

Bilawal forms committee
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman and former foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has constituted a committee to engage with government over privatisation issues. According to a notification issued by the PPP chairman's secretariat, the members of the committee included Sherry Rehman, Syed Naveed Qamar and Saleem Mandviwalla.

Attack repulsed
F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: There was no let-up in targeting of police facilities in KP by terrorists as another police station was attacked late Sunday night. An unspecified number of terrorists armed with heavy weapons attacked Peezo Police Station in Lakki Marwat but they met with stiff resistance from police jawans. The terrorists after failing to penetrate into the police station retreated and fled away into the darkness.

Saudi investment to be supported at all cost, says Premier

— Pakistan highly values its multifaceted ties with Italy

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday assured his government's blanket support to the Saudi investment, enabling the investors and businessmen to accomplish their future projects in Pakistan expeditiously with joint ventures and replicate them within short time for the mutual benefits of the people of both countries.

Addressing a dinner gathering hosted in the honour of visiting delegation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the prime minister said that time waited for none and stressed that they should overcome the challenges if they really wanted to make use of this opportunity as the Saudi leadership and their leading investors and business people wanted to help Pakistan.

The prime minister reiterated that it was not the government's job to do businesses but it had to offer policy frameworks, act like a catalysts and remove all the hurdles for speedy achievement of economic targets. He said that the government had resolved and was committed to remove all the bureaucratic hurdles and red tape in the way of foreign investment.

Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, federal ministers, Saudi ambassador in Pakistan, members of the delegation and senior officials were present during the event. The prime minister said that Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) was the very robust and all encompassing vehicle to attain all those projects in the interest of people of Pakistan and the Saudi investors, leading to further strengthening of mutual cooperation and partnership.

The SIFC was a model acceptable to the Saudi delegation and they were fully satisfied over the existing oppor-

tunities, he observed. The prime minister said that from diverse projects, the Saudi investors could earn profits and if they provided them a mechanism free of troubles, bureaucratic hurdles and red tape, then the sky would be the limit.

The prime minister expressed his satisfaction over the solid and tangible progress achieved during the delegation's interaction with the Pakistani counterparts. He said that shortly, they would witness solid agreements worth billions of dollars investment.

Recollecting his visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during Ramazan ul Mubarak, the prime minister termed his meeting with the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Mohammed bin Salman as 'a wonderful interaction and he was extremely encouraged and deeply impressed with his forward looking vision that transformed KSA in many ways to come, whether it was in agriculture, education, IT, communication and infrastructure, youth empowerment and all inclusive policies'.

Crown Prince's dynamic and visionary leadership had placed KSA among the most progressive societies in the world, the fastest growing economy with the latest infrastructure, transport facilities, provision of jobs and progress in every sphere of life which was phenomenal, he added. The prime minister said that the Saudi delegation interacted with the Pakistani counterparts which would further enhance the bonds of brotherhood and friendship and transform into new heights.

"The KSA always stood with Pakistan through thick and thin and in different times. If we thank them, we can't for their generosity for the last seven decades," he added. He said that some thirty years back, Pakistan was

able to offer their Saudi brothers training in different walks of life, but today, KSA was far more experienced and had immense potential to train Pakistanis.

Saudi Assistant Minister for Investment Ibrahim Al Mubarak, on the occasion, thanked the prime minister for warmly hosting them. He said that their visit was a testimony to their deep friendship and strategic partnership which was very important, adding under their leadership's directives, they moved swiftly to explore partnership with Pakistan. He also lauded response of the private sector that interacted with them, adding that the relationship between the two brotherly countries was very strong and the both countries could achieve shared economic objectives together.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif said that Pakistan deeply valued its multifaceted relations with Italy spanning over many decades, which had always been marked by goodwill and trust.

The prime minister expressed the views during a meeting with Ambassador of Italy Marilina Armellini who paid a courtesy call on him at the Prime Minister's House, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The prime minister said that the two sides also shared similar views on a number of important regional and global issues.

Expressing satisfaction over the positive trajectory of Pakistan-Italy bilateral relations, the prime minister urged the two sides to enhance cooperation in the fields of education, trade and investment, legal migration, as well as cultural exchanges. Thanking the Italian leadership for the congratulatory message that he received on his re-election, the prime minister conveyed his sincere commitment to work closely with Italy to further cement bilateral ties in the days ahead.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Italy to Pakistan, Marilina Armellini called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Saudi Crown Prince may visit Pakistan from 10th

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: As Pakistan and Saudi Arabia engagements have been at their peak in recent weeks following Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit in March, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman is likely to pay his much-anticipated visit to Islamabad between May 10 to 15.

The visit of the top dignitary possesses vital importance to Pakistan eyeing big investment from Saudi Arabia in diverse fields which would be cemented via Prince Salman's forthcoming visit this month. It would be the first visit of Saudi Prime Minister Salman, also known as MBS, to Pakistan in five years as he last time visited the country in February 2019 during the rule of former prime minister Imran Khan.

It would also materialise the understanding between both countries in Makkah for attracting Saudi investments worth \$5 billion in Pakistan in the coming days. However, the official announcement for the definite dates of MBS' visit is due to be made. It emerged that MBS was due to arrive in Pakistan in 2022 as part of his visit to the region but it was called off at the 11th hour.

A 50-member high-level Saudi trade delegation — led by the Deputy Investment Minister of Saudi Arabia Ibrahim Al-mubarak — is already present in Pakistan which landed in Islamabad yesterday on a two-day official visit to explore various avenues of trade and investment ahead of Prince Salman's expected arrival in the coming days. The companies which are part of the delegation represent different economic sectors, including information technology, telecoms, energy, aviation, construction, mining exploration, agriculture and human resource development.

Hamas says it accepts Gaza ceasefire proposal

CAIRO (Reuters): Hamas on Monday agreed to a ceasefire proposal in the seven-month-old war with Israel in Gaza, hours after the Israeli military told residents to evacuate some parts of Rafah, which has been sheltering more than a million displaced people.

Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh informed Qatari and Egyptian mediators that the group accepted their ceasefire proposal, according to a brief statement from Hamas, which gave no details of the accord. There was no immediate comment from Israel. The agreement, should it take effect, would be the first truce since a week-long pause in the fighting in November, and follows months of failed attempts at pausing the fighting to free hostages and allow more aid into Gaza.

There had been concerns that the ceasefire talks being held in Cairo had stalled after Hamas official

Izzat Al-Rashiq warned that any Israeli operation in Rafah would put the truce talks in jeopardy. The city, on the southern edge of the Gaza Strip, has been the last sanctuary for around half of Gaza's 2.3 million residents, pushed south by Israel's seven-month-old assault.

Meanwhile, President Joe Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke Monday morning, a White House official and a National Security Council spokesperson said, as Israel appeared closer to launching an offensive on the southern Gaza city of Rafah — a move staunchly opposed by the US on humanitarian grounds.

The NSC spokesperson said Biden reiterated US concerns about an invasion of Rafah — where more than 1 million civilians from other parts of Gaza are sheltering after 7 months of war sparked by Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on

Israel — and said he believes reaching a ceasefire with Hamas is the best way to protect the lives of Israeli hostages held in Gaza. The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the call before an official White House statement was released.

The call comes hours before Biden is to host King Abdullah II of Jordan for a private lunch meeting at the White House on Monday. On Sunday, Netanyahu rejected international pressure to halt the war in Gaza in a fiery speech marking the country's annual Holocaust memorial day, declaring: "If Israel is forced to stand alone, Israel will stand alone." "I say to the leaders of the world: No amount of pressure, no decision by any international forum will stop Israel from defending itself," he said, speaking in English. "Never again is now."

Pak-Afghan highway blocked

F.P. Report

KILLA ABDULLAH: Pak-Afghan national highway and Quetta-Gulistan highway were blocked on Monday by armed tribesmen against the operation of security forces for eradication of poppy crops in Killa Abdullah and Gulistan.

According to reports, armed tribesmen blocked Pak-Afghan national highway near Jungle Pir Alizai, Killa Abdullah and Quetta-Gulistan highway near Gulistan Bazar against the operation of Anti Narcotics Force and other security forces to eradicate poppy (opium) crops cultivated in Killa Abdullah and Gulistan areas of district Killa Abdullah. Long queues of vehicles were seen stuck on Pak-Afghan national highway and Quetta-Gulistan highway. Pak-Afghan national highway and Quetta-Gulistan highway remained blocked till filing this report. It is pertinent to mention that after eradication of poppy crops in different areas of Chaman, a district bordering neighbouring country Afghanistan.

NA's reserved seats: SC suspends PHC verdict

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court (SC) on Monday suspended the verdict of Peshawar High Court (PHC) regarding allocation of reserved seats in the National Assembly.

The three-member bench headed by Justice Mansoor Ali Shah and comprising Justice Athar Minallah and Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, which heard the appeal of 'Sunni Itehad Council (SIC), referred the matter to the judges committee for forming a larger bench.

The Supreme Court, in its order, said that the court decision would apply to the political parties to the extent of additional reserved seats only. It declared that it would hear the case on a daily basis from June 3.

On the occasion, the Federal Government requested the court to form a larger bench to which the matter was sent to the judges committee. The court said that the members of the reserved seats allot-

ted in the second phase would not be able to vote until the final decision.

Addressing the Attorney General for Pakistan, Justice Mansoor Ali Shah asked that how the political parties could get the additional reserved seats as they could take seats according to their proportion. "Can the remaining seats be given to them? Is there anything like that in the law?" he further questioned and said if it was not so in the law, then it was not against the constitutional scheme to do so. The case was then adjourned.

The SIC had challenged on April 1 the PHC's March 14 order that deprived the party of reserved seats. The petition stated that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf candidates joining the SIC after their party lost its electoral symbol, and the Election Commission of Pakistan also raised no objections to the above independent returned candidates joining the SIC.

Justice Minallah observed that a political party could only get reserved seats according to the number of general seats it had won. "Where is it written in the law that the remaining reserved seats should be distributed among the same political parties?" Justice Shah asked. "We have to protect the public mandate. The real issue is of the public mandate," he observed.

Justice Minallah then asked, "Where is it written in the law that a political party cannot contest elections upon not receiving an electoral symbol?" Advocate Salman Akram Raja, who contested the Feb 8 polls as a PTI-backed independent, then said the same question had been asked in a court before the elections "One thing is decided a party would only get reserved seats according to the representation it has [in the assemblies]," Justice Minallah remarked. "How is it possible that someone's mandate is handed over to someone else?" Justice Shah wondered. "For the first time, a major political party was deprived of its electoral symbol," Justice Minallah observed.

KP cabinet approves essential expenditures of province

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa cabinet Monday approved essential expenditures of the Province for the month of May while directing all departments to finalize their budget proposals for the next financial year.

The approval of the essential expenditure was necessitated by the fact that in the absence of the Assembly, budget for the current Financial Year was approved by the caretaker cabinet at different intervals. It also resolved to timely convened the budget session of the Provincial Assembly for approving budget for the next Financial Year.

Presided by Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur the meeting was held in Pakhtunkhwa House Islamabad on Monday in which detailed deliberations were held on various other agenda items. Minister, Advisors, Special Assistants along with relevant government officers attended the meeting. Explaining the details of the decisions of the cabinet meeting, Adviser to the Chief Minister on Information and Public Relations Barrister Dr. Saif said that the provincial cabinet has taken important decisions in its fifth meeting.

He said that the provincial cabinet has decided that such ministers who do not belong to Peshawar and do not have

an official residence will be given Rs. 200,000. If taken, rent will be paid by the government and the utility bills of the house will also be included in the same rupees.

Barrister Dr. Saif said that since 2014, the ministers who had the facility of official residence were deducted Rs. 70,000 Barrister Dr Saif said that house rents have increased in 2024 and a suitable house can be found on this amount. It is merit to mention here that the Cabinet approved amendment in the "NWFP Ministers Salaries, Allowances and Privileges Act 1975" as well as revision of the terms and conditions of the Adviser and Special Assistants to Chief Minister. The amendments have been carried out to facilitate residential accommodation of the Ministers due to shortage of government residences and non-availability of rented homes as per rates fixed in the Act.

