

Security of students

ISLAMABAD (APP): On the instructions of President Asif Ali Zardari, the President House Sunday contacted the Pakistani ambassador in Kyrgyzstan expressing concern over the violent situation in the county. The President House stressed the need to take immediate measures to protect Pakistani students in Bishkek besides providing a conducive environment for Pakistani students to continue their education.



@thefrontierpost

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

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIXI

No. 117

Regd. No. 241

ZIQAAD 11 1445 -- MONDAY, MAY 20 2024

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

PRICE. 30

175 more students return to Pakistan from Bishkek

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Around 175 more students returned from Bishkek on Sunday after a flight arrived at Lahore airport. Students who were stranded in Bishkek due to recent mob attacks targeting foreign nationals were received by Information Minister Ataullah Tara upon their arrival.

Addressing the media, the information minister stated that all preparations have been finalized at Lahore and Islamabad airports to facilitate the return of students from the capital of Kyrgyzstan.

According to the details, the two special flights KA-4575 and KA-6571 carrying approximately 360 Pakistani students from Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, landed at Islamabad and Lahore International Airport, respectively.

The student's families and relatives are present at the airport to receive their loved ones who arrived in Lahore and Islamabad.

Meanwhile, separate counters have been set up in the international arrival lounge for the passengers of the flight.

Additionally, the FIA has issued orders to hasten the immigration process for students arriving from Bishkek.

PPI adds: As the recently unfolding situation in Kyrgyzstan has put the students at risk, the first flight carrying 180 passengers has reached Lahore.

According to a report on Saturday, the flight KA-571 landed at the Lahore Airport. Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi welcomed the students at the airport where he was flanked by the airport's Chief Operating Officer and several senior officials.

Airport Manager Nazir Ahmad Khan said separate counters have been set up in the international arrival lounge for the passengers arriving in

the flight while orders have also been issued to the FIA for the timely immigration of students and passengers coming from Bishkek.

Sources said two separate flights would also bring 360 students stuck in Kyrgyzstan tomorrow with one

flight to land in Lahore and the other in the capital. Dozens of Pakistani students were wounded in mob violence around student hostels in Bishkek, capital of Kyrgyzstan, on Friday night, Dunya News reported.

No casualties in Bishkek incident:Dar

LAHORE (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar expressed his regret over the unfortunate incident in Bishkek, emphasizing that the government stands firmly with the victims during this challenging time.

At a press conference held on Sunday, alongside Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar and Federal Minister for Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan Affairs Ameer Muqam, Dar reassured that medical treatment for injured Pakistani students is a top priority. He confirmed that all students are safe and stated that the incident stemmed from a misunderstanding, with false information being circulated on social media for political purposes.

"The Bishkek incident was due to a misunderstanding, and various nationalities including Pakistani, Indian, Bangladeshi, and Arab students were affected. False reports are being spread on social media, which is disgusting," said Dar.

He clarified that misleading information, such as mislabeling a Bangladeshi student's picture as Pakistani, is being propagated. He dismissed claims of assault against a female student as unfounded, citing confirmation from the Kyrgyz government.

He highlighted the immediate response by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stating, "An emergency unit was activated right after the incident. Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and the entire government machinery are closely monitoring the situation." He mentioned that despite the Kyrgyz ambassador being on leave, his deputy provided detailed information on Saturday, ensuring full communication between the governments.

The Deputy Prime Minister revealed that six Pakistani students were among the sixteen injured foreign students, currently receiving treatment in three different hospitals. He underscored the strong fraternal relations with Kyrgyzstan, emphasizing that the incident was not targeted against Pakistan. "The situation is now normal, with Kyrgyz students visiting the injured as a gesture of goodwill. Security has been heightened in Kyrgyzstan as a precaution," he added.

Due to the incident, a planned visit was canceled at the request of the Kyrgyz government, the minister said. Instead, he added that two officers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were dispatched to Bishkek. He assured that continuous contact is maintained with the students and their parents through the embassy.

Gandapur says to send special flight to bring back students

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, has decided to arrange special flights to repatriate Pakistani students and citizens stranded in Kargil, Afghanistan. The first special flight will depart today (Monday), while the second flight is scheduled for tomorrow (Tuesday) to transport Pakistanis from Kargil to Peshawar.

Any Pakistani stranded in Kargil can contact the following WhatsApp numbers: 0343-3333049 / 0344-0955550 to avail of this free air service on a first-come, first-served basis. For information regarding the families of Pakistanis stranded in

Kargil, they can contact toll-free number 1700.

In a video message released as part of this initiative, the Chief Minister emphasized that it is our responsibility to safely repatriate Pakistanis stranded in Kargil. The provincial government has committed to providing free air service not only for the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but also for citizens from other provinces to facilitate their return home.

The Chief Minister further stated in his message that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government will ensure that all necessary facilities are provided for the safe return of all Pakistani citizens, regardless of their province of origin. He expressed hope

for the swift resolution of the issue in Kargil and prayed for the safe return of all Pakistanis.

He assured that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has stood by the people in the past, continues to do so, and will remain committed to their welfare in the future.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has pledged his government support to facilitate the return of Pakistani students stranded in Kyrgyzstan, emphasizing their importance as the nation's future.

Expressing concern over the students' predicament, Chief Minister Gandapur announced the readiness of the KPK government to cover the

expenses for their safe repatriation to Pakistan.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan echoed the students' dissatisfaction with the government's protective measures in Kyrgyzstan, calling for their immediate evacuation.

In response to Khan's plea, the Deputy Foreign Minister of Kyrgyzstan assured that legal action would be taken against those responsible for the attack on students. Pakistani Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan, Hasan Zaigham, met with the Kyrgyz Deputy Foreign Minister to address concerns regarding Pakistani students' safety in Bishkek.

Arrangements for MBS visit reviewed

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah on Sunday reviewed preparations for the visit of the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia Mohammed Bin Salman Al Saud to Pakistan.

Ishaq Dar underlined that the people of Pakistan were eagerly looking forward to the visit of His Royal Highness at a mutually agreed date.

During a telephonic conversation, the two leaders also discussed the robust bilateral relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, exploring various avenues for further strengthening cooperation across multiple sectors. This dialogue underscored the profound and enduring partnership between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

The ministers also discussed the grave situation in Gaza and other pressing regional and global developments of mutual concern.



TEHRAN: A screen grab from video released by Mehr News Agency via Telegram shows a rescue team arriving at the site of a helicopter crash in Iran.

The Frontier Post

Food aid shipment in Gaza

DUBAI (Arab News): A UAE aid shipment carrying 252 tons of food arrived in Gaza bound for the north of the enclave, Emirates News Agency reported on Sunday. The shipment arrived via the maritime corridor from Larnaca in Cyprus. The delivery involved cooperation from the US, Cyprus, UK, EU and UN. The supplies were unloaded at UN warehouses in Deir Al-Balah and are awaiting distribution to Palestinians in need.



RAWALPINDI: General Angus J. Campbell, Chief of Defence Forces Australia, paid a visit to General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Sunday.

Campbell calls on Asim Munir

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: General Angus J. Campbell, Chief of Defence Forces Australia, paid a visit to General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Sunday.

During their meeting, they engaged in discussions on matters of bilateral professional interest, with a particular focus on the global and regional security environment and cooperation between the two Armed Forces.

Both parties expressed a mutual desire to further expand military-to-military cooperation.

The Australian Chief of Defence Forces expressed his admiration for the high professional standards maintained by the Pakistan Armed Forces, their notable achievements in the fight against terrorism, and their continued efforts to promote regional peace and stability.

Iran's President helicopter crashes

DUBAI (Reuters): A helicopter carrying Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and his foreign minister crashed on Sunday as it was crossing mountain terrain in heavy fog, an Iranian official told Reuters, and rescuers were struggling to reach the site of the incident.

The official said the lives of Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian were "at risk following the helicopter crash", which happened on the way back from a visit to the border with Azerbaijan in Iran's northwest.

"We are still hopeful but information coming from the crash site is very concerning," said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Iranian state media said bad weather was the cause of the crash and was complicat-

ing rescue efforts. The chief of staff of Iran's army ordered all the resources of the army and the elite Revolutionary Guard to be put to use in search and rescue operations.

"It is dark and it has started raining, but the search continues. Rescue teams have reached the area ... however, the rain has created mud, making the search difficult," a local reporter told state TV. State TV had earlier stopped all its regular programming to show prayers being held for Raisi across the country and, in a corner of the screen, live coverage of rescue teams deployed on foot in the mountainous area in heavy fog.

The rescue teams were expected to reach the probable site of the crash later on Sunday evening.

The crash comes at a time

of growing dissent within Iran over an array of political, social and economic crises. Iran's clerical rulers face international pressure over Tehran's disputed nuclear programme and its deepening military ties with Russia during the war in Ukraine.

Raisi, 63, was elected president in 2021, and since taking office has ordered a tightening of morality laws, overseen a bloody crackdown on anti-government protests and pushed hard in nuclear talks with world powers.

In Iran's dual political system, split between the clerical establishment and the government, it is Raisi's 85-year-old mentor Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, supreme leader since 1989, who has the final say on all major policies.

US national security adviser, MBS discuss security deal

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP): President Joe Biden's national security adviser met early Sunday with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to discuss what the kingdom described as the "semi-final" version of a wide-ranging security agreement between the countries.

The announcement by the state-run Saudi Press Agency comes as the strategic deal had been upended after Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on Israel that killed 1,200 people and saw 250 others taken hostage back to the Gaza Strip.

In the time since, a punishing Israeli airstrike campaign and ground offensive there has killed over 35,000 Palestinians, endangering the security deal that had included Saudi Arabia diplomatically recognizing Israel for the first time since its founding in 1948.

Saudi state media released no images of Jake Sullivan and Prince Mohammed meeting in Dhahran, a city in the kingdom's far east that's home to its state-run oil giant, the Saudi Arabian Oil Co. known as Saudi Aramco.

"The semi-final version of the draft strategic agreements between the kingdom and the United States of America, which are almost being finalized — and what is being worked on between the two sides in the Palestinian issue to find a credible path — were discussed," the statement released after the talks said.

That included "a two-state solution that meets the aspirations and legitimate rights of the Palestinian people" and "the situation in Gaza and the need to stop the war there and facilitate the entry of humanitarian aid," the statement added.

Saudi Arabia has long called for an independent Palestinian state to be created along Israel's 1967 borders, with east Jerusalem as its capital. However, that likely may be untenable for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose government hinges on support from hard-liners who oppose a two-state solution and support Israeli settlements on lands Palestinians want for that state.

The White House had acknowledged Sullivan's trip and that he would later head on to Israel, where

he's scheduled to meet Netanyahu on Sunday. However, there was no immediate statement from the U.S. on the discussions, other than to say they would be "including the war in Gaza and ongoing efforts to achieve a lasting peace and security in the region."

Saudi Arabia has long relied — like other Gulf Arab nations — on the U.S. to be the security guarantor for the wider Middle East as tensions over Iran's nuclear program in recent years have spilled over into a series of attacks. The proposal now being discussed likely would deepen that, and also reportedly includes access to advanced weapons and possibly trade deals as well.

Saudi Arabia has also pushed for nuclear cooperation in the deal that includes America allowing it to enrich uranium in the kingdom — something that worries nonproliferation experts, as spinning centrifuges opens the door to a possible weapons program. Prince Mohammed has said the kingdom would pursue a nuclear weapon if Iran had one. Iran in recent weeks has increasingly threatened it could do so.

31 more die from Israeli strike at refugee camp

GAZA STRIP (AFP): Palestinian Territories: Gaza's civil defense agency said Sunday that an Israeli air strike targeting a house at a refugee camp in the center of the Palestinian territory killed at least 31 people, updating an earlier toll.

"The civil defense crew were able to recover 31 martyrs and 20 wounded from a house belonging to the Hassan family, which was targeted by the Israeli occupation forces in the Nuseirat camp," Gaza civil defense agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal told journalists.

He said rescue workers were continuing to search for missing people under the rubble. Earlier on Sunday the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital had said it had received the bodies of 20 people killed in the strike which witnesses said occurred around 3:00 am local time.

The Israeli army when contacted by AFP asked for specific coordinates of the strike.

Palestinian official news agency Wafa reported that the wounded included several children. Fierce battles and heavy Israeli bombardments have been reported in the central Nuseirat camp since the military launched a ground opera-

tion on the southern city of Rafah in early May.

Palestinian militants and Israeli troops have also clashed in north Gaza's Jabalia camp for days now.

Witnesses said several other houses were targeted in air strikes during the night across Gaza, and that strikes and artillery shelling also hit parts of Rafah during the night. The Israeli military said two more soldiers were killed in Gaza the previous day.

The military said 282 soldiers have been killed so far in the Gaza military campaign since the start of the ground offensive on October 27.



CM reviews progress on 7 mega projects

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Sunday paid visit to seven different under-construction projects, reviewed its progress and removed bottlenecks causing delays in the completion of Malir Expressway and Karimabad Underpass.

The CM expressed his displeasure over the shifting of K-Electric and Sui Gas Company's installations, which have caused a delay in the completion of the Malir Expressway.

He suspended SHO Korangi for his failure to stop dumping debris and garbage along Korangi Causeway and directed SSP Korangi to personally monitor the area where different projects Malir Expressway, New Jam Sadiq Bridge and Korangi Causeway Bridge were being constructed.

The CM was accompanied by provincial ministers Sharjeel Inam Memon, Syed Nasir Shah, Saeed Ghani and Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab, Chairman P&D Najam Shah, Commissioner Karachi Hassan Naqvi, Secretary Local Govt Khalid Hyder Shah, Secretary Transport Asad Zamin, Project Director Malir Expressway Niaz Soomro, PD Mega Projects Tariq Mughal and Engineer Khalid Masoor briefed the chief minister during his

visit to different projects.

The CM was told that the Malir Expressway project was 38.661 km starting from Jam Sadiq Bridge to Kathore at M9 was started on May 12, 2022 and its completion period was 26 months. It is a three-plus three (six-lane) project and would have six interchanges. To a question, Niaz Soomro told the CM that the progress of Malir expressway segment-I from Korangi to Quaidabad has 70 per cent physical progress while segment-II from Quaidabad to Kathore has 30 per cent.

The CM expressed his displeasure when he was told that the completion of Segment-I had been delayed by three months due to the shifting of utilities by K-Electric and Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC).

The reasons behind the delay were stated to be that K-Electric has to shift its remaining four installations for which it has already been paid. The K-Electric has also to shift its High-Tension Line (HTL) at Jam Sadiq so that its connectivity with the Malir expressway could be made.

The CM was also told that the SSGC had to lower its three Pressure lines at chainage, but they were delaying the process., therefore work on the project has been delayed. The chief

minister expressed his displeasure on K-Electric and SSGC and directed his secretary to fix his meeting with both companies at CM House at the earliest.

The chief minister was told that there were some encroachment issues at the existing loop of Quaidabad Interchange and some land issues which needed to be resolved for completion of the project in time. The CM directed DC Malir to immediately remove encroachment [from the loop of Quaidabad Interchange], resolve the land issues and report him. Mr Shah directed the SSPs Korangi and Malir to provide foolproof security to the workers working on the Malir Expressway.

The CM was told that the New Jam Sadiq Bridge was a part of the BRT Yellow Line Corridor. The contract includes the construction of the Jam Sadiq Bridge over the Malir River and the construction of the New Jam Sadiq Bridge as the BRT Yellow Line Corridor. The project cost has been estimated at Rs12.531 billion. The work on the project has been started. The CM directed the project director to speed up the work. The chief minister was told that the Bridge at Korangi Causeway was being constructed for Rs6499.551 million. The total length of the route is 2.30 km,

including one km bridge structure and a 1.30-meter road over an embankment. It would have a 300-meter link road to Malir Expressway and a 50-meter link road to Creek Avenue.

It would be a three plus three lanes and three-lane roundabout. The CM was told that the work was started in July 2023 and would be completed within 24 months. The CM expressed his displeasure when he noticed that debris and garbage were being dumped at the site of the Korangi Causeway. The CM immediately suspended the SHO Korangi Industrial Area and directed the SSP to personally monitor so that no builder could dump the debris along the road.

The construction of a two-plus-two-lane underpass has been launched for Rs1350 million in District Central. Its physical progress is 35 per cent. The CM was told that there was a waterline under the project for which arrangements were being made to speed up the work on the project. The CM directed the project director/KDA to expedite the work as it has caused problems in the smooth flow of traffic.

The scope of works of the Bakhtiar Youth Center construction of a new Pavilion with a dressing

room, repair & Maintenance Existing of Pavilion, construction of the new Pavilion with a sitting area, public bath, cafeteria and gym (Left Side), repair of boundary wall, upgradation of cricket, including three cricket pitches, jogging track, installation of stadium light for polygonal Tower, construction of football ground with sitting area, construction of road, parking area and walkway.

The project also includes the construction of two staff Quarters, a generator room & Electrical Room, an underground Tank of 50,000 Gallons/water supply system and the development of a sewerage system.

The CM was told that the total project area was 15.380 acres, in which a cricket ground would be developed over an area of 7.6 acres, a football ground 7.779 acres, and the cost of the project was Rs594 million.

Rehabilitation / re-construction of the road from Cafe Piyala (near Gulberg Chowrangi) to Rashid Minhas Road (near UBL Sports Complex) is part of the Karachi Mega project launched for Rs902.131 million.

The road from UBL Sports Complex to Sareena Mobile Market (Sakhi Hasan) District Central is taken up Specially for the Community. This

is the very important main road to provide an easy approach to Cardiac Hospital, Imam Clinic, and Mamji Hospital, and easy access towards Naya Nazimabad, the same thickly populated area and also this will be the main access to the City area.

The length of the road is 4.05 km (dual carriageway) and its width is 9.753 meters to 11 meters. RCC drain has been developed along the road, and the electrification works have been completed. The entire work will be completed by the end of this week.

The cost of reconstruction of 6.4 km Shahrah-e-Noor Jahan from Abdullah College to Qalandria Chowk, District Central is Rs 3367.735 million. This is an important Shahrah to provide an easy approach to the same thickly populated area and also this will be the main access to the Inter Board office, Katti Pahari, Qasba Colony, Manghopir, Five Star, Sakhi Hassan, Nagan Chowrangi, Naya Nazimabad, Nusrat Bhutto Colony, and North Karachi. The project will provide ease in traffic moving through North Nazimabad and the North Karachi area. Shahrah-e-Noor Jahan is also an alternate artery to Shahrah-e-Shershah Suri. The project has been completed.



LAHORE: A large number of youngsters bathing in a canal to get relief from scorching hot weather due to increasing temperature in Provincial Capital. —APP Photo

Governor wants early start of agri varsity campus

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Punjab Governor, Sardar Saleem Haider Khan presided over an important meeting about Attock Campus of Pir Meher Ali Shah Aird Agriculture University Rawalpindi at Governor House Lahore.

In the meeting, Governor Punjab reviewed the progress on the project of Attock Campus of Pir Meher Ali Shah Aird Agriculture University. Governor Punjab directed to complete the Attock campus at the earliest.

He said that Attock Campus project should be

operational in the shortest possible time to provide the facility of higher education to the residents of Attock and suburban areas. He said that higher education has a key role in the development of the country.

Governor Punjab said that it is very important to provide higher education facilities in remote areas. It was also decided in the meeting that a committee comprising the officers of the Department of Agriculture will be formed. The committee members will visit the site and submit a report within ten days to ensure the earliest completion of the Attock campus.

In the meeting, Pro Vice-Chancellor Pir Meher Ali Shah Aird Agriculture University Rawalpindi Dr. Muhammad Naem, Special Secretary Agriculture Department Dr. Shahanshah Faisal Azeem, Additional Secretary Agriculture Captain Waqas, Principal Secretary to Governor Captain (retd) Saqib Zafar, Special Secretary Academics, Abdul Rehman, Shah, Additional Secretary Universities Tariq Mehmood and Member National Assembly from Attock Sheikh Aftab Ahmed and other officers were present.

Japanese ambassador calls on CM, discusses trade

LAHORE (APP): Japanese Ambassador Mr. Wada Mitsuhiro called on Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif here on Sunday.

All possible opportunities for strengthening trade, business and investment relations were discussed. Exchange of cultural and educational delegations between Punjab and Japan were also discussed in the meeting.

The CM said that Punjab is emerging as a major consumer market, adding that

there are good investment opportunities for Japanese companies in Punjab. Skilled young manpower of Punjab can perform unprecedentedly in Japanese institutions, she added.

The chief minister said the people-to-people interaction between Punjab and Japan is indispensable for the development of bilateral relations.

Moreover, the promotion of student-faculty programs between Punjab and Japan was also agreed in principle in the meeting.

Ambassador Wada Mitsuhiro said that Japan attaches great importance to its relations with Pakistan. He added, "We are determined to collaborate with the Punjab government for the development of technology." Mr. Wada Mitsuhiro apprised the CM that eleven Pakistani students are studying in Japan on MEXT scholarships for Masters/PhD degrees. He added a number of Japanese projects are ongoing for public welfare in Pakistan.



Encroachments on the rise in commercial areas

RAWALPINDI (APP): Contrary to the policy of the Punjab government and strict direction from the country's Superior Courts, the city managers have turned a blind eye to the ever-increasing encroachments in the city. All major markets and city bazaars are developing with encroachments and traffic congestion each day.

The areas of Raja Bazaar, Narankari Bazaar, Barra Bazaar, Dalgaran Bazaar, Mochi Bazaar, Namak Mandi Bazaar, Lal Haveli Bazaar, Sarafa Bazaar, Moti Bazaar, Iqbal Road, Commercial Market, Sadiqabad Bazaar, Muslim Town Bazaar, Khayaban Sir Syed Bazaar, Adiala Road Bazaars, and several other localities were bursting with encroachment.

Group leader Traders Association Commercial Market Rizwan Sunny told APP that the area of commercial had turned into an encroachment hub with the nexus of Municipal

Corporation officials and parking contractors. He said push-ups carts, Chips, Soda, Juice, hangers and Chat vendors were ruling the commercial market area and businessmen and vehicle movers were hostages in front of them.

General Secretary A n j u m a n - T a j r a a n Rawalpindi Tahir Taj Bhatti said that illegal encroachments on every city road were the leading cause of disturbing business activities in the city areas. He urged the Rawalpindi administration to widen the entrance of interior city bazaars including Talwara Bazaar, Trunk Bazaar, Bohri Bazar, Sabzi Mandi, Moti Bazar and other areas for the smooth flow of traffic.

Tahir added that due to a lack of parking space and encroachments in many markets of downtown areas, traders were losing customers and distances of minutes was being covered in hours due to acute road encroachments and traffic

stuckups. He said it had become challenging for foot travellers to move into the city's commercial areas due to heavy traffic jams and increasing encroachments.

Rani, a housewife from the Akal Garh area, said that she had planned to buy garments for my kids from Moti Bazar but was going back home as I could not move with my family due to a packed rush. When contacted, an official source in the Municipal Corporation Rawalpindi said that a grand anti-encroachment drive had been started in the city areas on the instruction of Commissioner

Rawalpindi Division Engineer Aamir Khattak for eliminating encroachments.

Vaccancy required

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PDMA warns of heat wave from 21 to 27

LAHORE (APP): In line with instructions from the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Punjab, the Health Department has issued a heatwave advisory.

According to a PDMA spokesperson, there is a severe risk of a heatwave in Punjab from May 21 to May 27, particularly affecting Bahawalpur, Rahim Yar Khan, Dera Ghazi Khan, and Multan districts in South Punjab. Hospitals have been instructed to set up heatwave counters, while supply and availability of all necessary medicines for heatwave prevention will be ensured.

PDMA Director General Irfan Ali Kathia emphasized that citizens are being informed about heatwave dangers through print, electronic, and social media. He urged all departments to cooperate and work together to combat the heatwave.

