

Pakistan receives \$7.142b

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan has received a total of \$7.142 billion in foreign aid grants and loans during the first ten months of the current fiscal year, according to the latest report from the Ministry of Economic Affairs. The report indicates that from July through the end of April, Pakistan secured this substantial amount of foreign assistance from various bilateral, multilateral, and other international partners and institutions.

 @thefrontierpost

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**PTI moves IHC
F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Imran Khan-founded Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Saturday moved the Islamabad High Court (IHC) seeking its order to de-seal its central secretariat in the federal capital. The CDA had Thursday demolished a portion of the PTI Central Secretariat over a "violation of building rules", drawing strong condemnation from the former ruling party.

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing 10th meeting of the Apex Committee of Special Investment Facilitation Council.

Pesco seeks FIR against PTI MPA

— protesters allegedly enter Peshawar grid station, activate feeders

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar Electric Supply Company (Pesco) sought a first information report (FIR) against PTI MPA Fazal Elahi on Saturday after he allegedly led protesters inside Peshawar's Rehman Baba Grid Station and forcibly activated feeders.

A statement from Pesco said Elahi surrounded the grid station with the protesters and later entered it to "forcibly" activate nine feeders considered "high loss feeders" with losses on them due to electricity theft and non-payment of dues over 80 per cent. It added that a heavy police contingent was also present at the scene.

"Operation is going on to reduce the losses on the mentioned feeders by Pesco," the statement said. Elahi earlier said while addressing the crowd, "We will continue to protest outside the grid station unless the power is restored." He further warned that the demonstrators would take control of the grid station if their demands were not met.

"If the matter is not resolved here, we will shut down Sheikh Muhammadi Grid station," he threatened. "We will close the power there and cut off the electricity supply to the whole area." The MPA said the protesters were "demanding their rights" and urged PTI workers to "drag their MPAs in front of grid stations".

The protest came to an end after the demonstrators received assurances that Pesco would reduce prolonged power cuts. Elahi announced the end of the rally after negotiations between the demonstrators, Assistant Commissioner Haroon Saleem and Pesco executive engineer Alam Zeb proved successful. Zeb assured the protesters that loadshedding would not exceed 10 hours and that feeders in the area would be supplied with adequate power.

Once the negotiations were finalised, Elahi announced the end of the rally and protesters dispersed. While negotiating with the Peshawar Electric Supply Company officials, Elahi promised to take action against power theft. "We will eradicate power theft from the neighbourhood," he vowed. Elahi also said that he stood with the Water and Power Development Authority, which he said was "short-staffed right now".

However, the Pesco executive engineer later submitted a complaint, to the Rehman Baba station house officer seeking an FIR against the PTI MPA. The complaint said that around 9am a "mob of almost 400-450 persons" entered the grid station led by Elahi and forcefully restored the supply of the following feeders: Sorazai, Sorazai Bala, New Chamkani, Yaka toot, New Hazar Khani and Qalandar Baba.

The complaint added that the six feeders were kept active from 10am to 1pm which caused a "heavy loss to Pesco as all feeders are sick and defective". "It is further added that during the above interval of time, approximately 70,000 units (which comes out to Rs3.64 million loss to Pesco in money) have been consumed as per grid-provided data, which was caused due to unlawful act of above MPA along with his supporters.

"In light of the above, it is requested to lodge proper FIR against the mentioned nominee as per the law of government of Pakistan, in intervening in official duties of Peco and operational activities, challenging the writ of government of Pakistan, loss sustained to government assets and other relevant clauses that relate to this issue," the complaint concluded. Media has reached out to MPA Elahi and the Pesco executive engineer for comments after this development.

PIA flight carrying students from Bishkek reached Karachi

F.P. Report

KARACHI: On the instructions of Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, a PIA chartered flight arranged by the Sindh government, to rescue the Pakistani students, reached Karachi from Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon, Provincial Minister for Energy Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, Sindh Government Spokesperson Ganhwar Khan Isran, and Deputy Mayor Salman Murad warmly welcomed the students at the airport.

Speaking to the media on this occasion, Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said, "We are happy that our students have reached their homeland among their loved ones. The Sindh government has ensured the safe return of its students to their homes." He said that the students of our country have gone through trauma in Kyrgyzstan. In today's special flight, students from all over Pakistan have come, not only from Sindh, and they have been brought back on a PIA chartered flight managed by the Sindh government on the instructions of Chief Minister.

He said that when riots were happening in Kyrgyzstan and their parents were worried, President Asif Ali Zardari and Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari issued special instructions for the safe return of Pakistani students from Kyrgyzstan. They instructed the Sindh government to take the initiative in the return of the stu-



dents and bring them back home on chartered planes.

He said that Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has announced that chartered flights will also be arranged for the return of other Pakistani students stuck in Kyrgyzstan. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that today's chartered flight was organized by the Sindh government on the instructions of Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah. The Chief Minister has also said that if necessary, more chartered planes will be sent to bring back the students.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the first flight of students from Bishkek was welcomed by the Sindh Chief Minister. However, due to an important meeting in Islamabad, he instructed us to welcome the students today.

Talking to the media, Provincial Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah said that the leadership of the Pakistan People's Party is fully aware of the pain of the parents whose children were trapped. He said that the Government of Sindh will provide treatment to any injured student, regard-

FO welcomes ICJ ruling against Israel

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Saturday welcomed a new ruling by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ordering Israel to immediately halt its military offensive in Rafah. The ICJ amended an earlier order and demanded Israel immediately halt its military offensive in Rafah, a city in southern Gaza where Tel Aviv sent forces May 6.

"Israel must immediately hold its military offensive or any other action in the Rafah governorate which may inflict on the Palestinian group in Gaza, conditions of life that could bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part," said ICJ President Nawaf Salam, as he read the order on additional provisional measures requested by South Africa in the genocide case against Israel.

In a statement, FO spokesperson said: "Pakistan supports the application filed by South Africa before the ICJ against Israel under the 1948 Genocide Convention, in follow up to which the Court has announced additional provisional measures.

"As required by the latest ruling of ICJ, Israeli occupation authorities should keep the Rafah crossing open for unhindered provision of humanitarian assistance, and ensure unimpeded access to the Gaza Strip of any commission of inquiry, fact-finding mission or other investigative body mandated by the United Nations to investigate allegations of genocide," she added. The statement further demanded immediate and unconditional implementation of the latest orders of the ICJ against Israel as well as the previous orders of 26 January and 28 March.

"We call on the UN Security Council to play its role in ending Israel's ongoing brutal military campaign across Gaza; allowing unhindered flow of humanitarian assistance; taking effective measures to protect civilians in Gaza; and holding Israel accountable for its crimes," it reads. It said that Pakistan reaffirmed its unwavering support for the inalienable right to self-determination of the Palestinians for a viable, secure, contiguous and sovereign State of Palestine on the basis of the pre-1967 borders and with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Gandapur to be indicted on June 6

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A local court in Islamabad has fixed June 6 as the date to indict Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur and co-accused Asad Khan in connection with audio leaks case.

The district and sessions court conducted the hearing of the case on Saturday. Additional District and Sessions Judge Abdul Ghafoor Kakar approved Ali Amin Gandapur's application seeking exemption from appearance. The judge then adjourned hearing of the case until June 6. The FIR registered against Gandapur mentioned an audio leak, in which he could purportedly be heard using derogatory language against the PDM coalition government.

The Frontier Post

Shehbaz commends SIFC's role in national prosperity

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday said that the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) was playing a critical role in country's progress and prosperity and thanked the provincial governments for expressing their confidence in SIFC.

Addressing a meeting of SIFC, the prime minister said that should work tirelessly to build a 'Pakistan as perceived by their founding fathers and by acting upon the advices of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Allama Muhammad Iqbal.' The prime minister urged the provincial governments to further support the SIFC and move ahead in unison like a family to compensate for the losses of the past and overcome issues of poverty and hunger in the country.

He said that the federal government did not get enough for initiating development projects after distribution of resources among the provinces, therefore under such conditions all the governments should move together with unity. Updating the members of SIFC about his recent visit to the United Arab Emirates, he said the UAE leadership had announced 10 billion dollars investment in Pakistan and expressed their complete confidence in SIFC.

The leadership of brotherly countries and others as well were aware of the functioning of SIFC, he observed. When SIFC was formed through legal procedures, certain concerns were expressed by a quarter but with the passage of time, its significance, efficiency and achievements had shut all kinds of criticism and everybody now fully supported its initiatives, he added.

The prime minister also cited his meeting with a German delegation that was also aware of the functioning

of the SIFC. The prime minister stressed that they should resolve today to achieve their targets as sky was the limit and would work day and night to transform Pakistan into something upon which the Pakistanis could feel pride, adding it was possible with the untiring efforts and by shedding sweat and blood.

The prime minister also underlined the need of capacity building and enhancing professionalism of experts in different fields. He said that he had already instructed the ministries clearly to hire consultants and experts and would soon seek their feedback. The prime minister said that the digitization process of the Federal Bureau of Revenue had already commenced.

He urged all the stakeholders to redouble their efforts and promote the local talent and industry, adding that 60 per cent population of the country comprised youth bulge, who should be trained in IT field while the natural resources worth billions of rupees lying untapped be fully utilized. The prime minister also credited SIFC for paving way for the Reko Diq project in Balochistan province.

SIFC reviews progress on ongoing collaboration with friendly countries: The apex committee of Special Investment Facilitation Council on Saturday reviewed the progress on ongoing economic collaboration with friendly countries and appreciated the recent upsurge in trade and investment related engagements under government-to-government and business-to-business frameworks.

The 10th meeting of SIFC's apex committee chaired by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif also gave directions for an efficient follow-up mechanism to transform these commitments into tangible projects and economic dividends, at a fast pace. The meeting was convened to review various initiatives and projects under

its ambit, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The meeting was attended by Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, members of the federal cabinet, chief ministers and high-level government officials. The prime minister appreciated the role of SIFC and affiliated stakeholders for steering the investment and privatization drive, in a befitting manner. He also gave directions to fast-track various initiatives through 'whole of the government' approach and play a constructive role towards the economic stability of the country.

The chief of army staff reassured the firm resolve of Pakistan Army to backstop government's initiatives for economic prosperity of the country and socio-economic well-being of its people. During the meeting, the ministries gave comprehensive progress on various projects and policy initiatives being steered through the platform of SIFC, and proffered plans for accomplishment of set milestones in the future.

The committee exhibited profound satisfaction on the overall progress achieved so far and appreciated the role of federal ministries, provincial governments and associated departments in realising the envisioned dividends. The committee appreciated the facilitation provided from the platform of SIFC for improving macro-economic conditions of the country. It also reviewed the progress on privatization of state-owned-enterprises (SOEs) and expressed satisfaction with the ongoing process. It urged timely accomplishment of various privatization milestones in collaboration with relevant stakeholders. The committee reiterated the commitment to improve the investment ecosystem and gave directions to make it more investment-friendly through sustainable policy initiatives.

Alleged blasphemy in Sargodha Several arrested as mob assaults man

F.P. Report

SARGODHA: At least 25 people were arrested in Punjab's Sargodha district on Saturday after an angry mob tortured a person belonging to the Christian community over an alleged desecration incident, police said.

According to media, the situation turned violent when enraged people attacked the man's house in the Mujahid Colony area, damaging his belongings and torching a shoe factory established within it. They also burnt tyres and damaged electricity installations in the area.

Upon receiving the information, a heavy contingent of police surrounded the area and shifted the accused and his family to an undisclosed location after rescuing them. District Police Officer (DPO) Asad Ajiaz and Regional Police Officer (RPO) Sharik Kamal Siddiqui were also present in the area to control the situation. Police also resorted to tear gas shelling to disperse the mob and arrested at least 25 people allegedly involved in the riots.

According to police officials, the situation had been

brought under control and no one would be allowed to take the law into their hands. RPO Siddiqui said after completing the investigation into the blasphemy incident, legal action would be initiated against those found guilty of committing blasphemy.

In a statement, Sargodha Division Commissioner Muhammad Ajmal Bhatti pledged that those involved in the incident would be brought to justice after holding a transparent inquiry into the incident. However, he also confirmed that no loss of lives occurred in the incident and urged the citizens not to pay heed to "rumours" circulating on social media regarding the incident.

"Only one person sustained injuries in the incident," the commissioner said, adding that he was in stable condition and would be discharged from the hospital soon. The Punjab home secretary said violence against anyone under the guise of religion would not be tolerated and added that action would be taken against the accused after the completion of an inquiry. Earlier, the RPO had confirmed that the mob also attacked the police

party with stones, but they were later dispersed.

Meanwhile, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) expressed concerns over the situation in Sargodha and urged the Punjab Police and district administration to restore calm in the area and bring perpetrators to justice immediately. Later, the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) took suo motu notice of the and has sought a report from DPO Sargodha, besides impressing upon the provincial government to ensure the protection of the Christian community at Sargodha and elsewhere in the province.

In a statement, the commission strongly condemned the violent attacks, saying that such acts totally disregard the sanctity of life and property, terrorise people from minorities, vitiate all norms of justice and encourage complete lawlessness. It mentioned that the commission expects swift and expeditious action by the law enforcement authorities to arrest and bring the culprits to the book in the minimum possible time so as to deter the recurrence of such heinous incidents.

IMF's GST condition could raise petrol prices

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan is on the brink of an unprecedented increase in petrol prices as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) recommends imposing a General Sales Tax (GST) alongside the existing petroleum levy on fuel products.

According to media reports, this recommendation comes as part of broader IMF conditions aimed at securing economic stability. The proposed measures also include significant hikes in electricity and gas tariffs, with an 18 percent GST on petroleum products potentially raising petrol prices by Rs 50 per liter.

Currently, the government levies Rs 60 per liter on petroleum products, generating an estimated Rs 1,080 billion in revenue for the next fiscal year. Projections indicate that this figure could reach Rs 2,295 billion over the next two years. To accommodate the IMF's demands, the government is also considering the introduction of a carbon levy instead of the GST.

In tandem with the petrol price hike, the IMF has urged the government to implement several other reforms, including the periodic adjustment of gas prices, efforts to curb electricity theft, and improvements to the transmission system. The IMF has also called for timely issuance of notifications for annual electricity tariff adjustments.

The government has assured the IMF of its commitment to these reforms, which are expected to place a significant financial burden on the public. The federal government has reportedly pledged to make electricity and gas more expensive, despite recent claims of record low inflation from the ruling PML-N administrations in the federal and Punjab governments.

Additional IMF conditions involve the revision of power purchase agreements, reforms to agricultural tubewell subsidies, and measures to reduce the circular debt in the energy sector.

Federation, provinces on one page for development: Tarar

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture, Attaullah Tarar stated on Saturday that the meeting of Special Investment Facilitation Council had given a message of unity as federation and provinces were on one page on the issue of development of the country.

Speaking to the media after the SIFC meeting, he said it was serious forum and its meeting was held in a cordial atmosphere. He said open discussion was held over national economy, attracting investment and public private partnership. Tarar said he was grateful to all Chief

Ministers for not only attending the meeting but also giving their input. He said this forum will move forward with the input of all including the chief ministers of the four provinces.

The minister also congratulated all the provincial governments on meaningful meeting of SIFC. Investment will be promoted through SIFC forum both at Federal and provincial level. He said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had issued directives for establishment of six desks to promote investment and trade through SIFC which was the lifeline of the country's economy. The special desks will be established for United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia,

China, Qatar, European Union and United States of America.

He said all the chief ministers lauded the contribution of SIFC in promotion of investment and trade. Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has also assured cooperation, he remarked. "The prime minister has made it clear that we do not want aid or loans, our focus will be on investment and trade," the minister maintained.

He said that meetings of SIFC Executive Committee will be held more frequently and it will be empowered to make decisions. He remarked that federation and provinces were on one page on issue of national development.



CM Maryam welcomes UAE's \$10 billion investment

LAHORE (APP): Punjab investment, following Chief Minister Maryam successful talks between Nawaz Sharif welcomed the Pakistani delegation the UAE's \$10 billion and UAE authorities

aimed at boosting foreign investment in Pakistan.

In her message, the CM said the pledge of \$10 billion investment is an undeniable proof of external confidence in the PML-N government. The chief minister said positive economic indicators augur well for a better economic future of Pakistan, adding that the Pakistan stock market is setting new records day by day.

This positive trend in N government enjoys the Pakistan Stock trust and confidence of

Exchange (PSX) 100 index is welcome, she added. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif said the government is focused on giving maximum relief to people by bringing down inflation, adding that inflation will decrease and Pakistani currency would stabilize. The price of food items including bread will further decrease, she mentioned.

The CM said the PML-N government enjoys the trust and confidence of

businessmen, industrialists and investors, highlighting that the efforts of PM Shehbaz government for foreign direct investment in Pakistan are commendable.

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif vowed that Pakistan will regain its lost position under the PML-N government. "May Allah Almighty protect Pakistan from the evil elements that hinder its development" she prayed.

Federal Ombudsman and Sindh Chief Secretary discuss prison reforms

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Federal Ombudsman Ejaz Ahmed Qureshi and Chief Secretary Sindh Syed Asif Hyder Shah presided over a meeting regarding prison reforms on Thursday.

Senior Advisor to the Ombudsman Anwar Haider, the Secretary of Health, the Inspector General of Prisons, and officials from the Home Department attended the meeting.

The primary focus of the meeting was to comprehensively assess the current state of prisons across Sindh and devise strategies for their

enhancement and reforms.

Chief Secretary Syed Asif Hyder Shah informed the meeting about several key initiatives aimed at enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the province's correctional facilities.

Chief Secretary Sindh said that provincial government plans to introduce audio and video link system in all prisons across Sindh. This will enable prisoners to appear in court proceedings and talk with their families via video links.

Chief Secretary further stated that 500 acres of land will be allocated for the construction of a new prison in

Karachi. This development is expected to alleviate overcrowding issues and improve living conditions for inmates.

Furthermore, the budget for provisioning quality food to prisoners has been significantly increased from 1200 million to 2400 million, underscoring the commitment to ensuring the well-being of inmates.

To strengthen oversight and accountability within the prison system, Chief Secretary Shah announced the formation of 22 oversight committees, each dedicated to monitoring the conditions within a specific prison facility.

DIRECTORATE GENERAL HEALTH SERVICES
KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA PESHAWAR
All communications should be Addressed to
The Director General Health Services Peshawar
and not to any official by name
Office PH 091-9210269 Exchange 091-9210187, 091-9210196 Fax: 091-9210230

FINAL ABSENCE NOTICE

You Dr. Muhammad Iqbal S/O Said Ahnrad Chief District Specialist ENT (BS-20) attached to DHO Hospital Batkhela is absent from duty since 01-02-2023 unlawfully An absence notice was served upon you at your home address through registered letter No 2414-16/E I dated 06 02 2024 with the direction to report arrival in the DG Health office & explain reasons for your willful absence but you failed to comply with the orders Now through this press notice you are finally directed to report arrival in the DGHS office within 15-days of the publication of this notice & explain reasons of your willful absence In case of failure ex-parte action will be taken against you under E&D Rules 2011 which might lead to your removal from service This notice is issued with the approval of the Competent authority:-



INF(P)1005/24

Directorate General Health Services
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Peshawar

مشتری ہوشیار باش

ہر خاص و عام کو مطلع کیا جاتا ہے کہ رقبہ متفرق خسرہ جات

واقع موضع ناٹک، تحصیل مری، پاکستان کاؤنسل آف آرکیٹیکٹس اینڈ ٹاؤن پلانرز

(Pakistan Council of Architects and Town Planners)

کی ذاتی ملکیت ہے۔ اور اس رقبہ کی خرید و فروخت پر عمل پابندی ہے اور مزید نہ ہی اسکی خرید و فروخت کیلئے کوئی نامزدہ مقرر کیا گیا ہے۔ لہذا اس زمین کی خرید و فروخت کے سلسلے میں کسی بھی قسم کے نقصان کا زرمہ دار خریدار خود ہوگا

مخمسب
ریجنل رجسٹرار

محلان سٹریٹ فور آف آفس نمبر 7-12 D12 مرکز، اسلام آباد

فون 051-6155552-4

PID (K) NO 3300/23

PAKISTAN CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY (PCAA)

OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME A PART OF PCAA'S PROFESSIONAL TEAM SITUATION VACANT NOTICE NO. 06/2024

پاکستان سول ایوی ایشن اتھارٹی

Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority requires services of qualified individuals to fill the following vacant posts where selection will be made purely on suitability and merit:-

Post	No. of Seat (s)	Prescribed Qualification	Quota & Pay	Age Limit
Assistant Director Electronics (EG-01)	Fifteen (15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelors of Engineering (Electronics / Computer / Telecommunication), Minimum 16 years of Education with 70% aggregate or equivalent CGPA from HEC Recognized University and having minimum 60% marks or equivalent in Intermediate level. Candidates must be registered with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Merit - 02 BAL - 01 EX-FATA - 01 KPK - 02 Punjab - 07 Sindh (R) - 02 Rs. 56,280 - 5,630 - 168,880 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximum 28 years (age relaxation shall be applicable as per applicable Rules)

Application Procedure:

- Interested candidates are required to fill & submit Online Job Application Form available at www.caapakistan.com.pk within fifteen (15) days from the date of this advertisement.
- Candidates will be required to upload scanned copies of certificate / degree (HEC Verified) of the required qualification and CNIC while applying for the job.
- In case a candidate does not upload the above documents with the online application form, his/her application will be rejected.
- Domicile holders from all Provinces are eligible to apply for selection against seat reserved for Merit.
- All the interested candidates must read the Terms of Reference (TOR) mentioned in the vacancy notice available at CAA's website before applying for the post.

Note:

- Selected candidates for the above post of Assistant Director Electronics (EG-01) will be required to execute a Surety Bond of Rs. 2,500,000/- (Rupees Twenty Five Hundred Thousand) for serving in CAA for at least ten (10) years.

ADDITIONAL DIRECTOR HUMAN RESOURCE (TM)

Headquarters Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority,

Terminal-I, Jinnah International Airport, Karachi, Tel: 021-99072067

PID(K)3349/23

www.caapakistan.com.pk

GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA COMMUNICATION & WORKS DEPARTMENT

NOTICE INVITING E-BIDDING (Single stage two envelope E-Bidding System)

C & W Department (Highway Division, Bannu), Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa invites electrone Bids from the eligible firms/bidders in accordance with KPRA procurement rules 2014 on single stage two envelope procedure for the following works:

S.No	Name of Work	Required category of PEC	Tender From Entry Fee	Bid Security+ S/Durty	Period of Completion	Last date of submission of Bids and time	Date of opening of Technical Bid	Date of opening of Financial Bid
1	Constn: of Road & Bridges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa ADP No.1633/210456 (2021-22) SH: Constn: / Rehab: of BTR from BCR to Ayaz Dergha District Bannu.	C-5	0.03%	2% on E/Cost+ Stamp Duty	As per Work Order	26/06/2024 At 12:00 PM	26/06/2024 At 12:30 PM	Date of opening of Financial bid will be announced after the approval of Technical bids from the competent authority

- Bid documents and instruction to bidders can be downloaded from C&W web site (www.cwd.gkp.pk) before the submission date/time.