Barrister Dr. Saif said that keeping in view the backwardness and security situation of the merged districts the provincial cabinet has also approved 503 million rupees for the deputy commissioners of the merged districts for the next three years. He said that the expenditure will go through a process of audit and nothing will be kept secret. He said that from 2021 to 24 20, 1303 million rupees were allocated for deputy

commissioners in tribal districts and FR. According to details, District Bajaur will be given Rs.40,000, Khyber Rs.200,000, Kurram Rs.25,000, Mohmand Rs. 150,000, North Waziristan Rs. 40,000, Orakzai Rs. 19,000, South Waziristan Upper Rs. 45,000, and South Waziristan Lower 15,000, during the upcoming three years. It is worth mentioning that before merger of erstwhile FATA with the Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Deputy Commissioners of Tribal Districts (previously called 'Political Agents) were collecting Agency Development Fund from the erstwhile Agencies, which used to be spent for the general welfare of the Agency. After merger, the Federal Government discontinued the collection of Agency Development Fund, Permits and other taxes.

The cabinet also approved the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Charitable Commission Employees Terms and Conditions of Service Rules 2024.

The Charitable Commission has been established in 2019 under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Charities Act 2019. The prime objective of the Commissioner is to register, administer and regulate charities, fund raising, appeal and collection of charitable funds for charities through an effective

monitoring and accountability of promoters, collectors and recipients'. Immediately these rules will enable the Provincial Government clear the backlog of pending cases of charity organizations waiting for registrations.

Disagreeing with the recommendations put forward in the meeting minutes of the Standing Committee of the Senate of Pakistan, the provincial cabinet decided to go ahead with the already approved plan for Swat Motorway Phase II. The Senate committee, in its meeting on May 16, 2023, suggested alterations to the project's design, but the cabinet asserted that the current design adheres to international standards and sound engineering principles.

Furthermore, the cabinet highlighted that the Senate committee's recommendations are not obligatory for the provincial government and might impede the project's timely execution. As proposed by the Labor Department, the Cabinet approved the establishment of Labor Court at District Kohat and the extension of the jurisdictions of Labor Courts to the Merged Districts. The cabinet also approved establishment of camp offices for the Labor courts in District Chitral, Buner and Bannu.

The provincial Cabinet also approved the allotment of two kanals state land, situated inside Tehsil

Building at Jamrud District Khyber, to the Federal Government for construction of office-cum-residential accommodation on payment of market value in relaxation of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Procurement Regular Authority Amended Act No. V clause (14) sub-clause (1).

The Cabinet also constituted a ministerial committee to look into the grievances of the employees regularized under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Employees (Regularization of Services) Act 2018. The committee will review cases and present recommendations before the cabinet for consideration in compliance with the directions of the High Court. The cabinet as per the request of the Registrar Peshawar High Court, approved Rs.89.280 million for purchasing 18 Suzuki Swift cars fare 18 newly created post of senior civil judges in the family courts of the Province.

The Cabinet also approved an allowance of Rs. 300,000 per month for incumbent DG Aviation. The Administration Department had requested for it as per the agreement and service rules for the post of Director General Aviation, both serving and retired officer of BPS-20/21 of Pakistan Air Force can be posted as DG Aviation and the incumbent DG Aviation submitted a request that since he was being

paid by the PAF, hence, an amount may be sanctioned to him in accordance with the said agreement. It is to be noted that the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa owns two Helicopters i.e MI-17 and Ecureuil AS 350 83 for official use. The Chief Minister on this occasion directed to prepare a case for converting one of these helicopters (MI-17) into an air ambulance in the larger interest of the people of the Province.

Relaxing the ban on the purchase of appliances for the Administration Department, the provincial cabinet allowed the provision of funds amounting to Rs. 18.808 million (Phase-I) for the purchase of handheld scanners and cell phone detectors. The appliances will be utilized to curb the increasing trend of using modern electronic gadgets for cheating in exams held under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Service Commission. The provincial cabinet also allowed the handing over of one kanal plot of DG Agriculture Research Center to Pakhtunkhwa Highways Authority for construction of PKHA complex. The plot is annexed to the under-construction PKHA Complex on GT Road at Tarnab while in lieu thereof the Agriculture Department will be given another adjacent plot in the same number khasra.

Minister announces development schemes

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Minister for Minorities Affairs Ramesh Singh Arora said on Monday the Punjab government is starting development schemes worth millions of rupees for the Christian community. Speaking at the funds and Easter grant distribution ceremony in Narowal's village Shaari, the minister reiterated the government's unwavering commitment to safeguarding the rights of every citizen, said a hand-out issued here.

The minister urged the Christian community to actively engage in identifying schemes in their localities, aiming to dispel any misconceptions about governmental efficacy.

Assuring swift redressal of community issues in Narowal, he pledged to personally oversee the resolution process, underscoring the PML-N government's resumption of the developmental journey.

Emphasizing collective responsibility, he called for vigilant monitoring of ongoing projects. Notably, the commencement of the cemetery boundary wall construction in Shaari symbolizes tangible progress.

Furthermore, Minister Arora stressed the imperative of educational empowerment, urging parents to prioritize their children's education for a brighter future. Earlier, the warm reception by a large number of Christian community members underscored solidarity and support for the government's initiatives, resonating with the beat of drums.

SIU arrests murder-robbery suspect

KARACHI (APP): The Karachi Police's Special Investigation Unit (SIU)/Crime Investigation Agency (CIA), apprehended a wanted suspect connected to a fatal robbery.

SSP SIU Adeel Chandio disclosed on Monday that acting on a tip-off, the SIU arrested the individual implicated in a robbery-murder case near Sohrah Goth's Service Road.

The apprehended suspect, identified as Nadeem Khan, stands accused of participating in the April 15, 2024 incident where he and his accomplice, Ikramullah, fatally shot Nabi Daad during a robbery in Scheme 33, Lasi Goth. They also seized the victim's mobile phone. The incident was reported at the Sohrah Goth police station. Nadeem, the detained suspect, fired the fatal shots at Nabi Daad, while Ikramullah operated the motorcycle. Authorities recovered the murder weapon, a 9mm pistol, from Nadeem.

A case has been filed against Nadeem under the Sindh Arms Act at the SIU police station for the illegal possession of firearms. Ikramullah, Nadeem's accomplice, was arrested at the Sohrah Goth police station on April 24. Nadeem has a history of prior arrests at the Sohrah Goth police station and has served time in jail. Investigations into Nadeem's potential involvement in other incidents are ongoing.

CM meets New York police officers to share experiences

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah met with a delegation of 22 members from the Pakistani American Law Enforcement Society (PALES) of the New York Police Department and discussed their respective policing systems and shared experiences.

During the meeting, PALES offered the chief minister to train provincial local police officers in dealing with street crime, petty crimes, intelligence work, traffic management, and vigilance.

The 22-member delegation of the PALES was led by Rohail Khalid. In the delegation the officers of different police assignments such as Integrity Control officer, Traffic Enforcement, Intelligence, Training Bureau, Identification Bureau, Patrol, and others.

Sindh Home Secretary Iqbal Memon, IG Police Ghulam nabi Memon, Secretary to CM Raheem Shaikh, and others also attended the meeting.

The chief minister welcomed the New York Police Department delegation and discussed the issue of terrorism in Karachi, which he attributed to the Afghan war and regional politics. He acknowl-

edged the sacrifices made by the police and law enforcement agencies, with the support of his government, to eliminate terrorism in the area.

The chief minister further highlighted the challenge of street crime in the city, against which the police and Rangers have initiated operations. He also mentioned that the government was working on amending laws to utilise technology in dealing with repeat criminals.

The delegation members emphasized that only a small group of 10 per cent of the population was responsible for committing crimes against 90 per cent. They suggested that if criminals were aware of being watched, they would avoid committing crimes.

The delegation members also agreed with the chief minister on the importance of using technology to control crime.

The New York Police Department offered to train the Sindh police.

The chief minister appreciated the offer and directed the Inspector General of Police to examine the proposal and submit a plan for sending police officers to New York for training.

Sindh govt plans to conduct random drug tests on students: Sharjeel

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Senior Minister for Information, Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control as well Transport and Mass Transit System Sharjeel Inam Memon has said the Sindh government making efforts to protect younger generation from the menace of drugs.

While addressing a press conference on Monday, he said that the societies around the world were facing a common challenge. The Senior Minister said that the Sindh government was planning to conduct random drug tests on students in educational institutions. If any child tested positive, their case will be handled with complete confidentiality. Additionally, strict action will be taken against those involved in supplying drugs. He said our children were studying in public and private schools, colleges and universities and it was our responsibility to protect them. Sharjeel said that the scourge of drugs persisted in the province. The crackdown of the Sindh government would continue until the end of the drugs.

All the departments of the Sindh government, especially the Minister of Home Affairs, Zia-ul-Hasan Lanjar, are also with us in this grand action against drug mafia.

President Asif Ali Zardari, in his recent visit to Karachi, has given special instructions to end the scourge of drugs.

He further said that the Excise and Taxation Department and the Sindh Police under the special supervision of Chief

Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah have taken vigorous actions against drug peddling in the last one and a half months.

Now, there will be even more stringent action, with operations carried out with the assistance of the Police, Rangers, Excise Taxation, and Anti-Narcotics Force.

He mentioned that the Sindh government was planning to establish new rehabilitation centers. He urged parents to pay special attention to their children and requested the media to conduct an awareness campaign against drugs, especially ice (methamphetamine). He claimed that in the last month and a half, 1550 suspects have been arrested in ongoing operations against drug dealers. Authorities have seized 236 kg of ice, 900 grams of heroin, and 51,906 kg of hashish from drug dealer, the Department of Excise and Taxation and Narcotics Control has confiscated a large quantity of drugs in an operation against drug dealers.

He emphasized that those who lead the youth into drug addiction were national criminals. Sharjeel mentioned that the ongoing operation in Katcha was making progress, with the Sindh Police achieving significant success. Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the Sunni Ittehad Council had not submitted the list for reserved seats. He emphasized that the country operated under the constitution of Pakistan, and it cannot run based on anyone's wishes.

Minister stresses collective efforts to uplift underprivileged class

LAHORE (APP): A delegation of the British High Commission, British Council and UNICEF led by Clara Strandhoj, head of the British High Commission Lahore, visited the Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Maal office here on Monday.

The delegation held a meeting with Punjab Minister for Social Welfare Sohail Shaukat Butt and explored potential collaboration in several social welfare projects. The meeting was attended by Secretary of Social Welfare Iqbal Hussain, Director General of Social Welfare Aamna Munir, Ali Naqvi from FCDO, Deputy Head of the British High Commission Saeed Ul Hassan, Tanya Durani from UNFPA, Yasmin Zaidi and Arshad Mahmood from Aawaz II, and Zahida Manzoor and Azlan Butt from UNICEF.

During the session, the secretary of social welfare provided an orientation on potential collaboration in several social welfare projects with partners.

Social Welfare Minister Sohail Shaukat Butt expressed gratitude to Clara Strandhoj and the delegation, emphasizing the importance of uplifting underprivi-

leged classes through mutual cooperation with the British High Commission and other stakeholders. He stressed the need for strict implementation of legislation concerning gender-based violence, assistance to victims, and prevention of child marriage. Highlighting the role of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, he emphasized the importance of timely enforcement of laws, especially through programmes aimed at assisting vulnerable women and children. Plans were discussed for improving conditions in shelters, orphanages, and other institutions, with a focus on better exit strategies for those leaving such facilities. The minister also outlined initiatives to integrate transgender individuals into society through training programmes in various fields and ensuring complete protection against gender-based violence for women of all religions.

Regarding welfare programmes, the minister highlighted the digital registration for disabled individuals under the Himmat Card and Nigheban Card programmes, along with efforts to provide interest-free loans to the disabled.



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Defence & Defence Production Khawaja Muhammad Asif, presenting a souvenir to H.E. Nicolas Galey, Ambassador of France.

Governance and Compliance Manager to revolutionize business

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In accordance with worldwide standards and regulatory requirements, the company has implemented sustainability related frameworks, such as Enterprise Risk Management (ERM), Lessons Learnt, and Health Safety Environment (HSE). For Descon to evaluate the effectiveness of these frameworks and to continue progress towards its sustainability and operational goals, accurate and transparent reporting was essential.

