

Bushra Bibi challenges notice
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Bushra Bibi, wife of PTI founder, challenged the NAB's summons notice for the new inquiry against the PTI founder and her in Islamabad High Court. The petition seeks to suspend the NAB call-up notice until a decision on the petition. The court is set to hear the case regarding NAB's new investigation against PTI founder and Bushra Bibi.



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PM calls for improving conditions of labour class

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said that they were fully cognizant of the value of the labourers and workers in the national economy and stressed upon the wealthy, businessmen, investors and industrialists to prioritize improving the conditions of the workers.

Addressing a gathering of labourers and workers from different sectors at his residence in connection with the observance of International Labour Day, the prime minister said that the country's economic situation was challenging but they were striving to turn it around, with collective efforts and sincerity.

He said that Pakistan would soon become a powerful country through the functioning of a fair system and on the basis of hard work by the employers and the employees including workers.

The prime minister said that the government was striving to bring about substantial changes in the national economy and to recover billions of rupees being wasted due to corruption. Referring to his recent visit from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, he said that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and other leadership desired to see Pakistan moving on the path of progress.

The Saudi business and investors' delegation would soon visit Pakistan which would increase businesses and job opportunities in the country, he added. The prime minister said that in the upcoming fiscal budget, they would try to provide further relief to the labour class.

Calling upon the business people and well-to-do class, the prime minister said that they should also think beyond their families and businesses and invest in certain education and health projects for the deprived classes like those established in the developed countries.

"It was not an objective behind the creation of Pakistan that there would be a difference between the rich and the poor. Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad



Ali Jinnah led a massive movement in which the people offered huge sacrifices. The motive was the establishment of a welfare state in which everyone would have equal opportunities to excel in life on the basis of one's capacity and ability and take the country forward," he added.

The prime minister reiterated that they were striving to end corruption and promised that all the organs of government and other state institutions, with their collective efforts, would carve a niche for Pakistan among the comity of nations. He said that the labourers and workers worked hard in the most difficult conditions and helped their employers generate their businesses. Both were like the wheels of the same carriage and their work led to progress and prosperity of the nation and country.

He said if the workers were deprived of their due rights, a country could not achieve progress. The prime minister opined that due to price hikes and inflation, life for the common man had become hard.

The prices of petroleum products had been reduced but it could not be a

substitute for the daily price hike as the labour class had to meet the requirements of education for their sons and daughters, treatment for their parents, and other daily expenditures and were living from hand to mouth, he observed.

The prime minister emphasized that under the teachings of the Holy Quran and the Prophet's (Peace Be Upon Him) messages, it was their abiding duty to bridge the differences between the rich and the poor. The prime minister recollected that his father was also a worker who attained his earlier education in Amritsar and during his 30s settled in Lahore, where he worked along with his brothers in a steel factory.

He also recited Dr Allama Iqbal's verse about the plight of labourers and workers and said that these couplets represented a powerful message, reflecting the voice of millions of workers in Pakistan. The labour day started after the Chicago incident and then the movement became global, he said, adding that the Quranic teachings and the Seerah of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) highlighted the value of hard work.

Police foil terror attack on check post in D G Khan

F.P. Report

DERA GHAZI KHAN: Police Wednesday foiled a terrorist attack on the Jhangi check post in Dera Ghazi Khan late at night, injuring at least seven police personnel in the terror incident, police told media.

According to the Regional Police Officer Sajjad Hassan Khan, the Jhangi check post is located on the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa-Punjab border in the Taunsa area. He added that the attackers wanted to capture the check post, but they fled in the darkness of the night after the attack was repulsed by policemen.

According to Punjab Police, 15 to 20 terrorists were involved in the attack. DG Khan RPO and district police officers reached the spot with more reinforcements as soon as they received the information about the attack. "In the attack, seven personnel got injured while fighting bravely and were shifted to the hospital for treatment."

The post further read that only two days ago, the RPO and DPO had visited the outpost to inform the deployed personnel about the threat of attack and rehearsed the defense measures. Inspector General Punjab Dr Usman Anwar praised the personnel, posted at the Jhangi check post, for successfully defending the post. "Punjab Police is on alert, will never let terrorists succeed in their nefarious intentions," the post stated, citing IG Punjab.

President for strict action against criminals in Sindh



F.P. Report

KARACHI: President Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday urged Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah to take strict actions against the criminals in Karachi, dacoits in Kacha area and the drug traffickers in close collaboration with the federal government and other provinces to ensure law and order situation in the province.

He expressed these views while chairing a meeting here on security, and law and order situation in Sindh Province. The representatives of the law enforcement agencies briefed the president about the crimes in Karachi, the Kacha area, and the overall security situation of the province. The president called for devising a system for effective monitoring of the city's all entrances and exits. Emphasizing the need to complete the Karachi

Safe City Project on an urgent basis, he said Police should ensure effective tracking of stolen property and take appropriate legal action in this regard. He said all kinds of support should be provided to ensure the security of Chinese citizens. Besides, the president also stressed the need to continue the ongoing operation in the Kacha area with full force. He also directed the establishment of more Police check posts to improve the security situation of the Kacha area.

President Zardari also asked to ensure the provision of the necessary equipment to the Sindh Police with the support of the federal government. The president, emphasizing the need to expedite work on the development projects in various areas of Sindh province said, development projects on both sides of the River Sindh should be launched.

He instructed to take support from the local leaders and the community members to solve the issues of tribal and Kacha areas. He said a system should be evolved for effective communication between Sindh, Punjab, and Balochistan to prevent crimes in the country.

The president, expressing concern over the spread of drugs in educational institutions, said Karachi must be made a drug-free city.

A special law can be made for conducting compulsory tests of students and establishing rehabilitation centers, he said adding that the Sindh government should create awareness about drugs among the parents. He said proposals for necessary amendments in federal anti-narcotics laws could be made to provide jurisdiction to the police in drug cases. Further, he said effective measures to prevent the spread of drugs in educational institutes were inevitable adding that the Police must take strict action against the drug mafia.

Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, briefing the president about the overall security situation in Karachi and the rest of the province, said that after strict actions taken by the provincial government against street crimes in Karachi, and operations against dacoits in the Kacha area, the law and order situation had significantly improved. He informed that the number of crimes had significantly reduced during the current year as compared to the previous year. The president was told that crimes in Karachi were less than those recorded in the big cities across the world.

The Sindh CM pointed out that the law and order situation across the province was being reviewed regularly. He said the Sindh government was ensuring the provision of necessary equipment to enhance the capacity of the Police. Sindh Police, he said had taken important steps to control street crime besides the law enforcement agencies were also conducting operations in the Kacha areas. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Minister for Science and Technology Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui participated in the meeting. While provincial ministers Sharjeel Memon, Nasir Shah and Ziaul Hasan Linjar also attended the meeting.

COAS, UK Army Chief discuss military ties



F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir held a meeting with his British counterpart General Sir Patrick Sanders, where the two discussed measures to further elevate bilateral defence relations, said a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) on Wednesday.

In the meeting, which was also attended by CGS-designate of the UK Army General Sir Roland Walker, both sides "discussed matters of professional interest and measures to further elevate bilateral defence relations", the army's media wing said. The army chief thanked Gen

Sanders, the chief of general staff (CGS) of the UK Army, for his services in enhancing bilateral military ties and felicitated Gen Walker on his nomination as the UK Army's next CGS, the statement added.

COAS Munir and Gen Sanders also addressed the opening session of the sixth Pakistan-UK Regional Stabilisation Conference at Islamabad's National Defence University on Tuesday, the ISPR said. The UK Army's CGS-designate also attended the event. The conference is a flagship defence and security dialogue between Pakistan and the UK, held alternately in the two countries, the statement noted.

In connection with the conference, a 30-member UK delegation led by Standing Joint Force Commander Major General Tom Bateman was visiting Pakistan from April 29 to May 3, the ISPR said. "During the conference, delegations from both sides will exchange perspectives on global and regional environment and its impact on national security, and regional peace and stability," it added.

The ISPR highlighted that this year, the scope of discussion had been expanded from bilateral to regional issues and that defence officials of both countries were also participating in the conference.

Another video of women 'misbehaving' with Motorway cops goes viral

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Days after a Motorway policeman run over by a woman car driver in Rawalpindi, another video of two ladies "misbehaving" with Motorway Police personnel went viral on social media on Wednesday.

In the viral video, the women can be seen filming the Motorway cops, threatening and hurling abuses at them during the quarrel. They were heard alleging that the Motorway personnel hurt one of the women while trying to "snatch" her mobile phone while she was making the cops' video.

Moreover, one of the women alleged that the Motorway cop demanded bribe from them, while the cop claimed that the women were "making video" and had "obstructed" the throughfare.

Later, the Motorway Police (North Zone) issued an official statement regarding the matter, saying that their personnel stopped the women for "speeding" and "rash driving" on the motorway near Kallar Kahar. "The women violator misbehaved with the Motorway Police officials. The woman was driving with extreme carelessness and speed," the statement read.

It further stated that the women kept threatening to block the motorway and continued misbehaving despite being asked to calm down, and fled the scene without paying the penalty. The Motorway Police are taking legal action against the violators, it added.

It may be noted that an incident of misbehaviour with Motorway Police surfaced on April 24, when a woman rammed her car into a Motorway Police personnel and vented anger at the traffic wardens for being stopped over speeding. The entire incident was filmed and posted on social media, showing her arguing in an abusive manner with the Motorway Police officer for being pulled over for speeding.

'Torrential' rains shutter Saudi schools, flood roads

RIYADH (AFP): Saudi Arabian authorities shuttered schools in several regions on Wednesday as flash floods inundated roads, the latest instance of heavy rains disrupting life in the desert Gulf.

AFPTV footage showed partially submerged cars struggling to drive through standing water in the central region of Qassim, one of the areas hit hardest overnight. "The rain continued for seven hours from the afternoon until near midnight in very large quantities," said Mohammed, an Egyptian resident of Buraidah, the capital of Qassim, who spoke to AFP on the condition that only his first name be used.

"Water accumulated to a height of more than 10 centimetres in front of the residence and prevented us from going out to the street. The

sound of thunder was loud and lightning was illuminating the city." The National Meteorological Centre issued red alerts for Qassim and other areas, including the eastern province on the Gulf, the capital Riyadh and Medina province bordering the Red Sea.

It warned of "heavy rain with strong wind, lack of horizontal visibility, hail, torrential rains, and thunderbolts". Schools in the eastern province and Riyadh also cancelled in-person instruction and moved classes online. The Medina education department posted pictures of maintenance workers repairing electricity and air-conditioning units and removing standing water from schools on X.

There was some standing water on Riyadh's roads on Wednesday but traffic was not significantly disrupted.

Rainstorms and flooding are not unheard of in Saudi Arabia, especially in winter, and larger, more densely populated cities can struggle with drainage. Such problems occur annually in Jeddah, the port city on the Red Sea coast, where residents have long decried poor infrastructure. Floods killed 123 people in the city in 2009 and 10 more two years later.

This week's heavy rainfall in Saudi Arabia follows the intense rains that lashed the region in mid-April, killing 21 people in Oman and four in the United Arab Emirates, which received the heaviest rainfall since records began 75 years ago. Global warming caused by fossil fuel emissions "most likely" exacerbated those rains, an expert group of scientists said in a study published last week.

Three siblings burnt alive

FAISALABAD (INP): Three siblings were burnt to death and father and another child were wounded as a horrible fire erupted in a house in Faisalabad. According to details, fire broke out in a house located in Gutwala area of Faisalabad due to which three children were killed and their father and another child received burn wounds. Rescue teams have shifted the dead and injured to Allied Hospital, Faisalabad.

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20 new buses as part of People's Bus Service arrived

F.P. Report

KARACHI: A fleet of 20 new buses as part of People's Bus Service has arrived in Karachi to enhance the best, affordable, and comfortable travel facilities for the people.

Senior Minister of Sindh and Minister for Information, Transport & Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, announced the good news that the new fleet of buses has arrived at Karachi Port.

In a statement on social media, he said that, God willing, the Sindh government's transport department will soon initiate new routes to further enhance the travel facilities for the people. He emphasized that our focus is on serving the people and providing maximum relief to the peoples of the province.

AIOU commences MA, MSc final exams from May 13

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has announced the examination schedule of M.A, M.Sc, M.Com, MBA/MPA (Commonwealth of Learning), MLIS, M.Ed and Postgraduate programs offered in semester autumn 2023. These examinations will start on May 13 and will continue till June 13, said a press release on Wednesday. Date sheet is uploaded on the university website (www.aiou.edu.pk) and roll number slips are uploaded to students' CMS portals. Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof Dr. Nasir Mahmood, has instructed the examinations department to ensure transparency and provide all necessary facilities to the students during the examinations. Moreover, special teams will conduct surprise visits to the exam centres.

Punjab TUT extends support to Kyrgyzstan

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Tianjin University of Technology has offered support and expertise to Kyrgyzstan for enhancing quality of education to empower institutions to meet their emerging demands of modern technological landscape.

The offer of VC Dr Rauf-I-Azam surfaced during a meeting here on Wednesday with Meher Kashif Younis, honorary Consul Kyrgyzstan.

They explored various avenues for educational collaboration between Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan.

The discussions delved into areas of curriculum development, faculty exchange programmes, joint research initiatives, and student exchanges.

The VC said potential collaborations hold promise for fostering cultural exchange and strengthening bilateral ties. He said through educational partnerships, students from both countries could gain exposure to diverse perspectives, languages, and academic environments.

Meher Kashif said: "The discussions reflect our dedication to advancing technology education and fostering international cooperation".

Sharjeel pays tributes to laborers

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Senior Minister of Sindh and Provincial Minister for Information, Excise, Taxation, Narcotics Control, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, has said that he wholeheartedly pays tribute to the laborers who are working tirelessly day and night to advance national development. Pakistan People's Party is steadfast in its determination for the rights of laborers as per the vision of Shaheed Bibi.

In his message on Labor Day, Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon has stated that the People's Party has taken several steps for ensuring fair wages for laborers and job security. He highlighted that the Sindh government has set a minimum wage of 32,000 rupees under the reform program for laborers and initiated labor law reforms.

He emphasized that under the Workers Welfare Board, the Sindh government has arranged health and death grants for

laborers, along with providing dowries for their daughters. Additionally, he attributed the establishment of labor colonies, aimed at providing housing for laborers, to the Sindh government of the People's Party.

Sharjeel Inam Memon highlighted that the abolition of child labor and bonded labor, as well as legislation for women laborers and special persons, stand as achievements of the People's Party. Furthermore, he underscored that the Government of Sindh initiated the registration of domestic workers to ensure they receive equal rights comparable to industrial laborers.

He emphasized that the Government of Sindh firmly believes in upholding the principles of social justice and equality. He further stated that Labor Day not only highlights the sacrifices of workers but also underscores the importance of their rights and welfare. He reiterated the commitment to creating an environment where every worker has the right to live in dignity.

Saleem Tariq Lone speaks Police College Bramshill farewell dinner

F.P. Report

Mr. Saleem Tariq Lone, an officer of the Police Service of Pakistan, made a speech at the Police College Bramshill, on the eve of the farewell dinner arranged for the Pakistan Police officers, who attended a special course conducted for them in the year 1993.

Commandant, Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I may assure you at the outset that I have no intention of spoiling this wonderful evening by making a long speech.

But I would be rather remiss in my duty if I didn't briefly recount our great experience of attending the first ever Pakistan Command Course, at Bramshill.

We have been at the receiving end during the Course. Now it is our turn. I can see David Pope almost collapsing in his chair but, cheer up David, I will try to be as diplomatic and smooth as ever.

Most of us arrived here with the mixed feelings of excitement and enthusiasm for attending an institution which has a unique worldwide reputation and enthusiasm for making the best use of our stay here. On the day of arrival, we were almost enchanted by the captivating and picturesque locale of the College and the grandeur of the 'mansion'.

We were, however, quite intrigued to see the composition of our directing staff, two senior retired police officers with an adjunct of a retired 'Pope'.

But we soon discovered that the 'Pope' had nothing to do with satisfying our ideological quests and that the Home Office was bent upon civilianising the police in England and Wales.

So much is the emphasis on 'civilianization', after Sheehy, that the role of disciplining the police officers is also taken over by the 'Popes'.

A word about the course itself.

Despite the initial disadvantage of

organising the first ever Command Course for a group of ten Police officers from Pakistan without given a fair opportunity of knowing the background of the officers and their particular areas of interest, it was most gratifying to see how the experience, vision and commitment of the directing staff combined with the high degree of motivation of the group produced an excellent learning process. A very congenial environment was created and sustained throughout the course, (I can partly take credit for that) which encouraged full participation of all members of the group acting faithfully on the principles of equal opportunities. The course design was professionally productive and imaginative which was the result of flexible and consultative approach of the directing staff.

I can assure you that at the end of the course the group has been sensitized to various policing issues and challenges and professional responses to meet those challenges. This has surely led to the creation of positive and constructive attitudes. We are going back home with some new ideas and with a lot of motivation to bring about positive changes in our personal style of management as well as organisations where we will be working, in the

Some of us have also mastered some additional skills, eg the art of sleeping through the monotony of a lecture without being detected. Some excelled more than others and won the title of "Sleeping Beauty". In the end I must also avail myself of this opportunity to express our deep appreciation and sincere thanks to all those who have contributed in a variety of ways to meet our professional, intellectual, physical, social and emotional needs. Without their voluntary contribution, our stay could not have been as rewarding and fulfilling.

Thank you very much.

Interior Minister visits Coast Guards HQ, lauds PCG performance

KARACHI (APP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited Pakistan Coast Guards (PCG) Headquarters here on Wednesday. The Director General Pakistan Coast Guards Brigadier Ghulam Abbass received the Minister on his arrival at the Headquarters.

Interior Minister laid floral wreath at martyrs monument and presented solute to the martyrs for their supreme sacrifice for the defence of the motherland.

The Interior Minister was briefed on the professional affairs of Pakistan Coast Guards, in which the efforts to fulfill the responsibilities of Coast Guards and prevent all kinds of smuggling, especially anti-narcotics activities.

Mohsin Naqvi was informed about the professional training of Pakistan Coast

Guards and the measures taken to prevent smuggling and the details of the seized drugs, alcohol and other general items, including the process of burning the seized drugs. The Federal Minister while appreciating the professional performance of the institution, the high determination, courage and efforts of the officers and jawans of the Coast Guards, said Pakistan Coast Guards, is the only one that performs its duties simultaneously on land and sea. This is a force which has an important role not only in peace time but also in any difficult and war situation, Naqvi said. He expressed best wishes for the Pakistan Coast Guards by assuring the provision of all possible support and resources to make it more active and strong.

Women Domestic Workers Union holds rally

LAHORE (APP): The Women Domestic Workers Union-Punjab held a rally in collaboration with WISE (women in struggle for Empowerment) on the International Labor Day on Wednesday.

A large number of domestic workers joined the rally led by leaders of Women Domestic

Workers Union. The participants were chanting slogans and carrying banners and placards inscribed with their demands. Speaking to the rally, Ms Bushra Khaliq, Executive Director WISE, said women domestic workers were particularly vulnerable to discrimination in respect of working conditions and terms of

employment.

"They are forced to face issues like long and unlimited working hours, violence and multiple forms of abuse at work, forced/child labour, lack of minimum wage, labour inspection and law enforcement, she added.

President of the DWs union Shenaz Ajmal and General Secretary

Shenaz Fatima demanded the government to increase wages of labourers in proportion to the rising inflation and implement the minimum wage notification 2023.

They said the Punjab Employees Social Security Institute (PESSI) should register DWs and issue them social security cards.

Governor emphasizes labors' role in economic development

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Governor M Balighur Rahman emphasized the indispensable role of laborers in propelling Pakistan's economic growth and fortifying its stability. On the Labour Day, he issued a

message acknowledging the significance of the day which is commemorated worldwide, including in Pakistan. He extended his gratitude to all diligent workers, encompassing those engaged in factories,

mills, fields, and construction sites, who sustain their livelihood through the honest means. Highlighting the importance of labour rights and workplace safety, the governor urged industries to prioritize

the well-being of their workers. He emphasized the necessity of ensuring that laborers are accorded their rightful rights and that stringent safety protocols are enforced across all workplaces.



KARACHI: Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi visiting the martyr's monument (Yadgar-e-Shuhada) at the Pakistan Coast Guards Headquarters.

CM Maryam inaugurates Field Hospital in Bahawalpur

LAHORE (APP): Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif reached Bahawalpur after inaugurating Field Hospital in Lahore and arrived in the suburban area of Abbas Nagar Chak Number BC-6.

According to a handout issued here on Wednesday, the CM inaugurated the Field Hospital in Bahawalpur after its inauguration in Lahore on the same day. She inspected the Mobile Health Unit and reviewed provision of facilities available over there. She monitored the ultrasound room, pharmacy, laboratory and communicated with the paramedic staff. She also inspected provision of facilities in the Field Hospital. CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif went to the women after the inauguration ceremony and sat on a cot with them. On the appeal of an elderly woman, the CM herself took her to the Field

Hospital and got her x-ray, ultrasound and ECG by standing alongside. She showed affection and love to a son of a woman Usman by calling him close to herself. She went to the residence of a villager Jamsheed Arshad on his invitation. The residents of the house showed their pleasant surprise on seeing CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif present among them. Madam CM got herself introduced with the women and expressed her formal apology on giving them untimely inconvenience. The rural women warmly welcomed the CM on her arrival and remarked, "Thawada ana sade sar mathe te, gam gam pe awo." The Chief Minister accepted the offer to take a meal with the family members. She had a meal with them by sitting on the cots. She praised the simple indigenous food and thanked them. The CM said, " She felt heartily

pleased in meeting with the kind-hearted rural people. Their neat and clean houses as well as living are admirable. "It is my firm resolve to ensure progress and uplift of every village along with nice roads as well as a clean environment," she said.

CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif inaugurated a 26 km long road project stretching from Ahmadpur to Jhangrasharqi. Senator Pervaiz Rashid, Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Information Minister Azma Zahid Bokhari, Provincial Ministers Khawaja Salman Rafique, Special Assistant Zeeshan Malik, MPA Sania Ashiq, Chief Secretary, Secretary Health, Secretary Information and other relevant officers were also present on the occasion.

IG Punjab visits police check post Hazrat Umar Farooq (Jhangi)

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar on Wednesday visited Police Check Post Hazrat Umar Farooq (Jhangi) in DG Khan and met the brave policemen who foiled the terrorist attack.

He hugged the brave police officials who bravely repulsed the terrorist attack. He appreciated the police personnel who showed exemplary courage, determination and bravery in the line of duty.

The IG Punjab gave Rs 50,000 each to all the jawans posted at the check post and Rs 100,000 cash reward each to the injured officials. He inspected the damage caused to police check post Hazrat Umar Farooq (Jhangi) due to terrorist attack. RPO DG Khan and other officers briefed IG Punjab about the details of the incident and the challenges faced by the police.

As per details, after 02 months, Punjab Police once again foiled the terrorist attack of the banned organization on Jhangi (Hazrat Umar Farooq) police check post in DG Khan on Tuesday night. The pre-

alert men of the Punjab Police fought bravely for 3 hours and forced the terrorists to retreat.

According to the Punjab Police Spokesman, 15 to 20 terrorists took advantage of the darkness of the night to attack from different sides. The terrorists wanted to seize the Jhangi police check post and take the posted officials hostage. The terrorists used rocket launchers, hand grenades, laser light guns and other modern weapons in the attack. However, the terrorists were forced to flee due to the strong resistance of the policemen and running out of ammunition.

The IG Punjab said that the Punjab Police is alert and will never let the terrorists succeed in their nefarious intentions. RPO Dera Ghazi Khan and DP Dera Ghazi Khan reached the spot with more reinforcements as soon as they got the information about the attack. Seven jawans posted at Jhangi Chowki were injured while fighting bravely, the jawans of District Police, Elite, SOU gave full response to terrorists. Among the injured are ASI Imran,

Constables Muhammad Amir, Ashiq Zain, Rehmatullah, Sanaullah, Elite Constable Tariq while seriously injured. Elite Constable Shahid Manzoor has been shifted to Nishtar Hospital Multan for treatment. He directed the RPO and DPO DG Khan to provide the best medical facilities to the injured police officers and personnel.

The IG Punjab directed to complete the construction work at the check post soon and further strengthen the front line post. He said that additional police personnel and more resources will be provided at Jhangi check post. He instructed the provision of armored vehicle (APC) and modern weapons at the check post.