The public is advised to take precautionary measures: avoid exertion and exercise in strong sunlight, stay indoors unless necessary, wear light-color cotton clothing, and call the PDMA Helpline at 1129 or Rescue 1122 in emergencies.

144 drug dealers arrested during last 24 hours

LAHORE (APP): Police teams conducted 307 raids on hideouts of drug dealers across the province, 140 cases were registered and 144 accused were arrested during the last 24 hours.

The police recovered 54 kilograms of charas, 290-gram Ice and 1,683 litres of liquor from drug dealers.

A police spokesman said that 23,910 raids were conducted across the province since February 26, 11,137 FIRs were registered against the accused involved in drug-trafficking, and 11,860 accused were arrested. The police recovered 7,290-kg charas, 120-kg heroin, 250-kg opium, 37,290-kg Ice, and 142,549 litres of liquor from the accused.

Punjab bans wheat smuggling to KP

RAWALPINDI (INP): Punjab government has issued a notification to take steps to curb smuggling of wheat to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Provincial secretary food has directed for establishing check posts on main highways and handing over responsibility to eligible officers to prevent smuggling.

Meanwhile, the Flour Mills Association sources said that thousands of trucks have been parked

outside warehouses in KP. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has placed demand for supply of three Lac tonnes of wheat," sources said.

Flour Mills Association sources said that the KP government purchasing wheat at the price of Rs. 3,900 per maund. "The wheat being sold between 2,800 to 3,000 rupees per maund in the open market in Punjab," sources said.

"The government creating more difficulties for farmers by imposing restrictions," sources added.

It is to be mentioned here that delay in the government's wheat procurement drive in Punjab has caught the growers off guard, which have produced bumper crop of wheat in this season. The farmers have been forced to sell the wheat at the price down to the government fixed price.

CCPO orders timely submission of challans

LAHORE (APP): CCPO Lahore Bilal Siddique Kamyana issued directives for timely submission of challans and swift disposal of pending cases.

He said this while presiding over an important meeting of senior police officers in his office here on Sunday. Matters regarding drug-related cases under investigation and the submission of objectionable challans were discussed in the meeting.

The CCPO Lahore directed the divisional SPs to improve coordination with the prosecution department. He stated that he is personally monitoring pending cases on a daily basis and will regularly receive reports from the SPs. He stressed that the registration of false cases is unacceptable under any circumstances.

The CCPO Lahore directed that cases should be registered promptly and investigated on merit along with completion of challans on time. He ordered intensifying the campaign against organized crimes including drug offenses and emphasized the need to provide swift justice to the victims by promptly finalizing cases and submitting challans.

Bilal Siddique Kamyana highlighted that investigations should be conducted based on merit, justice and legal requirements.

Sindh intermediate exams postponed

KARACHI (INP): The Sindh government has postponed the intermediate exams across the province for five days in the wake of ongoing heat wave.

The postponement was approved by Sindh Chief Minister (CM) Murad Ali Shah, as recommended by provincial Minister for Universities and Boards Muhammad Ali Malkani.

The intermediate exams, originally slated to start on May 22, will now begin on May 27. A spokesperson said that the Universities and Boards Department changed the date for intermediate exams as per CM Shah's

directives.

The citizens of Karachi have been left sweltering due to the current heat spell that has gripped the metropolis for the past few weeks and a significant rise in temperatures is expected during the next 10 days.

The Pakistan Meteorological Department has predicted that the country may experience three heat waves in various cities during the next 25 days.

The presence of high pressure in the upper atmosphere will result in heat-wave conditions in most parts of the country, especially Punjab and Sindh

from May 21 and a severe heatwave from May 23 to 27, the advisory warned.

Daytime temperatures are "likely to remain 4 to 6 degrees centigrade above normal" in Sindh and Punjab from May 21 to 23 and six to 8°C from May 23 to 27.

In Islamabad, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Azad Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan and Balochistan, day temperatures are likely to remain four to 6°C above normal from May 21 to 27.

The advisory wanted authorities to remain alert and take necessary measures to deal with the heat-wave spell.

Meeting of honorary CGs of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A meeting of the Honorary Consuls of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was held at the Serena Hotel in Islamabad, where Mr. Asad Saleem, Honorary Consul of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was unanimously elected as the new Dean of Honorary Consuls of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He will assume the office of the Dean effective June 1, 2024.

The meeting was attended by Engr. Said Mahmood (Tajikistan), Senator Faisal Saleem (Bulgaria), Asad Saleem (Bosnia & Herzegovina), Ammad Rasheed (Tunisia), Nawabzada Fazal Karim (Japan), and Asad Saifullah (Czech Republic).



Attock Khurd Railway Station, a great tourists attraction



PESHAWAR (APP): The Attock Khurd Railway Station at the bank of Indus, which is emerging as attractive tourist spot requires steps by the authorities of Pakistan Railways and Tourism to facilitate tourists in reaching to the spot.

The Railway Station established in the year 1884 is adjacent to the British era constructed master-piece of construction and architecture on Indus River is a scenic spot situated in gorge and surrounded by green hills.

Pakistan Railways is operating special Safari Train Service for tourists from Rawalpindi on

every Sunday to see historic station and bridge on the River Indus. The Bridge was constructed in 1880 and is still used as railway crossing on the river. For a period of century (1880-1979) the bridge was used for both trains and vehicular traffic as single road link on GT. Road between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab.

For visiting the place, tourists from Punjab can get ticket from Railway Station Rawalpindi. However, a special arrangement is required for visitors from Peshawar. Those interested in visit are required to either contact

the office of the Divisional Superintendent, Pakistan Railways Peshawar, which used to arrange a buggy for them while taking into account the expenses of Pakistan Railways on their transportation.

The second procedure is that they will have to take ride in railway from Peshawar to Jehangira Station and then take any mean of transportation to reach the station and bridge.

The initiative of the Safari Train was taken in collaboration with Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) to promote tourism and also earned revenue



for Pakistan Railways.

On arrival at Attock Khurd Railway Station, the each and every guest is received by the Station Master M. A Jehangir with a smiling face. Other staffers are included two Assistant Station Masters and other supporting staff. A good furnish room as also serving as rest room where guests and tourists use to sit and relax from the fatigue of the journey.

The station also has a museum housing various railway equipment, like oil heaters, hand signal lights, siren, rest chair and an original model of the steam engine designed by the inventor

George Stephenson. Despite the passage of a period of over 140 years, all equipment is still in working condition. The waiting room for ticket seekers is turned into the museum.

The station is also beautified with the historical portraits regarding initial days of the invention of railways and George Stephenson, the father of the railways.

Beside the equipment the visitors take interest in visiting the railway track on the upper floor of the bridge to watch the engineering expertise of the Britishers and flow of the water of River

Indus. The lower portion of the bridge was reserved for vehicular transportation and still good conditions and local residents are still crossing it either by motorcycles or on feet to meet their relatives residing in the nearby villages. However, motorists are strictly prohibited to cross the river on their vehicles.

Only few measures required by the government to facilitate tourists to the spot are the establishment of a full-pledge restaurant and a tuck shop.

"Pakistan Railways has invited tenders to establish these facilities at the station, M.A Jehangiri,

the Station Master when asked in this regard. He as presently the station has no ticket issuance office and trains are only passing through it.

In British era period, he said that station was established to facilitate the residents of 25 villagers in boarding and deboarding. However, he said since long no such facilities are available at the station. The first train in Pakistan was operated on the morning May 13, 1861, when Sindh Express with 200 passengers on board travelled from Karachi Cantonment Station to Kotri.

He said that due to its location and historic importance, the station is attracting both foreign and local tourists, saying that beside, lawyers, students and other section of the society, a group of the diplomats of various European and other countries have visited the station and the bridge.

Shehzad Butt, a Peshawar-based journalist, who was also amongst the visitors also complained of lacking the facility like restaurant or a tuck shop at this historic and tourists' attractive railway station called for the establishment of such facilities with immediate effect to facilitate visitors at the spot.

Young tennis star Shayan Afridi meets IGFC North



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Shayan Afridi, a promising young tennis player from Khyber district, is rapidly emerg-

ing as a beacon of hope for the youth in Pakistan. The talented athlete has distinguished himself in tennis, achieving remarkable success at the provin-

cial, national and international levels. His impressive accomplishments include 8 titles in the Under-10 category, 12 titles in the Under-12

category and 3 titles in the Under-14 category, culminating in his recognition as the National Tennis Champion.

Shayan Afridi is set to represent Pakistan in the International Tennis Championship, which will be held in Nepal on May 18. In a significant event, Shayan Afridi had the honor of meeting Inspector General Frontier Corps North, Major General Noor Wali Khan, at the historic Balahisar Fort in Peshawar.

Major General Noor Wali Khan lauded the young star's exceptional talent and encouraged him to continue excelling in his sport, aiming to bring pride to Pakistan on the international stage. To support Shayan in his dual pursuits of sports and education, Major General Noor Wali Khan awarded him a cash prize.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi inquiring after the health of Justice Musarrat Hilali during his visit to Peshawar Institute of Cardiology.

Speen Jumaat reconstruction on urgent basis demanded

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Muslim League-N leader Arbab Khizr Hayat has demanded immediate reconstruction of the dilapidated Speen Jumaat situated on University Road, expressing concern that there is a risk of collapse at any time, potentially leading to loss of lives and valuable property. He emphasized the urgency of the situation, particularly highlighting the presence of innocent children acquiring religious education inside the mosque, whose lives are at risk due to its deteriorating condition.

journalists, Arbab Khizr Hayat criticized certain unnamed political figures for politicizing the reconstruction of the mosque, suggesting they are exploiting religious sentiments for their own political gains. He clarified that the mosque falls under the ownership of the Department of Auqaf (Religious Endowments), urging them to initiate immediate reconstruction. He denounced rumors spread by malicious elements claiming that the provincial government intends to demolish the mosque and replace it with a plaza, terming such claims baseless.

Arbab Khizr Hayat asserted that it is imperative to prioritize the safety and preservation of the mosque, citing Islamic principles that emphasize the importance of safeguarding places of worship. He accused individuals attempting to politicize the mosque's reconstruction of being enemies of Islam and stated that the people of Peshawar are well aware of their intentions.

He praised the provincial government's decision to undertake the comprehensive reconstruction of the historic mosque and commended the support of the entire nation for this initiative.

Action against illegal currency business continue

PESHAWAR (APP): The FIA crackdown operations continued against Hawala, Hundi and illegal currency exchange in Swabi and Peshawar here on Sunday.

Major Operations of Commercial Banking Circle Peshawar in its operations have arrested 5 suspects in raid operations, FIA spokesman said. The alleged accused was arrested from Din Trade Center and Sadar area of Peshawar and Lower Dir, FIA spokesman informed.

The alleged accused were found to be involved in Hawala hundi and illegal currency exchange and the accused were doing currency exchange business without license, FIA spokesman said. Among the arrested accused are Khalid Khan, Shayaz Khan, Shoaib, Asghar and Amjad Ali, the FIA spokesman said.

A huge amount of domestic and foreign currency was recovered from the possession of the accused and a total of more than 48, 56000 Pakistani rupees was recovered from the possession of the accused.

Upskill KP Program empowers 300 women, youth in digital skills

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The groundbreaking Upskill Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Program, a collaborative effort between atomcamp and IMSciences University, Peshawar, concluded with a grand ceremony and career fair.

This transformative 4-month online training initiative, funded by the Sustainable Energy and Economic Development (SEED) program, successfully trained 300 participants in the high-demand fields of Digital Marketing, Full Stack Web Development, and Data Science & AI.

The Upskill Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Program was specifically designed to empower the women and youth of the region. With a strong focus on women's empowerment, the program successfully trained 200 women, equipping them with industry-ready skills and paving the way for their active participation in the digital economy.

The program's success is a testament to the dedication of atomcamp and IMSciences University, Peshawar, in fostering a community of lifelong learners and professionals.

By providing immersive learning experiences, real-world projects, and personalized mentorship, atomcamp has been instrumental in nurturing a new generation of Data Scientists and AI professionals who are ready to make significant contributions to the global Data and AI ecosystem.

The event featured participant testimonials and interviews with chief guests, offering insights into the impact of the training program on their careers and lives.

Media agencies in Peshawar were present to cover the event in full detail, highlighting the achievements and stories of these talented individuals.

The party leader said economic and social injustices are escalating with each passing day.

On the other hand, he added the country has caught up in a mess of problems owing to the inability of the rulers.

Faiq said farmers, traders, industrialists, working class and poor people have become highly upset under the prevailing circumstances.

He said these political elites and opportunist/cruel segments are responsible for elevating miseries of

The party leader said they wanted to free people and the system from this oppressiveness and cruelty.

Our quest isn't for gaining power but ATP is struggling for delegating powers and authority to ordinary people, aiming to make collective leadership and wisdom a source of country's progress and people's prosperity.

We want to envoy a message of public authority and justice and a manifesto at every nook and corner of the country, enabling people to struggle for their rights and authorities. Shah went on to say that Pakistan's economy is still at crossroads, stating economic experts clearly said political parties were lacking any economic revival agenda/plan.

The ATP chief said politicians/rulers have no agenda for public welfare and economic revival people as they are all only greedy and hunger of power gain and slaves of personal interests, and give betrayal to people.

Faiq stresses unified efforts to steer country out from crisis

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Muhammad Faiq Shah, founder and chairman of the Amun Taraqqi Party said his party has a clear roadmap of progress and stability and urged all institutions and stakeholders to be united under a single platform to steer the country out of the current crisis.

Shah while talking to a group of reporters here on Sunday held present and previous rulers responsible for pushing the country years back in all sectors.

He said these political elites and opportunist/cruel segments are responsible for elevating miseries of

He said these political elites and opportunist/cruel segments are responsible for elevating miseries of

Women empowerment vital in bringing about positive social change

PESHAWAR (APP): Amidst the challenges of conservative traditions and limited opportunities, the women of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are resilient to prove their mettle in almost every field of life by breaking barriers and carving out spaces of influence in their respective communities.

Through their determination and unwavering spirit, these rural women of the province are not just challenging the status quo; they are rewriting the stories of empowerment, paving the way for a brighter and more inclusive future for all.

Fatima, a determined woman in her early thirties,

residing in a small village of Swat nestled within the picturesque landscape of the province. Her story epitomizes the transformative journey of empowerment that many women in rural areas are undertaking.

Despite societal pressure and gender norms that dictate a woman's role solely within the confines of her home, Fatima dared to dream differently. Her journey began with education, a cornerstone of empowerment for women across the globe.

In a region where access to education is often limited, however, Fatima's pursuit of knowledge was nothing short of revolutionary.

With unwavering support from her family, she defied conventions and enrolled in a local school, determined to break the cycle of illiteracy that had plagued her community for generations.

As Fatima delved into the world of learning, she discovered her passion for entrepreneurship. Armed with newfound skills and knowledge, she embarked on a mission to uplift her fellow women by providing them with economic opportunities.

Together with a group of like-minded women, she founded a cooperative aimed at producing and selling traditional handicrafts.

Through their collective efforts, Fatima and her companions transformed their humble dwellings into bustling hubs of creativity and commerce.

From intricately embroidered textiles to handcrafted pottery, their products captivated local markets, earning them recognition for their craftsmanship and ingenuity.

With each step forward, Fatima and her peers shattered stereotypes and defied expectations. Their voices reverberated in village councils and public forums, advocating for gender equality, access to healthcare, and protection against domestic violence.

Fatima's story is but one thread of women's empowerment unfolding across the rural KP. From Swat to Dir, women are reclaiming their rightful place as architects of their own destinies. They are challenging conventions, reshaping norms, and amplifying their voices.

Similarly, another inspiring example is Saima, a young woman from a remote village in Swat, who defied her family's opposition to pursue higher education and become a teacher.

She now runs a school for girls in her village, providing them with a safe place to learn and grow.

Saima's school has a total of

250 students, with 120 girls and 130 boys. The school has classes from Grade 1 to Grade 10, with an average of 25 students per class.

Naila Kiran of DI Khan said that government should initiate skill-based education and create employment opportunities for women.

She said that women had best quality of skills like embroidery, handicraft and pottery but due to lack of government interest the skills go wasted.

Mashal Azam Yousafzai Advisor to Chief Minister on Social Welfare and Women Empowerment told APP that Women of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa possess a diverse

array of skills that contribute significantly to the region's development and progress.

From traditional handicrafts like embroidery, weaving, and pottery to modern professions such as medicine, education, and entrepreneurship, women in KP excel in various fields.

Their resilience and determination enable them to overcome cultural and societal barriers, empowering them to pursue their passions and contribute to the economy.

Their ability to mobilize communities and bring about positive change showcases their innate leadership skills to improve lives of those around them.



In brief

Paramedics elections
F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Insaf Health Forum (IHF) backed by the Pakistan Tahreek Insaf on Sunday announced to take active part in the upcoming general elections for the paramedical association. The announcement was made during a meeting of the forum held at the district headquarters hospital Timergara with its president Muhammad Iqbal in the chair. The meeting was attended by health workers affiliated with the PTL. The IHF vice presidents Nasrud Din Jan, Muhammad Zubair, information secretary Aziz Khan and others addressed the meeting. The speakers said that IHF was a key forum and its workers performed duties in all health units. They said the forum had decided to take active part in the upcoming elections for the Paramedical staff association. A seven-member committee was also formed to negotiate an alliance with other groups in the Lower Dir district. The IHF district president Muhammad Iqbal said that they respected the paramedic's leadership and believed in serving the community. He said the IHF had invited the provincial health minister to visit the DHQ hospital Timergara and during his visit the IHF would apprise him of the problems faced by paramedics.

'Govt to improve living standard'

SIALKOT (PPI): Defense Minister and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) leader Khawaja Asif Sunday reaffirmed the commitment of the Punjab government to improve the quality of life for the common man. He shared his remarks on the Punjab CM's performance in a ceremony in Sialkot. Asif lauded Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz for swiftly launching public service initiatives within her first three months in office, following in the footsteps of her leaders, Nawaz Sharif and Shehbaz Sharif. Highlighting the proactive stance of CM Maryam Nawaz, Asif commended her efforts to bring essential services directly to the citizens' doorsteps. He emphasized her awareness of the challenges facing healthcare facilities in Sialkot, specifically mentioning her forthcoming visit to the District Headquarter Hospital (DHQ) in Sialkot. As part of the government's initiatives to revolutionize the healthcare sector, Asif spotlighted the introduction of mobile clinics, heralding them as a boon for rural areas.

400kg unhygienic meat disposed off

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) on Sunday raided in Chowk Azam area and seized 400 kilograms unhygienic meat and caught one butcher while three others managed to flee. According to PFA's spokesperson, the Authority's safety team on a tip off special branch, along with livestock team raided and caught butchers Nazir alias Naja and Umair Hussain while supplying unhygienic meat. The team caught Umair Hussain while Nazir and two unknown butchers managed to flee from there. 400 kilograms of unhygienic meat of cow was disposed off which was used to be supplied to various hotels. Cases were registered against two nominated and two unknown butchers with Chowk Azam police station.

Ready to play bridge role between KP, federal: Kundi

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Sunday said that he is ready to play the role of bridge between the federal and provincial government.

Governor Kundi stressed the importance of addressing issues with reason rather than resorting to indecorous behavior.

He said this while addressing the public in Malakand.

"I extend an invitation once again to the Chief Minister KP to visit the Governor House, and I am willing to visit the Chief Minister's House if they feel uncomfortable," said Governor Kundi, highlighting his commitment to collaboration for the province's welfare.

Expressing readiness to meet with the Chief

Minister at any time for the province's rights, Governor Kundi expressed his intent to pursue the province's case through the appropriate forum.

"I invite the provincial government and all political parties to join hands with me in fighting for the province's cause," Governor Kundi urged, underlining the Governor House's role as the home for all political factions.

Governor Kundi assured that political rivalries should be settled through elections, emphasizing the need for effective governance.

"We will not impose Governor's Rule; Peoples Party believes in democracy," Governor Kundi asserted, outlining his party's stance.

Regarding the electricity issue, Governor Kundi

advised the federal government to transfer all three power companies to the province, holding the provincial government responsible for its management and outcomes.

"The issue of tax exemption was a gift from Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. I will raise the matter of tax enforcement with the federal government," Governor Kundi added, acknowledging the concerns of the Malakand division's residents and emphasizing the need for permanent solutions rather than repeated protests.

"I am a people's Governor, ready to go to every street. I don't want to cause anyone distress," concluded Governor Faisal Karim Kundi, portraying his commitment to serving the public with empathy and accessibility.

Mardan Mayor emphasizes progress

MARDAN (APP): The City Mayor of Mardan, Himayatullah Mayar Sunday emphasized the importance of aligning developmental projects with international sustainable development goals (SDGs) to ensure the progress of the region.

Speaking at a consultative session organized by the non-governmental organization CPDI with financial support from GIZ, Himayatullah Mayar highlighted the necessity of steering local government projects in Mardan towards achieving these goals.

The session, which was also attended by Dr. Hussain Ali, Assistant Professor at Abdul Wali

Khan University Mardan and CPDI resource person, provided technical support on various developmental aspects.

He stressed that areas such as education, youth welfare, support for impoverished women, sports, family planning, agriculture, and municipal services need to be tailored to meet the specific needs of the local population.

Mayor Mardan acknowledged the initiation of a program by CPDI, GIZ, and the German government, which not only aids in the planning of developmental projects but also educates elected representatives about sustainable development practices.

practices.

He regarded this initiative as a significant step towards sustainable progress.

In conclusion, Mayor Mayar expressed his gratitude to the council members, CPDI, and GIZ for their efforts and support.

The consultative session, part of the GIZ-PLG project titled "Localization of SDGs through PDP by the Tehsil Local Governments in KP Province," focused on the formulation of Tehsil Development Plans (TDP) and saw active participation from members of the City Council Mardan, with Mayor Himayatullah Mayar attending the session.

Kp Cities Improvement Project held

F.P. Report

SWAT: A high-level meeting of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cities Improvement Project was held at the Commissioner's Office Saidu Sharif under the chairmanship of Commissioner Malakand Division Saqib Raza Aslam.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioner Swat Shahzad Mehboob, Executive Directors of Asian Development Bank Moushumi Khan, Keiko Takahashi, Alberto Carden, and Noor Ahmed, and officers of Rural Development Department, KP-CIP and WSSC Swat besides other officials.

The meeting was given a detailed briefing by the concerned authorities regarding the progress and designing of projects related to the Mingora Gravity Water Supply Scheme, Women's Park Mingora, and Solid Waste Management System.

The meeting was told that the cost of the Mingora gravity water supply scheme would be Rs 27 billion 50 crore.

The project includes water transmission, a distribution system, and a water treatment plant. Under the project, a 20 Km transmission line is being laid with a diameter of 48 inches and from which clean water will be provided to the urban population.

Keeping in view the modern requirements, rapid gravity filter technology, solar energy, and water metering are being introduced through which clear water will be able to reach the houses and upper floors without any additional support, which will save electricity in the houses and reduce load shedding.

However, water supply to the population will continue uninterrupted. Under KP-CIP, Women's Park in Mingora City is in the final stages of completion with a cost of 27.5 million rupees.

Addressing the meet-

ing on this occasion, Commissioner Malakand Division Saqib Raza Aslam said that the Mingora gravity water supply has been designed to be flood-proof, work on which is progressing rapidly.

The urban population of Mingora has been suffering from water supply problems for a long time, considering the problems of the local population the Mingora Gravity Water Supply Project was introduced.

He also thanked the local public representatives and said that the public representatives have worked tirelessly in relation to the project and have played an active role in designing the project and handling other issues in a short period of time.

He said that the Mingora gravity water supply project will be a historic project for the people of Mingora and surrounding areas which will completely eliminate water problems in the area.