The leader in analytics has announced a new partnership with the multinational engineering company Descon Engineering Limited. Descon has chosen SAS as its trusted partner to develop an innovative and highly customized solution that enables qualified analysis and decision-making based on reliable data. Recognized globally for its quality, safety and on-time delivery of projects and products, Descon provides comprehensive solutions ranging from project conception to the establishment of fully operational facilities in industries such as oil and gas, petrochemicals, and power, among others.

"Since multiple business management and monitoring activities

were mostly carried out using semi-automated spreadsheets that required a significant amount of manual effort, human mistakes and delayed reporting were unavoidable," said Tahir Mehmood, Head of Digitalization at Descon. "Through the implementation of SAS Governance and Compliance Manager (GCM), we were able to create a tailored solution that precisely met our unique needs, ensuring interoperability with our proprietary business processes developed over many decades of operation. This allowed us to make qualified analyses and decisions based on reliable data."

With SAS GCM, Descon has developed a reliable and user-friendly solution that senior executives can trust for shaping opinions and decision making. Instead of worrying about data consolidation, managers and analysts can now immediately identify areas for improvement by rapidly analyzing the available data.

Having the capacity to track the history of records has also assisted Descon in better understanding the sequence of events. Ultimately, SAS has enabled Descon to become curiosity-driven, leading to better insights, decisions and growth. In

addition, the flexibility of the SAS platform allows Descon to further improve the solution in response to evolving business dynamics.

Senior Customer Success Manager at SAS Middle East Salem Abou Fakhr stated: "As organizations strive to digitally transform with agility and speed while maintaining regulatory compliance, analytically driven decision making is becoming a critical differentiator. SAS brings the best-in-class analytics and AI to nearly every industry, building solutions to fit specific organizational needs, regardless of company size."

Due to the innovative nature of this project, the Descon team's tireless efforts and the assistance of local SAS partner TRA, played an instrumental role in the successful outcome."

From banking, where decisioning is used to provide more personalized customer experiences or to prevent fraud, to manufacturing, where AI-driven organizations make confident decisions on quality or supply chain optimization, SAS is effectively helping businesses across all industries make transparent and explainable decisions to build trust for the long term and outpace tomorrow.

Youth Parliament appointed cabinet members

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Youth Parliament appointed new members including Syed Wajid Ali Shah as Minister for Tourism and Sheraz Khan Afridi as Overseas Minister, on Monday.

In this regard the notification stated that Midrar as Minister for Health, Shoaib Khan as Defense Minister, Shoaib Khan as Excise and Taxation Minister.

Muhammad Adnan Minister for Religious affairs, Tilha Iqbal as Sports Minister, Farhan as Technical trainings Minister, Abbubakar as Social Welfare Minister and Umar Fayyaz is appointed as Minister for IT and Telecommunications.

Geo-tagging of 3,000 mineral deposits completed

LAHORE (APP): Under the Chief Inspectorate of Mines App, developed by Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) for the Punjab Minerals Department, more than 3,000 mineral deposits have been geo-tagged, while more than 1,000 inspections have been done by 14 inspectors deployed in 7 different regions.

This was told in a progress review meeting presided over by PITB Chairman Faisal Yousuf held at Arfa Software Technology Park (ASTP). PITB Additional Director General (ADG) Qasim Ifzal, Director Atif Hussain and other senior officials also attended the meeting.

The participants of the meeting were apprised that PITB has facilitated the Department of Minerals to digitize all mineral mine sites and conduct inspection through mobile phones in a paperless environment.

In addition, the system facilitates the department in tracking the presence of Emergency Rescue Equipment at the mine.

CM welcomes Saudi trade delegation to Pakistan

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif while welcoming the Saudi trade delegation coming to Pakistan expressed best wishes for the success of the Pakistan Saudi Arabia Investment Conference.

In her message, the CM warmly welcomed the Saudi investors coming to Pakistan. The CM said the Saudi Arabia is an all-weather reliable brotherly country of Pakistan. "Our historical fraternal relationship is changing into an economic partnership," she said. Holding the Pak-Saudi Arabia Investment Conference is a promise of prosperity, she mentioned.

Maryam Nawaz Sharif said the arrival of a 50-member delegation from 30 Saudi companies is a clear proof of Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman's attachment to Pakistan. She welcomed the direct agreement between Saudi and Pakistani investors.

CM praises police for busting Jordan gang: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif appreciated the police for arresting Jordan gang, the biggest narcotics supplier in Lahore and recovering drugs worth millions of rupees.

The Chief Minister called the police officers in her office on Monday and lauded their performance.

The Punjab Police achieved this historic success under the special directions of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif and traced the accused with the help of IT and other modern techniques.

The CM directed the police to continue crackdown against drug barons with the same spirit. Earlier, the CM was briefed by the authorities concerned that Jordan was considered to be a mysterious and influential drug supply gang in Lahore. It was told that Marijuana, ICE, hashish, opium and other drugs were provided in imported packaging.

Drugs in the form of chocolate, toffee etc. were sent from Central Asia, Canada, Mexico and other countries.

The authorities also apprised the CM Punjab that Muhammad Ayub, operating under the name of Jordan, was supplying drugs in Pakistan through various sources.

Members of the Jordan gang including Mohammad Ali, Aziz, Muhammad Nadeem, Samina Iftikhar, Sana and Fatima Zahra were arrested in DHA Phase-6, along with nine gunmen. The accused were supplying drugs by contacting the supplier in Pakistan through fake ID. The IG Police, CCPO, Additional Secretary Law and Order, SSP and other officials were also present on the occasion.

Commissioner inspects city's development projects

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Divisional Commissioner Zaid-bin-Maqsood on Monday conducted a comprehensive tour of various ongoing mega development projects in the provincial capital.

Accompanied by DG LDA, Tahir Farooq, the commissioner inspected the Ravi Bridge expansion project and the Controlled Access Corridor Band Road Lahore project.

During the briefing by Chief Engineer LDA, it was highlighted that upon completion of the Ravi Bridge expansion project, residents will experience significant relief on major internal and external routes of the city. The commissioner was briefed about the challenges faced, particularly the redirection of river flow, which necessitated continuous efforts by teams working round the clock.

Out of the 96 phases of the project, 91 have been

completed, with work progressing on the remaining 7. Subsequently, the commissioner along with DG LDA Tahir Farooq, also visited both packages of the Band Road project. Work on Package 2 of the Band Road project is underway, with traffic flow management initiatives also in progress. The briefing emphasized the accelerated pace of work on both packages, with a focus on rapid completion. Commissioner Zaid-bin-Maqsood directed authorities to expedite work on these mega projects, ensuring timely relief for Lahorites.

Officials from LDA, NES-PAK, and relevant departments were present during the inspection. Meanwhile, the commissioner chaired a review meeting regarding smog prevention measures at his office and stressed the importance of analyzing the adverse health

effects of smog, emphasizing the need for research reports to formulate effective strategies. He commended the Water Commission for its efforts in combating environmental pollution.

The commissioner instructed the Agriculture Department to provide machinery for the eradication of crop residues. He underscored a zero-tolerance policy against all sectors contributing to smog and directed authorities to monitor brick kilns, factories, and industrial units in accordance with smog prevention policies.

CEO LWMC Babar Sahib Din, Development Director Javed Rashid Chohan and representatives from LDA, Environment Department, Forest Department, and Cantonment Boards attended the meeting. DCS from all districts participated via video link.



LAHORE: Students participating in Arts and Painting Competition organized by Qasr Behbood Social Welfare and Baitul Mal Department, The Formanite School System.

US officials discuss bilateral cooperation with KP Governor

PESHAWAR (APP): Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy, Andrew Shofer and US Consul General in Peshawar, Shante Moore, called on Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi at the Governor's House on Monday.

During the meeting, the Deputy Chief of Mission and the Consul General congratulated Governor Faisal Karim Kundi on

assuming office. They discussed various matters of mutual interest, including collaboration between US development agencies and the provincial government, as well as bilateral cooperation in different sectors. Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa emphasized the need to promote two-way relations and connections between the people of the two countries. He also stressed the

importance of peace for the development and prosperity of the province, particularly in the tribal and southern districts, which have been severely affected by terrorism.

Governor Faisal Karim Kundi expressed his desire for good relations with all neighboring countries, including Afghanistan, and acknowledged the decades-long hospitality extended to Afghan refugees in Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa and across the country.

He also mentioned the ongoing process of dignified repatriation of illegal Afghan refugees living in the country.

Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy, Andrew Shofer, mentioned that American development and aid organizations are working in the province, aiming to improve public welfare and well-being.



PESHAWAR: Additional Secretary Social Welfare Muhammad Farooq and Program Manager UNICEF, Dr Wisam in a group photo with the other officials and participants during the closing ceremony of Child Protection Case Management Training.

Elimination of corruption termed national duty

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: District and Sessions Judge Peshawar Inam Ullah Wazir said that corruption is a major social curse and its elimination is our national responsibility, on Monday. He expressed these views during an introductory meeting with the employees of the Session Court while Civil Judge Imran Ullah was also present.

District and Sessions Judge Inamullah Wazir said that he has a long association with Peshawar Session Court, having served as a Civil Judge for three years and then as an Additional Session Judge. He emphasized the importance of judiciary and responsibilities of court employees, urging them to play a role in curbing corruption.

DSJ encouraged employees to be honest and hardworking, and warned that corrupt employees would be fired and action would be taken against them. He also directed employees to treat litigants with kindness and respect, as they come to court already troubled and distressed.

Finally, he emphasized the importance of keeping their uniforms clean and adhering to punctuality. He also stressed upon the need to eliminate corruption, emphasized the importance of

judiciary and court employees' responsibilities, and encouraged employees to be honest, hardworking, and kind to litigants.

DSJ Peshawar inaugurates book exhibition

Meanwhile, District and Sessions Judge Peshawar, Inamullah Wazir inaugurated book exhibition organized by District Bar Association at the Peshawar Bar, on Monday.

The event was attended by President of Peshawar Bar Association Amjad Ali Marwat, General Secretary Azharullah, Vice President, Abdul Haseeb and Press Secretary Afzal Khan Baba Khel along with cabinet members.

District and Sessions Judge Peshawar, Inamullah Wazir, visited the stalls and showed interest in the books on various subjects, praising the effort of the bar association. PBA president Amjad Ali Marwat advocate said that lawyers and books are inseparable, and a lawyer without books is incomplete.

He added that the Peshawar Bar had organized a book exhibition in 2021, considering the convenience of lawyers. He claimed that the book exhibition was arranged with the aim of promoting legal knowledge and resources among lawyers.

Traffic Police license branch to remain open on Saturdays

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar City Traffic Police Monday announced the driving license branch will remain open on Saturdays to better serve citizens.

According to the spokesperson, the branch will operate from 9 am to 5 pm.

The step will mark the first time in the history of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's that such extension in the service of the traffic police will be provided.

Chief Traffic Officer Peshawar, Saud Khan emphasized that this decision aligns with the priority of prioritizing citizen facilitation.

Previously, services were limited on Monday to Friday, Chief Traffic Officer Peshawar, Saud Khan added.

Minister welcomes SC decision on reserve seats

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Minister for Public Health Engineering of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Malik Pukhtoon Yar Khan, has welcomed the Supreme Court's decision to declare the judgment of the Peshawar High Court null and void.

Speaking briefly to media representatives, he said that the Supreme Court's decision to declare the judgment of the

Peshawar High Court null and void has upheld justice and truth.

He expressed strong hope that the final decision would also be in favor of the ruling coalition, as there has been extreme injustice against our party, and we have been deprived of legitimate rights.

However, there is hope, as God's timing is never wrong. He stated that a large gathering will take

place in Dera Ismail Khan on May 9, in which a significant caravan from southern districts, especially Bannu district, will participate.

We will prove that the cases filed against us regarding the events of May 9 were based on lies. Our party teaches the lesson of peace and brotherhood, not chaos.

This country belongs to all of us, not to any individual. It is everyone's

joint responsibility to protect it and lead it towards progress.

He emphasized that the dream of progress and prosperity is revolving in our minds, but the mindset of the opposition is stuck in revenge politics. How long will these people continue with their temporary and revengeful politics? We need to take the country and the nation towards progress and happiness.

Defending KP: Police shortages threaten security

Muhammad Ilyas Khan Sadozai

KHYBER Pakhtunkhwa Police is vigorously combating terrorism despite facing a shortage of officers and personnel. At present, there is an overall shortage of 68 senior officers including 41 grade 19 officers and 27 officers in grade 18. Despite repeated reminders to the relevant federal ministry, the issue of officer shortage in KP Police remains unresolved.