INSTRUCTIONS TO BIDDERS

(KPRA Single stage two envelop bidding procedure)

- Technical bid/ proposal should accompany the following:
 - Certificate that that Bid Security in the shape of Call deposit (original) has been enclosed in financial bid.
 - Enlistment Order of C&W Department (photocopy).
 - Renewal of registration for CFY 2023-24 (Photocopy).
 - National Identity Card (CNIC Photocopy)
 - Copy of the valid Pakistan Engineering Council registration.
 - Form H of the Company/Firm.
 - Documents showing general capabilities, financial soundness, general and relevant experience record, personnel capabilities, equipment capabilities and Income Tax/NTN Certificates.
 - Any other document to support the technical bid.
- Technical evaluation will be carried out on marks threshold in passing all the fields including PEC Registration, Enlistment with C&W Deptt., Tax Payer proof, Relevant experience in past 05 years, Performance, Technical Personnel, required Equipment, Financial status, Auditors report, Managerial capabilities, Litigation status etc.
- Incomplete/ Conditional/ Electronic bids and bids received after closing time shall not be entertained. Bids shall be signed by authorized persons.
- Bid security 2% in shape of call deposit (in Original) and 0.03% Tender Firm Entry Fee of the estimated cost in cash (non-refundable) should be enclosed along with bidding documents.
- The contractors quoting their bids upto a limit of 10% below Engineer Estimate shall submit bid security to the extent of 2% of Engineer Estimate only.
- The contractor quoting their bids more than 10% below upto 20% below on Engineer Estimate shall submit alongwith their bids 8% Additional Security of Engineer Estimated Cost in addition to 2% bid security. If the bid is not accompanied with the required amount of Additional Security then it will be considered as non responsive and the 2% bid security shall be forfeited in favour of Govt. and the 2nd lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly.
- Similarly, a contractor quoting bid more than 20% below shall submit with his bid an additional security on Engineer Estimated Cost equal to the differential amount of submitted bid and Engineer Estimate alongwith detail rate analysis. In case of more than 20% below bids if the bid is not accompanied by the detailed rate analysis and/or required amount of additional security then the said bid shall be considered as non responsive. All the securities submitted alongwith non responsive bid shall be forfeited in favour of Govt. and the 2nd lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly.
- In case detailed rate analysis submitted with the bids, in view of the Procuring Entity, not convincing, the Head of the Procuring Entity may declare such bid as non-responsive without any forfeiture of bid securities and record reasons therefor.
- The procuring entity may offer the contract to next lowest bidder after due diligence in the context of financial difference between such two bids are may advertise procurement opportunity afresh.
- After commencement of work by the successful bidder, the procurement entity may replace the additional security with a bank guarantee of the same amount from the schedule banks, if the already deposited security is not in the form of bank guarantee.
- The additional security shall be released to the contractor is (04) Four Installments i.e. 1st Installment of 25% to be released upon completion of 25% of the project 2nd Installment of 25% to be released upon completion of 50% of the project 3rd Installment of 25% to be released upon completion of 75% of the project & the 4th Installment of 25% to be released after 100% completion of the project.
- Any bidder who provides incorrect information, fake documents should be disqualified.
- Time allowed for completion of the work is as specified in the NIT which will start from the issuance of work order.
- Bids will be valid for Ninety (90) days.
- Successful Bidder should sign the agreement with the department within stipulated time after acceptance of bid.
- Call Deposit of Scheduled Banks shall be acceptable.
- If the evaluated bid costs of two or more than two bidders are same then the successful bid will be declared through draw.
- A copy of the technical proposals in the required format is mandatory and to be uploaded as a part of E-Bidding before submitting Financial Bids.
- Scanned copy of bid security i/e Tender Entry Fee shall be submitted electronically along with technical bid on E-Bidding System.
- Bid security of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd lowest electronic bidder for the specific work will be retained by the Department till the approval of bids.
- The bidder must be enlisted with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority as per KPRA Rules.
- Pay Order is not acceptable as per Notification No. of KPRA vide No. KPRA/M&E/Estt/1-12/2017-18, dated: 05/04/2018.
- The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Finance Act XXVII of 2019 2 Schedule under S.No.14, in case of projects funded under the Government's ADP Budget, Tax shall be charged at the rate of Two Percent (2%).
- Venue of bids opening is **office of the Executive Engineer, Highway Division Bannu.**

Note:- (1) Differential amount, if a contractor quote e.g. 25% below Engineer Estimate bid than he has to deposit alongwith his bid 2% bid security and 25% Additional Security of Engineer Estimate.

(2) It is mandatory to all contractors, who are participating in the bidding should sign every page of their brochure with page numbering and mentioning here total No. of Pages i.e. 1 of 200 before submitting in the office of the undersigned, unsigned brochure will not be considered in the bidding process.

Executive Engineer Highway Division Bannu

INF(P)1059/2024

حکومت پاکستان

فنانس ڈویژن

سنٹرل ڈائریکٹوریٹ آف نیشنل سیونگز، اسلام آباد



درج ذیل اسامیوں کے لیے درخواستیں مطلوب ہیں

مندرجہ ذیل تعلیمی قابلیت، تجربے اور عمر کی حد کے معیار پر پورا اترنے والے امیدواروں سے نیشنل سیونگز آرگنائزیشن میں مندرجہ ذیل عہدوں کے لیے درخواستیں مطلوب ہیں۔

سیریل نمبر	اسامی کا نام	پے سکیل	عمر کی حد	تعلیمی قابلیت	تعداد اسامی	ڈومیسائل	تعلیمی قابلیت کا مقام
-1	ڈرائیور	BPS-04	18-30 + پانچ سالہ عہدی رعایت	(i) پرائمری پاس (ii) درست ڈرائیونگ لائسنس ہولڈر اور ٹریفک قوانین سے اچھی طرح واقف۔	8	لوکل	پشاور ریجن (1) اسلام آباد (1) گوجرانوالہ ریجن (2) لاہور ریجن (1) فیصل آباد ریجن (1) مٹان ریجن (1) حیدرآباد ریجن (1)
-2	ٹائپ کا صمد	BPS-01	18-25 + پانچ سالہ عہدی رعایت	پرائمری پاس	10	لوکل	پشاور ریجن (1) ایبٹ آباد ریجن (1) اسلام آباد (3) لاہور ریجن (1) مٹان ریجن (2) حیدرآباد ریجن (1) کراچی ریجن (1)
-3	گمن مین	BPS-01	18-25 + پانچ سالہ عہدی رعایت	(i) پرائمری پاس (ii) سطح انوائس یا سول سطح انوائس کارڈ ہائڈروس مین۔	133	لوکل	پشاور ریجن (9) ایبٹ آباد ریجن (12) اسلام آباد ریجن (15) گوجرانوالہ ریجن (12) لاہور ریجن (17) فیصل آباد ریجن (18) مٹان ریجن (11) بہاولپور ریجن (8) سکھر ریجن (10) حیدرآباد ریجن (11) کراچی ریجن (9) کوئٹہ ریجن (1)

"عمر میں مزید چھوٹ درج ذیل زمروں کو دی جانے کی جیسا کہ ہر ایک کے خلاف اشارہ کیا گیا ہے:

نمبر شمار	امیدواروں کی تکلیفی	عمر میں چھوٹ قابل قبول ہے۔
1	(a) وفاقی حکومت کے ماتحت تمام عہدوں کے لیے شیڈول کاسٹ، بدھت کیونٹی، قبائلی علاقوں، آزاد کشمیر اور گلگت بلتستان کے تسلیم شدہ قبائل سے تعلق رکھنے والے امیدوار۔ (b) وفاقی حکومت کے تحت بی بی ایس 15 اور اس سے نیچے کی آسامیوں کے لیے بدھت (ر) اور بلوچستان سے تعلق رکھنے والے امیدوار۔	3 سال 3 سال
2	پاکستان کی سطح انوائس یا سول سطح انوائس کارڈ ہائڈروس مین۔	(15) سال یا درحقیقت پاکستان کی سطح انوائس میں خدمات انجام دینے والے سارواں کی تعداد، جو بھی کم ہو۔
3	سرکاری ملازمین جنہوں نے درخواستوں کی وصولی کی آخری تاریخ کو 2 سال کی مسلسل سرکاری ملازمت مکمل کی ہے۔	10 سال 55 سال کی عمر تک۔
4	بی بی ایس 15 اور اس سے نیچے کی پوسٹوں پر تقرری کے لیے معذور افراد۔	10 سال
5	دوران سروس فوت شدہ سرکاری ملازم کی بیوہ، چٹا یا بیٹی۔	05 سال

مذکورہ بالا اہلیت، تجربے پر پورا اترنے والے امیدوار اپنی درخواستیں ذیل میں دینے گئے تجویز کردہ پرقارے پر ہر اسامی کے برخلاف سنٹرل ڈائریکٹوریٹ آف نیشنل سیونگز 23-N سیونگز ہاؤس G-6 مرکز اسلام آباد پر بھیج سکتے ہیں۔ سرکاری ملازمین اپنی درخواست مناسب پتیل کے ذریعے بھیج کر داسکتے ہیں۔ جس پوسٹ کے لیے اپلائی کیا گیا ہے اس کا تذکرہ درخواست کے ساتھ ساتھ لگانے یا دونوں پر کیا جاسکتا ہے۔

درخواستوں کی وصولی کی آخری تاریخ اشاعت کی تاریخ سے 15 دن ہے۔

اہم ہدایات:

درخواست فارم نیشنل سیونگز آفیشن ویب سائٹ www.savings.gov.pk سے بھی ڈاؤن لوڈ کیا جاسکتا ہے۔

معلومات کے غلط اندراج یا خفیہ رکھنے یا تعیناتی کیلئے کی دباؤ کی صورت میں امیدوار کو نااہل کر دیا جائے گا۔

متعلقہ علاقائی اصول کے ڈومیسائل کے حامل امیدوار درج بالا پتے پر اپنی درخواستیں بھیج کر سکیں

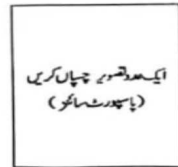
فنانس ڈویژن

سنٹرل ڈائریکٹوریٹ آف نیشنل سیونگز

اسلام آباد

درخواست فارم

(BS-4r BS-1) کی اسامی کے لیے)



درخواست نمبر۔

(صرف فٹری استعمال کے لیے)

درخواست نمبر کے آسامی:

1-	نام:	2-	والد کا نام:
3-	صحتی کارڈ نمبر:	4-	تاریخ پیدائش:
5-	ووٹنگ (محلہ):	6-	تعلیمی قابلیت:
7-	ادارہ کا نام:		
8-	ملازمین کا نام:	9-	موبائل نمبر:
10-	آگے پیلے سرکاری ملازم ہو تو:- (نہیں) آگے کی اسامی کا نام:-		
	(ج) پارٹ ٹائم ہو تو:-		
11-	ڈراماٹک اسامی کے لیے: (نہیں) ٹیکنیکل نمبر:-		
	(ج) ڈراماٹک اسامی کے لیے: (نہیں) ٹیکنیکل نمبر:-		
12-	ریٹائرڈ آفیسر یا سول آفیسر کے امیدواران کے لیے: (گمن مین کی اسامی کے لیے) (الف) گمن مین کا نام:- (ریٹائرمنٹ کی تاریخ اور نمبر) (ب) ریٹائرمنٹ کی تاریخ:- اقرار نامہ: میں اقرار کرتا ہوں کہ درج بالا معلومات میرے علم کے مطابق درست ہیں۔ اگر ان میں سے کوئی جھوٹا ہے تو میں ذمہ دار ہوں گا/ہوں گی۔		

تاریخ:

امضاء اور نام:

1- حق پیمانے والے درجہ بندی کے عمل پر نام لکھ دینے سے انعام دہانے والے امیدواران کو نااہل کر دیا جائے گا۔

2- مذکورہ بالا اسامیوں کے امیدواران درخواست دینے کے بعد اسامیوں کے حامل ہونے کے بعد بلا تلافی طور پر اسامیوں کے پتے پر بھیج کر دیا جائے گا۔

نوٹ: نمائندہ امیدواران کو ہونے والے امیدواران کی کوئی اسامی کے حامل نہیں ہوں گے۔

اسسٹنٹ ڈائریکٹر (ایچ آر)

مزید معلومات کیلئے نیشنل سیونگز ہیڈ آفس +92-21-99333676 +92-51-9215746 پر رابطہ کریں۔

PID (I) No.7273/23

DG hold meeting with APNS, CPNE heads

PESHAWAR (APP): A meeting was held under the Chairmanship of Director General Information and Public Relations Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Imran, with All Pakistan Newspaper Society (APNS) and (CPNE) heads and representatives of various advertising agencies, here.

During the meeting issues related to previous arrears of newspapers and advertisement agencies were discussed while in this regard, some proposals also came under discussion for the solution of such issues.

On this occasion, provincial heads of APNS, Pir Haroon Shah, CPNE Tahir Farooq, Deputy Director Advertisement Ibne Amin and relevant section officials also attended the meeting. The main purpose of the meeting was disposal of the matter as per suggestions, issued by ITNE Islamabad to the Information Department, wherein, it was stated that a reconciliation shall be made with newspapers and advertising agencies regarding the previous arrears.

In this regard, as per the special directives of the Chief Secretary, on behalf of the Information Department, the reconciliation process was thoroughly discussed by the forum. Similarly, the meeting attendees of CPNE and APNS expressed that they are fully satisfied by the ongoing efforts of the department and hoped that it will bring better results for the solution of media outlets liabilities.

On this occasion the Director General Muhammad Imran told the meeting that the Information Department has raised the issue of media outlets and advertising agencies arrears on various forums and in this regard we are taking practical steps so that the liabilities of such organizations are made clear.

He added that the department is working on reconciliation with all his available resources and very soon the good news regarding provision of arrears will come from the government. He further said that the department is reconciling with all the departments and such progress reports are also furnished to the Chief Secretary office which aims to complete this progress as soon as possible.

The meeting participants appreciated the performance of the department and hoped that they will receive good news soon in this regard. They showed full satisfaction over the reconciliation process with departments and highlighted the efforts of the department with positive remarks.

CM aide stresses renovation work at Mahabat Khan Mosque



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to Chief Minister on Culture, Tourism, Archeology and Museums Zahid Chanzeb visited the historic Mahabat Khan Mosque and inspected the renovation work being done at a cost of Rs152 million under the Directorate of Archeology.

Upon arrival, Mahabat Khan Mosque Khateeb Maulana Muhammad Tayyab Qureshi along with a large number of worshippers welcomed the advisor and the members of his delegation, including Director of Archeology and Museums Dr Abdul Samad, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPCTA) Director MIS Mahad Hasnain, Radio Pakhtunkhwa ex-Station Director Ghulam Hussain Ghazi and Advisor Tourism's Principal Staff Officer Tashfeen Khan.

On this occasion, the advisor mingled with the worshippers and inquired from them about the renovation work going on in the mosque.

Zahid Chanzeb, who is also an architect, pointed out several important aspects for making the renovation work more sustainable and for the foundations strength of the mosque.

He said that the mosque was built almost four centuries ago and strengthening its arches and foundations should be top priority than renovation works. "More funds would be provided if required for this purpose because it is indispensable for the life and safety of 10,000 worshippers in the mosque," he added.

He also directed to improve the sound system of the mosque. However, the Khateeb and worshippers told him that the quality of the current scheme under the direct supervision of Archeology Directorate is progressing in a satisfactory manner compared to the previous schemes while Dr Abdul Samad's close liaison was specially appreciated on this occasion.

The advisor expressed satisfaction over the demolition of 42 shops and markets around the mosque due to which the boundaries and exterior features of this historic mosque were clearly visible for the first time now.

The architect executing the project informed the advisor that in addition to revival of the original Mughal beauty and elegance of the interiors of the mosque, sound proof materials and chemicals were also being used to eliminate the echo generated in the inner hall. While in the original construction, the air circulation system inside the hall is also being restored, due to which the moisture in the walls will also be eliminated.

Maulana Muhammad Tayyab Qureshi also requested the advisor that one or two-storey strong and ventilated roof sheds should be constructed in the wide yard of the mosque in which hundreds of thousands of more worshippers can offer prayers in peace within the limits of the mosque.

The adviser agreed to the proposal and directed the Director Archeology to draw up a workable scheme in consultation with the Aqaf Department, experts and local business community, and henceforth execute this scheme as soon as possible.

This magnificent mosque was built in 1630 by the then Mughal governor, Nawab Mahabat Khan Kamboh, using a combination of mud, lime and Waziri bricks, which is still a testament to the Mughal style of architecture.

KP government presented politically stunt budget: QWP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Quami Watan Party (QWP) Provincial Chairman Sikandar Hayat Khan Sherpao on Saturday said the provincial budget for financial year 2024-25 was a political stunt and government would be unable to receive the money it was hoping.

In a statement, he said the budget was a jugglery of words to deceive the gullible people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, adding that this would turn out to be a deficit budget. Quoting the budget figures, Sikandar Sherpao said that in the budget for financial year 2023-24, the provincial government had presented it with a total volume of Rs1456 billion, but the actual figures stood at Rs1074 billion. This year, he added, the government had presented the budget with a total outlay of Rs1754 billion but this would turn out to be a deficit budget like the previous one. He said it was strange the meeting of the National Economic Council was yet to take place wherein in the federal government conveyed the official figures about budget allocation, but the provincial government presented its budget, adding that the budget figures seemed unauthentic.

Explaining his argument, he said that on the one hand, the provincial government was criticizing the Centre for the poor economic condition of the country but on the other hand it was hoping to receive increased share under the federal transfers, which belied its stance.

He said the provincial government was using various pressure tactics to get relief for PTI and former prime minister Imran Khan. Sikandar Sherpao said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was facing three main issues i.e. poor economic situation, rising acts of terrorism and worsening law and order. The QWP leader said the people were facing the brunt of the poor governance, adding the provincial government to avoid indulging in confrontation with the Centre and focus on getting the rights of the province. He said a new National Finance Commission Award should be announced wherein the shares of the provinces should be enhanced.

Criticizing the federal government, he said the Centre should pay KP its outstanding arrears on account of net hydel profit. He said it seemed the federal government was also not sincere to pay KP its NHP arrears. The QWP leader said the powers that be were also least bothered about the issues being faced by KP. He added it seemed the Federal government and the powers that be had left the KP people at the mercy of the TikTok government.

Roheena defend PhD thesis



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Dr. Roheena Zafar former PhD scholar of Department of Pharmacy, AWKUM has successfully defended her PhD thesis on the title "Impact of Pharmacist led Interventions for Drug Related Problems among Chronic Kidney Disease Patients: A Randomized Control Trial" at the conference Hall, Department of Pharmacy, Garden Campus, AWKUM.

Dr. Roheena Zafar conducted her research under the supervision of Assistant Professor Inayat Ur Rehman and Assistant Professor Dr. Yasir Shah (Co-supervisor).

Dr. Allah Buksh, Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences, UVAS, Lahore and Dr. Zakir Khan, Riphah Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Islamabad attended the public defense as External examiners. Dr. Roheena responded to the questions of the examiners and other participants in a scholarly way and she is the first PhD in Clinical Pharmacy from Department of Pharmacy, AWKUM. Her thesis was evaluated by Professor Dr. Maria Daglia (Italy), Dr. Bhuvan KC (Australia) and Dr. Allah Buksh, UVAS, Lahore.



PESHAWAR: Special Assistant Malik Liaqat Ali Khan meeting with Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Choudhry Nadeem Aslam and Special Secretary Establishment.

Protest against loadshedding concluded

PESHAWAR (INP): Protesters led by a PTI provincial lawmaker ended a protest outside Peshawar's Rehman Baba Grid Station on Saturday after receiving assurances from the utility company that it would reduce prolonged power cuts.

The PTI MPA, Fazl Elahi, announced the end of the rally, after negotiations between the demonstrators, Assistant Commissioner Haroon Saleem and executive engineer Alam Zeb proved successful.

The protesters were assured that loadshedding would not exceed 10 hours and that feeders in the area would be supplied with adequate power. Earlier, they had threatened to enter the grid station and restore power themselves.

Police arrived on the scene to try and disperse the protesters, who threatened to take control of the station and restore the power themselves if the loadshedding continued.

Fazl Elahi said, "We will continue to protest outside the grid station unless the power is restored." He further warned that the demonstrators would take control of the grid station if their demands were not met.

"If the matter is not resolved here, we will shut down Sheikh Muhammadi Grid station," he threatened. "We will close the power there and cut off the electricity supply to the whole area." The MPA said that the protesters are "demanding their rights" and urged PTI workers to "drag their MPA in front of grid stations".

Once the negotiations were finalised, Fazl announced the end of the rally and protesters dispersed. While negotiating with PESCO officials, Fazl promised to take action against power theft. "We will eradicate power theft from the neighbourhood," he vowed.

In September last year, ministers of the caretaker government, while announcing a crackdown against electricity theft, revealed that the losses of power distribution companies in Peshawar, Hyderabad, Sukkur, Quetta and Azad Jammu and Kashmir were as high as 60pc. Fazl also said that he stands with Wapda, whom he said is "short-staffed right now".

Supply of essential medicines continue

PESHAWAR (APP): On behalf of Health Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah, the supply of essential medicines in hospitals continues all across the province here on Saturday.

On Saturday, consignments of essential medicines were sent to seven more district headquarters hospitals, said a spokesman of the Health Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The official said that DHQ Abbottabad, Haripur, Karak, Kohat, Mardan, Nowshera and Nasirullah Babar Memorial Hospital have sent emergency medicines.

There is ample amount of medicines in the warehouse and the supply of medicines is going on as per the need, said Health Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah while talking to media men during his visit to various hospitals. This time too, about 10 billion rupees have been allocated for the purchase of medicines, said Health Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah.

Earlier in Ramadan, we sent medicines to 13 DHOs and 17 district headquarters hospitals, said Health Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah. Non-availability of medicines in any hospital is not acceptable, said Health Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah. He said, supplying medicines to remote hospitals will reduce the burden on hospitals in Peshawar.

Federal Tax Ombudsman visit Customs House

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Dr. Muhammad Asif Jah (Hilal e intiaz/ Sitara e intiaz) Federal Tax Ombudsman Islamabad visited Customs House Peshawar along with his advisors Sardar Ali Khawaja, Zia ud Din Wazir and Almas Jovinda. Saeed Akram Chief Collector Customs KP and other Customs and IRS officers posted in KP received the honourable guest. Customs special Squad presented the honourable FTO a Guard of Honour.

The Honourable FTO expressed his condolences on the recent Shahadat of Customs officers in DIK and offered Fatiha at



Yadgar-e-Shuhada in Customs House, Peshawar. While addressing the Customs and IRS officers the Honourable FTO advised them to always abide by law, avoid delays and try to give relief to the taxpayers as per law. Chief Collector Customs KP at the end presented a shield to the honourable FTO.

ANP rejects KP budget

PESHAWAR (APP): Awami National Party Saturday rejected the provincial budget-2024-25 present for the new financial year and termed it as jugglery of words and manipulation of figures.

Talking to media men, spokesman of the Awami National Party Arsalan Khan Nazim has rejected the provincial budget for the new fiscal year and termed it as a manipulation of figures.

Presenting the provincial budget-2024-25 before the federal budget is deceiving the people, said the provincial spokesperson of ANP. The provincial budget document is inspired by the stories of Sheikh Chilli, said already indebted province, said the provincial spokesperson of ANP. Making a frivolous person the head of the province is a story with a king in the blind, Arsalan Khan Nazim alleged.

He said why confrontation is being done for provincial rights instead of good relations with the center. The Chief Minister, he said, is putting the entire province at stake for his party's ego. "If the interest of the province had been put first, instead of smoky rhetoric, the people would have got relief," Arsalan Khan said, adding, "ANP will not allow the province to be made a scapegoat for personal interests."

ANP condemns violent incidents in Sargodha

Awami National Party has condemned violent incidents in Sargodha and said that no one should be allowed to violate law of land on the pretext of blasphemy.

In a statement issued from Bacha Khan Markaz, spokesman for ANP, Engineer Ehsanullah Khan said that Islam is a religion of peace and targeting someone on allegations of blasphemy is unacceptable.

It was also promised to make another 122 billion rupees in debt to the

Summer vacations announced

PESHAWAR (INP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has announced summer vacations in schools.

According to the notification released by KP Education Department on Saturday, primary schools will shut down for vacations on June 1 while middle and higher secondary schools will be closed on June 15 and reopened on August 31.

Schools in upper district of the province will observe vacations from July 1 to August 31.



PESHAWAR: Provincial Health Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah checking record of medicines during visit Professional Wire House.

Weather to remain dry

PESHAWAR (APP): The weather is likely to remain dry and hot in most districts of the province, an official of the Meteorological Department said here on Saturday.

Severe heat is likely in the southern districts of the province and heavy dusty winds are expected in Kohat, Charsadda, Peshawar, Khyber, Lucky Marwat, Karak, Hangu, Nowshera, Dera Ismail Khan and Tank, the official of the Meteorological Department said.

There is a possibility of rain with thunder in the districts of Upper Dir, Swat, Mansehra and Abbottabad and during the last 24 hours, 4 mm of rain has been recorded in Timeragah, 3 mm in Dir and 2 mm in Malam Jabba, Meteorological Department official said.

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Muhammad Faiq Shah, founder and chairman of the Amun Taraqqi Party urged the government to take measures for uplift of impoverished people.

Shah while talking to various delegations here on Saturday emphasized that the benefits of mega development projects must reach people without delay.

He said social and economic injustices have risen up while the gap between government and people was also widening.

The ATP chief said two laws were enforced in the country, one for the poor and other for the elite.

He added that the poor are becoming poorest and the rich are becoming richest. Delay in delivering justice is equally tantamount to denial to justice, he added.

Shah wanted formation of a joint alliance to combat poverty, hunger and illiteracy, which are amongst major challenges of the country.