ABBOTTABAD: Advisor to Chief Minister KP on Tourism, Culture and Archeology Zahid Chanzeb inspecting the Himala House in Nathiagali

First ever Sunday Bazar in Mardan opened
F.P. Report

MARDAN: Mardan's first ever Sunday Bazar in Sheikh Multoon Town was inaugurated here on Sunday by Chairman of Neighborhood Council Sheikh Multoon Arsalan Khan Toru and Project Director of Urban Area Development Authority Hamid Islam in a simple ceremony.

Provincial Food Minister Zahir Shah Toru could not attend the opening program of Sunday Bazaar in Sheikh Multoon Town due to his unavoidable engagements, so on his instructions, Chairman Arsalan Khan Toru performed the function of inauguration.

Bakhtiar Khan Toru of Sheikh Multoon Residents Society along with other officials and elders also participated in the opening ceremony of Sunday Bazaar held in Sector J.

Speaking on the occasion, Chairman Arslan Toru and PD, MDA said that all necessary steps are being taken to ensure the provision of various facilities to the residents of the town and the establishment of the Sunday Bazaar is also a part of these efforts.

MPA pays surprise visit to Lachi hospital
F.P. Report

KOHAT: Member Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Daud Shah Afridi Advocate paid a surprise visit to the Type-D Hospital of Tehsil Lachi District Kohat of his Constituency at around 1:00 pm on Sunday night and checked the Staff Attendance, Stock Register, OPD Record and medical facilities being provided in the hospital. He also reviewed the cleanliness situation in the hospital. The MPA also apprised himself of the problems of medical staff and patients. He called upon the doctors to have a compassionate attitude with patients. Daud Shah Afridi, in his message on this occasion, clarified that any doctor or government official/officer who will do his duty in Kohat, will have to do it in accordance with the public wish- es adding that they will be rewarded accordingly and whoever will neglect his duty, will not stay in Kohat again.

Encroachments in Galyat angers Zahid

F.P. Report

A B B O T T A B A D : Advisor to Chief Minister KP on Tourism, Culture and Archeology Zahid Chanzeb expressed his anger over the illegal encroachments in Galyat and issued instructions to the concerned quarters to remove them immediately and submit the report of all the leased properties to him within ten days.

He also paid a detailed visit to the parks, public washrooms and parking areas in Nathiagali and Dongagali.

On this occasion, he expressed his indignation over the deteriorating condition of the washrooms and issued instructions to immediately allocate 20 washrooms separately for men and women and keep them clean, while at the same time.

Orders were also issued to remove the illicit encroachments and keep it as resting places for tourists only. He also

directed to prepare a map of the land in Donga Gali and make a modern parking area for tourists so that the issue of parking in the area could be solved in the true sense.

He also visited the Himala House and issued instructions to complete the necessary renovation work going on there as soon as possible and to provide Wi-Fi and other facilities for the tourists as well.

Zahid Chanzeb further directed that the process of providing vehicles and motorcycles to the tourism police posted at Galyat and other tourist places should be started immediately and check posts should also be established for them where instead of body searching of the tourists, uniformed well-mannered police jawans would receive them and be there to provide them with facilities and guidance, to let the tourists experience pleasant changes.

Zahid Chanzeb directed the Galyat

Development Authority (GDA) to immediately remove all encroachments on the sides of the roads and to submit a detailed report of the rest areas of various leased properties within ten days to him.

He cautioned that removal of all kinds of encroachments should be ensured before the tourism season reaches the climax so that the soaring rush of tourists during the season can be properly managed.

He directed the tourism officials to make the tourists fully aware of the usefulness of the tourism helpline so that they could be fully aware and could contact the helpline 1422 of the tourism department before visiting the tourist spots and get complete information including weather conditions and during the trip.

Also, if they face any vehicle faults or any other difficulty, they can be helped practically, he concluded.

People welfare top priority, says KP Law Minister.

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister of Law and Finance Aftab Alam Afridi Advocate has said that the provincial government of Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf is trying to solve the basic problems of the people in line with the vision of party leader Imran Khan and all the resources should be used for the betterment of the people.

He added that he will

never hurt the trust of the people. This he said while talking to various delegations at his residence on the occasion of Public Day on Sunday. He listened to the problems of the people and orders were issued on the spot on various applications.

The Law Minister said that PTI is a public political party which believes in selfless service to the people. We consider ourselves not rulers but servants. He

said, they will not devise developmental strategy from the office for the sake of commission, but will take people into confidence step by step in the development of the area so that government funds are not wasted.

Aftab Alam asked the party workers to guide us in better utilization of government resources keeping in mind the important problems of their respective areas.

PPP meeting for UC level organization held

Abid Buner

BUNER: Pakistan People's Party: Grand Meeting was held in Swari under the chairmanship of President Saifullah Khan. In the meeting, District General Secretary Rafiqullah Khan Advocate, former candidate of National Assembly, Yousuf Ali Khan, retired SP Zahir Shah, former Town Nazim, Sher Zaman Khan, former candidate of

Provincial Assembly, Saveera's Father Dr. Imran Shah, former candidate of Provincial Assembly, Syed Shamsher Bacha, key figures of mother party and office bearers of pocket organizations and party members participated in large numbers.

In the meeting, there was a detailed discussion regarding the party's organizational affairs, the situa-

tion during and after the recent general elections and the party role in the Buner Quami Jirga against the implementation of the Tax and Customs Act in Malakand Division. And how the party is to be most more active in achieving its higher goals. Important decisions were made and the plan of action was decided for the formation and full participation in the National Jirga.

Tightening noose around wheat hoarders, exploiters

FAISALABAD (APP): After a series of public welfare initiatives by the Punjab government, agriculturists have desired strict action and tightening noose around hoarders and exploiters to save precious money of poor farmers.

These market exploiters continue to fleece billions of rupees of poor farmers every year in one context or the other forcing them to live a hand to mouth life for being under debt at the hands of these market mongers.

Steps to rescue farmers from cruel clutches of exploiters would encourage them enabling them to more efficiently contribute to national economy as well as initiatives to address food security issues.

Being an agrarian country, Pakistan's farmer force is main component of its economy but they are very commonly made to suffer

as happening in the case of wheat crop wherein the exploiters force farmers to sell their wheat for Rs 2800 to Rs 3000 for 40 kg instead of the government announced rate of Rs 3900.

"Rs 1000 per 40 kg loss is too less. We had better wheat crop this year and hoped that money earned from it would help us in cultivating other crops. But, market players are not inclined to give us announced price," remarked Muhammad Imran, a small farmer in Faisalabad.

"Since prices of seed, fertilizers and other inputs had risen recently resulting in increased per acre cost, offering us reduced wheat price means to make our survival difficult," he said.

Appreciating recent measures in different sectors by the Punjab government, Imran appealed to deal with middlemen and

hoarders to ensure better price for them. "First they exploit us when they lend us seeds and fertilizers and then by purchasing our crop on reduced price."

What is happening with farmers in the case of wheat is a replica of what they faced during maize crop when the exploiters purchased maize crop from them Rs 700 to Rs 800 per 40 kg less than announced price.

The country has witnessed a bumper wheat production this year as the average wheat production in some areas remained around 45 maunds per acre. Therefore, its procurement by the government and purchase by private sector must be at par in terms of commodities rate.

"This time we had set a target of wheat sowing at 16 million acres but the sowing surpassed 18.5 million acres. This additional

1.5 million brought out a bumper crop," informed an agriculture department official. "This bulk production created demand and supply imbalance and is one of the reasons behind price issues."

According to Dr Javaid Ahmed Chief Scientist, Wheat Department Ayub Research Institute, new wheat varieties like Akbar-2019, Dilkash-2019, Nawab-2021 and Bhakkar Star played important role in enhanced productivity. "We have done our bit in research and development by introducing good varieties. Now, it is duty of other government organs to sort out purchasing, storage and other market issues."

As wheat is our main staple food widely cultivated across the country to ensure food security, there is dire need to safeguard its growers' interest.

"Although we obtained

bumper wheat production, yet could not get its announced price," said another farmer, Muhammad Hasnain Khan. "As marketing is a complex phenomenon with exploiters often usurping farmers' rights, the government should properly safeguard their interests like it was doing in many other areas."

"If we calculate their expenditures on sowing a crop including seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, tube well water and then its harvesting and threshing, farmers hardly earn profit with existing rate," he recorded.

"The commission mafia remains active at almost all grain markets at the time of sowing and selling a crop firstly for offering farmers loans on high mark up and then buying their crops on lesser rates," Khan said.

"As I pointed out that

farmers' with meager financial resources have to sell their produce as early as possible, for securing money for next crop, these market players exploit their compulsion," he stated.

Also taking full benefit of social media for rumor mongering, these agents misguided farmers by saying that the government was not buying wheat this year, he further stated.

This situation calls for urgently carving a strategy to stem out these agents and ensure transparent purchase policy as Zulfiqar Ahmad, Information Secretary Wheat Growers Association saw it as a governance issue. "If the government pushes forward 'Baboos' to regulate wheat buying and procurement, the issue may be resolved conveniently."

Besides urging the government to digitalize wheat purchase, he said, it should

also encourage value addition to wheat related products, enabling growers to earn more profit.

Zulfiqar also suggested small silos at Union Council level and enhance capacity of present ones at tahsil level besides providing proportionate loans to farmers through ZTBL, against the stored wheat.

Therefore, a multi-pronged strategy and stringent measures were needed to reign in exploiters, ensure enhanced storage and check wheat smuggling to neighboring countries. Moreover, Artificial Intelligence (AI) can also help regulate the entire system of wheat production, purchasing and procurement.

The experts fear that if prevailing market problems are not properly addressed, there can be likelihood of decline in wheat sowing acreage next season.



Vancouver: Visitors looking at different cars during 36th Vancouver All British Field Meet Classic Car Show.

Innovative jaw growth device Saudi female doctor receives US patent

RIYADH (APP): Dr. Afnan Muhammad Al-Asiri from Saudi Arabia has been awarded a patent by the United States (US) Patent Office for her innovative device designed to stimulate the growth of the lower jaw using electromagnetic waves.

Dr. Al-Asiri, who first presented her invention four years ago, has reached this milestone after a long and dedicated journey. Reflecting on her achievement, she stated, "I consider this victory an inspiration for further future achievements and innovations, reflecting promising success in other fields."

In an interview with Al-Arabiya, Dr. Al-Asiri shared the story behind her invention. The idea emerged after noticing an increase in cases of delayed lower jaw development among some of her patients. This observation motivated her to develop a device aimed at promoting early jaw growth by leveraging the child's developmental period.

The device works by applying electromagnetic waves to the patient's lower jaw for a specific duration and frequency. This stimulates the formation of new stem cells in the targeted areas, thereby promoting

bone growth. Dr. Al-Asiri emphasized that the invention is a significant advancement in orthodontic treatment and holds potential for broader applications in the future. The patent was secured with the support of King Saud University and its faculty.

Dr. Al-Asiri highlighted the device's benefits for patients with lower jaw growth issues, noting that it effectively stimulates jaw growth during critical developmental periods, encouraging new bone cell formation. This innovation is poised to become a valuable tool in the field of orthodontics and beyond.

France mobilises police to regain control

PARIS (Reuters): French police trying to restore order in the island territory of New Caledonia after days of deadly unrest have cleared dozens of barricades that had been blocking the main road linking the airport to the capital, Noumea, a senior official said on Sunday.

Around 60 barricades that protesters had put up along the 60 km (37-mile) road have been dismantled but the road is not yet open as debris needs to be cleared, which will take several days, the territory's high commissioner, Louis Le Franc, told reporters.

The Tontouta airport is closed because of the unrest on the French-ruled South Pacific territory.

Protests erupted last week, sparked by anger among indigenous Kanak people over a constitutional amendment that will change who is allowed to participate in elections, which local leaders fear will dilute the Kanak vote.

Six people have been killed and the unrest has left a trail of burnt businesses, torched cars, looted shops, and road barricades, cutting off access to medicine and food.

Three of those killed were indigenous Kanak and two were police officers. A sixth person was killed and two seriously injured on Saturday during a gun battle between two groups at a roadblock in Kaala-Gomen, French police said, without identifying the groups.

More than 600 police were mobilised to clear the barricades on the airport road, including some 100 gendarmes who are part of a special, heavily armed unit, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said on X late on Saturday.

Biden likely to face pro-Palestine protests

NEW YORK (Aljazeera): Joe Biden is expected to face protests demanding a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, as the United States president delivers a graduation speech at Morehouse College, a historically Black university attended by Martin Luther King Jr.

Biden's graduation speech on Sunday at Morehouse College in Atlanta, in the election battleground state of Georgia, is aimed at encouraging Black and young voters to support him ahead of US elections in November.

The Democratic president is expected to face a tight contest against his Republican rival and predecessor Donald Trump, and he is trying to appeal to key segments of his party base.

But Biden has faced

widespread anger – particularly from progressives, youth and Black and other voters of colour – over his unwavering support for Israel amid the Gaza war.

More than 35,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, have been killed in Israeli attacks since the conflict began in early October.

Al Jazeera's Alan Fisher, reporting from a protest for Gaza about 1km (less than a mile) from Morehouse College on Sunday morning, said the demonstrators believe Biden should not be giving the commencement address because of his Middle East policies.

Students had called on the school to cancel Biden's speech over his support for Israel despite the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza.

"Morehouse College has a history of social justice," Fisher said.

"Its most famous alumnus is Dr Martin Luther King, who of course talked about how there should be equality throughout the world and how it was important that politicians did always what was right, rather than what brought them votes."

The White House last week sent a senior official to meet students and faculty members at Morehouse to discuss the objections to Biden's speech, according to US broadcaster NBC News.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre on Friday said Biden sought to use the speech as "an opportunity to lift up and to give an important message to our future leaders".

Taiwan's new president inherits a strong foreign policy position but political gridlock at home

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP): In a campaign ad for Taiwan's President-elect Lai Ching-te, incumbent President Tsai Ing-wen was shown driving with Lai in the passenger seat, exchanging reflections on their years governing together. Tsai later turned over the driving to Lai, who was joined by running mate Bi-khim Hsiao.

The message was clear: Lai would steer the island in the direction set by Tsai, who after eight years in power was barred from running again.

Lai, 64, will take office Monday. Continuing Tsai's legacy means aiming to strike a balance between cultivating Taiwan's unofficial alliance with the United States and maintaining peace with China, which claims Taiwan as its own territory, to be retaken by force if necessary.

Lai is also expected to build on some of Tsai's domestic reforms, despite political gridlock. Lai and Tsai's Democratic Progressive Party has lost the majority in the legislature, making it hard for Lai to push through legislation, including the approval of crucial national defense budgets.

Tsai, 67, has been Taiwan's first female president and one of Asia's few female leaders who didn't hail from a political dynasty. Her legacy will be tied to defending the island's sovereignty from China while

refashioning it as a credible partner for the U.S. and other democracies. She will also be remembered for overseeing the legalization of same-sex marriage, steering Taiwan through the COVID years and kickstarting the island's military modernization.

She leaves office with high approval ratings. A recent poll by broadcaster TVBS showed 42% of respondents were satisfied with her eight-year performance. Her predecessor, Ma Ying-jeou, left office with approval ratings of around 23%.

Tsai's popularity partly reflects a shift in Taiwan's identity. A vast majority of residents now identify as Taiwanese as opposed to Chinese and want to be governed separately from Beijing. Taiwan and China have had different governments since a civil war in 1949 saw the Nationalists flee to the island while China's Communist Party took control of the mainland.

Tsai veered from the more China-friendly policies of the previous ruling party, the Kuomintang. By the end of Ma's tenure, the frequent exchanges with Beijing were making many Taiwanese nervous, said Shelley Rigger, a Taiwan expert at Davidson College.

Beijing called Tsai a separatist after she refused to



acknowledge the 1992 Consensus, an agreement which says Taiwan is part of "One China." While pulling away from Beijing, however, Tsai left a door open for communication.

"President Tsai has always said that Taiwan, under her leadership, is happy, willing and eager to have dialogue with Beijing, just not on terms unilaterally imposed by Beijing," said Wen-Ti Sung, a fellow with Washington-based think tank Atlantic Council.

China has not only declined to speak to Tsai but also

ramped up military and economic pressure on the island, sending warships and military jets near it daily.

Beijing prevents countries it has diplomatic relations with from having formal ties with Taipei. During Tsai's tenure, it intensified a campaign to lure away the island's few diplomatic partners. During Tsai's years in office, China poached almost half of Taiwan's diplomatic allies, bringing the remaining number to 12.

Tsai pushed back by diversifying trade relationships and

increasing military spending including submarine development. She also elevated Taiwan's standing on the international stage, said outgoing Foreign Minister Joseph Wu.

"Her leadership style is very moderate, but at the same time very firm in dealing with any kind of international pressure," he said.

"She strengthened awareness of Taiwan around the world and its ties with the international community," said Bonnie Glaser, the director of the Indo-Pacific pro-

gram at the German Marshall Fund of the United States.

'TSAI 2.0'

Lai, who served as vice president during Tsai's second term, came across as more of a firebrand earlier in his career. In 2017, he described himself as a "pragmatic worker for Taiwan's independence," drawing Beijing's rebuke. He has since softened his stance and now supports maintaining the status quo across the Taiwan Strait and the possibility of talks with Beijing.

"Lai has spent the last two-plus years trying to convince the world that he is Tsai Ing-wen 2.0," said Lev Nachman, an assistant professor at National Chengchi University.

Lai will build on Tsai's efforts to strengthen ties with the U.S., which doesn't formally recognize Taiwan as a country but is bound by its own laws to provide the island with the means to defend itself.

By some measures, Lai's greatest uncertainty on the foreign policy front might come from Washington. A new Donald Trump administration could throw off whatever balance Tsai has achieved in Taipei's relations with Washington and Beijing, Nachman said.

WHAT'S NEXT AT HOME

During Tsai's tenure, Taiwan became the first society in Asia to legalize same-sex

marriage, though critics say she skirted political responsibility by leaving the decision up to the Supreme Court and a series of referendums.

She oversaw a controversial pension and labor reform and extended the military conscription length to one year. She also kickstarted a military modernization drive, including a program for building indigenous submarines at more than \$16 billion each.

Tsai's leadership during the COVID pandemic split public opinion, with most admiring Taiwan's initial ability to keep the virus largely outside its borders but criticizing the lack of investment in rapid testing as the pandemic progressed.

Tsai's mixed success on the domestic policy front contributed to historically poor results for the DPP in local elections, said Sung with the Atlantic Council. The party's poor performance in the 2022 elections led to Tsai resigning as party chairwoman. And while Lai won the presidential election, DPP lost its majority in the legislature.

"Much of President Tsai's government's success comes from the foreign policy and related international outreach fronts, and in terms of making inroads on the much more grassroots party machinery level, for example, those still have room for improvement," Sung said.



WikiLeaks' Julian Assange faces US extradition judgment day

LONDON (Reuters): A British court could give a final decision on Monday on whether WikiLeaks' founder Julian Assange should be extradited to the United States over the mass leak of secret U.S. documents, the culmination of 13 years of legal battles and detentions.

Two judges at the High Court in London are set to rule on whether the court is satisfied by U.S. assurances that Assange, 52, would not face the death penalty and could rely on the First Amendment right to free speech if he faced a U.S. trial for spying.

Assange's legal team say he could be on a plane across the Atlantic within 24 hours of the decision, could be released from jail, or his case could yet again be bogged down in months of legal battles.

"I have the sense that anything could happen at this stage," his wife Stella said last week. "Julian could be extradited, or he could be freed."

She said her husband hoped to be in court for the crucial hearing.

WikiLeaks released hundreds of thousands of classified U.S. military documents on Washington's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq - the largest security breaches of their kind in U.S. military history - along with



swathes of diplomatic cables.

In April 2010 it published a classified video showing a 2007 U.S. helicopter attack that killed a dozen people in the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, including two Reuters news staff.

The U.S. authorities want to put the Australian-born Assange on trial over 18 charges, nearly all under the Espionage Act, saying his actions with WikiLeaks were reckless, damaged national security, and endangered the lives of agents.

His many global supporters call the prosecution a travesty, an assault on journalism and free speech, and revenge for causing embarrassment. Calls for the case to be dropped have ranged from human rights groups and some media bodies, to Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and other political leaders.

DETAINED SINCE 2010

Assange was first arrested in Britain in 2010 on a Swedish warrant over sex crime allegations that were later dropped. Since then he has been variously under house arrest, holed up in Ecuador's embassy in London for seven years, and held since 2019 in Belmarsh top security jail, latterly while he waited a ruling on his extradition.

"Every day since the seventh of December 2010 he has been in one form of detention or another," said Stella Assange, who was originally part of his legal team and married him in Belmarsh in 2022.

If the High Court rules the extradition can go ahead, Assange's legal avenues in Britain are exhausted, and his lawyers will immediately turn to the European Court of Human Rights to seek an

emergency injunction blocking deportation pending a full hearing by that court into his case at a later date.

On the other hand, if the judges reject the U.S. submissions, then he will have permission to appeal his extradition case on three grounds, and that might not be heard until next year.

It is also possible the judges could decide that Monday's hearing should consider not just whether he can appeal but also the substance of that appeal. If they find in his favour in those circumstances, he could be released.

Stella Assange said that whatever the outcome she would continue to fight for his liberty. If he is freed she plans to follow him to Australia or wherever he was safe. If he is extradited, she said all the psychiatric evidence presented at court had concluded he was at very serious risk of suicide.

"We live from day to day, from week to week, from decision to decision. This is a way that we've been living for years and years," she told Reuters.

"This is just not a way to live - it's so cruel. And I can't prepare for his extradition - how could I? But if he's extradited, then I'll do whatever I can, and our family is going to fight for him until he's free."

Elon Musk launches Starlink service in Indonesia

JAKARTA (Arab News): Elon Musk and Indonesian Health Minister Budi Gunadi Sadikin launched SpaceX's satellite internet service on Sunday, aiming to boost connectivity in the world's largest archipelago.

Musk, the billionaire head of SpaceX and Tesla, arrived in Bali by private jet on Sunday morning, before attending Starlink's launch at a community health center in the provincial capital Denpasar.

Wearing a green batik shirt, he inaugurated Starlink together with Sadikin, Communications Minister Budi Arie Setiadi and Maritime, and Fisheries Minister Sakti Wahyu Trenggono, and said that the satellite service would help millions in Indonesia to access the internet.

"We're focusing this event on Starlink and the benefits that high-bandwidth connectivity can bring to a rural island and to remote communities," Musk told reporters in Denpasar.

"I think it's really important to emphasize the

importance of internet connectivity and how much of a life-changer that could be." Indonesia, an archipelagic state comprising over 17,000 islands, is home to more than 270 million people and three different time zones. Following the launch, Musk said that internet connectivity was also integral for learning and business.

"You can learn anything if you're connected to the internet, but if you're not connected, it's very difficult to learn," Musk said. "And then if you have some virtual services that you wish to sell to the world, even if you're in a remote village, you can now do so with an internet connection. So, it can bring a lot of prosperity, I think, to rural communities."

Indonesia is the third Southeast Asian country where Starlink will operate. Neighboring Malaysia issued the firm a license to provide internet services last year, while a Philippine-based firm signed a deal with SpaceX in 2022.

On Sunday, Starlink was

launched at three Indonesian health centers, two of which are located in Bali and one on the remote island of Aru in Maluku. Officials say the services will be prioritized for health and education, and in outer and underdeveloped regions.

Starlink is expected to bring high-speed connectivity to thousands of health centers across the country, Sadikin said, allowing Indonesians in remote areas to access services that were previously not available to them. "With Starlink ... 2,700 community health centers that had difficulties getting internet access and another 700 that didn't have internet access, now can have them. So, the

services will not differ with health centers ... that are located in the cities," the health minister said.

The arrival of Starlink in Indonesia is expected to boost equal internet access across Southeast Asia's largest economy.