The provincial government, along with the federal government, is not giving due attention to the pressing issues faced by the police. Currently, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police is grappling not only with a shortage of senior officers but also facing challenges due to the population growth. This includes a scarcity of police constables in almost every district, which is undoubtedly impacting the effectiveness of the police force.

Despite the limited manpower, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police, including Peshawar, has successfully maintained a crackdown against anti-social elements. However, the return of impending challenges has been highlighted during the recent visit of Provincial Ministers and Members of the

Assembly to the Police Lines in Peshawar. This prompted the Assembly members to swiftly raise their voices on the relevant forum for the resolution of all issues.

Internationally, police staffing is determined based on the population. According to international standards, four police officers are recommended per thousand population. However, proper staffing arrangements are lacking in KP, especially in Peshawar. According to the last census, Peshawar's population is more than 4 million, and adding IDPs, Afghan refugees, and others, it exceeds 6 million. However, the current number of police officers in Peshawar falls significantly short of the international standard. Similarly, the establishment of new housing colonies in the surroundings of Peshawar has changed its landscape, leading to challenges in addressing the issues arising from the increasing population. Efforts are being made to control the problems arising from the population growth, but considering the population of 6 million, Peshawar requires at least 24,000 police officers according to international standards. However, the current number of officers falls far short of this requirement, adversely affecting both security and

the professional capabilities of police.

Moreover, the basic element of a police force is the number of police constables. Therefore, increasing the number of constables is essential for enhancing police effectiveness. The government must prioritize increasing police staffing and improving their training to ensure public safety and maintain law and order effectively.

It is evident that while KP Police is at the forefront of the fight against terrorism, the incentives for its officers are lower compared to other provinces. Discrepancies in salaries and shortages in personnel negatively impact the morale and performance of police, necessitating immediate attention from the authorities.

To enhance the effectiveness of KP Police, it is imperative to address existing challenges comprehensively. This includes not only rectifying staffing deficiencies but also ensuring equitable remuneration and fostering an enabling environment for officers to discharge their duties with dedication and professionalism.

It is high time that the authorities take concrete steps to resolve these issues and equip KP Police to fulfill its mandate of safeguarding the province and its inhabitants effectively.

The Importance of vaccinations

Narmeen Zafar



"Vaccines are a crucial shield against infectious diseases, protecting not only the individual but also the community at large. By getting vaccinated, we can prevent the spread of diseases, reduce the risk of outbreaks, and protect vulnerable populations such as the elderly and young children. Vaccination is a safe and effective way to safeguard our health and well-being."

Mental Health Awareness

Misha Javid



"Mental health awareness is crucial in today's fast-paced world, where stress and anxiety can easily overwhelm us. It's essential to prioritize self-care and seek help when needed, as mental wellness is just as important as physical health. By breaking down stigmas and encouraging open conversations, we can work towards a healthier and happier society."

Innovations in Surgical Techniques

Maham Azam



"Advances in surgical techniques have transformed the medical landscape, enabling minimally invasive procedures and faster recovery times. Robotic-assisted surgery and laparoscopic methods have improved precision and reduced scarring. These innovations are enhancing patient outcomes and improving the overall surgical experience."

Hujra culture still alive in KP despite growth of social media

PESHAWAR (APP): Despite mushroom growth of social media platforms, the nearly 5,000 years-old culture of hujra is still continued in villages of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where people celebrate joyous occasions including marriages and birthdays on beatsdrums besides swapping tales of day to day happenings in a soothing environment.

Enjoying the musical rabab with tabla played by artists Dilaram Khan and Masood Khan in a marriage function, the residents of Mohib Banda Nowshera gather in the hujra of Bahadar Khan on every Sunday where they exchange views on regional and international issues, sports, culture besides celebrate their siblings' successes.

"As per my father's will, I had never closed my hujra doors for anyone since 2000. Today, we had gathered to celebrate the engagement of a local youth amid beatsdrums and rabab that enthralled youth," said Bahadar Khan, whose hujra was a centre of warmth, friendship besides cementing bonds of brotherhood and tolerance in society.

He said that children learn alot from seniors citizens at hujra besides abiding to rich Pakhtuns culture.

"The culture of hujra was as old as history of Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa itself" said Bakhtzada Khan, senior research officer archeology and museums department KP while talking to APP.

On the basis of archaeological evidence recovered from Gor Kathri excavations, he said hujra was existed in some 5000 years ago in KP and continued even today despite invasion of social media.

He said that Pakhtuns was very ancient tribe of the region whose history can trace to about 5,000 years ago, adding the origin of the hujra is as old as Pakhtun history.

"This institution had originated alongside the social life of

Pakhtuns because hospitality was second nature to them and to be hospitable, they needed the hujra where people warmly welcome guests even today".

He said it was hard to imagine a village without a hujra in a pakhtuns society in ancient history and was passed from one generation to other. The great pashto poets, Rehman Baba, Khushal Khan Khattak, Ghani Khan, Ameer Shah Shinwari and Rehmat Hama Sail also highlighted significance of the hujra in their literary works.

He said hujra is a multi-purpose cultural space, exclusively for men, built and maintained collectively by the villagers as it

ties them together as a community.

"A hujra is considered much more than a mere building or a room in a village. It has served as a seat of learning, a centre for teaching young people about Pakhtun traditions by abiding to

occupied centre-stage in Pakhtun communities for good reason where people shared each other's success and griefs.

Pashto Ghazal maestro and Pride of Performance Khyal Muhammad said that hujra is the backbone of Pashtun society

and has a unique distinction in global cultures.

"When I was young, the hujras were jam-packed with people. My first priority was stage performance in hujra compare to other forums," he said. With passage of times, he said that hujra were converted into houses due to population bulge and speedy growth of social media tools.

He said that hujra had a long

Famous actor, Javed Babar said that other nations may have guest houses, community centres, gymnasiums, playgrounds and wedding halls but, in Pakhtun culture, all of these activities take place in one hujra, which is a reflection of Pashtun's rich culture.

He said that it was hujra where youth was used to learn ethics such as respect for elders and avoiding idle talk; adding a person well-versed in the norms of the hujra is called 'hujra pass.'

Babar said that in case a person was a PhD scholar, but unaware of the values of the hujra, he is deemed as someone who has not mastered the ethics of Pakhtun culture.

He said that hujra functions as a sort of parliament house for Pashtuns where they can achieve collective goals such as specifying a proper burial place for someone in the graveyard or resolving security issues besides young people learn the art of dialogue and dispute resolution here.

The speakers said that revival of the hujra is not an impossible mission and certain steps such as the installation of wifi for youngsters need to be taken, so that they can fulfill their educational and entertainment needs under the supervision of elders.

They said indoor games such as table tennis could also be introduced to attract their presence and participation.

The experts feared that if Pashtuns fail to revive the hujra, Pakhtun youth will be left isolated and this could lead to psychological and mental health issues besides a setback to local politics.

They underscored the need to re-establish the hujra with the consensus of all stakeholders such as the political government, the community, cultural experts and institutions necessary to bolster peace.

The experts said that KP government could chalk out a plan for the revival of hujra such as allocation of rooms for a library, indoor games, a meeting hall and guest room with internet facility and essential furniture to facilitate young lots. They said that constructing shops nearby could generate revenue which could be used for the maintenance of the hujra.

ANP led government in 2008-2013 had provided special funds to 700 hujras collectively owned by the people in the entire province. These hujras were converted to community centres that help people to participate in social, political and recreational activities in positive manners.





In brief

Two shot killed one injured F.P. Report

BUNER: The mother and son were shot killed while another woman (daughter-in-law of the deceased) injured due to firing by unknown culprits inside home at midnight in village Soray tehsil Chaghorzai, Buner, district. Police registered a case of double murder and attempt to murder against the unknown accused on the report of injured lady. The injured lady (R) resident of Soray Chaghorzai has stated that last night she and her husband were sleeping in their room while her mother-in-law was in another room while they heard firing. She with husband and her mother in law came out of rooms at the moment two unknown armed men started shooting at them. The complaint got injured on her left leg while husband and mother in law died. The injured woman has stated in her report that they have no enmity with anyone. The dead bodies and injured woman have been shifted to the district headquarters hospital Daggar by locals and police. The dead bodies have been handed over to the heirs fulfilling medicolegal proceedings. Meanwhile, the Gulbandi police station has registered a case against the unknown accused and started investigation and conducting raids to arrest the accused and claimed to trace and arrest them soon.

Police arrests 11 alleged culprits F.P. Report

LARKANA: Police arrested 11 alleged culprits from different areas of Larkana district while recovered alcohol, two stolen motorcycles, two valuable mobile phones and a buffalo from their possession. According to details, the accused Mudassar Zangju has been arrested along with pistol and bullets. While the Waris Dino Machhi police foiled the drug supply attempt and arrested the accused Iqar Anad along with two and a half kilos of hashish, on the other hand, the Waris Dino Machhi police also recovered the stolen buffalo belonging to Ahmed Ali Brohi. Ratodero police have arrested two accused Akram Sianach and Azhar Sianach along with pistol and cannabis and registered separate cases. Along with a pistol and a large quantity of bullets and the accused. Moreover, alleged culprit Muhammad Ali Shah was arrested with four bottles of liquor and registered separate cases. Dari Tehana police staff have arrested the accused Amir Korai along with 08 bottles of liquor and registered a case, while the valuable mobile phone of the citizen Sadaqat Ali Shah has also been recovered.

JUI-F hold gathering F.P. Report

JACOBABAD: Jaamiat Ulema Islam Fazal (JUI-F) workers held a large gather with the title of Million March at Jacobabad while committed to struggle on street instead of debating in parliament house, on Monday. On behalf of JUI Sindh, the history-making house is not the Maidan, congratulations to the leader of Jamiat Maulana Fazlur Rehman for his clear stand against fraudulent elections, Amir Dr. A. G Ansari, said JUIF will go to public for success of the Million March and election 2024 results. While congratulating the leader of Sindh Allama Rashid Mahmood Soomro on his struggle and bravery, he said that such leaders who are ready to sacrifice their lives for religion and nationalism regardless of religion and race, salute him for all his orders.

ANP to raise voice for rights of Pukhtun, says Hussain Shah

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The newly elected provincial general secretary of the Awami National Party Hussain Shah Yousafzai has said that his party will never hesitate to raise voices for Pukhtun rights in the country. He was addressing party workers on his arrival to the area after election at Chakdara here the other day. Carrying party's red flags, dozens of the ANP workers warmly received him at the Chakdara Interchange on Swat motorway, and chanted slogans in his favour.

The ANP stalwart was then taken to his native village in a vehicular procession. Addressing the workers he said that the ANP was the only political party that always raised its voice for rights of Pukhtun. He said that party workers and leaders loved Wali Bagh, the home town of Late Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan in Charsadda. Mr Yousafzai said that Pukhtun across the country were faced with lawlessness and a sense of deprivation.

He said the ANP would be made more functional in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province under the leadership of Mian Ifikhar Hussain and Aimal Wali Khan. He said the disgruntled workers would be persuaded and united on a single platform. He said the ANP played a key role in national politics and he would convey the message of Bacha Khan to each and every nook and corner of the province.

One killed: A man identified as Khan Shahzada 54 was killed in firing when two brothers clashed over a pathway dispute at Sher Khani Dara in the jurisdiction of Haya Serai police station here the other day. The Rescue 1122 emergency team reached the spot and shifted the dead body to the district headquarters hospital Timergara. The Haya Serai police arrested the accused within hours and also recovered the gun used during the crime.

Citizen demand: A local resident of Alimast village of Adenzai has demanded the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Inspector General of Police and Malakand Regional Police Officer to direct the Chakdara police not to disturb local residents for protecting her 9th grader daughter from being kidnapped.

Flanked by advocate Imran Khan, Gul Muhammad and Jan Muhammad, one Fazal Akbar informed a presser at the Chakdara press club that his nephews had tried to kidnap her daughter during his examination here a few days ago while local residents foiled the bid and handed the accused over to the Chakdara police. He said that despite thanking the local residents, the Chakdara police were now teasing local residents as some influential people from the Malakand district were backing the accused. He said that local police should provide security to his family instead of disturbing it.