Dr. Usman Anwar while talking to the media representatives said that the morale and determination of the policemen posted at Jhangi check post is very high. Punjab officials fighting at the front line are his pride and a valuable asset of the department, he added. The IG Punjab said that the bravery and steadfastness of Punjab Police personnel is being appreci-

‘Climate change poses threat to economy’

LAHORE (APP): Chairman UK-Pakistan Joint Business Council Mian Kashif Ashfaq Wednesday said climate change had posed a great threat to Pakistan's economy and agriculture sector, with devastating consequences witnessed in the aftermath of recent floods. Speaking as a guest of

honour at a seminar on "Challenges of Climate Change" here, he said these floods wreaked havoc, washing away vital infrastructure and causing colossal losses to agriculture which was a cornerstone of Pakistan's economy.

He said Pakistan's vulnerability to climate change was exacerbated by its geographical location and reliance

on agriculture, which employs a large portion of the population and contributes significantly to the GDP. Extreme weather events, like floods, droughts, and heatwaves, are becoming more frequent and intense due to climate change, amplifying the challenges faced by the agriculture sector.

<p>PUBLIC NOTICE</p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Muhammad Asif with regards to moveable & immovable assets of deceased Mr. Abdul Rab citizen number 1720122464353 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs.</p> <p>1. Ashan (Daughter)</p> <p>2. Muhammad Kashif (Son)</p> <p>3. Muhammad Asif (Son)</p> <p>4. Muhammad Zahir Khan (Son)</p> <p>5. Muhammad Zahir Khan (Son)</p> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA MARDAN-SFU</p>	<p>PUBLIC NOTICE</p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Izzat Khan with regards to moveable & immovable assets of deceased Mr. Zahir Khan citizen number 1610132833841 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs.</p> <p>1. Rani Khan (Daughter)</p> <p>2. Robina Khan (Spouse)</p> <p>3. Mareena Khan (Daughter)</p> <p>4. Izzat Khan (Son)</p> <p>5. Izzat Khan (Son)</p> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA MARDAN-SFU</p>	<p>PUBLIC NOTICE</p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Imran Khan with regards to moveable & immovable assets of deceased Mr. Fazal Wadood Khan citizen number 4240118767043 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs.</p> <p>1. Shazia Bano (Daughter)</p> <p>2. Imran Khan (Son)</p> <p>3. Fozia Bano (Daughter)</p> <p>4. Badshahat Begum (Spouse)</p> <p>5. Nazia (Daughter)</p> <p>6. Fazal Ali (Son)</p> <p>7. Naveed Hussain (Son)</p> <p>8. Amin Ullah (Son)</p> <p>9. Mareena, Fazal (Daughter)</p> <p>10. Fazal Hussain (Son)</p> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA MALAKAND-SFU</p>	<p>PUBLIC NOTICE</p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Adnan Khan with regards to moveable & immovable assets of deceased Mr. Musali Khan citizen number 1430120273635 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs.</p> <p>1. Adnan Khan (Daughter)</p> <p>2. Adnan Khan (Son)</p> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA KOHAT-SFU</p>
<p>PUBLIC NOTICE</p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Ashraf Wazir Khan with regards to moveable & immovable assets of deceased Ms. Gulzar Anjum citizen number 1520207971618 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs.</p> <p>1. Bibi Nasima (Daughter)</p> <p>2. Muhammad Aziz Khan (Son)</p> <p>3. Ashraf Wazir Khan (Son)</p> <p>4. Muhammad Zahir Khan (Son)</p> <p>5. Muhammad Zahir Khan (Son)</p> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA CHITRAL-SFU</p>	<p>PUBLIC NOTICE</p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Zahid Nawaz with regards to moveable & immovable assets of deceased Mr. Naseeb Gul citizen number 1350436804915 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs.</p> <p>1. Shahid Nawaz (Son)</p> <p>2. Nargis Bibi (Spouse)</p> <p>3. Zahid Nawaz (Daughter)</p> <p>4. Sidra Bibi (Daughter)</p> <p>5. Mujahid Khan (Son)</p> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA MANSEHRA-SFU</p>	<p>PUBLIC NOTICE</p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Safir Ullah Khan with regards to moveable & immovable assets of deceased Mr. Dilawar Khan citizen number 1110119024015 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs.</p> <p>1. Shahid Ullah Khan (Son)</p> <p>2. Zainab Bibi (Daughter)</p> <p>3. Safir Ullah Khan (Son)</p> <p>4. Haleema Bibi (Daughter)</p> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA BANNU-SFU</p>	

Wage magistrates ensure provision of minimum wages for labours: CM

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister, Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, on the eve of International Labor Day announced to double the assistance packages given to the laborers by the provincial government and said that the revenue of provincial labor department has increased so the packages of labors should also be enhanced accordingly.

He also announced to appoint/post wage magistrates to ensure provision of minimum wages fixed by the government to laborers and said that salaries of laborers must be transferred through bank accounts and effective monitoring mechanism should be put in place. He was addressing a ceremony held in Peshawar here on Wednesday to mark the International Labor Day.

In the ceremony, the Chief Minister made an automatic transfer of Rs177.5 million rupees to the accounts of laborers for the educational expenditures of their children. A total of 22354 students will benefit from the transferred amount. He on this occasion, also instructed the provincial labor department to hand over the 2056 residential flats at the earliest to laborers constructed for them in Peshawar and said that, in consultation with all stakeholders handling over be carried out in a transparent manner.

Addressing the audience, Ali Amin Gandapur said that the role of laborers in in national and economic development is pivotal and they deserve tribute and appreciation for their contribution. He said that if the problems of labor class are realized in true sense most of them automatically get resolved. He added that the incumbent provincial government would safeguard the rights and welfare of the laborers by introducing new legislation and reforms in existing legal framework, stakeholders including labors' representatives would also be taken on board during the process of legislation and reforms.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government would stand by the labor class and would not allow any individual or institution to exploit them. The chief minister mentioned that, ease of doing business was also one of

the priorities of his government adding that potential investors would be attracted to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by extending facilities to them. Investors were being encouraged to invest in the province by providing conducive environment, plans were also in pipeline for providing locally produced electricity to industry at cheaper rates which will resultantly benefit laborers and create job opportunities in the province. He added that intentions and priorities of the incumbent provincial government were bonafide and will be successful in delivering.

Provincial Minister for labor, Fazal Shakoor Khan, Country Director for Pakistan, International Labor Organization, labor representatives and others also addressed the ceremony.

Executing court imposes fine on ABL for delaying tactics in pension case

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The 22 Decree holders retired from ABL had opted for the calculation on the basis of last pay drawn but bank revised the existing scheme in 2002 according to which pension was restricted to the basic pay as on 30/6/2002 instead of last pay drawn and w.e.f.1.7.2002 gratuity as one salary for one year was allowed with Contributory provident fund which was challenged in the court in 2010.

In the year 2018; vide order dated 22/1/2018 in CR No 634/2015, the Peshawar high court decided the case in favor of employees. ABL challenged this judgment in Supreme court vide C A No.793/2018 the judgment of PHC was upheld on 17/1/2020. Bank then filed Review vide CRP No 185/2020 which was also dismissed by the S.C. on 25/9/2020.

Now, execution is pending in the executing court but bank is using delaying tactics on one or the other pretext. So far bank lost about 5 rounds of litigation after the final judgment of SC. A fine if RS.100000/- was imposed on the bank by the executing court.

In appeal against imposition of fine a further fine if RS.20000/- was imposed by the ADJ, Peshawar. Presently the bank filed a writ petition in PHC and got stay of execution proceedings on 12/12/2023.

It is worth mentioning here that out of 22 decree holders, 5 have been expired. The decree holders who are now in mid-80s are still looking for their lawful right of pension since 2010 but due to negative conduct of ABL they are still deprived of their pension dues.

ANP KP gets new chief

PESHAWAR (PPI): In a significant move, Mian Iftikhar Hussain was elected as the ANP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa president in the intra-party elections.

According to the ANP information, Hussain Shah Yousafzai secured the position of provincial general secretary, and Arslan Khan was elected as the provincial information secretary while Syed Aqil Shah was elected as the senior vice president.

In January this year, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in its decision allowed the Awami National Party (ANP) to contest polls on its election symbol of "Lantern" despite its failure to fulfil the legal requirement.

The ECP had imposed a fine of Rs20,000 on the ANP with the direction to hold intra-party polls till May 10, some three months even after the Feb 8 general elections. ECP allows the party to fulfil legal requirement even after general elections.

Laborers backbone of national economy: Shakoor

Syed Waliullah Shah

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister Fazal Shakoor Khan lauded role of workers in national development while stated that their role is crucial and cannot be ignored.

He said that the laborers, especially those in industrial units, are the backbone of the country's economy.

This he said while addressing United Labor Federation at Hakimabad and added that the previous governments had destroyed the Workers Welfare Board schools.

He said that the govern-

ment will ensure the provision of cheap electricity and gas to industries in the near future to control unemployment in the province.

The labor leaders, including Malik Wali Muhammad, Ajmal Khan, Muhammad Iqbal, Abid Khan, Atlas Khan, Zain-ul-Abideen, Muslim Shah and Adam Khan addressed the gathering.

United Labor Federation presented a resolution demanding the provision of ownership rights to labors at labor colonies as well as a minimum monthly wage of Rs 50,000 for industrial

workers, restoration of the EOBI matching grant, and an increase in the pension of retired industrial workers from Rs 10,000 to Rs 40,000.

The labor leaders also demanded that the government institutions established for the welfare of workers, including social security, workers welfare board, and EOBI, should recruit children of laborers. They said that the current situation is worse than the 1886 Chicago labor movement and demanded that the government take concrete steps to address their issues.

Labor welfare policy urged

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) Lawyers Forum provincial president Kifayatullah Khan along with Information Secretary Salim Shah Hoti paid rich tributes to the workers across the globe on eve of International Labor Day, on Wednesday.

PMLN Lawyer Forum said that the workers of Chicago had written history with their blood and

their historical struggle was a torchbearer for others. In a statement, they said that the working segments are shedding blood and sweat for the development of the country and the current terrible wave of inflation has affected them immensely.

The conditions of working class is very poor and it is impossible to their ends, they added. They emphasized on importance of education and training for welfare of workers. They

said that the working class is the backbone of our economy, so it is important to give them relief in the current situation so that they can get out of economic difficulties.

They said that the government should change the existing labor laws and create an effective, pragmatic and efficient labor policy so that the exploitation of workers can be ended and the basic necessities of life can be provided.

Reports on BISEP exams termed misleading

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Throughout the province, from April 18, matriculation exams are being conducted under the supervision of eight educational boards of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In this context, a special meeting of the Coordination Committee of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board was held, which was attended by the chairpersons of all eight educational boards of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to the announcements made during the meeting,

various boards have been circulating negative and false news on social and electronic media for the past few days regarding paper leaks and early distribution of papers, which have no connection to reality.

It was stated in the announcements that all these are propaganda contrary to reality. Over 98% of the exam halls are holding papers in an extremely organized and transparent manner, while a few complaints have been received from remote mountainous

areas. It is also noteworthy here that the Pakistan Inter Board Chairman Committee has awarded special commendatory certificates to all educational boards of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for conducting examinations based on the Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) system, and some complaints have been received by the education department and educational boards regarding the creation of images of papers and student cheating from some examination halls.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur witnessing the transfer of amount for the industrial workers and their children.

Congratulation

Facility Cost Total: 177.52 in Million
Beneficiaries: 22354
Student Stipends: 3.4 in Million
Beneficiaries: 61

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Workers Welfare Board the above amount has been transfer to Industrial Workers and their Children individual bank accounts

Chilam Josh Festival in Kelash Valley Advisor Tourism stresses on brisk arrangements

PESHAWAR: Zahid Chanzeb, Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism and Culture, has directed the Tourism and Culture department and Chitral district administration to ensure brisk arrangements to celebrate the upcoming 5-day Chilam Josh Festival in a befitting manner in the serene Kalash Valley in Lower Chitral.

"The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA), Kalash Valleys Development Authority (KVDA), Tourism Police, district administration and other concerned quarters have to make coordinated efforts to facilitate the domestic and foreign tourists during this extravaganza" said Zahid Chanzeb while chairing a meeting in this regard at Peshawar.

The KPCTA Director General Barkatullah Marwat, KVDA DG Minhasuddin and other officials attended the meeting. The CMs' Aide asked his department to reopen camping pods in Bumburet and depute the personnel of Tourism Police to facilitate foreign and domestic tourists and local residents in the gleeful gala. He added that local culture and traditions must be respected and maximum facilities should be provided to the Kalash people to celebrate the annual festival with all pomp and show.

Zahid Chanzeb said that camping pods and hotels with extra potable water and washrooms provisions should be installed and revitalised for the attraction and facilitation of tourists, while ensuring security measures for the festival, including the deployment of Tourism Police for assistance and guidance of the safety of visitors.

He said he along with the other provincial ministers would also participate in the festival to personally review the arrangements

there.

Briefing the Advisor Tourism about the arrangements, Kalash Valley Development Authority Director General Minhasuddin said that the authority has taken all out steps for the facilitation of tourists, including arranging free parking lots, plan for smooth flow of traffic with the help of local Traffic Police, launching cleanliness drive in three main valleys of Kalash, installing posters and banners regarding tourists guiding principles and standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the local culture and traditions and promotion of tourism, cultural stalls, arranging home stay for the paying guest tourists to strengthen Kalash community and inviting prominent social media bloggers and V-loggers to publicise the event worldwide.

He said the KPCTA tourist facilitation centres in Upper Dir and Lower Chitral have also been

streamlined that would remain open for guidance of tourists and visitors during the event.

He said that foreign and domestic tourists can also contact Sayyah Tourism Helpline by calling at 1422 to obtain requisite information and assistance before their departure for the thrilling gala.

The five-day Chilam Josh Festival will be held in the three Kalash valleys Bumburet, Birir and Rumbur from May 13 to 17, he told the meeting.

The annual festival comprises traditional events including dances of Kalash girls and boys to the beat of traditional drums and will be attended by a large number of tourists, including foreigners from all over the world.

The Chilam Josh Festival will start with 'Milkday,' in which Kalash people offer libations of milk that had been saved for 10 days prior to the occasion.

Resolving issues of minorities top priority: Tarakai

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Education Faisal Khan Tarakai has said that resolving the issues of minority communities and providing them with facilities is our top priority. A quota has been allocated in the education department, including all provincial institutions, on which work is ongoing, he added.

Tarakai said that Missionary Schools established throughout the province are an important means of providing higher education, and all facilities, including infrastructure, students, and teachers' issues, will be addressed, and Edwardes College, along with all missionary institutions, will soon be brought back on track.

These views were expressed by him during a meeting with a delegation of representatives from the minority community under the leadership of Humfrey Saffraz Peter, Chief of Staff, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The delegation included Education Director Daniel, Father Khush Bakht, Joseph, Asif, and Provincial Minority Leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Samuel Robert.

Minister of Education Faisal Khan Tarakai said that the minority community is playing its role in the development of our beloved Pakistan shoulder to shoulder, and our government views the services of the minority community with respect. He said that the education department is soon launching an E-Transfer Policy in which special arrangements will be made for the minority community and women.

The delegation informed the education department about the issues of unemployment facing the minority community, which the Minister of Education assured to resolve.

He further said that we are also initiating a School Development Program in our schools, which will benefit from your school-based schools, and your schools will be further



upgraded so that we can prepare our province's children according to the needs of the market.

With the consultation of the delegation, Kashif has been nominated as the focal person from the minority community for the education department, who will inform the education authorities about the issues of the minority community. Minister of Education Faisal Khan Tarakai said that now the formation of the political government in the province has come into effect, and through reforms, we have to move this

province forward on the path of progress.

He said that this country is ours, and it is our collective responsibility to fix it. The delegation informed the Minister of Education about the issues of posting transfers in remote areas, softness in marking in the recruitment process for the minority community in specific areas, and issuing equal orders for recruitment on merit and minority seats during recruitment, including other important issues that the Minister of Education assured to resolve.

Labour Day – A reminder for better facilities to workers

PESHAWAR (APP): When international labor community was observing International Labour Day, scores of illiterate laborers in Pakistan were totally unaware of this global phenomenon.

Although rallies and processions were taken out in different parts of country yet many preferred to remain at their job place on this day despite being a public holiday, to earn living for their families whether in convenient or exploitive environment. Like many parts of Pakistan, May First is observed the world over as International Labor Day to pay homage to the sacrifices of 1886 Chicago workers who sacrificed their lives demanding eight hours duty a day. People gathered at roads and streets to renew their pledge sending a message to employers to provide

proper wages and healthy environment under this year's theme of "ensuring laborers' safety and health at work place."

But, there are many like Irshad Ullah, a marble miner of Warsak Road, who was busy cutting raw marble slabs in his factory even on this holiday exclusively announced for him. Enjoying the national song "A jawan Jeet Hai Tera Nishan" from his mobile, this miner woke up early in the morning even on May Day to support his two assistants in fulfilling the orders placed by customers. "No one can understand the pain of a married unemployed person other than me. Had my father not sold a piece of land for setting up my marble business; today I may have become a stigma for my family," he remarked remembering the gone

hard days.

Hailing from Amankot Nowshera district, Irshadullah once faced a great financial crisis, anxiety and depression, before his fortune turned around through the marble and granite business. "My family financially supported me by establishing a small-scale business and today I am living a respectable life," he remarked. "All this happened with the benediction of Allah Almighty and my hard work." Many like Irshadullah who was once a hard-working laborer, opt for going to work only because a day missed of working means for them to bring hardship to their families. "Labor Day is not just about paying tributes to workers but also teaching them about their rights and stopping them from being exploited," said a labor laws expert advocate Asif

Yousafzai. He said the 1973 constitution protects the rights of laborers and the working class in Pakistan and country's labor policy ensures social security network, old age benefit schemes and welfare fund for laborers.

"Pakistan being a member of the International Labor Organization (ILO) is mandated to protect all rights of laborers like right to trade union, assembly, job protection and retirement benefits," Asif Yousafzai said. Since, Pakistan ratified numerous ILO conventions its respective governments do their bit to protect the rights of laborers like health, residence, education and wages to make them a productive segment of society.

As labour ministry was devolved to provinces under 18th constitutional amendment, labor laws and policies are now

framed and implemented at a provincial level in line with Pakistan's commitments to international laws and frameworks and circumstances internally. However, the existing circumstances necessitate revisiting these policies and salary packages of labour class to make them meet their ends as the economic recession of recent past had it difficult for them to survive. "What we earn is quite insufficient for our survival.

Our working hours are unlimited and wages too minimal to feed our children," remarked an agricultural worker in Faisalabad, a city in Punjab province. "Since, there are no working hours for us like factory workers or other regular or certified labor, there is no discrimination of dawn or dusk for us," said Muhammad Imran, a field worker. "Similarly our

nature of job is also not specified as we have to perform all agriculture-related tasks during the day and sometimes even during the night," he narrated. "And what we earn for it is too less to factory workers performing eight hours duty." Similar is the case with field workers (Harees) in rural Sindh whose lives are pathetic as they survive on the mercy of land owners. Then there are irregular workers working at small shops, stores, warehouses, shopping centers and factory outfits. "We cannot ask freely for desired wages as employers try to pay us the minimum and often than what announced by the government. But, since we need some money for our families, we cannot argue with them," said a Karachi-based loader, Muhammad Waseem. "Working at a warehouse and loading

vehicles for delivery sometimes become too taxing. But, we have to live with it." The situation may also not be different for workers and laborers in Balochistan, especially the shepherds whose whole day passes at pastures and grazing fields. But, many among them are paid a meager amount bi-annually or annually that is when calculated on a daily basis feels like nothing. Although, provincial governments and some federal institutions ensure during employment and post-retirement facilities for laborers, yet majority of the irregular workforce is deprived of these privileges. Therefore, it is imperative for all governments to fully protect the rights of laborers as they provide for a better economic basis of any economy and play an important role in national progress.



In brief

Woman kidnaps her own son

NAROWAL (INP): A woman with the help of her lover kidnapped her own son in Narowal, police said on Wednesday. The police recovered 10-year-old child Muhammad Zubair who was kidnapped two days ago. Police said in this regard that in order to humiliate and scare the relatives, the mother had created a drama of child abduction. The police said that woman's husband is living abroad. The police recovered the child in two days with the help of human intelligence source and modern technology. The abducted child was hidden by a quack, a friend of child's mother, in his tent, the police said. After two days of child's abduction, the concerned police arrested the quack who also was involved in the kidnapping of Muhammad Zubair. However, Rehana Bibi, the mastermind of the child's abduction has managed to escape, said police. Narowal police had registered a case of kidnapping on the complaint of Muhammad Zubair's uncle Muhammad Shehbaz. The child was suddenly abducted from outside the house on April 27, the police said. Muhammad Zubair, who was rescued, was handed over to his father and uncle.

Bride tricks her groom

PAKPATTAN (INP): A groom was stunned over his bride's sleight of hand as she tricked him on their wedding night and fled away along with jewellery and cash worth over million rupees in Pakpattan, police said on Wednesday. According to police, after making the bridegroom unconscious, the bride collected all the valuables and took off. The bride stole valuables worth Rs1.2 million including jewellery and cash, the police said. However, the police registered a case against four people including the bride and launched a hunt to trace them down.

Farewell arranged

F.P. Report

HARIPUR: University of Haripur organized a grand farewell function to pay tribute to the exemplary services of the Director Works/Project Coordinator Syed Zaheer Hasrat Shah while the varsity officials including Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Shafiq ur Rehman, Director P&D Salman Khan, Dean of Biological and Biomedical Sciences Prof. Dr. Azizullah, Controller of Examination and others present in the event. Syed Zaheer Hasrat Shah was recognized for his outstanding service and unwavering dedication to the University. Recognition of his outstanding performance and commitment, Prof. Dr. Shafiq ur Rehman, on behalf of the University, presented him with a souvenir as a token of appreciation and gratitude. Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dr. Shafiqur Rehman expressed his sincere gratitude to Syed Zaheer Hasrat Shah for playing an important role in advancing the infrastructure and operational efficiency of the University. VC wished Syed Zaheer Hasrat Shah for a successful and fulfilling journey ahead. Syed Zaheer Hasrat Shah expressed his thoughts and thanked the university administration for acknowledgement the efforts he said that this difficult task would not have been possible without the support of my team and P&D and the cooperation of the University Administration (UOH).



HYDERABAD: Workers of Pakistan WAPDA Hydroelectric Workers Union holing a rally on the eve of International Labour Day.

Govt committed to follow law under constitution

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: Federal Minister for SAFRON and Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan Affairs Engineer Amir Muqam on Wednesday said that his party believe and follow law and rules under the constitution. He said this while address the swearing-in ceremony of the Matta Bar Council Association in Swat.

Party leaders, district officials, and members of the legal fraternity also attended in large numbers. Amir Muqam emphasized the need for lawyers to work towards upholding the supremacy of law and the constitution, rather than being swayed by individual interests. He reiterated the government's commitment to upholding the independence of the judiciary and urged the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to prioritize the issues of the province's people over personal agendas.

Muqam urged the Chief



Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to focus on improving the lives of the province's people rather than engaging in power struggles in Islamabad. He expressed confidence in the strength of the central government and assured that over the next five years, Pakistan would gain control over its issues.

Muqam highlighted the importance of collaboration between institutions and governments solely for the resolution of Pakistan's issues. He praised Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for his tireless efforts day and

night. Minister Amir Muqam commended Army Chief General Asim Munir's role in attracting investment from around the world for the first time in Pakistan.

He stated that he had always served the nation impartially, regardless of the electoral mandate. Muqam emphasized that he stood with the nation in every difficulty, whether it be floods, earthquakes, or terrorism. Lastly, Federal Minister Engineer Amir Muqam announced a grant of Rs2 million for the Bar Council's activities.

Eye's viral disease spreading in Waziristan

F.P. Report

WANA: A rapid outbreak of conjunctivitis, also known as pink eye, has been reported in the tribal areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including South Waziristan. According to health department of south Waziristan, there has been a significant increase in conjunctivitis cases in government and private hospitals.

Residents of the city have reported a surge in complaints of severe eye itching, redness, and swelling, with around 100 affected individuals visiting government hospitals daily. Experts warn that the virus can cause severe eye irritation and pain for up to 10 days and can be contagious to those in close proximity to the affected individual.

"Experts have warned that the virus can temporarily affect the cornea and other parts of the eye, although no severe cases have been reported so far. They advised against using home remedies to alleviate symptoms and emphasized the importance of hygiene." The public urged the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa health department for taking emergency measures to control the spread of the virus in all hospitals in lower south Waziristan.

Public outcry over brutal domestic violence

F.P. Report

THATTA: An awful incident of domestic violence has shaken the village of Chhatto Keho in Thatta district, where a 40-year-old woman, Zahida Keho, was subjected to brutal torture by her husband and brother-in-law.

According to her father, Zahid Keho, Zahida was meted out an inhuman treatment for visiting her parents' home without permission. Her husband and brother-in-law tortured her for two consecutive days, and then threw her into a ditch outside the village, believing she was dead.

