Podcast, which marks a significant milestone as the podcast was launched in September 2019.

In this latest episode, which is available here for viewing and free downloading for editorial purposes, the lanky left-arm speedster candidly discusses his cricket journey, including:

His early days as the youngest of seven brothers and his family's survival through terrorism. Transition from being a youngster in the ICC U19 Cricket World Cup 2018 to becoming one of the fiercest present-day fast bowlers.

The impact of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2019 on his career, including his outstanding performance against

Bangladesh with a six-fer at Lord's.

His current fitness and form following a career-threatening injury in 2022. Player of the match performances against India (three for 31 in Dubai) and Bangladesh (four for 22) in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2021 and 2022, respectively, and the subsequent heartbreaks.

Chances in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 and the team environment, emphasising playing for the star and logo on the chest rather than the name and number at the back of the shirt.

Bowling with Naseem Shah and Haris Rauf, and the importance of collective performances. Expectations from fans and supporters in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 and beyond.

Shaheen had a stellar series against Ireland, fin-

ishing as the standout bowler with seven wickets. During the second T20I on Sunday, Shaheen reached a milestone of 300 wickets in international cricket, becoming the 12th Pakistan bowler to achieve this feat. The other 11 are: Wasim Akram (916), Waqar Younis (789), Imran Khan (544), Shahid Afridi (538), Saqlain Mushtaq (496), Saeed Aijmal (447), Shoaib Akhtar (438), Umar Gul (427), Abdul Razzaq (388), Abdul Qadir (368), and Mushtaq Ahmed (346).

The 24-year-old, who has represented Pakistan in 146 international matches since his debut in April 2018, is now focused on the upcoming four-T20I series against England, scheduled from May 22-30, and the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024, set to be held in the United States and Caribbean countries from June 1-29.

Barca coach Xavi set for sack: reports



BARCELONA (AFP): Barcelona are poised to sack coach Xavi Hernandez just weeks after he made a U-turn and decided to stay at the club, Spanish media reported Friday.

Catalan radio station RAC-1 said president Joan Laporta had decided to sack Xavi, with daily newspaper Sport confirming the news, while AS said Barcelona were already deciding who would replace the coach.

In January, Xavi said he would leave at the end of the season but, after a run of strong form, in April he and president Joan Laporta agreed the coach would stay for the next campaign, with his contract expiring in June 2025.

However, Laporta did not travel with the team for their 2-0 in at Almeria in La Liga on Thursday, with Spanish media reporting he was angry with Xavi's pre-match comments.

The coach had highlighted Barcelona's financial difficulties in comparison to the strength of new Spanish champions Real Madrid and other European giants. "Barcelona fans

have to understand, we're not in the same situation (as those clubs)," said Xavi on Wednesday.

The coach stood by his words on Thursday when he was asked about Laporta not attending the Almeria match.

"They haven't told me anything personally... We travelled with the sporting vice-president, more directors, all normally," Xavi told reporters late Thursday. "I said what I think is real, that we will fight for all the trophies, with a lot of hope, with ambition, but that the situation is not easy.

"We are working very well, the club most of all, to change this situation."

Barcelona won La Liga last season but were not able to defend the title. They went out of the Champions League in the quarter-finals to Paris Saint-Germain and will end the season trophyless.

Real Madrid thrashed Barca in the Spanish Super Cup final while Athletic Bilbao eliminated them in the Copa del Rey.

In April, Xavi, 44, said he was "full of hope" and

that fans, players and "above all the confidence of the president and (sporting director) Deco" was what convinced him to stay. Laporta said at the time that he was glad Xavi would remain at the helm and that it was good for the stability of the club.

"It's great news that Xavi is staying," the president told a news conference. "The team we have, that is (still) consolidating, with very young players, needs that stability. 'Xavi is a reference for young players and we can see that -- today I'm especially pleased, and the board have unanimously supported this decision."

Laporta appointed Xavi, one of Barcelona's greatest ever midfielders, to replace Ronald Koeman in November 2021.

As a player, Xavi made 767 appearances for Barcelona, winning four Champions Leagues and eight La Liga titles, as well as the World Cup with Spain. During his time as Barcelona coach, he lifted the Spanish Super Cup last season, along with the league title.

Buttler buoyed by return of Archer

LONDON (AFP): England white-ball captain Jos Buttler is glad to see "proper superstar" Jofra Archer back in action following the fast bowler's wicket-taking return to action for Sussex's 2nd XI. Injuries have blighted Archer's international career and he has not played top-level cricket for the past year.

England, however, have recalled Archer for the defence of their T20 World Cup title in the United States and the West Indies next month, with the pace-man also selected for the upcoming warm-up series against Pakistan.

Archer continued his build-up to the four-game series against Pakistan by turning out for Sussex's second string on Friday.

He was parachuted into the match on day four, taking the new ball and returning figures of 1-11 in six sharp overs in Kent's second innings at Beckenham.

The 29-year-old, previously playing domestic cricket in his native Barbados, hit home opener Ekansh Singh on the helmet and then had him caught in the slips. Archer will join the England squad in Leeds ahead of the first Twenty20 international against Pakistan at Headingley on Wednesday.

Buttler, who returned early from the Indian Premier League to oversee England's World Cup preparations, told Britain's Press Association news agency: "It's a huge encouragement for him to be back and see him ready to play.

"Everyone knows what he is capable of and the attitude he possesses. As a captain he is someone you can always turn to in a game because he always has a trick up his sleeve.

BCCI approaches Gautam Gambhir

NEW DELHI (Agencies): Former India batter Gautam Gambhir is on top of the BCCI's wishlist take up the position of India men's head coach after Rahul Dravid's term ends at the conclusion of the 2024 T20 World Cup in June.

ESPNcricinfo has learned Gambhir, who is currently the mentor of Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL, has been contacted by the BCCI to gauge his interest in the job, and further discussions are expected after KKR complete their IPL 2024 campaign. However, the deadline for applying for the India head coach job is May 27, a day after the IPL final.

Dravid, it is learnt, has communicated to the BCCI his decision not to seek another tenure.

While Gambhir, 42, has

no experience of coaching at international or domestic level, he has been in charge of the coaching staff at two IPL franchises. He was the mentor at Lucknow Super Giants in IPL 2022 and 2023 - they qualified for the playoffs in both seasons - before joining KKR for the 2024 season, where they will finish the league stage on top of the points table. Gambhir's move to KKR for IPL 2024 was unexpected but it is learned he was persuaded to become the team's mentor by the franchise's principal owner Shah Rukh Khan.

Gambhir was part of India's T20 World Cup triumph in 2007 and the ODI World Cup victory in 2011. He captained KKR for seven IPL seasons from 2011 to 2017, and they qualified for the playoffs

five times and won two titles in 2012 and 2014 under his leadership. They also reached the final of the defunct Champions League T20 in 2014.

Last week, the BCCI posted an advertisement seeking applications for the position of India men's head coach. The job, the BCCI said, would be for all three formats for a duration of three and a half years starting from July 2024 until December 2027.