"A satellite-based internet service like Starlink will certainly be very beneficial for the country because there are still many regions which don't have internet access," said Pratama Persadha, chairman of the Communication and Information System Security Research Center.

Other sectors in Indonesia, such as education and the digital economy, will also get a boost from Starlink, he added.

The Frontier Post

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Kyrgyzstan Must Take Action

In a distressing turn of events, dozens of Pakistani students have been subjected to unjust violence in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Reports indicate that a conflict initially between Egyptian students and locals was erroneously attributed to Pakistani students, leading to brutal attacks on their hostels. This horrifying situation not only endangers the lives of innocent students but also severely tarnishes Kyrgyzstan's reputation on the global stage. It is alarming that hostels, which should be safe havens for students, became scenes of terror as mobs forced entry, breaking doors and assaulting residents.

The mental and physical scars inflicted on these young individuals are unimaginable and wholly unacceptable. The distress signals sent through social media, along with footage and imagery of the violence, underscore the urgent need for intervention and support for these students. The response from the Pakistani Embassy in Bishkek, led by Ambassador Hasan Zaigham, is commendable. Their proactive approach in liaising with Kyrgyz law enforcement to ensure the safety of Pakistani students is crucial.

However, the mere necessity of such measures speaks volumes about the gravity of the situation. It is imperative that the local authorities in Kyrgyzstan take swift action to not only quell the current unrest but also to prevent such incidents in the future. The Pakistani government's engagement, particularly through the efforts of Prime Minister Sheebaz Sharif and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, illustrates their commitment to the welfare of their citizens abroad. The planned visit by high-ranking officials to Bishkek is a positive step towards addressing this crisis directly and ensuring the well-being of the affected students. However, while these efforts are necessary, they are not sufficient on their own. The Kyrgyz government must take responsibility for the security lapses that allowed this violence to unfold. It is imperative that they provide adequate compensation to the victims for their immense suffering and losses. Such gestures would not only aid in the healing process but also help restore Kyrgyzstan's image, which has been significantly marred by these events. Moreover, it is critical that those responsible for investigating and participating in the violence are brought to justice.

The arrest and prosecution of the perpetrators would serve as a strong deterrent against future xenophobic violence and reinforce the rule of law in Kyrgyzstan. In closing, this editorial calls for a multi-faceted response to a complex and grave situation. The Kyrgyzstan government must act decisively to rectify the injustices suffered by Pakistani students and ensure their future safety. The Pakistani government, for its part, must continue to offer robust support and advocacy for its citizens, ensuring that no student is left vulnerable in a foreign land. Together, with concerted efforts, it is possible to turn this situation around and guarantee the security and rights of all students in Kyrgyzstan, irrespective of their nationality.

Any challenge to Taiwan's status as part of China doomed to fail

As Lai Ching-te takes office as leader of the Taiwan island authorities on Monday, he and his "pro-independence" Democratic Progressive Party must give a clear answer to the question regarding their choice between peaceful development or confrontation across the Taiwan Strait.

As a spokesperson of the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office pointed out last week, promoting peace across the Taiwan Strait means opposing separatist moves, and the stronger the commitment to the one-China principle, the more peaceful and stable the cross-Strait situation will be. Any misstep will pose a risk to cross-Strait peace and stability, and thus jeopardize the well-being of Taiwan compatriots.

Over the past eight years Lai's predecessor Tsai Ing-wen and the DPP have led Taiwan far away from the right path of peaceful development. Their reckless adherence to a "pro-independence" agenda, in collusion with outside forces, especially the United States, has dealt a heavy blow to cross-Strait relations. Under Tsai and her DPP authorities, what used to be robust cross-Strait exchanges have been brought to a standstill, and the situation in the Taiwan Strait has been increasingly fraught and pushed to near breaking point several times. Lai must close the trust deficit to bolster cross-Strait peace and stability, which have been undermined by the words and deeds of Tsai, to avoid the worst-case scenario.

The mainstream public view on the island is in favor of peace not war, development not decline, communication rather than separation, and cooperation instead of confrontation. Lai should heed this sentiment and refrain from further harming cross-Strait relations.

Lai should know the damage Tsai has done to cross-Strait relations is so big that further provocation over the one-China principle and confrontation with the Chinese mainland will only lead to disastrous consequences. Beijing's determination and resolve to realize national reunification should not be taken lightly. Opting for peace and development is the only viable path for Lai and the DPP. They should discard their "pro-independence" stance and refrain from colluding with outside forces, which have never ceased their malicious intention to contain China's peaceful rise through interfering in the Taiwan question and playing the Taiwan card.

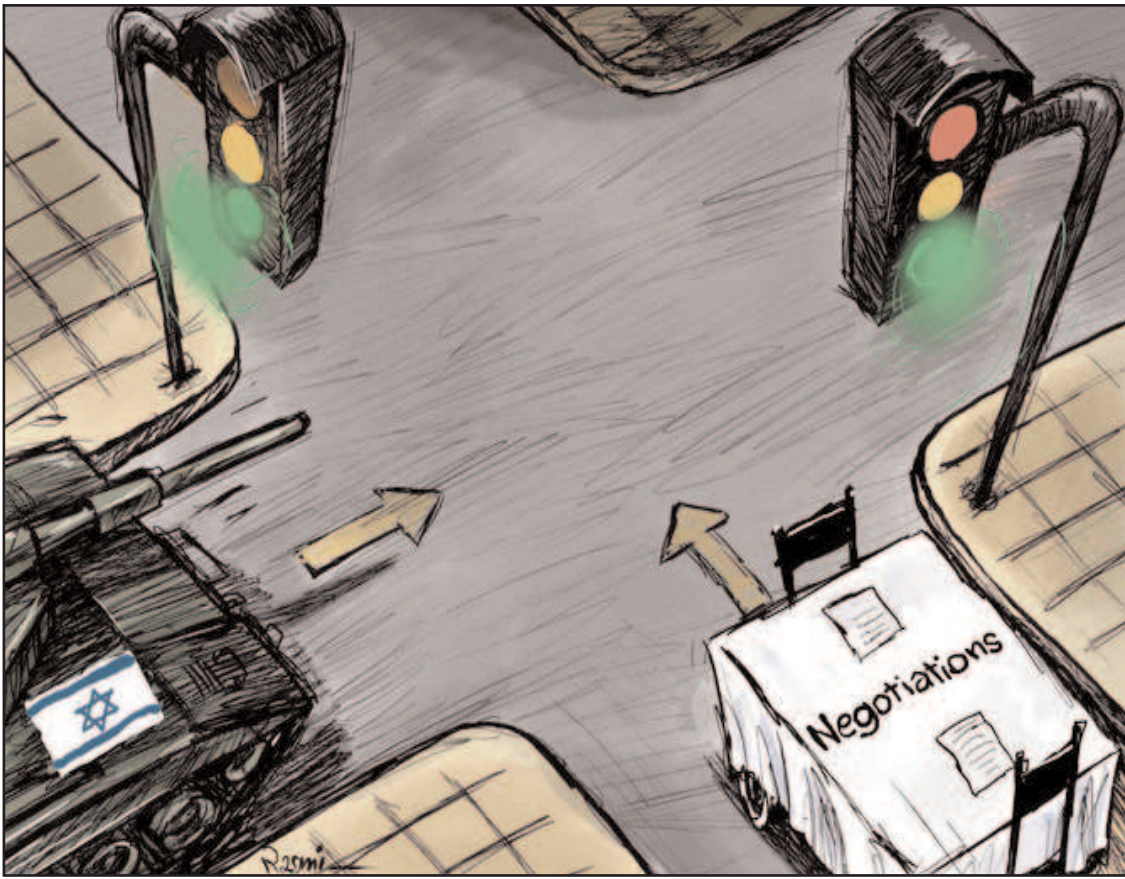
Prior to Lai's inauguration, Washington has intensified its interference in the Taiwan question. Some US officials have blatantly challenged the authority of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758 again, calling Taiwan's status "undetermined" and trumpeted calls for Taiwan's "meaningful participation" in the UN system.

As before, the US will fail in its attempts to hype up the Taiwan question in the world arena. In terms of the Taiwan question, it seems some politicians in Europe have a better understanding and a more sober mind than their US peers on the high stakes involved in constantly messing with the one-China principle. Speaking to Foreign Policy magazine last week, Josep Borrell, the European Union's foreign policy chief, said the bloc should be firm about ensuring that a military conflict does not break out over Taiwan, and that "It's one single China. It means that we are not going to recognize the statehood of Taiwan."

Those in Taiwan who still believe they can count on external intervention to separate the island from its motherland should know they have no chance of succeeding. The reunification of China is unstoppable, and any force standing in the way of reunification will only be met with Beijing's resolute and decisive countermeasures.

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Clueless in Gaza

Yossi Mekelberg

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu avoids giving interviews to domestic media outlets, as accountability and transparency have never been his forte. He does not like the scrutiny that comes when facing probing journalists who might, in their audacity, ask him difficult questions. Why has he not taken responsibility for his failure to defend Israelis on Oct. 7? Why, more than seven months into a war to “destroy Hamas,” are the organization and its leaders still capable of fighting against a much larger and better-equipped army, and are now returning to places that were evacuated by Israel?

How can he justify the killing of so many noncombatants in Gaza? How can he explain the current state of international isolation that Israel finds itself in, especially considering the initial circumstances of this war? And then there is the question of all questions: What is his plan for the “day after?” All of these are legitimate concerns that Netanyahu avoids addressing either for the sake of convenience or, in the case of what the future might hold for Gaza and Israel's relations with the Palestinians more generally, because he is devoid of an adequate answer.

Instead, he gives interviews to selected American media networks, preferably those that will give him as easy a ride as the situation allows. He then relies on the natural sympathy of the interviewer, and his own unparalleled manipulative prowess in twisting matters and concocting a reality in which he and Israel are always the victims, always moral, and eventually victorious.

It might therefore have been because of the relaxed nature of his interview with Dr. Phil McGraw, a clinical psychologist by trade on whose American TV show Netanyahu appeared this week, that he for the first time opened up a little and admitted some culpability for the failures of Oct. 7 — not personally, mind you, but he was prepared to claim collective responsibility and generously share the blame for the calamity with his Cabinet colleagues.

It is not only the case that Netanyahu has his own version of the past and the present, regardless of how detached it is from reality, but equally, and more disturbingly, there is his vision for the future — or rather, representation of the country's bioregions, but such sites still protect only a small fraction of the country's biological diversity. The conservation of small sites of key biological importance, however, may help preserve most of its plant and animal species.

In the Kingdom, ecological representation — the idea that the full variety of biodiversity should be represented in a national system of protected and conserved areas — in the country is assessed based on eight primary types of terrestrial physiography, its terrestrial wetlands, and the marine environments of the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf. These

the lack of one.

Asked by Dr. Phil about “the day after” the war, his response reflected a foggy mind and wishful thinking, with no strategic clarity. After seven months of horrific bloodshed, it is not too much to expect some coherence when it comes to Gaza and not the vague answer he gave. He said: “We'll probably have to have some kind of civilian administration by Gazans who are not committed to our destruction, possibly with the aid of the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and other countries that I think want to see stability and peace.”

A few days later he said that “talk about the day after (the war), while Hamas is still intact, is

From Day 1 of this conflict, the absence of any serious scenario-building within the Israeli government or the country's various security organizations regarding the short- and long-term political objectives of the war, beyond the mantra of “total victory,” was obvious. What we are witnessing instead is Israel entering into yet another never-ending war, with no exit strategy, that will inevitably lead to an Israeli military presence in the Gazan enclave for the foreseeable future, embroiled in guerrilla warfare with Hamas and other Palestinian militant factions, with no political horizon.

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What we are witnessing instead is Israel entering into yet another never-ending war, with no exit strategy, that will inevitably lead to an Israeli military presence in the Gazan enclave for the foreseeable future, embroiled in guerrilla warfare with Hamas and other Palestinian militant factions, with no political horizon.

We are already seeing in some parts of Gaza previously declared by Israel to be clear of Hamas forces, and which therefore had a considerably reduced

Israeli military presence, that Hamas militants are returning, as is the Israeli army and, with them, further clashes.

Netanyahu's US TV interview earned an instant rebuke from the UAE's Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, who put him firmly in his place by declaring categorically that the UAE will not “participate in the civil administration of the Gaza Strip, which is under Israeli occupation.”

It is reasonable to conclude that this is also the position of the other countries Netanyahu expects to help Israel reconstruct the Strip. Because this time, unlike in previous rounds of hostilities, unless there is a historic compromise with

when the war ends. Military leaders rightly accuse the government of having no diplomatic plan for establishing a governing body in the Strip, consequently forcing the army to launch repeated campaigns against Hamas with no decisive outcome.

This meeting of minds between the international community and the Israeli military establishment derives from a clearer view that the only possible solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a political one that brings an end to the occupation. By the same token, military force can only serve to prolong the conflict and, in the case of the war in Gaza, unnecessarily extend a Netanyahu premiership that has no support within his own country, let alone abroad.

Every single day that the war continues without moving any closer to a peaceful political solution in which Gaza is just one component, albeit a very significant one, is a disaster for the people in the territory, and Palestinians in general, but also for Israel and its international standing.

Netanyahu's insistence, for example, that a further Israeli offensive in Gaza will go ahead has already led to Washington withholding at least some weapon supplies, and Egypt, which is directly affected by what is taking place in Gaza, announced last week that it would support South Africa's ongoing lawsuit in the International Court of Justice that accuses Israel of genocide in Gaza.

This is Netanyahu's legacy: failure to defend Israel when it needed it most; conducting a war with no achievable objective in mind; creating the conditions for Israel, its politicians and military personnel to be accused of war crimes; and having no grasp of how to bring this war to an end in a way that serves as a springboard toward peace with the Palestinians and rebuilding formal and informal ties with regional powers.

For a split second, Dr. Phil managed to get Netanyahu to make some progress in taking responsibility for all this. But neither the Israelis nor the Palestinians, or any other regional powers, have the time to wait and see whether this session of media therapy might lead to Netanyahu's full rehabilitation. This he should do as a private citizen.

Oil theft the untold driver of Syria's enduring humanitarian crisis

Sir Alan Duncan

More than 13 years since the onset of civil war, the suffering in Syria has rarely been further from the headlines. Concurrent crises in Ukraine and Gaza have captured global attention. With the conflict largely frozen and the peace process stalled, awareness of Syria has been reduced to sporadic moments, such as the recent strike on Iran's Damascus consulate. Yet the humanitarian crisis engendered by Bashar Assad's brutal fightback against his people remains very real.

What is unusual about the humanitarian crisis in Syria is one of its key drivers: oil. Once a cornerstone of the Syrian economy, oil has become a source of misery for the Syrian people — affecting the environment, health and long-term prospects for recovery.

International sanctions imposed on the industry in 2011 have had the unintended effect of allowing the country's oil wells and refineries to fall into the hands of unsavory private actors, including the self-proclaimed Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria. According to statements from this group in 2022, more than three quarters of its operating budget of \$780 million is made up of such oil revenue.

The destinations for this illicit oil are difficult to trace but are thought to include the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Damascus regime itself. In short, vast quantities of Syrian oil are being stolen and the funds misappropriated, rather than going in any meaningful sense toward supporting the Syrian people.

This also matters because of what it is doing to the environment in northern Syria and, by extension, the health of those who live there. This is the epicenter of a real and growing social crisis.

The groups that have seized control of oil extraction are unable or unwilling to adhere to proper industry standards of production and refining.

Some of the refineries they have set up are little more than makeshift huts. This has led to frequent oil spills, which have contaminated the soil and poisoned northern Syria's waterways.

As an investigation in pan-Arab magazine Al-Majalla found, the region lacks a facility for managing the byproducts and waste from oil refining, “resulting in its haphazard disposal, including by mixing it with water. Disposing of oil refining waste into rivers and canals has contaminated the soil with substances like arsenic, lead and mercury. These, in turn, are absorbed by plants and vegetables.” It is no surprise, then, that agriculture has been widely decimated, exacerbating existing food shortages.

The toll on human health is devastating. Exact fig-

ures are hard to come by, such is the makeshift and sparse nature of Syrian healthcare provision, but cases of cancer are increasingly concentrated around Syria's oil-producing north — and have increased up to three times faster than the comparative period before the war. Cancer cases and deaths are expected to double in the current decade, according to the International Atomic Energy Agency. Respiratory diseases and other health issues associated with toxic emissions are also rising.

One person quoted in Al-Majalla's investigation, whose young nephew is battling leukemia, put the problem bluntly: “In the past, (oil) companies treated harmful gas and oil waste. Nowadays, no one treats the source of these cancer-causing emissions.”

All told, oil is driving suffering across large swaths of Syria. But I believe it can also drive a radical and impactful solution.

Sanctions are often described as a blunt tool and Syria is a case in point. Even if inadvertently, they have contributed to an environmental and social catastrophe affecting hundreds of thousands of Syrians. These sanctions must be reconsidered. This does not mean lifting valid restrictions on any individuals and bad actors, but it does mean finding a way to allow the country's natural resources to be produced safely for the benefit of Syrians.

Through the selected lifting of sanctions or granting of specific waivers, international energy companies could return to parts of Syria and restore safe operations, with effective independent oversight and buy-in from local populations. Correct standards can be reintroduced and the terrible environmental and health damage can begin to be reversed.

Moreover, the revenues generated from this oil production could be channeled into a humanitarian fund dedicated to meeting Syria's critical needs — not least healthcare, water and schools.

This is a complex prospect in a region blighted by competing political challenges. But I believe that continued inaction is unacceptable and the growing consequences intolerable.

The UN's humanitarian appeal for Syria for 2023 sought \$5.4 billion but raised only a third of that. Compare that to the \$15 billion that Gulfstates, an independent energy company I advise, estimates would be available every year for reinvestment if oil operations were returned to the hands of legitimate parties. This potential is currently being squandered and stolen. It is time for the international community to implement a radical solution, explore targeted sanctions relief with appropriate oversight and help end this human tragedy.

Biodiversity should be represented in conservation planning

Hany Tatwany

are subdivided into 52 bioregions, 45 terrestrial and seven marine, based on physiographic (geology, topography, altitude), climatic, edaphic (soil-related), and biological factors.

The Kingdom's sites of outstanding biological diversity and productivity include freshwater wetlands, isolated mountain massifs, juniper woodlands, marine islands, mangroves, seagrass beds, coral reefs, and natural seed banks.

In efforts to conserve the Kingdom's physiography and bioregions, the criteria used for the selection and prioritization of

areas for protection and conservation include consideration of ecological and socioeconomic factors.

The ecological factors include the need to ensure the country's various terrestrial and marine bioregions are properly represented; the conservation of key sites of outstanding biological diversity and productivity; and the conservation of key plant and animal species.

The socioeconomic criteria include traditional and local conservation practices; the potential value to rural development through sustainable use of natural resources;

and the value in terms of environmental education and nature-based tourism.

Many countries are making efforts to preserve important areas and ecosystems. This is often done by taking action to protect sites that are of outstanding scenic splendor or home to large populations of key species of animals and plants. Protected areas are therefore established to conserve threatened or rare species and improve the representation of bioregions.

Many outstanding protected areas have been established in this manner. However, given the rapidly mounting threats and pressures on ecosys-

tems, current rates of extinctions that are unmatched in human history, and insufficient human and financial resources to properly tackle the problems, it is clear that such ad hoc approaches are falling short.

It is widely recognized that any system of protected conservation areas in a country should aim to ensure all major bioregions found within it are properly represented, to ensure that no ecosystems or ecological communities are lost to posterity. This is perhaps the most basic step that must be taken in the conservation of a nation's biological diversity.

Europe’s missed opportunity in Tunisia

Hafed Al-Ghwel

Once hailed as the Arab Spring’s lone democratic success story, Tunisia is now fully in the grip of regression, with an alarming crack-down on migrants, civil society groups, nongovernmental organizations, journalists, and the political opposition.

This narrative is incomplete, however, without considering the role of the EU in all this. Its engagement has subtly transitioned from being a champion of democratic values to striking transactional bargains that have, inadvertently or otherwise, come to undermine its very ideals during Tunisia’s cycle of repression.

Since the initial exuberance about the democratization of Tunisia in the aftermath of the events of 2011, Europe’s stance on the country has demonstrably shifted. At first, the EU greeted the democratic transition with enthusiasm and support, aligning itself with the nation’s nascent aspirations for freedom and a rules-based civil society. It represented a beacon of democratic progress in the region.

However, as Tunisia’s economic struggles, fluctuating political landscape, and security dilemmas began to intersect with the challenges Europe itself faced, particularly the surge in irregular migration, the EU’s priorities visibly morphed.

The humanitarian and liberal rhetoric took a back seat and Europe’s foreign policy paradigm transitioned toward a more practical, realpolitik approach wherein migration control, counterterrorism, and energy security began to dictate the terms of the relationship with greater assertiveness.

This utilitarian shift has come into sharp focus in

recent months, given the manner in which the EU and its member states have engaged with the current regime. In the thick of domestic and regional turbulence, demonstrated by the regime’s puzzling stewardship, the EU has found itself entangled in a frustrating paradox.

On one hand, its policymaking and external engagements are bound by foundational principles including the promotion of human rights, support for democracy, and the shoring up of human security in challenging contexts overseas.

On the other, it is compelled to take action to secure its borders by tacitly endorsing, or at least turning a blind eye to, Tunisia’s contentious migrant-expulsion policies and reported alliances with smuggling networks, thereby raising concerns about complicity in human rights abuses. This dichotomy marks a transactional turn in policy-setting, a move that already has been construed as the bloc actively undermining its own fundamental ethos.

Consequently, the strategic calculus appears to have overridden the EU’s normative considerations. Even as Europe continues to claim to be a champion of democracy and human rights, those values are compromised by the exigencies arising from Tunisia’s complex sociopolitical milieu and Europe’s own self-interest.

Brussels’ engagement with a Tunisia enmeshed in internal strife, while the bloc deals with external pressures from migrant flows caused by regional instability, is now a matter of pragmatism versus principle. It is a conundrum that represents a stern test for the EU’s resolve in uphold-

ing its foundational values while addressing contemporary geopolitical realities.

This veneer of pragmatism belies an unsettling erosion of Europe’s moral high ground. Once predicated on the nurturing of fledgling political institutions, the European policy on Tunisia has been distilled into more limited and myopic areas of focus: curbing migration and securing borders.

Even as the current Tunisian regime sweeps up migrants and vocal critics alike, casting them into the bleak uncertainty of detention, Europe appears at best helpless, at worst complicit. This discreet stance on political repression in Tunisia — exemplified by the harsh response from the current regime to civil society organizations, with verifiable reports of a systematic crackdown including raids, intimidation, and the dissolution of prominent nongovernmental organizations — underscores a disheartening recalibration.

The EU’s minimal responses to the abuses of power engender a perception of tacit approval, which perhaps serves the broader objective of staunching flows of migrants to European shores, regardless of the moral cost attached to such a consequential silence.

When cornered on the issue, Europe’s leaders continue to parrot grand-sounding declarations about human rights and freedom of expression, but consistently fail to account for how transactional rhetoric undercuts those ideals and condones the Tunisian regime’s ever-tightening grip.

Clearly, the currency of human dignity finds little

stock in the economics of Europe’s engagement with Tunisia, as critical judgments on the denial of personal liberties yield to short-sighted migration pacts. The seemingly strategic EU silence on the jailing of outspoken critics and the detention of political opponents in Tunisia paints a picture of a bloc less enthralled by the prospects of democratization than by the specters of instability and refugee flows.

Implicit within the EU’s apparent compliance with Tunisia’s undemocratic trajectory is the assumption that Europe can navigate the results of partnering with an illiberal regime without jeopardizing its own values and security interests. Such a bargain, however, flirts dangerously with the notion that the line that separates strategic interests and fundamental values can be blurred without consequence.