Villagers discovered Zahida in a pathetic condition and informed her father, later she was rushed to a nearby hospital, where doctors found that both her arms were broken and her legs had been pierced with a sharp weapon. Zahid Keho alleged that the delinquents have the patronage of influential political figures in the area, who are threatening him and his daughter with dire consequences. Despite this, he has bravely spoken out against the atrocity and sought justice for his daughter.

Initially, the police refused to lodge FIR, but amid mounting public pressure, SHO Ghulam Ullah police station finally registered a case under relevant sections of the Pakistan Penal Code 1860. The police have managed to arrest the husband of the victim. This incident highlights the ongoing issue of domestic violence and the need for greater protection for women in rural Sindh. The police's initial inaction in this case is also a cause for concern and raises questions about their commitment to upholding the law and protecting vulnerable citizens.

Victim families in Dir gets Rs11m as compensation amount

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: According to the district administration a total of 14 persons including women and children were killed and nine injured in rain related incidents during the month of April so far in the district. Similarly 47 full house damage, 719 partial house collapse and 39 animal perishment cases were reported in the Lower Dir district due to torrential rains and floods.

The additional deputy commissioner relief and human rights Tariq Hussain told this reporter on contact that one person drowned in a flooded stream was yet to be recovered while a missing driver Saleem Khan who was drowned in the Talash stream was recovered in Nowshera after two weeks.

The official said that heirs of 11 dead persons had been paid with the compensation amount of Rs 11 million (one million each), while 100 non-food items packages were provided to assistant commissioners for distribution among the affected families. He said that the affected families in Luqman Banda, Asbanr, Tormang, Shamshi Khan and Malala were provided with the compensation cheques. The ADC said that a causeway at Shamshi Khan Talash which was damaged by floods had been restored for all kinds of vehicular traffic. He said the Bagh Pengal road, the Sheen Ghar road and Shahi road were cleared from landslides and traffic flow on them had been restored.

Rescue 1122 report: The Rescue 1122 Lower Dir responded to a total of 485 emergencies out of 534 during the month of April. According to a progress report shared by Rescue 1122 district emergency officer Ibrar Ali, a total of 5230 calls were received including 534 calls relating to emergencies like medical care, road accidents, house fires, clashes, house collapses, drowning and firing cases.

The official said the Rescue 1122 services quickly responded to 485 cases wherein first aid was provided to the victims before shifting them to nearby hospitals. He said that 207 victims were shifted to hospitals inside or outside the district under the supervision of trained staff. He said that a total of 201 medical emergencies, 44 road accidents, 18 house fires, 6 clashes, 9 house collapse, 7 drowning and 42 miscellaneous cases were reported during the month.

Anti-polio drive: A total of 332,570 children below five years are to be vaccinated during the five-day anti polio drive in Lower Dir district commencing from May 2. It was stated by Dr Noor Hameed, EPI coordinator during a function regarding the upcoming national immunization campaign held here on Tuesday. The additional deputy commissioner finance and planning Jan Muhammad, Dr Jehan Zeb and Dr Noor Hameed vaccinated some of the children during the function and kicked off the drive formally.

Talking to local journalists, Dr Hameed said that a total of 1268 mobile teams, 58 transit and 69 fixed teams had been formed. He asked parents, teachers, religious clerics and social

activists to extend their cooperation to the health teams to make the drive a success in the district.

14 persons dead in rain related mishaps: As many as 14 persons including women and children were killed and nine injured in rain related incidents during the month of April so far in the district. Similarly, 47 full house damage, 719 partial house collapse and 39 animal perishment cases were reported in the Lower Dir district due to torrential rains and floods.

This was claimed by additional deputy commissioner relief and human rights Tariq Hussain told the reporter on phone call that one person drowned in a flooded stream was yet to be recovered while a missing driver Saleem Khan who was drowned in the Talash stream was recovered in Nowshera after two weeks.

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Info Minister condoles with Saira Afzal

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar visited residence of MNA Saira Afzal Tarar in Kolo Tarar Town near Hafizabad soon after reaching Pakistan after completion of his foreign tour to express condolence over demise of former Parliamentary Secretary Mian Afzal Hussain Tarar (father of MNA Saira Afzal Tarar).

He offered 'Fateha' and prayed that May Allah Almighty grant an exalted place to the (Late) in Jannat-ul-Firdaus and fortitude to the bereaved family to bear this irreparable loss with equanimity. He said that Mian Afzal Hussain Tarar was a close, trustworthy and a loyal companion of Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and my affectionate elder as well. His death is a profound shock for all of us.

Federal Minister Info said that deceased remained steadfast with the party on the path of truth like a staunch loyal companion. He did not change sides with the change of political climate. He was honest per-

son who believed in treading on the right path along with serving the humanity. His invaluable services rendered for the country, nation and political party would be remembered for ever.

I started my political career from Kolo Tarar to conduct election campaign of MNA Saira Afzal Tarar in 2008 alongwith my elder Mian Azal Hussain Tarar, he added.

CEO education retired: Chief Executive Officer Education Hafizabad Sohail Azhar Khan has retired from his service to reach age of supernation. Deputy Commissioner Sundas Irshad bestow special souvenir to Sohail Azhar Khan in farewell meeting to acknowledge his services render to upgrade educational standard and to improve management of schools during his service. ADCR Intiaz Ali Baig, DEO Secondary Anwar Javed, DEO Elementary (Women) Samina Yasmeen, DEO Elementary (Men) Amanullah, DDEO Sadaf Khanim and Assistant Arif Hunjra were also present in the meeting. DC said on the occasion that during tenure

of Sohail Azhar Khan, significant improvement was witnessed in the schools of distaste.

Meanwhile, the Additional Charge of the post of Chief Executive Officer Education Hafizabad have been entrusted to District Education Officer Hafizabad Muhammad Anwar Javed. Muhammad Anwar Javed took over the charge of the post of Chief Executive Officer Education Hafizabad. Moreover, District Population Officer Hafizabad Muhammad Arif Ali paid tribute to labourers on World Labour Day. He presented flowers to Rickshaw drivers and brick kiln workers.

Earlier, the father of former Federal Minister Saira Afzal Tarar, Mian Afzal Tarar laid to rest in his native town Kolo Tarar. A large number of people belongs segments of society including former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Federal Law Minister Azam Nazir Tarar, senior officer Babar Hayyat Tarar, Secretary Information Punjab Ahmad Aziz Tarar attended his funeral prayer.

Workers national's asset playing key role in development

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri has said in her message to express solidarity on the occasion of International Workers' Day that the working class is the real capital of the country which plays the most important role in the construction and development of the country. The economy of Pakistan runs on the tail of our hardworking workers.

At present, the conditions in which labourers, office workers, farm workers, labourers and other government and non-government organizations are working all over the world cannot be called an idol. She said that Labour Solidarity Day is celebrated every year on May 1st as an international day, but there was no solidarity with the labourers in any era.

Senator Samina Mumtaz Zahri said that perhaps no serious attempt has been

made to change the conditions of the labourers in any era so that the conditions of the actual labourers can be changed so that they too can take a peaceful breath and feed their children. We must remember the struggle of 1884, in which the voice raised against the capitalist class in Chicago was bathed in blood. Their struggle is remembered every year at the global level.

She said that International Labour's Day is the day of countless workers who burn in the furnace of capital in factories, fields, threshing floors, mines and other factories, but the sad thing is that this day of workers at the global level is celebrated with great organization. Solidarity with labourers is expressed, but the fact is that even today this class is suffering badly under the capitalist system, which has no future. Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri further said

that the common man has been affected by the current inflation, while the labour class has been practically killed.

A labourer working 12 to 14 hours a day does not even get enough wages to support his household, which is the reason why suicide is common in this section. She also said that the duty is not fulfilled by celebrating the day of solidarity with the workers at the global level, nor should the governments be satisfied by increasing their wages in paperwork.

Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri appealed to the federal and provincial governments that the workers who sweat the most in the mill of inflation are a pitiful class. It should be implemented while immediate and emergency steps are taken to further improve these laws, only then will the requirements of solidarity with the workers be met.

KKKU celebrates World Labour Day

F.P. Report

KARAK: Khushal Khan Khattak University (KKKU) Karak, arranged a walk to celebrate World Labour Day which was organized by the Blood Donor and Social Welfare Society, on Wednesday.

The event was led by Shah Muhammad, Lecturer of Computer Science and Bioinformatics. The ceremony, held on the auspicious occasion of Labour Day in which faculty members, students, and administrative staff of the University were present. Participants marched through the university campus, holding placards



inscribed with slogans expressing solidarity with the labourers, the unsung heroes of our society.

KKKU Vice Chancellor Professor Dr Muhammad Naseer Ud Din emphasized the pivotal role of labourers as the backbone of our country's economy. He called for concerted efforts

to ensure better health and education facilities for the wards of labourers, acknowledging their invaluable contributions to the nation. Registrar KKKU Dr. Rafi Ullah Khan shed light on the remarkable contributions of labourers not only within the nation but across the globe.

Separate events held to observe World Labour Day

F.P. Report

LARKANA: Larkana Social Union celebrated Labour Day and paid tribute to the martyrs of Chicago. A protest rally was taken out from Bagrani Road to the Press Club, on Wednesday.

Sheikh Hafiz Bashir Ahmed Hussaini, Deedar Ali Sheikh, Liaquat Ali Imrani, Zahid Ali Junju and others said that the workers' day is being celebrated since 1886 after massacre of labours in the city of Chicago United States of America. Bari defeated and bowed to that empire and salute the sacrifices made by the workers. It is sad to say that the anti-people policies of the rulers running the country and not taking any steps to support the country's economy, even today the capitalists are oppressing the workers in Sindh.

Due to the shortage of factories and factories in the interior of Sindh during the period of inflation, the daily wage earners are suffering from hunger and misery. They said that the International Labour Day is being celebrated from the phrase "God is the friend of God". It has been proved that the greatness and importance of the labourer, but even today we have millions of innocent children and orphans, men and women

who are helpless.

Those who cannot even take their rights, while the first part of every development of the country is the labour and craftsmanship of the workers, with the labours of which big buildings, roads, big businesses are running because of these workers. They said that the rulers have dragged the people into the trap of inflation by taking loans, while the workers have played a role in the development of the country by shedding their sweat. But due to the contrary policies of the elected representatives, they have created great problems for the poor people and especially the working class, so that the workers are still deprived of their legitimate and basic rights and better wages, which is why once again oppression, oppression and oppression have united.

There is a need to struggle against it. They demanded the Chief Minister of Sindh to increase the wages of the workers by setting up factories and factories in the big cities of Sindh for national development and save the poor workers from starvation.

Meanwhile, a ceremony was organized in Government Arts and Commerce College on the occasion of May 1 International Labour Day in Larkana, in which all the staff

of the college participated. That we should value workers and workers and treat them with respect and pay them before they sweat.

This day we got as a result of the sacrifices of Chicago workers, which is celebrated all over the world at the same time. On this day, let us stand with the workers and support their legitimate demands because the workers are still oppressed today. Prof. Umid Ali Samtoe said that the real purpose of May Day is to sympathize with the workers and give them their rights.

Professor Abid Hussain Bhutto said: We are all labourers who receive compensation for doing physical labour. We all should be aware of the problems of our workers. Professor Akbar Chandio said that historically, capitalists have been exploiting workers in every era and the same work is still going on today. Professor Amir Ali Abbasi said that when we read the history of workers in the world, it is full of oppression and oppression.

Even in this modern era, there has been no improvement in the life of the elderly class. We should demonstrate solidarity with the workers on May 1. should Prof. Aniza ran the program. On this occasion, the students of the college also gave speeches paying tribute to the workers.



BEIJING: An aerial photo showing rescuers work at the site of a collapsed road section of the Meizhou-Dabu Expressway in Meizhou, south China's Guangdong Province.

New Haiti PM tasked with stabilising violence-racked country

PORT-AU-PRINCE: Haiti's transitional council has nominated Fritz Belizaire as the new prime minister of the crisis-ridden Caribbean country. The council tapped the former sports minister to take over from interim prime minister Michel Patrick Boisvert. The previously low-profile new premier faces a daunting task of trying to stabilise the island nation, which is mired in chaos as it battles violent armed gangs that have taken control of many areas.

The council had earlier named Edgard Leblanc Fils, a former senate president, as president of the panel. The appointments follow weeks of political deadlock and in-fighting on the council, which was convened last month after former Prime Minister Ariel Henry resigned. Belizaire's nomination was supported by four of the seven voting members on the nine-member panel. Other members noted that they were unfamiliar with him.

The council is also tasked with appointing a cabinet and an electoral council, which should pave the way for Haiti's first general elections since 2016. However, internal squabbles on the panel have delayed the process. Tensions concerning selections are reported to be threatening to dissolve the council.

"This is a very good choice for prime minister," Fils said of Belizaire according to AP. "The important thing for us is this will, this determination to go beyond divisions, to overcome conflicts and to reach a consensus." Gunfire was heard across the capital Port-au-Prince during the council meeting, illustrating the challenge the new prime minister faces to end the chaotic violence plaguing Haiti.

Some 4,000 inmates were released in raids on Haiti's two biggest prisons in February. Amid an orgy of violence, the gangs have since wrested control from authorities in many areas and attacked infrastructure. More than 2,500 people were killed or injured across Haiti from January to March, according to the United Nations. Nearly 95,000 people have fled Port-au-Prince. People are struggling to find food and access healthcare with Haiti's ports and airport closed.

"The Haitian population can no longer wait," Louis Gerald Gilles, a member of the transitional council who supported Belizaire's appointment, told AP. "The security issue is essential for societal calm." However, desperately needed political stability looks some way off. The Caribbean country has not held elections for eight years and has been

without a president since Jovenel Moise was assassinated in 2021.

Henry, who was not elected, was removed after the armed gangs launched a coordinated attack in February, demanding that he step down. Having been in Kenya seeking international help to quell the violence at the time, he remains locked out of Haiti. He submitted his resignation last week. The transitional council will act as the country's presidency until it can arrange an election, which must be held by February 2026.

The announcement of Belizaire as the new prime minister may not help. Although he served as sports minister between 2006 and 2011, he is not well known in the country, and the appointment, which appears to have been arranged in a backroom deal, shocked some transitional council members. The Montana Accord, a civil society group opposed to the selection, said in a statement that the announcement was a "conspiracy" hatched by four council members against the Haitian people "in the middle of the night". The next challenge for the transitional council will be to decide on support for a UN-backed deployment of a Kenyan police force to help fight the gangs. However, it is unclear when that might happen. — Aljazeera

A sanctioned strongman and the 'fall' of Myanmar's Myawaddy

MAE SOT, Thailand: On April 11, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), the armed wing of Myanmar's Karen National Union (KNU) a staunch opponent of the military coup, captured the 275 Light Infantry Battalion base about 5km (3.1 miles) west of Myawaddy, a town of crucial strategic importance on the Myanmar-Thai border.

The KNU immediately claimed a successful offensive, sharing photos of its troops at the entrance to the city. Although the KNU did not definitively claim they had taken the town, many thought Myawaddy had been fully liberated by the forces fighting against the generals who seized power from the elected government in a 2021 coup. But the situation was not quite as it seemed.

Just two weeks after the KNLA took control of the base, the Myanmar military was back, sharing a picture of its soldiers raising their flag back at the site in a sudden and surprising turn of events. Interviews with

Myawaddy residents, sources close to the offensive and analysts indicate the KNLA never took the entire town. Rather, Myawaddy was under the control of the Border Guard Forces (BGF), a notorious militia operating in the border areas that are home to the ethnic Karen, Myanmar's second largest ethnic group. And at the heart of the incident is Colonel Saw Chit Thu – an ethnic Karen strongman who leads the BGF with thousands of armed men under his command.

"Myawaddy was never captured by the KNLA. While the junta's remaining troops from the 275th LIB retreated, the BGF army took control of Myawaddy and Saw Chit Thu stated that they would remain neutral to avoid conflict within the city," a source close to a Karen ethnic armed group told Al Jazeera, requesting anonymity for fear of reprisals. "During the capture of the 275th LIB, the BGF troops facilitated the transfer of junta troops

from their base to the 2nd Friendship Bridge. Although the KNLA forces were permitted to enter the city, they were not authorised to occupy it, or target any of the junta's administrative buildings within the city."

The claim was corroborated by four different sources and analysts with deep knowledge of the incident. Myawaddy is one of Myanmar's largest cities with a population of more than 200,000, and occupies a crucial position on the Thai-Myanmar border through which billions of dollars of trade have passed for decades. Its apparent fall suggested a significant breakthrough for those fighting against the successes of Operation 1027, a major offensive launched by a coalition of other ethnic armed groups last year.

But when the Myanmar military made threats to destroy the town from the air and attack Shwe Kokko, a district just north of Myawaddy and the heart of Saw Chit Thu's criminal

empire where scam operations are rampant, he chose to allow the military to retake their base to entrench his power and profits. "It became clear that the BGF had been playing both sides and that it ultimately pivoted to assist the military regime, leading to the photo op of the Myanmar flag once again being raised over the base," Jason Tower, the Myanmar director of the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) told Al Jazeera.

Saw Chit Thu is a veteran fighter and was once the commander of the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) Battalion 999, a military-linked group that split from the KNU in 1994. Since then, he has become one of the most feared figures in Karen State and has worked closely with the Myanmar military. Experts say the group has been actively involved in burning down villages to support the Myanmar army and even bombing camps housing displaced people. — Aljazeera

Highway collapse in China leaves 24 dead

BEIJING (AP): A section of a highway collapsed early Wednesday in southern China, sending cars tumbling and leaving at least 24 people dead, according to state media. Eighteen cars fell down a slope after a 17.9-meter (58.7-foot) long section of the highway collapsed, according to a statement from authorities in Meizhou city in Guangdong province. The incident occurred around 2 a.m.

The death toll had risen to 24 by Wednesday afternoon, according to China's official Xinhua News agency. Parts of Guangdong province has seen record rains and flooding in the past two weeks, as well as hail. Some villages in Meizhou had flooded in early April, and the city had seen heavy rains in recent days. Witnesses told local media they heard a loud noise and saw a hole open up several meters wide behind them after driving past the section of the road just before it collapsed.

Video and photos in local media showed smoke and fire at the scene, with highway rails slanting downward into the flames. A pile of blackened cars could also be seen on the slope leading down from the highway. The ground beneath the highway appeared to have caved in, along with the section of the road that had broken off. Rescue workers have taken 30 people to the hospital, state broadcaster CCTV reported.

Kishida will stress rules-based global order

TOKYO (AP): Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said Wednesday that he will stress the need for a rules-based international order in the face of global challenges and tensions when he attends a meeting of the Organizations for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris.

Kishida began a six-day trip abroad in Paris, where he is scheduled to give a keynote speech on Thursday, the first of a two-day OECD ministerial meeting, which will be chaired by Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa. "I would like to stress that Japan will take a leading role in creating and strengthening a free, fair and rules-based international economic order," Kishida told reporters at Tokyo's Haneda international airport.

Kishida said he also plans to step up an effort to support emerging countries, especially those in the Indo-Pacific region, to join the OECD, whose 38 member nations are mostly developed Western economies. Japan and South Korea are the only two East Asia members, and both Indonesia and Thailand want to join the OECD. Kishida is also expected to propose a multinational framework to discuss the development and use of AI and its spread of disinformation.

Gaza, a thorn in Israel's side or its dream?

GAZA: The Israeli army is reinforcing its positions within the Gaza Strip, ostensibly before a long-telegraphed assault on Rafah and the Hamas brigades it says are present there. Rafah's population has swollen after hundreds of thousands of desperate families fleeing from the rest of Gaza sought what shelter they could from Israel's relentless attacks.

The southern city has not been spared Israeli attacks from the air as Israel has threatened for weeks to invade it by land, spurring international concerns about the potential impact on Palestinian civilians there. Under pressure from its allies in the United States and the West as well as pressure from its neighbour Egypt, Israel appears to have permitted the building of a refugee camp at Khan Younis, north of Rafah.

About 40,000 tents are reported to have been bought by Israel while others, of unknown provenance are already in place outside Khan Younis. How 1.4 million people would be housed in those tents remains unclear, as do the details of an Israeli announcement on Wednesday that it had determined other, "safer" zones for the evacuees. Gaza's fate beyond any Israeli assault on Rafah remains unknown. Far-right and ultranationalist members of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet, whom he relies on for the survival of his coalition government, are publicly invested in a ground offensive on Rafah, reacting angrily to any implication that it might not happen.

Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar

Ben-Gvir reportedly told Netanyahu that not launching a land assault on Rafah meant he would have failed in his mission to protect Israel. But the Israeli government also reportedly told Egypt on Friday that it would give a "last chance" to a potential captive release deal before invading, according to The Times of Israel, which quoted an unnamed Israeli official as saying "a deal in the near future or Rafah". Benny Gantz, a member of the war cabinet who is seen as a more moderate figure and entered the war cabinet only after the war on Gaza began, said: "Entering Rafah is important in the long struggle against Hamas. The return of our abductees, abandoned by the 7.10 [Netanyahu] government, is urgent and of far greater importance." A deal to return the captives, he added, should be taken so long as it does not require that the war end.

Israel says four brigades of Hamas fighters and the group's leaders remain in Rafah, shielded by a number of captives taken from Israel on October 7, which justifies an assault in defiance of international concern. Israel has previously sought to combat Hamas's armed wing, the Qassam Brigades, at other locations, such as al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, and declared them "cleared". Weeks later, Israeli soldiers and tanks would return to these same locations, killing more civilians and destroying more as the army "reclassified" the areas.

"Netanyahu is coming to a strategic political intersection where the centrist bloc in the emergency government – led by Gantz – are pressuring for a hostages deal while the far-right sec-

tion led by Smotrich and Ben-Gvir signal that a deal that would prevent Israel from initiating an operation in Rafah would not be acceptable for them," Eyal Lurie-Paredes of the Middle East Institute said. Judging by Netanyahu's past, he will at all costs prioritise maintaining his coalition, which has a slight Knesset majority of 64 of 120 seats, Lurie-Paredes continued.

"His calculation is simple: He has full political dependency on Smotrich and Ben-Gvir for any future coalition after alienating most other factions of Israeli politics due to his ongoing corruption trial. Smotrich and Ben-Gvir are very aware of Netanyahu's political dependency on them and use it to gain much influence on the government's policy even though they are not part of the war cabinet," he said. Since Israel withdrew its 21 settlements and 9,000 settlers from Gaza in 2005, the enclave's boundaries have held firm while Palestinians in the occupied West Bank have been divided up and isolated from each other by settlements, illegal under international law, whose settlers attack Palestinian towns violently, and decisions by Israeli authorities.

Many Israeli settlers have come to see the current conflict as an opportunity to reverse that withdrawal from Gaza, but how much impact they have on decision-making is unclear. "There has been an Israeli movement to settle in Gaza for decades, so the idea is not new at all. What's new is the plausibility of the notion," said HA Hellyer, senior associate fellow at the London-based Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies. — Aljazeera

South Sudan likely to face acute food insecurity

UNITED NATIONS (AP): Over 7 million people in South Sudan are expected to face acute food insecurity or worse during "the lean season" between now and July, the UN Food and Agriculture Organizations said in a report.

The FAO said the highest prevalence of acute hunger, ranging between 65% and 75% of the population, is reported in northern Unity, Upper Nile and Jonglei states, in the Pibor area in the east near the border with Ethiopia, and among South Sudanese returning from war-torn Sudan. The Rome-based agency expressed special concern about the

79,000 people facing the highest catastrophic levels of food insecurity and starvation. It said 11,000 are in the Pibor area, 40,000 are in Northern Bahr el Ghazal state's Aweil East County, and 28,000 are South Sudanese who fled the year-long conflict in Sudan and are spread across the country.

FAO said the main drivers of "the dire food security situation" are protracted economic challenges that have sparked high inflation, "insufficient food supplies, the lingering impact of consecutive years with widespread floods and episodes of intercommunal vio-

lence." The landlocked country is facing an economic crisis due to a decline in oil exports after war-torn Sudan declared force majeure on oil shipments – South Sudan's main export – passing through the country in March. The fighting in Sudan has affected shipments destined for a terminal near Port Sudan along the Red Sea coast.

The world's newest nation, which gained independence from Sudan in 2011, has also been struggling to integrate rival military forces, draft a new constitution and prepare for its delayed first elections in December 2024.

Brazil floods: Residents stranded on rooftops

RIO GRANDE (BBC): At least six people have died and more than a dozen are missing after storms caused flooding in the southern Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul. Helicopters are flying over the region searching for people who have been left stranded. In some areas, the flooding is so severe that helicopters have been unable to land and have had to winch resi-

dents to safety.