The ATP chairman said that common Pakistanis had been disillusioned. "They have been deceived in the name of food, shelter and clothing."

He said his party has vigorously carried out a campaign for public authority and justice for the last seven years.

Our party has come into the political arena by carrying a sole manifesto, roadmap and ideology, through which the destiny of the whole nation and country will be altered, Shah said.

Faiq made it clear that issues won't be resolved until public authority and justice. He added education, health and employment have been mainly focused in our party's manifesto, asked to enforce emergency in these sectors and provide authority and justice to people.

"Economy cannot be stabilised in the political

polarization and confrontation," Faiq remarked, while talking about ongoing tug of war between provinces and centre on denial of due rights and share in resources.

Shah stressed the power of gentle persuasion, stating, "The promotion of truth can also be done with polite lips and tone."

The ATP leader called for distribution of resources among all federating units on an equitable basis.

He said there shouldn't usurp rights of the smaller provinces because there is an increasing sense of deprivation among people in the underdeveloped regions.



In brief

JUI-F worker killed in Tank F.P. Report

TANK: A worker of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) was killed in the firing in Tank, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to the police, one person was killed by unidentified assailants in Shah Alam area of Tank. Police say that the incident took place late at night in which the deceased was identified as Maulana Ehsanullah. Former District General Secretary Shams-ul-Zaman Shams said that Maulana Ehsanullah belongs to Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F).

FIR lodged against Dasti

MURADABAD (INP): The first information report (FIR) was lodged on Saturday against MNA Jamshed Dasti and 20 others for allegedly harassing the price control magistrate. According to the police, the fines were imposed for selling expensive vegetables in Muradabad. Dasti reached out on the occasion along with confidants and tore the fine receipt. Dasti had incited the people to stage the Azad Kashmir-like protest. The police said: "The investigation into the matter is under way, and action will be initiated." Moreover, the FIR was registered on the complaint of price control magistrate Sanaullah Riaz.

2 kids suffocate to death

NOUSHEHRO FEROZE (INP): Two kids suffocated to death after being trapped inside a locked car in Tharo Shah Khanzada Mohalla of Kandiaro, neighborhood of Noushehro Feroze district, reported on Saturday. According to the channel, the victim boys are identified as 5-year-old Hasan and 4-year-old Hussain. They were the sons of Aqeel Khanzada. As per the channel report, the incident occurred when the children were left in the car by their father, who went into the house. Unaware of the danger, the children remained in the vehicle. After two hours of frantic searching by the family, the children were discovered in the car, but it was too late. Both boys died from suffocation caused by the car's auto-lock system. The tragic loss has shocked the local community.

Electric thieves caught F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: According to details, Exion (Faisalabad Electric Supply Company) Fesco WAPDA Kamalia Syed Fazal Abbas Shah while talking to *The Frontier Post* said that our task force is continuously conducting operations against electricity thieves. In which 220 electricity thieves caught and FIR registered against them. He further said that 60 person were arrested along with the FIR and we fined them 26.84 million out of which 25 million was collected and deposited in the treasury of Pakistan. He said that our task force is identifying the electricity thieves and taking actions against them and these actions will continue. In the end, Syed Fazal Abbas Shah said that I give messages to the electricity thieves not to damage the treasury of Pakistan by stealing electricity. If the electricity thieves do not stop their actions, I will have to take further action against them.

Couple injured

OKARA (INP): A couple was injured when an over speeding car hit a motorcycle here on Saturday, police said. A reckless driven car knocked down a motorcycle carrying a couple in suburbs of Okara city.



MINGORA: KP Minister for Forests, Fazal Hakeem Khan inaugurating water supply scheme in Swat.

KP budget jugglery of words: Muqam

F.P. Report

SWABI: Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions and Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Kashmir Affairs, Engr Amir Muqam here Saturday said that the budget of KP was a jugglery of words and no significant relief was provided to people.

He said that most of statistics of KP budget were based on speculations and hypotheses and that no significant relief was provided to masses in any sector including social services. Addressing Lahor tehsil bar after administering oath to its elected office bearers, the Minister said that it was highly astonished that the KP budget was presented before the federal budget this year and most of its statistics were based on speculations and hypotheses.

The Federal Minister said that the provinces mostly presented its budget after analyzing the receipts, projects and allocations in the federal budget and include confirmed figures in its Annual Development Program. Engr Amir Muqam that people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa could not be deceived on mere slogans and hypotheses any more.

He said that people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had given mandate to KP rulers for solution of their prob-

lems and not for raising mere slogans and posting political gimmicks' posts and videos on social media for achieving cheap popularity. The people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa knew about elements that raised hollow slogans to take control of Governor House and PESCO, he said.

He said people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were custodians of these institutions and would frustrate the ill designs of such elements know for hallow sloganeering. Engr Amir Muqam expressed the hope that KP rulers would show political maturity and sit with Federal Government for resolution of problems of the province. He said that the confrontation and agitation politics of PTI were fully exposed before the nation.

Engr Amir Muqam expressed the hope that KP rulers would learn less from the leadership of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif who launched mega projects for people in short period of time. He said KP was kept backwards by the PTI due to its poor policies and agitation politics in 10 years rule, resulting an increase of people problems.

Engr Amir Muqam said that Pakistan Muslim League Government has put the country again on track of economic progress

and development. He said Pakistan has started moving back on road to prosperity and problems of people are being addressed at their doorsteps.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif is working tirelessly to take the country's out of existing challenges. Amir Muqam said that Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) was formed under the leadership of Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif to attract foreign investments and stimulate the nation's economic growth.

He said that vast opportunities in mines, mineral, gemstones and hydropower were existed for foreign investment in KP. He said Federal Govt was encouraging investment to alleviate poverty and generate employment opportunities for youth. He said that bench and bar play important role in provision of speedy justice to the litigants. He said that lawyers had played important role in countering of challenges confronted to the country in the past. Engr Amir Muqam expressed the hope that the elected cabinet of the Lahor tehsil bar would play constructive role in resolution of lawyers problems. He suggested increase of election tenure of the bar to address issues of lawyers.

Fire sweeps paper factory at Haripur F.P. Report

HARRIPUR: Rescue 1122 reacted swiftly and extinguished the fire at a factory in Hattar Industrial Estate at Haripur in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) on Saturday.

According to reports, as soon as they learnt about the fire in the Horison Paper Mills, firefighters from Rescue 1122, Haripur and Khanpur Station rushed to the site and started dousing the flames along with the industrial estate's fire brigade.

And after hectic efforts of four hours, the firefighters managed to put out the blaze by pouring 40,000 liters of water on the burning structure. Two fire vehicles and eight rescue personnel participated in the operation. As per the initial reports, it was the fuel stored at the factory's power generation unit that had caught the fire, which eventually spread to other units of the factory.

Two cars were completely burnt after fire erupted at a workshop at Quaid-e-Millat Road in Khanpur in southern Punjab. Soon after learning about the incident, the firefighters reached the site and started extinguishing the blaze. According to reports, the explosion of firecrackers by members of a marriage party led to the fire. The car owners, on the other hand, said that they had suffered a loss of Rs2.5 million.

Two-day Sports Festival concluded: A two-day Sports Festival was organized at Central Prison Haripur with the assistance of the District Sports Office in Haripur and Directorate General Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa wherein the prisoners enthusiastically participated here on Saturday.

On the final day, Deputy Commissioner Haripur Khan Muhammad was the chief guest on this occasion and distributed cash prizes and awards to the winning and runner-up teams. On the first day, Regional Prison Officer Muhammad Naeem and Commandant of the Prison Staff Training Academy Amin Shuaib inaugurated the event as the chief guests.

Gilani: Upcoming budget should be people-friendly

Saqib Mushtaq

MULTAN: Acting President Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani has urged the need for the upcoming budget to be people-friendly. He stated that economic prosperity was linked to political stability in the country. "Without economic stability, the condition of the people cannot be improved", he remarked. He stressed the need to bring all stakeholders together to resolve national issues.

The Acting President expressed these remarks while addressing a gathering of Parliamentarians, Members of the Provincial Assembly, and other prominent political figures from Multan. The Acting President pledged to engage with the federal and provincial governments to complete developmental projects in Multan, including the issuance of notification for Multan as Big City



and the completion of the under-construction ring road project.

Acting President reaffirmed his commitment to prioritizing public service. He also highlighted the widespread benefits of the Benazir Income Support Program in Southern Punjab and also advocated for its expansion. He added that discussions had already begun with the Prime Minister to provide facilities for education, health, and transportation in Southern Punjab.

Different parliamentarians and local leadership including MNA Syed Ali

Qasim Gillani, Nawabzada Itikhar Ahmed Khan, MPAs Syed Ali Haider Gillani, Mian Kamran Abdullah, Rana Iqbal Siraj, Wasif Mazhar Raan, Senior Vice President PPP South Punjab Khawaja Rizwan Alam, Mehr Irshad Seyal, Dr Javed Siddique, Malik Naseem Labar, President PLF Shiekh Ghias ul Haq advocate, General Secretary District Bar Multan Syed Arif Shah, City President PPP Aabida Bukhari, Secretary Information Khawaja Imran Bashir and many others were also present.

KKKUK holds seminar

F.P. Report

KARAK: Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak has held one-day seminar on Disability and Psychological Well-being. The seminar was organized by the Accessibility Committee, to address the needs of disabled and specially-abled students.

The seminar featured Miss Faryal Zafar, a distinguished Lecturer in Psychology from the Higher Education Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, as the resource person. Miss Zafar's expertise brought detailed perspectives on the psychological aspects of disability, focusing on strategies to enhance the well-being of disabled individuals within educational institutions.



Her presentations and interactive sessions provided valuable knowledge and practical approaches to foster an inclusive environment. The seminar was attended by a large number of students and faculty, demonstrating the university's commitment to promote accessibility and inclusivity in higher education.

Dr. Hassan Ahmad Shah, Head of Accessibility Committee of Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak, expressed his gratitude to Miss Faryal Zafar for her invaluable contributions and to the Accessibility Committee members for organizing such a meaningful event.

Two robbers injured

OKARA (INP): Two robbers were injured and arrested with arms after exchange of fire with police here on Saturday.

According to details, four robbers were fleeing after snatching motorcycle and cash from a citizen

when police approached them in Renala Khurd area Satghara police station jurisdiction. An exchange of fire took place in which two robbers including Ahmed Ali and Ghulam Rasool were injured and held with arms

while their two accomplices managed to escape from the scene.

The detainees were wanted by police in various criminal cases. The police took the recovered arms into custody and shifted the injured robbers to hospital.



HYDERABAD: volunteer spraying water on a driver's face during very hot weather.

Release on import of lambs at Torkham border sought

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: People from different walks of life demanded of the authorities concerned to give up the ban on import of lamb from Afghanistan to Pakistan via Torkham border so that the tribesmen can perform the sacrificial rite on upcoming Eidul Azha.

In a "Meet the Press" held in Landi Kotal press club district Khyber on Saturday tehsil chairman Haji Shah Khalid, Malik Masel Khan, Jamaat-e-Islami district leader Murad Hussain Afridi, local head of Tehreek-e-Insaf

Zarbullah Shinwari, Najeeb Khawrichan and others said that lamb and sheep for sacrificial purpose imported from Afghanistan through Chaman, Kharlachi, Ghulam Khan crossing while banned at Torkham border was injustice to locals.

They added that although sheep and lamb was not a banned item but its import had been restricted at Torkham border for the last few years for unknown reasons that need to be addressed. With permission to import of sheep, additional custom duty will be added to the national

exchequer, they added and said besides the locals will get the sacrificial animal easily at a sensible rate.

They maintained that the majority of the tribesmen were jobless and couldn't afford expensive sacrificial animals, available in down towns while sacrificial animals, imported from Afghanistan could be available at reasonable price, they argued. They demanded of the authorities at the Torkham border to relax the ban on import of lambs from Afghanistan so that they could get sacrificial animals at low rates on the arrival of Eidul Azha.

Muhammed Sarwar

WORDS are immensely powerful. They are powerful because they give form to ideas, which have the potential to threaten the citadels of power. The status quo fears words more than anything; and, they are the ones to suppress them more than anyone. That is why, historically, dissenting voices have always been suppressed by those in power.

Because the suppression of voices ensures an unequal social order between the powerful and the powerless. Those who are being silenced, are effectively rendered invisible and powerless. Those that silence others, consolidate their power by becoming more powerful.

There is something tribal in the urge to silence the voices of others. In the past, the chieftains of the tribes did not want any peer competitors to challenge their authority. The elected or unelected chieftains of

today also do not want to be challenged. Their methods of silencing the voices of others may be different but their motive is the same: the singularization of truth. They want people to see the world not through their own eyes but the eyes of their masters. The masters detest any other version of truth: except their officially authorized version of truth. Any dissenting voice that claims otherwise is instantly crushed. Socrates is said to be the first casualty of truth: because he seduced people to navigate for the plurality of truth.

It is true that modern states have evolved into framing complex laws that spell out the rights of individuals to speak their minds; however, the genetic trait to subordinate others has not gone anywhere. Therefore, laws are not entirely helpful—especially if they are formed by the powerful—to secure the rights and interests of the marginalized. After all, isn't it true that laws are made to be broken intentionally and

deceptively by the powerful when conflicting interests emerge? And isn't it also true that those in power benefit from the loopholes and know smart ways to lock up voices that might pose a threat to their power?

One of the egregious tools widely abused today is the pretext of national security: it is often cited as an excuse to silence dissent. Its telling example is the militarized response of western governments against the peaceful protests in the educational institutions which demand an end to the war in Gaza. Instead of heeding to the genuine concerns, anger, and frustration of protesters, they are labeled as undemocratic forces stoking violence and anti-semitism. The western world, which tirelessly lectures others about freedom and democracy, scraps their democratic ideals into pieces when the interests of the powerful are at stake.

Muzzling dissent

The pretext of national security effectively allows all states to extinguish any contrarian discourse that deviates from the official state narrative. In Pakistan, we have a rich history of bending and breaking the law by self-serving individuals, however, the invocation of national security to suppress dissenting voices has become a cliché in recent times. Indeed, national security is of paramount importance; however, it should not be misused to drown out meaningful conversation on important issues.

Since the controversial election, widespread measures have been imposed on social media platforms to curb free speech. The Punjab Defamation Act 2024, is another addition to the slew of draconian laws aimed at silencing critical voices. It provides a legal cover to punish opponents and journalists critical of the government policies. The latest round of restrictions has exacerbated the ongoing onslaught on fundamental

rights. It has exponentially escalated the threat of our democracy sliding towards authoritarianism.

Every time the government announces restrictive measures, the citizenry gradually becomes habitual to those measures. After some time, the cycle is repeated, and the population again digests the new dose of restrictions. In this way, the territory of individual rights is gradually surrendered to undemocratic forces. The post-election curbs have transformed the country into a claustrophobic abyss. There is little or no space left to breathe freely. Public and private spaces have shrunk to the point of asphyxiation. In other words, insanity has literally colonized our rationality.

Does suppressing dissent help at all? An African proverb says that "an enemy is the one to whom we were not ready to listen". Those whose voices are suppressed or unheard for too long, might feel neglected and suffer alienation. Therefore, they might resort to violent actions to register their griev-

ances. That is how friends turn into enemies when the common ground for coexistence diminishes. If democracy is a social contract where everyone is equal, then everyone should be heard and their opinions counted equally: even those with whom we have our core disagreements. Because there is no other way to make the social contract functional except by accountability. That is why free speech and accountability are the central pillars of democracy.

One can suppress voices but one cannot incinerate ideas. The more one tries to suppress ideas, the stronger they will spring up. If they are not allowed a breathing space, they would rupture like a volcano in tumultuous waves causing unimaginable destruction. That is why I said in the beginning that words are immensely powerful. One should think hard before suppressing words lest they blow everything up with them like explosives.

The Author is an MPhil scholar in English Literature at GC University, Lahore.



Putin questions Zelenskyy’s legitimacy as Ukraine’s leader



TALLINN, Estonia (AP): Russian President Vladimir Putin visited his Belarusian counterpart and close ally for talks in Minsk, after which he questioned whether Volodymyr Zelenskyy has the legitimacy to negotiate on Ukraine's behalf. Russia is willing to hold talks about the war in Ukraine, Putin said, but Zelenskyy's five-year term in office was supposed to end May 20.

However, Zelenskyy has ruled out holding new presidential elections while his country is at war — something Putin apparently ignored in remarks to reporters. Ukrainian legislation bans elections during martial law that has been in place since Russia launched its invasion in February 2022. The country would have to amend the law to elections during a state of war.

Russian officials have repeatedly called attention to the question of Zelenskyy's term in office during the past week. "Of course, we are aware that the legitimacy of the current head of state has ended," Putin said at a news conference in Minsk after talks with Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko. "We must be completely sure that we are dealing with legitimate authorities," said Putin, who has repeatedly stated that Russia is ready for talks with Ukraine.

However, Zelenskyy has rejected the preconditions that Russia has put forth for talks, including allowing Russia to retain the territory Kremlin's forces have taken since the February 2022 invasion. An international peace conference on Ukraine is to be held in Switzerland in June, but Russia has not been not invited and Putin has dismissed the conference's importance. The two-day visit to Belarus was one of several foreign tours Putin used to

kick off his fifth term in office. Since his May 7 inauguration, he also has gone to China and is expected in Uzbekistan on Sunday. Russia and Belarus have increasingly close relations and foresee eventually forming a so-called "union state." Lukashenko has given Moscow permission to deploy Russian tactical nuclear weapons and troops to in Belarus, which shares a 1,084-kilometer (673-mile) border with Ukraine. In 2023, Russia moved some of its tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus.

Unlike nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missiles that can destroy entire cities, tactical nuclear weapons intended for use against troops on the battlefield are less powerful. Such weapons include aerial bombs, warheads for short-range missiles and artillery munitions. Deploying tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus would allow Russian aircraft and missiles to reach potential targets in Ukraine more easily and quickly if Moscow decides to use them. It also extends Russia's capability to target several NATO allies in Eastern and Central Europe.

Russia has also used Belarus, which depends on Russian loans and cheap energy, as a staging ground in the war in Ukraine, deploying some of its troops there. The two countries kicked off military drills involving tactical nuclear weapons earlier this month. Moscow said its drills, announced publicly for the first time on May 6, were a response to statements by Western officials signaling possibly deeper involvement in the war in Ukraine. The drills began this week. Belarus launched its maneuvers involving missiles and warplanes capable of carrying tactical nuclear weapons on May 7.

Pomp and drama as Nigerian emir returns

ABUJA (BBC): As he returned to the throne in a colourful ceremony, Nigeria's influential Emir of Kano addressed the people who deposed him four years ago. Those who expelled Muhammadu Sanusi II from his role as a traditional Muslim leader in the northern state of Kano were not worth talking about, he said.

Mr Sanusi was ousted in 2020 for showing "insubordination" to the authorities there. His supporters believe he was sacked as he opposed the re-election of Kano's then governor, Mr Sanusi, an ex-central bank chief, was reappointed by current Governor Abba Kabir Yusuf at Kano State Government house. During his 2023 campaign to become governor, Mr Yusuf had pledged to bring Mr Sanusi back as emir.

He said that by dethroning Mr Sanusi, the authorities had violated Kano's centuries-old tradition of emir rule. Traditional leaders in Nigeria hold few constitutional powers but are able to exert significant influence as they are seen as custodians of both religion and tradition. At ceremony, Mr Sanusi expressed his gratitude to the state governor, state legislators and the people of Kano as a whole.

Of those that deposed him in 2020, Mr Sanusi said: "Those who did that are not worthy of me talking about what they did." But just hours before the event, it was unclear whether Mr Sanusi's rein-

statement ceremony would actually go ahead. The Federal High Court had issued a last-minute order stopping the state government from abolishing all five emirates created during the administration of former Governor Abdullahi Ganduje and returning to the system where only one emir ruled Kano.

The ruling was a response to an application from Aminu Bappa Dan Agundu, a Kano emirate official who opposed moving back to the old system. However, Mr Yusuf said he did not recognise the ruling. Referencing reports that the High Court judge was based in the US, Mr Yusuf said at the ceremony: "Imagine a judge in America ordering us to halt the coronation of the Emir of Kano, Sanusi. Our laws are in place and they will not change."

Mr Sanusi became the 14th Emir of Kano in 2014 after the death of Ado Bayero. From 2017 onwards, he had frosty relations with then-Governor Ganduje. He was sacked in 2020, with the government accusing him of "total dis- respect" towards the local institutions. The government then created five new emirates in the state and appointed Alhaji Aminu Ado Bayero as the new emir in Kano.

The day before Mr Sanusi returned to the throne, the Kano State House of Assembly abolished the five former emirates. That same day, Governor Yusuf signed the

law and gave the emirs of the abolished emirates 48 hours to vacate their palaces. On the streets of Kano, the reaction was mixed.

New lord mayor of Leeds sworn in

LONDON (BBC): The new lord mayor of Leeds has been officially sworn in at a council meeting. Abigail Marshall Katung takes over the role from Al Garthwaite to become the city's 130th lord mayor and the first person of African descent to hold the position. The councillor will be supported by her husband, Nigerian Senator Sunday Marshall Katung.

"Since arriving in Leeds in 2000, the city quickly became my cherished second home," Mrs Marshall Katung said. Born in Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria, Mrs Marshall Katung came to the UK to study at the University of Leeds. "It was not just the city where I lived, studied and worked, it's where I chose to raise my children and become a public servant," the athletics coach and Leeds City College governor said. "My appointment as lord mayor has been widely celebrated in the city's African community and is a shining example of the enormous contribution international students make to UK society."

Tunisians rally against crackdown on media

TUNIS: Several hundred Tunisians have marched through the capital, Tunis, chanting "down with the dictatorship" as they protested a spate of arrests under a presidential decree critics say is being used to stifle dissent.

Since Tunisia's 2011 revolution, the country has been considered among the more open media environments in the Arab world. But politicians, journalists and unions say that freedom of the press has faced a serious threat under the rule of President Kais Saied who came to power following free elections in 2019. Two Tunisian media figures received one-year jail sentences in recent days after making comments the authorities deemed critical, in the latest prosecutions under Decree 54 issued by Saied in 2022 banning the "spreading of false news".

"Down with the decree," the demonstrators shouted as they marched through Tunis. "Dictator Kais, it's your turn now," they added, in allusion to the Arab Spring uprising, which toppled longtime leader Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in 2011. Two years after his election, Saied shut down the elected parliament and moved to rule by decree. He also assumed authority over the judiciary, a step that the opposition called a coup.

Since then, many of his critics have been prosecuted or sent to jail. Broadcaster Borhen Bsaies and political commentator Mourad Zeghidi were both jailed for a year – six months for spreading "false news" and a further six months for "spreading news that includes false information with the aim of defaming others". During the hearing, both Bsaies and Zeghidi had defended their "journalistic work". Zeghidi's lawyer, Kamel Massoud, condemned Decree 54 as "unconstitutional".

"When politics enters the courtroom, justice leaves," he said. Tunisia has now imprisoned a total of six journalists, including Bsaies and Zeghidi, since Saeid's Decree 54 came into force.

Meanwhile, more than 60 journalists, lawyers and opposition figures have been prosecuted under the same decree, according to the National Syndicate of Tunisian Journalists. In May, police arrested 10 people, including journalists, lawyers and officials of civil society groups, in what Amnesty International called a "deep crackdown" targeting activists and journalists. Human Rights Watch has called on Tunisia to respect free speech and civil liberties. — Aljazeera

140 migrants reach Greece

ATHENS (AP): Nearly 140 migrants have reached Greek shores over the past 24 hours, making the dangerous sea voyage across the Mediterranean Sea, authorities said. One man, who had set off from North Africa, drowned off the southern island of Crete.

Greece, along with Spain and Italy, is a key entry point for people from the Middle East or Africa who are seeking a better life in the European Union. To get to Greek shores, most make the risky crossing in flimsy boats from neighboring Turkey or Libya. Greece's coast guard said 34 men and three boys were rescued by a passing merchant vessel some 83 nautical miles (95 miles) south of Crete after issuing a distress signal.

A coast guard statement said one more man who had been on the boat fell into the sea and drowned, according to other survivors and the ship's captain. All survivors were taken to Crete.

Italian activist goes on trial in Hungary assault case

ROME (AFP): An Italian anti-fascist activist went on trial in Hungary for allegedly attacking neo-Nazis in a case that has sparked tensions between the two EU allies. Ilaria Salis, 39, arrived at the Budapest court accompanied by her father, with Italy's ambassador and a throng of Italian journalists also in attendance.