Dravid had begun his two-year term as India's head coach after the 2021 T20 World Cup. His stint was supposed to end after the 2023 ODI World Cup in November last year, but he agreed to an extension until the end of the 2024 T20 World Cup, which will be played in West Indies and the USA in June.

Leclerc on top for Ferrari in opening practice



IMOLA (AFP): Charles Leclerc topped the times for Ferrari in Friday's opening free practice at the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix, finishing a busy session one-tenth of a second clear of nearest rival George Russell of Mercedes.

Driving his revised Ferrari with confidence and determination, Leclerc clocked a best lap in one minute and 16.990 seconds to finish ahead of Russell and Ferrari team-mate Carlos Sainz in third at the home's geographical 'home' circuit, 50 kilometres from Maranello.

Sergio Perez was fourth for Red Bull ahead of championship-leading team-mate and three-time world champion Max Verstappen, Yuki Tsunoda for RB and seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton

in the second Mercedes.

Both Verstappen and Hamilton had troubled sessions with the Dutchman wrestling often with his car to keep it on the asphalt.

McLaren's Lando Norris, maiden winner of the race in Miami two weeks ago, was eighth ahead of team-mate Lando Norris and two-time champion Fernando Alonso of Aston Martin.

The session began in warm and dry conditions on a beautiful day in the rolling vineyards of Emilia Romagna that envelop the Autodromo Enzo e Dino Ferrari. Russell, buoyed by hopes of a forthcoming Mercedes revival, set the early pace ahead of Hamilton with Vertappen third before Tsunoda took top spot for RB.

The times tumbled rap-

idly as the drivers, back at Imola for the first time in two years following last year's cancellation due to flooding, with Verstappen swapping best laps with Russell and both Ferrari men before Leclerc regained the ascendancy.

The Monegasque clocked 1:16.990 to go clear before Hamilton clipped a kerb and spun back into the fray and Verstappen, with six minutes to go, went off and crossed the grass at Variante Alta after complaining "I have no grip there".

British teenager Oliver Bearman, who impressed when he replaced appendicitis victim Sainz in Saudi Arabia at short notice, drove with consistency in 15th place as a replacement -- for the session only -- for Haas's Kevin Magnussen.

For Bearman, it was an opportunity to impress in a bid to prove his potential to replace Nico Hulkenberg who is set to join Sauber next year ahead of Audi's racing takeover.

It was less satisfying for Alex Albon, who had signed a long-term contract with Williams earlier in the week, as his car shut down after 20 minutes to trigger a red flag intervention.

Ahsan Iqbal vows to revive Pakistan's Sports

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Planning and Inter Provincial Coordination (IPC), Ahsan Iqbal, inaugurated the National Conference on Revival of Sports here on Friday, and emphasized the government's commitment in improving Pakistan's sports landscape.

Declaring 2025 as the year of sports revival in Pakistan, the minister expressed his determination to take Pakistan's sports to new heights. "All-out efforts are being made to improve Pakistan's sports," he said.

The minister highlighted the importance of the conference in reviving and improving sports in the country. "Victory is not won on the field of play, but it has to be planted in the mind," he said here at a local hotel.

He pledged to provide comprehensive support to Pakistan's talented athletes, saying that the country has immense talent. The aim of today's conference is to offer broad-based support to these athletes, he said.

Ahsan announced several initiatives to promote sports, including the preparation of 2028 Olympics, promotion of institutional sports, and establishment of an endowment fund for players. He also mentioned the installation of astro-turfs to highlight sports from the grassroots level.

The minister said Pakistanis were second to none in the world in terms of intelligence and hard work. However, he was of the view that

despite having a population of 250 million, Pakistan failed to qualify for even five sports in the Olympics.

Ending doping in sports in Pakistan is a top priority, he stressed, adding that despite funds being allocated for National Games in 2016 and 2017, the event did not take place.

Ahsan said that he was imprisoned in the previous government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for building Narowal Sports City. "Sports should be kept away from politics," he said.

Ahsan also criticized the previous PTI government for dismantling departmental sports structures, which had harmed the development of sports. He said he will also write a letter to all departments to restore sports within a week. We plan to build seven astro turfs for hockey, four of which have already been completed.

The minister also highlighted the achievements of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government, including ending load shedding and terrorism, and bringing peace to the country.

He also highlighted PML-N's government's achievements in resolving the energy crisis, combating terrorism, and restoring lights of Karachi.

Ahsan also emphasized the need for sports revival in Pakistan, saying that a nation's character is reflected in its sports. "If a nation is labeled as thieves, bandits, or corrupt, then that

nation is defeated," he said.

He highlighted the success of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project and drew a comparison with the development of sports infrastructure. Germany build 400 squash courts in one year, while we build only four in Pakistan in the same timeframe, he said.

Looking ahead to 2047, when Pakistan and India will mark 100 years of their independence, he said, India has made significant strides in sports but expressed his determination to create a new chapter of development in Pakistan sports.

"We must invest in our youth and sports infrastructure to create a vibrant sports culture in Pakistan. This is crucial for building a positive image of our nation and promoting national unity and pride."

He said that Pakistan will host the South Asian Games in 2025 and aims to become one of the top ten economies in the world, including the sports sector. He also revealed plans to hire foreign coaches to develop sports in Pakistan.

With a renewed focus on sports development, Pakistan aims to reclaim its position as a sporting nation and inspire a new generation of athletes and citizens alike. The conference brought together sports officials, athletes, and other stakeholders to discuss ways to revive Pakistan's sports sector.



In brief

238,900 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 238,900 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 223,200 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1469.18 feet and was 71.18 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 62,700 cusecs and 90,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1175.05 feet, which was 125.05 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 61,600 cusecs and 50,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 130,500, 111,900, 44,300 and 13,900 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 69,200 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 15,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Police arrest 705 POs

RAWALPINDI (APP): The district police in ongoing operation against Proclaimed Offenders (POs) managed to net 705 outlaws this year including 78 most wanted. According to a police spokesman, City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Hamdani directed the police officers to make all-out efforts to arrest the POs wanted in different cases including heinous crimes. The police while conducting raids in different areas rounded up 705 POs including 78 of A category and 627 of B category, he said and informed that the ongoing operation had been accelerated. The spokesman said that other accused allegedly involved in different cases would also be rounded up. Divisional Superintendents of Police appreciated the performance of the police teams, he said adding that such elements would be punished according to law.