JUI-F set to mobilize workers for May 9th protest rally in Peshawar:

Jamiat Ulema Islam Fazl Lower Dir chapter on Monday asked party workers to mobilize people to participate in the Mat 9th protest demonstration to be held in Peshawar. Talking to local journalists at the Timergara press club the JUI-F district chief Sirajud Din and party patron-in-chief Muhammad Rahim Haqqani said that party workers from the Lower Dir district would travel to Peshawar in a vehicular procession for which all arrangements had been finalized.

They said that 100 vehicles had been arranged to take party workers to Peshawar on May 9. The JUI-F leaders said that they would never accept the rigged elections of Feb 2024 in which their mandate was stolen. They asked workers to be prepared for a massive agitation against the incumbent rulers as they had no moral and legitimate authority to govern Pakistanis.

Meanwhile the residents of Lower Dir complained that despite the decrease in the price of wheat flour, the price of roti has not been reduced as per official rates. Talking to local journalists at Timergara the residents said that 200 grams roti was being sold at Rs 40 almost in all markets of the district. They said the administration had fixed Rs 30 for 200 grams roti and Rs 15 for 100 grams roti but the naanbais were not ready to follow this rate.

The residents also complained that butchers had also increased the price of beef and mutton. They said that beef was being sold at Rs 1000 to Ra 1100 instead of Rs 750 fixed by the administration. They said that neither butchers nor naanbais were following the government rates. They demanded the district administration and authority of the Halal Food to take notice of the matter and provide relief to the consumers.

Road repair demanded: Motorists from the Lower and Upper Dir districts on Monday complained that numerous potholes and ditches had appeared on the main Chakdara Dir road after recent spells of heavy rains while the National Highway Authority was doing nothing to repair it. Talking to local journalists the motorists said that thousands of vehicles passed through the road daily but the overall dilapidated condition of the road caused misery to them.

They pointed out that the ditches had increased the risk of road accidents as most of the drivers tried to avoid them. They demanded of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and high ups of NHA to take notice of the bad road condition and start maintenance work on it without further delay. They said the administration and the NHA had failed to open choked culverts and roadside drains due to which rainwater always flowed on the main road. They demanded of the concerned authorities to repair the main Chakdara Timergara road, Rani to Khall road, Munda to Khzana, Balambat to Odigram and Maidan road.

Police arrests two alleged thieves

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Police arrested two alleged thieves and recovered several stolen water pumps and solar panel batteries from their possession. Talking to this reporter the station house officer Muhammad Ayub Khan said that one Gul Amir lodged a complaint about his motor pump theft.

The SHO said that local police started investigations and traced the culprits as they were selling the used solar batteries and water pumps in a local market. He said that seven water pumps and two solar batteries stolen from mosques were recovered from the accused.

SHO said the vehicle used during the crime was also taken into custody. He said the accused had confessed to the crimes and

was sent to jail. The SHO asked local residents to extend their cooperation to police for curbing street crimes and tracing the culprits. Dozens of water pumps from wells and solar systems batteries have been stolen in several villages of Talash during the last two months.

JI Congregation rejects 2024 election's result: Jamaat-i-Islami central deputy chief Dr Osama Razi has said the JI has rejected the results of 2024 general elections as Forms 47 are tempered. Addressing the JI monthly congregation at Ahya ul Uloom Balambat as chief guest here the other day he said that a government with a false mandate could not solve problems faced by the nation.

The JI district chief Izazul Mulk Afkari and other religious scholars

also addressed the function.

Dr Osama Razi said the government should be given to those who had won the elections as per Forms 45. He announced that the JI would soon launch its agitation campaign against the rulers for which other opposition parties were being contacted.

The JI leader alleged that his party mandate in Karachi local bodies polls was also stolen and asked the rulers to seek apology from the nation. He said the people of Karachi had voted to his party and it had won six provincial assembly seats there according to Form 45 but again its mandate was stolen. He demanded the formation of a judicial commission for probing actual results of the Feb 2024 general elections.

room doctors, when we took the patient suffering from severe pain to the B ward the staff sent us back to the A ward this process continued in a painful condition due to which my sister died by rubbing her heels. Sheikh Maltoon police station registered a case and start legal action.

District Council meeting held: The meeting of the district council of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam was held under the chairmanship of District Amir Maulana Muhammad Qasim. District Ameer Maulana Muhammad Qasim, District General Secretary Maulana Amanat Shah Haqqani, Hafiz Akhtar Ali, Qari Ehsan Mohsin, Azam Khan, Zahir Shah, Maulana Aqeel Ansari, Mufti Salim Halimi, Qari Niaz Ali and Maulana Qaisar-ud-din addressed the meeting.

The speakers said that thousands of party workers from Mardan district will participate in the Awami Assembly march to be held in Peshawar on May 9. JUI has completely rejected the February 8 elections. The worst rigging has been done in

the election. The current governments in the country are not public but imposed by the establishment. He said that today the children of the country know what is being played with the country; neither the bureaucracy nor the establishment has played any role in the freedom of Pakistan.

Scholars have played a great role in the struggle of the Pakistan Movement. Decisions of the country are not made by the elected representatives of the Parliament, but by the will of the forces outside the walls he is suffering from severe problems and is not in a happy state. Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman is going to the field of action for the real freedom of the country and is fighting for the democracy and survival of Pakistan.

In this regard, a million march has been organized in Peshawar in the name of Awami Assembly, in which people will participate in large numbers. In the meeting, various committees for Ansar-ul-Islam, Jamiat students, wahdat teachers, doctors and lawyers were also formed for the preparations of the



MANSEHRA: Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism and Culture, Zahid Chanzeb inquiring after health f injured police official at hospital.

Advisor commends performance of Police F.P. Report

MANSEHRA: Zahid Chanzeb, Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism and Culture, during his visit to Mansehra held a meeting with District Police Officer (DPO) Shafiuallah Gandapur at the DPO office and highly deplored the Bedra Interchange incident.

He appreciated the outstanding performance of the police team for immediately apprehending the accused involved in firing on the police team posted on duty. He also prayed for the elevation of martyred police jawan Aamir and the speedy recovery of injured soldier Naveed.

On this occasion, the Chief Minister's Advisor on Tourism and Culture handed over a check of Rs.1 lakh to DPO Mansehra for financial assistance to the martyr's widow, which will be delivered to her promptly on behalf of the advisor CM who is also MPA from Mansehra.

Zahid Chanzeb on this occasion paid rich tributes to the entire police team for the abrupt action on this incident and arresting the suspects involved in the martyrdom of the police jawan within few hours of the incident. He highly eulogized their professional skills and sense of duty as well. The Tourism Advisor acknowledged that Mansehra Police side by side with the KP Police is a force of martyrs and Ghazis and henceforth he salutes to their bravery and courage.

Later, Zahid Chanzeb also visited the local hospital to inquire after the health of police constable Naveed who was injured in the incident. While appreciating the courage of this brave police Jawan, he also gave him cash assistance of Rs 1 lakh from his own pocket in assistance for his treatment expenses.

DPO Mansehra thanked Zahid Chanzeb for his visit to the DPO office and the proper encouragement of police force. He assured that Mansehra police will not disappoint the provincial government and people despite its limited resources and less manpower.

Ministers review facilities at Sialkot Int'l Airport

F.P. Report

SIALKOT: Federal Minister of Interior and Anti-Narcotics Mohsin Naqvi along with Federal Minister of Aviation and Defense Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Monday paid a two-hour detail visit to Sialkot International Airport and reviewed the facilities for passengers at the arrival and departure terminals.

Expressing dissatisfaction over the facilities available at Sialkot Airport for passengers going abroad, the ministers directed to increase facilities at the Airport for the convenience of passengers.

Mohsin Naqvi noted that passengers leaving for abroad have to wait up to 60 minutes for immigration

and said that immigration counters to facilitate them in this connection. He ordered to complete the task of increasing immigration counters during the closure of Sialkot Airport for 15 days from 9 am due to runway extension project.

The federal ministers also directed the concerned authorities to complete the work of immigration counters and other facilities at Sialkot airport within 15 days. Minister Aviation and Defense Khawaja Asif said that the search process has been simplified for the convenience of passengers and ANF at Sialkot Airport, Customs and ASF check passengers at one place instead of three different

places.

Mohsin Naqvi said that 12 immigration counters should be operational when the airport reopens and the process of providing more facilities to passengers during the closure of the airport should be completed. He said that the passengers are our honoured guests and it is our responsibility to provide maximum comfort and convenience to them. Chief Executive Officer Sialkot Airport Air Vice Marshal (R) Tanveer Ashraf Bhatti, Brigadier Sikander of Anti-Narcotics Force Punjab, FIA Gujranwala Zone Director Sajid Akram, Airport Manager Nisar Ahmed and related officials were also present on the occasion.

Sustainable development linked with peace: Ahsan

F.P. Report

NAROWAL: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal has said that sustainable development is linked with peace in country and every individual, especially the youth responsible to fight against the miscreants who spread intolerance and misinformation in the society.

He was addressing the participants of Peace, Education and Development Conference organized by University of Narowal, at Narowal Sports Gymnasium on Monday. Ahsan Iqbal was of the view that major challenge faced by Pakistan was propaganda stemmed in misinformation fracturing the very basic ethics and value set of our society. Without peace there would be no sustainable progress and development, he said adding that the foundation basis of Islam was 'peace and peace' only.

The federal minister said that in past, unfortunately our politics had become a victim of intolerance and bigotry and even

some have used religion to victimize their opponents but salute to the people who rejected such elements with the power of their vote. He said the purpose of today's conference was that we had to make this country a citadel of peace as progress and prosperity depend on peace.

Ahsan Iqbal said that today youngsters should dive deep into the reason behind Pakistan's creation, it was struggle for peace which then was not possible as Muslims felt vulnerable as a minority – Thus, today, it was the duty of every Pakistani to protect its minorities and their rights. He said: "If we want Pakistan to enter top economies then we need to embrace "Mera Pakistan Movement" for each Pakistani working in different sectors, his or her circle of influence is their Pakistan". Citing the attack on him in past, the Federal Minister said that today's event on 6th May marks the sad day when a 'vulnerable young individual' fell victim to hate and bigotry propagated by intolerant elements of the society. However, with the

grace of Allah Almighty, he survived to champion.

Peace, education and development to prove that hate would always be defeated by positivity, he added. He said: "When the seeds of prejudice and hatred were planted in the mind of a person, then we have to consciously make every effort to get rid of this hatred so that we are not devoid of rational thinking". Today, he said that disinformation had become a big challenge for peace in the world, at this time it was responsibility of every individual to protect ourselves and the people around us from disinformation.

"We have to make our country one of the 10 best economic powers in the world by 2045, so we have to make our country the best country through peace-building, continuity of policies and continuous reforms like other successful countries", he added. Ahsan Iqbal said the country was a bouquet, adding "Our Christian brothers said to Britain at the time of Pakistan creation that our vote is with Pakistan, we should be made a part of Pakistan".

MMC staff booked for negligence delivery cases

F.P. Report

MARDAN: A case has been registered against the doctors and staff of Labor room and Gynae AB Wards on the complaint of the brother of a young woman who died due to the negligence of doctors in Mardan Medical Complex Hospital Mardan. A thirty-six-year-old woman died after giving birth to a child in the labor room through a normal delivery, after being severely hurt by the doctors and staff of the labor room and gynecology and obstetrics ward, police report.

According to the details, Shahzad son of Ayaz Khan a resident of Jhande told the police while filing a report against the doctors, nursing and gynecological staff of labor room and Gynecology A and B wards of Mardan Medical Complex Hospital at the hospital police post that my sister was brought to the maternity labor room where after the birth of a healthy child.

Later, the patient was transferred to the Gynae A ward on the instructions of the labor

room doctors, when we took the patient suffering from severe pain to the B ward the staff sent us back to the A ward this process continued in a painful condition due to which my sister died by rubbing her heels. Sheikh Maltoon police station registered a case and start legal action.

The speakers said that thousands of party workers from Mardan district will participate in the Awami Assembly march to be held in Peshawar on May 9. JUI has completely rejected the February 8 elections. The worst rigging has been done in

the election. The current governments in the country are not public but imposed by the establishment. He said that today the children of the country know what is being played with the country; neither the bureaucracy nor the establishment has played any role in the freedom of Pakistan.