She left to applause after the court heard testimony from one of the victims of masked attackers and two witnesses. None of the three could personally identify Salis. The case has been front-page news in Italy after Salis appeared in court in January handcuffed and chained, with her feet shackled. The teacher from Monza, near Milan, was arrested in Budapest in February 2023 following a counter-demonstration against a neo-Nazi rally.

She had been jailed awaiting trial, when she was released into house arrest. Her case has sparked tensions between Rome and Budapest despite the cordial relations between their far-right prime ministers, Italy's Georgia Meloni and Hungary's Viktor Orban, with Rome making several official complaints on behalf of Salis. Prosecutors allege Salis travelled to Budapest specifically to carry out attacks against "unsuspect-

ing victims identified as, or perceived as, far-right sympathisers" to deter "representatives of the far-right movement". She was charged with three counts of attempted assault and accused of being part of an extreme left-wing criminal organisation in the wake of a counter-demonstration against an annual neo-Nazi rally.

Salis denies the charges -- which could see her jailed for up to 11 years -- and says she is being persecuted for her political beliefs. A next hearing is set for September, with Salis's lawyer Gyorgy Magyar complaining that his client has yet to receive all the case documents in her native language. Salis's father Roberto Salis and Italian ambassador Manuel Jacoangeli also complained that Salis's address in Budapest was read out in court, saying it put her "at risk". A defiant Salis told Italian newspaper La Stampa via her father in an interview published last week that she was "on the right side of history".

Last month, the Italian Green and Left Alliance (AVS) nominated Salis as their lead candidate for the upcoming European elections. If the party garners enough votes at the ballot, Salis may be able to claim parliamentary immunity, which would lead to a suspension of crimi-

nal proceedings against her. Salis's case has been highly politicised, with the Hungarian nationalist government frequently commenting on it.

It has repeatedly denounced the media for allegedly depicting Salis as a "martyr", instead pointing to what it called the "brutality" of her alleged crimes. Salis's father claims that his daughter was kept in inhumane prison conditions until January when her case received significant media coverage. "For eight days, she was kept in a prison in a solitary cell, without being provided with toilet paper, sanitary towels, and soap... in Italy, we would consider this torture," Roberto Salis told AFP ahead of the trial.

The Council of Europe has criticised Hungary's overcrowded prisons. Hungarian officials have denied accusations of ill-treatment. In the past, Hungary came under heavy criticism both at home and abroad over a controversial terrorism conviction handed to a Syrian man for his role in a border riot in 2015. Prosecutors had accused Ahmed Hamed of using a megaphone to orchestrate violence and throwing stones at Hungarian police to force them to open the border with Serbia, initially handing him a 10-year jail term.

It’s possible no party will get a majority in S Africa’s election

CAPE TOWN (AP): The focus for South Africa's national election next week is on the fate of the African National Congress party and whether it is going to lose its parliamentary majority for the first time, as many expect.

Several polls put the ANC's support below 50% ahead of vote, raising the prospect that it might not be the majority party for the first time since winning control of the government when Nelson Mandela led it to victory in the first all-race elections that ended white minority rule in 1994. But the ANC is still widely expected to be the biggest party.

Here's how no clear majority would bring an unprecedented political change and complicate how the president is elected and how the government works in Africa's most advanced economy: The most immediate impact if there is no party with a majority would be on how the president is chosen and if ANC leader and current President Cyril Ramaphosa is reelected for a second and final five-year term.

The president is the head of state and has executive powers, but South Africans don't vote directly for the president in a national election, rather casting ballots for political parties. Those parties get seats in Parliament according to their share of the vote. Lawmakers then elect the president in the first sitting of the legislature after the election. The vote occurs in the lower house of Parliament, known as the National Assembly, and it needs at least 201 votes from its 400 lawmakers to elect a president. The ANC has always had

a majority in Parliament since 1994 and so the president has always been from the ANC.

Without a majority, the ANC would need a coalition or agreement with another party or other parties to get Ramaphosa reelected. The president could even come from another, smaller party if that's the agreement, although that's very unlikely. The word coalition makes South Africans nervous after a series of them at local government level have been spectacular failures, including in Johannesburg, the biggest city and economic hub. There, the collapse of numerous agreements between parties has led to major problems in running the city's services. Other towns and cities have had similar experiences, including the administrative capital, Pretoria.

But a national coalition government of some sort is a real possibility as a result of the ANC's declining support and would be uncharted waters for South Africa. While a coalition might be a reflection of the democratic will of the people, some analysts say it could also be bad for South Africa's economy. It increases the chances of government instability and could lead to muddled policy, putting off foreign business investment at a time when South Africa desperately needs that.

There has been no indication of who the ANC might approach as a coalition partner and, for now, all options appear to be on the table. The ANC has maintained during election campaigning that it is not thinking about coalitions and is focused on retaining its majority. Should the pre-

dictions hold and the ANC loses its majority, it could go straight to the official opposition Democratic Alliance party for a coalition. It's unclear if that's feasible as the DA has been so critical of the ANC and Ramaphosa, as have the two other main parties.

Instead, the ANC may go to a number of smaller parties with small shares of the vote to put together a coalition that would take their combined share to over 50% and allow a government to be formed. There are dozens of parties contesting the election, many of them new and some expected to get just a few percent of the vote, but they could suddenly have a big say in South African politics. Those smaller parties would want something in return, whether Cabinet positions, some input on policy or even control of entire government departments.

Some South African political commentators have started to speak about a possible government of national unity in a kind of repeat of what happened just after the apartheid system of white minority rule ended 30 years ago. Then, Mandela invited other major parties into his government to seek some unity as South Africa took its first, uncertain steps as a democracy and went about writing a new constitution. It was an act of reconciliation in bringing a fractured country together, though others have doubted it would work for South Africa now. For one thing, if all the major political parties were part of the government, who would hold it to account?

Some 45,000 Rohingya flee amid allegations of burning in Myanmar

DHAKA: Escalating violence in conflict-torn Myanmar's Rakhine State has forced another 45,000 minority Rohingya to flee, the United Nations warned, amid allegations of beheadings, killings and burnings of property.

Clashes have rocked Rakhine State since the Arakan Army (AA) rebels attacked forces of the ruling military government in November, ending a ceasefire that had largely held since a military coup in 2021. The fighting has caught in the middle the Muslim minority group, long considered outsiders by the majority Buddhist residents, either from the government or the rebel side.

The AA says it is fighting for more autonomy for the ethnic Rakhine population in the state, which is also home to an estimated 600,000 members of the persecuted Rohingya Muslim minority, who have chosen to remain in the country. More than a million Rohingya have taken shelter in neighbouring Bangladesh after fleeing Rakhine, including hundreds of thousands in 2017 during an earlier crackdown by the military that is now the subject of a United Nations genocide court case.

UN rights office spokeswoman Elizabeth Throssell told reporters in Geneva that tens of thousands of civilians have been displaced in recent days by the fighting in

Buthidaung and Maungdaw townships. "An estimated 45,000 Rohingya have reportedly fled to an area on the Naf River near the border with Bangladesh, seeking protection," she said, as she urged the protection of civilians according to international law.

UN rights chief Volker Turk was urging Bangladesh and other countries "to provide effective protection to those seeking it, in line with international law, and to ensure international solidarity with Bangladesh in hosting Rohingya refugees in Myanmar", she said. But Al Jazeera's Tanvir Chowdhury, reporting from Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, said that with more than a million Rohingya already in the country, the government has been reluctant to take more, leaving the latest refugees stuck on the Myanmar side of the border.

James Rodehaver, head of the rights office's Myanmar team, described the horrifying situation many were fleeing from. He said his team had received testimonies and seen satellite images, online videos and pictures indicating that Buthidaung town had been "largely burned". "We have received information indicating that the burning did start on May 17 ... two days after the military had retreated from the town ... and the Arakan Army claimed to have taken full control of the village."

One survivor had described seeing dozens of dead bodies as he fled Buthidaung, while another had said he was among tens of thousands who fled the town only to find themselves blocked by the Arakan Army on the road west towards Maungdaw town.

Other survivors also said AA members had abused them and extorted money from them as they tried to make their way to Rohingya villages south of the town. In the weeks leading up to the burning of Buthidaung, Rodehaver said the rights office had documented renewed attacks on Rohingya civilians by both the AA and the military in northern Rakhine, including through air strikes.

The team had documented "at least four cases of beheadings", he said, adding that they had determined with a high level of confidence that those were carried out by the AA. There have also been previous allegations of Rohingya being used as human shields. Al Jazeera's Chowdhury, said the Rohingyas were "caught in the middle". "They are in a precarious situation," he said, adding that recent Rohingya refugees who fled Myanmar had told him that both the AA and the military have been trying to recruit them to fight. "They are threatened that if they don't join, their villages would be burned," he said. — Aljazeera

Car bomb in Syrian capital kills one

BEIRUT (AP): A bomb attached to a car exploded early Saturday in the western part of the Syrian capital that is home to several diplomatic missions, killing one person and causing material damage, state media reported.

Damascus' Mazze neighborhood houses the Iranian consulate, destroyed last month in a strike blamed on Israel. The attack at the time killed seven people including two Iranian generals and a member of Lebanon's militant group Hezbollah, and triggered a direct Iranian military

assault on Israel for the first time, sparking fears of a nationwide war. Several airstrikes have hit the tightly-secured neighborhood over the past months, mostly targeting Iranian officials.

State news agency, SANA, didn't say who the person killed was but said the blast set two other cars ablaze. Rami Abdurrahman, who heads the Britain-based opposition war monitor the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, said the man killed in the explosion was a Mazze resident who carried a card identify-

ing him as a Syrian army officer. Abdurrahman said the dead man had close ties to the Iranians.

Hours after the blast in Damascus, an Israeli drone strike reportedly targeted a car and a truck outside the western Syrian town of Qusair, northwest of Damascus, close to Lebanon's border, the Observatory and a Beirut-based pan-Arab TV station reported. The strike hit the two vehicles near Dabaa air base. Qusair and its suburbs were struck several times over the past months by Israeli drones targeting Hezbollah fighters who have a

presence in the area.

The Beirut-based Al-Mayadeen TV didn't say if there were casualties, but the Observatory said two Hezbollah members were killed and several others wounded in the drone strike. Lebanon-based Hezbollah and Israeli forces have traded cross-border fire a day after the Israel-Hamas war started on Oct. 7 on an almost daily basis. Since then, more than 400 people have been killed in Lebanon, most of them Hezbollah fighters, and more than 70 civilians and non-combatants, according to an Associated

Press tally.

Meanwhile, Israel says at least 15 soldiers and 10 civilians have so far been killed in the clashes. Tehran has been sending advisers to Syria since the country's conflict, which later turned into civil war, began in March 2011 and has killed half a million people. Iran-backed fighters have helped tip the balance of power in favor of President Bashar Assad's government.

Iran's military presence in Syria has been a major concern for Israel, which has vowed to stop Iranian

entrenchment along its northern border. Syria has accused Israel of carrying out hundreds of strikes on targets in government-controlled parts in recent years — but Israel has rarely acknowledged such strikes. The war in Gaza started after Hamas led militants in a surprise attack on southern Israel. About 1,200 people were killed and 250 taken hostage. Israel responded with a retaliatory war that has killed more than 35,000 Palestinians, many of them women and children, according to Gaza health officials.

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A commendable stand by ICJ

THE recent decision by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to order Israel to halt its military operations in Rafah, a city in southern Gaza, is a commendable action that underscores the international community's commitment to protecting human rights and maintaining peace. This ruling, although unlikely to be enforced by Israel, represents a significant step towards addressing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and holding powerful nations accountable for their actions.

The ICJ's decision comes at a critical juncture, with growing international criticism of Israel's conduct in Gaza. The court's ruling on Friday marks the third instance this year where the 15-judge panel has issued preliminary orders aimed at curbing the violence and alleviating the humanitarian suffering in Gaza. Despite the legally binding nature of these orders, the lack of a policing mechanism to enforce them poses a significant challenge. However, the moral and symbolic weight of the ICJ's decision cannot be understated.

Israel's justification for its military actions in Gaza centers on its right to self-defense against Hamas militants. The ongoing conflict has resulted in substantial loss of life and widespread destruction. The ICJ's order, therefore, adds to the mounting international pressure on Israel to cease its military operations and seek a peaceful resolution to the conflict. This pressure is further amplified by the stance of Israel's closest ally, the United States, which has expressed caution against an invasion of Rafah. The warnings from the U.S., along with recent decisions by three European countries to recognize a Palestinian state and calls for arrest warrants for Israeli and Hamas leaders, reflect a shifting global sentiment towards the conflict.

The humanitarian crisis in Gaza is dire, with hundreds of thousands of Palestinians seeking refuge from the violence. The ICJ's decision aims to address this crisis by pushing for an immediate halt to military operations. This action aligns with the court's broader mandate to uphold international law and protect human rights. The criticism from the international community, including from within Israel, indicates a growing recognition of the need for a more humane and just approach to the conflict.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faces substantial pressure domestically to bring an end to the war. The conflict, which began with a deadly incursion by Hamas militants into Israel, has led to significant civilian casualties and the taking of hostages. The ongoing demonstrations in Israel, with thousands calling for a resolution to the hostage situation, highlight the public's desire for peace and stability. The ICJ's ruling adds another layer of pressure on the Israeli government to consider alternative approaches to the conflict.

While the ICJ has broad powers to issue orders, the lack of enforcement mechanisms is a significant limitation. This is evident in other cases on the court's docket, such as Russia's continued disregard for a 2022 order to halt its invasion of Ukraine. Despite this, the ICJ's rulings carry significant symbolic weight and serve as a reminder of the international community's expectations and norms.

Israel's response to the ICJ's order, as indicated by government spokesperson Avi Hyman, suggests that compliance is unlikely. However, the court's decision is a clear statement of the international community's stance on the conflict. It emphasizes the importance of adhering to international law and protecting civilian lives, even in the face of complex and protracted conflicts.

The ICJ's action is commendable not only for its immediate implications but also for its broader impact on international relations and the enforcement of human rights. By addressing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and calling for an end to military operations, the court reinforces the principles of justice and peace. This decision, while challenging to enforce, sets a precedent and serves as a powerful reminder of the need for accountability and the protection of human rights in conflicts around the world.

UK election drive

THREE days in, and this general election is already shaping up to be one of the most boring in history. I thought 2017 was bad but at least it featured Sexy Jezza trying to take us back to the 1970s while useful idiots banged their drums for the old pinko at Glastonbury. Remember the 100,000 metropolitan liberals who'd paid £243 each standing in a field, chanting, "Oh Jeremy Corbyn!" while live streaming it on their smartphones?

While I am sure we can look forward to another "nothing has changed" moment over the next six weeks, there is something depressingly Maybotic about the patter of the campaign so far. Rishi Sunak's schtick – that the Tories might be rubbish, but Labour will be even worse – is already rolling on repeat as the Prime Minister tours the factories of the UK in his high-vis jacket.

Sir Keir Starmer, meanwhile, is set to spend the next 40 days and 40 nights telling us that all we need is "change" and an "end to the chaos" after "14 years of Tory rule". It's like Brown's "global financial crisis" and Cameron's "long-term economic plan" all over again. I appreciate that the best way to worm into the electorate's ear is to repeat your core message ad nauseam, but have party strategists not considered it might be rather nauseating for the voter?

Having said that, in a bore-off between Sunak and Starmer, my money's on the former Winchester head boy over the nasal knight. At least we know what we get with Sunak – a class swot who got his homework in on time. It's not a charismatic offering, I grant you. It's not Johnson and it's nowhere near Farage. But with Reform's honorary president out of the picture, Sunak is the only Conservative on the slate. And he's competent, there's no doubt about that. He works hard. And he can't stand losing. As a former investment banker, he's got that competitive edge. Starmer, by comparison, does not look match fit. Indeed, as Peter Mandelson rather cruelly pointed out, he's only a heavyweight as far as the scales are concerned. This political punch-up isn't going to be anywhere near as exciting as Fury vs Usyk but so far Starmer is failing to shine in the spotlight. If Sunak truly takes the gloves off, he could do some significant damage to Labour's poll lead.

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White House state dinner that could help Biden's election chances

Joyce. M. Davis

THIS week's US-Kenya summit was about many things. It was about strengthening a burgeoning trade relationship in multiple areas, including technology, energy and artificial intelligence. It also afforded the opportunity to highlight a new role for Nairobi as a military partner for Washington.

But high on the list — hardly a surprise in a presidential election year — is that the visit also had much to do with US politics. President William Ruto and his wife, first lady Rachel Ruto, were treated with all the pomp and circumstance befitting their stature on the global stage, as cameras rolled in the United States and the images were beamed around the world. And as President Joe Biden seeks to strengthen ties with Black voters to shore up his re-election bid, it did not hurt one bit to welcome the African leader and his wife for an official state visit to the White House.

A glittering banquet late Thursday was lent a bit of extra shine by the presence of former President Barack Obama — years out of office but still an immensely popular figure with Black voters — whose father was Kenyan. Africa matters to many Black Americans, a continent most will never have visited, but to which they have ancestral and emotional ties. Scenes of Biden and Ruto shaking hands and smiling with their wives at their sides are bound to resonate with Black voters, a base Biden desperately needs to turn out in force to support him at the ballot box in November.

There were formal greetings with national anthems and military salutes, as well as a press conference at the White House. The elegant state dinner befitting a top global ally was the icing on the cake. All of that can only help Biden's standing with people in the east African country and Africa as a whole, as well as bolstering his ratings with Black Americans. Ruto is only the sixth head of state to enjoy a state visit with Biden, and the high-profile visit sent a strong message about Kenya's importance to the United States at home and abroad.

But there is even more at stake for American interests than photo-ops to boost popularity polls. America needs Kenya, and vice versa. First, the US-Kenya alliance is more than 60 years old. It has stood the test of time, including the violent election of 2007 when an estimated 1,200 Kenyans died. At that time, Ruto and the United States were on opposite sides. The International Criminal Court charged Ruto with murder, forced deportation and persecution. The United States supported the investigation, standing with those charging Ruto. The case against the future Kenyan leader — and allegations against the sitting President Uhuru Kenyatta — collapsed after a 13-year investigation. Both men, who at the time were political adversaries, settled their differences, and Ruto ran as Kenyatta's deputy in the 2013 presidential elections. Kenyans elected Ruto as

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Both nations have deepening ties with Africa. China has been funding major infrastructure projects across the continent, while Russia is also making fresh inroads by capitalizing on growing anti-Western sentiment in some parts of the continent to profit from sales of weapons and natural resources.

president in 2022. Today, at a time of turmoil and instability in various parts of the African continent, Kenya is an oasis of relative calm and stability. In fact, Ruto has aptly described Kenya as the "anchor" of East and Central Africa.

Kenya is now one of America's strongest and most dependable allies on the African continent. And America needs stable African allies as China and Russia are both on the hunt for the continent's vital minerals and other natural resources. Both nations have deepening ties with Africa. China has been funding major infrastructure projects across the continent, while Russia is also making fresh inroads by capitalizing on growing anti-Western sentiment in some parts of the continent to profit from sales of weapons and natural resources.

Against that backdrop, Ruto's state visit is a welcome event for both Nairobi and Washington. To give US relations with Africa the kind of boost that is really needed, however, Biden should have visited the continent, as he promised to do long ago. And he should have fulfilled his promise to prioritize relations with Africa far sooner than the final year of his first term as president.

It would have gone a long way to slowing the progress America's adversaries are making politically and economically. It is one thing to send first lady Jill Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris — both of whom traveled to Africa last year — to wave the flag for America. But it is another matter entirely for an American president to set foot onto African soil

in person. Strong relations with Kenya benefit American business and security interests. Kenya not only has a young, educated population with disposable income to purchase American products, but also a leader who wants to be a player on the world stage. Ruto has agreed to send Kenyan troops into Haiti to deal with the chaos gangs have wrought to the nation so close to American shores. In doing so, he is netting desperately needed international cash to help prop up Kenya's economy and fill government coffers with hard currency.

And Ruto's visit to the United States will have another positive impact. It will boost economic ties with the United States, benefiting both American and Kenyan businesses. Keep in mind Kenya has what is called the "Silicon Savannah" with highly trained engineers and a tech-savvy workforce. Over 90% of its energy comes from renewable sources, and the United States is Kenya's largest export market.

None of this means Kenya is severing political or economic ties with Russia or China. It makes sense for Kenya to keep friendly relations with both countries, but American businesses should not fear their economic competition. America has so much more to offer.

Ruto's entourage met with leaders of Coca-Cola and Delta Airlines, which reportedly is interested in acquiring a stake in Kenya's flagship carrier Kenya Airways. And even more economic news is likely to result in the days and weeks following the state visit.

The truth is, both Biden and Ruto will benefit from this week's meetings in Washington. Ruto departs the United States with the new status of "major non-NATO ally" strengthening his administration and providing valuable protection for his country. He is also receiving assurance that the vital African Growth and Opportunity Act, providing African states with duty-free status in the United States, will be extended.

Unfortunately, the one thing that is likely most pressing on Ruto's mind is something the United States is unable to provide — an antidote to the devastating effects of climate change on the African continent. In just the past few weeks, more than 250 people have died in the worst flooding in Kenya in more than a decade and signs are that it will only get worse. As much as Biden might like to stop the rains and reverse global warming, the power to do so is not within any president's purview. However, he can help America to become a more visible presence on African matters.

Ruto's visit provided an opportunity for Biden to personally and publicly reconnect to Africa, reset with African American voters — and vow to do better. Biden has promised to visit the continent, which he now says he'll do next year. He'll have the opportunity to do so if US voters — including Black Americans — return him to office.

CNN

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CNN

A ludicrous rule hands Reeves a free pass to spend recklessly

Kate Andrews

LET'S say, hypothetically, it's the Labour Party forming the next government in six weeks' time. What will Sir Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves be inheriting from the Tories? More bad than good, I'd say. And these are not problems that a simple change of government can turn around.

A record-high NHS waiting list, 5.6 million Britons on out-of-work benefits: this is the legacy of the lockdowns that the Tories ushered in and Labour supported every step of the way. Addressing these crises will require a willingness to embrace the sorts of radical reform that, again, no party has wanted to admit is needed. Saying such things out loud would mean action would have to be taken. That would use up a lot of political capital, and require some unpopular decisions, too.

But the inheritance won't be all bad. Plenty of economic indicators suggest that Britain is set for some better times. By no means should we expect to see booming economic growth or skyrocketing living standards. That would require politicians to do things like, goodness forbid, making it easier to build homes. Labour says it wants to do this, but has not explained convincingly how it will make it happen. Still, there is good reason to think people will have noticed the improvements: inflation will have returned to around its target for a substantial period of time, boosting confidence that the crisis of prices is over. Wages should continue to outpace inflation. The latest data shows pay growth, adjusted for inflation, at 1.7pc — its highest in two years.

This remains the big conundrum of this summer election: while some metrics may have worsened, many of the economic ones might have improved, including the ones that address the fundamental question of an election: are you feeling better off? There is a very real chance that the Tories are not only going to hand the keys to No 10 over to Labour, but a quietly improving economy, too. This won't solve anywhere near all the problems Starmer will inevitably face, but it will make his political landing a little bit softer, and those early decisions ever so slightly easier.

But this is by no means the greatest gift the Tories would be handing over to Labour. The Treasury has been subject to a very loose fiscal rule: that debt must be falling as a percentage of GDP on a five-year rolling basis. This has never been a secret, but it has also escaped serious scrutiny.

This rule may soon tie new hands — but is it actually constricting spending? When Jeremy Hunt was appointed Chancellor by Liz Truss, he had one job: to restore the fiscal credibility that had been lost almost overnight by the then prime minister. Hunt did so by reversing almost all of Truss's so-called mini-Budget. Markets responded positively.

By the time Rishi Sunak entered Downing Street, with Hunt by his side, gilt yields and market expectations for rate peaks had

both settled. The pair became a symbol (for the markets, anyway) of renewed stability — and this presented an opportunity. From time to time it's noted just how relaxed the fiscal rule is, usually around fiscal statements when we are reminded that the chancellor's spending plans all seem to rely on major spending cuts in (another) five years' time.

In his last Budget, for example, Hunt was able to make the sums add up, including another 2p off employee National Insurance, based on the idea that in five years he would unfreeze fuel duty. Technically, his numbers added up and he was making good on his fiscal rule to get debt falling in the medium term: but only on the assumption that such a tough political decision would actually be made in five years' time. Does anyone think this will really happen? Of course not. But that's no trouble for the Treasury. Thanks to the rolling aspect of the fiscal rule, the spending cuts (or tax hikes, or whatever is promised to reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio) can be pushed back, year after year, just so long as at the end of this hypothetical five-year spending period, the rule is satisfied.