The state's governor has asked the federal government for help. "President Lula, please immediately send as much air support as possible for RS [Rio Grande do Sul]. We need to rescue hundreds of people in dozens of municipalities who are in an emergency due to the intense rain which has already fallen and which is going to con-

tinue falling in coming days," Governor Eduardo Leite wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter.

President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva responded, saying that the federal government would "join the efforts of state government and municipalities to get through this difficult time, which is the result of climate change affecting the planet".

Why would Israel and its allies fear the ICC?

THE HAGUE: Israel has long been accused of acting with impunity in the Palestinian territory it occupies, relying on support from the United States and the broader West to protect it from repercussions.

Yet a recent flurry of media reports out of Israel indicates that Israeli officials may be worried about the winds changing with the International Criminal Court (ICC) reportedly planning to charge top Israeli military and political figures with war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza. Israeli media reports indicate that arrest warrants could be issued as soon as this week and that Israel has asked the US to pressure the court to not issue them. Al Jazeera has been unable to independently confirm the potential warrants.

The ICC has spoken to medical staff in Gaza about possible war crimes, according to the Reuters news agency, reviving discussion of possible warrants. In March 2021, an ICC investigation of Israeli conduct in Gaza and the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem since 2014 was launched under former ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda. In November last year,

Bangladesh, Bolivia, Comoros, Djibouti and South Africa referred Israel's conduct to the court again, resulting in current Prosecutor Karim Khan announcing that the ongoing investigation had been expanded to include violence since Israel's latest war in Gaza began in October. A month later, on a visit to the West Bank and Israel, he said the court would investigate crimes by both Israel and Hamas on and since October 7.

Why an investigation that has been under way for three years has caused such sudden concern within Israel has raised some questions. Israel is not a signatory to the Rome Statute, the treaty that established the ICC, and, as such, does not recognise its authority, and neither does the US. Normally, that would mean the court could not investigate Israel; however, its jurisdiction extends to crimes committed by a member state or on the territory of one of its member states, of which Palestine is one, having joined by request of the Palestinian Authority in 2015.

As such, the court has the power to investigate grave crimes and issue arrest warrants against anyone –

including Israeli soldiers and officials – implicated in perpetrating atrocities in the West Bank or Gaza. According to Israeli news outlets, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Defence Minister Yoav Gallant and army chief Herzi Halevi could all be hit with arrest warrants in the coming days, which could significantly impact their political and military careers. Netanyahu said last week on social media that Israel would "never accept any attempt by the ICC to undermine its inherent right of self-defence".

Legal experts speaking to Al Jazeera believe that any indictments would be related to Israel's policy of weaponising food to starve civilians in Gaza and Hamas's decision to take Israelis captive during their surprise attacks on October 7. "These two charges are the easiest to trace up to the senior leadership [of both parties]," said Adil Haque, a professor of law at Rutgers University in New Jersey. Israel's war on Gaza has killed nearly 35,000 Palestinians, left the enclave on the verge of famine and uprooted nearly all of the more than two million people who live there.

Israel has defended its conduct in

the war under the pretext of self-defence after the Hamas-led October 7 attacks on southern Israel led to the deaths of 1,139 people and the capture of about 250. Israel has since faced accusations of genocide at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the highest United Nations court, which, like the ICC, is based in The Hague. Experts believe ICC indictments could further undermine the legitimacy of Israel's war on Gaza and complicate its exceptional relationship with European allies who are members of the Rome Statute.

"This would be a huge moment for the ICC itself, for Israel and just as importantly for Israel's allies," said Hugh Lovatt, a senior policy fellow and expert on Israel-Palestine with the European Council for Foreign Relations. "It would clearly be seen as further stigmatising Israel ... for its actions in Gaza." Of the three people seen as potential subjects for ICC arrest warrants, Netanyahu would face the largest dilemma. He is already fighting for his political survival as he stands trial on corruption charges and for the security failures that allowed the October 7 attacks. As head of state, he could be barred

from visiting the European Union, where all member states are theoretically required to arrest him as part of their obligations under the Rome Statute.

"There are 120 members of the [ICC] who in principle would be obligated to arrest them if they stepped foot in those countries, and there is an argument that any country – even if they are not party to the court – could arrest them," Haque said. Israel claims to have the "most moral army in the world" and Palestinians are a "stateless mass of unorganised, violent people that attacks Israel unjustifiably", said Alonso Gurmendi Dunkelberg, an expert in international law and a lecturer at King's College London.

"Israel's whole narrative ... of the conflict is at risk," Dunkelberg added. "When you start chipping at the edges of the debate, you will find [Israel] is at the ICJ being sued for genocide ... and then you add the ICC. Eventually at some point, [Israel's] narrative starts to really weaken." ICC arrest warrants against Israeli officials could have stark implications for Israel's European allies, who would be forced to balance their exceptional

relationship with Israel with their ostensible support of the international rights-based order, according to Lovatt. "European countries supported the ICC arrest warrant against [Russian President] Vladimir Putin [for atrocities in Ukraine], ... so how can they come out and suddenly oppose or criticise an ICC indictment on Israeli officials?" he asked.

"If they shield Israel from international accountability yet again, then it will further underscore – in the eyes of many other countries in the Global South – that the West is engaged in this obvious game of double standards, and that will undermine ... the international legal order." Dunkelberg added that there is a possibility that close Israeli allies who also have commitments to the ICC, such as France, Germany and the United Kingdom may refuse to arrest indicted Israeli leaders who visit their countries. Such a move would be damaging to the global credibility of the court, but it would not be unprecedented. In 2009, the ICC indicted Omar al-Bashir, Sudan's former president, for war crimes, but African states refused to comply with the ICC's arrest warrant. — Aljazeera

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Trump's legal woes increase

NEW YORK Judge Juan Merchan on Monday fined former US President Donald Trump \$9,000 on nine counts of violating the gag order that the court had imposed on Trump in the “hush money” case. The violations were brought to the notice of the court by the prosecution team. These were statements that Trump had made on his social media platform Truth Social.

The judge warned that he could send Trump to prison if there were further violations. Trump had pleaded that some of the statements were not made by him at all. Merchan said, “Defendant is hereby warned that the Court will not tolerate wilful violations of its lawful orders and that if necessary and appropriate under the circumstances it will impose an incarceration punishment.” The judge also said that the \$9,000 fine was the maximum fine he could impose under the law. The former president has been facing a tough courtroom situation ever since the trial began nearly a fortnight ago. Judge Merchan had insisted that Trump be present in the court during the trial though Trump had wanted to be away on the campaign trail. The New York trial is one of the four cases that Trump is facing, which includes his role in the January 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol by an irate crowd of his supporters.

Trump's trial in New York would be a test case for Trump, for his Republican party whether he could be nominated as a presidential candidate with all the legal troubles surrounding him. The former president and the Grand Old Party (GOP) seem to believe that the cases against him in the courts would garner sympathy for him. Trump, and partly his supporters in the party, have been arguing that these are politically motivated cases pursued by his Democrat opponents in the legal sphere. It is a fact that the attorneys pursuing the cases against Trump are Democrats because in the American system the legal positions of state attorneys are through elections and mostly along party lines.

There is little doubt that Trump has a solid block of supporters, going beyond the traditional Republican voters, and that they could see Trump as a political victim of the ruthless politics of liberals in America.

The ordinary, conservative American voter, which includes the white, undereducated, rural, working class person, is an ardent supporter of Trump. On the other hand, the college-educated, professional voter, which includes white, Latino, Black, Asian person, is more likely a Democrat supporter. The fight between Trump and Democrats' presumptive nominee, President Joe Biden, is not just a political battle. It is a social and cultural battle as well along well-defined ideological lines. The US Supreme Court is hearing an appeal by Trump where his lawyers are arguing that as a former president he was immune from prosecution on any legal count. Trump's argument is that it necessary to honour the office of the highest executive on the land. The Supreme Court, which has three of the justices nominated by Trump during his presidential term, will have a tough task on their hands. The conservatives are in a majority in the court, and it is possible through legal interpretation to justify Trump's claim for immunity. It is one of the rare occasions that the American presidential contest is passing through the courtrooms, from the Supreme Court to the trial court in New York. Though Biden is marginally ahead of Trump in the popularity ratings, Trump's electoral support is not to be underestimated. His position will be endangered only when a conviction verdict emerges from any of the four cases. Trump appears unfazed but it has to be seen whether it will last through the legal trials.

Miscalculation leads to crisis

“Gradually, then suddenly,” replies a character in Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, on being asked how he went bankrupt. Something to that effect has just been experienced by Scotland's first minister, Humza Yousaf, who stood down on Monday after seeing his political currency dwindle to zero in a matter of days.

Less than a week after ending the Scottish National party's pact with the Scottish Greens, which gave him his majority in Holyrood, Mr Yousaf fell on his sword after discovering that no viable plan B was available that included him at the helm. As he frankly admitted on Monday during an emotional press conference, Mr Yousaf grievously miscalculated in believing it would be possible to unexpectedly bin the cooperation agreement with the Greens, summarily dismiss the party's co-leaders from his government, and then rely on their support for an SNP-minority administration. It was an inept piece of brinkmanship from a politician who, while clearly a decent man, has not convincingly navigated his party through ever-choppier waters following the resignation of Nicola Sturgeon last February.

Mr Yousaf will now stay on while the SNP seeks to appoint its third leader in 18 months. The newcomer will aim to rebuild the trust forfeited so recklessly last week, and lead a minority government into Holyrood elections in 2026. But after a period of near-complete hegemony lasting the best part of two decades, this latest bout of self-inflicted drama comes against a wider backdrop of serious political turbulence for the SNP. Amid a cost of living crisis, and with independence now seen as a medium-term aspiration rather than an immediate goal, its approach to domestic politics has risked being underpowered on some bread-and-butter issues and overly performative on others. The departing first minister's doomed attempt to reset his government was intended to preempt a revolt by the Greens over the scrapping of environmental targets. That followed a damaging assessment by the climate change committee, suggesting that the groundwork had not been done to achieve them. On core competencies such as education and public health – in relation to drug misuse, for example – there is considerable room for improvement after 17 years of SNP-led government. Meanwhile the Scottish government's gender recognition reform bill – vetoed by Westminster – and its hate crime laws, which came into force this month, triggered high-profile culture wars that have alienated some key constituencies. Most seriously of all, the embezzlement charges brought this month against Ms Sturgeon's husband, Peter Murrell, have inflicted lasting reputational damage that will cast a deep shadow over the coming general election. Clearly, these accumulated problems cannot simply be laid at the departing first minister's door. Mr Yousaf won the SNP leadership by presenting himself as the continuity candidate following Ms Sturgeon's resignation. It was his misfortune that the past became a liability destined to haunt his brief period in office. His own departure reinforces the sense that an important inflection point in Scottish politics is being reached, 25 years after devolution was first introduced. According to polls, Labour is on course to make significant gains in Scotland when Rishi Sunak finally goes to the country.

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Pak lunar Probe to launch soon...



International support for Palestinian Christians in short supply

Ray Hanania

NOT enough is being done to support Christians in the Arab world, particularly those who are under siege by Israel.

This topic only comes up a few times each year, during the Orthodox religious holidays, which fall on different dates from other “mainstream” Christian churches because of their differing calendars. Although most Christians celebrated Easter on March 31, for example, Orthodox Christians will celebrate it this Sunday.

Labels do not really mean much, of course, except in Israel, where people are segregated based on their religion. If you are Jewish and recognized as such, Israel's government gives you more benefits and rights than it does to non-Jews who have Israeli citizenship.

In Israel, the proportion of the population made up of Christians has dropped from 2.9 percent to 1.9 percent over the past 75 years in the face of the inherent discrimination that exists against them and Muslims alike. Although the total number of Christians in Israel continues to increase slightly each year, that is not because Israel's discrimination has eased up.

For example, Israel has locked my family's land — 38 dunums adjacent to the illegal settlement of Gilo between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Israeli officials have told me directly that I will never be able to secure that land, no matter what legal documents I acquire, because I am not Jewish.

The intensity of the discrimination against non-Jews varies, depending on whether or not you accept Israel's policies and stay quiet or if you protest too loudly. Those who protest often find themselves apprehended and held in so-called administrative detention, which means they can be imprisoned indefinitely without

charge. B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, reports that there were 1,310 Palestinian civilians being held in administrative detention just before the Hamas attack in October last year. There are now more than 3,600. Most of them are Muslim,

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but there are many Christian Palestinians too. There may be far more detainees than reported because, in 2020, the Israeli Prison Service stopped providing the data to B'Tselem, knowing that it exposed a dark, sinister and illegal side of Israel's government.

Essentially, the imprisoned Palestinians are political hostages who are denied their legal rights.

They are held for periods of up to six months, which are easily renewable. Their situation is no different than that of the Israelis who were taken hostage by Hamas on Oct. 7. So, why does the world seem to care about the Jewish hostages but not the Palestinian ones? The

same reason there is no concern about the violence and abuses committed against Christians among Western governments that represent overwhelmingly Christian populations and that should be concerned for them.

Most people in the West fail to even recognize the existence of Arab

da lies are Muslim.

During the ongoing Israeli violence in Gaza, several Christian churches have been damaged or destroyed. Of the approximately 2 million Palestinians in Gaza, about 1,000 are Christian. They have been suffering along with the Muslims under Israel's decades-long oppressive occupation and siege. It is very difficult to get information on the status of the Christian community and their churches in Gaza. Israel does not permit independent media into Gaza to cover the conflict. It only allows embedded, usually pro-Israel, journalists to accompany the army on very few select missions.

But some stories are slipping through Israel's tight censorship. On Oct. 19, Israeli forces attacked the Greek Orthodox Church of St. Porphyrius, the third-oldest church in the world, killing 16 of its parishioners and injuring dozens more. Also during Israel's war on Gaza, the Gaza Baptist Church, which was established by Southern Baptists in Gaza City in 1954, was heavily damaged and two parishioners at the Holy Family Roman Catholic Church, a mother and her daughter, were shot dead by Israeli snipers.

Very few stories about the catastrophe facing Christians in Gaza, amid the massacres of Muslims, have made it to the front pages of mainstream American newspapers. That might explain why no major Christian organizations have spoken out against the Israeli attacks.

This Orthodox Easter, I will pray for the safety not only of Christian Palestinians in Gaza and in the West Bank, where settler violence has spiked and continues to escalate, but for all of the Palestinians in Gaza. I wonder how many other American so-called Christians will do the same.

Is the UAE's Digital Strategy 2025 enough

Ehtesham Shahid

THE frantic and glitzy cyberworld has a frightening underbelly. Anyone doubting the threat lurking in digital interaction and transactions should look at these local numbers. The UAE's public sector admittedly faces around 50,000 cyber-attack efforts daily. The country averted over 71 million attempted cyberattacks in the first three quarters of last year, and 87 per cent of companies in the UAE have faced different forms of cyber incidents, 25 per cent caused by deliberate malicious behaviour by employees.

While that samples the threat, it is not about one country or another. All countries are equally vulnerable, even though affluence and connectivity could make some countries more attractive to attackers than others. As the UAE positions itself as a global hub for business and innovation, it is understandably spearheading digital transformation that brings its own set of challenges, particularly in cybersecurity. Unfortunately, the swift pace of digital adoption also piques the interest of increasingly sophisticated cybercriminals, highlighting vulnerabilities within the system. Governed by the ambitious UAE Digital Government Strategy 2025, the nation is laying down a vision for an inclusive, digital-first future. This strategy incorporates 64 digital initiatives spread across six pillars, promising to redefine public services through the Unified Digital Platform and aim for smart, resilient cities, such as under the Smart Dubai 2021 Strategy. However, a strategy only suffices once all the stakeholders commit to combat the challenge.

The rapid expansion of technologies such as cloud computing, operational technology, and artificial intelligence broadens the attack surface, offering cyber criminals more opportunities to exploit. As the nation integrates these advanced technologies, it faces the complexities of integration and data security concerns, requiring a robust digital governance framework that is both inclusive and resilient. As a global hub, the UAE also has to manage the risks associated with cross-border data flows, including compliance with international data protection regulations. The UAE's strategy commits to inclusivity, ensuring that digital government initiatives leave no one behind. This includes adopting open processes and focusing on accessibility for all groups, especially the elderly, people with disabilities, women, and children. Under the resilience dimension, the UAE aims to leverage emerging technologies to anticipate and proactively respond to crises. This involves creating more robust government operations and educating the public and businesses about cybersecurity risks and best practices.

The strategy also promotes cross-sectoral collaboration and sets national digital priorities. It requires deep integration of digital technologies at all government levels. With a focus on user-

driven services, the UAE strategy emphasizes the importance of designing digital services around people's needs, enhancing engagement and convenience. Digital transformation is mandated across all policy processes, with ongoing experimentation to align with rapid technological advancements.

The data-driven dimension recognises the value of data in enhancing public services. However, managing this data securely and ethically is paramount to prevent breaches and ensure public trust. The strategy's emphasis on proactiveness, facilitated by technologies like the UAE National Digital ID, aims to streamline interactions with government services. This reduces bureaucratic hurdles and necessitates advanced security measures to safeguard against identity theft and unauthorised access.

The overarching objectives of the UAE digital strategy include providing world-class digital infrastructure and integrated services designed to meet user needs. The commitment to raising digital skills and ensuring legislative readiness for digital transformation is crucial. However, achieving these objectives requires a comprehensive cybersecurity framework that keeps pace with digital advancements to mitigate risks effectively.

While the UAE's Digital Strategy 2025 lays a robust foundation for a digital future, it also requires a parallel enhancement in cybersecurity measures. Addressing the shortage of skilled cybersecurity professionals and advancing the current digital infrastructure to defend against and withstand sophisticated cyberattacks are imperative. Only then can the UAE hope to secure its digital transformation ambitions against the ever-evolving landscape of cyber threats.

The strategy aims to transform the country into a world leader in digital economy, innovation, and government services. However, like any ambitious digital transformation strategy, it faces challenges, particularly regarding cybersecurity. The strategy will need to evolve to address the growing cybersecurity needs to ensure that the digital advancements it promotes do not become vulnerabilities. Establishing and continuously updating a comprehensive cybersecurity framework that defines standards, practices, and responses to cyber threats goes a long way in achieving this objective.

The UAE's strategy must continue to develop robust cybersecurity frameworks to protect against increasing cyber threats. This includes technological solutions and regulatory and legal frameworks that can adapt to new types of cyber threats, which evolve rapidly, and strategies need to be dynamic to respond effectively.

The UAE's proactive stance in regularly updating its cybersecurity strategies and collaborating internationally is vital to mitigating these risks alongside ongoing vigilance and improvement.

China's tourism industry on way to full recovery

Yang Jinsong

THERE have been strong signs since last year suggesting the tourism sector is on way to full recovery. Passenger trips within the country in 2023 increased to 4.89 billion, 93.3 percent more than the previous year, with domestic travelers spending 4.91 trillion yuan (\$691.2 billion), up 140.3 percent year-on-year, according to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

The huge domestic tourism market has been helping stabilize the global tourism industry as well as driving its growth. The number of tourists in China has been continuously increasing over the past four decades, with domestic passenger trips jumping from less than 500 million in the 1980s to more than 6 billion in 2019 at an average annual growth of about 10 percent.

China boasts both one of the world's largest inbound tourism markets and a massive domestic tourist industry, which has been fast recovering after the COVID-19 pandemic. Official data show that during the eight-day Spring Festival holidays in February, 474 million

domestic passenger trips were made, up 34.3 percent year-on-year, with the total domestic tourism spending increasing 47.3 percent year-on-year to about 632.69 billion yuan. Also, about 119 million domestic passenger trips were made during the three-day Qingming Festival holiday earlier this month, an increase of 11.5 percent over the same period in 2019, with the domestic tourism industry's revenue reaching 53.95 billion yuan, up 12.7 percent compared with the same period in 2019.

A large number of Chinese tourists have traveled or are willing to travel abroad this year, while other countries are learning from China's innovative development model to make their tourism industries more resilient. For example, barbecue in Zibo, Shandong province; malatang, a soup containing boiled meat and vegetables seasoned with mouthwatering, spicy scarlet chili oil, in Tianshui, Gansu province; and the ice-snow tourism festival in Harbin, Heilongjiang province, all have boosted domestic tourism. Their sound infrastructure, clean image and excellent public

services have attracted even foreign internet influencers.

The huge domestic tourism market and supporting industries are China's advantages, and they have accumulated rich experiences which the global tourism industry can reference. China's tourism industry is treading the right path to optimize the tourism products, promoting the high-quality development of tourist destinations and developing new tourism formats.

China's inbound and outbound tourism sectors both have performed well this year. During the Spring Festival holidays, Chinese people made 3.6 million outbound trips, close to the 2019 level. And while the number of outbound passenger trips could reach 130 million this year and inbound tourist footfalls could recover to 50 percent of the 2019 level, the inbound tourism markets of the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions and the Taiwan island province are expected to make fast recovery, according to the China Tourism Academy.

Therefore, it can be safely said that China's tourism

industry is on way to full recovery and is injecting new impetus into the global tourism industry. China's tourism industry shares with the rest of the world its development opportunities and strives to promote the development of a more open, more cooperative and higher-quality tourism market. For example, many tourist destinations across the world have benefited from Chinese tourists, as the swelling numbers of Chinese tourists in other countries have helped create more jobs and boost people-to-people exchanges.

The Chinese government has been taking measures to boost the tourism sector, for example, by encouraging Chinese nationals to visit foreign countries, which incidentally will help the global tourism industry to recover.

The fact that an increasing number of Chinese tourists visited countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative in 2023 means more Belt and Road countries benefiting from the growth of China's tourism market.

Besides, China's high-quality opening-up requires high-quality cooperation

and exchanges among countries, which tourism readily provides. Since the second half of last year, China has been introducing plans to make travel for foreign tourists easier. In July, China resumed visa-free entry for the citizens of Singapore and Brunei. From December, French, German, Italian, Malaysian, Dutch and Spanish nationals can get a 15-day visa-free entry into China for business, tourism, family visit and transit purposes.

Also, from March 14 this year, China has granted visa-free entry on a trial basis to visitors from Switzerland, Ireland, Hungary, Austria, Belgium and Luxembourg. Before that, in January, the National Immigration Administration introduced five new measures to facilitate foreigners' entry into the country, which include relaxation of port visa application requirements and provisions of visa extension, providing replacement and issuance services at local immigration departments for foreign nationals visiting or staying in China for non-diplomatic, non-official purposes, such as trade, investment or entrepreneurship or for visiting relatives.

Moreover, foreign nationals can enjoy 24-hour direct transit without undergoing border checks at nine major airports including those in Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Xiamen and Guangzhou. And while multiple-entry visas are available for foreigners, the requirements for visa have been streamlined for foreigners staying in China.

In addition, the government will launch a series of targeted measures to address existing problems and propel the inbound tourism market. For example, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism said at a news conference in March that it will make it easier for payments at various places such as tourist attractions, cultural and performance venues and star-rated hotels.

The government attaches great importance to people's desire for a better life, which includes good travel experience. The government links this desire with the recovery and sustainable development of the global tourism industry.

The positive impact of the recovery of China's tourism sector will encourage more countries to work together to boost the global tourism industry.

The wrongs and harms of a Roma register in Norway

Solvor Mjøberg Lauritzen

I was trained to be an academic, not a whistleblower. But when I found out that the Norwegian police had put together a register of Roma people, a national minority in Norway, I had no choice but to bring it to public and legal scrutiny.

I first saw the “family tree” of Norwegian Roma people put together by police officers in a meeting I was invited to about crime prevention work in Oslo in the fall of 2023. The police officers wanted to expand their knowledge about Roma people and had invited me as I had worked with Roma-related issues in my research. I photographed the “family tree” and, suspecting that there was a register behind the graphics, accepted an invitation to a follow-up meeting with the police officers who presented it.

My suspicion was correct. In the follow-up meeting, an officer showed me the register on his computer and explained how he had created it. The register includes 14 people facing charges in ongoing criminal cases, 74 who are their close relatives and 567 other people. The register even includes Holocaust survivors, deceased people as well as Roma children.

I recorded the meeting and took notes, thus securing proof. Based on the recording and the family tree photo, investigative journalists at the Norwegian newspaper Aftenposten released a report last month revealing the existence of the Roma register to the Norwegian public.

Keeping registers of citizens based on their ethnic and racial background is illegal in Norway, which is itself reason enough for the Norwegian authorities to act on this revelation. But the history of police registration of Roma in the country and its tragic consequences adds to the gravity of this violation.

From ethnic registration to Auschwitz-Birkenau

In the early 1920s, the Norwegian authorities launched a campaign to register all Roma people in the country, who numbered no more than 150 at that time. In parallel, they also started denying members of the group Norwegian citizenship and made their Norwegian identification papers invalid, rendering them stateless.