Scholars have played a great role in the struggle of the Pakistan Movement. Decisions of the country are not made by the elected representatives of the Parliament, but by the will of the forces outside the walls he is suffering from severe problems and is not in a happy state. Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman is going to the field of action for the real freedom of the country and is fighting for the democracy and survival of Pakistan.

In this regard, a million march has been organized in Peshawar in the name of Awami Assembly, in which people will participate in large numbers. In the meeting, various committees for Ansar-ul-Islam, Jamiat students, wahdat teachers, doctors and lawyers were also formed for the preparations of the

Million March, which will prepare vigorously throughout the district. Sheikh Al Hadith will leave in the form of a procession from the district office under the leadership of Maulana Muhammad Qasim. All the workers should ensure their participation.

PTI to mobilize public: The central leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, former federal minister MNA Ali Muhammad Khan said that Pakistan was not liberated by gunpowder and tanks but by the struggle of the youth, political insight and the power of the pen. After Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah no other father of the nation can be born.

The current situation does not allow any deal. Maulana Fazal ur Rahman intends to join our movement against the government but we cannot trust anyone. Their eyes are always focused on power. On May 9, we will announce to play the decisive round. He was speaking at a seminar organized by Insaaf Students Federation Tehsil Takhtbhai regarding the release of Imran Khan and PTI workers

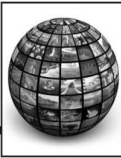
in military custody, Ehtisham Khan Advocate, Engineer Fahim-ud-din, ISF Mardan District President Ehsan Khan, General Secretary Arshad Ali Khan, Chief Organizer Shahzad Khan, Takhtbhai President Yasir Khan, General Secretary Dr. Abdul Rehman and others have said while speaking that on May 9 no official of the security agencies was martyred or injured.

A conspiracy was made. Today, Adyala Jail has become Guantanamo Bay Jail. It is becoming more and more difficult for the old workers of the party to get permission to meet Imran Khan this causes concern among the entire workers if the ruling class wants to repeat the tragedy like Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, then their thinking is extremely childish. He said that the fake government established through Form 47 has been rejected by the people. The Pakistani nation has voted for PTI and Imran Khan Inflation and unemployment are due to the current government.

The fake government has handed over the Pakistani nation to the World Bank and the IMF. Imran Khan is the only leader of

the world of Islam who is fighting the war of the Muslim Ummah. If leader Imran Khan is not released immediately, then there will be no hesitation in jamming the entire country. The founder of a major political party has been detained without any evidence of any crime, which is the extreme of injustice and cruelty. He said that the former Prime Minister of Pakistan and the founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Imran Khan and the innocent workers under the guise of May 9 should be released with dignity without delay.

He is a public leader and people expressed their trust in him by voting, but the Form 47 government cheated on the people's mandate and in total opposition to the democratic process, cheated on the public opinion and brought out the funeral of democracy. He said that we want supremacy of law and constitution. He warned that if Imran Khan and PTI workers in military custody are not released so PTI will start a decisive movement from May 9 and encircle the whole of Islamabad.



Labour must rebuild trust with Muslim voters: MP

LONDON (BBC): Labour's deputy campaign coordinator says her party needs to rebuild trust with Muslim voters, amid an apparent backlash over its stance on Gaza. The party's position on the Israel-Hamas war appears to have dented its support in Muslim areas in England's local elections. Labour's Ellie Reeves admitted it had "a lot of work to do" to rebuild support before the general election.

She added this included ensuring voters "understand our position". In 58 local council wards analysed by the BBC, where more than one-in-five residents identify as Muslim, Labour's share of the vote was 21% down on 2021, the last time most seats were contested. It was a downside to an otherwise positive performance for Labour, which saw it gain more than 170 councillors to take control of eight councils. The potential impact on a general election is unclear, however, with some evidence the biggest drops in support are largely confined to areas where the party's support was already very strong. And there are signs that any adverse reaction was less prominent in London, where incumbent Labour mayor Sadiq Khan called for a ceasefire before the party leadership did. Labour's vote is up by three points on average in parts of London where more than 15% identify as Muslim, compared with 4.5% where the proportion is less than this. Labour called for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza conflict in February, after months of wrangling over its position. Its initial stance after the war began, in which it called for humanitarian pauses in the fighting, prompted Labour

resignations in councils and from its frontbench last year. The decline in its vote share in areas with a big Muslim population appears to have been largely to the benefit of independent candidates standing in those areas. Ali Milani, chair of Labour Muslim Network, said Labour's positioning on Gaza "is going to have a serious electoral consequence".

"If I was a Labour MP in Bradford or Birmingham or Leicester or parts of London or Manchester I would be seriously concerned," he added. The Greens, who called for an "immediate ceasefire" just over a week after the war began, have also increased their share of the vote from 2021. Co-leader Carla Denyer said Labour's stance on the conflict had been the "final straw" for some Labour supporters who were already disappointed by policy U-turns in other areas. "I have met many voters on doorsteps who brought it up proactively as an issue," she added. She also said "part of the Muslim community switching their votes" was also a factor in Newcastle, where the Greens gained their first-ever seats on the city council. Recently re-elected Worthing Councillor and Momentum co-chair Hilary Schan resigned from Labour in order to support pro-Palestinian candidates from other parties - and she has joined journalist Owen Jones's We Deserve Better campaign. Speaking to BBC Breakfast, Ellie Reeves said: "We know that we've got a great deal of work to do to rebuild trust with Muslim communities. "I understand people's concerns about what's happening in Gaza. The loss of life there has been intolerable - that's why we have called

an immediate ceasefire". She added that "a lot of listening needs to be done," and the party also needs to make sure voters "understand our position". Labour's national election co-ordinator Pat McFadden echoed her, telling the BBC's with Laura Kuenssberg programme that the situation in the Middle East was a "high foreign policy priority" for Labour, if it was elected. "The better lives that people want for the Palestinian people is something the Labour leadership shares," he said. He acknowledged that in some parts of the country, the conflict was proving a problem for Labour and said: "There will be some people who maybe voted Labour in the past who haven't in the local elections because of this issue and where that's the case we'll work to get people's support back." In the West Midlands mayoral race, independent candidate Akhmed Yakoob, who campaigned on Gaza, won over 69,000 votes. In Blackburn with Darwen, Labour lost council seats to independent candidates who quit the party over the leadership's Gaza stance. It also faced a surge from pro-Palestinian independents in Bradford, where the Labour council leader said Gaza had been a "big issue". The local party leader in Oldham said the conflict was a factor there, where Labour lost overall control of the council, but also blamed a wider unhappiness with "mainstream parties". George Galloway's strongly pro-Palestinian Workers Party of Britain won four seats - two in Rochdale, one in Calderdale and one in Manchester, where they ousted the Labour deputy leader of the council Luthfur Rahman.

Bodies of Australian, US surfers identified

MEXICO CITY: Mexican authorities have confirmed the deaths of an American and two Australians who went missing in northern Mexico last week after the tourists' parents identified their bodies. The bodies of Australian brothers Callum and Jake Robinson as well as their friend, United States citizen Carter Rhoad, were found at the bottom of a well in the state of Baja California after a days-long search. All three were in their early 30s and had been shot in the head. "The victims' relatives were able to identify them without the need for genetic tests," a statement from the state prosecutor's office said.

The three men went missing while on a surfing holiday near the popular tourist town of Ensenada, about 90 minutes south of the US-Mexico border on the Pacific coast.

They are believed to have been killed after resisting an attempt to steal their pick-up truck, state prosecutor Maria Elena Andrade Ramirez said at a news conference. The vehicle, which had been set on fire, was found nearby.

Australian Treasurer Jim Chalmers expressed sympathy for the Robinson family. "I think the whole country's heart goes out to all of their loved ones. It has been an absolutely horrendous, absolutely horrific ordeal and our thoughts are with all of them today," he said. Three suspects, two men and one woman, have been arrested on suspicion of involvement in the case. One of those arrested has a history of violence, drug dealing and robbery, officials said. Investigators said earlier that the bodies were recovered from a well about 50 feet (15 metres) deep in an "advanced state of decomposition."

Another corpse found at the site had been there longer and was unconnected to the others, officials said. The three surfers were last seen on April 27 and reported missing a couple of days later, when authorities launched a multi-day search with the help from the US's Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Baja California, one of Mexico's most violent states because of organised crime gangs, is also known for its inviting

beaches and the Ensenada area is considered among its safer parts. At the news conference, Andrade Ramirez was questioned by one reporter who expressed approval that such a massive and rapid search was mounted for the foreigners, but asked why, when local people disappear in the area, it took weeks, months, or even years for action to be taken. "Do you have to be a foreigner in Baja California in order for there to be an investigation if something happens to you?" asked the reporter, who did not identify herself by name. "Every investigation is different," Andrade Ramirez replied. As if to underscore that point, dozens of mourners, surfers and demonstrators gathered in Ensenada to pay their respects to the surfers and voice their anger over the deaths. "Ensenada is a mass grave," read one placard carried by protesters. Many marched with their boards scrawled with messages, including "beaches, security, freedom, peace", "no more deaths" and "Australia, we are with you". — Aljazeera

Philippines, US repel mock foreign invaders

LAOAG (Reuters): US and Philippine armed forces fired missiles and artillery to thwart a simulated invasion in the Philippines' northern waters facing Taiwan on Monday, in a show of military force and strengthening ties as regional tensions rise. About 200 soldiers took turns defending the shores of the coastal city of Laoag in Ilocos province, launching Javelin missiles and firing howitzers and machine guns to repel an unnamed enemy trying to storm the beach.

US and Filipino military personnel sank five floating pontoons standing in for amphibious landing ships as part of their annual exercises called Balikatan, or "shoulder-to-shoulder". The annual drills, which involve about 16,000 Filipino and American troops and began last month, will run until May 10. They come at a

time of escalating tensions between the Philippines and China in the South China Sea. Last week, the Philippines accused China of using water cannons against their vessels around the disputed Scarborough Shoal, which damaged naval vessels and injured people onboard. On Monday, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr said his country would not retaliate in kind, saying the Philippines did not want to raise tensions. The exercises have irked China, which has warned of destabilisation when countries outside the region "flex muscles and stoke confrontation". Several of the drills this year were set in islands and provinces facing Taiwan and the South China Sea. Laoag City is about 408 km (254 miles) from Taiwan's southernmost point. US Marines Lieutenant General

Michael Cederholm, commander of joint task force Balikatan, told reporters on Monday the exercises were meant to improve how the forces operate alongside each other and were not directed against a specific adversary. "We don't do this for any third party. We don't do this for messaging. We do this to create interoperability," Cederholm said, without mentioning China. The main exercises will culminate with a "maritime strike", in which the combined forces of the Philippines and the United States will sink a decommissioned Philippine navy ship. The annual drills will officially end. Other exercises have included simulations of retaking occupied islands and a multilateral sail with France and Australia in the South China Sea, inside the Philippines' exclusive economic zone.

Russia blames Baltic countries for the severing of most ties

MOSCOW (Reuters): The "hostile line" of the Baltic countries have led to the severance of most of their ties with Russia, the Russian foreign ministry said in remarks published, warning also that Moscow will respond with asymmetric measures.

"Because of the openly hostile line of Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn, all interstate, interdepartmental, regional and sectoral ties with Russia have been severed," Maria Zakharova, the spokeswoman of the Russian foreign ministry told the RIA state news agency, referring to the capitals of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. She added that Moscow will continue to use diplomatic measures of influence on the Baltic countries. Estonia last week accused Russia of violating international airspace regulations by interfering with GPS signals and the Baltic countries are among those that are "deeply concerned" about activities they called Russian espionage, NATO said last week. Zakharova, without specifying what steps taken by the Baltic countries she was referring to, told RIA that Moscow will respond to the hostile actions by Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, with asymmetric measures.