It was an odd move indeed when the Government made one of its five pledges to "get debt falling". This was never going to be delivered: with the leeway that the fiscal rule allows for, public sector net debt just keeps increasing. Despite making good on the fiscal rule, debt figures soar under current forecasts, from £2.5 trillion by the end of this year to more than £3 trillion by March 2029.

This is not some terrible mistake: it is exactly what the rule is designed to do. It's just not all that often that politicians can get away with it. It's no wonder, then, that Rachel Reeves has announced that she will stick with this fiscal rule if and when she enters No 11.

It is not a burden, but a free pass she will be inheriting: to borrow more money and rack up debt while still being able to claim that debt remains a serious concern. But will this free pass last? Regardless of party, the ludicrous nature of this rule was going to be exposed at some point. Plans for discipline can only be pushed back so many times before market confidence starts to wane.

The assessments that will be made of Labour's economic agenda are likely to include how they are using this fiscal rule. It's exactly the kind of flexibility a heavy-spending government dreams about. Were Labour to push it to its limits, it could face a market backlash. But that doesn't mean the party won't try. And why wouldn't it? Starmer and Reeves have made clear the many areas they want to invest in — green infrastructure, the NHS — and yet have been very hesitant to say where the new money will come from. "Borrow to invest" is a phrase we hear plenty of times from Labour: we know it's on their minds. The Tory party's use of a rather reckless fiscal rule means it may well be on the cards, too.

The Telegraph

How battlefield motorcycles and 'turtle tanks' expose weaknesses of Russia's army

Serhii Kuzan

SINCE the beginning of the full-scale invasion, Russia has suffered heavy losses in both personnel and military materiel. The high rate of losses is forcing Moscow to send units into battle with improvised equipment, saving its limited resources until everything else has failed. It is a sign of weakness in the invading forces which can be overlooked by headlines about Russian advances on multiple fronts.

According to confirmed data from the Oryx project, as of May 1, 2024, Russia has lost 2,006 armored personnel carriers (APC) and armored fighting vehicles (AFV) destroyed, abandoned, or captured. As well as modern Russian armored personnel carriers like the BTR 80, this number includes many Soviet-era vehicles.

The situation with losses among infantry fighting vehicles is even worse. Since the beginning of the war in Russia, the Ukrainian Defence Forces have taken 3,967 units of equipment out of action, of which 2,879 were destroyed completely. Such losses could not but affect the Russian army's supply of combat vehicles. A report from the International Institute of Strategic Studies says that at the start of 2022, Russia had 14,193 armored personnel carriers and infantry fighting vehicles in service. As of May 13, 2024, 42.08% of those had been lost. Furthermore, if we take into account the greater number of losses reported by the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Russia has lost more vehicles than were held in its pre-war inventory.

In order to compensate for losses on the battlefield, the

Kremlin has drawn the large stockpiles of preserved military weapons that Russia was left with after the collapse of the Soviet Union. According to satellite imagery, Russia had about 14,865 armored combat vehicles in storage before the full-scale invasion, at least 4,813 of which are thought to have been withdrawn as of May 2024.

Even though Russia restores about 185 armored vehicles per month on top of producing new machines, these efforts are unlikely to be enough to cover their monthly losses. According to the losses confirmed by Oryx, the Russian army loses an average of 180 armored vehicles per month, which is likely to be an undercount.

It is becoming noticeable that fewer armored vehicles are being deployed to the front. Russian command has

clearly had to concentrate its most sophisticated weapons and equipment in priority areas. As a result, Russia has been forced to improvise solutions to the shortage of armored vehicles in other combat zones. Recently, the Ukrainian army has recorded an increase in the number of assault operations by enemy units on motorcycles, buggies and golf carts or unarmed Ural trucks encased in anti-drone cages. Perhaps emblematic of this is the emergence of the "turtle tank", characterized by a tortoise shell-like casing of improvised armor designed to protect against shrapnel and kamikaze drones. In a strange irony, soldiers have been forced to guard the vehicles that are supposed to protect them.

At the current rate of losses, Russia may soon exhaust

its stocks from the Soviet era, and more modern models of BMP and APC could become rarities on the battlefield in one-and-a-half to two years. This will inevitably have ramifications for Moscow's battlefield planning.

A striking example is the current offensive in the Kharkiv region, particularly near the town of Vovchansk. Russia has been forced to limit its use of armored vehicles and has even resorted to requiring light infantry and special forces to do reconnaissance and advance on foot. Only when this fails is equipment sent to support the assault forces, suppress Ukrainian firing positions, and gain further ground.

General Oleksandr Pavliuk, commander of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, said earlier this month that Russia would check the stability of Ukrainian

defense lines before choosing the most favorable direction for an attack. The country's General Staff was acting on intelligence to counter an attack in the Kharkiv region before the new offensive was launched. The current situation is proving that warnings that Russia would take advantage of the time for long-delayed US aid to arrive at the front lines to escalate their attacks.

It is in the interests of Ukraine's partners to provide military and financial assistance so Kyiv can continue reducing Moscow's capabilities to take the war to other European countries. So while the West holds back for fear of escalating the war, they are overlooking how Ukraine has proved that it can weaken Russia, reducing the risk of future escalation altogether.

The Moscow Times

Both feted and gilded, Keir and Sunak are two sides of same rotten politics

SAY this for Keir Starmer: he's lucky in his enemies. From Rebecca Long-Bailey to Liz Truss to Humza Yousaf, they flop as heavily as solo projects from lesser members of Take That. And then we come to Rishi Sunak.

It shouldn't be said of a man wealthier than the king, but: poor Rishi. The defining images of this first week of the election campaign will be of a downpour and D:Ream, and the ostensible leader of the country standing drenched on his doorstep as if, Withnail-style, he'd called an election by mistake. For his launch, Starmer kept in the warm and looked prime ministerial. What a contrast.

Or is it? Elections bring out such binaries: incumbent v insurgent, chump v champ. But these two rivals are more alike, personally and politically, than is in either's interest to let on. Both non-London southerners, they come from well-paid jobs outside Westminster, Sunak in finance and Starmer in law. SW1 is stuffed with lifers, yet these two only became MPs in 2015, gifted ultra-safe seats and swift promotion to the frontbench.

For the most part, their press hasn't been merely supportive, but positively slobbering. In 2020, the Times's Saturday magazine put dicky Rishi on its cover with a gold halo; the next year, the Sunday Times magazine presented Keir's dad-level skills at football with chuckling indulgence. You've eaten eggs that were harder than this pair's careers. Rather than wear out their Italian shoe leather trudging between doorsteps, they have been primped and counselled and focus-grouped into place. And, as every bad-tempered interview suggests, it has left them without killer political instincts.

One proof of that lies in the fact that you are reading about an election over this bank holiday week-end. Had Sunak held on a while longer, not only would the economic news have got a little better for him but Starmer would inevitably have come under more scrutiny. Why does his party have a place for the poison politics of

Aditya Chakrabortty

Natalie Elphicke but not the socialism of Diane Abbott? What happened to all the promises he made for greater fairness?

I make this point with zero sympathy for the Goldman Sachs appointee currently occupying No 10. The Tory party is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake, and the polls suggest it will finally be over in six weeks. But within a couple of years of a Starmer government, he will hit the same rapids as Sunak. And the same personal and political forces that are

Analysis by the Institute for Fiscal Studies suggests that, whichever of the two parties comes to power in July, day-to-day spending on everything outside health, defence and education is promised to fall by around £20bn.

about to do for his enemy could then quite conceivably do for him.

Consider the economy, supposedly the number one issue in this election. The big picture is that the UK has been through a shockingly bad five years, in which people are on average worse off than they were at the start of this parliament, even while taxes are reaching a record high – and still rising. In those two facts alone, you have enough explanation for why any government would get kicked out.

"Two different countries, two different futures," said Starmer this week. Not according to his own economics. He and Rachel Reeves have sworn themselves to budgetary rules that are practically identical to those currently enforced by Sunak and Jeremy Hunt – which leaves both sides on the hook for huge spending cuts.

Analysis by the Institute for Fiscal Studies suggests that, whichever of the two parties comes to power in July, day-to-day spending on everything outside health, defence and education is promised to fall by around £20bn. That is

roughly equal to shutting the entire Home Office, or closing the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. The next time a journalist interviews a Labour frontbencher they should ask which of those options they would prefer.

Reeves or Wes Streeting will probably reply that these headaches will be solved by economic growth, an explanation more readily accepted in Westminster than anywhere else.

From the IMF to the Bank of England, most institutions expect the British economy to remain very tepid over the next few years. Think Starmer can change that? Analysts in the City don't. Take this from the consultancy Capital Economics: "We are not convinced that either party will be responsible for a big increase in the economy's potential growth rate". Rather more blunt is Sharon Graham, boss of Unite: "Ripping up building regulations and tinkering in the public sector are not going to deliver serious growth – that's for the birds." The trade unionist's voice is especially vital here, since Labour is chasing the same "hero voter" as the Tories were in 2019: older Brexiters who tuned out of the reds when they got too "woke". This is why Starmer's "six pledges" last week didn't contain a single direct promise to younger voters or working people: they just aren't that central to his electoral coalition.

Cast your imagination forward to 2026, with an economy still dragging along and more big spending cuts being made to your

public services. The result is that the politics will look and feel as sullen and fractious as today. Just look at the "shit list" drawn up by Starmer's lieutenant Sue Gray of issues likely to smack her boss in the face once in No 10. They range from more bankrupt councils to collapsing universities, to teaching and medical trade unions in open mutiny over low pay.

How would the new prime minister respond to all this? The most likely answer is: as badly as our current one. The Labour leader is, if anything, even more technocratic than Sunak and has surrounded himself with others of like mind. Gray is an ex-civil servant; Ravinder Athwal, writing the party's manifesto, is an ex-civil servant; and, as director of public prosecutions, Starmer was himself a civil servant. He comes to politics without a clear idea of what he wants to do or how to do it. As Karl Pike at Queen Mary University of London writes in his new book, Getting Over New Labour: The Party After Blair and Brown: "If Starmerism is associated with anything ... it is with a leader still making up his own mind." Except in power you no longer get to do that; the Treasury and the Bank of England make up your mind for you.

This summer marks the 17th since the collapse of Northern Rock, the start of the banking crisis and what should have been the beginning of the end of Britain's ruined economic and political model. Yet we enter our fifth general election since then with the same old conjuring tricks and half-hearted flourishes that have dominated politics my entire adult life. A pledge card from a Labour leader. An assurance of greater austerity. The old mix of free markets and strong state, giveaways for financiers and crackdowns on dissenters that has been the hallmark of British government since Thatcher. The one great novelty this time is the sight of a prime minister whose weakness is being mercilessly exposed by a rival who himself has many of the same frailties and flaws.

The Guardian

Thailand moves toward ratifying UN convention

Tommy Walker

When in force, the UN treaty on protection is expected to reduce the number of "enforced disappearances," rights advocates say. A mechanism will be in place for requests to protect individuals at risk to be sent to the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearance, which is the supervisory authority of the convention.

"One immediate change is that relatives, legal representatives, or any other person having a legitimate interest in the potential victims of enforced disappearance will be equipped with more tools to seek the truth. The committee can urgently request state parties like Thailand to take measures to ensure that a disappeared person, including dissidents and political refugees, is located and protected, taking into account the urgency of the situation," Sanhawan said. Phil Robertson, director of Asia Human Rights and Labour Advocates (AHRLA), said he hopes the Thai government works to improve conditions for dissidents and critics.

"One hopes that this ratification will see Thailand turn the corner and end such disappearances once and for all, but it will require real political commitment to stop the culture of intimidation and impunity which makes disappearing critics and rivals so easy," he told VOA. Robertson said the treaty should be retroactive so dozens of unsolved cases can be re-examined.

"If they are serious about this issue, the Thai authorities would systematically reopen and investigate those cases, but there is no indication they are preparing to do so. For the families of the dozens of victims of enforced disappearance vainly waiting for closure and accountability, this ratification won't mean much since it's not retroactive," Robertson said. One such case has reached a 20th anniversary. Somchai Neelapaijit, a prominent Thai human rights lawyer, disappeared in Bangkok in 2004.

Thailand announced last year it was seeking a seat on the UN Human Rights Council and was preparing for the September vote at the UN General Assembly that will determine which

nations hold seats for the 2025-27 term. Bangkok now has boosted its chances to secure a UN seat, Robertson says. "Thailand needed something to show for its campaign to be elected to the UN Human Rights Council in September, so ratifying this convention became the easiest pledge they could make."

But for a country that has seen military coups and opposition crackdowns in recent years, Thailand's human rights record remains a concern. The crackdown on dissidents stemming from the 2020 anti-government and monarchy reform protests has seen nearly 2,000 people prosecuted for expressing opinions and political views. This includes 272 people facing lese-majeste charges, which prohibits criticism of Thailand's monarchy. Under Article 112 of Thailand's Criminal Code, each charge can warrant a maximum 15-year prison sentence.

Human rights advocates have expressed concern that some political activists have been refused bail and remain in custody in pretrial detention. Currently 27 detainees are being held under those conditions, according to Thai Lawyers for Human Rights. Earlier in May, political activist Netiporn Sanesangkham, also known as "Bung," died of cardiac arrest while in custody following a hunger strike. She was facing lese-majeste charges and her bail had been revoked.

"Thailand does not deserve a seat on the UN Human Rights Council if it continues to imprison people for speaking the truth to power."

Akarachai Chaimaneekarakate, advocacy lead at Thai Lawyers for Human Rights, told VOA. Sanhawan, of the ICJ, said that while political activists languish in Thai prisons, questions over human rights practices hang over the country.

"The allegations of rights violations that continually haunt Thailand should be addressed, including the alleged misuse of the judicial process against political dissidents based on non-human rights compliance laws which have been consistently criticized by UN bodies for a long time."

VOA

Maldives faces existential threat from a climate crisis it did little to create

Mohamed Muizzu

FOR the Maldives, the existential threat of the climate crisis, particularly sea level rise, has been a reality we have grappled with for decades. In 1989, recognising the urgency of our situation, with our islands standing just one metre above sea level, we brought this issue to the global stage for the first time.

This early recognition of our vulnerability sparked a national transformation as we embarked on proactive climate resilience and adaptation measures. Thirty-five years later, has the rest of the world truly been listening? If you look at how the world's reaction to the climate crisis is funded, the answer is clearly "no".

For decades, Small Island Developing States (Sids) like the Maldives have been bearing the brunt of global warming with minimal support. The Maldives is liable for just 0.003% of global emissions, but is one of the first countries to endure the existential consequences of the climate crisis. Wealthier nations have a moral responsibility to communities like ours. Yet Sids are given only about 14% of the finance that the least developed countries receive.

The problem is that the current global financial architecture is outdated and not fit for purpose: its use of legacy metrics such as gross national income (GNI) and gross domestic product (GDP) skews our economic reality, painting Sids as wealthier than we are, barring us from critical funding opportunities. And, thanks to the Maldives' healthy tourism industry, we are ranked as an emerging economy

and therefore shut out from the cheaper financing set aside for the lowest income countries.

These institutions are failing to account for the existential threat that the climate crisis poses to our nation. The islands of the Maldives are spread over 90,000 sq km (35,000 sq miles). We are 99% water and 1% land – no income metric can capture that. Unless we urgently reassess how funding is delivered and interest rates are calculated, and what projects are deemed worthy of climate resilience funding, millions of people living across Sids risk losing their homes. Behind these statistics are 65 million people living on land on which the impacts of climate change are clearly visible. We are seeing average temperatures in the Maldives rising, while storms are becoming more frequent and fiercer than ever. Recently the "feels-like" temperature, which can be attributed to factors such as reduced cooling winds and heightened humidity, soared to a staggering 46C.

The other core issue is what can be funded. The world often thinks of Sids as simply small idyllic islands, as if they were built solely for foreign visitors. In fact, Malé, our capital city, is roughly twice the size of New York's Central Park and is one of the most densely populated capitals in the world. This is why we constructed Hulhumalé, a reclaimed island in the middle of the Indian Ocean, physically raised two metres above sea level, with many inherent fea-

tures of climate resilience, such as buffer zones placed between the island and the reef, designed to protect the coast from severe waves. It was a lifeline, a blueprint for survival that has since evolved into a thriving urban centre. Similarly, our upcoming project, Ras Malé, aims to be the Indian Ocean's first eco city, raised three metres above sea level. This is true climate adaptation if ever I saw it. However, sustainable construction must coexist with environmental stewardship, a responsibility we take seriously. We recently paused work on crucial development projects due to severe coral bleaching brought on by global heating. Yet because projects like Ras Malé are classed as infrastructure work in the eyes of some climate financiers and multilateral banks, climate funding for such projects – running from the millions to billions of dollars – is not forthcoming.

The international community must understand that we rely on external financing to prepare for and recover from the climate crisis that its overconsumption has caused. With adequate international funding, we could advance critical climate initiatives. Projects that connect and raise islands through bridges or causeways, along with expanded urbanisation, will enhance access to essential services like education and health, and help create climate-resilient communities ready for the future. Moreover, investments in renewable energy sources like solar will

ensure the Maldives continues along its journey through the energy transition. But only if the world's financiers will support them.

That is why, at the UN's upcoming fourth International Conference on Sids for the most climate-vulnerable nations, we will be calling for the global adoption of a multidimensional vulnerability index (MVI), a new measure that reflects Sids' inherent vulnerabilities. The MVI is a vital tool that can help small islands access the resources we urgently need. It is designed to provide a true reflection of our challenges by considering factors beyond mere economic output and acknowledging our unsustainable structural vulnerabilities. If it is adopted, we can start to rethink the criteria used to decide how projects are funded and spark a wave of sustainable development across our nations. Multilateral institutions, such as the World Bank and sovereign governments alike, must be willing to embrace this challenge. The unwillingness to solve this problem threatens every one of those 65 million Sids inhabitants.

When Sids nations convene in Antigua at the end of May, we will confront a stark reality: though responsible for a minuscule fraction of global emissions, we bear the brunt of their consequences. Yet our demands will not be radical. We simply ask the world to step into our shoes and realise how climate financing can be reformed for the better, to support true resilience. We seek not charity but equity and justice, in addressing a crisis we did little to create.

Youths hold the key to a better Sino-US future

Steve Farr

THIS year marks the 45th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the United States. Celebrating this occasion, Chinese and US leaders sent messages to the 14th China-US Tourism Leadership Summit held in Xi'an, Shaanxi province. Leadership summits such as these, especially when bilateral ties are strained or facing severe challenges, provide much needed opportunities for people-to-people exchanges, which are vital to reducing misunderstanding.

Misunderstanding, misperception and even fear are often based upon unknowns. With our world becoming more complex and complicated by the day, we need to eliminate those unknowns with global understanding and friendship now more than ever before. Helping to address this challenge, the recent steps taken by China could help clear the unknowns.

It is estimated that only 2 percent of the world's population has traveled beyond their countries' borders. At the same time, an increasing number of people throughout the world are realizing that we are stronger together. By collectively leveraging our knowledge and resources through better

collaboration, we can all play an important role in solving global problems ranging from climate change and poverty to health issues.

Addressing these global challenges, President Xi Jinping's emphasis on "people-to-people diplomacy" with the aim of promoting friendship between people and strengthening relationships among countries is timely. Further promoting the value of this diplomacy, the Chinese leader's recent announcement of a new visa-free travel policy for citizens of a dozen or so countries has been met with enthusiasm. In addition, his invitation to 50,000 youths from the US to visit China in the next five years is a welcome move which will further facilitate and promote international understanding and friendship.

For people visiting China as tourists or on business, the new visa-free policy is a "win-win". When visiting China, tourists can explore an incredible country characterized by opportunities and beauty, which ranges from the warmth of the Chinese people to natural scenic sites. In Guangzhou, for example, tourists can experi-

ence the "City of Flowers", soak in Cantonese culture, and marvel at the city's architecture, paintings and porcelain, and enjoy its operas, music and food.

Most foreigners visiting China on business mention the Canton Fair, which is famous for providing one of the world's best displays of merchandise. Business travelers also realize China offers unprecedented foreign investment opportunities and a welcoming business environment. The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area is regarded as one of the most educated, talented and capital rich regions in the world. No wonder Guangzhou is the top destination for foreign investors including Fortune Global 500 companies in China.

The fact that today's students are tomorrow's world leaders makes student exchange programs all the more important. Having personally witnessed the positive impact of student exchange programs in Guangzhou, I have seen young minds develop different perspectives through greater global understanding and appreciation. These first-hand experiences unfortunately cannot be learned from a book or in a classroom.

I call student and other types of exchange programs "force multipliers". Domestic and foreign participants meet each other face-to-face, learn from one another and form lasting bonds based on mutual respect and empathy. These positive experiences and bonds are then exponentially multiplied as they are shared with family, friends and communities.

Do we have differences? Of course. To think otherwise would be naive. A vast majority of these differences are further compounded by miscommunication. People from different cultures and speaking different languages think and approach challenges differently. And "people-to-people diplomacy" and their interpersonal relations help overcome the challenges of miscommunication.

Differences can be navigated and settled. The best way to resolve differences is often through mutual understanding. Rather than focusing on the differences, let us learn from one another and peacefully settle our differences. No matter which country we belong to, we all share and love the same planet. Working together, we can build a better tomorrow for our children and that is what matters the most.

The China Daily

How Patrushev's Paranoia consumed the Kremlin

Ilya Matveev

WHILE President Vladimir Putin's recent inauguration was not followed by a major reshuffle in the Kremlin, there were some important personnel changes. Nikolai Patrushev was moved from head of the Security Council to the much narrower role of presidential aide, which looks like a demotion for a man once considered the most powerful security official in Russia. What should be made of his appointment?

Within the Russian political system, different people in Putin's entourage and in the Kremlin more broadly play different roles. Some are technocrats with highly specialized knowledge. Belousov's experience as a skilled economic manager will equip him to oversee Russia's enormous military spending, which officially amounts to 6.7% of GDP.

Others, like Shoigu, bank on their absolute loyalty to Putin. As a political heavyweight, he could not have been disposed of easily, so he was moved to another important role. Others are ideologues who articulate a coherent worldview that serves both as a blueprint for propaganda and as a basis for Putin's thinking. One such person is Yuri Kovalchuk, a media manager and longtime friend of Putin's who reportedly had his ear in the months leading up to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Patrushev is another.

A former KGB officer, Patrushev served as director of the FSB from 1999 to 2008, and as head of the Security Council from 2008 to 2024. Before 2014, his infrequent press interviews resembled bureaucratic reports on the various activities of the Security Council. His anti-Western rhetoric at this time was quite moderate and limited to criticism of NATO expansion. However, since 2014, his interviews have become more frequent and

their tone (as well as content) has changed dramatically.

Patrushev began to paint a picture of the West as Russia's eternal enemy, bent on its total destruction, saying they "would prefer Russia not to exist at all". He saw the West as being behind everything from global terrorism to the so-called color revolutions in countries neighboring Russia. As the years passed, he went further and further down the conspiracy rabbit hole, expressing support for the golden billion theory and suspecting the US of having engineered the Covid-19 pandemic.

The change in Patrushev's rhetoric reflects Russia's situation after 2014. It is unlikely that his conspiratorial views developed suddenly. Rather, he finally felt that it was possible at that time to express them publicly. Before then, imperial nationalism with a paranoid, conspiracy streak was present in the Kremlin, but not dominant. It had not yet fully gripped Putin.

Within the political system, Patrushev's Security Council was an important but not pre-eminent institution, sharing influence with the "civilian" part of the presidential administration as well as the government and Putin's oligarchic entourage. After 2014, however, conspiracy nationalism took center stage, and the Security Council rose to become the most influential political institution in Russia. Putin himself began to express views similar to Patrushev's.

In this context, does Patrushev's demotion mean that the "paranoid style" of Russian politics is finally giving way to something new? I believe the opposite is the case. In the years before and after the invasion of Ukraine, Putin fully assimilated Patrushev's thinking into his own rhetoric. His recent speeches on

the "centuries-old Russophobia of Western elites" are indistinguishable from Patrushev's interviews. In effect, there is no need to keep Patrushev as the ideologue-in-chief, as that was a role Putin assumed himself.