TDCP makes arrangements

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Tourism Development Corporation of Punjab (TDCP) has made comprehensive and best arrangements for the tourists in Murree to facilitate them with dignity. Talking to APP here on Friday, a TDCP official said the practical steps are being taken by the organization for further promotion of tourism in Murree. Foreign and domestic tourists are thronging to Murree due to its scenic beauty and clad mountains to enjoy their trip, he added. He said that the TDCP has already launched an effective cleanliness campaign at different tourist spots in the Murree hilly areas not only to attract them but also to provide a neat and clean ambiance. He said the sanitary workers are involved in collecting plastic waste and littered discarded items aiming to ensure a plastic-free environment, especially in green spaces because plastic bottles, wrappers, and shopping bags are rampantly littered at the tourist destination. The official said that tourists appreciated the arrangements made by TDCP to entertain them with dignity and respect. It is pertinent to mention here, that Murree is a mountain resort city located in the Galyat region as it is formed on the outskirts of the Islamabad-Rawalpindi metropolitan area and is about 30 km north-east of the federal capital. Murree is a popular tourist station due to its landscape and beauty.

ID Cards to be issued, renewed at UC level: Naqvi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Interior Minister, Mohsin Naqvi on Friday visited the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) headquarters and chaired an important meeting during which various proposals were discussed to make NADRA more people-friendly.

Several significant decisions were made to facilitate the public, including the provision of identity card issuance and renewal facilities at the union council level across Pakistan. Additionally, biometric machines will be installed at union council levels nationwide.

Mohsin Naqvi directed that a plan be devised within a few days to finalise the issuance and renewal of identity cards at the union council level. He also sought a plan to make the Identity Card system foolproof, better, and efficient.

He emphasised the need for a plan that would facilitate visitors to NADRA centres and

ensure prompt service without delay.

Considering the long queues of citizens, the minister also sought a plan to increase NADRA centres in six major cities, including Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, Quetta, Islamabad, and Rawalpindi within seven days. He also ordered effective action against the fake identity card mafia.

Later, the minister visited the NADRA operational room, where he was briefed on the digital monitoring system of NADRA centres across Pakistan.

He appreciated the efforts of Chairman NADRA, Lieutenant General Muhammad Munir Afsar, and his team. Secretary Interior, Khurum Ali Agha, and senior NADRA officials were also present on the occasion.

Interior Minister congratulates newly elected body of AEMEND: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi congratulated the newly elected

President of the Association of Electronic Media Editors and News Directors (AEMEND) Azhar Abbas and other officials on Friday.

Mohsin Naqvi also expressed well wishes to the newly elected Senior Vice President Ayaz Khan, Vice President Muhammad Usman, Secretary General Tariq Mehmood and hoped that under the leadership of the newly elected president Azhar Abbas, the Association will continue to play its positive role in the development of electronic media. He added that undoubtedly, electronic media had developed rapidly in a short period of time.

He said that electronic media would have to adapt itself to modern technology as per the demands of the social media era. The role of electronic media in promoting democratic values and solving social problems in the country is unquestionable, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin chairing a meeting at NADRA headquarters.

Qaiser calls on Chief of Naval Staff

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh on Friday visited Naval Headquarters, Islamabad and called on Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf.

During the meeting, professional matters of mutual interest and Pakistan Navy's role in regional maritime security and Indian Ocean region came under discussion, said a press release. Both the dignitaries also dilated upon prospects of maritime economy and its importance for overall economic growth of the country.

Later on, a detailed briefing was given to the Minister regarding Pakistan's maritime challenges, opportunities and steps taken by Pak Navy to facilitate awareness and development of this crucial sector for future economic progress of Pakistan.

Kundi lauds Saudi investment in Pakistan

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Faisal Karim Kundi and Ambassador to Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan H.E Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malkiy met at Islamabad where they discussed enhancement of cooperation in different sectors in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and further strengthening of bilateral relations between the two brotherly Muslim countries. During the meeting, investment opportunities in different sectors in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa came under discussion. The Saudi ambassador congratulated Faisal Karim Kundi on assuming the office of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor and expressed best wishes to him. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor said that relations between the two brotherly countries were deep-rooted and people of both countries were connected in a strong bonds of religious, culture and historical values.

Faisal Karim Kundi said Saudi Arabia's investment in different sectors in Pakistan would significantly help bring economic stability in the latter, saying KP is blessed with an abundance of natural resources and there is a lot of opportunities for investors of the friendly countries to make investment in Pakistan including KP.

He held Saudi Arabia's investment in different sectors in Pakistan including KP in high esteem.

ANF recovers 133 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting five operations across the country managed to recover 133 kg drugs and arrested four accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday.

He informed that 65 kg hashish was recovered from Pinni Gwadar while 36 kg hashish and 2.2 kg opium were recovered from Khushab and two accused were arrested. 18 kg hashish was recovered from an accused rounded up near GT Road, Attock. In another raid, 12 kg hashish was recovered from a drug smuggler arrested near Sabi Road Quetta.

Govt to ensure internet access: Shaza

ISLAMABAD (APP): State Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima Khawaja said on Friday that the government was committed to ensuring internet access, smartphones, devices, and fiber optic facilities across the country.

Speaking at a ceremony organized by Huawei Pakistan on the occasion of World Telecommunication Day, she highlighted Huawei's significant contributions to the global technological landscape and its positive impact on Pakistan.

The event was also attended by Vice CEO of Public Affairs Yushaoning, President of Carrier Network Business Group Zhangzhen, Director PACD Saad Talha and CEO Cloud Shahzad Rasheed.

World Telecom Day is dedicated to raising awareness about the role of telecommunications in the lives of people and in the development of societies worldwide.

The minister said, "I will like to congratulate Huawei on all the success it has achieved so far, and also

thank Huawei for being in Pakistan and helping Pakistan achieve its goals". She also offered full support to Huawei Pakistan.

The minister outlined Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's vision of creating a fully digitized nation where every citizen had a digital identity and all processes in the economy, governance, and society are transparent, streamlined, and efficient.

"Connectivity, whether it is fiber or wireless, is a top priority for Pakistan. We recognize that connectivity and the internet form the foundational architecture for any ICT development we aim to achieve in the future," she said.

The minister underscored the critical role that robust digital infrastructure played in advancing technological progress and innovation. As the world increasingly relied on digital solutions, ensuring widespread and reliable internet connectivity remained a top priority for fostering sustainable ICT growth, she added.

Shaza said that under the Prime Minister's vision, the private sector was being

provided with full support and an enabling environment to take the lead in the digitalization process.

She also announced that preparations were underway for the launch of 5G services in Pakistan, which would be available soon.

An auction committee led by the Finance Minister was overseeing these matters, she added. She believed that the introduction of 5G would usher in a new era of development.

The minister recalled that in 2010, Shehbaz Sharif, as Chief Minister, introduced the concept of e-employment. About one million laptops, she said had been distributed among the youth, enabling many Pakistani freelancers to make a name for themselves globally.

She recalled that 3G and 4G services were also launched during the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government, and now the government was moving towards launching 5G. The minister said that the PML-N had played a crucial role in Pakistan's digitalization and IT advancements.

Hajj arrangements in Madinah inspected

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director Pakistan Hajj Mission, Zia-ur-Rehman Khan Friday said that high-level teams for the government scheme are monitoring the Hajj arrangements in Madinah to ensure the provision of facilities including accommodation, transportation, food, healthcare, and other logistical arrangements.