"We will also respond to the hostile actions of the Baltic states with asymmetrical measures, primarily in the economic and transit spheres," she said. Russian police in February put Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas, Lithuania's culture minister and members of the previous Latvian parliament on a wanted list for destroying Soviet-era monuments. Meanwhile, the Russian forces have taken control of the village of Ocheretnye, in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region, the Russian Defence Ministry said. The village, which lies northwest of the one-time Ukrainian stronghold of Avdiivka which Russia captured in February, had a pre-war population of around 3,000. There was no comment from Ukrainian officials and no mention of Ocheretnye in the evening report of the Armed Forces General Staff. Unofficial Ukrainian war bloggers, including the popular Deep State Map site, indicated that Russia was in control of the village. Russia has made slow but steady advances since taking Avdiivka, with a string of villages in the area falling to Moscow's forces.

Bangladesh reopens schools

DHAKA (Reuters): Schools in Bangladesh reopened and classes were continuing over the weekend after a searing heatwave a week ago that suspended lessons as the country baked in temperatures that surged to well over 40 degrees Centigrade.

Bangladesh has wavered over reopening schools for some 33 million students amid pressure to prepare pupils for exams, even as the worst heatwave in seven decades sent temperatures as high as 43.8 C (110.84 F) last week. Many people have died across the region, and experts warned the heat could exacerbate inequalities, widen a learning gap between developing and developed nations in the tropics.

Bangladesh, which follows the Islamic work week, will hold classes until further notice, the education ministry said. Education Minister Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury has said schools would open if needed to complete the curriculum. Parents have welcomed the decision. "Children don't want to study at home. This will help them make up for the loss," said Fatema Akhtar, who was waiting to pick up her grade-two daughter outside a school. Scientists have said climate change is causing more frequent, severe, and lengthy heat waves during summer months. The UN children's agency has estimated that one in three children, or nearly 20 million children, in low-lying Bangladesh bear the brunt of such climate change every day.

Floods in Brazil kill 75 people over 7 days

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP): Massive floods in Brazil's southern Rio Grande do Sul state have killed at least 75 people over the last seven days, and another 103 were reported missing, local authorities said. At least 155 people were injured, while damage from the rains forced more than 88,000 people from their homes. Approximately 16,000 took refuge in schools, gymnasiums and other temporary shelters.

The floods left a wake of devastation, including landslides, washed-out roads and collapsed bridges across the state. Operators reported electricity and communications cuts. More than 800,000 people are without a water supply, according to the civil defense agency, which cited figures from water company Corsan. A rescue team pulled an elderly man in serious medical condition into a helicopter from a remote area in the Bento Gonçalves municipality, according to footage from military firefighters. Torrents of brown water poured over a nearby dam. Residents in the town of Canoas stood up to their shoulders in muddy water and formed a human chain to pull boats carrying people to safety, according to video footage shared by local UOL news network.

The Guaba river reached a record level of 5.33 meters (17.5 feet), surpassing levels seen during a historic 1941 deluge, when the river reached 4.76 meters. "I repeat and insist: the devastation to which we are being subjected is unprecedented," state Gov. Eduardo Leite said. He had previously said the state will need a "kind of 'Marshall Plan' to be rebuilt," Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva visited Rio Grande do Sul for a second time, accompanied by



Defense Minister José Múcio, Finance Minister Fernando Haddad and Environment Minister Marina Silva, among others. The leftist leader and his team surveyed the flooded streets of Porto Alegre from a helicopter.

"We need to stop running behind disasters. We need to see in advance what calamities might happen and we need to work," Lula told journalists afterwards. During mass at the Vatican, Pope Francis said he was praying for the state's population. "May the Lord welcome the dead and comfort their families and those who had to abandon their homes," he said. The downpour started Monday and was expected. In some areas, such as valleys, mountain slopes and cities, more than 300 millimeters (11.8 inches) of rain fell in less than a week, according to Brazil's National Institute of Meteorology, known by the Portuguese acronym INMET.

The heavy rains were the fourth such environmental disaster in the

state in a year, following floods in July, September and November 2023 that killed 75 people. Weather across South America is affected by the climate phenomenon El Niño, a periodic, naturally occurring event that warms surface waters in the Equatorial Pacific region. In Brazil, El Niño has historically caused droughts in the north and intense rainfall in the south.

This year, the impacts of El Niño have been particularly dramatic, with a historic drought in the Amazon. Scientists say extreme weather is happening more frequently due to human-caused climate change. "These tragedies will continue to happen, increasingly worse and more frequent," said Suely Araújo, a public policy coordinator at the Climate Observatory, a network of dozens of environmental and social groups. Brazil needs to adjust to the effects of climate change, she said in a statement, referring to a process known as adaptation.

Rwanda won't guarantee how many migrants it will take from UK

KAMPALA (BBC): The Rwandan government won't guarantee how many migrants it can take from the UK if flights start to depart. Rishi Sunak has promised that migrants arriving in the UK without permission will be sent to Rwanda rather than allowed to claim asylum in the UK.

Around 52,000 have come to the UK since the law was changed in 2023 and are in line for deportation. Rwanda has signed a five-year deal with the UK, with costs estimated to be at least £300 million already. Last month the prime minister's plans for the UK to send some asylum seekers to Rwanda passed Parliament. Speaking on 22 April, Mr Sunak said the first flight to Rwanda would leave in 10 to 12 weeks. Previously, the government said it aimed to start the flights in spring. Mr Sunak said there would be "multiple flights a month through the summer and beyond". When

Parliament approved the legislation, according to Home Office there were 52,000 asylum seekers who could potentially be sent to Rwanda. But, speaking on the BBC's with Laura Kuenssberg programme, Rwanda's government spokesperson Yolande Maloko said: "I cannot tell you is how many thousands we're taking in the first year or in the second year." But, when asked if Rwanda could accommodate all of the people in the current backlog. "This will depend on very many factors that are being worked out now," Ms Maloko said. Ministers have said repeatedly they want the notion of being sent to Rwanda to be a deterrent for those trying to come to the UK. But, Ms Makolo said Rwanda had been "attacked unjustly". "Living in Rwanda is not a punishment. It is a beautiful country, including the weather," she added. Transport Secretary Mark Harper also appeared on the show and was asked

whether the UK government has a back-up plan. Although he didn't answer directly, Mr Harper said the government has a "plan to start flights going in 10 to 12 weeks that is being worked on by the Home Office". Mr Harper added: "We want a steady rhythm of flights going to Rwanda through this year. "We will continue working closely with Rwanda on the partnership agreement we have got that has got all of the safeguards in place that people want to see. "I think if you can set up a system of deterrent through those flights you will break the business model of the organised crime groups who traffic people across the very dangerous waterway of the English Channel." Labour's Pat McFadden told the programme he thinks the government will succeed in getting flights running to Rwanda but believes it won't fix the migration problem or be value for money.

He declined to scrap the scheme on the first day of a Labour government, should it win the next general election, but reiterated the party does not want to continue with Mr Sunak's policy.

Mr McFadden also said he doubted Labour would seek to return any asylum seekers back to the UK. Separately, Ms Makolo denied Rwandan involvement in the bombing of a displacement camp in the Democratic Republic of Congo. At least nine people, including seven children, were killed in the strike on the Mugunga camp in the eastern city of Goma. The US has blamed the Rwandan army and M23 rebel group. Ms Makolo said the US government had been "very hasty to blame us without looking, without investigating this incident and without talking to the people who are effected. "It's something that we outright reject and it's unfair," she added.

No arrests as police clear USC pro-Palestinian encampment

CALIFORNIA: Protests against Israel's war on Gaza continue across university campuses in the United States as graduation season gets under way, with police in Los Angeles making no arrests as they cleared a pro-Palestinian encampment at the University of Southern California (USC).

After USC requested assistance, police entered the encampment about 5am local time (12:00 GMT) and worked with campus police to remove tents as students peacefully left the area, police said. The move comes a day after at least 25 pro-Palestinian protesters were arrested as police cleared an encampment at the University of Virginia (UVA).

Tensions flared at UVA's campus in Charlottesville, where protests had been largely peaceful, when police officers in riot gear

were seen in a video moving on an encampment on the campus's lawn and cuffing some demonstrators with zip ties. Campus protests have emerged as a political flashpoint during a US election year as Democratic President Joe Biden seeks a second term in office. Police have arrested more than 2,000 people during protests at dozens of campuses around the country. Students and other protesters have called for universities to divest their financial ties to Israel and push for a ceasefire. Under mounting political pressure, Biden broke his silence on the campus unrest, saying Americans have the right to demonstrate but not to unleash violence. Many colleges, including Columbia University in New York City, have called in police to quell protests. At the

University of Texas in Austin, drones deployed by police circled overhead as about 200 pro-Palestinian demonstrators rallied, with about 50 onlookers, local media reported. The speakers advised fellow demonstrators to remain peaceful and not engage the police. Adam, a Palestine Solidarity Committee organiser protesting at the University of Texas at Austin, told Al Jazeera that Palestinian students recognise that American students support Palestine. "We will no longer deal in the blood of Palestinians," he said. Al Jazeera's Phil Lavelle, reporting from the University of California Irvine, said the situation there was relatively calm and talks between the protesters and the university administration were ongoing. "We understand there is a protest in San

Francisco. Here at UC Irvine, things are very calm," he said. Separately, there have been at least four bomb threats at New York area synagogues over the weekend, police said, but none have proven credible.

New York Governor Kathy Hochul said on X: "We will not tolerate individuals sowing fear & antisemitism. Those responsible must be held accountable for their despicable actions." At least 34,683 people have been killed, mostly women and children, and 78,018 wounded in Israel's war on Gaza since October, according to Palestinian authorities. Israel launched the assault on Gaza after Hamas led an attack on southern Israel, killing at least 1,139 people, mostly civilians, according to an Al Jazeera tally based on Israeli statistics. — Aljazeera

Chad presidential vote set to end military rule

N'DJAMENA (BBC): Chad is set to become the first of Africa's current junta-led states to move to democratic rule with Monday's presidential vote. It will end a three-year transition imposed after the sudden death of long-serving leader Idriss Deby Itno while fighting rebels. But as his son, and successor, Gen Mahamat Déby is one of the favourites to win, there is some scepticism about whether this will bring about change.

Prime Minister Succès

Masra is among his nine challengers and is seen as his biggest rival. Ten other politicians who had been hoping to run, including two prominent figures, Nassour Ibrahim Neguy Koursami and Rakhis Ahmat Saleh, were excluded by the constitutional council because of "irregularities". For example, Mr Koursami was accused of forgery. But some have argued that the decision to bar certain people was politically motivated. Another potential opponent, Yaya Dillo, was killed

by security forces in February while allegedly leading an attack on the National Security Agency in the capital, N'Djamena. Activists have called for a boycott of the election that they termed a ploy to lend a sheen of democratic legitimacy to the Deby dynasty. Many are still in exile following a deadly crackdown on opponents following protests in October 2022. Nevertheless, Chad's election is a milestone for countries in West and Central Africa that have fallen under

military rule since a spate of coups began in 2020.

It may serve as a template for juntas seeking to maintain political influence after first coming to power illegitimately. The oil-exporting country of nearly 18 million people has not had a free-and-fair transfer of power since independence from France in 1960. Idriss Déby overthrew Hissène Habré in 1990 and remained in charge for the following three decades until his battlefield death in April 2021 at the age of 68.

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Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

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Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

*USA and Canada Toll Free Number 1-800-5905747

Intransigence blocks progress

THERE were reports recently quoting an Egyptian official as claiming "significant progress" had been made in negotiations between Israel and Hamas. Hamas negotiators later confirmed "in-depth discussions" had been held in Cairo.

Even Ismail Haniyeh, its most senior political leader, declared on Sunday that Hamas was "keen" to reach a comprehensive cease-fire agreement. But the negotiations have yet to show signs of a breakthrough as the two sides have continued to exchange fire and Israel threatens to launch an offensive push into Rafah.

The latest development is only additional proof that the Gaza conflict is far from ending, and a permanent solution will be out of the question without all stakeholders coming to terms with the truth of the matter that so long as Israel and Hamas perceive each other to be existential threats, no cease-fire will hold for long. No solution will prove permanent. Both have made no secret about their goal of erasing the other from the map. For all the negotiations on prisoner-for-hostage swaps or on a cease-fire, no progress has been made in this regard.

But the world is overwhelmingly focusing on the humanitarian tragedy resulting from Israel's military onslaught. The head of the World Food Program just appealed for an end to the fighting, warning of a "full-blown famine" in northern Gaza. The head of the World Health Organization has also warned that "a full-scale military operation in Rafah ... could lead to a bloodbath". And Rafah happens to be a major logistics hub for humanitarian aid. Even US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has said that without a credible plan to protect civilians, the United States could not support "a major military operation going into Rafah because the damage it would do is beyond what's acceptable".