During his 24 years in power, Putin has fulfilled many functions. He acted as an arbiter in intra-elite conflicts, created a gigantic pyramid of patronage and material rewards, and used PR stunts to bolster the regime's legitimacy. He interacted with countless heads of state, and commanded Russian troops in wars from Africa and the Middle East to Europe and the Caucasus.

Now, however, all of these activities are subordinated to Putin's all-encompassing ideology complete with a sense of Russia's historical mission and an image of the West as Russia's eternal enemy and a nefarious force behind the world's many ills. This grand ideological vision shapes Putin's entire thinking.

For Patrushev himself, however, Putin may have reserved a special role, as his new and ridiculous title – a presidential aide for shipbuilding – indirectly suggests. Behind this façade, there might be a task of interacting with the Western national security establishment (something Patrushev has done before). Putin would trust Patrushev to do this job precisely because of their shared ideological thinking.

Furthermore, Patrushev remains in Russian politics as the head of a family clan. His son Dmitry has assumed the position of deputy prime minister – the highest position yet occupied by a child of Putin's close associate. Since the Kremlin's grand ideological vision requires a new nobility to implement it, the conspiracists may remain in charge of the Kremlin long after Putin and Patrushev are gone.



UAE's assurance to invest \$10b encouraging: Zahid

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President of Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister, Mian Zahid Hussain has said that assurance of the United Arab Emirates' (UAE) to invest ten billion dollars in Pakistan is encouraging.

In a statement issued on Saturday, he said that the UAE President Sheikh Muhammad bin Zayed Al Nahyan has made this assurance during a special meeting with Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that international institutions and friendly countries were restoring confidence in Pakistan, which was likely to bring about a pleasant change in the country's situation soon.

He said that after addressing the round table

session on the partnership between Pakistani IT companies and the United Arab Emirates, the Prime Minister met with the IT experts and professionals.

He met with the Director General of the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development, during which the promotion of cooperation between Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates was discussed.

The Prime Minister also discussed cooperation in the political, economic, and defence sectors during the meeting with the President of the friendly country.

The Prime Minister also reiterated his commitment to promote cooperation in the fields of information technology, renewable energy and tourism.

He also expressed his determination to ensure success of investment projects in Pakistan in the fields of energy, port operations, food security, communica-

tions, minerals, banking, and financial services.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan, Defense Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif and Special Assistant Tariq Fatemi also participated in these meetings and had productive discussions with various officials.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif was trying to strengthen the brotherly and cooperative relations between Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates.

He added that Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif was trying to improve Pakistan's image and lure investment.

Due to his efforts, the countries that were annoyed by the previous government's irresponsibility have now come closer to Pakistan, he maintained.

The business leader fur-

ther said that the majority of Pakistan's population was youth, due to which there were many opportunities for development in Pakistan.

The 60% majority of our population is between 15 and 30 years old, but they were facing problems in finding employment, he observed.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that a large number of educated people were leaving the country due to lack of opportunities. This leakage of intelligence was harmful to the country's future, so it should be prevented in every possible way, he noted.

Those who leave the country do not get employment and business opportunities, which will cause the country to suffer a lot, he said and added that the best way to keep them in the country was through economic development, he said.



ISLAMABAD: GME & CBD PPL Arshad Palekar and representative of DEW Qaisar Rafique exchanging documents after signing agreement. MD & CEO PPL Imran Abbasy and DG FWO Major General Abdul Sami also present on occasion.

171 students from Bishkek arrived F.P. Report

KARACHI: A special flight operated by PIA (PK-6271) transported a total of 171 students from Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan to Jinnah International Karachi on Saturday.

The passengers were warmly received by provincial minister Sharjeel Inam Memon and Sarfaraz.

At the occasion other government and airport officials were also present.

PSX introduces new feature

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) has introduced its new Text-to-Speech feature on PSX website, specifically tailored for the blogs and articles section.

This audio enhancement aims to significantly improve accessibility and convenience for users browsing specific content available on PSX website, said a news release here on Saturday.

The Text-to-Speech functionality proves especially valuable for those individuals who prefer listening to content rather than reading.

Additionally, this service caters to those of PSX's patrons facing visual impairment, reading difficulties, or those who prefer to do multitasking and would simply want to listen to content on the go.

The audio player is embedded in the various blogs and articles available on the PSX website for a smooth listening experience. This audio feature offers customizable options such as playback speed adjustment and effortless navigation.

PSX MD and CEO Farukh H. Khan said "We are delighted to introduce the Text-to-Speech facility enhancing accessibility for all PSX website users, specifically those who access the blogs & articles section of the website.

PPL signs joint venture agreement with FWO

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) has signed a Joint Venture Agreement with Degan Exploration Works (DEW), a wholly owned subsidiary of Frontier Works Organization (FWO), to explore and develop mineral resources in the EL-207 Block located in District Chagai, Balochistan. This initiative is a key component of PPL's strategy to diversify into the mining

sector and strengthen its presence in Balochistan.

The agreement was signed by GME&CBD PPL Mr. Arshad Pakekar and Mr. Qaisar Rafique, representative of DEW, and witnessed by MD & CEO PPL, Mr. Imran Abbasy, and DG FWO Major General Abdul Sami on May 24 in Islamabad. The signing ceremony was attended by key stakeholders and company officials.

Previously, PPL had entered a Memorandum of

Understanding (MoU) with FWO to foster strategic cooperation on the EL-207 Project.

The block is believed to have significant potential for porphyry-type deposits, including copper and gold.

This agreement lays the foundation for a long-term partnership, offering strategic advantages within the mineral-rich Chagai metallogenic belt and is poised to transform the mining landscape in Balochistan.

Purchase sacrificial animals: SBP to introduce QR code payment mechanism

KARACHI (INP): The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) is likely to introduce QR code payment mechanism through Raast to facilitate the purchase of sacrificial animals during Eidul-Azha. SBP Deputy Director Ahmed Sumair revealed this while speaking at the 17th international conference titled "Mobile Commerce 2024".

"Currently we are working with 25 banks and have

selected 50 major cattle markets to enable QR code payment method there to facilitate the masses for the payments", he informed.

He highlighted the importance of this project for cattle farmers and expand financial inclusion through Raast.

"The initiative is being taken to help people and merchants to securely make transactions for the purchase of sacrificial animals,

besides helping banks to potentially tap over Rs550-600 billion cattle purchases through digital banking on the annual religious festival," Sumair stated.

He said markets had been identified in all 15 cities with SBP field offices, including Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Faisalabad and Hyderabad. "We are covering six cattle markets alone in Karachi this Eidul Azha," he added.

UAE's decision to invest 10b dollars welcomed

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President of Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister, Mian Zahid Hussain, said on Saturday that the United Arab Emirates' assurance of investing ten billion dollars in Pakistan is encouraging.

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Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that after addressing the round table session on the partnership between Pakistani IT companies and the United

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He added that Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif is trying to improve Pakistan's image and lure investment. Due to his efforts, the countries that were annoyed by the previous government's irresponsibility have now come closer to Pakistan.

Zahid further said that the majority of Pakistan's population is youth, due to which there are many opportunities for development in Pakistan.

Industry's core issue high cost of doing business: FRIA

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Ferozepur Road Industrial Association (FRIA) has asked the government to work on a fast track plan to address expansive energy issue and priority should be given to the value-added industry in this

regard.

The PIAF leader and FRIA Senior Vice Chairman Shabbaz Aslam said that industry's core issue is the high cost of doing business, which the government needed to bring down to bring the local as well as the export industry at par with global competitors. The FRIA leader urged for increasing ease of doing business, lowering cost of production, paying early refunds to solve liquidity crunch, relaxing import policy for industrial raw material, and equalizing the energy tariff across the country.

Shabbaz Aslam said Pakistan was at 147 out of 190 countries on the global ranking of doing business mainly due to bureaucratic hurdles. He said various provincial departments,

including EOBI, Social Security, Women Welfare, Environment Department were playing a negative role and treating the manufacturers and exporters like criminals. He called for giving a boost to the export sector by adopting diversified marketing techniques and extending practical support to the industry, and asked the exporters to prepare themselves for meeting the global challenges so that exports could be enhanced by fully exploiting new opportunities. He also stressed the need for adopting new technology so that Pakistan's exports may be able to cope with the emerging challenges in international arena.

Shabbaz Aslam urged the government to undertake thorough research and also brief the SMEs of the

details of such challenges. He hoped that the government would help boost country's exports, while all the macro and micro issues of the trade and commerce should also be addressed. He said that growth of economy was a must to steer the industry of worse situation and contribute to the exports of the country. He observed that the domestic industry should be allowed to grow while enjoying the right to avail opportunities against the competitors. The businessmen leader said the benefits of the GSP Plus status can only be harvested by maximum value-addition in finished products rather than exporting only raw materials, which cannot be possible without relaxation in import policies.

Inflation rate falls by 0.3%

ISLAMABAD (INP): The inflation rate continues to decrease on a weekly basis in the country, with a decrease of 0.34 percent recorded in the inflation rate during the week, after which the annualized rate of inflation on a weekly basis settled at 21.31 percent.

According to the weekly data released by the Bureau of Statistics, 18 commodities

became cheaper and 12 more expensive during the week, while the prices of 21 commodities remained stable.

According to the weekly inflation report issued by the Statistical Institute, during this week the price of garlic decreased by Rs43.46 per kg, the price of chicken by Rs20.21 per kg and a 20 kg bag of flour by

Rs88.89.

During the last one week, the price of onion has gone down by Rs1.97 per kg and eggs by Rs3.53 per dozen.

Similarly, basmati rice, red lentils, green gram beans, and tomatoes are among the items that became cheaper, while the domestic LPG cylinder price also recorded a decrease of Rs93.12.

According to the weekly report of the Institute of Statistics, the price of beef increased by Rs4.62 per kg, mutton by Rs4.47 per kg and curd by Rs1.23 per kg. While hot spices, jaggery, tea leaves and cigarettes are also among the expensive items. According to the Statistics Institute, the prices of 21 commodities, including cooking oil, electricity, petroleum products, remained stable during this week.

Onion export exceeds \$210m

KARACHI (INP): For the first time in the country's history, the export of onions from Pakistan has exceeded 210 million dollars, while by the end of this year, the said export will reach 250 million dollars, which is a record. The spokesperson of Pakistan Fruit and Vegetable Exporters Association said that for the first time in the country's history, the export of onions has reached a record level, which is the highest in the history of any product including fruits and vegetables. According to the spokesman, from July 2023 to April 2024, the export of onion from the country was recorded more than 210 million dollars, while earlier in the history of the country, there were only more exports of orange, which was 210 million dollars.

Speakers highlights Pak-Africa economic, trade ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speakers at the Africa Day ceremony highlighted the potential of economic and trade growth between Pakistan and Africa, as well as Pakistan's commitment to transforming ties into meaningful partnerships.

In this regards Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) organized a ceremony on Africa Day, said a news release here on Saturday.

Addressing a ceremony, Additional Foreign Secretary Shehryar Akbar Khan said that Africa, with its diverse cultures, vibrant traditions and spirit stands as a testament to the resilience of its people.

He said that since the launch of the Engage Africa Policy in 2019, Pakistan has successfully executed Phase-I of the policy, which involves opening of five resident Missions in Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Uganda, Djibouti, and Rwanda and up gradation of two missions to Ambassadorial level in Tanzania and Niger, and that options are being explored to enhance our engagements with Africa by opening one embassy per year.

Pakistan is committed to

deepening its ties with the African nations and transforming it into meaningful partnerships and its proof is that in the last seven months, we have processed ten MoUs on establishing bilateral political consultations with various African countries, he added.

Sudan, Nigeria, Kenya and Somalia have successfully launched social identification systems established by NADRA and that after the resumption of direct flights from Addis Ababa to Karachi by Ethiopian Airlines, discussions are underway to extend the flights operations to Lahore and Islamabad.

Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed said that there is a massive potential for growing economic and trade ties between Pakistan and African countries.

He said that prominent African national leaders in the post-colonial era had always acknowledged the overwhelming moral, diplomatic and material support their countries had received from Pakistan for ensuring their survival and growth soon after securing independence.

President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ahsan Zafar

Bakhtawari said that Pakistan's relations with Africa are characterized by mutual respect, solidarity and cooperation.

Pakistan is actively engaged in capacity-building programs, training diplomats, providing scholarships, and offering military training to African countries.

Pakistan and Africa can unlock new opportunities for trade, investment, and partnership, ultimately contributing to the socio-economic development and prosperity of both regions.

As far as the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) is concerned it is all set to develop a Sister Cities Economic nexus with the chambers of cities that have established sister city agreements with Islamabad, he added.

Islamabad has signed sister city agreements with 20 cities worldwide, including three in Africa: Rabat (Morocco), Khartoum (Sudan), and Tunis (Tunisia). We are also planning to invite all Presidents of sister city chambers of commerce and industry in August to develop cooperation mechanisms.

He went on to say that ICCI delegations recent

visits successfully explored new avenues of partnership with African nations.

I shall like to request the esteemed support of the respective Excellences to ensure the success of this initiative to bring the countries more closer for the promotion of Business to Business. People to people, and academia linkages for the benefit of all the stakeholders, he further said.

Ambassador of Morocco and Dean of African Corps Mohammad Karmouné underlined the need for close cooperation between Pakistan and the African nations to overcome to challenges of climate change which are badly impacting the economic development at global level.

He said that both the sides have to closely work to ensure food security, water management, high yield productivity, climate resilient crops to mitigate the negativity and ensure sustainable growth.

Ambassador of Algeria Brahimi Romani said that his country wants to develop strong trade and economic ties with Pakistan as both countries have good potential to cooperate with each other in many areas.

Ambassador of Mauritius Rashid Ally Soobadar said that diplomatic and economic relations between Mauritius and Pakistan were growing with each passing day and that Pakistan enjoys immense potential to become a world class tourist destination.

He suggested that a core group comprising business community leaders from Pakistan and the African States be established to chalk out the future course of action for strengthening economic ties and enhancing trade volumes for the benefit of the people of both sides.

Ambassador of the Republic of Somalia Shirwa Abdullahi Ibrahim said both Somalia and Pakistan have been developing a fruitful and close relationship.

He acknowledged that both countries continue to learn from each other's experiences in these critical areas.

Chairman Founder Group, Khalid Iqbal Malik while mentioning the benefits of investments in Pakistan said that it is high time for friendly African countries to come forward and avail the opportunity.

Chairman Pakistan Africa Friendship Association (PAFA) and Secretary General United Business Group Zafar Bakhtawari underlined the need for air connectivity with African countries, especially with Egypt and Morocco for promotion of tourism.

He also said that PAFA mulls to organize events to commemorate the national heroes of Africa countries like Nelson Mandela, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Ahmed Ben Bella, Habib Bourguiba and other.

Senior Vice President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Faad Waheed said that frequent meetings of Pakistani and African business leaders are need of the hour to achieve the cherish goal of enhancing business ties.

All the speakers highly commended the services of Zafar Bakhtawari for fostering ties between Pakistan and the African nations by declaring him a true Pakistani, working hard for the cause.

Ambassador of Palestine, and Head of Missions of Egypt Sudan, Libya and Kenya also attended the ceremony.



In brief

Hockey trials on Sunday

FAISALABAD (APP): The Divisional Sports Department would organise hockey trials at Hockey Stadium Faisalabad on Sunday evening for selection of divisional team. Divisional Officer Chaudhry Tariq Nazir said here on Saturday that the trials would commence at 4 p.m. and the selected teams would participate in Punjab Hockey Championship scheduled to be held at Lahore under the aegis of Directorate General Sports & Youth Affairs Punjab from June 4 to 6, 2024. He said that the hockey players belonging to Faisalabad division would be eligible to participate in the trials. All the players who had participated in any tournament from any department would not be eligible for these trials. The candidates however should bring their original CNICs along with its photocopy and 2 passport size photos for participating in the trials, he advised.

Two-day Sports Festival concluded

HARIPUR (APP): A two-day Sports Festival was organized at Central Prison Haripur with the assistance of the District Sports Office in Haripur and Directorate General Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa wherein the prisoners enthusiastically participated here on Saturday. On the final day, Deputy Commissioner Haripur Khan Muhammad was the chief guest on this occasion and distributing cash prizes and awards to the winning and runner-up teams. On the first day, Regional Prison Officer Muhammad Naem and Commandant of the Prison Staff Training Academy Amin Shuaib inaugurated the event as the chief guests. The festival featured a variety of games and sports, including cricket, football, badminton, volleyball, Ludo, carom board, sack races, stone lifting, and musical chairs wherein all the prisoners enthusiastically participated. Deputy Commissioner Khan Muhammad and Superintendent of the Prison Umair Khan praised the event. The chief guests expressed their gratitude to District Sports Officer and the prison staff for successfully arranging and managing the event and encouraged the organization of similar activities in the future to promote rehabilitation and healthy activities for prisoners and staff.

Rooney appointed manager

LONDON (AFP): Former England and Manchester United captain Wayne Rooney was appointed as the new manager of Championship side Plymouth on Saturday. A move to Argyle is the fourth managerial role of Rooney's coaching career, which has so far failed to live up to his stellar playing days. "Taking this role at Plymouth Argyle feels like the perfect next step in my career," said Rooney in a club statement. "This is an opportunity to be part of an exciting project. I look forward to helping to build a squad of players to play expansive football – and to entertain the Green Army." The 38-year-old was sacked after just 83 days in charge of Birmingham earlier this year. Rooney won just two of his 15 matches in charge of the Blues, which contributed to their relegation to League One. He previously had a short spell with former club DC United in Major League Soccer.



EDGBASTON: Jos Buttler bludgeoned 84 off 51 balls.

Garnacho, Mainoo seal stunning Cup win for Man United

LONDON (Reuters): Manchester United saved their best performance of a mediocre season to the very end as they upset Manchester City 2-1 in the FA Cup final on Saturday to deprive their rivals of the double.

With speculation swirling about the future of manager Erik Ten Hag, United ripped up the form book as first-half goals from teenagers Alejandro Garnacho and Kobbie Mainoo proved enough for them to lift the trophy for a 13th time.

They had to endure a second-half siege, however, as City swarmed forward and a late goal by Jeremy Doku set up a nerve-shredding finale before United could celebrate at Wembley. Premier League champions City, bidding to become the first club to win the double in successive seasons, had been on a 35-match unbeaten run in all competitions in open play.

But they were well



below their best in the first half, gifting Garnacho a 30th-minute opener before Mainoo made it 2-0.

City woke up in the second half and Erling Haaland hit the crossbar, but they had to wait until the 87th minute for substitute Doku to halve the deficit. United hung on, however, to seal the best result of Ten Hag's two-season reign and qualification for next season's Europa League.

"Incredible. Nobody believed in us. But we're a team, all together. We fought, the game of our lives," Garnacho, who

became the first Argentine to score in the Cup final since Ricky Villa for Tottenham Hotspur in 1981, said.

The build-up had been dominated by talk of the chasm between the two Manchester clubs with City having won an unprecedented fourth successive English title and United suffering their worst Premier League campaign.

FUTURE DOUBT Ten Hag's future was also clouded in uncertainty with reports that the showpiece would be his last game in charge, whatever the outcome.

Even the most optimistic United fans would have walked down Wembley Way in the sunshine fearing a drubbing, but their team turned logic on its head.

Garnacho, one of the few positives in United's season, had the game's first shot on target and his movement was a constant threat to a City defence featuring two changes with John Stones and Nathan Ake handed starts.

City looked rattled by United's energy and offered a rare gift after 30 minutes.

A long ball forward should have been easily dealt with by Josko Gvardiol but his headed back pass went over advancing keeper Stefan Ortega and Garnacho ran through to tap the ball into an empty net.

Marcus Rashford had a goal ruled out minutes later with Garnacho adjudged offside in the build-up but it was not long before United were in dreamland.

Nadal won't '100% close door' on 'magical' French Open

PARIS (AFP): Rafael Nadal said Saturday that he is likely appearing at the French Open for the final time but cautioned it was "not 100%" certain, describing the tournament where he has been champion 14 times as a "magical place".

"It's a big, big chance that this is going to be my last Roland Garros, but if I have to tell you it's 100% my last Roland Garros, sorry, but I will not, because I cannot predict what's going on. I hope you understand," said the Spaniard. Nadal, who will celebrate his 38th birthday on June 3, faces world number four Alexander Zverev in the first round in Paris on Monday.

The Spanish legend has racked up 112 wins in 115 matches at the tournament since his title-winning 2005 debut when he was just 19. He has 22 Grand Slam titles -- second only to Novak Djokovic's 24 on the all-time men's list -- but his career has been plagued by injuries. Nadal has played just four tournaments since January last year after suffering a hip injury and then a muscle tear. As a result, his ranking has slumped to 276 in the world and he comes into the French Open unseeded.

"I have been going through a long process of recovery with a very difficult injury, almost two years of suffering, but I feel better now," he added. "I have fewer limitations than three, four weeks ago, without a doubt." Nadal had to sit out the 2023 French Open through injury. The year before he won his 14th title but revealed that he could only play with daily pain-killing injections in his feet.

'Positive legacy' "In some ways I don't want to close the door 100%. I am enjoying playing tennis. I am travelling with the family. They are enjoying," added Nadal on his reluctance to call time on his career. "So give me some time. Maybe in one month and a half I say, okay, it's enough, I can't keep going, but today in some way I cannot guarantee that that's going to be the last one. But of course it's a big chance."

Nadal arrives in Paris having yet to make a clay-court quarter-final this season. In Rome, he was defeated in the second round. "I feel competitive in training. Maybe not in an official match, but when I enter the court, I feel like I can beat anyone," he said.

Nadal holds a 7-3 winning record over Zverev. Five of those victories came on clay including a semi-final triumph at Roland Garros in 2022 when the German was forced to quit with ankle ligament damage.

In Paris so far this week, Nadal has practised in front of packed courts. He hit with fellow former champion Stan Wawrinka who described Nadal as "strong as ever". Fifth-ranked Daniil Medvedev, who trained with him on Thursday, said he was happy not to face him in the first round.

"This place is magical for me. If in the bottom of my heart, I didn't have any hope to have success here and to create a beautiful thing this year, I would not be here in front of you guys," added Nadal. "So I still have the motivation and a small, at least is a small hope to play well."

And if 2024 turns out to be Nadal's French Open farewell?

"I just can say thanks to all the love I received from all the players, from the organisers, from the tournaments, from all the community of tennis and sport. "I feel very proud that probably I leave a positive legacy there."

Trials for U-23 KP Games Malakand Region Boys, Girls trials completed

SWAT (APP): Trials of male and female players of Malakand Region completed for the forthcoming U23 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Games with more than two thousand male and female players participating in 20 different disciplines.

Cricket trials were held at Makan Bagh Cricket Academy in which more than eight hundred male and female players participated, Regional Sports Officer Muhammad Tariq told media men here on Saturday.

RSO Muhammad Tariq said that they also held male and female trials at Chitral wherein a lot of talented players have been given due opportunities to come and play. He said that they held trials of male and female athletes at Girls College Chitral for female games and boys at Chitral Sports Complex inside Chitral Scout Center.

Muhammad Tariq Khan said that they held a details meeting of the District Sports Officer of the Malakand Region in which District Sports Officer from Dir Upper, Dir Lower,

Chitral Upper, Chitral Lower, Buner, Shangla, Malakand, Bajaur and Swat before conducting the trials. He said that female trials at Chitral were organized in Govt Girls Degree College Chitral wherein players from the Lower and Upper Chitral participated in different games badminton, squash, table tennis, cricket, volleyball, hockey, judo, athletics and taekwondo.

In the Swat all female games trials were held at Officer Club where Miss Sumayyah Ahmad supervised the trials along with other female coaches of Swat District with District Sports Officer Obaid Khan headed all committees. The athletics and hockey trials with cricket conducted at Grassy ground Swat while athletic and hockey trials were organized at Hockey Turf, Makan Bagh Swat and Judo, Table Tennis and Taekwondo trials were held at Female Indoor Gymnasium.

The male trials of football was held at Parade Ground, Chitral, Cricket at Town Cricket Ground

Baloch, Chitral, Badminton at Grain Depot Badminton Court Chitral Lower, Table Tennis at Government High School Baloch Chitral and Athletics at Polo Ground Chitral and Volleyball at Govt Commerce College Ground Chitral Lower.

Muhammad Tariq Khan said that a total of 1850 players' contingent would vie for the top honor in the forthcoming Inter-Region U23 Games played at Peshawar from May 28, 2024.

He said, "Directorate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has given them a task to hunt talented players, both male and female and ensure them due opportunities so that they could come and play and be part of the Games while representing Malakand Region."