Talking to a Private news channel, he thanked the dedicated ministry staff for working round the clock, adding that complaints regarding luggage and other issues raised by intending pilgrims have been successfully resolved.

The Pakistani government with the help of the Saudi administration had made remarkable arrange-

ments and provided every possible facility to intending pilgrims, he said adding that due to the previous government's immature policies, the hajj rate was high however, this year's cost was low as compared to the last year.

He further mentioned that the Main Control Office in Madinah is diligently overseeing operations and the influx of hajj flights will continue.

He said that the main objective of the ministry is to improve arrangements in light of feedback received from the stakeholders, adding that the government had also introduced a comprehensive and affordable hajj package to hajjaj this year.

He said, "Our primary goal is to ensure that pilgrims can focus on their

spiritual journey without any distractions or difficulties". He said that the government would continue to assist Hajj organizers and any such initiatives that would benefit pilgrims and religious tourists.

He stated that the pilgrims in Makkah had also expressed their satisfaction with the arrangements of the government.

The director further said that every citizen should show maturity while using social media platforms and be sensible citizens while performing hajj. He said that people who are performing hajj should pray for the lasting peace, prosperity and well-being of the people of Jammu and Kashmir and also for the people of Pakistan.

Speakers call for promoting peace, tolerance

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speakers at the concluding session of a two-day national conference on Friday emphasized on highlighting the teachings of Maulana Rumi, Hazrat Sultan Bahu and other mystics to eradicate the effects of materialism and colonialism on Muslim thoughts.

"The values propagated by mystics including tolerance, philanthropy and religious harmony had a profound impact on society, language and literature which needed to be promoted among the citizens", they said.

The national conference titled "Maulana Rumi and Hazrat Sultan Bahu: Insaan Dosti, Aman-o-Mohabbat aur Rawadari key Payambar" was arranged under the auspices of Muslim Institute and Turkey's Yunus Emre Institute and National Language

Promotion Department (NLPD).

"The poetry and thoughts of mystics are not only an expression of ideas but a source of education. The thoughts of Maulana Rumi and Hazrat Sultan Bahu created a personality like Iqbal", they said.

On the second day, the speakers included Director General NLPD, Dr. Muhammad Salim Mazhar, Member of National Assembly, Sahibzada Amir Sultan, Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan, Khazar Farhadov.

Chairman Higher Education Commission (HEC), Professor Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad, DG Public Libraries, Kashif Manzoor, Vice Chancellor Kohsar University Dr. Syed Habib Bukhari, Executive Director of NLPD, Dr. Rashid Hameed, Chairman

Muslim Institute, Sahibzada Sultan Ahmad Ali, Dr. Farooq Adil, Dr. Arshad Mahmood Nashad and others were included.

The speakers said that Maulana Rumi and Hazrat Sultan Bahu believed that the very thought that causes a person to fall from the position of humanity is not Islamic or Sufi thought.

According to them, literature is a soul of society and create peace, tolerance and harmony among the society by reducing extremism.

At the end of the two-day conference, eminent young singer, Hamid Ali sang the Sufi words of Maulana Rumi and Sultan Bahu in a very beautiful manner.

The conference was attended by the speakers from the four provinces of Pakistan and the universities and academic institutions of Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

Two-Day Int'l Law Summer School held

ISLAMABAD (APP): A two-day International Law Summer School was conducted by the 'Law Chair' of the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI).

The theme was "International Organizations as Regulators: Pakistan's Experience," and it was a part of a series of international law events for the year aimed at building international legal capacity amongst young legal practitioners in Pakistan, said a news release issued here.

The speakers provided their insight on areas of international law that are relevant globally and are also of pressing concern for Pakistan's current legal and geopolitical situation. Special stress was laid on the responsibility for regulating state actions at the global level and evaluating the functioning and work of these institutions with regards to Pakistan's experience.

Maham Naweed, Chair of International Law at IPRI, introduced the course work and stressed the need for out-of-the-box thinking on critical issues of lawfare while dealing with national issues on the global front.

The panel of distinguished speakers included Dr. Sikandar Ahmad Shah, Sarah Bilal, Malik Sikandar Hayat, Dr. Faiza Ismail, Dr. Aneel Salman, and Dr. Sherryar Sikandar Hamid.

A session was dedicated to the United Nations Security Council, and the lecture revolved around the theme of international peace and security. The speaker also discussed Pakistan's experience with the Security Council and its stance on global issues.

Another session revolved around GSP+, its structure, mandate, and workings, and Ms. Sarah Bilal outlined the tough conditions that Pakistan

has to meet in order to sustain its GSP+ status.

The role of the International Criminal Police Organization enlightened the audience regarding INTERPOL, explaining it also from the perspective of Pakistan.

The emphasis was laid on the importance of international cooperation and the channels of outreach.

The discussion on the World Trade Organization, FATF, and the International Monetary Fund drew immense interest from the students, who put across their state of mind on the evolving situation and as to how Pakistan can make inroads for attaining economic sustainability and progress.

The students were from different varieties of the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad and evinced keen interest in it.

Certificates were also given to the participants in summer school.

Afghanistan: Torkham crossing closed for 2nd day
KABUL (Amu TV): The Torkham crossing remained closed for a second day on Friday, halting the movement of passengers and cargo trucks. Pakistani officials stated that the crossing is closed for three days to facilitate the transfer of visa and passport control services from one building to another. Images received by Amu show that the relocation of visa and passport control services by Pakistani officials is ongoing.

Five killed in traffic accident in Herat
HERAT (Amu TV): Five people were killed and 10 more were injured after a minibus collided with a motorbike in Herat-Badghis highway on Friday, sources told Amu. According to sources, the vehicle had 13 passengers on board, while two people were riding the motorcycle. Many such traffic accidents in Afghanistan happen due to drivers' carelessness and lack of proper roads.

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

China, Pakistan emphasize inclusive political framework in Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLO News): Pakistan and China, in a joint statement, called for coordinated international efforts to help Afghanistan address its economic development challenges and encouraged Afghanistan to establish an inclusive political framework.

Adopting moderate policies, pursuing good neighborly relations, and resolutely combating terrorism, as well as preventing terrorist activities from Afghanistan, are other points emphasized in this statement.

Meanwhile, the Islamic Emirate has not yet commented on this joint statement.

"The agreement between Pakistan and China regarding strengthening relations and coordination concerning Afghanistan is a good move, provided that coordination also involves the people and the current government of Afghanistan," said Aziz Maarej, a political analyst.

The two sides have agreed to play a positive and constructive role in helping Afghanistan achieve sustainable development and integrate into the international community.

"Demonstrating readiness to cooperate and continue relations with Afghanistan, both politically and economically, is a good initiative by Afghanistan's neighboring countries. It is important not only for expanding relations but also for strengthening peace and stability in Afghanistan," said Najib Rahman Shamal, an international relations analyst.

Earlier, Pakistan's special envoy for Afghanistan, Asif Ali Durrani, once again claimed that India, using its proxies in Afghanistan, financially supports the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan; claims that are always denied by Kabul.