Europe’s silence suggests a belief that it can compartmentalize its relations, addressing shared concerns such as migration while disregarding internal repression.

Such a stance not only undermines the transformative promise once heralded by the EU in the wake of the Arab Spring but also signals to other nations that the European commitment to democracy is negotiable in the face of pressing strategic concerns.

The reality is stark. Once upon a time, Europe had at its disposal the diplomatic wherewithal to sway Tunisia’s future and steer President Kais Saïed away from the shadow of Ben Ali. Financial aid, trade agreements, and diplomatic relations, all of which are powerful tools in the European arsenal, could have been wielded to enforce a reversal, or at

least a slackening, of the tightening noose.

However, the prioritization of migration control over democratic values has created a dissonance in EU-Tunisia relations, overshadowing Europe’s once powerful role as a promoter of democracy in its immediate neighborhood.

This strategic misstep is further compounded by the EU’s failure to act decisively against the negative external influences that have induced Tunisia’s retreat from democracy, which contrasts sharply with its more resolute stance on the defense of democracy in its more-immediate neighborhood against external threats.

Moreover, the hesitancy of the EU to decisively support Tunisia in times of acute crisis, as seen in its delayed reaction to the collapse of healthcare in the country during the COVID-19 pandemic, represents a missed opportunity to reinforce its influence and commitment to the nation’s democratic path.

Despite the considerable aid and support it has allocated to Tunisia since the Arab Spring, the EU has struggled to adapt its approach in the face of the escalating trend toward authoritarianism in the country.

Instead, European engagement has quietly waned, paving the way for the ruling administration’s unchecked run toward autocracy, all under the pretext of restoring political stability at any cost and stemming a crisis responsible for a resurgence of the Eurosceptic far-right.

For the Tunisians who bravely turned the page in 2011, the difficulties they face now are a painful tragedy and a sobering revelation of how Europe has retreated from its ideals.

A boost for Biden’s global democracy agenda

Andrew Hammond

US President Joe Biden has faced criticism for making “revitalizing democracy the world over” a key goal of his administration. Yet his agenda might be taking stronger root across much of the West and beyond, and could outlive his administration, whether it ends in 2025 or 2029.

An illustration of the appealing nature of his message was on display on Tuesday and Wednesday this week at the Copenhagen Democracy Summit. This global event, the brainchild of Anders Fogh Rasmussen, a former NATO secretary-general and Danish prime minister, featured keynote speakers from around the world, from the Asia Pacific to the Americas.

The speakers included Republican US Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Taiwan’s President Tsai Ing-wen, and President-elect Lai Ching-te, and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

The event coincided with the publication of research based on interviews with almost 70,000 people worldwide, which found that faith in democracy remains high around the globe, with 85 percent of those polled agreeing that democracy is important to their country.

This is a timely reminder, given that 2024 is a banner year for elections, during which an estimated 2 billion people in dozens of nations will go to the polls.

The research also found, however, that governments generally were not seen to be living up to the democratic expectations of their citizens; only a little more than half of those polled were satisfied with the state of democracy in their country. This dissatisfaction was not limited to nondemocratic nations; it was also prevalent in several Western countries with long democratic traditions.

A good example was the US, where former President Donald Trump will once again be on the ballot for the Republican Party in the presidential election in November.

Still tarred by the assault on the Capitol by his supporters on Jan. 6, 2021, he has openly stated that should he win, he will be a dictator on the first day of his second term.

The consequences of a Trump victory are not only important domestically but internationally. During his first term, foes of the US around the world, from Venezuela to Iran and Russia, relished the disorder he brought to Washington. In particular, the Jan. 6 debacle was watched with glee by those nationalist populists around the world who try to defy calls for the rule of law and democratic norms to be respected.

Other think tanks, such as the US-based Freedom House, in recent years have also regularly highlighted the hostile environment democratic governance faces around the globe. A key challenge, especially following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, is the growing concern about the increasing influence of Moscow and other authoritarian and/or autocratic states.

According to Rasmussen, there is a “trend which shows we risk

losing the Global South to the autocracies. We are witnessing an axis of autocracies forming, from China to Russia to Iran. We must act now to make freedom more attractive than dictatorship, and unite through an alliance of democracies to push back against the emboldened autocrats.”

Yet there are some in the US, and beyond, who would prefer Biden not to overemphasize democracy-based political rhetoric. They argue, for example, that such ideas sometimes make a simplistic, binary distinction between “good” and “bad” that can sit awkwardly in a fast-changing, complex world of ambiguity and uncertainty, where there is frequently a need to work with states that lack democratic traditions but with which the US has shared interests.

Some critics instead favor an international approach by Washington based more on classic, quantifiable national interests. They argue that other states, especially developing ones, might be more likely to aspire to emulate the US because of its material prosperity, rather than any appeals based on its democratic virtues.

Economic modernization and liberalism, it is suggested, will be the impulse for future democratic reforms and help counteract the appeal of alternative, authoritarian models of development that have brought significant indebtedness to key US allies.

The implication is that Biden’s agenda might best be delivered by putting significantly more emphasis on new economic-reform and infrastructure packages for Africa, Asia, and the Americas, including signature initiatives such as the G7-backed Build Back Better World initiative, to demonstrate in a practical way the US intent to invest in low and middle income countries.

Yet, as important as this economic agenda is, it is not incompatible with an agenda for democracy. Indeed, value-driven, high-standard, and transparent partnership schemes that address the developing world’s huge infrastructure-funding challenges, such as Build Back Better World, can reinforce Biden’s wider agenda.

This is important because there is recognition that a broad, multifaceted approach is needed to ensure that freedom and democracy flourish. This is why it is so important that Biden now embeds in his agenda for the remainder of his presidency the need to make democracy “more responsive and resilient.”

The truth behind Biden’s assertion that “proving democracy is durable and strong” is a central challenge of our age is highlighted in the important book “How Democracies Die” by Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt.

Its core concept is that in

The consequences of a Trump victory are not only important domestically but internationally. During his first term, foes of the US around the world, from Venezuela to Iran and Russia, relished the disorder he brought to Washington. In particular, the Jan. 6 debacle was watched with glee by those nationalist populists around the world who try to defy calls for the rule of law and democratic norms to be respected. Other think tanks, such as the US-based Freedom House, in recent years have also regularly highlighted the hostile environment democratic governance faces around the globe. A key challenge, especially following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, is the growing concern about the increasing influence of Moscow and other authoritarian and/or autocratic states. According to Rasmussen, there is a “trend which shows we risk losing the Global South to the autocracies. We are witnessing an axis of autocracies forming, from China to Russia to Iran. We must act now to make freedom more attractive than dictatorship, and unite through an alliance of democracies to push back against the emboldened autocrats.”

Gulf states may benefit from Turkish-Greek detente

Sinem Cengiz

The Gulf states have increasingly shown an interest in the Eastern Mediterranean over the past few years. Their involvement in the region initially coincided with escalating tensions between Türkiye and Greece, ultimately entangling them in that rivalry as they aligned themselves with the conflicting parties.

As Turkish-Greek relations strained over drilling rights in the Eastern Mediterranean, the relations between Greece and the Gulf states — in particular Saudi Arabia and the UAE — intensified. In February 2021, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the UAE participated in an event held in Athens called the “Philia Forum” (philia means friendship in Greek) — a meeting that caused unease in Ankara. Egypt, France and the Greek Cypriot administration also participated. During that period, Türkiye’s relations with most of the countries that Greece invited to the forum soured.

Also, the growing convergence and cooperation in energy and security matters in the Eastern Mediterranean between Greece, Israel and Arab states, which was institutionalized in 2019 through the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, became a significant concern for Ankara. The exclusion of Türkiye from such platforms, due to its strained ties and dis-

agreements with most member states, at times intensified tensions, most notably with Greece.

However, the present situation differs significantly from those times. Since 2021, Türkiye has engaged in a normalization process with the Gulf states, Egypt and Israel. Ankara’s normalization with these stakeholders became significant in terms of detangling them from Türkiye’s dispute with Greece in the Eastern Mediterranean. With the recent mending of ties with Athens, Ankara is now at the final stage of its regional normalization phase.

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis met Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan during his visit to Ankara this week. These two leaders, who were both reelected last year, have started taking high-profile steps to strengthen the normalization process.

This was their fourth meeting in a year. Last year, they agreed to put their disputes aside and focus on areas where they can find agreement. This was confirmed this week, as Erdogan and Mitsotakis underscored that there were “no unsolvable problems” between their countries.

Ankara and Athens are now trying to find a way to compartmentalize their issues and build the new era on a “positive agenda” that will include cooperation in the trade, energy, education

and cultural realms. It seems like this positive agenda is clearly bearing fruit in terms of their cooperation on migrant flows, as well as on tourism.

Mitsotakis stated that Greece would back additional EU funding to Türkiye for the migrant issue. In regard to tourism, the increasing number of Turkish citizens visiting the Greek islands in the eastern Aegean is promising, strengthening the two countries’ political, economic and cultural ties alike.

The changing dynamic in the Eastern Mediterranean is expected to affect countries with interests in the region, including the Gulf states. Although the Gulf states’ increased involvement initially coincided with regional rivalries and geopolitical tensions, it is crucial to recognize that shared antagonism toward Türkiye was not the sole driver behind their engagement in the region.

Historically, the relationship between the Gulf and the Eastern Mediterranean was primarily rooted in economic and trade ties, albeit at a relatively modest scale. Although the Gulf states are latecomers to the Eastern Mediterranean, their interests should be analyzed in the broader context, which has international, regional and local dimensions. The growing

focus of Gulf states on the Eastern Mediterranean is part of a larger pattern of their expanding ambitions, while also reflecting the evolving geopolitical dynamics across the region.

In the international context, closer ties between Gulf and EU states, Greece in particular, comes at a time when US policy in the region is being reassessed following the uncertainties of the Trump and Biden presidencies. In the regional context, closer ties came when relations with Türkiye were strained. However, the Gulf states are now building political and economic capital in their relations with Ankara, with comprehensive free trade deals, strategic dialogue mechanisms and defense collaboration. Yet, stronger ties with Türkiye will not be at the expense of their growing relations with Greece because the Gulf states are seeking to grow their number of partners in the region.

Turkish-Greek normalization will be a win-win situation, especially at a time when Israel’s war in Gaza is jeopardizing the security of the Eastern Mediterranean. Prior to the Gaza war, natural gas discoveries in the area offered attractive prospects and promised new development opportunities. The prolonging of the war in Gaza carries potential risks to the interests of Türkiye, Greece and the Gulf states.

Lastly, the Gulf states, which are currently diversifying their policies domestically and abroad according to their various “Vision” plans for the future, consider closer ties with both Türkiye and Greece key to their quest of extending their soft power. The cultural and tourism sectors play a central role as they seek to diversify their economies away from oil.

The Gulf states could also contribute to the moderate atmosphere in relations and strengthen the positive agenda between Greece and Türkiye. This could start with Türkiye’s inclusion in the cooperation and friendship mechanisms in the Eastern Mediterranean, which stand as a convergence point of geopolitics and geoeconomics. This would contribute to the development of an interconnected Eastern Mediterranean region. From energy cooperation to maritime security and from tourism to trade, there are several initiatives that the Türkiye-Gulf-Greece trio can explore.

The Eastern Mediterranean’s security landscape is likely to be significantly influenced by the two contradictory trends of Israel’s Gaza war and the improving relations between Greece and Türkiye. While the former poses challenges, the latter offers opportunities for the Gulf states.

Biden-Netanyahu standoff complicates Gaza conflict

Talmiz Ahmad

Amid the extraordinary carnage in Gaza, the international community is witnessing with surprise and bemusement the spectacle of the American president standing eyeball to eyeball with the Israeli prime minister, with neither of them signaling any desire to give way. This spectacle is particularly astonishing since Joe Biden has consistently prided himself on being Israel’s best friend and, during the Gaza war, has proffered almost unstinting support to Israel’s war effort.

Ties between the US and Israel, two of the world’s closest allies, have generally been described with words such as “tightly knit,” “unwavering support” and “iron-clad.” What, then, has gone wrong? It now appears that the large-scale killing of

Palestinians in Gaza and the widespread pro-Palestine agitations in the US and several European cities have finally awakened the US president’s conscience, or just rudely reminded him that he is losing support in the presidential race.

After seven months of wanton death and destruction, he is now counselling restraint just as Benjamin Netanyahu is preparing to order a fresh assault on Rafah, in southern Gaza, where nearly 2 million displaced Gaza residents have found temporary, albeit squalid, refuge.

All through March, the US president repeatedly conveyed to Netanyahu the need for a ceasefire and increased humanitarian supplies to the beleaguered enclave. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer

described Netanyahu personally as a liability for Israel. Finally, in an unprecedented move, the US declined to veto a UN Security Council resolution that called for a cessation of hostilities and increased flow of humanitarian aid.

Living up to his reputation as a master political manipulator, Netanyahu then adroitly shifted attention from Gaza to Iran by attacking the Iranian consulate in Damascus, killing seven senior Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps officers, including two generals. The prospect of an Iranian retaliation pushed the US immediately back on to the Israeli side. After the October 7 attack, Biden said that, “we will make sure Israel has what it needs to take care of its citizens (and) defend itself,” while Secretary of State Antony

Blinken gushed: “... as long as America exists, you will never ever have to (defend yourself). We will always be there by your side.” Fortunately for regional security, April’s tit-for-tit exchanges between Iran and Israel were largely mere demonstrations of technology and capacity, with both sides deciding not to escalate matters further.

This brought Gaza back to America’s attention, amid widespread demonstrations on numerous university campuses expressing support for Palestinian aspirations, referring to Biden as “Genocide Joe” and calling for an immediate end to the conflict. On May 6, Biden advised Netanyahu not to invade Rafah. The Israeli prime

minister immediately ordered aircraft to hit targets in southern Gaza, while a brigade seized the Rafah border crossing with Egypt. Another brigade moved to the border with eastern Rafah.

Two days later, in an interview on CNN, Biden publicly set out his red line, saying: “If they (Israelis) go into Rafah, I’m not supplying the weapons that have been used to deal with the cities.” He also ordered a pause in the delivery of 3,500 bombs to Israel. Netanyahu remained unfazed. He categorically stated: “If we must, we shall fight with our fingernails.”

Israel has not yet conducted a full-scale assault on Rafah, but it continues to launch regular attacks on

targets there and intense bombing at the Rafah-Egypt border. Several dozen Palestinians have been killed. Israel has also dropped leaflets warning civilians they will face “extreme force” if they remain in the area. On Sunday, Israel hit a UN vehicle carrying emergency medical supplies to Rafah, while intensifying attacks in northern Gaza. Blinken has warned helplessly that the Rafah attack will inflict “terrible harm” on the population.

The stakes for Netanyahu are very high. A ceasefire, without Hamas having been “annihilated,” would diminish the prime minister’s standing among his right-wing support-base and could even lead the extreme right to topple his government. As soon as he ceases to be prime minister,

Netanyahu will face the revival of criminal cases against him and possible imprisonment. Hence, he has every reason to continue the conflict in Gaza, at least until Hamas’ military commander, Yahya Sinwar, has been apprehended or killed and he can proclaim victory.

Netanyahu is on solid ground at home. He faces little domestic opposition to the conduct of the war, except from the families of the hostages. No influential group is calling for halting the Rafah attack or for an increase in humanitarian assistance.

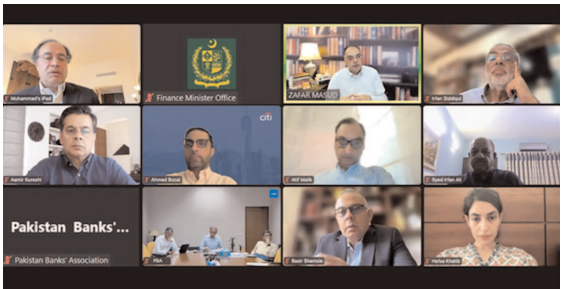
The Israeli PM believes he can face off with Biden. He has already taken on a Democratic president, Barack Obama, on his home turf, when in March 2015 he attacked the nuclear agreement with

Iran at a joint session of Congress. Now, he again enjoys the full backing of the Republicans who are criticizing Biden for betraying Israel’s interests by halting military supplies.

In this stand-off, it is Biden who seems to have the weaker hand. In the presidential campaign, polls are still placing him neck and neck with Donald Trump, with the latter even marginally ahead in the swing states. The pause in supply of munitions is hardly likely to make much difference, given that Israel already has enough weaponry for the Rafah assault and billions of dollars of US supplies are ready for delivery.

A Biden climbdown is very likely. As an observer has noted cynically, “US red lines with Israel have been known to turn pink.”

Minister updated on banking sector strategic plan in priority sectors



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Banks' Association (PBA) held a meeting with the Federal Minister for Finance & Revenue, Muhammad Aurangzeb. The meeting focused on enhancing support by the banks for the three key sectors of Agriculture, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), and Digital & Technology in Pakistan. The discussion underlined the banking sector's commitment to fostering financial inclusion in the Country.

Federal Minister mentioned at the outset that the idea of this exercise shall be to encourage the entire sector to contribute towards these priority sectors as per their size and unique offerings & strengths. While there will be no "directed lending"; however, there

shall be voluntary targets to be set between the banks and the regulator to share the responsibility to contribute towards these critical sectors. He expects the banks to step up and continue to work with the Government in the revival and the growth of the economy.

During the session, Chairman PBA, Zafar Masud, along with the Steering Committee members on these initiatives, including Vice Chairman PBA, Ahmed Bozai, CEO & SG PBA, Muneer Kamal, Executive Director (Financial Inclusion Group) State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Syed Irfan Ali, and President & CEO Meezan Bank, Irfan Siddiqui, presented a comprehensive set of recommendations aimed at promoting growth and sustainability in these vital sectors. The proposals were

developed in close consultation with SBP to ensure they effectively address the unique challenges and highlight the opportunities within each sector.

The key recommendations in the agriculture sector included, among other steps, restructuring crop loan insurance schemes to integrate crop yield factors, revitalizing agricultural cooperative banks and upgrading provincial agricultural cooperative legislations to facilitate the creation of agricultural cooperative lending institutions. The recommendations also included exploring technology-driven solutions to facilitate the distribution of targeted subsidies through banks, particularly to the subsistence-level farmers, similar to BISIP, to promote much-needed financial inclusion.

Similarly, it was resolved in the meeting that banks get actively involved in providing financial and management support to entities such as the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) and National Credit Guarantee Company Limited (NCGCL). The Minister was apprised that

PBA and SBP are actively engaged to revising SME Prudential Regulations, enhancing clean financing limits, and reviewing regulatory retail portfolio limits to facilitate SME financing.

The Minister was informed that PBA is contemplating to establish "SME and Agriculture Index" to target the customers currently outside the documented economy while also enhancing credit risk management.

On the Digital & Technology front, PBA recommended facilitating retail foreign investment through digital micro sukus/infra bonds and integrating freelancers into payment gateways. It was also proposed to enhance foreign remittance flows via specially developed online portals for overseas Pakistanis.

It was emphasized that the banks be allowed to offer products and services in technology space, currently only used for their own operations, to the outside world to harness export flows. The recommendations related to documentation of the economy through the use of technology were also discussed,

and outlined the role that the banks will play in furthering Government's efforts in this respect.

The Minister commended PBA's Steering Committee, and the respective Task Forces for the three identified priority sector, for their thorough analysis and valuable recommendations. He highlighted the crucial role of the banking community in driving economic growth. He stressed upon the banks to enhance their efforts in supporting these priority sectors to foster economic development and prosperity. The Minister consented on the governance structure for the implementation of the proposed recommendations by PBA, jointly with SBP and the Ministry of Finance & Revenue, spearheaded by him and the Governor SBP.

"PBA and its members are fully committed to working closely with the Ministry of Finance and the SBP to implement these recommendations, and ensuring effective contribution of the banking sector to Pakistan's economic prosperity," Commented Zafar Masud, Chairman - PBA at the end of the meeting.



KARACHI: President Pakistan Society of Internal Medicine Dr. Javed Akram, VC Health Services Academy Professor Shahzad Ali Khan, Founding Director Center of Excellence in Women and Child Health Dr. Zulfiqar Bhutta and CEO & MD Getz Pharma Khalid Mahmood at Antimicrobial Summit.

Gas theft crackdown: 69 connections disconnected: SNGPL

F.P. Report

LAHORE: During the ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, SNGPL continued raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad, disconnecting another 69 connections; Rs 1.59 million fine imposed.

In Lahore, the team disconnected 18 connections on illegal use of gas and imposed a fine of Rs 1.04 million against gas theft cases. The team also lodged 3 FIRs against gas theft

cases.

In Multan 05 connections were disconnected on illegal use by the regional team.

In Peshawar the company disconnected 34 connections on account of direct use of gas and illegal use of gas and amount of Rs 0.41 million have been booked against gas theft cases.

The regional team of Shiekhpura disconnected 05 connections on illegal use of gas and also booked

an amount of Rs 0.04 against gas theft cases. The team also lodged 1 FIR against gas pilferers.

In Bahawalpur the team disconnected 02 connections on illegal use of gas.

The regional team of Sahiwal disconnected one connection on illegal use of gas.

In Faisalabad the team disconnected 04 connections on illegal use of gas and also booked an amount of Rs 0.1 million against gas pilferers.

BMP for revisiting terms of power purchase contracts to control rising energy cost

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has stressed the need for revisiting terms of power purchase agreements with a view to restore the viability of country's energy sector, as billions of rupees could be saved by making payments to IPPs in local currency instead of dollars.

FPCCI former president and BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar said that in view of decreasing cost of production and lessen energy tariffs, the government should bring some major changes in the agreements with IPPs, who are earning high profits due to certain terms and conditions of their agreements.

He further disclosed that the high cost of power tariff was due to a host of factors, including snowballing capacity payments, net hydel profit, transmission constraints, minimum plant factor provision for RLNG based plants, gas price anomalies and financing cost of circular debt.

The FPCCI former president said that Pakistan pur-

sued an aggressive policy to add power capacity, but years of slow economic growth, power theft, and under-investment in transmission and distribution networks have meant that bill recovery has not been at par.

He said that most IPPs had an investment payback period of 2-4 years, profits generated were as high as 18.37 times the investment and dividends 23 times the investment and under the 1994 Power Policy, 16 out of 17 IPPs invested a combined capital of Rs52 billion and earned profits in excess of Rs417 billion. The governments' failure to contain the circular debt had cost the country over Rs5,082 billion in the past 15 years, with an annual loss of Rs370 billion.

Mian Anjum Nisar added that restoring energy sector viability requires strong cost-side reforms, including continuation of efforts to improve transmission infrastructure, better integration and expansion of renewable energy capacity; improving DISCO performance via either privatization or long-term management concessions; moving captive power demand

to the grid; revisiting, the terms of power purchase agreements; and continuing to convert publicly-guaranteed PHPL debt into cheaper public debt.

He outlined the reforms' agenda that has either been undertaken by Pakistan or where Islamabad needs to put more efforts.

In the case of the energy sector, terms of power purchase agreements have not come heavily under the scanner as the focus has first been on taking recovery and tariffs to a sustainable level.

Higher energy prices triggered mass protests across Pakistan last year and have also stifled energy demand with policymakers scratching their heads on how to move forward for the sector's viability.

With runaway inflation triggering record high interest rates, demand for energy has reduced further, leaving the government in a 'catch-22' situation.

In a report, it is also admitted that the only sustainable solution for the sector is decisive action to address cost-side and infrastructure issues. He quoted the IMF report which is an important document as

many see it as a guideline in the light of Pakistan's pursuit for a longer, larger program with the IMF.

A mission of the lender is expected to visit this month ahead of the budget-making exercise where new taxation measures targeting non-filers and retailers are currently being pursued.

In the letter of intent, part of the IMF staff report, Pakistan also agreed that it will focus on mobilizing significant additional revenue especially in under-taxed sectors.