He also appreciated Adviser to the Chief Minister on Sports and Youth Affairs Syed Fakhre Jehan, Secretary Sports Matiuallah Khan, Director General Sports Abdul Nasir Khan for giving free hands to extend all out facilities to the players during the trials and games.

Archer takes two wickets as England beat Pakistan

EDGBASTON (Agencies): Jofra Archer took two wickets in his first international for more than a year as England began their World Cup preparations with a 23-run victory over Pakistan in the second T20 at Edgbaston.

With Pakistan chasing 184, Archer's opening over went for 15, the pace bowler running into the shot-playing of Fakhar Zaman. But England's spinners bowled superbly and Archer later returned to the attack to have Azam Khan caught at cover.

After Fakhar holed out for 45, Iftikhar Ahmed and Imad Wasim kept Pakistan alive – Iftikhar hit a monstrous six off Reece Topley. They could not attack Archer, who at times bowled in excess of 90mph. He had Imad caught at deep point in figures of 2-28 and Pakistan's innings wilted to 160 all out.

England had earlier been lifted to 183-7 by 84 from captain Jos Buttler, who could miss part of the T20 World Cup in the Caribbean and United States to be at the birth of his third child.

That total could and should have been more, but Pakistan fought back well at the end of England's

innings to the delight of a partisan crowd in Birmingham. At one stage, England lost five wickets for 25 runs in 25 balls.

The hosts ultimately had enough and lead the series 1-0 after Wednesday's opening match was washed out. The third game is in Cardiff on Tuesday before the final match at The Oval on Thursday.

Archer shows England what they've missed

There will have been times when many, including Archer himself, will have wondered if he would ever play for England again.

The more recent lay-off for an elbow problem kept him out for a year, the latest in a string of injuries. This was his first home international since 2020 and, because of the pandemic, first in front of a crowd in England since the 2019 Ashes.

Introduced in the sixth over, Archer looked every inch his old self, with pace in the high 80s and the crowd chanting his name. Still, Fakhar clipped to mid-wicket for four and scooped for six.

On a two-paced pitch, England's threat came from spin. Moeen Ali opened the bowling and claimed 2-26

and Adil Rashid, playing for the first time since February, bowled beautifully for 1-25.

Archer was reintroduced in the 12th over and immediately had Azam miscue to Moeen. Archer's next delivery was a 91.3mph yorker to Iftikhar.

While Fakhar remained, Pakistan had hope. He twice hit massive sixes into the pavilion, but after the second, off Liam Livingstone, the left-hander skied to Harry Brook at long-on.

Even then, Iftikhar and Imad targeted spin, but Archer was a different proposition. His third over, the 15th of the innings, went for only five singles. After Iftikhar's huge blow over square leg off Topley, the right-hander hit the ball miles high to Chris Jordan, who held on to his second catch at long-on, showing one of the reasons England have included him in their squad.

With the game as good as done, Archer was recalled for his final over and Imad guided a full toss straight to deep point. England, so poor at the 50-over World Cup in the autumn, suddenly have an attack looking all the more potent.

Jhakkar wins Rustam-e-Multan division title

MULTAN (APP): Sanwal Jhakkar won the Rustam-e-Multan division wrestling (dangal) competition while Moeen Sial secured second position.

The event organized by Municipal Corporation Multan was held at hockey ground. According to details, the senior Rustam-e-Multan division match was held between Sanwal Jhakkar and Moeen Sial, where Sanwal Jhakkar defeated Moeen Sial after a tough contest.

For the third and fourth positions, Qazi Mehboob defeated Momin Arain. In

the junior Rustam-e-Multan Division match, Nasir alias Punnu Jutt defeated Kaleem Pahor and won the title.

The match for the third and fourth positions held between Rana Adil triumph over Tanveer Goga. An awards distribution ceremony was held at the end of the ceremony.

MPA Salman Naem, Chief Executive of State Bank of Pakistan Javed Iqbal Marth were the chief guests while Municipal Corporation Officer Khalid Gilani, divisional sports officer Syed

Manzar Shah, DSO Farooq Latif and others were present.

Sanwal Jhakkar received a prize of Rs 200,000 and a turban, while Moeen Sial was awarded Rs 100,000. Qazi Mehboob, who secured the third position, received Rs 30,000 and Momin Arain, who came in fourth, received Rs 20,000 rupees.

In the junior Rustam Multan Division, the winner of Junior Rustam Multan Division, Nasir Jutt Rs 75000 and Rs 50000 cash prize was given runner up Kaleem Pahor.

I'm leaving Barca with 'clear conscience': Xavi

Barcelona (AFP): Sacked Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez said Saturday he was leaving the club with a "clear conscience".

President Joan Laporta took the decision to remove the former midfield great on Friday, mere weeks after saying he was delighted Xavi was staying for the final year of his contract.

In January the coach said he would leave at the end of the season but after a surge in form in April he and Laporta announced that he would remain in charge next season.

Despite media reports saying Laporta had decided to sack Xavi over the past fortnight, the coach insisted he was looking forward to next season and had heard nothing from the board, until the axe finally dropped.

"I'm doing OK, it's not been easy, it's been a tricky time," Xavi told a news conference ahead of his final

match at the helm, against Sevilla on Sunday in La Liga. "We can be proud of the work that we've done, it's not been easy because of the situation the club is going through."

"I have a clear conscience, in general, I am happy -- we have done good work even though this year we did not achieve our objectives. Content, satisfied, grateful." Barcelona won La Liga and the Spanish Super Cup last season but this year finished without any silverware.

Real Madrid regained the Spanish title with ease and Paris Saint-Germain knocked Barcelona out in the Champions League quarter-finals. Xavi, 44, reiterated he was grateful to Laporta and the board for giving him the chance to coach the club, that he was leaving "in peace" and hoped one day to work with Barcelona again.

"They have decided this, thinking about the club and that it needed a change in direction, I can only accept it and respect it," continued the coach.

"We need a rest, and (if Barca need me again) we will evaluate the circumstances. "I hope we can return to work for and with the club of our lives." As a player Xavi made 767 appearances for the Catalan club, behind only Lionel Messi, winning eight La Liga titles and four Champions Leagues among other trophies.

Former Bayern Munich and Germany coach Hansi Flick is heavily tipped to replace Xavi. Flick, 59, has not coached since Germany sacked him in 2023 after a poor run of results. Previously Flick steered Bayern to a treble in 2020, including an 8-2 thrashing of Barcelona in the Champions League quarter-finals.

1st PNSC Inter-Provincial Women's Softball C'ship starts May 30

KARACHI (APP): First PNSC Inter-Provincial Women's Softball Championship will be played at the Football Stadium KPT Sports complex, Karachi, from May 30th to June 1st 2024.

Teams from Punjab, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and host Sindh will participate in the championship.

Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC) is the title sponsor of the championship and Combaxx Sports is co-sponsors in collaboration with Palmolive, Dr Essa Lab, KPT and others. Sindh Softball Association has been given the hosting of the championship.

While addressing the meeting held to finalize the arrangements for the event, President of the Softball

Federation of Pakistan Asif Azeem said that in October this year, Pakistan has to participate in the 4th Asian Women's Softball Championship to be played in Taiwan, in which the age limit for participation by Softball Asia has been set from 18 to 28 years.

The PNSC Inter-Provincial Softball Championship is an excellent platform for the women players of the four provinces in which they can become a part of the national team camp by showing outstanding performance, especially the students of the colleges and universities participating in the teams of the provinces can get the full opportunity from this event to make it to the national team.

Asif Azeem also said that the sponsorship of the

softball game from the private sector is welcome, and we are grateful to PNSC, the title sponsor of the event, Combaxx Sports CEO Omar Saeed, Palmolive, KPT, the event's venue partner, and Healthcare Partner Dr. Essa Lab for their cooperation.

The chairman of the organizing committee of the championship, Dr Farhan Essa, said that providing an ideal environment to the players in the sports field is our priority. A refresher course will also be conducted during the championship. The Federation's Qualified Coaches Unit will educate participating players, umpires, coaches and technical officials on the new rules and regulations of the game of softball, he concluded.



In brief

Girl dies, 3 injured in Rawalpindi road mishap

RAWALPINDI (INP): A young girl died while three people were injured when over speeding car driven by female driver ran over pedestrians here on Saturday. According to details, a reckless driven car ran crushed the pedestrian crossing road in Chuhar Chowk area of Rawalpindi. As a result of accident, a young girl died on the spot while three others sustained injuries. The body and injured were shifted to hospital for medico-legal formalities. The police impounded the car and arrested the female driver who was being investigated after registering a case against her.

AIOU commences final exams

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) will commence the examination of Middle Tech program scheduled from June 8 to 14 and semester was offered in autumn 2023. The students have already been informed through mobile SMS, said a press release. It is pertinent to mention here that AIOU had introduced Middle Tech Program under Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) in collaboration with JICA and Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training. Many students from the far flung and remote areas took admission into this program. The program was intended to help those students who could not attend a school or dropped out of school due to any reason and are willing to pursue education. Students enrolled in this program have completed their education in a relatively short time.

2 Cattle thieves arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested two cattle thieves in the jurisdiction of Race Course police station here on Saturday. Police have also recovered stolen cattle and amounting Rs 23,000 from their possession. The arrested thieves were identified as Asif and Bilal. Police have registered separate cases against both of them and further investigation has been started. The SP Pothohar stated that the suspects would face charges in theft cases and assured that all legal procedures will be followed to ensure they will be punished. He emphasized that protecting the life and property of citizens is a top priority, and all available resources are being utilized. Similarly, Police have arrested motorcycle lifter and recovered four stolen motorcycles from their possession. Bani police have registered case and started investigation.

Poet Meeraji remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): Renowned Urdu language poet Meeraji was remembered on the occasion of his birth anniversary on Saturday. Born on May 25, 1912 in a Kashmiri family of Gujranwala his real name was Mohammed Sanaulah Dar. He passed his childhood days in Lahore and he began composing poetry when he was at school. Later, he adopted his pen name Meeraji. Though brought up in affluent surroundings, Meeraji left his home and family and chose to lead the life of a homeless wanderer, mostly staying with his friends and making a living by selling his songs. Meeraji is considered to be one of the pioneers of symbolism in Urdu poetry, and especially introducing free verse. Along with Noon Meem Rashid, he was a leading poet of the Halqa-e Arbab-e Zauq, which broke away from the classic convention of Radeef and Qafia and explored the rich resources of blank verse and free verse.



ISLAMABAD: Children enjoy swing at G 7 Park in the Federal Capital. —APP Photo

Rubina highlights official number 8171 for stipend collection

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson of the Benazir Income Support Programme, Mrs. Rubina Khalid, has stated that 8171 is the official number of the Benazir Income Support Programme.

She urges beneficiaries to visit the designated payment centers to collect their quarterly stipends and warns against trusting any number other than 8171, as other numbers are likely fraudulent and used to deceive innocent people.

Mrs. Rubina Khalid expressed these views today while speaking to women during her visit to the Benazir Income Support Program payment centers in Peshawar.

Mrs. Rubina Khalid made a clear announcement that the total amount of the quar-

terly tranche issued under Benazir Kafalaat is Rs. 10,500. She advised deserving women to count and receive their full amount and to request a bank receipt. In case of any deduction of the stipend or abuse by the staff, she urged beneficiaries to immediately file a complaint with the Benazir Income Support Programme helpline at 080026477.

During her visit, Chairperson Rubina Khalid inspected the payment centers established at Tamash Stadium and the UC20 office in Peshawar. The objective was to review the payment disbursement process to deserving women and the necessary arrangements and facilities provided to them.

Later, Mrs. Rubina Khalid also visited the Benazir Income Support

Programme office in Peshawar. She instructed the staff to prioritize payments to elderly women and those with young children.

She further emphasized that deserving women should be informed about their amount while issuing tokens. She stressed the importance of maintaining cleanliness in the office and improving arrangements for deserving women. She insisted that women be treated with respect and courtesy, warning that any misbehavior will not be tolerated.

Addressing the staff, Mrs. Rubina Khalid urged them to perform their duties honestly. She directed the concerned officers to display clear written instructions and banners to guide the beneficiaries and the general public, ensuring they do not face any difficulties.

IRSA releases 334,500 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Saturday released 334,500 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 347,000 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1468.14 feet and was 70.14 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 132,000 cusecs and 145,000 cusecs respectively.

The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1180.50 feet, which was 130.50 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 65,500 cusecs and 40,000 cusecs respectively.

The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 201,100, 122,600, 80,000 and 25,000 cusecs respectively.

Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 96,500 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 31,100 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

International clinical trial day observed

ISLAMABAD (APP): Maroof International Hospital (MIH) has celebrated International Clinical Trial Day to highlight the crucial role of clinical trials in medical advancements. Key speakers provided compelling statistics and committed to furthering research excellence.

Dr Waqar Hafeez, Executive Director, Research Department, MIH emphasized the surge in clinical trials in Pakistan.

"Data from clinical trials.gov reveals a dramatic increase in the number of clinical trials as 469 conducted in 2023 compared to just 215 in 2019," he highlighted, underscoring the critical need for robust clinical research, especially post-COVID.

Chairman Naseer Ahmed congratulated the research team for their commitment to excellence. Dr Mujtaba Qadri and Dr Mir Waheed have been the pioneers, and under Dr Saboor Waris leadership, our clinical trial unit has achieved new heights," he said. Haroon Naseer CEO MIH, reaffirmed the hospital's dedication to advancing medical research.

the police teams recovered stolen property worth more than 160 million rupees in cases of property crimes.

The IGP mentioned that the Islamabad Police also conducted a vigorous campaign against professional beggars. Similarly, 252 absconders and proclaimed offenders were arrested. All this has been done by the Islamabad Police team, from constable to IGP.

He further said that they have also taken strong measures for the convenience of the public and improved public service delivery more than before. Their prime agenda is crime prevention. Islamabad Police will not tolerate any criminal elements committing any crime with a citizen, and they will be apprehended.

IGP Islamabad said in his message that Safe City is also playing its full role in crime prevention.

The crime forecasting, trending crime, crime hotspots, traffic routes of criminal elements, and their tracking are being addressed in Safe City Islamabad.

Every officer of the Islamabad Police is present on the roads 24/7 to protect the lives and property of the citizens. Let's join hands with the police so that, together, we can make our city a cradle of peace, he maintained.

Mohsin Naqvi seeks plan to establish 'Safe City' in Dasu, Chilas

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi chaired a meeting regarding the establishment of the Safe City Project in Dasu and Chilas to ensure the fool-proof security of Chinese and foreign nationals.

The minister has formed a special committee to seek a comprehensive plan in this regard and directed the committee to submit final recommendations within 15 days.

On this occasion, the minister said that the prime minister had directed to establish the safe city project in Dasu and Chilas. He emphasised the implementation of the project on the pattern of safe cities in Islamabad and Lahore.

He highlighted that the purpose of Safe City is not just to install cameras but a system that is equipped with advanced technology and artificial intelligence tools, adding that the Safe City project will ensure surveillance and security of the entire area.

The minister further said that Islamabad Police will provide all kinds of support in this regard. He directed that Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA),

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police and Islamabad Police should jointly prepare a comprehensive plan in this regard. The minister also constituted a committee comprising of IGP Islamabad, RPO

Hazara and the representative of WAPDA. He said that it is their responsibility to ensure the security of Chinese citizens working for the progress and development of Pakistan, assuring that no effort will be spared in this regard.

The meeting was attended by Federal Secretary for Interior Khuram Ali Agha, Chairman WAPDA Lieutenant General (R) Sajjad Ghani, Chief Commissioner Islamabad Muhammad Ali Randhawa, and IG Islamabad Ali Nasir Rizvi. Additionally, the Additional Chief Secretary Home, Additional IG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and RPO Hazara joined the meeting via video link.

CDA Chairman sets four-month deadline for sector development projects

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) Muhammad Ali Randhawa instructed that ongoing development works across all sectors be completed within a strict timeline of four months.

Chairman, presiding over a meeting on sector development, emphasized the need to promptly resolve any obstacles hindering sectoral progress to ensure continuous development.

Randhawa received a comprehensive briefing on the progress of ongoing

development projects in Sector C-14, C-15, C-16, I-12, and E-12. It was reported that 50 percent of the development work has been completed in Sector C-14 and C-15, 45 percent in Sector E-12, and 80 percent in Sector I-12.

Chairman CDA instructed that the development of Sector C-14 must be finished by September 2024, with possession granted to the allottees. Additionally, construction in Sector I-12/3 and Sector I-12/4 should be completed and

handed over to the allottees within three months.

Furthermore, payments should only be made following third-party validation of sector development works. He also emphasized the appointment of consultants for all projects.

Likewise, effective coordination among relevant entities is crucial for completing development projects in these sectors.

He also emphasized prioritizing the completion of long-stalled development works in these sectors.

Mushaal urges India to allow her to meet Yasin Malik

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Mushaal Hussein Mullick, wife of jailed Kashmiri leader Mohammad Yasin Malik, in a video message has demanded that India allow her along with her 12-year-old daughter Raziya Sultana to meet Yasin in Tihar Jail.

She demands that they should be allowed the facility as per rules under Geneva Conventions on the rights of prisoners. The family has not seen each other and been forcibly divided for almost 10 years.

Mushaal Hussein

Mullick wife of Jailed Kashmiri Hurriyat Leader Mohammad Yasin Malik video message demanding India to allow her along with their 12 year old daughter Raziya Sultana a safe entry to meet Yasin in Tihar Jail as per rules under Geneva Conventions on the rights of... pic.twitter.com/Be9s8MW32

Mushaal has urged the United Nations and other world bodies, apart from government of Pakistan, to look into grave human rights violations and put pressure on India to guarantee her safe and secure meeting with him in Tihar

jail's death cell in New Delhi.

Indian kangaroo courts have unilaterally given life imprisonment to Yasin Malik in fraudulent cases to suppress the legitimate voice of Kashmiris' right to self-determination, she says. Now the government of India is seeking death penalty on fictitious cases to silence the most powerful voice of Kashmiris under Indian occupation.

It has been two years since he was charged and given life imprisonment without a fair trial, physical presence, counsel and legal access.

Police determine to address public issues: SP

ISLAMABAD (APP): Following the special directions of the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, the Superintendent of Police (SP) Industrial Area on Saturday held a Khuli Kachehri at Sector I-14/1 Mosque.

A public relations officer said that the Khuli Kachehri was attended by citizens and senior police officials. Khuli Kachehri are being held as per the directions of IGP Islamabad across the city to ensure the early redressal of public complaints.

At the outset of the proceedings, the participants shared their grievances and also gave suggestions to

resolve them. The SP Industrial Area issued orders on the spot to address the issues of the participants and assured them that their suggestions will be taken into account.

He highlighted that police were determined to resolve the issues faced by the citizens. However, Khuli Kachehri were helpful in maintaining direct relationships with the public.

He asserted that better strategy on part of the police led to reduction in crime in the city. Islamabad Police are taking steps to control crime further. He asked the participants to cooperate with the police in controlling the crime in the city.

He further said that the

Islamabad Police also launched an effective crackdown against those involved in drug peddling, land grabbing and criminal activities in their areas.

He urged the citizens to check the activities of the people in their surroundings and inform the police in case of observing the suspicious activities.

He added that effective policing is only possible through cooperation of the public and trust between them would be ensured through resolving their problems at their door steps. Any complainant can approach him for redressal of the issues. The participants also thanked the IGP for organizing these Khuli Kachehri.

DC hosts crucial meeting with Plastic Stakeholders

RAWALPINDI (APP): A significant meeting was held at the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Office Rawalpindi, bringing together all plastic stakeholders in the district, including manufacturers, recyclers, and consumers.

The session was chaired by the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Hassan Waqar Cheema alongside the Additional Deputy Commissioner General (ADCG) and the Assistant Director of Environment.

During the meeting, the Assistant Director of Environment Anza Niazi provided a detailed briefing on the enforcement of the Punjab

Environmental Protection (Production and Consumption of Single-Use Plastic Products) Regulations 2023 in District Rawalpindi.

The briefing included a presentation of alternative materials to single-use plastics, emphasizing the importance of compliance with the new regulations.

The DC issued a stern directive to all stakeholders, mandating strict adherence to the regulations. He warned that non-compliance would result in legal action against violators. To ensure enforcement, price control magistrates in the district will be equipped with plastic bag

thickness measuring gauges. Starting June 5, plastic bags with a thickness of less than 75 microns will be confiscated.

Moreover, the chair encouraged stakeholders to consider more sustainable alternatives, such as cloth bags and paper, steel, or wooden cutlery. This shift is not only aimed at protecting the environment but also at safeguarding human health.

This meeting underscores Rawalpindi's commitment to environmental protection and sustainable practices, setting a robust precedent for the region's approach to reducing plastic pollution.

Iran's aid package arrived

BALKH (Ariana News): The first shipment of Iran's humanitarian aid to the flood victims arrived in Balkh. Razia Alishondhi, the vice president of international affairs of the Red Crescent Society of Iran, has announced that the aid packages have been sent to Afghanistan within the framework of humanitarian cooperation. Local officials in Balkh have stated that the plane carrying aid packages, including food, medicine, carpets, blankets and tents, landed at Mazar-e-Sharif airport.

37% increase in measles cases

KABUL (TOLOnews): Ministry of Public Health reports a 37% increase in measles cases compared to last year. Sharafat Zaman Amarkhil, spokesperson for the ministry, says that in the first four months of the current year, over three thousand positive cases of this disease have been registered in country. Meanwhile, doctors at the Indira Gandhi Children's Hospital report that in the past two months, more than twenty children with measles are admitted daily to this hospital.

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

Recent floods destroy infrastructure, claim lives in Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLOnews): Residents of Baghlan, Faryab, and Ghor provinces said that recent floods have destroyed public infrastructure such as schools, roads, health centers, and bridges in these three provinces. According to residents, the damage to this infrastructure has made life difficult for the flood-affected people in these provinces. Burka district in Baghlan is one of these districts where floods have severely damaged health centers, schools, and roads. "These should be repaired for us again because it is impossible for our children to use these centers again, or for us to use these bridges," said Mohammad Zahir, a resident of Baghlan. "We have lost everything here—schools, clinics, bridges, everything.

These should be rebuilt for us, especially public facilities," said Abdul Wasi, a resident of Baghlan. Residents of these three provinces called on the interim government and international aid organizations to rebuild the destroyed infrastructure in their areas. "Unfortunately, the flood has taken our school building, and we currently have no place to stay. We are living in the open air," said Abdul Wahid, a resident of Ghor. "If the Siyah Sang canal and Firozkoh city are not rebuilt, people will be at a greater risk, and agricultural lands will be destroyed," said Saifuddin Shirzad, another resident of Ghor. Meanwhile, with most of the roads in the flood-affected districts of Baghlan, Faryab, and Ghor

being destroyed, travel between districts and cities has come to a halt. Ismatullah Muradi, the spokesperson for the Faryab governor, said: "Most of the roads connecting the Bilchiragh district are blocked, which has caused problems for the residents, and they want this issue to be resolved." "The main problem here is that there should be canals to control the flood-water and provide a way for it to flow out," said Nasruddin, a resident of Faryab. In recent weeks, devastating floods in several provinces of the country have caused significant financial losses to the people. Additionally, hundreds of people in some provinces, especially in Baghlan, Ghor, and Faryab, have lost their lives.

Mayor visits road construction projects



KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Abdul Rashid, the Mayor of Kabul, inspected key construction projects, including Zakirin Road to Qargha Road, Badam Bagh Road, and the route from Hangra Intersection to Qasaba Road. He emphasized the need to enhance the speed and quality of these developments. The Kabul Municipality reported significant progress on the northwest con-

ector road project, which began last year. This project, spanning 7,645 meters in length and 30 meters in width, has over 50% of the work completed. The new connector road from Hangara Intersection to Qasaba Road (Mirza Abdul Qadir Beedel Road) has also seen promising progress. Recently started, this project has already achieved over 20% completion. The Mayor stressed the

importance of maintaining strict control and supervision at every stage of these projects. He urged officials to ensure timely and efficient execution, leaving no effort spared. Kabul Mayor is dedicated to completing ongoing projects within their timelines. He consistently oversees the progress of various infrastructure initiatives, contributing to Kabul's development and modernization.