Kabulov discusses Afghan situation with Indian officials



KABUL (TOLO News): India's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a statement said that the Russian Special Presidential Envoy for Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov, and Indian officials discussed the current situation in Afghanistan.

According to the statement, in meetings between Kabulov and Indian officials, they also discussed developmental aid to support the welfare of the Afghan people.

The statement said: "India and Russia held bilateral consultations on Afghanistan today in New Delhi. Ambassador Zamir Kabulov, Special Presidential Envoy for Afghanistan and J.P. Singh, Joint Secretary (PAI) discussed the current situation in Afghanistan and emphasized on the need to provide development assistance for the welfare of the Afghan people."

Meanwhile, the Chinese special envoy for Afghanistan, Yue Xiaoyong, also reported a meeting with Uzbekistan's special representative for Afghanistan, adding that both parties agreed to cooperate for the peace and reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, the Islamic Emirate called these meetings indicative of good regional coordination, adding that countries should cooperate with the Islamic Emirate considering the current progress and security in Afghanistan.

Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate, told TOLONews: "Afghanistan seeks good relations with all countries in every sector, and in the diplomatic sector as well, it seeks comprehensive trust and confidence. The positive view about Afghanistan in the region is beneficial both for the region and the people of Afghanistan."

"Few countries like India are friends with both Russia and the United States, and have their voice heard in the United Nations. These meetings here are to discuss the upcoming Doha meeting on Afghanistan," Tariq Farhadi, a political analyst, told TOLONews.

"If these representatives first share and discuss a common view with each other in their meetings, and then share those views with the Islamic Emirate, it would be more effective," said Edris Mohammadi Zazai, another political analyst.

Earlier, Roza Otunbayeva, the head of UNAMA, met with Iranian officials about significant issues including the upcoming Doha meeting.

Over 20 Afghanistan-Uzbekistan trade meetings held in past year



KABUL (TOLO News): In the past year, high-level delegations from Afghanistan and Uzbekistan have met over twenty times in Kabul and Tashkent to expand economic and trade cooperation.

Yadgar Shadmanov, Uzbekistan's ambassador to Afghanistan, told TOLONews that his country's relations with Afghanistan are mainly focused on strengthening and expanding economic and trade cooperation.

A m b a s s a d o r Shadmanov said: "In 2023, delegations from both countries traveled between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan more than 20 times. The purpose of these trips was to continue bilateral cooperation, expand economic and trade relations, and discuss economic plans implemented in Afghanistan."

According to Mr. Shadmanov, Uzbekistan plans to invest \$400 million in thermal energy production and cement manufacturing in Afghanistan.

Yadgar Shadmanov said, "As you know, due to Afghanistan not being internationally recognized, we have focused more on economic issues with Afghanistan and are conducting most of our cooperation in economic matters."

The ambassador also mentioned the Qosh Tepa Canal, stating that his country does not oppose the construction of the canal but advocates for its advanced and principled development.

The ambassador in Kabul said, "Governments have the right to use water from shared and border rivers. We acknowledge this. Afghanistan can also use water from the Amu River, and we do not oppose this; however, we advocate for the construction of the canal in an advanced manner based on principles."

According to statistics from the Uzbek embassy, nearly 900 million dollars in trade was conducted between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan in 2023, and the goal of officials from both countries is to increase this amount to 1.5 billion dollars by 2025.



Floods again hit several provinces in Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLO News): Devastating floods have once again swept through the provinces of Ghor, Faryab, Badakhshan, Sare Pol, and Jawzjan.

According to initial reports, hundreds of houses have been destroyed, and in addition to the destruction of thousands of acres of agricultural land, hundreds of livestock have also perished.

There are no details available yet on human casualties resulting from these floods.

Abdul Rahman, a resident of Firozkoh city, said: "From Firozkoh city to the villages of Kandovan and Shahr Yaman, and from the west to the villages along the Harirod River, hundreds of houses and shops have been destroyed. People's livestock have also perished. The water has entered people's homes, and so far, there is no information on human casualties."

Mohammad Sediq, another resident of Firozkoh, said: "The flood is ongoing and has entered the city, flooding people's homes and shops, destroying houses and livestock."

In the past ten days, this is the third time that devastating floods have hit the Murghab district of Ghor. In the most recent flood, one person died, and dozens of houses and shops have been destroyed.

Amanullah Paikar, the governor of Murghab district, said: "This is the third time that floods have hit, causing damage to the people. Everything in the market is submerged, and we have moved about twenty-five shops to higher ground."

Juma Khan, another resident of Murghab district, said: "The roads are completely blocked, and the shops are completely ruined. People are trying to remove their belongings from their homes and shops, but they can't do anything."

The powerful floods in the city of Faizabad and the districts of Argo, Raghistan, Darayim, and Yaftal in Badakhshan have caused significant damage.

According to local authorities in Badakhshan, five hundred residential houses and ten thousand acres of agricultural land have been destroyed, and nearly five hundred livestock have perished.

Abdul Zaker, a resident of Badakhshan, said: "More than eighty houses have been completely destroyed, and people have no place to live and are living in the open."

Toriyl, another resident of Badakhshan, said, "All our possessions in the two houses we have are gone. We could only save our family, and everything else was washed away by the flood."

In the provinces of Faryab, Jawzjan, and Sare Pol, powerful floods have also caused extensive damage to the people.

Women in Afghanistan struggle with soaring mental health issues: Report



HERAT (Khaama Press): Officials from the Mental Health Department of the Herat Regional Hospital have reported a concerning increase in the number of women suffering from mental illnesses.

According to the report, at least eighty per cent of those seeking help at the Herat Psychotherapy Hospital are women and girls.

According to a United Nations report, since the Taliban's return to power in August 2021, women in Afghanistan have been grappling with deep and increasing psychological issues.

A doctor at the Herat psychotherapy hospital, who asked to remain anonymous for security reasons, said: "Every day, 100 people come to the Herat psychotherapy centre, and 80 per cent of them are women."

Sources at the Herat Regional Hospital say that they have cared for 400 people in a month, but the number of patients is increasing daily.

Economic problems, domestic violence, a bleak future, and restricted educational and employment opportunities under the Taliban regime are cited as factors contributing to the rise in women's mental illnesses.

With the Taliban's return to power, women face widespread restrictions. Girls are prevented from attending schools and universities, and women are barred from working.

Since the Taliban's takeover in Afghanistan, they have prohibited girls from attending school beyond the sixth grade. This restriction has contributed to mental health issues among young girls, leaving them with a bleak future.

Additionally, the severe humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan has pressured families into consenting to underage marriages. Reports indicate a significant increase in the incidence of such marriages across the country.

Women are concerned that in such a situation, the Taliban regime in Afghanistan might be recognized.

Russia sends 21 tons of humanitarian aid to flood victims in Baghlan



BAGHLAN (Khaama Press): Russian state news agencies reported that the country has sent 21 tons of humanitarian food aid to Afghanistan.

The plane carrying this cargo flew from Moscow to Kabul on Thursday, May 16.