In its recommendations, he suggested to the government that basic tariff of IPPs should be changed in Pakistani currency instead of dollars and if this change is not made, an amount of Rs5,266 billion will have to be paid. Similarly, the profits to the IPPs owners should be given in Pakistani rupees instead of dollars.

The country could save Rs5,500 billion only with change of currency in the agreement, instead of Take or Pay contract. The government is suggested to revoke the practice of capacity payment based on 'Take or Pay' with the owners of IPPs.

The report also claimed that the IPPs' owners showed extra cost to get extra tariff at the time of the contract, with NEPRA failing to check the veracity of cost. The cost of the power plant prepared by the companies was also accepted by the authorities, it further reveals.

The FPCCI former president observed that besides increasing exports and controlling imports the government will have to take administrative measures. He argued that the devaluation of the currency was dictated by the IMF through prior actions and it has nothing to do with macroeconomic fundamentals. He said that there was a complete breakdown of economic policymaking, as the country's fiscal policy had become subservient to monetary and exchange rate policies.

He said that the monetary tightening and exchange rate depreciation resulted in higher inflation, public debt and debt servicing. The empirical evidence showed that the one percent monetary tightening hiked the inflationary pressure by 1.3 percent in the case of Pakistan, he added.

Bodies announce support for PIAF in LCCI polls

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The delegation of various traders and industrial associations, especially the paper market and Shah Alam Market, Young Traders Association, Beden Road and other markets visited the PIAF office to show their solidarity with the PIAF in the upcoming Lahore Chambers elections. The delegation from Paper Market Ganpat Road was led by APMA former chairman Khamis Saeed Butt while the delegation from Young Traders Association of Shah Alam Market was led by Shehzad Aslam and the delegation from Baden Road was led by Tahir Hafeez.

In the meeting the PIAF leadership said that the All Pakistan Paper Merchants Association has always played an important role in the elections of the Lahore

Chamber. In the biggest election of the business community of Lahore, PIAF will succeed once again with the support of businessmen and industrialists.

The leadership of PIAF is always active in solving the problems of the business community on all forums and will not spare any effort in the future. For the past years, PIAF Founders Alliance has not lost a single seat. PIAF Founders Alliance this time will win all the seats, but despite this, hard work is necessary for elections.

Patron-in-Chief PIAF Mian Anjum Nisar and Chairman PIAF Fahimur Rahman Saigol while talking to a delegations led by former Senior Vice Chairman PIAF Khamis Saeed Butt and Executive Committee Member PIAF Bau Muhammad Bashir pointed out this. On the occasion of the visit to the central office of the PIAF hundreds of businessmen and industrialists from Urdu Bazar, Ganpat Road, Abakari Road, Anarkali and adjacent markets participated in the delegation. Ahad Amin Malik will enter the field as a PIAF candidate in the Lahore Chamber elections. All members expressed their support for him in the meeting.

Bajwa, Qayyum Raza, Arsalan Abid and many other businessmen were also present.

Meanwhile Chairman of PIAF, Pattern Chief PIAF, Senior Vice Chairman, Vice Chairman other senior members met executive committee member PIAF Nabil Tariq Mehmood and his group in their office and once again congratulated Pakistan Goods Transporters for winning the election unopposed. On this occasion, Senior Vice President Goods Transporters Association Malik Irfan, Vice President Mumtaz Zaman, Mirza Arshad Baig, Ahmad Khan, General Secretary Zahid Basir and other officials also participated. Coordination duties were performed by Executive Committee Member PIAF Malik Muhammad Khalid.

The PIAF Chief observed that besides increasing exports and controlling imports the government will have to take administrative measures, as a large demand of cash dollars are seen in the market. He argued that this devaluation of the currency was dictated by the IMF through prior actions and it has nothing to do with macro-economic fundamentals. He said that there was a complete breakdown of economic policymaking, as the country's fiscal policy had become subservient to monetary and exchange rate policies.

Debt servicing economy's biggest issue

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The governments' borrowing policy over the last decade has brought the country to the brink, as the debt servicing has now become the biggest challenge on expenditures front in the federal budget in the wake of huge domestic and foreign borrowings, as Pakistan's external public debt rose by \$1.2 billion in six months to \$86.35 billion as of Sept, 2023.

APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood, quoting the data, pointed out that the external debt was

recorded at \$86.36 billion and domestic debt was recorded at Rs39.5 trillion of the total public debt at the end of Sept 2023. In its first quarterly report on Foreign Economic Assistance of the current fiscal year, the ministry said Pakistan had received total foreign inflows of \$3.5b in July-Sept 2023 against loan repayments of \$1.5b, resulting in a net inflow of \$1.97b.

APBF Chairman Ibrahim Qureshi observed that country's fiscal policy over the past decade has focused primarily on macroeconomic stabilization in response to the financial crisis, calling for more emphasis on reforms to foster long-term inclusive

growth by adapting to advancing technology and deepening global integration.

Ibrahim Qureshi said that reforms will require a growth-friendly budget, re-composition to upgrade tax, social spending, and active industrial policies in close consultation with the real stakeholders to achieve sustainable development goals.

The APBF President said that amid increasing discount rates that have now hiked to 22 per cent, Pakistan's total debt and liabilities skyrocketed to Rs35 trillion, which is rising at high speed in the wake of a soaring budget deficit.

Syed Maaz Mahmood

said that there was no justification for making changes in policy rate because it would further increase debt servicing requirements. The policy rate has gone up by 600 basis points and it seemed at only achieving stabilization and there was a significant increase in real positive interest rate.

Around 64 per cent of the total external public debt was obtained from multilateral and bilateral sources having concessional terms and longer maturities, the MEA added. As of September 30, 2023, the total external public debt of the government was \$86.358bn, he said. The external public debt as of March 31, 2023 amounted

to \$85.18bn. In comparison, the country had received \$2.2bn in loans and repaid \$2.06bn during the same period last fiscal year (July-September 2022), leading to net addition of \$142 million.

The FEA report said Pakistan had signed new agreements worth \$642m in fresh commitments during the first quarter of the year and all new commitments had been funded by multilateral development partners as international bonds and commercial loans could not be secured in view of adverse market conditions following poor credit rating and resultant unaffordable interest rates.

Out of these \$642m

commitments, 69pc was for project financing, 15pc as program financing, and 16pc as commodity financing as top priority was for securing financing for mitigation of the devastating effects of 2022 floods.

During July-September 2023-24, disbursements of \$3.538bn were mainly under the project and program loans and grants from multilateral development partners, bilateral development partners and financial institutions.

According to the Debt Policy Statement, around 58 percent of financing of federal fiscal deficit was carried out through domestic sources and 42 percent from external sources.

Senior Vice Chairman PIAF Nasrullah Mughal, Vice Chairman PIAF Tahir Manzoor Chaudhary, Former Chairman PIAF Muhammad Ali Mian, Senior Vice President Zafar Chaudhry, Vice President Adnan Khalid Butt and others were present in the APMAA delegation. Sheikh Saadat Hussain, Fazal Karim Chaudhary, Sharaf Hussain, Humayun Babar, Waqas Malik, Mugheez

global market.

Later, the PIDE team presented the findings of their ongoing research on the state of automobile industry in Pakistan and the future outlook.

A second presentation focusing specifically on the potential of Electric Vehicles in Pakistan, as well as the challenges in its adoption were also presented by the PIDE team at the conference.

Court Notice

In the Court of Abdul Halem Civil Judge-V/Alaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar. Suit No. 53/1, Institution 8/3/2024, date of hearing 3/6/2024. Noor Jihan Vs. Afzal Khan. Notice to No. (14) Abdul Qados s/o Zariat Shah, (25) Amir Nawab s/o Alyas, (29) Aurangzeb s/o Mahabat Khan, (36) Adil Shah s/o Amera Shah, (39) Said Karim s/o Ajab Gul resident of Shadm Amazai Tehsil Mandanr District Buner. Whereas, in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants cannot be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8:00 a.m. dated 3/6/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Court Notice

In the Court of Sumira Wali District Judge/Zila Qazi Buner at Daggar. Suit No. 23/13, Institution 1/11/2023, date of hearing 10/6/2024. Rozi Khan Vs. Musafir etc. Notice to No. (1/1/3) Mazed Khan (brother Mst. Kalsum) s/o Rishad Khan resident of Daggar Kalay Tehsil Daggar District Buner. Whereas, in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants cannot be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8:00 a.m. dated 10/6/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Institute of Development Economics hosted a day-long conference on 'Revitalizing Pakistan's Automobile Industry: Moving towards Consumer Welfare, Global Integration & Sustainable Mobility'.

Representatives of Automobile Companies in Pakistan, Automobile parts manufacturers, policymakers and academicians participated in the conference, which was held in Lahore sharing their experience and knowledge regarding the issues and the future outlook of automobile industry in Pakistan, said in an official statement here on Sunday.

The conference was well attended by a large number of students from the local universities as well.

The discussion in the conference was focused on three sub-

themes, Localization Obsession and Supply Chain Constraints, Policy, Reforms and Industry Development, and Electrification and the Future of Mobility.

Extensive and in-depth analysis and views were shared on all the themes by the experts, while students also actively participated in the discussion sessions as well.

Dr. Nadeem Ul Haque, Vice Chancellor Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) in his opening address to the conference expressed that the primary agenda of this conference is to explore why Pakistan's automobile industry is not progressing and to discuss strategies for its revitalization.

The aim of our institution is the economic prosperity of Pakistan, and this conference is a step towards achieving that by focusing on the automobile sector.

The key issues to address

include the reasons behind the lack of exports from the automobile industry, the delayed introduction of hybrids and EVs, and the future of the industry in terms of research and development.

Despite 50 to 70 years of protection, the sector has failed to export, which is a significant concern given the country's economic crisis.

The objective is to have a constructive dialogue to develop policies and understand issues that will drive the development of Pakistan's automobile industry.

Dr. Nadeem concluded his remarks by reaffirming PIDE's efforts towards always taking new steps forward, aiming to conduct research and stimulate debate on important topics as the goal is to foster real, productive conversations that lead to actionable outcomes for the sector's growth and integration into the



The participants lauded the work done by PIDE and also the organization's efforts to bring together all stakeholders for developing and promoting a unified reform plan for the revitalization of the automobile industry in Pakistan. The message from the conference was clear that Pakistan needs a policy shift if it wants to develop its automobile industry.



In brief

Multan won national T-20

MULTAN (APP): Multan Physical disabled team won the Shahid Afridi Foundation (SAF) National T-20 Grade One Cricket Championship by defeating Bahawalpur with 6 wickets in the final match. The final match of the championship organized by the Pakistan Physical Disability Cricket Association in collaboration with Shahid Afridi Foundation and the Pakistan Cricket Board, was played at the DHA Sports Complex. Former Test cricketer Masroor Anwar gave man of the match award to Multan all-rounder Zubair Saleem for the fourth consecutive man of the match. On this occasion Additional Commissioner Arshad Gopang, Muhammad Arsalan Khan President Multan District, Regional Head PPDCA Multan and Bahawalpur Jameel Kamran and a large number of fans were present. A dditional Commissioner Arshad Gopang said that Commissioner Multan Maryam Khan was committed to the promotion of sports. A ceremony will be held in honor of the winning team of Multan region soon. Earlier in the final, Bahawalpur scored 127 runs, Abid Hussain and Mann scored 26,26 runs. Zubair Saleem bowled 4 players for 26 runs, Muhammad Irfan took 3 wickets and Jahanzeb Tiwana took 2 wickets. Multan won the title for the fourth time by achieving the target four wickets in the 19th overs as Majid Hussain remained unbeaten by scoring 45 runs with help of five fours while Muhammad Zaman Ali added 34 runs.

Afridi hails Kohli statement

KARACHI (Web Desk): Former Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi on Saturday unequivocally praised Indian batting maestro Virat Kohli for his expressed willingness to visit Pakistan. Afridi, at a tape-ball event in Karachi, confidently remarked that he was not surprised by Kohli's gesture. "I expected such a statement from Virat. I welcome Virat, whether he comes to the PSL or with the Indian team," Afridi said. For the unversed, Virat Kohli revealed his desire to visit Pakistan during a video call with Pakistani mountaineer Shehroze Kashif in 2022. "Give my regards to your family and all your friends. Hopefully, we will visit Pakistan soon; everyone's started visiting now," Kohli said while talking to Kashif. Meanwhile, Shahid Afridi also expressed support for young opening batter Saim Ayub and expressed confidence in his talent. "Saim has a lot of talent. I hope he performs well. Pakistan need a batter who can play well in the first six overs," Afridi said. Ayub is currently in England with the Pakistan squad, where they are scheduled to play a four-match T20I series against the host nation, starting on May 22. The national men's cricket team reached here on Wednesday, following their 2-1 series victory over Ireland in the three-match series. After the conclusion of the England series, the Pakistan team will depart for the United States of America (USA) to participate in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024. The 2009 champions will start their campaign against co-host USA on June 4 before taking on arch-rivals India on June 9.

Wyatt's blitz help England complete series sweep

LEEDS (Monitoring Desk) : England Women beat Pakistan Women by 34 runs to complete the three-match T20I series sweep at Headingley on Sunday. England racked up 176 on the board and then defended it with ease restricting Pakistan to 142-4 in 20 overs. Danni Wyatt's 87 off 48 balls was the difference between the two sides. In pursuit of the 177-run target, opening batters, Gull Feroza (30, 29b, 5x4s) and Sidra Amin (26, 29b, 5x4s) provided a steady start with a 60-run opening stand. Sidra's departure initiated a mini collapse as Feroza, Sadaf Shamas (6, 7b, 1x4) and Muneeba Ali (3, 6b) returned for low scores leaving Pakistan 73-4 in 11.4 overs. With 104 runs required in 50 balls, Pakistan could only manage 69 more runs as Aliya Riaz (35 not out, 27b, 4x4s) and Nida Dar (29 not out, 24b, 3x4s, 1x6) chipped in with spirited batting efforts. Despite the two

experienced batters throwing punches in an unbeaten 69-run stand, England managed a 34-run win. Earlier, after England opted to bat first Maia Bouchier (8, 14b) and Wyatt provided a 36-run opening partnership. Wyatt, in the meanwhile, looked in good touch as she hit four boundaries scoring the bulk of the 40 runs that England notched in the powerplay. Heather Knight and Wyatt stitched a 59-run third-wicket partnership with the latter being the aggressor contributing 47 off 19. Wyatt brought up her half-century off 34 balls in the 11th over, ransacking 20 runs against Nida. Diana Baig brought an end to Wyatt's onslaught who had raced to 87 off 48 balls with the help of twelve fours and one six. Nida dismissed her counterpart while Sidra run-out Capsey as the double strike in the 15th over meant England were reduced to 122-5.

While England lost regular wickets, Amy Jones (26, 15b, 4x4s) kept the innings intact and helped her team post 176 all out. Diana was the pick of Pakistan bowlers, returning figures of 3-26 in her four overs. Nida too picked up three wickets while Fatima Sana removed one batter. Scores in brief: England Women beat Pakistan Women by 34 runs England Women 176 all out, 20 overs (Danni Wyatt 87, Amy Jones 26; Diana Baig 3-26, Nida Dar 3-45) Pakistan Women 142-4, 20 overs (Aliya Riaz 35 not out, Gull Feroza 30, Nida Dar 29 not out, Sidra Amin 26; Sophie Ecclestone 1-19) Player of the match – Danni Wyatt (England Women) Player of the series – Amy Jones (England Women) 1st T20I – England win by 53 runs 2nd T20I – England win by 65 runs.



LEEDS: Nat Sciver-Brunt looked to be inventive in her short innings.

Raducanu pulls out of French Open qualifying to train on grass

PARIS (AFP): Former US Open winner Emma Raducanu is likely to miss the French Open at Roland Garros after withdrawing from this week's qualifying tournament. While the Briton is a third alternate for the main draw, successfully coming through qualifying, which starts on Monday, would have offered her a guaranteed route to the main draw. Her name, however, did not appear among the qualifiers listed Sunday on the Roland Garros website. "It's important for me to keep laying on the foundations and I will use the time to do a healthy block before the grass and subsequent hard court seasons to give myself a chance to keep fit for the rest of the year," Raducanu said Sunday in a statement quoted by British media. The 21-year-old won the US Open title in 2021 but has since suffered from regular injury problems and is now ranked 212 in the world. Her only appearance on the red clay in Paris was in 2022 when, seeded 12th, she lost in three sets to Aliaksandra Sasnovich in the second round, and she was not awarded a wild card for this year's edition. Raducanu reached the quarter-finals in Stuttgart last month where she lost to world number one Iga Swiatek but then slipped to a straight-sets, first-round loss at the Madrid Open last month to world No 82 Lourdes Carle. After that match, Raducanu said she was "mentally and emotionally exhausted". The French Open main tournament begins on May.

Foden fires Man City to title

MANCHESTER (AFP): Manchester City won an unprecedented fourth consecutive Premier League title on Sunday as Phil Foden's double inspired a 3-1 victory over West Ham. No side in the history of the English top flight had ever won four successive titles, but City have become accustomed to rewriting the record books under Pep Guardiola. The Catalan coach has masterminded six Premier League wins in the past seven seasons. In four of those years, City have also surpassed 90 points. They were pushed this season to deny Arsenal a first title since 2003/04. The Gunners celebrated a 0-0 draw at the Etihad last month that kept them one point in front of City with nine games to play. But the champions were relentless in the run-in, winning their final nine league games, scoring 33 goals. Guardiola conceded City had felt the pressure in a nervy 2-0 win at Tottenham in midweek that kept the destiny of the title in their own hands. In the same scenario two years ago, they needed a remarkable late fightback from 2-0

down to beat Aston Villa 3-2 on the final day. There was far less drama as West Ham melted under the baking Manchester sun in David Moyes' final game in charge of the Hammers. Foden was recently crowned the football writers' player of the year for his best-ever goalscoring season and ended any suspense after just 79 seconds. The England international arrowed a blistering drive into the top corner to ensure there was no nervous wait for the title party to get started. Foden doubled City's lead inside 20 minutes with another cool left-footed finish from Jeremy Doku's cross for his 27th goal of the season. City should have been out of sight before half-time as Alphonse Areola denied Kevin De Bruyne and Erling Haaland failed to turn in from point-blank range. Out of nowhere, there was a twist in the tale of the first half when, from a West Ham corner, Mohammed Kudus' outrageous overhead kick flew high past Stefan Ortega. Haaland claimed his second Golden

Boot in as many seasons in the Premier League despite a day to forget in front of goal. The Norwegian missed a huge chance to restore the home side's two-goal cushion when he spooned over another inviting Doku cross. City swiftly restored order at the start of the second period and fittingly it was Rodri, himself a player of the year contender, who delivered the knockout blow to Arsenal's title hopes. The Spaniard has not been on the losing side for club or country since March 2023. City's only three Premier League defeats came in the three games the 27-year-old was suspended. This time Areola should have done better as the Frenchman failed to turn Rodri's tame effort round the post. City could cruise to the finish line and extend a remarkable 35-game unbeaten streak in all competitions from open play. The only blip on that run was a penalty shootout defeat to Real Madrid in the Champions League quarter-finals that denied Guardiola's men the chance of back-to-back trebles.

Timber Wolves bag Ramadan Cup title

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ali Hamza Kazmi scored 14 points and Sher Shehzad scored four points for the winning side while Khalid Saadi scored seven points and Muhammad Salman scored five points for YMCA. President Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF), Brigadier (Rtd) Muhammad Iftikhar Mansoor who was the chief guest of the closing ceremony appreciated the efforts of the tournament organizing secretary Ouj E Zahoor and all other members for providing the best arrangements for this tournament and said that Pakistan Basketball Federation will continue their efforts to promote basketball in the country especially to organize such events in the future as well

so that the youth get an opportunity to show the essence of their abilities. Deputy Director General Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) Muhammad Saeed Akhtar, Pakistan Basketball Federation Associate Secretary and Organizing Committee Secretary Ouj E Zahoor, President Federal basketball Association Ejaz Rafi Butt, PBBF Chairman Selection Committee Col. (R) Shujaat Ali Rana, National Coach Malik Muhammad Riaz, Muhammad Azam Dar and other dignitaries were also attended the closing ceremony. Earlier in the semifinals of the club tournament, Timber Wolves thrashed Bulls A by 18-11 points and YMCA beat Reapers Red by 20-12 points.

Usyk beats Tyson Fury to become undisputed champion

RIYADH (Agencies): Oleksandr Usyk beat Tyson Fury by scoring a razor-thin split decision to win the world's first undisputed heavyweight championship in 25 years, an unprecedented feat in boxing's four-belt era. The United Kingdom's Fury was the early aggressor but Usyk gradually took charge and the "Gypsy King" was saved by the bell in the ninth round before slumping to his first career defeat on Sunday. "It's a great time. It's a great day," Usyk said. Ukraine's Usyk joins the likes of Muhammad Ali, Joe Louis and Mike Tyson as the undisputed heavyweight champion, the first since boxing recognised four major belts in the 2000s. With the win, the former undisputed cruiserweight champion can legitimately claim to be the best of this era, although a rematch expected in October could provide another twist. The UK's Lennox Lewis was the last man to unify the heavyweight belts – three at the time – after beating Evander Holyfield in 1999. Usyk got the better of the opening rounds before Fury hit his stride in the fourth, engaging in some showmanship as he started to catch Usyk with vicious body shots, but the Ukrainian battled back with



several stinging reminders of his power. Usyk turned the tide in the eighth round and few would have been surprised had the referee stopped the fight in the ninth as the Ukrainian's powerful punches to the head left Fury reeling. Usyk hurt Fury (34-1-1) with a left hand and eventually sent him sprawling into a corner in the final seconds of the round, getting credit for a knockdown right before Fury was saved by the bell. Fury struggled to mount a consistent attack after nearly getting stopped, and the knockdown turned out to be the decisive factor in the decision. "Thank you so much to my team," Usyk said while fighting back tears in the ring after the win. "It's a big opportunity for me, for my family, for my country. Slava Ukraini!"

Fury wants rematch Fury kissed Usyk on the head after the final bell. Fury also said he wants the rematch in October. "I believe I won that fight," Fury said. "I believe he won a few of the rounds, but I won the majority of them, and I believe it was one of those what-can-you-do, one of them ... decisions in boxing. We both put on a good fight, best we can do. "You know, his country is at war, so people are siding with a country at war. But make no mistake, I won that fight, in my opinion, and I'll be back. I've got a rematch clause." Usyk landed 41 percent of his 407 punches, while Fury landed just 31.7 percent of his 496 punches, according to CompuBox statistics. Usyk both threw (260 to 210) and landed (122 to 95) more power punches. Usyk has now joined the

elite club of fighters who held every major world championship belt at heavyweight – and he is the first to do it in the four-belt era, which began in 2007. The list of undisputed champions includes Jack Dempsey, Joe Louis, Floyd Patterson, Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier and Mike Tyson. Stars line up at ring side Wladimir Klitschko was among the legends watching along with Saudi-based football stars Cristiano Ronaldo and Neymar. Riyadh's newly built, 22,000-capacity Kingdom Arena was packed when Usyk strode out for his ringwalk at 1:30am (22:30 GMT) wearing a green cosack coat and fur hat. Fury followed, dancing to Barry White and Bonny Tyler's "Holding out for a Hero" in a green sleeveless jacket and back-to-front baseball cap. It set the stage for a clash of two fighters with impeccable pedigrees and very different approaches to the sport. In the co-main event, Australia's Jai Opetaia won a unanimous decision over Mairis Briedis of Latvia to win the vacant IBF cruiserweight title. Meanwhile, Ireland's Anthony Cacace scored a TKO win over Joe Cordina of Wales to retain his IBO super-featherweight title and claim the IBF belt.