Afghan Minister emphasizes strengthening ties with Qatar

KABUL (BNA): In a meeting held on Saturday at the office of Mawlawi Mohammad Yaqoob Mujahid, the acting Minister of National Defense, both Afghanistan and Qatar expressed their commitment to fortifying bilateral relations and expanding cooperation between the two countries. During the meeting, Acting Minister Mujahid extended his sincere grati-

tude to Qatar for its invaluable humanitarian aid provided to the victims affected by recent earthquakes and floods in Afghanistan. Responding to the acting Minister's remarks, Mohammad bin Abdul Aziz Al-Khalifi, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar, reaffirmed Qatar's dedication to deepening the strong bonds of friendship between Afghanistan and

Qatar. He emphasized their intention to expand cooperation across various sectors, aiming to mutually benefit both nations. Both sides expressed optimism regarding the future prospects of their bilateral relationship, highlighting the potential for increased cooperation in sectors of security, defense, trade, investment, and cultural exchange.

Afghan Minister meets Turkish experts



KABUL (BNA): The Acting Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock, Mawlawi Ataullah Omari, held a productive meeting with key Turkish experts. The Acting Agriculture Minister, Musa Sardar Celebi, head of the ASAM and Strategic Center and coordinator of humanitarian aid (UKID), and Dr. Bilal Hakimi, program manager of the Ministry of Agriculture's Development and Cooperation (MDC) in Turkey, engaged in discus-

sions to enhance bilateral cooperation, according to a statement released by the Ministry. During the meeting, a comprehensive discussion took place on Afghanistan's agricultural sector. Key topics included potential investment opportunities and strategies for promoting standardization in agriculture, aimed at enhancing productivity and quality. The meeting was attended by high-ranking officials, including Sayed

Hazrat Hashemi, Secretary to the Deputy of the Invitation Commission of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, and Mullah Mohammad Hossain Khorshid, Head of the Office of the Ministry of Agriculture. The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock expressed its gratitude to the Turkish experts for their valuable insights and committed to a close collaboration to implement the initiatives discussed during the meeting.

IEA praises recognition of Palestinian state

KABUL (BNA): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan praised the recognition of the Palestinian state by Ireland, Norway, and Spain. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has issued a statement commending the Republic of Ireland, Norway, and the Kingdom of Spain for their recent decision to recognize the Palestinian state. The Ministry hailed this move as a significant and positive step forward in the international support for Palestinian sovereignty. The statement further noted that this recognition comes at a crucial time, when Zionist occupation, alongside its aggression on the historical land of Palestine, is attempting demographic changes through war crimes and genocide of the Palestinian nation in Gaza. The Ministry considers the land of Palestine as the historical legitimate right of the Palestinian nation and condemns the ongoing genocide by Zionist occupiers as a fundamental cause of instability in the region. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan once again urged the international community and Islamic countries to take immediate and decisive actions to prevent the ongoing catastrophe. Emphasizing the gravity of the situation, the Ministry called on these nations to fulfill their responsibilities and support the Palestinian nation's right to freedom and self-defense.

Rise in forced marriages

KABUL (Khaama Press): In its latest report, the United Nations has examined the devastating consequences of the ban on girls' education, revealing that these prohibitions and other restrictions have affected all aspects of the lives of women and girls in Afghanistan. The report, published on Saturday, May 25, on the UN Women website, shows that following the imposition of restrictions on the freedoms of women and girls, particularly the ban on girls' education, what is termed "forced marriage" has increased by 25%. The rate of early childbirth among Afghan teenage girls has risen by 45%, and the risk of maternal mortality among Afghan girls and women has increased by at least 50%.

It is noteworthy that this report is based on consultations and discussions with over 700 women from 2022 to 2024 and was prepared in collaboration with other active UN agencies in Afghanistan, including the International Organization for Migration and UNAMA. Meanwhile, according to UN officials, 1.4 million women and girls in Afghanistan have been deprived of continuing their education, and the policy that led to this deprivation has had irreparable consequences. This comes amid a dire humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, with 23.7 million people needing emergency aid in 2024, according to UN agencies. Meanwhile, the escalation of Afghan migrant deportations by Pakistan and Iran has exacerbated the current situation.

Türkiye to assist Afghan farmers: DG — boost investment in key sectors

KABUL (TOLOnews): Türkiye's General Director of Migration Management Atilla Toros, in a meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs, Abdul Salam Hanafi, said that Türkiye will assist Afghan farmers in growing alternative crops to opium. The Arg in a statement said that Toros also added that the Turkish government is interested in investing in various sectors in Afghanistan, including mining, energy, and transportation. During this meeting, Abdul Salam Hanafi requested that the Turkish government pay attention to the issue of migrants to strengthen relations between the two countries. "If we have good economic relations with Türkiye, due to its sensitive position as Türkiye connects Asian countries to Europe, Afghanistan can benefit from this," said Abdul Zuhoor Mudaber, an economic analyst. Atilla Toros also met with the acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Mutt-



aqi, to discuss strengthening bilateral cooperation and combating mafia groups. A number of economic analysts believe that expanding and strengthening relations with regional countries, especially Türkiye, is effective in economic growth and job creation in the country, and they called for more facilities for Turkish traders in

Afghanistan. "Countries like Türkiye, China, and Russia that show interest should be convinced to invest in Afghanistan genuinely," said Mohammad Nabi Afghan, an economic analyst. "More attention should be paid to the security and safety of investors, and measures that help strengthen investment

opportunities should be taken," said Shakir Yaqubi, an economic analyst. Earlier, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce reported a 53% increase in trade with Türkiye in the year 1402 (solar calendar) and said that trade with Türkiye reached over \$100 million dollars, with \$27 million dollars accounted for by exports.

Restrictions on Afghan girls will increase child marriages: UN groups

KABUL (TOLOnews): International organizations said that bans imposed on women and girls by the Islamic Emirate will increase the number of child marriages among Afghan girls by 25%. UN Women, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) published a joint two-page brief summarizing the issues of Afghan women and their demands of the international community. The brief said that the continuation of restrictions by the current Afghan government on women and girls will impact child marriages by an increase of 25%, increase early child-bearing by 45%, increase the risk of maternal mortality by 50%, and the brief emphasized that currently 82% of Afghan women

consider their mental health to be bad. It's also mentioned that Afghanistan remains the only country in the world that bans girls from going to school beyond grade six as a matter of policy. Afghan women are also banned from attending university. According to the joint brief, despite the restrictions on Afghan women and girls, they have not given up fighting for their right to live full lives with dignity. "Afghan women are still forming civil society organizations, still running businesses, and still providing services to their communities; most importantly, Afghan women have continued to find ways to make their demands to the international community clear," the brief said. UN Women, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and

the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in the brief said that Afghan women ask the international community to remain focused on the situation in Afghanistan and to restore women's rights, including the rights to education and work, in addition to women's participation in public decision-making. Meanwhile, a number of analysts dismissed these statements, asserting that the world does not have a policy to address these restrictions. "Forced marriages can be considered a very small part of the obstacles preventing girls from continuing their education, but what the United Nations Women's Section claims is not like that. The main and significant obstacles to girls' education are known by the United Nations, credible international insti-

tutions, and major powers, but they are wasting time. They do not have fundamental and principled work in hand to remove these limitations from the girls and women of Afghanistan," said Nesar Ahmad Sherzai, a political analyst. "Now that school and education have been restricted for girls and they have been deprived, families are once again forcing their daughters into marriage against the principles and civil law of Afghanistan, which sets the minimum age of marriage for girls at 16," said Soraya Paikan, a women's rights activist. Earlier, a number of countries including the United States called for the lifting of bans against women in Afghanistan and stated that if women's rights are not observed, "the Taliban" will not be formally recognized.

Baradar emphasizes participation of IE envoys at int'l conferences

KABUL (BNA): During a meeting with the Deputy Foreign Minister of Qatar, the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs of Afghanistan emphasized that an international conference on Afghanistan would yield no results without a representative from the Islamic Emirate. The meeting concentrated on strengthening political, economic, and trade relations, with both parties engaging in in-depth discussions and exchanging perspectives on these critical issues. The Deputy PM Baradar Akhund expressed gratitude for Qatar's cooperation and emphasized the need to further strengthen bilateral relations. He highlighted investment opportunities in Afghanistan and encouraged Qatari investors to explore various sectors. In response, the Deputy Foreign Minister of Qatar pledged to encourage their



Country's Investors to invest in Afghanistan and announced that a delegation of Qatari investors will visit Kabul in the near future. Meanwhile, Mohammed bin Abdulaziz Al-Khalifi added that they are closely working with Qatar Airways to initiate and enhance their flights to Afghanistan

according to a regular mechanism, aiming to strengthen trade relations between the two countries. He also emphasized that international meetings would be ineffective without a representative from the Islamic Emirate and confirmed that this stance has been clearly communi-

cated to the United Nations. In conclusion, Deputy Prime Minister Baradar highlighted that the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is dedicated to fostering extensive political and economic relations with all countries, adopting a policy of proactive engagement in bilateral interactions.

Balkh flour mill owners request halt to flour imports

BALKH (TOLOnews): A number of flour mill officials in Balkh, concerned about the cessation of their activities, are calling for a halt to flour imports from neighboring countries. These mill owners, in a press conference in Balkh, urged the caretaker government to support domestic production facilities. According to them, cur-

rently, out of more than 200 flour mills across the country, only ten are operational. The mill owners add that if operations resume, nearly fifty thousand job opportunities will be created. Bismillah Hamdard, the head of the Flour Millers Association in the northern region, said: "Our request to the government is to increase the import duty on

flour to a level that will encourage the establishment of more mills and lead us to complete self-sufficiency." Ahmad Shah Stanekzai, a manager of one of the flour mills in Balkh, said: "Within five years, we will achieve complete self-sufficiency and will not need any imported flour." Other mill owners also called for stopping flour

imports from neighboring countries. Mubashir Sadat, acting head of the Chamber of Industries and Mines in Balkh, said: "If the government cooperates with us, we can have more than two hundred active mills and employ tens of thousands of workers." Yousof Shahbaz, a manager of one of the flour mills

in Balkh, said: "If we are allowed and provided with raw materials and facilities, we can even export flour outside Afghanistan." According to reports, Afghanistan's annual flour demand reaches 6 million tons, and according to officials in Balkh, domestic flour mills currently have the capacity to produce 5 million tons of flour.



GAZA STRIP: *Paestian families using donkey carts as they fleeing their areas due to continues attacks from Israeli forces.*

India's massive election faces heatwave challenge

NEW DELHI (Reuters): The world's largest election may become the hottest on Saturday, as Indians participate in the penultimate phase of voting with temperatures forecast to surge to 47°C in the capital New Delhi.

More than 111 million people in 58 constituencies across eight states and federal territories are eligible to vote in the general election's sixth phase, which recorded turnout of 49.2 per cent at 3pm, with three hours of polling left. The overall turnout in the same phase of the last elections in 2019 was about 63pc. "There is a concern, but we hope that people will overcome the fear of the heatwave and come and vote," Delhi Chief Electoral Officer P. Krishnamurthy told Reuters.

Voting in the elections began on April 19 and will conclude on June 1, with counting set for June 4. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, leader of the Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) who is favoured to win a third consecutive term, also asked people to "vote in large numbers" in a message on social media platform X on Saturday.

The Election Commission has deployed paramedics with medicines and oral hydration salts at polling stations in Delhi, which have additionally been equipped with mist machines, shaded waiting areas and cold water dispensers for voters. In some parts of the northern state



of Haryana, people residing near polling booths also pitched in to help voters beat the heat, handing out cold drinks, dry fruits and milk free of cost.

Among those who cast their ballot early in Delhi were Rahul Gandhi, leader of the main opposition Congress party and Modi's main rival, his mother Sonia Gandhi and sister Priyanka Vadra. "We are keeping all our grievances aside and casting our vote for our constitution and democracy," Vadra told reporters.

Opposition leader and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, whose bail after pre-trial detention of nearly two months in a graft case has given fresh impetus to the opposition campaign, also voted in the capital.

Price rise and unemployment were two of the major issues mentioned by voters to Reuters when asked about the factors that determined their ballot. "The government boasts about

fast economic growth but the reality on the ground is very different," said Delhi voter Fazal, 46, who only gave his first name and works at a multinational corporation, adding he also voted to "save democracy". Ashok Ghana, a plumber in the eastern state of Odisha, who said he voted for the BJP, added that "price rise and the non-availability of jobs" were the issues he considered. Among those who voted based on the situation in their region was property dealer Praveen Chauhan, 43, in Delhi. "My main issues are clean water, electricity, access to good healthcare and education," he said, adding that the Kejriwal-led Delhi government "has given us that till now". While the heatwave was a concern in Delhi, a cyclone expected to hit land tomorrow was being closely watched in eastern Odisha and West Bengal, parts of which are also voting on Saturday.

24 people killed in India's Gujarat fire

GUJARAT (Reuters): At least 24 people, including many children, have died in a fire that broke out at a family entertainment venue in the western Indian state of Gujarat, a government official said. With rescue efforts continuing at the scene on Saturday evening in the Rajkot district, the local mayor told the Reuters news agency that the death toll was expected to rise.

"Our focus is on rescue operations and saving lives. We will ensure strict action is taken against the people who are responsible for this incident," Mayor Nayana Pedhadiya said. More than 300 people were in the two-storey structure at the TRP amusement and theme park when the blaze broke out as it was a holiday weekend. Rajkot fire officer Ilesh Kher told reporters.

"People got trapped as a temporary structure at the facility collapsed near the entrance, making it difficult for the people to come out," he said. "The flames spread rapidly because of its flammable material," he added. Television images showed a massive fire engulfing the TRP game zone and thick clouds of smoke emanating from the site. The entire structure was gutted in the blaze.

A police official at the local civil hospital said some of the bodies were also charred beyond recognition. Meanwhile, the district's chief fire officer, IV Kher, said firefighters had almost brought the fire under control. "The cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained," he told Reuters. Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel said that an investigation into the incident had been handed to a Special Investigation Team (SIT), and television reports added that two people had been detained by Rajkot police in connection with the incident.

Gujarat is the home state of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In a post on the social media platform X, Modi said that he was "extremely distressed by the fire mishap in Rajkot" and added that the local administration was working to provide assistance to those affected.

Most wanted MQM London accused held

KARACHI (INP): Pakistan Rangers and District City Police have successfully apprehended the notorious criminal Muhammad Hamid, also known as Pia, following a joint operation in Karachi's Eidgah area. Acting on intelligence inputs, law enforcement agencies swiftly moved in and detained the suspect, recovering a hand grenade from his possession during the operation.

According to police, Muhammad Hamid, with a history of criminal activities dating back to 1994, has been implicated in a string of serious offenses including target killings, involvement in political violence, and organized robbery. Initially associated with MQM Haqiqi in 2009, the accused later shifted allegiance to the MQM London group. During the course of preliminary investigations, shocking revelations emerged regarding Hamid's involvement in various criminal activities.

Israel strikes Rafah after top UN court orders it to halt offensive

RAFAH (AFP): Israel bombed the Gaza Strip, including Rafah, on Saturday, a day after the top UN court ordered it to halt military operations in the southern city as efforts get underway in Paris to seek a ceasefire in the war sparked by Hamas's October 7 attack.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) also demanded the immediate release of all hostages still held by Palestinian militants, hours after the Israeli military announced troops had recovered the bodies of three more of the captives from northern Gaza. The Hague-based court, whose orders are legally binding but lack direct enforcement mechanisms, also ordered Israel to keep open the Rafah crossing between Egypt and Gaza, which it closed earlier this month at the start of its assault on the city.

Israel gave no indication it was preparing to change course in Rafah, insisting that the court had got it wrong. "Israel has not and will not carry out military operations in the Rafah area that create living conditions that could cause the destruction of the Palestinian civilian population, in whole or in part," National Security Adviser Tzachi Hanegbi said in a joint statement with Israel's foreign ministry spokesman.

The Palestinian militant group Hamas, which has ruled Gaza since 2007, welcomed the ICJ ruling on Rafah but criticized its decision to exclude the rest of war-torn Gaza from the order. Hours after the ICJ ruling, Israel carried out strikes on the Gaza Strip early Saturday while clashes between the Israeli army and the armed wing of Hamas continued.

Palestinian witnesses and AFP teams reported Israeli strikes in Rafah and the central city of Deir Al-Balah. "We hope that the court's decision will put pressure on Israel to end this war of extermination, because there is nothing left here," said Oum Mohammad Al-Ashqa, a Palestinian woman from Gaza City displaced to Deir Al-Balah by the war.

"But Israel is a state that considers itself above the law. Therefore, I do

not believe that the shooting or the war will stop other than by force," said Mohammed Saleh, also met by AFP in the central Gaza Strip city. In its keenly awaited ruling, the ICJ said Israel must "immediately halt its military offensive, and any other action in the Rafah Governorate, which may inflict on the Palestinian group in Gaza conditions of life that could bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part."

It ordered Israel to open the Rafah crossing for humanitarian aid and also called for the "immediate and unconditional release" of the hostages held by Hamas in Gaza. The Gaza war broke out after Hamas's October 7 attack resulted in the deaths of more than 1,170 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli official figures. Militants also took 252 hostages, 121 of whom remain in Gaza, including 37 the army says are dead.

Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed at least 35,800 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the Hamas-run territory's health ministry. The Israeli military said the three hostages whose bodies were recovered in north Gaza on Friday — Israeli hostage Chanan Yablonka, Brazilian-Israeli Michel Nisenbaum and French-Mexican Orion Hernandez Radoux — were "murdered" during the October 7 attack and their bodies taken to Gaza.

The court order comes ahead of separate meetings on the Gaza conflict in Paris between the CIA chief and Israeli representatives on one side and French President Emmanuel Macron and the foreign ministers of four key Arab states on the other. Ceasefire talks involving US, Egyptian and Qatari mediators ended shortly after Israel launched the Rafah operation, though Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office this week said the war cabinet had asked the Israeli delegation "to continue negotiations for the return of the hostages."

CIA chief Bill Burns was expected to meet Israeli representatives in Paris in a bid to relaunch negotia-

tions, a Western source close to the issue said. Separately, French President Emmanuel Macron received the prime minister of Qatar and the Saudi, Egyptian and Jordanian foreign ministers on Friday "to press for a ceasefire," according to Cairo.

The French presidency said they held talks on the Gaza war and ways to set up a Palestinian state alongside Israel. The five countries discussed "the effective implementation of the two-state solution," it added. Top US diplomat Antony Blinken also spoke with Israeli war cabinet minister Benny Gantz about new efforts to achieve a ceasefire and reopening of the Rafah border crossing as soon as possible, Washington said.

Israeli ground troops started moving into Rafah in early May, defying global opposition. Troops took over the Palestinian side of the Rafah border crossing with Egypt, further slowing sporadic deliveries of aid for Gaza's 2.4 million people.

But on Friday, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi agreed in a call with his US counterpart Joe Biden to allow UN aid through the other entry point into southern Gaza, the Kerem Shalom crossing from Israel, the White House said. The US military has also installed a temporary jetty on the Gaza coast to receive aid by sea that a UN spokesman said had delivered 97 trucks of aid after "a rocky start" a week ago. The security and humanitarian situation in the territory remains alarming, with a risk of famine, hospitals out of service, and around 800,000 people, according to the United Nations, having fled Rafah in the last two weeks.

UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths said the situation had reached "a moment of clarity." "Aid workers and UN staff must be able to carry out their jobs in safety," he posted on social media site X late Friday. "At a time when the people of Gaza are staring down famine... it is more critical than ever to heed the calls made over the last seven months: Release the hostages. Agree a ceasefire. End this nightmare."

PTI calls May 25 darkest day in political history

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) declared May 25, 2022 as the darkest day in the political history of the country, because on this day, the state unleashed its full fury on peaceful marchers under leader of PTI Founding Chairman Imran Khan and subjected them to tear gas, rubber bullets and batons for hours in total disregard of the constitution and law.

PTI Spokesperson, in a statement, said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Founding Chairman Imran Khan launched the movement of Haqeeqi Azadi two years ago and took out a historic peaceful Azad March to establish supremacy of constitution and rule of law in the country.

However, he stated that as the state's fascism reached its peak, the peaceful participations of the Azad March were subjected to the worst state

sheer violation of the constitution and law.

PTI Spokesperson recalled that on that day, human rights were trampled across the country and the sanctity of foul walls was desecrated, as on that night, houses were raided, women and children were harassed, and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders and workers were abducted. He stated that during this state barbarism, two PTI workers were martyred, and dozens were injured, besides destroying properties and ransacking their homes.

PTI Spokesperson noted that the state machinery tried its best to push the country towards civil war; however it was Imran Khan who, despite facing and enduring all the worst state atrocities, held high the flag of peace and saved the country from internal turmoil and chaos.

He said that two years ago, the oppression and tyranny inflicted on the citizens marked the beginning of a shameful sequence of the state bar-

barity and fascism, adding that during these two years, Pakistan's largest and only federal political party PTI, had been subjected to full-scale state brutality.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Spokesperson lamented that under the pretext of a false flag operation on May 9, senior leaders, including women, and over 10,000 workers were rounded up and imprisoned. He went on to say that the state was still engaged in extrajudicial and illegal activities, while Imran Khan and PTI were continuously targeted with violence and revenge.

Pakistan needs stability, which can only be achieved by ensuring supremacy of constitution and law, he asserted. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Spokesperson demanded an immediate end to the state oppression, release of Imran Khan to provide effective leadership to the country and nation before the crisis further aggravated and the situation reached to a point of no return.

Spain demands Israel comply with UN court ruling

MADRID/LONDON: The Spanish government demanded on Saturday that Israel comply with an order by the top UN court to immediately stop its bombardment and ground assault on the Gaza city of Rafah.

It stressed that the ruling on Friday by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) was legally binding. "The precautionary measures set out by the ICJ, including that Israel should cease its military offensive in Rafah, are compulsory. Israel must comply with them," Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares wrote on X. "The same goes for a ceasefire, the release of the hostages and access for humanitarian aid (to Gaza)," he said.

"The suffering of the people of Gaza and the violence must end." The British government, meanwhile, has criticized the World Court order, saying the ruling would strengthen Palestinian Islamist group Hamas. "The reason there isn't a pause in the fighting is because Hamas turned down a very generous hostage deal from Israel. The intervention of these courts — including the ICJ today — will strengthen the view of Hamas that they can hold on to hostages and stay in Gaza," a UK foreign ministry spokesman said late on Friday. "And if that happens there won't be either peace, or a two-state solution."

In a case brought by South Africa alleging the Israeli assault on Gaza amounts to "genocide," the ICJ ordered Israel on Friday to "immediately halt" the ground and air offensive in Rafah. The operations began on May 7 despite international fears for the safety of the 1.4 million civilians trapped in the city. The Hague-based ICJ, whose orders are legally binding but lack direct enforcement mechanisms, also ruled that Israel must keep open the key Rafah crossing with Egypt to allow "unhindered" humanitarian aid into Gaza.

And it urged the "unconditional" release of hostages taken by Hamas fighters during their October 7 attack in Israel. Israel responded on Saturday by bombing Rafah and other parts of the densely populated Gaza Strip. Spain is one of the European countries to have been most critical of Israel over the war in Gaza. — Aljazeera



سوئی ناردرن گیس
Sui Northern Gas
PLC
SNGPL Official

اب بھی سمجھ جاؤ
یہ نہ ہو کہ پچھتاؤ
گیس چوروں کے خلاف بلا امتیاز
کریک ڈاؤن کا آغاز

SNGPL dismantles 4,500-metre illegal pipeline in Lower Dir

ایک مقدمہ میں کارروائی ابوروں، پینڈی، شیڈر، ستان، بکر شیر، نول، بی، کی پٹر جہان

Factory's connection severed for using domestic meter

Unit found using gas worth Rs400,000 to Rs500,000 per month

SNGPL intensifies crackdown on gas pilferers

حجاب کے ٹی، اسلام آباد: بیس چوری نیچا آ پریشن جاری

مزید 2436 گیس منقطع 2 کروڑ 87 لاکھ سے زائد کے جرمانے مانگو

کارروائی اٹال، اہمد، اور ایٹری کی، ملتان، و، شاد، کرک، و، گھر گھروں میں کی گئی

Over 180 gas connections disconnected in anti-theft drive

SNGPL detects 325,000 gas pilferage cases, recovers Rs2.4b durina crackdown

گیس چوروں نیچا آ کریک ڈاؤن جاری، 182 گیس کنکشن منقطع، جرمانے

لاہور میں گیس کے تھانے میں 2 کروڑ لاکھ کے جرمانے

SNGPL intensifies crackdown on gas pilferers

214 gas connections severed, Rs2.7m fine imposed

گیس چوری کی اطلاع 1199 پر دیں