TASS news agency wrote that this shipment is intended for the flood victims of Baghlan province and has been sent to Afghanistan as part of the "Russia with You" project.

According to the details provided, the aid includes vegetable oil and flour.

Recent deadly floods in various provinces of Afghanistan, including Baghlan, Takhar, Badakhshan, Faryab, and Herat, have resulted in human casualties and significant financial damage.

The devastating impact of these floods has left many areas in urgent need of assistance.

The United Nations and several relief organizations have urgently called for the provision of immediate humanitarian aid to support the flood victims across these affected provinces.

According to reports, more than 300 people have died in just two districts of Baghlan province due to the severe floods. This highlights the scale of the disaster and the critical need for timely aid to prevent further loss of life.

The recent floods add to the ongoing dire humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, where political instability, economic challenges, and previous natural disasters have already severely strained the resources and resilience of the local populations.

Clashes in Paktia leave 5 dead and 5 injured

PAKTIA (TOLO News): In ongoing clashes between Islamic Emirate forces and Pakistani military along the Durand Line, in Paktia, 5 civilians have been killed and 5 others injured.

These clashes near the Durand Line in Paktia have forced some families to leave their homes.

Hamidullah, a family member of the victims, said: "It has been three days that shells are being fired from Pakistan to this side. We had guests in our house, and as a result of the shelling, one of our guests was also injured."

Zahir, a displaced person, said: "The war between the Taliban and Pakistan is ongoing, and we have taken shelter elsewhere. We are moving from here."

Abdul Khaliq, another displaced person, said: "The war is ongoing, and all the people have fled with their animals."

According to local residents, rockets fired from Pakistan have hit people's homes, causing not only casualties but also financial losses. Jumma Gul, a resident of Paktia, said: "For three days now, shells have been fired from Pakistan, displacing people and causing deaths."

Sayed Mohammad, another resident of Paktia, said: "All the offices have been damaged, and all the markets have been completely destroyed."

Since last Monday, clashes between Islamic Emirate forces and the Pakistani military have been ongoing along the Durand Line in the Aryoub Zazi and Dand Patan districts.

Islamic Emirate officials have not yet commented on these clashes or the resulting casualties.

17 Laghman schools operate in rented buildings



MEHTARLAM (Pajhwok): Seventeen state-run schools, three madrassas and a teacher's training centre have been operating in rented buildings in eastern Laghman province, an official said on Wednesday.

Education Director Mawlawi Shah Jahan Sajid told Pajhwok Afghan News due to the non-availability of buildings these educational institutions operated in rented houses.

He said: "I agree that the education process in rented houses is slow and lacks many facilities, but it must be said that these rented houses are the legacy of the previous regime. I regularly recommended to the Education Ministry and relevant organisations to construct buildings for schools."

Some tribal elders and students of these schools have asked the IEA government to construct buildings for their schools in their localities instead of renting houses.

Mohammad Sharif Akbari, the resident of Gamin locality in Mehtarlam, said in the past government a house was rented or the girls students of this area and now they were faced with problems.

"The Gamin Girls Intermediate School has now yard, it is situated in the middle of houses and has 22 teachers and 1,200 students, we want the government to immediately construct building for this school."

Bibi Asema, the student of Afghan Lam Primary School in the Alingar district, said they studied in a rented house where the toilets were below the standard, there is no drinking water system and the education process is affected by hot and cold weather.

In Laghman, 104 state-run schools were without buildings, while 169 schools were without retaining walls.



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari administering oath of office to Ali Pervaiz as Minister of State, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Israel tells World Court S Africa case makes a mockery of genocide

THE HAGUE (AFP): Israel defended the military necessity of its Gaza offensive on Friday at the International Court of Justice and asked judges to throw out a request by South Africa to order it to halt operations in Rafah and withdraw from the Palestinian territory.

Israeli Justice Ministry official Gilad Noam called South Africa's case, which accuses Israel of violating the Genocide Convention, "completely divorced from facts and circumstances." "(The case) makes a mockery of the heinous charge of genocide," Noam said. He called it "an obscene exploitation of the most sacred convention," referring to the international treaty banning genocide, agreed after the Holocaust of European Jews in World War Two.

The convention requires all countries to act to prevent genocide, and the ICJ, also known as the World Court, which hears disputes between states, has concluded that this gives South Africa a right to make the case. A woman who yelled "liars!" during Israel's presentation was removed by security guards, a rare protest in the "Great Hall of Justice" courtroom in The Hague.

"There is a tragic war going on, but there is no genocide" in Gaza, Noam said. In past rulings, the court has rejected Israel's demands to dismiss the case and ordered Israel to prevent acts of genocide against the Palestinians, while stopping short of ordering it to halt the assault.

Ahead of Israel's presentation, several dozen pro-Israeli protesters gathered outside, displaying photographs of hostages taken by Hamas

fighters on Oct. 7 and demanding their release. The South African legal team, which set out its case for fresh emergency measures the previous day, framed the Israeli military operation as part of a genocidal plan aimed at bringing about the destruction of the Palestinian people.

South Africa's ambassador to the Netherlands, Vusumuzi Madonsela, requested the court to order Israel to "immediately, totally and unconditionally, withdraw the Israeli army from the entirety of the Gaza Strip." South Africa brought its latest request for emergency action in response to an Israeli military assault on Rafah at the southern edge of Gaza, refuge for half the territory's 2.3 million people who fled Israel's offensive further north.

Israel's Noam said that Israel's military operations were not aimed at civilians, but at Hamas terrorists using Rafah as a stronghold, who have tunnel systems which could be used to smuggle hostages and militants out of Gaza. Examples of alleged violations by Israel raised by South Africa were "not evidence a policy of illegal behavior, let alone a policy of genocide," he said. Ordering Israel to withdraw its troops would sentence remaining hostages in Gaza to death, Noam said.

More than 35,300 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's seven-month-old assault on the Gaza Strip, health officials in the enclave said on Thursday. The war began when Hamas militants attacked Israel on Oct. 7, killing 1,200 people and abducting 253 others. This week's

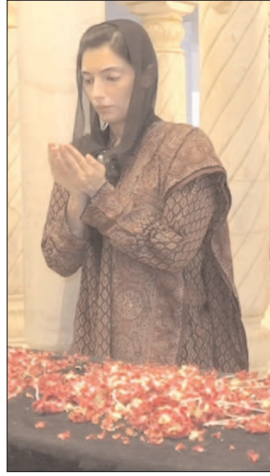
hearings focus only on issuing emergency measures and it will likely take years before the court can rule on the underlying genocide charge. A decision on the request for emergency measures is expected next week.

Meanwhile, Israeli military says its troops in Gaza found the bodies of three Israeli hostages taken by Hamas during its Oct. 7 attack, including German-Israeli Shani Louk. A photo of the 22-year-old Shani's twisted body in the back of a pickup truck ricocheted around the world and brought to light the scale of the militants' attack on communities in southern Israel.