A new “G*psy clause” of the Norwegian Alien Act that prevented the Roma from obtaining Norwegian citizenship was adopted unanimously by parliament in 1927. There was consensus from the extreme right to the extreme left that Roma people were unwanted in the country. Thus, Norway was able to declare itself “G*psy free” long before the Nazis occupied the country in the 1940s.

These harsh policies allowed for the Norwegian Roma to be pushed out of the country. As stateless individuals, many were unable to secure legal stays in other countries, and they kept getting deported from place to place. In the 1940s, many of them were rounded up and sent to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp complex in Nazi-occupied Poland. Of those deported to the camps, only four survived.

After the war, some of the surviving Norwegian Roma tried to go back to the country but were prevented by the “G*psy clause” of the Alien Act. Four of them led a years-long battle on behalf of the community to regain their citizenship rights and were only allowed to return in 1956 after the clause was repealed.

This was a largely silenced chapter in Norwegian history until Maria Rosvoll, Lars Lien and Jan Alexander Brustad, scholars at the Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies, published a report about it in 2015. This led to an apology from the Norwegian prime minister, and the descendants of the Holocaust survivors were given a collective compensation. That the Norwegian police were aware of this historical background was obvious to me as they used the report’s photos of Holocaust survivors in their meticulous mapping of the Roma people in Norway.

A broad consensus to register Roma

The idea that it is necessary to keep registers of Roma people is a historically rooted practice. In 1932, the predecessor of Interpol, the International Criminal Police Commission (ICPC) established an international “G*psy centre” in Vienna to centralise the exchange of information about Roma people.

In 1934, a permanent committee was formed to support the “G*psy centre” and what it called “a fight against the G*psy plague”. In the same year, the ICPC had an outspoken goal to carry out registration of all individuals who were racially defined as “G*psies” or living a “G*psy lifestyle”.

Historian Jan Selling’s research has shown that the Roma were the only ethnic group that was singled out in this way by the ICPC and there was a broad consensus among Nazi and non-Nazi police chiefs in Europe in their view of the Roma as “hereditary criminals”. Despite this fact, there has been a lack of interest among European police organisations in confronting this part of history, indicating that there is an ideological and operative continuity in European policing since the 1940s.

Norway clearly followed up on the ICPC’s intentions to register all Roma. In addition to the

Norwegian Roma, the minority known as Travellers (Romanifolk/tatere) were also registered by the police in 1927.

These practices continued even after the end of World War II as the presence of such registers in the National Archive reveals. Some of them were extensive and included information such as current names, dates of birth, social security numbers, passport numbers, photos, occupations, places of residence and kinships.

These registers were not closed down even after legislation was passed in Norway restricting the legality of registering ethnic and racial belonging in 1978.

There is, in other words, every reason to believe that registration of Roma and Travellers (Romanifolk/tatere) has taken place continuously in Norway for the past 100 years. The comprehensive registration practices suggests that Norwegian authorities see criminality as “hereditary” to Roma people.

Therefore, the recent disclosure of a Roma registry should infuriate but not surprise us.

‘Does the police have my name?’

When I left the police office where I had witnessed the ethnic register, I struggled to breathe. I was furious, but I also felt scared. Given that I am not a Roma individual and that neither I nor my family are in the register, I could not even imagine how Roma people would feel about this disclosure.

The news, of course, received strong reactions from the Norwegian Roma. One of their greatest fears was confirmed. Intergenerational trauma was reactivated. Having experienced state-committed genocide and being hunted by the police, they know what such a register might lead to. Norwegian Roma have told the media that many have considered leaving the country out of fear. Natalina Jansen, leader of the Roma Council in Norway, said in an interview: “You get the same fear that family members had when in 1934 they were refused entry to Norway and the persecution in Europe increased. Panic sets in.” A Roma child I recently met at a meeting about the register looked at me with serious eyes and asked, “Does the police have my name?”

Time for truth and recourse Norway’s brutal treatment of Roma people throughout history has not only directly caused death and trauma for the community, but it has also deprived our country of citizens who should have been part of our society. How Norway would have been with them present, we will never know.

As a Norwegian citizen, I am

grateful that the four Roma individuals at the foundation of the police’s “family tree” fought for their right to return to their home country. And I am grateful that their descendants have stayed in Norway and enriched our society despite an environment that has been largely hostile towards them.

It is time for a serious reckoning to be taken with the racist notion that Roma are more inclined to be criminals than other people. But words are not enough. Action must follow.

A well-formulated and substantive apology from the Norwegian prime minister in 2015 is close to worthless if the Norwegian police, in parallel, continue the practice of registering and racially profiling Roma people behind closed doors.

After the disclosure that Roma had been registered by the police in Sweden in 2013, the government responded by establishing a commission against antigypsyism. This could be a step in the right direction in Norway too. Further action could involve suggestions made by various scholars and community members.

A recent research project by the Centre for European Policy Studies recommends that antigypsyism be more closely monitored and regional and local truth and reconciliation commissions be considered in the European Union.

Given that injustices against Roma are not a closed chapter of history but rather an enduring oppression, scholars Margareta Matache and Jacqueline Bhabha have suggested a programme for reparatory justice that goes beyond truth-telling and apology to include offender accountability, restitution, reparative compensation, and new and stronger legal protections.

The Roma in Norway have repeatedly pleaded with Norway to take historical responsibility. Safira Josef and others have requested a truth commission, and Solomia Karoli has requested a memorial to the Roma murdered in the Holocaust. Furthermore, in speeches on International Holocaust Day, Josef, Amorina Lund and Palermo Hoff requested an action plan against antigypsyism. Their demands have gone unheard.

The world should now turn their eyes towards Norway. The country was the only one that achieved the goal of being “G*psy free” in the 1930s, and it has now made a complete register of its Roma national minority again. Will Norway take this opportunity to make serious efforts to break with the past? Or will the authorities simply give an empty promise that this will be the last time? The choice Norway will make will show the world where this country stands on justice and anti-racism.

— Aljazeera

EU hopes Egypt partnership can help curb illegal migration

Dr. Abdellatif El-Menawy

In recent years, the issue of illegal immigration has emerged as a significant concern for both Egypt and the EU. With the Mediterranean serving as a primary route for migrants seeking asylum in Europe, Egypt finds itself at the forefront of this complex challenge. However, amid this crisis, there has been a notable effort to bolster cooperation between Cairo and Brussels to mitigate the influx of migrants and ensure more secure borders.

Last month’s EU-Egypt agreement elevated their relationship to a “comprehensive strategic partnership,” emphasizing increased coordination and cooperation in various areas related to immigration, supporting the Egyptian economy and addressing geopolitical concerns. While cooperation between the two parties has existed for several years, the new agreement reflects the EU’s commitment to supporting Egypt in tackling the issue of illegal immigration.

Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, expressed satisfaction with the signing of the cooperation agreement and the strengthening of relations with Egypt during a press conference in Cairo. She said: “Today marks a significant milestone with the signing of the Joint Declaration for a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.”

Von der Leyen led a European delegation that visited Cairo on March 17, including leaders from Italy, Belgium, Austria, Greece and Cyprus. During this visit, agreements worth 7.4 billion (\$7.9 billion) were signed by Von der Leyen and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi.

The EU-Egypt agreement aims to enhance dialogue between the two parties and support economic reform in Egypt. Under this framework, the EU will provide Cairo with loans worth 5 billion in the period to 2027, investments totaling 1.8 billion in areas such as digitization and energy transformation, and grants amounting to 600 million. Additionally, cooperation in combating terrorism and immigration has been agreed, with a focus on addressing the root causes of illegal immigration, while facilitating legal migration to Europe. Some 200 million will be allocated to managing migration issues.

Since 2004, an association agreement has governed the

relationship between Egypt and the EU. According to the European Commission, 171 million has been approved to date to manage the migration file, support Egypt in border management, combating human trafficking and smuggling, and encouraging the voluntary return of migrants.

Concerns about increased migration to Europe have prompted the signing of the new agreement with Egypt, with Brussels viewing cooperation with Cairo as more effective in controlling migration than with other countries. It is noteworthy that this is not the first agreement of its kind signed by the EU with a Mediterranean country, as agreements have also been signed with Tunisia and Mauritania in recent years.

European leaders believe that the Egyptian government can implement stricter controls to minimize the number of boats departing the country.

They argue that Egypt’s security capabilities enable it to effectively control its borders and ensure there are no outlets for illegal migration.

The EU’s decision to sign this agreement is driven by valid geopolitical reasons. Cooperation with Egypt is seen as essential in preventing a geopolitical vacuum that could be exploited by other countries that have interests in the Mediterranean, such as Russia and China.

For Egypt, cooperation with the EU represents one facet of its broad range of collaborative agreements. This particular accord, which is primarily economic in nature, signifies the EU’s recognition of Egypt’s pivotal role in addressing immigration challenges. The essence of the agreement lies in achieving stability within Egypt. While Cairo has made strides in managing migration, economic hurdles persist, highlighting the critical need for financial assistance.

Furthermore, Egypt holds significant geostrategic importance for the EU, serving as a linchpin for security and stability in the region. Von der Leyen praised El-Sisi’s personal efforts to broker a ceasefire in Gaza during her visit to Cairo. However, some human rights organizations and activists express reservations about these agreements, citing the lack of explicit provisions addressing human rights violations or the accountability of recipients.

ient countries for EU funds.

They accuse the EU of prioritizing halting illegal migration at any cost, potentially overlooking the plight of migrants.

These agreements encompass various areas of cooperation, ranging from trade to clean energy initiatives to migration management. European leaders view them as instrumental in addressing the surge of migrants into Europe. Frontex, the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders, reported another increase in illegal migration rates to EU countries last year, reaching the highest level since 2016.

According to the International Organization for Migration, Egypt hosts nearly 9 million migrants and refugees, including 4 million Sudanese and 1.5 million Syrians. This influx places immense strain on Egypt’s economy, particularly given declining revenues from key sources like tourism, remittances and revenues from the Suez Canal, exacerbated by global economic downturns.

Efforts to alleviate Egypt’s foreign currency crisis appear promising, with development projects underway in the Ras El-Hikma area and the announcement of an \$8 billion financing agreement with the International Monetary Fund. El-Sisi emphasized Egypt’s commitment to curbing illegal migration during a summit with the prime ministers of Greece and Cyprus in 2020, affirming that Egypt pursues this goal based on its own capabilities and moral obligations, refraining from leveraging the issue for financial or political gain.

The partnership between Egypt and the EU presents significant opportunities to comprehensively and sustainably address the multifaceted issue of illegal migration. By pooling their strengths and resources, both parties can strive to create a safer, more prosperous and more humane environment for migrants and host communities alike.

Recognizing the imperative of addressing the root causes of illegal migration, officials on both sides emphasize the importance of enhancing economic development, fostering job opportunities and promoting social stability in migrant-prone areas. Investments in education, vocational training and infrastructure projects are deemed essential components of this holistic approach.

Will a new embassy mean a new approach for the US in Libya?

Hafed Al-Ghwel

In Libya’s fractured political and security landscape, the evolution of hybrid armed groups into near quasi-state actors has become a significant challenge obstructing the nation’s progress toward stability, security and sovereignty.

A convoluted dynamic is now the norm, whereby nonstate actors are firmly welded to what remains of Libya’s still functioning institutions, creating new political economies that thrive on a predatory governance model that is detrimental to the fabric of Libyan society. This strange mesh of political leadership, financial systems, transnational organized crime and heavily armed groups with foreign backing now ties any prospects of a promising Libyan future to the almost impossible task of dismantling these groups and the political economies that sustain them.

Hybrid groups in Libya have morphed into complex entities with vertically integrated operations that span from imposing tolls on urban streets to divvying up national resources — embedding themselves deeper within the country’s sociopolitical fabric. The political process in Libya, marred by division and inertia, often appears as a facade, with the real power dynamics being dictated by bargains between these groups and political elites. Such arrangements not only disenfranchise the Libyan populace but also cement the authority of these actors, making the transition toward a functioning state increasingly unreachable.

The timid return of the US to Libya with a new ambassador, after many years of failures, can be a positive step to at least a limited extent, given the major mistakes Washington has made in Libya over the past few years, such as engaging with and giving legitimacy to some of the worst characters that emerged after the fall of Muammar Qaddafi. The pending withdrawal of more than 1,000 US personnel from Niger, reports of a series of shipments of advanced Russian hardware to Tobruk and even the establishment of Russian military bases in the Eastern part of Libya might have caused some panic and a few sleepless nights across the Atlantic. By returning to Libya, the US will be able to put diplo-

matic boots on the ground, so to speak, which may help it make some serious headway in countering the existing and emerging threats, if only to safeguard American strategic interests in the Southern Mediterranean.

So, how can Washington succeed in, for instance, countering Russia’s deepening influence in eastern Libya and the likelihood of Western “over the horizon” counterterrorism operations going “blind” in parts of the Sahel? The US must take an active role in steering political and diplomatic activity toward rebuilding the collapsed Libyan state, rather than its repeated policy failures of trying to arrange a compromise between the thuggish forces that created this ever-expanding mafia state.

As such, a reengaged US policy toward Libya must also prioritize the dismantling of Libya’s corrosive political economies, which are central to the power and influence of its armed non-state groups. This endeavor is indispensable for slowing Libya’s fragmentation and energizing efforts toward unified governance.

Until then, however, Libya’s political impasse will persist, driven by a mafia-like ruling elite that prioritizes power and money over the populace and a financial system that is disproportionately reliant on oil revenues, which creates an endless cycle of opaque wealth distribution favoring the elites. The morass of semiofficial, mostly state-funded, hybrid groups — benefiting from state privileges while exerting mafia-like territorial control — remains the greatest barrier to any meaningful progress, state rebuilding and security sector reform.

For more than a decade, these groups have enjoyed unchecked expansion. Not only have their numbers grown exponentially, but US diplomats and military officials have also injected them with credibility through public meetings and photo opportunities showing America’s officials smiling while standing next to the worst of Libya’s thuggish spoilers and mafia leaders.

Washington’s strategy must therefore prioritize the dismantling of these economies through a multifaceted approach that

includes encouraging transparent, equitable financial systems to cut off the flow of oil revenues to armed groups. There must also be robust support for nontraditional interventions that can quickly offer viable alternatives to discredited militia membership and foster inclusive political dialogue.

The inclusion of the Libyan populace in the political process — even through holding referendums in the absence of an ability to hold elections — is not merely a democratic ideal but a strategic necessity for degrading the influence of hybrid actors. The widespread mistrust in state institutions and political developments is a direct consequence of a system that allows criminal political elites to escape punishment and that simply benefits these exclusionary elites, leaving the broader population marginalized. Encouraging genuine decentralization and local governance would empower communities and create a bulwark against the resurgence of militia-based power.

Recognizing the pivotal role of security sector reform in paving the way for effective governance in Libya, there has been an intense discourse among policymakers and analysts over the prospects for the successful implementation of reforms specific to the Libyan context. Yet, despite extensive deliberation, strategic missteps have plagued attempts at reform, such as an overreliance on so-called train and equip programs, which have failed to address the need for sustainable and holistic strategies. Such initiatives, undercut by a shortsightedness that prioritizes quick fixes over the foundational restructuring of Libya’s security apparatus, remain insufficient for long-term stability.

Furthermore, within Libya, officials have engaged in superficial restructurings of security-related ministries, driven by internal power dynamics rather than a comprehensive vision — all a byproduct of those malignant militia-state dynamics. Those decisions only deliver the facade of reform, yet systematically undermine genuine progress while purporting to contribute to security sector reform.

Libya’s security sector is still growing to this day — drawing recruits into a mix of state-affiliated and nonstate militias — meaning the need for interventions cannot be deferred until a nebulous “post-conflict” scenario crystallizes. Instead, the US and its Western partners must draw inspiration from the Democratic Republic of the Congo’s more proactive and comprehensive “next-generation disarmament, demobilization and reintegration,” which is well suited to the Libya scenario.

This model, unlike its predecessors, does not await peace agreements and instead initiates action in anticipation of them. Its scope extends beyond piecemeal efforts, integrating activities that align with broader national development aims. Crucially, it functions in tandem with security sector reform, transitional justice and state-rebuilding initiatives. This approach recognizes the dismantling of Libya’s hybrid groups not as a static program but as a fluid political process, one which is acutely attuned to localized contexts.

It is through these initiatives, continuously adapted to the Libyan sociopolitical dynamics, that the US can reengage in a meaningful and credible way. A renewed focus on underpinning long-term solutions over short-term illusionary gains — and recognizing these efforts as inherently political and intertwined with the overarching objectives of national unity and development — would be groundbreaking. Strategic US participation, in concert with international partners, would also help de-incentivize and disassemble the hybrid groups entrenched within Libya’s political and economic sphere, thereby advancing the country toward the dissolution of political gridlocks and the restoration of its sovereignty.

Only by tackling these underlying issues can the US hope to contribute to a stable and unified Libya, where governance and economic opportunities are not held hostage by armed factions, some of them even headed by American citizens without any fear of legal consequences in Libya or the US.

— Arab News

A promise of life

Aysha Taryam

Looking back at certain moments in history we see the human race experiencing shifts that forever altered the course of the future. The books tell of a great many advancements that have propelled the world forward and some that have wreaked unimaginable havoc.

At this moment in time our world is encountering many such shifts all at once. The human race seems to have conquered many of its inadequacies and fulfilled its quest in subduing its fears, it has worked tirelessly to be able to control the uncontrollable. Yet, it seems like one thing remains, the dark shadow looming over all living creatures, the one thing that does not care for any earthly accomplishment acquired, that which puts every single one of us on a level footing, the inevitable cessation of being. Death.

Humans have always faced their fate by attempting to understand and accept their immortality rather than resist it. Philosophers, psychologists and poets agreed that truly knowing oneself occurs when a person comes to terms with the futility of life, that it is the only way to truly appreciate it. Only there are those of us who, consumed with fear, remain defiant of this inevitability and advancements in science have only fuelled our fight against it.

Currently there exists a tech-millionaire entrepreneur named Bryan Johnson who at age 45 decided to dedicate his life to the pursuit of immortality. Billionaires like Jeff Bezos and Mark Zuckerberg have also entered the zone investing millions in longevity research. On the one hand it seems like a noble pursuit that will open doors to much-needed information on human life and aid in its betterment while on the other, one is overwhelmed by the deeper meaning of this well-funded war against the great equalizer. Socrates, Aristotle and Nietzsche conquered the idea of death by concluding that

immortality is a given because the soul is indeed everlasting and separate from the body. The differing religions of the world all agree on such an idea as well, from eternal afterlife to reincarnation most cultures view death as the beginning never the end. Literature warned of immortality as a futile quest that once reached will never bring happiness. The fiction and fantasy genres have given us warnings in the form of José Saramago’s Death with Interruptions where after momentary joy at the disappearance of death immortality suddenly presents unique demographic and financial challenges. And in Bram Stoker’s Dracula if there is one thing to take away from the philosophy of the vampire it is that immortality is a curse, destined to live forever as they watch their loved ones perish, while living a joyless life as the wonderful becomes mundane.

Johnson claims to be spending \$2 million a year to slow his aging process, he has so far succeeded in reversing his biological age by 5 years. Following his journey, one wonders if the cost of such an endeavour is just monetary for Johnson who has since divorced his wife and confessed that he no longer is able to spend his life with a partner because the life he leads is insufferable for another person to share. Alone he wakes up to a strict regimen of gruelling physical and mental routines all the while taking over 100 pills a day. A monotonous life of drugs and clinical experiments have rendered this man almost robotic. One need only to watch his interviews to understand that the toll this experiment has taken on his humanness is a heavy one. His obsession has garnered a following with the Bryan Johnson website’s Don’t Die Community that describes itself as a “decentralized community united in defeating death and building prosperity”; people are invited to join by signing up to a document

that boasts their “war with death” and “building towards an infinite horizon”. The noble endeavour is now seemingly looking more and more like a cultish doctrine; adding insult to injury, Johnson has now released his “Blueprint Stack”, a mix of drinks, pills and therapies, for the small sum of \$343 to the public. Oliver Zolman, the British doctor at the helm of Johnson’s experiment, is also allegedly on the way to capitalizing on this brand opening a chain of rejuvenation clinics. Researching Johnson, one is bombarded with pages upon pages of press-release like articles and interviews that are all praise and astonishment, but a thorough sifting through the marketing reveals articles that show researchers, scientists and stem-cell biologists challenging Johnson’s findings and their effectiveness. This scepticism over whether anyone would willingly live a joyless, redundant life like Johnson’s has forced a rebranding which now aims to portray his way of life as one that is in fact a ‘simple’ one that is adaptable to all.

In the exploitation of societies’ fears there lies a great deal of power and financial gain. The new era of research offers an endless life with no promises of its quality. The greatest flaw in the Don’t Die Community’s thinking is that it assumes that death only comes with age, but death has many forms and appears when it is fated to. To many whose lives have been taken too soon dying of old age is a blessing. The irony remains in some of us seeking to live forever without a thought to the lives that are now being lost, what does longevity mean in the greater scheme of things when at a push of a button or the short end of one’s temper lives can be extinguished. Arab poet Tarafa ibn al-Abd explained that death represents a fundamental value in life, describing death as the cornerstone of human corruption. Indeed, the refusal of death does not necessarily mean the acceptance of life.



SRB tax collection surges 29% to Rs185.2 billion

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Revenue Board (SRB) has collected Rs185.2 billion during the first nine months of fiscal year 2023-24 depicting an increase of 29 percent over the corresponding period of last year.

Chairman SRB Wafiq Memon called on Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Wednesday and briefed him about the revenue collections of the SRB, said a statement

issued here.

The Sindh Revenue Board (SRB) collected a record revenue of Rs185.2 billion during the first nine months of the fiscal year 2023-24 while in the corresponding period of the previous financial year 2022-23, the tax collection stood at Rs143.3 billion, it said adding that the achievement signified a year-on-year growth of 29 percent.

The CM said at the occasion that despite encountering various challenges, including the broader economic slowdown, the SRB has demonstrated resilience and efficiency in revenue collection.

The monthly tax collection by SRB during April 2024 has remained Rs18.8 billion which shows 23 percent growth as compared to tax collection of Rs15.2 billion in April 2023, it said.

Dollar steady and London shares higher

LONDON (AFP/APP): The dollar steadied and London shares were slightly higher in holiday-thinned trading Wednesday as investors awaited clarity on the outlook for US interest rates.

The Federal Reserve is set to keep borrowing costs on hold following a regular policy meeting that winds up later Wednesday but accompanying statements could hint at when cuts may begin, or not.

"Recent concerns around a resurgence in inflation pressures have pushed back the expected rate cuts that had until recently been scheduled to commence next month," noted Joshua Mahony, chief market analyst at Scope Markets.

The dollar, which has gained in recent days against other currencies on interest rate differentials, was largely flat Wednesday as many investors were either away for the May Day holidays or on hold ahead of the Fed's announcements.

Tuesday saw a sharp sell-off on Wall Street after fresh US data dealt another blow to hopes the Fed would reduce borrowing costs this year.

The reading on labour costs followed a string of recent reports out of Washington suggesting the Fed's battle against inflation has some way to go, even with interest rates at two-decade highs.

It has added to the angst among investors leading up to the US central bank's latest policy decision.

Markets could see deeper losses should the Fed assert "a high probability of no cuts this year, or even the open possibility of another hike", said Capital.com analyst Kyle Rodda.

With most Asian and continental European stock markets shut for May Day, London was the only major European exchange open, and the benchmark FTSE 100 stocks index was slightly higher nearing the

half-way stage. New York stock markets will be open Wednesday.

Drugs maker GlaxoSmithKline was up 2 percent in London as it announced progress in final trials of promising new drugs, even as profit fell 23 percent in the first quarter.

In commodities, oil prices slid as hopes for a ceasefire in Gaza rose as top US diplomat Antony Blinken on Tuesday urged Hamas to accept a truce offer.

The Palestinian militant group said it was considering a plan for a 40-day ceasefire and the exchange of scores of hostages for larger numbers of Palestinian prisoners.

Elsewhere, bitcoin sank sharply ahead of the Fed rate decision and following a mixed reception in Hong Kong to the launch of new investment products that track the world's most popular cryptocurrency and its rival ether.

Minister expresses resolve to facilitate labor

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Privatization, Board of Investment and Communications Abdul Aleem Khan on Wednesday reiterated the firm commitment of the government to take appropriate measures to provide maximum facilities to the labor force in the country and to include them in the national mainstream.

In his message on World Labor Day, the Minister said that he salutes the high morale of every hard worker, laborer, and skilled person who is serving this country.

One who is performing his duties even in the most difficult situations is praiseworthy and we must acknowledge such services not only on 1st May but every day, he remarked.