ROME (AFP): Alexander Zverev won his second Rome Open title after beating Nicolas Jarry in straight sets 6-4, 7-5 in Sunday's final. World number five Zverev, also Foro Italico champion in 2017, comfortably won his sixth Masters 1000 title in the last major tournament before the French Open, which gets underway next weekend. The 27-year-old succeeded in his 11th Masters final which equalled Boris Becker's record for the

most by a German since the series began in 1990. He comfortably beat Chile's Jarry, who could not repeat his quarter- and semi-final heroics against Stefanos Tsitsipas and Tommy Paul, in one hour and 41 minutes. Zverev claimed his first title of the year and first since winning at Chengdu in September at the end of an unusual men's tournament in which a host of top names were either eliminated early or dropped out before the start of the event.

Six-time Rome champion Novak Djokovic was dumped out in the third round by Zverev's semi-final opponent, journeyman Alejandro Tabilo. Last year's winner Daniil Medvedev was stopped at the last-16 stage while Italian world number two Jannik Sinner and third-ranked Carlos Alcaraz both missed the tournament with injury. Earlier, Sara Errani and Jasmine Paolini gave Italian fans something to cheer after beating Coco Gauff and Erin Routliffe to the women's doubles title. Unseeded Errani and Paolini made the Foro Italico crown roar by beating reigning US Open singles champion Gauff and Routliffe 6-3, 4-6, 10-8. Home supporters had been denied the chance to see Sinner and Matteo Berrettini play, with the former Wimbledon finalist also not fit enough to take part in his home city.



In brief

274,000 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 274,000 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 284,500 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1468.04 feet and was 70.04 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 86,300 cusecs and 90,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1176.15 feet, which was 126.15 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 64,200 cusecs and 50,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 151,200, 102,600, 70,800 and 14,600 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 96,400 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 22,900 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Transporters directed

RAWALPINDI (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Rawalpindi Hasan Waqar Cheema Sunday said that transporters had been directed to bring down fares by 5 percent on all routes in Rawalpindi after latest reduction in petroleum products. According to a DC office spokesman, the DC while reviewing the reduction of the fares after drop of petroleum products and cleanliness arrangements at the bus stands ordered that the list of the fares should be displayed at prominent places at all bus stands. A special squad had been formed to check the fares on a daily basis to implement the reduction in fares, the spokesman said adding, the banners were also being displayed at bus stands and Suzuki stops to provide awareness to the public regarding the reduction in the fares. A complaint cell was also being established in the office of the Secretary Regional Transport Authority (RTA) to register complaints regarding fares, he said. Special attention on the instructions of the DC, was being given to the cleanliness at the bus stands. The spokesman informed that on the directives of the Punjab government, certificates would be issued to the managements of the bus stands for good cleanliness arrangements at the bus stands. The citizens could get registered their complaints on RTA's Complainant Cell number, 051-9270011, he added.

Two bike lifters netted

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Police Anti Robbery and Dacoity Unit (ARDU) team arrested two wanted members of a bike lifter gang involved in numerous bike lifting activities, and recovered five stolen motorbikes from their possession. A police public relations officer on Sunday told APP that following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, the Islamabad Police has started "Nasha ab Nahe" movement and intensified crackdown against the criminal elements and drugs peddlers in order to eliminate the crime and drug menace from the city. Following these directions, the ARDU police team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending two wanted members of a bike lifter gang. The accused were identified as Taimoor Ahmed and Zahid Khan.

Ashrafi urges pilgrims to avoid political activities

LAHORE (APP): Chairman of the Pakistan Ulema Council, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, has emphasized that Pakistani pilgrims should refrain from participating in any political activity during their pilgrimage.

Addressing a press conference at Jamia Manzoor-ul-Islamia Cantonment on Sunday, Ashrafi condemned the spread of fake news on social media for political gains, particularly regarding the recent Kyrgyzstan incident. He highlighted that thousands of Pakistanis have left for Hajj, with over 80,000 joining private groups and around 70,000 in official groups. He praised the Makkah program, which assists pilgrims with neces-

sary supplies, and expressed gratitude to Saudi Arabia for facilitating this program.

He also mentioned that private groups, in collaboration with the Ministry of Religious Affairs, are committed to addressing any complaints from pilgrims in Makkah promptly. The "Road to Makkah" initiative has ensured the efficient delivery of goods for millions of pilgrims, he added.

Ashrafi urged Pakistani pilgrims to adhere to Saudi regulations and stressed that performing Hajj without proper permission on a visit visa is not permissible. He noted that countries like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, with the support of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff Hafiz Asim

Munir, are investing in Pakistan despite its economic challenges.

He underscored the importance of political stability for economic progress and called on all political parties to unite for the country's betterment. He also condemned the misuse of social media for political point-scoring, highlighting false reports about serious incidents such as the Kyrgyzstan case and the Bahawalpur University allegations, which have been proven baseless.

The establishment of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) was praised as a positive step towards economic stability, but Ashrafi stressed that achieving this requires political unity and justice for all.

15 drug peddlers held, cache of narcotics recovered

ISLAMABAD (APP): In response to the special directives of the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, the Islamabad Police have arrested 15 narcotics dealers under an ongoing drive "Nasha Ab Nahi" to eradicate narcotics and keep the youngsters safe from the curse of drugs.

A public relations officer on Sunday said that during the last 24 hours, the Islamabad Police apprehended 15 drug peddlers from different areas of the city and recovered a huge cache of drugs from their possession.

Following these directions, the Karachi Company police team arrested two accused namely Sibhat and Taj Muhammad and recovered 10 intoxicated tablets and three bottles of liquor from their possession. The Golra Police Team arrested an

accused and recovered 48 bottles of liquor from his possession.

Similarly, the Sangjani police team arrested an accused namely Haleem Shah and recovered 225 grams heroin from his possession. The Ramna police team arrested four accused including two ladies namely Arslan, Noman Masih, Sanum, and Yoursa Bibi and recovered 575 gram heroin, 210 gram hashish and 105 gram ice from their possession.

Moreover, the Shams Colony police team arrested an accused namely Jahangir and recovered 570 gram heroin from his possession. The Khanna police team arrested an accused namely Fawad Khan and recovered 521 gram heroin from his possession.

Furthermore, the Bhara Kahu police team arrested three accused namely Muhammad Waseem, Saqib, and Wali Khan and

recovered 250 grams of ice from their possession. The Bani Gala police team arrested two accused namely Muhammad Ashiq and Gul Nazir and recovered 1126 gram heroin and 20 gram ice from their possession.

Meanwhile separate cases have been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway. A citizen Fahad Khan resident of Sector G-9 while talking to APP said that the narcotics business can not run without the vindication of the local police.

The Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Islamabad directed the police officers to further intensify the crackdown against the criminal elements. "The Safety and security of the citizens is our foremost priority and no laxity will be tolerated in this regard", he maintained.

Citizens advised to take measures during heat wave

RAWALPINDI (APP): The citizens have been advised to be vigilant and take appropriate measures to stay safe during expected heat wave.

According to a district administration spokesman, the authorities concerned had been directed to ensure preparedness for anticipated heat wave.

He informed that Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rawalpindi, Hassan Waqar Cheema had directed the authorities concerned to take all possible steps to ensure preparedness and safety in light of the anticipated heat wave in Rawalpindi district. He said that the district administration Rawalpindi

had decided to take practical measures to protect the citizens from heat stroke.

Tents would be installed in different areas of the city to facilitate the citizens besides ensuring availability of fans and cold drinking water, he said. Heat stroke camps would be set up at bus stands, Suzuki stops, Nawaz Sharif Park on Main Murree Road, Kutchery Chowk, Raja Bazar, Saddar and other public areas, he informed.

The DC had directed the officers concerned to arrange duties of the officials of Municipal Corporation and Civil Defense in the camps, he said adding, the district

administration officers were instructed that walks should be organized besides displaying banners to spread awareness among the citizens about the heat stroke precautionary measures.

The government had reduced the timings of the schools due to the forecast of a heat wave, he informed. School hours for morning shift would be from 7 am to 11.30 am while the evening shift would be from 3:30 PM to 6:30 PM, he added.

The schools had also been directed to provide working fans, ensure the availability of water coolers and ensure that no student is made to sit in the open during the summer.

YourPace Kid's Trail Pakistan Race organized

ISLAMABAD (APP): The passionate school children of the federal capital early in the morning on Sunday actively participated in the inDrive and Margalla Trail Runners (MTR) hosted YourPace Kid's Trail Pakistan Race Event, a pioneering initiative aimed at promoting a running culture among children in the country.

The project's race, held at Fatima Jinnah F-9 Park, saw an impressive turnout of around 400 enthusiastic young runners aged 7-14, from diverse backgrounds along with their teachers and supporters.

YourPace by inDrive is a non-profit project dedicated to supporting running initiatives to bring together people from diverse backgrounds, helping create a discrimination-free environment for everyone. YourPace, a global initiative successfully conducted in six countries including Egypt, Morocco, Peru, Nepal, Chile, and Brazil, was held for the first time in Pakistan.

Over the past eight weeks, experienced athletes conducted training sessions at selected schools, including Bebud School (Said

Pur, Islamabad), Maryam Foundation School (Bani Gala, Islamabad), Ghosh-e-Mashaal (Margalla Town, Islamabad), and The Qalam School (Rawalpindi). The program focused on introducing students to running basics and encouraging active participation, with a special emphasis on gender equality and unity among participants.

The race featured distances of 1km, 3km, and 5km, allowing children to showcase their running abilities in a supportive and inclusive environment. The event was a resounding success, with beaming faces and a tangible sense of accomplishment among the young participants.

"In today's world, initiatives like YourPace are essential in guiding young kids towards a healthy lifestyle to improve their physical fitness and enhance mental growth," stated by Head of sports at Your Pace, Anna Fedorchuk while she shared her experience with the media; "This is my first visit to Pakistan, and I am deeply impressed by the people I've met. I thank Margalla Trail Runners for

their energy in organizing training programs and runs for children from five Islamabad schools, and the school administrations for their support. The children's happy faces speak volumes about the project's impact. They received well-deserved medals, the gratitude expressed confirms our program's success. Special thanks to inDrive for making this possible. We look forward to continuing our work here and say see you soon, not goodbye!"

Furthermore, founder of MTR, Javed Ali shared details about the YourPace Kid's Trail Pakistan project that it offers an eight-week training program for children from various schools in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Conducted by experienced athletes at selected schools, F-9 Park, and Sports Complex, the program introduces students to running basics and encourages active participation. Javed explained that this program is designed to have equal representation of both male and female students, promoting gender equality and unity among participants.



ISLAMABAD: People enjoy tram ride at Lake View Park in the Federal Capital. —APP Photo

Action against illegal housing schemes ordered

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Engineer Amir Khattak has directed the authorities concerned to intensify the operation against illegal housing societies and take indiscriminate action against the rules violators.

According to a Commissioner Office spokesperson, Engineer Amir Khattak had directed the officers of Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) and Food Department to give briefings on daily performance.

She said that during a briefing, the officers informed the commissioner that there are 635 housing schemes in Rawalpindi while 104 housing schemes are approved and 96 are under process. The administration on the orders of the commissioner was taking action against the rules violators, she added.

She said that the commissioner had instructed the food department to improve its checking system to provide quality food items to the public. Engineer Amir Khattak also directed that cleanliness and hygiene rules should be followed at food and drink places, she maintained.

From May 1 this year, during 1998 raids conducted by the Food Department, 864 improvement notices were issued and fines amounting to over Rs 5.3 million were imposed on the violators. Two FIRs were also lodged, she said.

Constables promotion recommended

ISLAMABAD (APP): Following the special directions of the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, a meeting of the Departmental Promotion Committee (DPC) was held at the Central Police Office Islamabad to promote 121 constables to the respective upper ranks.

While talking to APP on Sunday, the spokesman of police said that the meeting was chaired by SP Headquarters and attended by senior police officers. In the meeting, the Promotion Committee reviewed the service records of Constables for the vacant seats of Head Constables.

The Committee recommended promotions for 121 Constables to Head Constables with good records. After approval notifications for 121 constable promotions to head constable positions will be issued.

Moreover, 384 officials have been promoted to the next ranks so far. The promoted officers include 52 Sub-Inspectors of Islamabad Police to the rank of inspectors, 91 Assistant Sub-Inspectors to the rank of Sub-Inspectors, 120 Head Constables to the rank of Assistant Sub-Inspectors and 121 Constables to the rank of Head Constables.

Furthermore, different ceremonies were held in honor of these promoted officers, in which IGP Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, personally pinned the badges to the newly promoted officers.

The IG said that promotion was a fundamental right of every police officer. All officers who have passed the departmental promotion courses will be promoted according to their seniority to vacant seats, he said.

OPF to establish new academic block in Rawalpindi

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Overseas Pakistanis Foundation (OPF) an attached department of the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development would establish OPF Higher Secondary Girls School Academic Block the government's unwavering commitment to providing quality education to the children of overseas Pakistanis.

An official source told APP that the construction of a new Academic Block at OPF Girls Higher Secondary School, Rawalpindi reflects the government's dedication to meet the educational needs of both the overseas community and the general public.

At present, 710 students including 279 children of

Overseas Pakistanis are enrolled in the said school. New Academic Block will be constructed on an area of 21057 Sqr. Ft to accommodate around 300 more students. The proposed construction work of the new academic block will be completed with an estimated cost of Rs.99.93 million. The new academic block includes classrooms, day-care, a conference room, an art studio, a medical room, and a cafeteria.

Highlighting the alignment with the Prime Minister's vision, he underscored the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development's relentless efforts to extend maximum facilities and assistance to Pakistani expatriates, not

only domestically but globally. Recognizing the invaluable contributions of overseas Pakistanis to the national economy, he affirmed the government's commitment to exploring all avenues to facilitate them comprehensively.

He expressed optimism regarding the pivotal role overseas Pakistanis can play in national development, leveraging their knowledge, expertise, and global exposure for the betterment of the country.

He commended the management of OPF for the successful launch of the new academic block at OPF Girls Higher Secondary School, Rawalpindi, underscoring the importance of such initiatives in fostering educational growth.

No compromise on provision of best quality facilities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Chaudhry Salik Hussain Sunday assured that no compromise will be made on provision of best possible facilities of food, accommodation, cleanliness, transport and health-care to Pakistani pilgrims during this year's hajj.

"This year's Hajj would be exemplary for Pakistani pilgrims, offering facilities that were not available in the past", he said in an interview with PTV news channel. He mentioned that accommodations, meals,

and transportation, along with all basic necessities, had been standardized. Minister said that the strict monitoring system would also be adopted and effective round the clock.

"Apart from the food flavor, food cleanliness and safety are also essential to keep in mind while serving the hajjis. Hence, our monitoring will encompass food preparation until the distribution processes," he remarked. An online app has been launched to train pilgrims from Pakistan to Hajj e Baillullah and provide them guidance for

every step, he said. The Minister said a complaint management system is also part of the app to resolve the complaints of the pilgrims immediately.

The camps in Mina and Arafat will be provided with all services including three times meals, water, soft drinks, hot drinks, a medical doctor, security guards and round the clock cleaning, he added. It is to mention here that this year the government has introduced reduction in Hajj expenses with enhanced facilities as compared to previous years, he noted.

Police arrest 78 most wanted POs

RAWALPINDI (APP): The District Police in their ongoing operation against Proclaimed Offenders (POs), managed to net 78 most wanted criminals.

Police spokesman told on Sunday that City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Hamdani had directed the police officers to make all-out efforts to arrest the POs wanted in different cases including heinous crimes.

Police while conducting raids in different areas this year rounded up 705 including 78 of A category and 627 of B category, he

said and informed that the ongoing operation against POs had been accelerated.

The spokesman said that other accused allegedly involved in different cases would also be rounded up.

He further informed that Police Officers on the directives of CPO, Syed Khalid Hamdani were holding open courts (Khuli Kutcheries) in different mosques to resolve the public complaints.

The Police Officers including SDPOs and SHOs during Khuli Kutcheries directed the officials concerned to

resolve complaints of the citizens within shortest possible time frame.

The spokesman informed that CPO had warned the police officers of strict action on negligence and directed to address complaints of the citizens particularly marked by the senior police officers within given time frame.

He said that all-out efforts were being made to ensure service delivery and police officers on the instructions of the CPO were trying to resolve complaints of the citizens at police station level.

WASA defaulters given last chance till May 31

RAWALPINDI (APP): Managing Director (MD) Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) Rawalpindi on the directives of the Managing Director (MD) Saleem Ashraf has given a last chance to the defaulters till May 31 to clear their arrears.

According to a WASA spokesman, the MD had directed the authorities concerned to accelerate operation against WASA defaulters. The MD warned the officials concerned that negligence on their part would not be tolerated and all-out efforts should be made to ensure 100 recovery from the defaulters.

The spokesman informed that MD WASA on the directives of Director General, Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) Kinza Murtaza, had directed the officials to speed up the ongoing campaign against WASA defaulters.

He said, WASA is a self-sustaining institution and the agency meet all expenses from its own resources, so the officials had been warned that no shortcoming in revenue recovery would be tolerated. The MD had given a special ultimatum

to the WASA officers for 100 percent recovery of the arrears from all the defaulters. The Revenue Director and Deputy Directors were ordered to immediately disconnect the connections of the defaulters.

The Senior Special Magistrate had submitted a report that arrest warrants were issued against four defaulters for non-payment of the arrears. He said that after the deadline of May 31 for payment of the arrears, late fees and installments of the WASA bills would be banned and strict action.

Hundreds of homes destroyed

KABUL (Ariana News): At least 18 people have died and two others have been injured following floods in Faryab on Saturday night, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation announced Sunday. The flash floods occurred in Pashtunkot, Almar, Qaisar, Belcheragh, Khyber and Dawlat Abad districts, the ministry said in a statement. 560 houses, 850 acres of agricultural land, 110 shops and a mobile clinic were destroyed as a result of the floods, according to the statement.

Red Crescent signs agreement

KABUL (Ariana News): Qatar Red Crescent Society signed an agreement with the Afghan Red Crescent Society for the treatment of 169 children suffering from congenital heart defects. The agreement was signed by Mohammad Saleh Ibrahim, Director of Relief and International Development Division at Qatar Red Crescent Society, and Matiuilqah Khalis, the acting head of the Afghan Red Crescent Society.

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

Flood death toll rises to 80 in Faryab

FARYAB (Khaama Press): Recent floods in the Faryab province of Afghanistan have resulted in a significant loss of life, with at least 80 reported deaths, 5 injuries, and 5 individuals missing, according to local sources. The floods, which occurred last Friday, have devastated several districts, including Bulcharagh, Pashtunkot, Khwaja Sabzposh, Qaisar, and Almar, leaving dozens dead and wounded, as reported by local media outlets in Faryab province. This comes despite earlier statements by Esmail Muradi, the spokesperson for the governor in Faryab, who had informed the press

on Saturday that the floods on Friday had resulted in 18 deaths and 2 injuries. However, the latest reports indicate that the floods in Faryab have claimed the lives of at least 80 individuals, injured five, and left five others missing. The humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan has been exacerbated by such natural disasters, with the country already reeling under the weight of conflict and political instability. Furthermore, neighbouring countries like Pakistan and Iran's

forced deportation of Afghan migrants has led to a dire situation, as many of these individuals face uncertain futures upon returning to Afghanistan. This influx of returnees strains the country's limited resources, worsening the humanitarian crisis. The shortage of resources, coupled with the ongoing conflict and natural disasters, poses a grave challenge to the Afghan population's survival and well-being. Access to basic necessities such as food, clean water, and shelter remains a pressing issue, highlighting the urgent need for international assistance and support.

Kabir meets ethnic elders, promises equal services



KABUL (BNA): In recent separate meetings with tribal elders and influential figures from Paktika and Paktia provinces, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, the Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs, emphasized that every citizen has the right to openly share their requests and concerns with the officials of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. In the meeting, The tribal elders of Paktika shared their problems, requests, and suggestions with the Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs emphasizing attention to education, healthcare, and road construction in the province. They also provided suggestions to the Deputy PM

regarding the completion of unfinished projects in the province and enhancing access to healthcare services for people in remote areas. On the other hand, tribal elders and influential figures from the Aryub Zazi district of Paktia province conveyed the concerns and suggestions of the people to Deputy Kabir. Urged the alignment of development projects in the district to address local needs effectively. In response, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, the Deputy PM for Political Affairs, reaffirmed the principles of the Islamic system, emphasizing that every citizen of Afghanistan has the right to

openly share their requests with the officials of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. He further referred the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan's role as the servant of the Afghan people, highlighting the government's commitment to providing services to all regions without discrimination. In the end, the Deputy PM for Political Affairs stated that IEA considers the education sector a vital part of society. He emphasized that efforts are underway to provide better services to the people of Afghanistan and to expand educational opportunities to remote areas.

Ministry launches first bone fractures program

KABUL (BNA): Dr. Qalandar Ebad, the Minister of Public Health, inaugurated the nation's first international bone fractures program during his visit to Badakhshan province of Afghanistan. The program, which was unveiled with great enthusiasm, introduces a novel approach to bone fractures care, administered by the country's orthopedic specialists who have received specialized training. During the inauguration ceremony, Dr. Mohammad Ismail Wardak, a leading orthopedic specialist, delivered a comprehensive explanation of the Afghan Sign and Tools program to the attendees. This program is set to play a crucial role in improving the diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation processes for patients suffering from bone fractures in Badakhshan and

beyond. Expressing his gratitude, Dr. Qalandar Ebad, the Acting Minister of Public Health, hailed the establishment of the international bonr fractures care program as a significant achievement for Afghanistan's healthcare sector. Dr. Ebad also highlighted the Ministry of Public Health's ongoing efforts to establish other vital health departments throughout Badakhshan province.

Minister emphasizes commitment, expertise for effective management



KABUL (BNA): The Acting Minister of Urban Development and Housing emphasized in the development program that commitment and expertise are fundamental prerequisites for effective management. At the closing ceremony of a leadership development program organized by Administrative Reforms and Civil Services, Sheikh Hamdullah Nomani, Acting Minister of Urban Development and Housing, stressed the importance of commitment and expertise in management. The Acting Minister Nomani stated that offi-

cial and employees should possess not only expertise and skills but also humility and sincerity, refraining from arrogance and always prioritizing the satisfaction of the Almighty Allah in all work matters. Furthermore, Mufti Shahzad Noor Rashid, the Head of Administrative Reforms and Civil Services, reiterated that in such training programs, government employees, equipped with enhanced management and leadership skills, will effectively oversee departments, thereby contributing to improved governance. Officials from the Administrative Reforms and Civil Services reported that a total of 324 employees from various ministries and departments underwent training in two sessions of the leadership development and practical management skills training program.

IHH expands activities

KABUL (BNA): In a recent meeting between officials from the charity organization IHH in Turkey and Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, the Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs, it was announced that IHH is determined to expand its humanitarian activities in Afghanistan. The meeting served as a platform for the officials to provide detailed information about their ongoing operations, functions, and future plans. During the meeting, IHH representatives expressed their commitment to continuing their assistance to the people of Afghanistan across various sectors. The IHH Foundation's primary goal is to alleviate suffering and provide necessary aid to vulnerable populations. In response, Deputy Prime Minister Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi expressed gratitude for the humanitarian assistance rendered by IHH. Mawlawi Hanafi assured the officials that the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan full supports IHH's efforts and would facilitate the necessary facilities to ensure the continuation of their vital work. The commitment of IHH to expand its activities in Afghanistan is expected to bring much-needed relief to the Afghan population, especially in light of the ongoing challenges faced by the country.