The military identified the other two bodies found as those of a 28-year-old woman, Amit Buskila, and a 56-year-old man, Itzhak Gelerenter. Military spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari said all three were killed by Hamas at the Nova music festival, an outdoor dance party near the Gaza border, and their bodies taken into the Palestinian territory. The military did not give immediate details on where their bodies were found.

Hamas-led militants killed around 1,200 people, mainly civilians, and abducted around 250 others in the Oct. 7 attack. Around half of those have since been freed, most in swaps for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel during a weeklong ceasefire in November. Israel says around 100 hostages are still captive in Gaza, along with the bodies of around 30 more. Israel's campaign in Gaza since the attack has killed more than 35,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza health officials.

Aseefa visits family's graveyard



F.P. Report

LARKANA: Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari visited the Bhutto family's graveyard in Garhi Khuda Bakhsh for the first time since taking oath as MNA on 15th April. She laid floral wreaths at the graves of her mother Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, her maternal grandfather Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Begum Nusrat Bhutto, Shaheed Mir Murtaza Bhutto and Shaheed Shahnawaz Bhutto and offered Fateha for the departed souls here on Friday.

The unopposed election victory of Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari to the National Assembly is a testament to the legacy of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, and the resonance of their vision and mission that still inspires the people of Sindh to this day.

KP Opp slams passing of surplus budget

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Opposition in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly here Friday rejected the passage of budget by treasury and criticized government for its ignorance about the immensity of debt and lack of plan to pay debt.

Opposition slammed the indifference of treasury benches and said that receipts of the province are decreasing and government has without resources and money to pay salaries of employees. The session was chaired by Speaker, Babar Salim Swati. Opening debate on the passing of surplus budget for the financial year 2023-24, leader of opposition, Dr. Ibadullah said that surplus budgets are passed in emergencies, extraordinary situations or significant decrease of receipts.

He said that surplus budget amounting to Rs 306 billion was tabled in the assembly that shows an increase of 36 percent as compared to annual budget. Showing his astonishment, opposition leader said that surplus budget is misleading and devoid of facts and figures.

He said that unnecessary recruitment has been done in livestock department, Sehat card scheme lacks transparency, BRT has turned into a white elephant while allocation that was meant for salaries has been diverted to developmental schemes as it was the year of general elections. He said that Rs. 1.3 billion were sought for continuing operations of BRT that is a proof that this mega transport scheme is facing losses. He said that private company has filed a case against BRT while Peshawar Development Authority has not sufficient funds to hire prosecutor.

Dr. Ibadullah said that we are not against Sehat Card but the procedure to run this scheme lacks transparency. He said that there was certain criterion for availing facilities under Sehat Card but the government has allowed everyone to avail medical facilities under the said scheme. He also demanded audit of this project that was being run by huge spending of public money.

He said that government has miserably failed to increase its receipts and people of KP province are still waiting for addressal of their basic issues. He also criticized government for not utilizing income of Swat Expressway on people of Malakand. Opposition members, Adnan Khan said that surplus budget is deceiving and being prepared ignoring ground realities and financial position of the province. He said that we are ready to help government but the figures and data of the surplus budget must be scrutinized.

Disappearance of citizen from Jail PHC CJ orders CS, IGP to appear before court

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim ordered Chief Secretary, Home and Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to appear on 27th May in person regarding disappearance of a citizen named Shakir Ullah from jail who had obtained bail on 18th April but rearrested by law enforcement agencies on 25th April, on Friday.

Chief Justice PHC Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim has issued a written order stating that the re-arrest of Shakir Ullah after his release on bail is illegal and a clear violation of court orders. PHC cited Asad Qaiser vs Provincial Government case, in which the high court had clarified that a person released on bail cannot be rearrested in the already registered.

The counsel Sohail

Akhtar advocate argued that Shakir Ullah was rearrested by police along with Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD), and has been missing since then. The lawyer alleged that the respondents are responsible for his disappearance.

The court has directed provision of video evidence of the incident to the Additional Advocate General and Assistant Attorney General within two days. The court has also ordered the Chief Secretary and IG Police to appear before it on the next hearing in person, on 27th May.

Enlisting Speaker KP assembly in PNIL: PHC seeks reply in 7 days: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Waqar Ahmad ordered the federal government to submit reply regarding enlisting Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Speaker's Babar Saleem

Swati in Provisional National Identification List (PNIL) within seven days, on Friday.

The counsel Ali Azim advocate argued that Babar Salim Swati is a public figure and his name was included in the PNIL without any reason, which is a violation of fundamental rights.

The lawyer claimed that the petitioner is being politically victimized and his name was included in the list due to his affiliation with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party. The lawyer argued that the speaker's name should be removed from the list and the federal government's action should be declared illegal. PHC divisional bench comprised Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Waqar Ahmed heard the initial arguments and issued a notice to the federal government, seeking a response within 7 days.

Japan important partner of Pakistan: Tarar

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar said on Friday that Japan was an important development partner of Pakistan and Tokyo's support in difficult times has always been valuable for the people of Pakistan.

During a meeting with Japanese Ambassador to Pakistan Wada Mitsuhiro

here, he said Pakistan and Japan enjoyed a long-standing relationship of friendship and cooperation. In the meeting, bilateral diplomatic relations, cooperation in media sectors, fake news, economic initiatives of the government, and other important issues of mutual interest were discussed.

The two countries agreed to further expand the scope

of cooperation in various sectors. The minister appreciated Japan International Cooperation Agency for its support for the development of Pakistan. Apprising the ambassador of Japan about the government's economic initiatives, the minister said the present regime was determined to bring the country's economy back on track under the vision of the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

"The government has taken several steps to improve the business environment and promote investment, including reforms in the FBR to increase the tax net," he added. Steps were also being taken to provide business facilities to the private sector, the minister remarked. Attaullah Tarar said after the current gov-

ernment assumed power, the economic development of Pakistan accelerated and international financial journals were also predicting further improvement in the economic progress of the country.

In the meeting, issues regarding the prevention of fake news and the promotion of relations between the two countries in the fields of media were also discussed. "The whole world is facing a big challenge of fake news and there is a need to work together to overcome these challenges". The ambassador said Japan was seeking stronger ties with Pakistan. He opined that the government's measures to facilitate the business community will make Pakistan a more attractive destination for Japanese investors.

SC issues show-cause notices to Vawda, Mustafa

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Friday issued show-cause notices to lawmakers Faisal Vawda and Mustafa Kamal, seeking responses from them on their recent rhetoric against the judiciary.

The development came as a three-member bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa and including Justice Irfan Saadat Khan and Justice Naem Akhtar Afghan presided over the proceedings of a suo motu notice taken a day ago against independent Senator Vawda. On Wednesday, two senators Vawda and PML-N's Talal Chaudhry had held separate pressers, questioning the Islam-abad High Court (IHC) judges' claim that intelligence agencies had interfered in the judicial affairs. Without any evidence no one had the right to point a finger at the institutions, they added.