Abdul Aleem Khan said that there is no doubt our labor community has a great share in the country's economic system and keeps it alive and active.

The Minister expressed his good wishes for every laborer living in this country and prayed for their success.

Cotton seminar organized

BAHAWALPUR (APP):

Under the auspices of the Agriculture Department (Extension), Government of Punjab, the mega cotton seminar was held here in Bahawalpur.

The seminar was organized to shed light on the importance of cotton sowing. It was attended by the Secretary, the Agriculture Department, Government of Punjab, the Agriculture Department of Punjab, the mega cotton seminar was held here in Bahawalpur.

Addressing the seminar, the Secretary Agriculture said that cotton was a cash crop, adding that farmers should get financial benefits by sowing cotton. "Agriculture Department (Extension), Government of Punjab has been making efforts to promote IPM model and modern technology in cotton growing," he said.

He said that the Punjab government had given a package for farmers estimated to be billions of rupees. The seminar was informed that cotton would be sowed on 1,869,000 acres of land in Bahawalpur division.

Weak yen boosts tourist wallets

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Foreign tourists are flocking to Japan in record numbers and thanks to a sliding yen many are living like kings, splashing out on everything from kimonos to knives and slap-up meals.

"I bought three pairs of shoes, which is something I would never normally do," French tourist Katia Lelievre, 36, said with a laugh in the bustling Asakusa area of Tokyo famous for its Buddhist temple and souvenir shops.

The brands available in Japan are the same as in Europe -- Converse, Nike and Adidas -- but because of the exchange rate "it was really worth it" to buy, she told AFP. "The food is really cheap. (I spent a lot) especially on food. I tried everything I wanted," Dominique Stabile, 31, visiting from Italy, told AFP.

"I had a budget set and I didn't exceed it, so I'm happy." Local businesses are also benefitting. "A lot of people do the math and when they see the equivalent in their country's currency they say: 'Wow, I'm going to buy that too'," said Saori Iida, who works in a shop selling traditional second-hand Japanese clothes.

"Yesterday, we had someone who bought 15 kimonos," she said. "Thanks to the weak yen, foreign customers are buying a lot of handmade knives, even as prices rise," said Yuki Suzuki, 21, who works in a shop selling knives, another tourist favourite.

"I feel like there are now more customers who want to own sets and buy a little more, for example several blades made by the same craftsman," she told AFP.



KARACHI: Chairman IMARAT Group Shafiq Akbar cutting a ribbon to inaugurate new head office.

IMARAT Group inaugurates new head office

F.P. Report

KARACHI: In a significant stride towards real estate innovation, IMARAT Group proudly inaugurated its new head office, within the tower 1 of Mall of IMARAT. This event marks a notable milestone in the development of IMARAT Downtown.

Shafiq Akbar, Chairman of IMARAT Group, reflected on the significance of this development, saying, "At IMARAT, we're making remarkable strides. Opening our head office in Mall of IMARAT is a clear indication of our progress and firm resolve. This building is at the core of IMARAT Downtown, which integrates residential comfort with commercial prosperity, all within an ecologically friendly design aimed at sustainability."

Farhan Javed, Group Director at Graana.com,

emphasized the innovative aspects of the project: "The launch of our head office signifies more than just physical growth; it represents our commitment to pioneering new standards in real estate. Mall of IMARAT Tower is just the beginning. We are setting the stage for a series of developments that will transform Islamabad's skyline and offer unprecedented amenities."

Sharjeel A. Ehmer, Group Director at Agency21, added, "As part of the larger IMARAT Downtown, Mall of IMARAT serves as a central piece in our vision to create a multifaceted urban hub. It reflects our focus on integrating luxury with accessibility, providing an elite yet inclusive environment for all."

Mall of IMARAT, a cornerstone of the IMARAT Downtown development, is a modern architectural marvel designed to cater to a

diverse range of needs, from luxury living and high-end shopping to business operations and recreational activities. The completion of grey structure of the first tower of Mall of IMARAT and the ongoing construction of Tower 2 highlight the rapid progress of the development. IMARAT Downtown is not just a residential and commercial hub but also a cultural and technological landmark. Its comprehensive planning includes advanced security systems, green parks, and community spaces, ensuring a safe and vibrant environment for all its occupants.

The inauguration of IMARAT Group's new head office is a testament to their dedication to excellence and a preview of the transformative impact IMARAT Downtown is expected to have on Islamabad's urban landscape.

Asian markets track Wall Street down

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian stocks sank in holiday-thinned trade Wednesday, tracking a sharp sell-off on Wall Street after fresh US data dealt another blow to hopes the Federal Reserve will cut interest rates this year.

The reading on labour costs followed a string of recent reports out of Washington suggesting the central bank's battle against inflation has some way to go, even with borrowing costs at two-decade highs.

It also adds to the angst among investors leading up to the Fed's latest policy decision later in the day, which many were already expecting to see officials turn more hawkish.

That will be followed by closely watched non-farm payrolls (NFP) figures that should provide a fresh snapshot of the labour market, which has so far remained resilient to the high rates environment.

Wall Street's three main indexes tanked Tuesday after news that the employment cost index, the Fed's preferred gauge of wage inflation, came in hotter than forecast in the first quarter.

That provided another hammer blow to hopes the Fed will cut rates this year, with bets already reduced to just one by January -- compared with an expected six at the start of 2024. Some are even warning of a possible hike.

Investors ran for the sidelines on the report, which came as another batch of data showed US consumer confidence had tumbled to its lowest level since July 2022.

The wage "data delivers a straightforward message: the US economy isn't showing signs of rapidly slowing inflation", said SPI Asset Management's Stephen Innes.

"These numbers essentially bury any hopes for imminent rate cuts, unless, of course, a significant shift occurs such as a negative (NFP) print. "Overall, this data provides little support for the Fed to consider rate cuts shortly, signalling a need for more convincing evidence to prompt such action."

The negative mood spilled over into Asia, where most markets were closed for a holiday. Tokyo, Sydney and Wellington were all in the red, while London opened slightly higher.

"Public holidays in China and parts of Europe will thin markets slightly, and there's likely to be a level of risk aversion in Asian trade today going into the (Fed) decision," Capital.com analyst Kyle Rodda said.

"If the Fed asserts a high probability of no cuts this year, or even the open possibility of another hike, that could deepen the sell-off in stocks."

The yen edged down but largely stood its ground against the dollar after the volatility of Monday, when it hit a fresh 34-year low against the greenback and then snapped sharply back amid suggestions Japanese authorities intervened in forex markets.

While some stability has returned, traders remain on edge for any

wild movements, with observers warning more were likely owing to the vast difference between the Bank of Japan's loose monetary policy and that of other central banks.

The dollar was also up against sterling and the euro ahead of the Fed decision.

Oil prices slipped on hopes for a ceasefire in Gaza as top US diplomat Antony Blinken on Tuesday urged Hamas to accept a truce offer.

The Palestinian militant group said it was considering a plan for a 40-day ceasefire and the exchange of scores of hostages for larger numbers of Palestinian prisoners.

NZ's average hourly earnings up 5.2 per cent

WELLINGTON (APP): New Zealand's average ordinary time hourly earnings increased by 5.2 percent in the year to the March 2024 quarter, while annual wage cost inflation was 4.1 percent, according to the statistics department Stats NZ on Wednesday.

"Although wage cost inflation eased and average hourly earnings growth started to slow this quarter, annual growth remained high for the two surveys," said Stats NZ business employment insights manager Sue Chapman.

The health care and social assistance industry was a large contributor to the annual increase, Chapman said, adding total average hourly earnings were up 8.1 percent and wage cost inflation was 6.3 percent in this industry.

Over the last decade, men received an increase of 43 percent, and women received an increase of 50 percent to hourly earnings, she said.

Women's average ordinary time hourly earnings rose 6.9 percent in the year to the March 2024 quarter, driven by the health care and social assistance and education and training industries, Stats NZ said.

US Fed likely to keep rates steady

WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): The US Federal Reserve is expected to hold interest rates steady for a sixth straight meeting Wednesday, with a summer start to cuts looking less likely owing to stubborn inflation.

For months, the US central bank has maintained its benchmark lending rate at a 23-year high to cool demand and rein in price increases -- with a slowdown in inflation last year fueling optimism that the first cuts were on the horizon.

But inflation has accelerated, and analysts widely believe the rate-setting

Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) will keep its target range at 5.25 percent to 5.50 percent.

As hope dwindles for rate cuts in the first half of the year, the Fed also faces a growing possibility that eventual reductions will coincide with the run-up to November's presidential election. This could give the economy a boost while Democrats and Republicans vie to win over voters.

The converging timeline may prove uncomfortable given that the Fed, as the independent US central bank, seeks to avoid any appearance of political

cization.

Nevertheless, for Dan North, senior economist at Allianz Trade North America, "there is no chance" the FOMC will cut or raise rates on Wednesday.

Financial markets expected the central bank to begin cuts in June just a few weeks ago, but the most recent inflation reports have "definitely pushed the lift-off date substantially into the future," North said.

"The September meeting now seems like the most likely time for the first cut," he added.

Amazon triples quarterly profit as cloud surges

SAN FRANCISCO (AFP/APP): E-commerce titan Amazon said profit in the first three months of 2024 tripled as its cloud, ads, and retail businesses thrived.

Amazon shares were up more than 3 percent in after-market trades that followed release of the earnings figures, with Wall Street keeping a close eye on the impact of AI.

"It was a good start to the year across the business," Amazon chief executive Andy Jassy said in an earnings release.

The Seattle-based company reported \$10.4 billion in profit on revenue of \$143.3 billion compared with a profit of \$3.2 billion on \$127.4 billion in sales in the same period a year earlier.

lier.

"Amazon opens its new fiscal year with a robust set of numbers that show it has mostly brushed off pressures in the consumer economy," GlobalData managing director Neil Saunders said in a note to investors.

Sales at Amazon online stores grew by 7 percent in the quarter despite competitive pressure from rivals such as Shein and Temu, according to Saunders.

"Our customer data still shows that Amazon is a focal point for those consumers wanting value for money and convenience," Saunders said.

"We also believe that Prime members are leaning more heavily into Amazon to maximize value from

their subscriptions."

Growth in online store sales indicated last year's turnaround at Amazon's e-commerce business is continuing, according to Emarketer senior analyst Blake Droesch.

"While the core e-commerce business is no longer the biggest growth driver, it remains an essential component of the Amazon flywheel, particularly in propelling its ad business," Droesch said.

Jassy said the adoption of AI capabilities was getting companies to modernize their tech infrastructures through Amazon's AWS cloud computing division, which is on track to bring in a hundred billion dollars over the course of the year.

China's trade with other BRICS members up 11%

BEIJING (APP): China's trade with other BRICS members hit 1.49 trillion yuan (about 209.7 billion US dollars) in the first quarter, up 11.3 percent year on year, according to customs authorities.

The trade value accounted for 14.7 percent of the nation's total foreign trade value during the same period, said the General Administration of Customs (GAC).

Among BRICS mem-

bers, China's exports to Brazil and imports from it rose 25.7 percent and 30.1 percent year on year, respectively, in the first quarter.

Trade between China and Russia continued to expand during the period, featured by growth in traded products such as energy, automobiles, as well as general machinery and equipment, according to the GAC.

Trade between China

and India grew 8.5 percent in the first quarter, marking growth for five consecutive quarters.

Meanwhile, as China's largest trading partner in Africa for 14 consecutive years, South Africa saw robust growth in its trade with China. During the first quarter, China's exports to South Africa totaled 35.11 billion yuan, while its imports from the African nation stood at 66.46 billion yuan, said the GAC.



In brief

Rybakina rallies to make semi-final

MADRID (Agencies): Elena Rybakina battled back from 2-5 down in the deciding set and saved two match points to overcome Yulia Putintseva 4-6, 7-6 (7/4), 7-5 and reach the Madrid Open semi-finals on Wednesday. Fourth seed Rybakina produced key serves to swat away two match points at 2-5 and broke Putintseva as she was serving for the victory at 5-3. In the first all-Kazakh quarter-final at this level on the women's tour, Rybakina lacked efficiency on her break point opportunities, converting just three of 12 chances, and struggled to deal with Putintseva's deft drop shots. But a late-match collapse from Putintseva, who smashed her racquet and left it on the court after the match — helped Rybakina advance to her sixth semi-final of the season, where she will face defending champion Aryna Sabalenka or 17-year-old Mirra Andreeva. Rybakina owns a tour-leading 30 wins in 2024 and has been successful in her last 12 deciding sets this season.

Kane reveals Jude mind games

LONDON (Agencies): Harry Kane has revealed Jude Bellingham said "you're going to go left of the keeper" as the Real Madrid midfielder tried to put off his England team-mate before the Bayern Munich forward took his penalty in the Champions League semi-final. Bellingham could be seen mumbling something to Kane as the Bayern striker stepped up to take the spot-kick in the 57th minute of the first leg. However the England captain placed his penalty to the right of goal-keeper Andriy Lunin to give Bayern a 2-1 lead at Allianz Arena — although Vinicius Jr later also converted from the spot as the match ended all square. Kane said afterwards he did not hear what Bellingham said on the pitch but that the 20-year-old told him after the match. "In the moment, I didn't know what he said but I spoke to him after and he said: 'I know you're going to go left of the keeper'." "On the pitch, I knew he was there but I didn't know what he said. But I went left anyway. "It was nice for me because I saw the keeper go a little bit early and I put it away." It was Kane's 43rd goal in 43 games in all competitions this season and helps Bayern in their aim of finishing the season on a high, with the Champions League the only trophy they remain in contention for. Kane left Tottenham last summer for an initial £86m in the hope of winning trophies with 11-time Bundesliga champions Bayern.

Munyao in Kenya team for Olympics

NAIROBI (AFP): Alexander Mutiso Munyao, the surprise winner of this year's London Marathon, was rewarded for his victory on Wednesday by being named in the Kenyan marathon team for this year's Olympic Games in Paris. The 27-year-old was a relative unknown in marathon circles — in spite of running 2hrs 03mins 11secs in Valencia in 2023 — but he grabbed the headlines last month when he claimed his first major win in London in a time of 2:04:01, getting the better of Ethiopian legend Kenenisa Bekele. After breaking the tape in London, Munyao admitted he was not sure if he had done enough to merit selection but he was named alongside double Olympic gold medalist Eliud Kipchoge and the 2024 Tokyo marathon champion Benson Kipruto.

Iram Javed's half-century keeps Lahore unbeaten

LAHORE (PPI): Iram Javed's half-century led Lahore to a 74-run win over Peshawar in the seventh-round match of the National Women's One-Day Tournament at the Iqbal Stadium in Faisalabad on Wednesday. Following a delayed start due to overnight rain, Lahore scored 150 for seven in 29 overs courtesy 61 off 66 balls by Iram, laced with seven fours and two sixes.

In turn, Peshawar were all out for 76 in 25 overs, handing Lahore their seventh consecutive win in the tournament. Lahore's Quratulain bagged three wickets for 23, while Anam Amin, Ayesha Bilal and Noreen Yaqoob took two wickets each.

At Bohranwali Ground, opting to bat first, Multan managed to score 101 for seven in 32 overs, following another delayed start due to overnight rain. Karachi's left-arm spinners Maham Manzoor and Anosha Nasir bagged three and two wickets, respectively. In reply, Karachi



achieved the target in the 19th over, losing one wicket in the process. Opening batter Laiba Fatima returned undefeated on 53 off 59 balls, which included 10 boundaries.

Rawalpindi cruised to a nine-wicket win over Quetta at the Jawad Sports Complex Ground, securing their second win in the tournament. The match which was reduced to 40 overs a side due to overnight rain, Quetta after being put into bat struggled and were bundled out for a mere 53 runs in 34.1 overs,

with none of their batters reaching double figures.

Spinners Fatima Zahra and Rida Aslam starred with the ball, clinching three scalps apiece. In reply, Rawalpindi chased down the target in 23.3 overs, with nine wickets in hand.

Scores in brief:

Lahore beat Peshawar by 74 runs at Iqbal Stadium

Lahore 150-7, 29 overs (Iram Javed 61, Dua Majid 25, Saira Jabeen 25)

Peshawar 76 all out, 25 overs (Momina Riasat 20; Quratulain 3-23, Anam Amin 2-7, Ayesha Bilal 2-

9, Noreen Yaqoob 2-15) Player of the match — Iram Javed (Lahore)

Karachi beat Multan by nine wickets at Bohranwali Ground

Multan 101-7, 32 overs (Sadaf Shamas 16, Wajeeda Muneer 16; Maham Manzoor 3-16, Anosha Nasir 2-17)

Karachi 102-1, 18.4 overs (Laiba Fatima 53 not out, Yusra Amir 26)

Player of the match — Laiba Fatima (Karachi)

Rawalpindi beat Quetta by nine wickets at Jawad Sports Complex Ground

Quetta 53 all out, 34.1 overs (Fatima Zahra 3-5, Rida Aslam 3-19)

Rawalpindi 54-1, 23.3 overs (Aima Saleem 24)

Player of the match — Fatima Zahra (Rawalpindi)

Friday's fixtures: Peshawar Women v Karachi Women, Jawad Sports Complex Ground; Quetta Women v Multan Women, Iqbal Stadium; Rawalpindi Women v Lahore Women, Bohranwali Ground.

Smith axed as Australia name T20 World Cup squad

SYDNEY (AFP): Former captain Steve Smith and rising talent Jake Fraser-McGurk were notable omissions as Australia named their T20 World Cup squad on Wednesday.

All-rounder Mitchell Marsh will captain the side, while veteran opening batsman David Warner has been picked for what is shaping as his final international tournament.

"Mitchell has been an exemplary player and leader within the group for a long period of time," said Cricket Australia chair Mike Baird.

Test skipper Pat Cummins, paceman

Mitchell Starc and explosive batting all-rounder Glenn Maxwell are among the experienced players in the 15-man squad, with 11 having taken part in the 2021 T20 World Cup-winning campaign.

Selector George Bailey said there had been "long conversations" about whether to include talismanic batsman Smith in the side, following a dip in his limited-overs form.

Bailey said selectors would be keeping a close eye on the 22-year-old Fraser-McGurk, who has been in rampant batting form for the Delhi Capitals in the Indian

Premier League.

"Ultimately the balance of the final 15 needs to provide the best chance of being successful in this campaign," Bailey said.

The Twenty20 World Cup will be played in the United States and West Indies in June.

Australia squad for T20 World Cup:

Mitchell Marsh (capt), Ashton Agar, Pat Cummins, Tim David, Nathan Ellis, Cameron Green, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Glenn Maxwell, Mitchell Starc, Marcus Stoinis, Matthew Wade, David Warner, Adam Zampa.

Pakistan women's squad announced for England tour

KARACHI (PPI): The newly-appointed seven-member women's national selection committee has named a 17-player Pakistan women's squad for this month's tour to England.

Nida Dar will continue to lead the side, which will feature in three T20Is from 11-19 May and three ODIs from 23-29 May. The ODIs are part of ICC Women's Championship 2022-25 and this will be Pakistan's eighth and final series in the current event cycle.

Pakistan are currently sitting in fifth position with 16 points in the 10-team ICC Women's Championship 2022-25 standings. The top five teams from this championship, along with hosts India, will directly qualify for the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025.

In addition to the six white-ball international matches, the tourists will also play two warm-up

games (T20 and One-Day) against ECB Development XI on 9 and 21 May. For their first England tour since 2016, the national side will leave on Sunday, 5 May.

Pakistan women squad: Nida Dar (captain), Aliya Riaz, Ayesha Zafar, Diana Baig, Fatima Sana, Gull Feroza, Muneeba Ali (wk), Najiha Alvi (wk), Nashra Sundhu, Natalia Parvaiz, Rameen Shamim, Sadaf Shamas, Sadia Iqbal, Sidra Amin, Tuba Hassan, Umm-e-Hani and Waheeda Akhtar

Player support personnel: Nahida Khan (manager), Mahtashim Rasheed (interim head coach), Saleem Jaffar (bowling coach), Tauseef Umar (batting coach), Hanif Malik (fielding coach), Syed Nazir Ahmed (media manager), Rabia Siddiq (physiotherapist), Zubair Ahmed (analyst) and Hina Munawar (chief security officer)

Tour schedule: 9 May — T20 warm-up game v ECB Development XI, Uptonsteel County Ground (11.00am local time)

11 May — 1st T20I, Birmingham (2.30pm local time)

17 May — 2nd T20I, Northampton (6.30pm local time)

19 May — 3rd T20I, Leeds (1.00pm local time)

21 May — One-Day warm-up game v ECB Development XI, Northampton (11.00am local time)

23 May — 1st ODI, Derby (1.00pm local time) (ICC Women's Championship)

26 May — 2nd ODI, Taunton (11.00am local time) (ICC Women's Championship)

29 May — 3rd ODI, Chelmsford (1.00pm local time) (ICC Women's Championship).

Pakistani players see improvement in latest ICC T20 rankings

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Several Pakistani players have witnessed improvement in their positions in the latest T20 rankings released by the International Cricket Council (ICC).

The recent ICC rankings have seen Pakistan's skipper Babar Azam, with a rating of 763, jumping one spot to secure the fourth spot on the list — just one below his teammate and Green Shirts wicket-keeper batter Mohammad Rizwan who is ranked as the third-best T20 batsman in the world.

Babar's improvement in the rankings follows his impressive performance in the recently concluded home series against New Zealand where he finished as the highest run-scorer with 125 runs.

The ICC's T20 batter's list, which is topped by

India's Suryakumar Yadav followed by England's Phil Salt in first and second positions, respectively, doesn't include any Pakistani in the top 50.

Meanwhile, South Africa's Aiden Markram (5th), Rilee Rossouw (7th) along with England's Jos Buttler (8th) and Dawid Malan (10th) are included in the top 10 T20 batters.

Also, New Zealand's Tim Seifert improved seven places to equal seventh after accumulating 85 runs in the series against Pakistan at a strike rate of 144.06.

Pakistan's Fakhar Zaman also improved 10 places to 62nd after his 104 runs during the series against New Zealand. In bowling, pace spearhead Shaheen Afridi rose three places to equal 14th following his eight wickets across four matches against New Zealand.

Imad Wasim, who

recently took back retirement, also jumped 10 places to 22nd in the T20I all-rounders rankings.

Michael Bracewell (up 13 spots to 55th) and Ben Sears (up 29 places to 60th) also improved their positions on the list for T20I bowlers. With England's Adil Rashid ranked as the best T20 bowler, the second and third positions are secured by Sri Lanka's Wanindu Hasaranga and West Indies' Akeal Hosein.

India's Axar Patel and Afghanistan's Rashid Khan are ranked fourth and ninth, respectively. Whereas Australia's Josh Hazlewood has secured the seventh position. Pakistan's Shadab Khan is ranked as the 10th-best all-rounder with the category topped by Bangladesh's Shakib Al Hasan securing the first position.

Punjab, KP leading National Table Tennis League

ISLAMABAD (APP): Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were dominating the Prime Minister Talent Hunt Youth National Table Tennis League here at the Rodham Hall of Pakistan Sports Complex. This six-day event features talented players from all over the country competing against each other.

The closing ceremony and awards presentation would be held on May 3. Mohib Rehman, the league's brand ambassador and an international table tennis player from Balochistan, has lauded the initiative as a vital platform for discovering new talent.

The league was a joint effort between the Higher Education Commission and Government College University Lahore. "We are thankful to Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif for his Talent Hunt Youth Program," expressed Mohib, who was also a PhD scholar.

"This program not only promotes sports but also provides athletes with opportunities to progress, ultimately strengthening our national teams. It empowers young men and women to strive for future representation of our country."

The Higher Education Commission was hosting competitions throughout Baluchistan, showcasing the region's wealth of talent. Mohib stressed the importance of more opportunities through the Prime Minister Talent Hunt Youth Program, as players from Baluchistan are eager to participate in the national league.

"The Prime Minister Talent Hunt Program is praiseworthy. It boosts the morale of our youth and supports their development. The more programs like this we have, the more exceptional athletes we will discover across all sports," he said.

Alcaraz hopes for dream Olympic doubles match-up with Nadal

MADRID (AFP): Spaniard Carlos Alcaraz says he will form a dream team with his legendary compatriot Rafael Nadal in the men's doubles at the Paris Olympics later this year "if everything goes well."

The tennis tournament, which runs from July 27 to August 4, takes place at Roland Garros where Nadal, who will be 38 by then, has won a record 14 French Open singles titles.

Speaking after reaching the Madrid Open quarter-finals — extending his Madrid Open winning streak to a record-equaling 14 — Alcaraz said he and Nadal had

spoken "a little" about teaming up in Paris.