Trade with Afghanistan to be increased

KABUL (Khaama Press): Alexey Overchuk, Deputy Prime Minister of Russia, has announced that Moscow is interested in importing agricultural products from Afghanistan into its markets. The Russian Prime Minister made these remarks during the sidelines of the "Kazan" meeting. He called for increased exports from Afghanistan to Russia and mentioned the development of relations between the two countries in the areas of transportation and supply. According to the Russian Prime Minister, exports of grapes and dried fruits to Russia began last year, and Moscow's markets are interested in Afghanistan's products. The 15th International Economic Forum of Russia and the Islamic World held on Sunday in the city of Kazan, Tatarstan. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce of Afghanistan announced that in the Russia-Islamic World meeting, discussions were held about Afghanistan and Russia's economic capacities, exports and imports between the two countries, investment in Afghanistan's mining sector, and increasing trade between Afghanistan and Russia.

Baghlan flood disaster severe, requires immediate aid



KABUL (TOLONews): Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, deputy prime minister for economic affairs, described the flood disaster in Baghlan (including casualties and damages) as significant during a meeting with officials from UN agencies in Afghanistan. According to a statement from the Economic Deputy Office, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, in this meeting, asked UN representatives to coordinate with the Islamic Emirate to increase their development aid in addition to humanitarian assistance to the flood victims in Baghlan. Five districts in Baghlan have recently witnessed floods. Besides the destruction of residential houses, 19 clinics, 19 schools, 115 bridges, dozens of large and small canals, and 60 kilometers of roads were destroyed and need reconstruction. Meanwhile, the acting Foreign Minister also emphasized the need to address the problems of flood victims in various provinces, particularly Baghlan. Zia Ahmad Takal, deputy spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said: "The residents of Baghlan province were severely affected by the floods, and the Islamic Emirate, with all its available resources, has been assisting them." Abdul Latif Nazari, deputy of the Ministry of Economy, said: "In this meeting, discussions were held about transitioning projects from humanitarian to developmental and also about implementing projects in remote and underdeveloped areas." Several countries, including Qatar, Türkiye, and Russia, as well as domestic and international aid organizations, have provided assistance to the flood victims in this province. Qatar has provided over 126 tons of aid, including tents, blankets, food, and two ambulances. Russia sent 21 tons of food supplies, and Türkiye has provided 127 tons of aid packages, including medicine and food. Mir Shakib Mir, an economist, said: "It is essential for the international community to prioritize delivering aid to these families and building shelters for them on their agenda." Some residents from various provinces and some Afghans living in Türkiye have launched campaigns to gather aid for the flood victims in Baghlan. Mohammad Dawood, a resident of Nimroz, said: "I have helped to the best of my ability and I urge my dear friends to make a financial contribution because our compatriots truly need our help." According to recent statistics from several international organizations, the recent floods in several districts of Baghlan have resulted in nearly 200 deaths and over 240 injuries.

Chinese ambassador pledges support to Afghan flood victims



KABUL (BNA): In a meeting between the Chinese Ambassador to Kabul, Zhaoxing, and the Acting Refugees and Repatriation Minister, Khalil ur-Rehman Haqqani, China expressed its commitment to extending assistance to the flood-stricken regions of Afghanistan. Ambassador Zhao Xing praised the Islamic Emirate's effective management and swift response to natural disasters, underscoring China's readiness to provide aid within the limits of its capabilities. During the meeting, Ambassador Xing conveyed China's condolences to the flood victims and expressed his country's willingness to offer support to alleviate their suffering. Moreover, Ambassador Zhao Xing assured the Afghan authorities that additional aid from China would reach Afghanistan by July next year. The devastating floods that have affected several provinces in Afghanistan have caused significant damage to infrastructure, homes, and livelihoods. The timely commitment

IEA leader okays law on prevention of begging

KABUL (Ariana News): The Ministry of Justice announced that Mawlawi Hebatullah Akhundzada, the leader of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), has approved the law on collection of beggars and preventing begging. The law has three chapters and 27 articles, and is published in the official gazette of the Ministry of Justice. According to the law, begging is prohibited for healthy and working people and those who can secure their one-day meal. The law also prohibits the use of children and the disabled for begging. According to the law, professional beggars who use a child or a mentally ill person or a disabled person for the purpose of begging, will be sentenced to one month in prison by the court, and their organizers will be sentenced to up to six months in prison. In 2022, the leader of the Islamic Emirate ordered the collection of beggars. Tens of thousands of beggars have been rounded up so far.

Ghor floods risk collapse of Minaret of Jam



GHOR (Khaama Press): Following the devastating floods in Ghor province of Afghanistan, concerns have increased over the potential collapse of the "Minaret of Jam," an 800-year-old structure and the oldest mud-brick minaret in the world. Local sources in Ghor province report that recent floods have submerged the Minaret of Jam and nearly destroyed its protective walls. According to sources, water has now surrounded this historic minaret. Meanwhile, concerns about the destruction of this historical monument have risen among Afghan citizens and cultural enthusiasts. Some social media users have expressed their worries about the collapse of these ancient structures, adding that no institution claims responsibility for their protection. The Minaret of Jam in Ghor province, built approximately 800 years ago by the Ghurids, is a UNESCO World Heritage site and is recognized as the oldest mud-brick minaret in the world. For several years, walls to prevent the minaret's destruction, but these requests have been ignored.

At least 11 killed as Russia presses forward with its offensive in Ukraine

KYIV, Ukraine (AP): At least 11 people were reported killed in attacks in Ukraine's war-ravaged northeast on Sunday as Russia pushed ahead with its renewed offensive.

In the Kharkiv region, the focus of the offensive, the Kharkiv Regional Prosecutor's Office said six people were killed and 27 wounded in a Russian strike on the outskirts of the regional capital, also called Kharkiv.

Regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said that five more people were killed and nine wounded in an attack on the region's Kupiansk district, south-east of the regional capital.

Russia's Ministry of Defense said Sunday that its forces in the area were "continuing to advance into the depths of the

enemy's defense," Ukraine's General Staff said Russia had stepped up its attacks around Kharkiv and that the situation was "dynamic."

Russia launched an offensive in the Kharkiv region late last week, significantly adding to the pressure on Ukraine's outnumbered and outgunned forces which are waiting for delayed deliveries of crucial weapons and ammunition from Western partners. Ukraine's overstretched forces are trying to slow Russia on the new front by using bomb-laden drones to destroy military vehicles.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Friday during a visit to China that Moscow's offensive in the Kharkiv region aims to create a buffer zone but that there

are no plans to capture the city.

Meanwhile, Ukraine and Russia continued to exchange drone attacks.

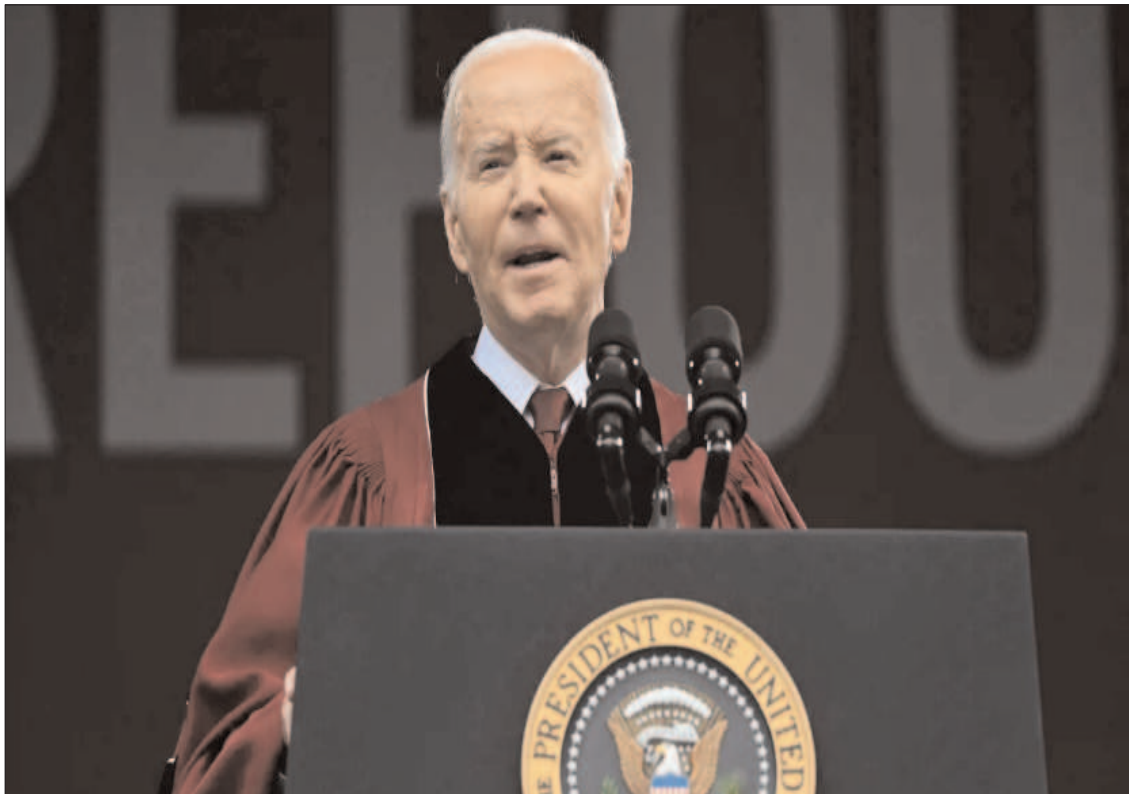
Ukrainian air force officials said Sunday morning that air defenses shot down all 37 Russian drones launched against the country overnight. In Russia, Russian air defenses shot down 57 Ukrainian drones over the southern Krasnodar region overnight, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

Local military officials said drone debris hit an oil refinery in the town of Slayansk-on-Kuban, but there was no fire or damage. News outlet Astra published videos appearing to show an explosion at the refinery as it was hit by a drone. The videos could not be independently verified.

Nine long-range ballistic missiles and a drone were destroyed over the Russia-occupied Crimean Peninsula, following Friday morning's massive Ukrainian drone attack that cut off power in the city of Sevastopol.

A further three drones were shot down over the Belgorod region, which borders Ukraine. According to regional Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov, a church roof was set on fire by falling drone debris, but there were no casualties.

The Russian-installed governor of Ukraine's partially occupied Kherson region, Vladimir Saldo, said that one person died and 16 were wounded when a Ukrainian drone hit a minibus on Sunday morning.



Atlanta, Georgia: A faculty member raises a fist as US President Joe Biden speaks during a graduation ceremony at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, US, on Sunday.

Israel minister vows to quit if there is no post-war plan for Gaza

GAZA STRIP (BBC): Israeli war cabinet minister Benny Gantz has threatened to resign unless Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sets out a post-war plan for the Gaza Strip.

Mr Gantz set an 8 June deadline for a plan to achieve six "strategic goals", including the end of Hamas rule in Gaza and the establishment of a multinational civilian administration for the territory.

"If you put the national over personal, you will find in us partners in the struggle," he said. "But if you choose the path of fanatics and lead the entire nation to the abyss, we will be forced to quit the government."

Mr Netanyahu dismissed the comments as "washed-up words" that would mean "defeat for Israel".

The growing rift comes as fighting rages at both ends of the Gaza Strip, with Israeli forces operating in the southern city of Rafah and the northern town of Jabalia, one of Gaza's historic refugee camps and an area the Israeli military previously said it had cleared of

Hamas fighters.

Mr Gantz was speaking just days after another war cabinet member, Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, urged Mr Netanyahu to state publicly that Israel had no plans to take over civilian and military rule in Gaza.

Mr Gallant said he had raised the issue repeatedly for months but had received no response.

He and Mr Gantz say that maintaining military control in Gaza would increase Israel's security risks, while others, including far-right members of Mr Netanyahu's ruling coalition in the government, believe continued control is necessary in order to defeat Hamas.

In a televised address on Saturday, Mr Gantz told Mr Netanyahu that the "people of Israel are watching you".

"You must choose between Zionism and cynicism, between unity and factions, between responsibility and lawlessness, between victory and disaster," he said.

Also among the six strategic goals he set out were the return of all

Israeli and foreign hostages still held by Hamas in Gaza and the return of displaced Palestinian civilians to northern Gaza by 1 September.

He also said Israel should continue to seek the normalisation of relations with Saudi Arabia as part of a "comprehensive process to create an alliance with the free world and the West against Iran and its allies".

Responding to the speech, Mr Netanyahu said that to meet Mr Gantz's demands would lead to "the end of the war and a defeat for Israel, the abandoning of most of the hostages, leaving Hamas intact and the establishment of a Palestinian state". Israel's war cabinet was established after Hamas attacked Israeli communities near Gaza on 7 October, killing around 1,200 people and taking hostages.

Israel's military campaign against Hamas in Gaza has killed 35,386 people, the Hamas-run health ministry says.

The chief of staff of the country's army, Herzi Halevi, has also privately

pressed on Mr Netanyahu the need for a "day after" strategy, according to reports in Israeli media.

The return of the Israeli military to parts of northern Gaza, like Jabalia, that were previously declared clear of Hamas has raised doubts about the government's strategy for eliminating the group.

Mr Halevi is said to have argued that, in the absence of a diplomatic process to establish a governing body other than Hamas, the military will be forced to launch repeated campaigns to keep the group at bay.

Mr Gantz proposed an American, European, Arab, and Palestinian administration that could manage civilian affairs in Gaza while the foundations are laid for a future alternative government.

He added that Israel could maintain a degree of "security control" in the meantime.

In Jabalia the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) said they fought battles with Palestinian armed groups. Palestinian medics said one of the Israeli strikes had killed 15 people.

King Salman to undergo tests due to high fever

RIYADH (AFP): Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz will undergo medical tests on Sunday due to "high temperature and joint pain", state news agency SPA reported.

The examinations will be conducted for the second time in a month at the royal clinics at Al Salam Palace in Jeddah. The king, 88, was last admitted to hospital in April for a routine checkup, state TV reported then.

King Salman, the custodian of Islam's holiest sites, became ruler of the world's top oil exporter in 2015 after spending more than two-and-a-half years as the crown prince and deputy premier.

Though his son, Mohammed bin Salman, 38, was named crown prince in 2017 and acts as day-to-day ruler.

Currently, King Salman "suffers from a high tem-

perature and pain in the joints," the statement said. "The treating medical team decided to conduct some tests to diagnose the health condition and to ensure his health."

The monarch's health is rarely discussed, but the Royal Court disclosed in April that he had been admitted to King Faisal Specialist Hospital for "routine examinations". He left the hospital later that day.

Prior to that, his most recent hospitalisation had been in May 2022, when he went in for a colonoscopy and stayed for just over a week for other tests and "some time to rest", SPA reported at the time.

Saudi Arabia has for years sought to quell speculation over King Salman's health.

In 2017, Riyadh dismissed reports and mount-

ing speculation that the king was planning to abdicate in favour of Prince Mohammed.

King Salman underwent surgery to remove his gall bladder in 2020.

He was also admitted to hospital in March 2022 to undergo what state media described as "successful medical tests" and to change the battery of his pacemaker.

King Salman served as Riyadh governor for decades and also as defence minister.

His reign as king has been marked by ambitious social and economic reforms largely managed by his son, who is trying to position Saudi Arabia for an eventual post-oil future.

Prince Mohammed has also overseen an intense crackdown on dissent that analysts say has helped him consolidate power.

PM for arrangements to bring back students

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday contacted Ambassador of Pakistan in the Kyrgyz Republic Hassan Ali Zaigham and directed him for making necessary arrangements for a special flight being sent to Bishkek this evening to bring back Pakistani students.

The special aeroplane will bring back 130 students to Pakistan on Sunday night, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

At the instructions of the prime minister, the government of Pakistan will bear all the expenses of the special plane.

The prime minister directed for keeping continuous contacts with all the students and their families, emphasising that the return of injured students should be a priority.

He further asked for bringing back those students back whose families were residing with them in Kyrgyzstan on urgent basis.

The ambassador of Pakistan Zaigham apprised the prime minister of his meeting with the Kyrgyz deputy foreign minister.

Slovakia: PM Fico's life no longer in danger

Bratislava (Aljazeera): Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico's life is no longer in danger following an assassination attempt, Deputy Prime Minister Robert Kalinak has said.

"He has emerged from the immediate threat to his life, but his condition remains serious and he requires intensive care," Kalinak, Fico's closest political ally, told reporters on Sunday.

A gunman shot Fico multiple times last week in an attack that sent shock waves around the world, and government officials had said his life was in danger.

The incident took place as the Slovak leader was greeting supporters after a government meeting in the central town of Handlova.

Fico underwent a five-hour operation on the same day he was shot, as well as a second procedure on Friday at a hospital in the central city of Banska Bystrica.

"We can consider his condition stable with a positive prognosis," Kalinak said outside the hospital, adding, "We all feel a bit more relaxed now."

Kalinak noted that Fico would stay at Banska



The 59-year-old Fico took office in October after his centrist populist Smer party won a general election.

He is serving his fourth term as prime minister after campaigning on proposals for peace between Russia and Slovakia's neighbour Ukraine, and to halt military aid to Kyiv, which his government has done.

According to Estok, the suspect was angered by the government's Ukraine policy.

Fico leads a coalition comprised of Smer, the centrist HLAS and the small nationalist SNS party.

Kalinak, the deputy prime minister, said the government would carry on without Fico "according to the programme he has outlined".

Outgoing Slovak President Zuzana Caputova and her successor Peter Pellegrini, a Fico ally who takes over in June, tried to quell the political tensions after last week's attack.

Following a proposal by Caputova and Pellegrini, several parties have suspended campaigning for European Parliament elections scheduled for June.

Appointment of Dar as deputy PM challenged

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Sher Afzal Marwat has challenged the appointment of Ishaq Dar as Deputy Prime Minister in the Islamabad High Court (IHC).

Marwat through his lawyer Riaz Hanif Rahi filed a petition in the Islamabad High Court, contending that Ishaq Dar was already working as a foreign minister.

He said in the application that on April 28 with the approval of the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif a notification for the appointment of Ishaq Dar as Deputy Prime Minister was issued. He said the office of the prime minister is a constitutional position whereas there is no provision in the Constitution which allows the Cabinet Division to issue a notification for the appointment of deputy prime minister.

ISLAMABAD (PPI) Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Munir Akram has said Pakistan is contesting for a non-permanent seat in the UN Security Council (UNSC) for the term 2025-26.

According to a statement issued today, Mr Munir delivering a virtual talk to the Pakistan Students Association Coalition based in the United States said the election would provide

Pakistan an opportunity to articulate the aspirations and the rights of the developing countries and push for peace and security in the Middle East, and Africa.

The ambassador informed the student body about Pakistan's active role within the United Nations including its presidency of the UN Economic and Social Council, the non-permanent membership of the Security Council and the chairmanship of the Grouping of G-77 and

China.

He said that as the second-time President of the ECOSOC in 2021, Pakistan played a leading role in advocating the concepts of vaccine equality, and the creation of new money for the developing countries enabling them to fight off the impact of COVID-19.

Likewise, the establishment of the instrument of Special Drawing Rights of 650 billion dollars by the IMF led to the provision of additional resources to the

developing countries in navigating the economic challenges.

The Ambassador said we are now asking for redistribution of the unused SDRs among those developing countries that are in acute need to realize their commitment to Sustainable Development Goals and deal with the challenge of climate change.

He also explained the state of the world including the key global and regional challenges.

Situation in Kyrgyzstan improving: Tarar

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage, and Culture Attaullah Tarar has stated that the Pakistani government is in constant contact with the government of Kyrgyzstan. He remarked that the situation in Kyrgyzstan is

improving, and efforts are underway to address the concerns of Pakistani students.

Ensuring that Pakistani students face no difficulties in Kyrgyzstan is a top priority, and the government is actively monitoring the situation, keeping the Prime Minister informed at every step.

Tarar made these

remarks while speaking to the media on Sunday during the reception of Pakistani students arriving from Bishkek at Allama Iqbal International Airport.

He mentioned that the Pakistani government has granted special permission for four flights to operate from Kyrgyzstan during the day.

Presently, 175 Pakistani students have arrived at Allama Iqbal International Airport from Bishkek.

He stated that arrangements for transportation and meals have been made for the Pakistani students returning home, ensuring their safe return to their respective residences.

Biden says he's working toward an 'immediate ceasefire' in Gaza

WASHINGTON (CNN): President Joe Biden on Sunday addressed the war between Israel and Hamas while delivering a commencement address at Morehouse College, saying he's called for an "immediate ceasefire to stop the fighting and bring the hostages home."

"What's happening in Gaza and Israel is heartbreaking: Hamas' vicious attack on Israel, killing innocent lives and holding people hostage; innocent Palestinians caught in the middle of all this — men, women and children killed or displaced and in desperate need of water, food and medicine," the president said. He described the situation in Gaza as a "humanitarian crisis."

The president then delivered a forceful call for a ceasefire paired with the release of hostages. He also

urged a long-term political solution to the conflict.

Biden said his administration "has been working on a deal as we speak," saying officials were "working around the clock" to greatly increase humanitarian aid to Gaza.

Biden's remarks came as some faculty and students at the college opposed the decision to allow him to address graduates because of his continued support for Israel.

The announcement last month that Biden will be delivering the Morehouse commencement sparked outrage from a portion of the school's faculty, prompting the school's provost to convene an open forum in late April to address those concerns. But even amid the controversy, the school has been steadfast that it will not rescind Biden's invitation, which was first extended in

September — before the war began.

During Biden's speech, one student unfurled a Palestinian flag, while others turned their seats away from him. But it was not clear whether the president was able to see those acts of protest. He delivered his speech without any noticeable interruption.

Due to that backlash, and in anticipation of protests, the White House last week sent Stephen Benjamin, the director of its office of public engagement, to Morehouse to speak with some of the students.

During a Thursday news briefing at the White House, Benjamin said he and the students had a wide-ranging conversation, including on the conflict in the Middle East.

"I think what's gonna be most important are the words that the president articulates,"

Benjamin said at the White House. "And I know that he, he feels very deeply about what this means to these young men."

"I'm sure the president will have a chance to engage with faculty, staff and students while he's there," he added, "and I know that he looks forward to it."

Over the last several months, Biden has largely shied away from addressing large crowds of young people on college campuses, a change that came shortly after his January remarks on abortion rights at Virginia's George Mason University were interrupted more than a dozen times by protesters outraged at his continued support for Israel in its war in Gaza.

Since then, and as the death toll in Gaza of civilians, aid workers and journalists has continued to rise, that anger

has only spread.

More than 1,360 student demonstrations have taken place on campuses across the country from October 7 to May 3, according to data compiled by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project. The overwhelming majority of those demonstrations — 97% — have been peaceful, though isolated cases of property destruction and violence have gained widespread attention.

Those instances reached a crescendo in late April and early May, when students at Columbia University overtook some university buildings, an encampment at the University of Texas in Austin was forcefully dispersed by police, and counter-protesters at UCLA launched an hours-long attack on a pro-Palestinian encampment.

Those cases of campus tur-

moil prompted Biden, in brief remarks from the White House earlier this month, to denounce some of the actions of campus protesters.

"I understand people have strong feelings of deep convictions," Biden said at the time. "In America, we respect the right and protect the right for them to express that. But it doesn't mean anything goes."

While dissent is "essential to democracy," Biden said in those remarks, it "must never lead to disorder, or to denying the rights of others."

Biden's Morehouse commencement will be the latest in a series of efforts undertaken by the president this week to both acknowledge the nation's historic racial shortcomings, while simultaneously addressing its next generation of Black leaders.

The president on Thursday met with the plaintiffs of the

historic Brown v. Board of Education case that overturned racial segregation in schools 70 years ago. During that meeting, some of the plaintiffs' relatives urged him to make the case's anniversary a national holiday.

On Friday, Biden delivered remarks at the National Museum of African American History and Culture and spoke with members of the Divine Nine, a group of historic Black fraternities and sororities.

And after his Morehouse speech on Sunday, Biden is set to travel to Detroit, where he will address an NAACP dinner.

Biden's stop at Morehouse is the second time he will visit the college during his presidency. In 2022, both Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris delivered a speech on voting rights at Morehouse.