The next day, two MNA Muttahida Quami Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P's) Mustafa Kamal and Istehkam-i-Pakistan Party's (IPP's) Awn Chaudhry also highlighted the judiciary's alleged shortcomings and called for establishing ethical standards for the judges.

Kamal claimed the judiciary had set "ethical standards" for politicians and the dual citizenship of judges was a "big question mark" and the judiciary should be made answerable on this issue, while Awn had termed it a crisis that would lead to an "anarchy in the country". At the outset of the hearing, CJP Isa asked the AAG if he had listened to Vawda's press conference and whether it amounted to contempt of court.

To this, Rehman replied that the stream he heard had some words "muted". The chief justice then remarked that there had been "more" statements against him in comparison but he had "ignored" them.

Putin eyes greater support from China for Ukraine war

BEIJING: Russian President Vladimir Putin is wrapping up his visit to neighbouring China, aiming to win greater support from Beijing for his military operation in Ukraine and expand crucial trade to his country's increasingly isolated economy.

Russia and China's partnership has only grown closer since the invasion of Ukraine, and Beijing has rebuffed Western claims that it is aiding Moscow's war effort while offering a critical economic lifeline with trade hitting \$240bn in 2023. Putin visited the northeastern city of Harbin on Friday, the final day of his two-day visit, to highlight the two countries' "trade and cultural exchange", Chinese state news agency Xinhua reported.

On Thursday, Putin arrived in Beijing on his first trip abroad since his March re-election, meeting President Xi Jinping for talks in which the leaders framed their nations' ties as a stabilising force in the international arena. The two leaders "had an in-depth exchange of views on the Ukraine crisis", Xinhua reported, adding that Xi spoke of China's "consis-

tent position and efforts to promote the political settlement of the Ukraine issue".

China has not sent weapons and ammunition to Russia and its peace plan unveiled last year was criticised by both Ukraine and its Western allies. There are limits to the two nations' ties, despite their insistence that it is limitless, said Alexey Muraviev, a Russia specialist and associate professor of national security and strategic studies at Curtin University in Perth, Australia. "The limits are that the two countries don't have a formal alliance agreement. To me, that's very clearly a sign that there are limitations to what seems to be a limitless relationship," he told Al Jazeera, adding that neither side is prepared to "unconditionally commit to support each other" on issues like Ukraine.

Xi said he would continue to work with Putin to "achieve steady and lasting progress, bring more benefits to the two peoples, and contribute to world security and stability". Western countries have been heaping pressure on China to cut off support for Russia's economy as the war in Ukraine grinds on. Putin

visited Harbin to promote trade ties. Lying just a few hundred kilometres from the border with Russia, Harbin has long served as a key hub for cross-border trade and cultural exchange.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of a Russia-China trade exposition on Friday, Putin hailed energy ties between the two countries and promised to "strengthen" them. "Russia is ready and able to continuously power the Chinese economy, businesses, cities and towns with affordable and environmentally clean energy," he said. He later told reporters that Russia's offensive in Ukraine's Kharkiv region was aimed at creating a buffer zone but there were no plans to capture it. Russian forces have made steady gains in the northeastern border region after launching a new incursion last week. On Thursday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy travelled to the area and acknowledged that the situation remained "extremely difficult" but was "generally under control". Putin said Russian troops were making daily advances there according to plan". — Aljazeera

Didn't stop govt from blocking SIMs of non-filers: IHC

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice Aamer Farooq of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday said that he didn't stop the authorities from blocking the SIMs of non-filers and the order only barred the government from taking any action against the telecom operators.

Media on Tuesday reported that the IHC had issued a stay order on a petition filed by a mobile operator challenging the Federal Board of Revenue's (FBR) move. The development came days after the FBR and telecom operators agreed on blocking SIMs of

non-filers as part of the government's bid to curb tax evasion to improve revenue generation amid dire economic indicators.

After lengthy deliberations among the stakeholders, the FBR announced earlier this month that telecom companies have agreed to commence the manual blocking process of SIMs in small batches until their systems are fully equipped to automate it. The tax collection body had said that the first batch comprising 5,000 non-filers had been communicated to the telecom operators and that more batches would be sent to telcos on a daily basis.

Earlier, it was decided to block 500,000 SIMs of individuals who did not appear on the active taxpayer list but were liable to file the Income Tax Return for Tax Year 2023. At the onset of the hearing of a miscellaneous plea, the attorney general said he had come to get the stay order on blocking of mobile phone SIMs dismissed.

To which, the chief justice remarked that the last order was not what it was reported in the media. He said the order didn't stay the blockage of SIMs instead he stopped taking action against the private companies.



RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, shaking hands with players of Pakistan Hockey team at General Headquarters.

NCA scandal: Bushra Bibi shows lack of faith in judge

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: An accountability court has failed to record testimonies of witnesses after Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan's spouse Bushra Bibi expressed a lack of confidence in the judge during the hearing of £190m NCA scandal case. At the beginning of the hearing, Bushra Bibi came to the rostrum and expressed a lack of faith in the accountability court's judge.

As the accountability court began the hearing, the former first lady entered the courtroom in aggressive mode and sat separately from the ex-prime minister, his sisters and her daughters. Later, she came to the rostrum and told the judge that she was neither having faith in the judges who were hearing previous cases nor she had confidence in this court. She complained about not being informed about a hearing scheduled for May 15 at Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail. The judge remarked that the May 15 hearing was deferred.

Bushra Bibi went on to

say that she was not a prisoner in the NCA scandal case but she was jailed due to "injustice". After Bushra's remarks, Imran came to the rostrum and asked his spouse to go with him to the family corner. However, she chose not to meet even her daughters who were sitting next to Imran's sisters. She met her daughters when a separate room was given to them.

During the hearing, the PTI founder kept going towards his lawyers, wife, sisters and lawyers in the courtroom. He was also seen whispering to his wife many times. The former premier and his lawyers sought time from the accountability court to convince Bushra Bibi to take back her expression of lacking faith in the judge. The hearing was stopped thrice following the lawyers' requests. After detailed discussions, Imran and his lawyers apprised the judge to take back lack of confidence remarks. They also pleaded with the court to conduct the next hearing after 15 days, as well as submitted a plea in response to the court notices issued yesterday.

The court then adjourned the hearing till May 22 without testifying any of the witnesses on Friday. Speaking to journalists outside Adiala Jail, PTI lawyer Naem Panjutha confirmed that Bushra Bibi expressed a lack of faith in the judge in Friday's hearing over a slow-paced trial. He said that the PTI founder demanded to conduct his medical tests at Shaukat Khanum Hospital. Panjutha alleged that Pims doctors had prepared fake "self-generated reports" of the incarcerated former premier.

He also confirmed that Bushra Bibi also refused to allow Pims doctors for her medical examination. The lawyer claimed that the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) wants to file a new reference against Imran. In the previous development, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) approved the PTI founder's bail petition in the £190 million NCA settlement reference on Wednesday. The high court ordered the authorities to release the PTI founder against the surety bond of Rs1 million.