"If everything goes to plan, like I have already said, we will play the doubles together at the Olympics," said Alcaraz, who turns 21 on the day of the Madrid final on Sunday.

"But there is a long way to go till it gets underway."

Alcaraz, a two-time Grand Slam singles champion, said finding a tournament to warm up for the Olympics together will be difficult.

Not the least of their problems is both have struggled with injuries. Nadal has been hounded

by them over the past couple of years and Alcaraz has returned for Madrid after recovering from an arm injury.

"We have said how wonderful it would be to play a tournament before the Olympics," said Alcaraz.

"But that will be difficult."

"On clay the next two tournaments are Rome and Roland Garros, which are hugely important to both of us in terms of the singles."

"Considering we are not at our physical peak it will be tough to play both a tournament and the Olympics."

FATA stun Peshawar Blue in Standing Cricket, Hazara secure win in Wheel-Chair Cricket



PESHAWAR (APP): Abdullah and Wisal guided FATA (Merged Area) team to a dramatic 10 runs victory against Peshawar Blue in the opening match of the Standing Cricket while Hazara and Peshawar recorded victories in Wheel-Chair Cricket in the ongoing Person with Different Abilities Games and Inter-Madaras Games here at Hayatabad Sports Complex on Wednesday.

In the first match of the

Standing Cricket event part of the Persons with Different Abilities, strong FATA defeated Peshawar by a dramatically ended match played at the ICC-certified Hayatabad Cricket Ground.

FATA skipper won the toss and elected to bat first by setting up a 90 runs target after 10 overs.

FATA won the toss and batted first and scored 90 runs in the first over. Wahid Gul

smashed an elegant knock of 25 runs including three dashing boundaries and a towering six on the led side. The other top scorer was Asad who scored 19 runs FATA. Sabz Ali dismissed two players.

In reply, Peshawar was in a good position at one point, but in the last few overs, Peshawar's wickets were lost one after the other and the whole team bundled out for 80 runs, 10 runs short from the winning target. Muhammad scored 29 runs with three boundaries and one six and Wisal scored 23 runs with two sixes and one boundary. Abdullah of FATA was the most successful bowler who took four wickets. Wasal dismissed two players and played a key role in team victory. Thus FATA won the match by 10 runs.

Earlier, the Games were organized by the Directorate General Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Persons with Different Abilities and Inter-Madaras Games.

In the 100m Wheelchair Race Shakeel of Peshawar claimed the gold medal, Mashal of Mardan got the second position and Atif of Bajaur got the third position. In the women's 100 meter race, Karisma of Mardan won gold, Rana Gul of Peshawar got the silver medal and Dera Ismail Khan Lubna got the bronze medal.

Shahzaib of Dera Ismail Khan won the first place, Samiullah of Peshawar got the second place and Sanaullah of Chitral won the bronze medal.

While Muhammad Umeer Sajid and Asif of Mardan won the third position, Zohaib of Peshawar won gold, Rizwane Silver of Nowshera and Muhammad Umeer of Mardan won bronze medals in 100 meters race.

Usman Khan of Charsadda won the first position, Tariq Mehmood of Peshawar won the second position and Bilal of Kohat won the third position. In the second match, Peshawar's Imran and Sardar Nabi defeated



Mardan's Abdul Rashid and Rahman 21-15-21-19 and qualified for the next round. In the wheelchair cricket male, Dir Lower defeated Abbottabad. Abbottabad won the toss and batted first and scored 80 runs in the allotted overs, in which Waqas scored 33 runs with four boundaries and one six and Arif scored 15 runs.

The Dir Lower team achieved the target with the loss of one wicket. Fawad

in 79 century breaks over the course of the campaign.

Wednesday's concluding session followed the established pattern of the match with Jones' safety play holding sway across lengthy frames and Trump's highest break a mere 22.

"I just struggled. I had a lot of chances but it was a bit slower than I liked and I couldn't get any rhythm and it was like starting again every time I came to the table," Trump said. "I should have been a bit more attacking in the first two sessions and maybe I played into his hands a little bit."

"It is not easy to have a good run here. Playing like that, he did me a favour because I'd have lost 17-0 [next] playing like that."

Jones, who also reached the last eight 12 months ago, made a composed 87 to edge ahead at 10-9 but was also helped along by some dreadful misses by his out-of-sorts opponent. Trump's failure to dispatch a routine pink in the 20th frame allowed Jones to take the frame with a 61.



In brief

Pak tourism symposium & expo

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) in partnership with World Bank Group has planned to organize Pakistan Tourism Symposium and Expo as a high level event of tourism industry from 27 to 28 May at Serena Hotel Islamabad. According to official sources, this tourism symposium will be a two-day event focused on the theme of Building National Economy Through Tourism. On this occasion, a tourism expo will also be organized to showcase Pakistan's rich tourism potential and create G2G, B2B and G2B linkages among the industry stakeholders. PTDC intends to bring together more than 400 national and international tourism professionals, industry experts, and decision-makers to share their ideas for the development of a future road map for the sustainable growth of tourism industry of Pakistan. All those who are interested to attend this high level event as a delegate are request to register online at <https://bit.ly/4aS12GH>. For further details click on the below mentioned link to find more details and register as a delegate of this conference <https://bit.ly/4aS12GH>. Last date for online registration is 10th May 2024.

IRSA releases 163,400 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 163,400 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 280,000 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1459.68 feet and was 45.68 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 42,900 cusecs and 5,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1157.40 feet, which was 107.40 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 93,700 cusecs and 15,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 88,900, 53,400, 52,800 and 17,900 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 91,100 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 43,300 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Wednesday issued a power suspension programme for Thursday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 08:00 AM to 13:00 PM. Islamabad Circle, Rahara Feeder, Rawalpindi City Circle, Gulzar Quaid, Khanna-II, KRL, Sadiqabad Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Morgah, Fuji Foundation, Mohra Nagyal, Mehboob Shaheed, AOWHS, Wilayat Complex, X-Liar Colony, Pindi Board, Parkview Feeders, Attock Circle, Mushtaq Shaheed, Ghazi Kohli, Malhwali, Feeders, Chakwal Circle, Dera Muslim, Raman Feeders and surrounding areas.

Police fined to female driver

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Motorway Police on Wednesday fined the female driver, who was driving the vehicle recklessly and high speed at Kallar Kahar and also reported involved in misbehavior with the Motorway police officers.



ISLAMABAD: Former Prime Minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf addressing during function to mark the International Labour Day at National Press Club.

Tararr commemorates Labor Day, pays tribute to Backbone of nation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Law and Justice, Azam Nazir Tararr, commemorated Labor Day with a message, acknowledging the sacrifices and contributions of workers to the prosperity of the nation.

In his address in connection with Labor Day on Wednesday, he underscored the significance of this day as a symbol of the sanctity and dignity of labor, emphasizing the pivotal role of workers in driving economic growth.

Labor Day, observed annually on May 1st, serves as a solemn reminder of the struggles endured by workers in their pursuit of basic rights and fair treatment.

The minister Tararr paid homage to those who laid down their lives in this noble endeavor, highlighting

ing their indomitable spirit and unwavering commitment to the betterment of society. As a representative of the government, Minister Tararr reiterated the administration's dedication to upholding the rights of all laborers across the nation. He emphasized the principles of social justice and equity, drawing upon the values espoused by Islam, which advocates for the respect and fair treatment of workers.

Throughout his address, Minister Tararr emphasized the indispensable role played by the labor force in driving the nation's progress and prosperity. He underscored the government's commitment to ensuring fair labor practices and improving the working and living standards of workers, thereby fostering

an environment conducive to their well-being.

Labor Day, Minister Tararr emphasized, serves as a call to action for both individuals and collectives to prioritize the welfare of working classes.

He urged citizens to play their part in safeguarding the rights and dignity of workers, thereby contributing to a more just and equitable society. Tararr reiterated the government's unwavering commitment to the welfare of workers and emphasized the collective responsibility of all citizens in ensuring their rights and well-being. As the nation reflects on the significance of Labor Day, let us honor the tireless efforts and sacrifices of workers, recognizing them as the backbone of our nation's progress and prosperity.

He said that where government elites build hospitals for themselves, it is important to build hospitals for workers. Abdullah Gul said that shareholding of economy is not given workers in Pakistan, the salary and per diem of the labourer is insufficient in this inflation. "He cannot fulfill the food and education of his children. The government should allocate educational scholarships for every child of the labourer so that the children of the labourer can play their role in the development of the country by seeking education," he said.

Govt must bound entrepreneurs to ensure health, safety of laborers: Gul

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Tehreek-e-Jawanan Pakistan (TJP) Mohammad Abdullah Gul on World Labor Day said that workers or laborers in the country had no rights as there was neither social security nor health policy.

In his statement here, he said the government should bound the industries, entrepreneurs and businesses to ensure health and safety of labourers at workplace.

He said the institutions and courts that deal with workers' issues are involved in collusion with factory and mill owners whereas if a case of violation of workers' rights

comes to them it was either not heard or decided for a year. Gul said that the government should bound the factory and mill owners to provide a school for the children of the workers along with the factory and a hospital for their treatment.

He said that currently the construction or real estate business was the most popular in Pakistan but these companies did not care about the welfare of the workers. "Every year hundreds of workers lose their limbs and lives just because they do not have Safety protection equipment and even not helmets," he said.

He said that where government elites build hospitals for themselves, it is important to build hospitals for workers.

Abdullah Gul said that shareholding of economy is not given workers in Pakistan, the salary and per diem of the labourer is insufficient in this inflation. "He cannot fulfill the food and education of his children. The government should allocate educational scholarships for every child of the labourer so that the children of the labourer can play their role in the development of the country by seeking education," he said.

Aleem Khan applauds labor community's contributions

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a statement marking World Labor Day, Federal Minister for Privatization, Board of Investment & Communications, Abdul Aleem Khan, hailed the dedication of every hard worker, laborer, and skilled individual serving the nation. He emphasized the commendable efforts of those who fulfill their duties even amidst

challenging circumstances, asserting that such contributions deserve recognition not only on May 1st but every day, said a press release issued on Wednesday.

Aleem Khan also underscored the indispensable role of the labor community in sustaining the nation's economic framework, emphasizing their vital contribution to its vitality and

dynamism. He urged for the adoption of strategies aimed at enhancing facilities for the labor class and integrating them more effectively into the national fabric. Expressing heartfelt wishes for the well-being and prosperity of every laborer within the country, the federal minister concluded with prayers for their continued success and advancement.

Labourers deserve special attention from all sections of society: Amir Muqam

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs & Gilgit Baltistan and States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) Engr Amir Muqam has said that labourers deserved special attention not only from the government but also from all the concerned sections of the society. In his message on International Labour Day, the Federal Minister said that it was imperative to take steps to protect workers' rights by strictly enforcing labour laws. Engr Amir Muqam paid rich tributes to the working class for their important role in the country's development and assured that the federal government would take all possible measures for

their welfare.

He said that the labour force is the backbone of our country's economy.

Engr Amir Muqam said that a stronger and more prosperous labourer class would result in a developed and prosperous nation. He said that International Labour Day is not only a reminder of the struggle of workers but also an acknowledgment of their contribution towards economic development.

"Our great religion, Islam, emphasizes the principles of social justice, equity, and respect for the rights of the people," he added. Engr Amir Muqam said the role of the working class is of vital importance in national development and prosperity.

Kamal Rizvi remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): Famous playwright and actor Syed Kamal Ahmed Rizvi was remembered on the occasion of his birth anniversary on Wednesday.

He was born in Bihar, in 1930 and did his BA in Patna. In 1951, after the partition of the subcontinent, he migrated to Pakistan. Initially, he spent some time in Karachi and then shifted to Lahore where his penchant for artistic pursuits endeared him to the artist community. He rubbed shoulders with many literary luminaries, including writer Sadat Hasan Manto.

Kamal Rizvi translated several English books into Urdu and wrote for magazines. In the late 1950s, he tried his hand at theatre and started writing plays, both original and adaptations. Some of his popular stage and TV plays are Badshahat Ka Khatma, Julius Caesar, Hum Sub Pagal Hain, and Bulagi Badzaat.

In 1965, when Lahore's television station became operational, he wrote and starred in the satirical drama series Alif Noon.

The drama assumed iconic significance as it, by humorous and meaningful situations, exposed hypocrisies and double standards that existed in society.

Shaza holds virtual meeting with Asia Internet Coalition team

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja held virtual meeting with Asia Internet Coalition (AIC) member companies' representatives led by its Managing Director Jeff Paine.

The meeting discussed matters related to digitalisation, responsible use of social media platforms, digital rights and e-safety in details said a news release.

AIC's membership includes Facebook, Google, Apple, Amazon, X, Yahoo, LinkedIn, and others.

While talking to AIC's member companies representatives, Minister of State for IT & Telecom Shaza Fatima Khawaja said that steps underway for the digitalization in the country, adding that the government

is committed for the digital transformation. She said that under the vision of the prime minister of Pakistan private sector is being fully supported. Public-Private dialogue platform will be launched very soon, she added.

Shaza Fatima said that work is going on different policies.

She said that government is focused on the development of the youth and their capacity building by equipping them with digital skills. Shaza Fatima said that responsible use of social medial platforms is utmost necessary. The meeting was also attended by Additional Secretary MoITT, Ms. Aisha Humera Moriani, Member IT Syed Junaid Imam and Member Telecom Muhammad Jahanzeb Rahim.

Innovative models like GUDS critical in equipping youth with green skills for climate-resilient urbanisation

ISLAMABAD (APP): The experts at the event 'Rethinking Urban Development in Pakistan: Leveraging Youth's Potential for Sustainable Cities' said that innovative models such as the Green Urban Development School (GUDS) play a critical role in equipping youth with the green skills required to manage urbanization in a nature-inclusive and climate-resilient manner.

The Institute of Urbanism (IoU) and School of Leadership Foundation (SoLF) with the support of the U.S. Embassy Islamabad launched the pilot GUDS program at two universities i.e. Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU) and COMSATS University Islamabad, which enhanced knowledge of participants through mentorship, exposure visits and cross-learning opportunities with experts from DePaul University, Chicago, a news release said.

The GUDS is also providing technical and financial support to two students from each university to practically set up their action research projects that lead to green start-ups, thus, empowering youth to spearhead the transition to a sustainable future. As the GUDS program was piloted at QAU in 2023, two grant winners have already set up their projects i.e. a composting facility and a sustainable rooftop set-up consisting of rainwater harvesting and hydroponic farm.

Addressing participants at the concluding event of GUDS, Mr. Kelly Ryan, representing the US Embassy Islamabad said, "through programs like the Green Urban Development School, our aim is to encourage exchange of knowledge and collaboration to collectively address the challenge of climate change".

Mariyam Irfan, Managing Director of

the School of Leadership Foundation (SoLF), remarked, "The Green Urban Development School represents a pivotal initiative in promoting sustainable urbanization in Pakistan. By nurturing the green skills of our youth and empowering them to implement innovative solutions, we are not only addressing immediate environmental challenges but also shaping the leaders of tomorrow who will drive lasting change." Dr. Ejaz Ahmad, Senior Program Fellow, IoU emphasized the need to reshape urban development paradigms through strategic partnerships, collaborative efforts, development of green skills, and equitable transitions.

Marfaa Naseem, the GUDS grant winner from QAU, said that she has harvested 48,000 liters of rainwater since installing the system in January 2024, saving around PKR 12,000 compared to tanker fees. She also highlights how the grant money helped her set up a hydroponic farm at her rooftop in Ghouri Town where she has planted around 230 plants in a limited area. Dr. Jabir Hussain Syed, Associate Professor COMSATS said that GUDS provided a great platform to students to channelize their creative thinking into designing innovative solutions for urban environmental issues. A total of four innovative solutions pertaining to urban water management, solid waste management and green infrastructure were submitted by the GUDS participants at COMSATS who had undergone the 2 month capacity-building sessions.

After a rigorous evaluation two projects were chosen for grant award of PKR 500,000 each. The first project will focus on green infrastructure while the second will focus on water conservation.

IIUI marks Labor Day: Panel discussion on right to education vs. Child Labor held

ISLAMABAD (APP): Department of Teacher Education in collaboration with Office of Research, Innovation & Commercialization (ORIC) at the International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) organized a panel discussion to mark the Labor Day in which panelists and participants discussed the critical themes surrounding the rights of children to education and the urgent need to address the issue of child labor.

Dr. Shamsa Aziz, Chairperson Department of Teacher Education briefed about the main idea behind arranging the panel discussion. The Panelists included Dr. Tabassum Naz Director Schools Federal Directorate of Education, Islamabad, Ms. Nazneen Zehra Deputy Director (Planning) Basic Education Community Schools, Islamabad, Ms. Shumaila Aslam Principal Ghori Career School, Islamabad, Ms. Tabassum Shairwani Khan PhD Education Scholar, IIUI and Ms. Sana Naseer BECS School. The panel was moderated by Dr. Fouzia Ajmal.

Under the theme "Empowering Futures: Right to Education vs. Child Labour," the discussion encompassed a wide range of topics, each shedding

light on different dimensions of the issue. The panel unanimously agreed on the significance of education as a fundamental right for every child. They emphasized that access to education not only empowers individuals but also plays a vital role in shaping a prosperous society.

Addressing the underlying socio-economic factors contributing to child labor was another focal point of the discussion, the panelists stressed the need for holistic approaches that tackle poverty, inequality, and lack of opportunities, which often force children into labor.

Panelists highlighted the pivotal role of teachers in eradicating child labor and promoting education. They emphasized the role of educators in creating inclusive and supportive learning environments that encourage children to stay in school and pursue their dreams.

The main takeaways of the discourse included community involvement as a crucial factor in combating child labor.

The panelists highlighted the importance of community partnerships and grassroots initiatives in identifying at-risk children and providing

them with educational opportunities.

According to the organizing departments, the panel discussion served as a platform for stakeholders from academia, government, and civil society to exchange ideas, share best practices, and chart a course of action towards ensuring every child's right to education. The Chief Guest, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Sarwar, Dean of the Faculty of Education, IIUI, commended the efforts of the Department of Teacher Education, Dr. Fouzia Ajmal, Focal Person of the activity and students' organizers (and reiterated the university's commitment for promoting education as a tool for social transformation. The event concluded with a renewed sense of urgency and determination to address the complex challenges of child labor and educational inequality. The participants expressed their commitment to working collaboratively towards building a future where every child has the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive.

This event was held in auditorium Fatima tuz Zahra block (Female Campus) IIUI which was attended by female students and faculty members of the department.



ISLAMABAD: CDA Labour Union General Secretary Chaudhry Yaseen leading a rally on the occasion of International Labour Day.

Medical shipment arrived

KABUL (Khaama Press): The organization Save the Children has announced that an airplane carrying 92 tons of medicine has arrived in Afghanistan. This organization stated in a press release that simultaneously with the delivery of this medical shipment in Afghanistan, more than 675 people in the country will gain access to medical assistance. Approximately 400,000 children will have access to medication for treatment simultaneously with this aid.

Afghanistan team announced

KABUL (Ariana News): Afghanistan named their 15-member squad for the upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 in the West Indies and the USA in June this year, with Rashid Khan set to lead the side. Afghanistan have made a few additions to their squad compared to the 2022 edition, with Karim Janat, Mohammad Ishaq, and Noor Ahmad all named in the side. However, Hashmatullah Shahidi wasn't part of the side, his last T20I appearance coming in 2022.

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

Washington sees interaction with IEA

KABUL (Ariana News): The Deputy Spokesman of the US State Department says that when the interests of his country are involved, Washington will not hesitate to interact with the Islamic Emirate.

Vedant Patel said that interaction with the Islamic Emirate is not only the best way to protect the interests of America, but also to support the people of Afghanistan.

Speaking at a press conference on Tuesday, he said interaction with the Islamic Emirate provides the basis for a direct dialogue with them.

According to Patel, this interaction is an opportunity to continue the pressure



on the Islamic Emirate for the immediate and unconditional release of American citizens, including those who have been caught "unjustly".

Patel added that the United States would also

take advantage of these opportunities to talk directly with the Islamic Emirate about commitments to counter terrorism. He emphasized that Washington human rights issues are also on the agenda.

104 detained for forgery and fraud in Kabul

KABUL (TOLONews): The Kabul Security Department has announced the arrest of 104 individuals involved in commission-based fraud cases in the past three months.

Khalid Zadran, the spokesperson for the Kabul Security Department, stated that these individuals were detained in connection with fraudulent activities related to passports and legal cases.

Zadran said, "In the past three months, we have arrested approximately 104 people on charges of forgery and handed them over to the law, who were engaged in forgery and commission dealings."

However, many citizens complain about the lack of transparency and the increase in commission activities across various government institutions.

They are calling for serious attention from the authorities on this matter.

Hussain Omid, a resident of Kabul, told TOLONews, "There should be transparency in a government, and those who engage in forgery and commission dealings, and those who issue passports and IDs for money are engaging in illegal activities."

Amir Shams, another Kabul resident, mentioned, "Forgery has greatly increased, especially in the Passport Directorate and in the part dealing with



identification documents."

Meanwhile, some experts believe that the arrested individuals should be legally punished according to the law.

They consider the enforcement of criminal law crucial for resolving citizens' challenges.

Salim Paigir, a political affairs expert, stated, "People who are caught in forgery or any crime must be punished according to criminal law."

Previously, the Kabul Security Department had reported 320 criminal incidents in the capital during the month of Jadi of the last solar year, of which at least 257 people were arrested in connection with these incidents.

Volume of exports, imports and transit through customs

KABUL (TOLONews): In the first month of the current Solar year, nearly 50 billion Afghani in exports, imports and transit transactions have been processed through the country's customs.

According to Ahmad Wali Haqmal, the spokesperson for the ministry, most of the country's customs offices are now operating 24 hours a day, providing facilities for both domestic and foreign traders.

Haqmal said, "The activity of most customs offices has become 24-hour, corruption has been eliminated, electronic scales have been activated, and the processing of goods is timely and transparent."

However, some traders say that if their issues at the ports in Iran and Pakistan

are resolved, the volume of imports, exports, and transit could increase.

Zalmay Azimi, a member of the board of the Chamber of Commerce and Investment, stated, "We have some problems with Iran regarding imports; our goods face many issues there."

Malik Nader Safi, the deputy of the North Oil and Gas Union in Hairatan, expressed, "Our request from the Minister of Finance is that he orders customs officials at all Afghan ports to work not just 24 hours but until midnight so that national traders will be satisfied."

Furthermore, the Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, in a program for the graduation of students from

Kabul Polytechnic, stated that conditions for investment by foreign companies have been facilitated, and the Islamic Emirate supports any such investments.

Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, remarked, "We invite domestic and foreign companies to come to Afghanistan because the environment for good investment has been made favorable, and the system supports them."

Previously, the officials of the Islamic Emirate have emphasized that Afghanistan has adopted a balanced and economy-centric policy with neighboring and regional countries, which has led to the expansion of bilateral and multilateral cooperation with Afghanistan.

World Bank donates \$84 million to Afghanistan

KABUL (Ariana News): The World Bank announced it has approved \$84 million in aid to Afghanistan in order to fight the economic crisis and implement livelihood projects in the country.

According to a statement, this "complements \$70 million in additional financing from the Afghanistan Resilience Trust Fund (ARTF)."

The project was started in 2022 with a grant of \$265 million from the ARTF to provide livelihoods support and services in rural and urban areas, support social grants for women and the most vulnerable, and strengthen community institutions for inclusive service delivery.

With this additional financing, the project will scale up activities in more rural and urban areas, provide more livelihood opportunities for women, expand activities focused on building climate resilience, and provide employment and services to returning Afghan migrants, the World Bank stated.

Melinda Good, World Bank Country Director for Afghanistan, said: "In the past 18 months, the project has laid the foundation for an effective service delivery platform and operational model at scale for delivering jobs, providing essential services and assets, and importantly, reaching women."

"With the additional financing, the project will continue its essential works in all six regions of the country, 26 of the 34 provinces, 67 rural districts, 6,200 rural communities, and eight major cities," she said.

To date, the project has provided short-term employment to over 776,000 households, benefiting around 5.4 million Afghans, and about 92,200 vulnerable households received cash transfers or in-kind social grants, with a significant portion being female-headed households or those with disabled members.

Approximately 7.4 million Afghans gained access to services like roads, sanitation, and water supply, and more than 2.1 million community members received training in health and nutrition, the effects of climate change and disaster risk management.

In addition, the project has helped create a market for local civil works and preserve local contractors' capacities built over the last two decades.

An estimated 2,200 highly skilled market-driven jobs have also been created.

The project is implemented by UNOPS, which facilitates international and local NGO partners and local private sector contractors to implement activities in rural and urban areas.

Uzbekistan, Afghanistan signed trade contracts



KABUL (Ariana News): Uzbekistan has agreed to sign export contracts worth \$44 million with Afghanistan, according to a report by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of

Uzbekistan. The contracts were signed during a three-day visit to Tashkent by a delegation of Afghan businessmen.

The two nations are also

planning to form an Uzbekistan-Afghanistan Business Council, which will have 18 Afghan companies among its members. Afghanistan's import market is worth \$7 billion.

The goods that are most in demand with Afghan importers are agricultural products, processed food, textiles, leather, electrical components and construction materials.

Herat citizens plead for protection following mosque attack

HERAT (TOLONews): At least five people, including a woman and a child, were killed Monday evening in an attack by an armed man on worshippers at a Shia mosque in Herat, and three others were injured.

Worshippers at a mosque in the Mohammadiya town in Guzara district in the western part of Herat were targeted during evening prayers.

Abdul Hakim Sadagat, a resident of Herat, said about the attack: "Mr. Javid's prayer mat was soaked in blood, and Hafiz had been shot in the head."

Azizullah, another resi-

dent of Herat, stated: "The martyrs were lying blood-soaked in the mosque, and the children and women who were injured were making a lot of noise."

Security officials in Herat said that the identity of the attackers is still unclear, and they attackers have managed to escape.

According to security officials, investigations by the security forces regarding how this attack occurred and the arrest of its perpetrators are underway.

"Security forces arrived at the scene after being informed, and investigations are currently ongoing

to arrest those responsible for this incident," said Abdullah Ensaf, the spokesperson for the Herat Security Command.

The bodies of the victims of this bloody attack were buried near their village, and thousands of Herat residents participated in the funeral ceremony of the victims.

Mohammad Zaman, a resident of Herat, said: "It is the nation's demand that the government should secure all mosques and should pay more attention to this matter."

Asadullah Qeemet, another resident of Herat,

said: "Security must be taken so that people no longer suffer; this is my request from the government." So far, no group has claimed responsibility for this attack.

This attack occurred about five months after another attack by assailants on civilians, including two Shia clerics, in the Jabriyal neighborhood in the west of Herat city. In that attack, six people, including two women, died.

Residents of Herat called for the identification and prosecution of those responsible for attacks on civilians in the province.

Stallholders in Kabul's PD4 complain about Municipal actions

KABUL (TOLONews): Several stallholders in PD4 of Kabul have complained about their stalls being removed by the Kabul Municipality.

They claim that despite having paid their rent, their stalls in the Taimani market are still being collected.

Rahmatullah, a street vendor, said, "We were paying the rent, and here, people are not left to their own devices; they have always paid the tariff."

Another street vendor, Abdul Jamil, said, "They gather everyone's stalls from here and take them to an unspecified fate; there are about thirty thousand or more breadwinners in this area from these street vendors."

Safaiddin, another vendor, told TOLONews reporter, "The district suddenly decided to dismiss us, saying they would take our stalls at night, and we wouldn't even have the right to complain."

Noor Agha, a vendor in Kabul's Taimani market, said he had bought a stall two years ago for 16,000



Afghanis to provide for his family, but now he is worried about it being collected.

Noor Agha told a TOLONews reporter, "I am completely broke right now, all our goods are basically debts; I have just paid off half of it, and now I am gathering the rest to take home, I don't have the money to buy anything else."

Meanwhile, the Kabul

Municipality says that to create order in the city, the stalls from District 4 are being removed and relocated to a specific designated area.

Nematullah Barakzai, a representative of the Kabul Municipality, said, "In the Taimani area of District 4, a specific space has been prepared for those who work as street vendors, and we

ask everyone to operate in those areas; otherwise, the Kabul Municipality does not allow anyone to block the street or sidewalk."

In the year 1401 of the solar year, the Kabul Municipality implemented a plan to reduce congestion on roads and highways by setting up stalls for street vendors in the city of Kabul.

Farmers concerned about impact of snowfall in Bamyan

BAMYAN (TOLONews): Different parts of the center and districts of Bamyan province have witnessed snowfall in recent days.

Several farmers report that their fields and fruit trees have been damaged by the snowfall.

Some farmers say that with the increasing cold, the seeds of wheat and potatoes planted in their fields will be destroyed.

Qorban, a farmer, said, "The weather has become very cold, and there is a possibility of frost affecting those who have planted potatoes."

However, Zabihullah Rabbani, the head of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock in Bamyan, considers the precipitation levels in the center and districts of this province to be beneficial for water resources.

According to Rabbani, this snowfall has occurred mostly in the districts of Yakawlang, Panjab, Waras, and parts of Kahmad and Saighan, including the center of the province.



The head of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock in Bamyan stated, "There has been about 196 millimeters of rain across Bamyan, and in some areas, including in the districts at the center, there has been snowfall."

Meanwhile, Samiullah Haq Bayan, the head of

Information and Culture in Nuristan, says that the rain-falls, in addition to blocking some communication roads, have also caused significant damage to the people.

Haq Bayan, said, "As a result of the recent rains, the people of Nuristan have suffered financial losses."

In the past three days, in addition to the provinces of Bamyan and Nuristan, provinces such as Maidan Wardak, Ghazni, Sar-e Pol, Jowzjan, Paktia, and Panjshir have also experienced snowfall, which has resulted in significant losses for farmers and orchardists.

Global, domestic condemnation follows deadly mosque attack

HERAT (TOLONews): The recent attack on Shia worshippers at a mosque in the Guzara district of Herat has sparked widespread condemnation from both local and international bodies.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and Richard Bennett, the UN Human Rights Council's Special Rapporteur for Afghanistan, along with the Iranian Embassy in Kabul, have strongly condemned the attack, urging swift justice for those responsible.

Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai and Abdullah Abdullah, head of the former government's High Council for

National Reconciliation, echoed these sentiments, labeling the attack as contrary to all Islamic and human norms. Hamid Karzai on social media platform X denounced the attack, calling it a violation of religious and human principles, while Abdullah Abdullah described the attack as "cowardly" and a clear act of terrorism, expressing his sympathy for the victims and survivors.

Hamid Karzai said: "I strongly condemn this attack, which resulted in the wounding of a number of our dear compatriots, and consider this terrorist act against all religious and

human norms."

Abdullah Abdullah said of the attack: "I consider this cowardly attack on our defenseless compatriots to be against Islamic and human norms."

The Iranian Embassy highlighted its readiness to enhance counter-terrorism cooperation with Afghanistan in response to the attack.

UNAMA and the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights also called for accountability for the perpetrators of this attack.

Tariq Farhadi, a political analyst, told TOLONews: "It would be better if more serious security measures are considered in Shia gath-

ering places."

Wais Nasiri, another political analyst said: "As long as activities, presence, and competition of insurgent groups are not curbed in Afghanistan, unfortunately, Afghanistan will remain a center and base for terrorist groups, and the proxy wars of these groups and powerful countries will continue."

The attack resulted in the deaths of seven individuals, including the mosque's Imam, and left several others injured.

No group has yet claimed responsibility, and security officials have not provided comments on the matter.



LAHORE: A Labour busy in his work at iron factory, as people enjoying World Labour Day.

Bilawal advocates PPP-mode over privatization for institutional success

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD/KARACHI: Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has advocated for a pragmatic approach towards managing key institutions such as Pakistan Airlines and Pakistan Steel Mills. He emphasized the importance of exploring public-private partnerships as an alternative to outright privatization. Additionally, he called upon the federal government to address the pressing issue of inflation by proposing salary increases for employees in the forthcoming budget.

According to a press release issued by the Media Cell Bilawal House, Chairman PPP, while addressing a function organized by the People's Labor Bureau (PLB) at the Karachi Arts Council on the occasion of International Labour Day, said that economies, businesses, and institutions worldwide, including Pakistan, thrive due to the dedication of workers. He reiterated the PPP's philosophy: ensuring that workers receive their rightful dues.

He pointed out that Quaid-e-Awam Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto not only granted workers the right to form unions but also established vital institutions like the Employees Old Age Benefits Institution (EOBI) for their welfare.

Additionally, he emphasized that when Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto assumed office as Prime Minister, her inaugural act was to release workers' representatives who had been unjustly imprisoned during the dictatorship. "Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto carried forward the noble struggle of the workers," he

noted. Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that during the first tenure of President Asif Ali Zardari, significant strides were made in favor of labor rights.

He noted the removal of anti-labor clauses from the constitution, originally introduced during the regimes of General Zia-ul-Haq and General Pervez Musharraf. Additionally, Chairman Bilawal highlighted substantial increases in salaries and pensions, asserting, "I believe that no government in Pakistan's history has elevated salaries and pensions to such an extent, barring the tenure of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto." Furthermore, he underscored the legislative achievements of the Sindh Assembly, stating that no other province rivals its commitment to enacting laws for the rights and welfare of workers.

Chairman PPP highlighted that the Sindh government, under the PPP, has launched the Benazir Mazdoor Card initiative. However, he noted that its full implementation hinges upon the federal government's transfer of ministries and institutions, as stipulated by the 18th Amendment. He advocated for the devolution of institutions like EOBI to the provinces. Expressing optimism, he stated his hope that PPP-led governments in Sindh and Balochistan would prioritize salary increases in the forthcoming budget.

Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari reiterated the PPP's longstanding stance on the privatization of institutions like PIA, emphasizing the preference for operating them under the public-private partnership (PPP) mode instead. He cited successful

PPP-mode projects in Sindh as examples of effective collaboration between the public and private sectors. Chairman advocated for a similar approach for institutions under consideration for privatization, suggesting that the government sell some shares and engage with the private sector to foster their development, thereby benefiting Pakistan and its economy.

Chairman Bilawal Bhutto highlighted the success of the Thar Coal Project completed by the People's Government of Sindh through a public-private partnership, contrasting it with previous failures under both provincial and federal administrations. He noted the current finance minister's favorable view of Sindh's PPP model and expressed the intent to persuade the government to transition from privatization to PPP-mode.

Talking about the Pakistan Steel Mills, Chairman Bhutto said that the land belongs to the Sindh government and decisions regarding the institution should involve Sindh's consent. He emphasized for collaborative discussions between the federal and provincial governments, proposing that if the federal government intends to divest from the Steel Mills, Sindh should have the opportunity to acquire and operate it more efficiently under PPP-mode, ensuring the welfare of its workers. Chairman Bilawal also stressed the need for increased activity within the People's Labor Bureau, a subsidiary organization of the PPP. He announced former Senate Chairman Mian Raza Rabbani's appointment to mobilize People's Labor Bureau nationwide.

Police move in after pro-Israel supporters attack pro-Palestinian camp at UCLA

LOS ANGELES (Reuters): Police deployed in force on the University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA) campus on Wednesday morning after Israel supporters attacked a camp set up by pro-Palestinian protesters.

Witness footage from the scene, verified by Reuters, showed people wielding sticks or poles to attack wooden boards being held up as a makeshift barricade to protect the pro-Palestinian protesters, some of whom held placards or umbrellas. On the other side of the country, police in New York arrested dozens of pro-Palestinian demonstrators holed up in a building at Columbia University and removed a protest encampment on Tuesday night.

The Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel by Hamas militants from the Gaza Strip and the ensuing Israeli offensive on the Palestinian enclave have unleashed the biggest outpouring of US student activism since the anti-racism protests of 2020. As student rallies have spread to dozens of schools across the US in recent days expressing opposition to Israel's war in Gaza, police have been called in to quell or clear protests.

About 1,200 people in southern Israel were killed in the Oct. 7 attack but the Israeli retaliatory assault has killed nearly 35,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza health ministry figures, obliterated much of the enclave's infrastructure, and created a humanitarian crisis verging on famine. The student protests in the United States have also taken on political overtones in the run-up to the presidential election in November, with Republicans accusing some university administrators of turning a blind eye to antisemitic rhetoric and harassment.

School officials informed the protesters that the encampment was unlawful and violated university policy. UCLA Chancellor Gene Brock said it included people "unaffiliated with our campus." Footage from the early hours showed mostly masked counter-demonstrators throwing objects and trying to smash or pull down the wooden and steel barriers erected to shield the encampment as pro-Palestinian protesters tried to fight them off. Demonstrators on both sides sprayed each other and fights broke out.

The Los Angeles Police Department said it had responded to a request from UCLA to restore order and maintain public safety "due to multiple acts of violence within the large encampment on their campus."

In Israel, Blinken pushes Netanyahu for sustained aid into Gaza

JERUSALEM (Reuters): US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday, pushing to get more aid into Gaza, while urging Hamas to accept a deal that would halt fighting and bring some hostages home from the enclave.

Israel is the final stop on the top US diplomat's Middle East tour, his seventh visit to the region which was plunged into conflict on Oct. 7 when Hamas attacked southern Israel. Illustrating the trip's humanitarian focus, Blinken will visit Ashdod port in the south, which has recently started receiving aid for Gaza. He will ask Israel's government to take a set of specific steps to facilitate aid to Gaza, where nearly half the population is suffering catastrophic hunger.

During a meeting with Netanyahu in Jerusalem lasting about 2 and 1/2 hours, Blinken noted improvement in delivering aid "and reiterated the importance of accelerating and sustaining that improvement," State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said. The United States is Israel's main diplomatic supporter and weapons supplier. Blinken's check-in with Netanyahu on aid comes about a month after US President Joe Biden issued a stark warning that Washington's policy could shift if Israel fails to take steps to address civilian harm, humanitarian suffering, and the safety of aid workers.

Blinken also reiterated the US position that Hamas, a Palestinian Islamist group widely proscribed in the West, was "standing in the way of a ceasefire," Miller said. The US diplomat has urged Hamas to accept an "extraordinarily generous" truce deal proposed by Egyptian mediators, which would see 33 hostages released in exchange for a larger number of Palestinian prisoners and a halt to the fighting, with the possibility of further steps toward a comprehensive deal later. A senior official for Hamas said the group was still studying the proposed deal but accused Blinken of failing to respect both sides and described Israel as the real obstacle. "Blinken's comments contradict reality," Sami Abu Zuhri told Reuters. Blinken's trip to Israel comes amid growing speculation that Israel will soon launch a long-promised assault on the southern Gaza city of Rafah, where more than one million Palestinians displaced from their homes further north are sheltering. While facing international calls to hold off on any Rafah offensive, Netanyahu has faced pressure from the religious nationalist partners he depends on for the survival of his coalition government to press ahead. Israel has described Rafah as a last bastion of Hamas, which it has vowed to eliminate.

Broadcast footage later showed a police cordon clearing a central quad beside the encampment. By 5 a.m. (1200 GMT) they had erected a metal crowd barrier in front of the encampment and the area was quiet. Los Angeles Councilwoman Katy Yaroslavsky, whose district includes UCLA, posted on X: "Everyone has a right to free speech and protest, but the situation on UCLA's campus is out of control and is no longer safe."

New York City police had arrested dozens of pro-Palestinian demonstrators holed up in a building at Columbia University and removed a protest encampment that the Ivy League school had sought to dismantle for nearly two weeks. Officers climbed into Hamilton Hall, which protesters had occupied in the early hours of Tuesday, through a second-story window. Within three hours, they had cleared the protesters and arrested dozens, a police spokesper-

son said.

Columbia President Minouche Shafik asked police to stay on campus until at least May 17 — two days after graduation — to maintain order and ensure that encampments were not set up again. Students standing outside the hall — the site of various student occupations dating back to the 1960s — jeered at police with shouts of "Shame, shame!" Police were seen loading dozens of detainees onto a bus, with their hands bound behind their backs by zip-ties, the scene illuminated with the flashing red and blue lights of police vehicles.

"Free, free, free Palestine!" protesters chanted outside the building. Others yelled "Let the students go!" Sueda Polat of Columbia University Apartheid Divest, the coalition of student groups that organized the protests, said they did not pose a danger and urged police to back down.

KP Governor calls on Nawaz, Maryam

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Haji Ghulam Ali who is one of the seasoned politicians of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Pakistan (JUIP) of Maulana Fazlur Rehman called on Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Mian Nawaz Sharif in Lahore on Wednesday.

The JUIP-backed KP governor arrived at Sharif's residence at Jati Umra at Raiwind in Lahore to meet the PML-N leadership. The channel sources said Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif was also present in the meeting between her father Mian Nawaz Sharif and KP Governor Haji Ghulam Ali.

The sources said KP Governor Haji Ghulam Ali discussed matters of mutual interest with the PML-N leadership. Haji Ghulam Ali was appointed KP Governor in the last caretaker government of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) tenure on the recommendation of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

"For how long 'establishment's parliament' will go on" he said adding, "We democratically created this country. Neither the bureaucracy nor the establishment had any role in the creation of this country. Think about how long you will continue to compromise on the results that the establishment dictates." On the other hand, Governor Ghulam Ali while addressing in a university in Mardan on April 25 dismissed the impression to impose the governor's rule in the province, adding that he was a politician and he could not even think of any such move. The governor said that he would leave the Governor's House if he was asked by his party head Maulana Fazlur Rehman.

"I am a political worker and have respect for the mandate of the people. I cannot even think of imposing the governor's rule in the province," he added. To a question, he said that he was ready to play his role to maintain a working relationship between the province and the federation.

Fazl expresses solidarity with Palestinians

F.P. Report

LAHORE: JUI-F Chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman stressed the need for focusing on the Palestine issue, expressing solidarity with the Palestinians.

Addressing the National Palestine Conference on Sunday, the JUI-F chief highlighted that the United Nations and the Islamic world must advocate for the freedom of Palestine. Fazlur Rehman extended a warm welcome to distinguished guests from Palestine who attended the event.

He highlighted the historical context, stating that Israel's presence as a state lacks historical precedence, and condemned the UN's recognition of Israel. Referring to the founder of Pakistan's initial opposition to Israel, he underlined the significance of the Al-Aqsa Mosque to the Muslim Ummah.

Also, Fazlur Rehman condemned alleged war crimes committed by Israel, implicating Europe and America, and charged the US for its historical actions. He also condemned the use of atomic bombs and human rights violations in Guantanamo Bay.

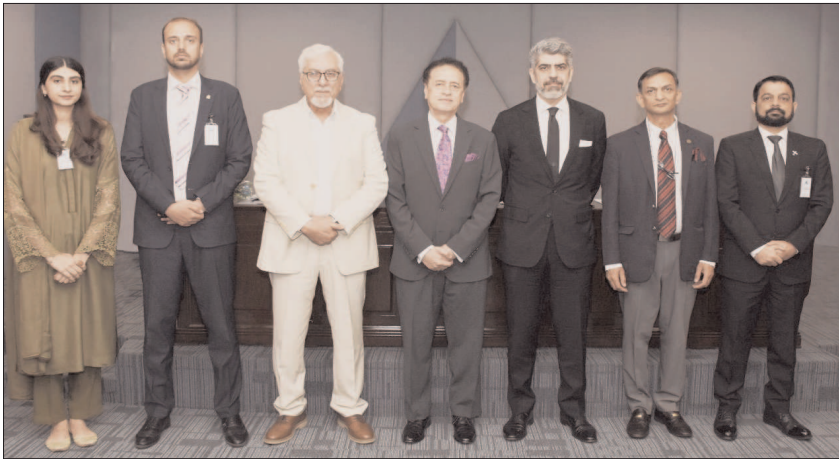
Two gunned down in Quetta

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Two persons, including one woman, were gunned down in two different incidents at Sariab Road and Eastern Bypass areas of Quetta on Wednesday.

According to police, unidentified assailant shot dead one man namely Rashid in Sariab Road area of Quetta. The assailant managed to escape after committing the crime. The body was shifted to Sandeman Provincial Hospital Quetta and later handed over to the heirs after fulfilling necessary medico-legal formalities. The incident has created a mourning atmosphere in the victim's home. Further investigation is being conducted by the authorities of police station Sariab.

Pakistan must build Indus Cascade for water security



F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS), Lahore, hosted a seminar titled 'Navigating the Indus Water Treaty: India's Hyper-nationalism and Pakistan's Water Security Challenges'. The event focused on the heart of Pakistan's socio-economic wellbeing - its water resources, and the challenges the Treaty faces due to the changing political dynamics in India.

The seminar commenced with opening remarks by Dr Bilal Ghazanfar, Associate Senior Researcher at CASS, Lahore, who emphasised that cooperation, not conflict, is the key to securing a shared water future for the region. This was followed by a keynote address by Engineer Suleman Najib Khan, Convener, Water and Resource Development Council, who spoke about India's water aggression and termed it as an ecocide in motion.

He added that there is no silver bullet and Pakistan

must build the Indus Cascade for its water security. Mr Ahmed Rafay Alam, an environmental lawyer, discussed the legal perspective on the Indus Water Treaty and highlighted the need for Pakistan to take a robust stance in defending its water rights and seeking international support to resolve disputes and ensure the implementation of the accord. The last speaker, Dr Hassan Abbas, a renowned hydrologist, framed the Indus Water Treaty as a catalyst for environmental peacebuilding. He promoted a holistic approach to water management, emphasising cooperation, sustainability, and regional stability in the face of climate change and geopolitical challenges.

In his concluding remarks, Air Marshal Asim Suleiman (Retd), President, CASS Lahore, reaffirmed Pakistan's steadfast dedication to upholding the fundamental principles enshrined within the Indus Water Treaty. He emphasised that as Pakistan's eastern neighbour, India shares the

responsibility for maintaining peace in the region. Therefore, he urged India to reaffirm its solemn commitment to international agreements and cautioned against any unilateral measures that could potentially jeopardise the Treaty's integrity. Furthermore, he said that international institutions that played a pivotal role in formulating the Treaty must step forward to safeguard its sanctity and ensure its continued efficacy.

The speakers pointed out that India's hyper-nationalism and unilateral measures on the Indus Water Treaty threaten Pakistan's water security and peace, endangering the lives and livelihoods of millions in the region. They also noted that Pakistan faces significant security challenges, including water scarcity, climate change, and India's assertive actions as an upper riparian state. Therefore, the seminar concluded with a resolute commitment to uphold the Treaty and a fervent call to action for the international community.

OIC Summit: Deputy PM arrives in Gambia

ISLAMABAD (INP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Wednesday arrived in Gambia to represent Pakistan at the 15th Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Summit being held in Banjul on May 4-5. Dar announced his arrival in Gambia in a post on social media platform X, erstwhile Twitter.

Dar was received by the Gambian Minister of Petroleum and Energy Nani Juwara, Foreign Secretary of Pakistan Ambassador Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi and Ambassador of Pakistan to Senegal accredited to Gambia Saima Maymunah Sayed. The Foreign Office announced in a press release on

Wednesday that Dar would also attend the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers' Meeting preceding the summit on May 2-3. During this meeting, ministers will discuss and finalise the agenda and outcome documents for the summit.

The summit is being convened at a critical juncture for the Muslim Ummah, particularly as the conflict affecting the people of Gaza persists without resolution. It presents an important opportunity for OIC leaders to address the dire situation in Gaza and present a unified stance on the Palestinian question. According to the press release, "At the Summit, the deputy prime minister and

foreign minister will speak about Pakistan's perspective on the ongoing genocide in Gaza, the right to self-determination of the people of Jammu & Kashmir, imperatives of solidarity and unity of the Ummah, rising Islamophobia, issues of climate change, terrorism, and other contemporary global challenges."

The statement further emphasises, "He will underline the need to find collective solutions to challenges confronting the Muslim Ummah." On the sidelines of the summit, the deputy prime minister and foreign minister will hold bilateral meetings with leaders and foreign ministers in attendance, concluded the statement.



LAHORE: JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman addressing National Palestine Conference.

Russia seizes more ground in Ukraine

MOSCOW: Russian forces committed a division to take several more villages in Ukraine's east during the past week, as Ukraine's European allies frantically increased their weapons

launched a massive assault on Ocheretyne, two kilometres further north, and had reached its western outskirts by Monday.

Lieutenant Colonel Nazar Voloshyn, spokesman for Ukraine's Khortytzia group defending this area, said Russia had committed four brigades to the offensive, about 20,000 men, and that Ukrainian reserves had been sent in to bolster defences. Fierce battles for Ocheretyne continued on Tuesday, but the Russian advance had already created a five-kilometre-deep salient into Ukrainian free territory. The Telegraph, a British newspaper, reported that Russia had attacked during a brigade-level rotation on the front lines.

While Russia focused

on the Avdiivka area, its attacks lessened in the other area of intense conflict, Chasiv Yar, some 45km (28 miles) to the north, which Russian forces have been trying to capture as a gateway to the rest of Donetsk. But on Monday, they unleashed their fury here, too, focusing on two villages to the north and south of Chasiv Yar in a now familiar Russian attempt at operational encirclement.

"There were attempts by the enemy to bypass Chasiv Yar near the villages of Ivanivske and Bohdanivka. In this way, the enemy wants to take the city in a vice, go around it in a circle," Voloshyn told a telethon, adding that all assaults had been repelled. — Aljazeera