Hamas' latest pro-cessa-fire stance following its recent talks with Fatah in Beijing has led many to assume the ball is now in Israel's court. Hamas' conditions for a cease-fire are that Israel end its "aggression", guarantee the withdrawal of its forces from Gaza, and a hostage-swap deal.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his war Cabinet, however, are determined to press ahead with the planned elimination of Hamas, whatever it takes. To them, Hamas' present interest in a cease-fire is only buying time for it to regroup, and that is the last thing Israel wants. Netanyahu has refused to bow to the international pressure to halt the war, dismissing the key Hamas demand of the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza as being equal to surrender. While claiming that Israel has shown it is willing to make concessions, the Israeli leader stressed that its military operations will continue until it has achieved its goal of eradicating Hamas. So despite the earlier signs of progress toward a cease-fire, it seems any hopes that one would be forthcoming were just wishful thinking.

According to Arab media, the talks between Hamas and Fatah in late April, hosted by Beijing, successfully bridged their differences and they are expected to hold another round of talks in Beijing in mid-June, with the aim of forming an interim, non-factional, national Palestinian government. As Beijing has stressed, it is the perpetual denial of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people that is the root cause of the conflict. The establishment of an independent State of Palestine that peacefully coexists with Israel is the only way to end the long cycle of violence between the Israelis and Palestinians. China will continue to strengthen cooperation with the international community in pursuit of this objective.

Sino-French friendship

THE warm welcome President Xi Jinping received upon his arrival in Paris on Sunday, which marked the beginning of the first leg of his six-day back-to-back visits to France, Serbia and Hungary, is a telling sign that despite the great changes the world has seen since his last trip to Europe nearly five years ago, Sino-French relations retain their strong momentum.

The two countries have maintained effective strategic communication and fruitful practical cooperation over those years, deepening people-to-people and cultural exchanges, and engaging in sound communication and coordination in international and regional affairs under the guidance of Xi and his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron. The worldwide attention being paid to Xi's visit speaks volumes about the responsibilities the two countries shoulder as permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and the roles they are expected to play in stabilizing the global industry and supply chains, and safeguarding world peace and stability. As such the outcomes of the talks between the two leaders on China-France relations, China-EU relations and international and regional hotspot issues are highly anticipated.

The two sides have great potential and space to further strengthen their communication and coordination to uphold a fair and just world order centered on the United Nations and to strengthen their cooperation to address the common challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss.

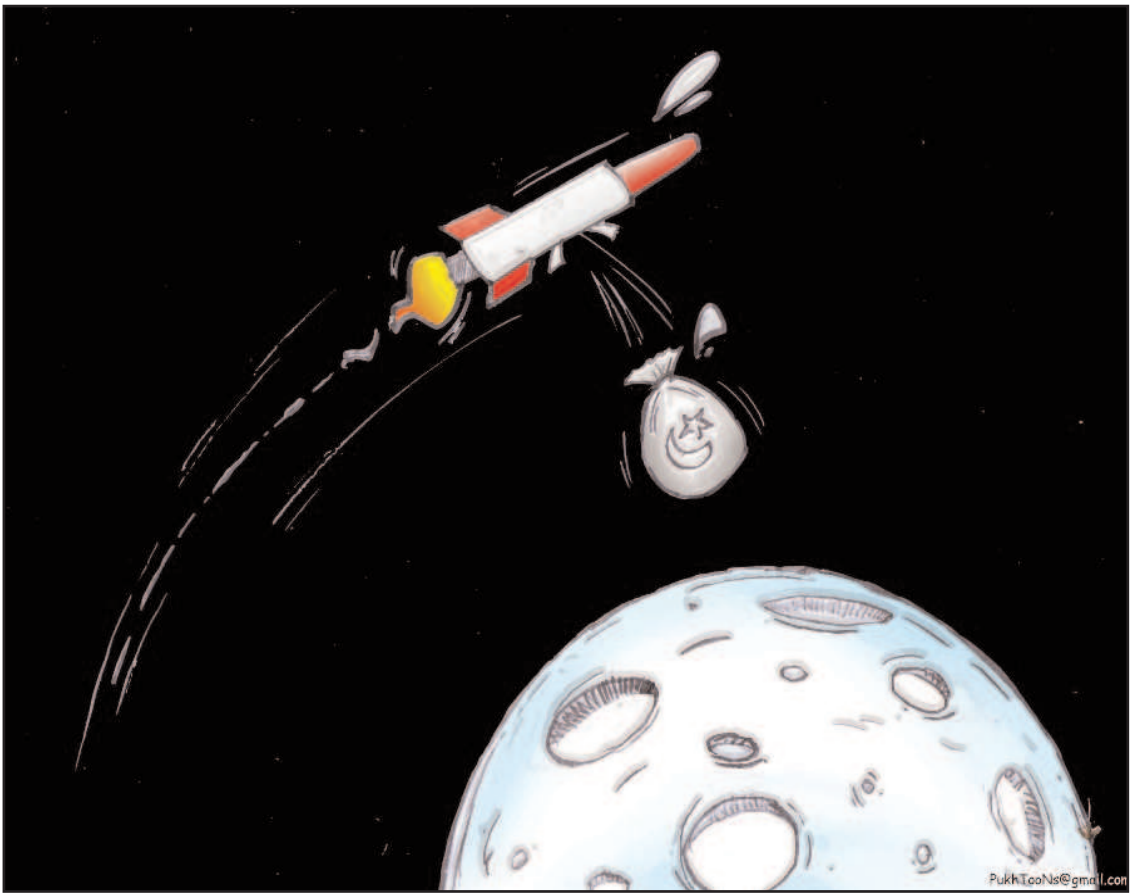
The structural complementarity of the two economies means there is much scope for deepening their cooperation in clean energy, nuclear energy research and development, and forest carbon sinks, as well as artificial intelligence, aviation and aerospace, and agri-food products.

All peace-loving countries hope that candid and extensive talks between the two sides will be productive and serve the common good of the world, which for too long has been hijacked by shortsighted geopolitical scheming of some certain countries, which have opted for bloc confrontation, zero-sum practices and a Cold War mentality as the means to preserve their undue privileges.

The steady development of Sino-French ties can also help consolidate Sino-EU ties which can act as an effective counterbalance to the negative influence of these self-serving cliques, which is a risk creator rather than a risk reducer. Led by some armchair ideologues, the actions of these countries are sabotaging global efforts to address common challenges rather than contributing to efforts to find solutions. It is to be hoped that through this visit, China and France can carry forward the good tradition of friendly relations, and further enhance political mutual trust, solidarity and cooperation, so that the two major players on the world stage can jointly elevate their comprehensive strategic partnership and in so doing help stabilize the China-EU relationship, and make new contributions to global peace, stability, and development.

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Saudi Arabia's realistic peace proposal gaining traction globally

Dr. Mohammed Al-Sulami

AMID ongoing efforts to foster peace in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia recently played host to a significant diplomatic gathering. In late April, the third consultative ministerial meeting of the six-party Arab Committee, comprising Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Qatar and the UAE, convened. The agenda centered on discussions regarding the Israeli military campaign in the Gaza Strip and its repercussions on regional stability.

Against the backdrop of escalating regional tensions and direct military confrontations, the participating nations highlighted the pressing need to address the evolving security challenges. Of particular concern were the potential threats to regional and international interests, underscored by the recent upheavals stemming from the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and the ongoing economic strain exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This gathering served as a platform to deliberate on strategies aimed at mitigating risks and advancing diplomatic initiatives to safeguard peace in the region.

The meeting, spearheaded by Saudi Arabia, underscored the Arab world's commitment to three core principles in addressing the Israeli military campaign in Gaza. Against the backdrop of Tel Aviv's attempts to eradicate the Palestinian issue through actions reminiscent of the Nakba, particularly mass displacement, these principles represent a unified stance aimed at fostering peace and stability.

Firstly, there was a collective call for an immediate cessation of the hostilities in Gaza. Secondly, there was a demand for the removal of all barriers obstructing the delivery of vital humanitarian aid to the besieged Palestinian population, coupled with a commitment to ensuring their protection in accordance with international humanitarian law. Lastly, the meeting advocated for the resolution of the conflict through the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, adhering to the principles of a two-state solution.

This unified approach underscores the Arab and Saudi perspective, challenging Israel's reliance on military force and punitive measures. Despite Tel Aviv's prolonged campaign, characterized by what is described as a policy of collective punishment, the meeting asserted that such tactics have failed to yield the desired results. Instead, the conflict has had a significant humanitarian toll, with reports indicating extensive casualties, hunger and displacement, along with internal strife within Israel. Against the backdrop of an already volatile regional landscape, these developments further exacerbate tensions and underscore the urgent need for a diplomatic resolution.

The mounting Arab, regional and international consensus on halting Israel's military operations in Gaza and resolving the conflict through a two-state solution is bolstering the credibility of the Kingdom's long-standing vision. From the onset of Israel's latest war on Gaza

more than six months ago, Saudi Arabia has advocated for a peaceful resolution — a stance that is gaining increasing traction and influence. Central to Saudi Arabia's approach is its policy of positive neutrality and active diplomacy in the Middle East.

Amid growing international condemnation of the Israeli offensive in Gaza and widespread support for a two-state solution, the Kingdom's vision is gaining prominence. This is particularly evident in the unanimous approval of a two-state solution and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state by the members of the UN Security Council, excluding the US. Furthermore, there is a burgeoning global movement, including influential American and European universities and public arenas, exerting pressure on governments

to take a resolute rejection of measures by Israel aimed at precipitating a human-made famine within Gaza, as well as strong opposition to the prospect of an Israeli military assault on the Palestinian city of Rafah. Such actions, it is argued, would only exacerbate the already dire humanitarian situation, leading to an escalation in casualties and displacements, exacerbated by the advanced weaponry and technology at Israel's disposal, much of it supplied by the US.

Chinese diplomatic efforts are underway to mediate between the Fatah and Hamas factions within Palestinian politics, with the aim of bridging divides and fostering unity. This initiative aligns with Saudi Arabia's pursuit of a two-state solution and underscores China's growing involvement in regional

the region, the US concurrently provides extensive military and armament support to Israel. This assistance empowers Israel to sustain its military operations, including the harsh and indiscriminate targeting of civilians in Gaza.

The inconsistency of the US toward the Palestinian issue, alongside various other Middle Eastern matters, is likely to fuel a growing inclination among regional powers to explore alternatives to the existing unipolar international system. This shift may prompt a reconfiguration of the global order toward one that aligns more closely with Arab aspirations for restoring security and stability to the region.

Yet, such US duplicity could catalyze increased competition among international powers vying for influence and dominance, leading to a reshaping of traditional spheres of influence previously dominated by Washington. This dynamic presents opportunities for these powers to expand their presence, enhance their influence and assert their roles within the international system, thereby bolstering their respective positions and serving their broader strategic interests.

In conclusion, more than two decades have elapsed since the inception of the Arab Peace Initiative and 200-plus days have transpired since the initiation of the Israeli military campaign in Gaza, resulting in widespread devastation and egregious violations of human rights. Despite the prolonged conflict, Israel's objectives, including the dismantling of resistance factions and the retrieval of hostages, remain unfulfilled.

These developments underscore the pragmatic nature of the Saudi proposal advocating for a two-state solution as a viable means to end the conflict, offering a balanced approach that acknowledges the grievances of all parties involved. Additionally, they shed light on the obstacles posed by US duplicity, which hinders efforts to achieve a resolution in the Middle East based on the principles of a two-state solution.

The prolonged delay in resolving the conflict through a two-state solution has exacted a heavy toll on all parties involved, including the US and Israel. The protracted nature of the conflict has incurred significant costs in terms of both financial resources and human lives, while also hindering the achievement of desired objectives. Additionally, the ongoing stalemate has eroded the credibility of the US on the international stage, as it grapples with competing powers seeking to assert leadership and influence in the Middle East.

Furthermore, regional powers have begun to reassess the role of the US in the Middle East, questioning its ability to effectively enforce security and stability arrangements. This shift in perspective has prompted a reevaluation of existing power dynamics and has contributed to the emergence of a new equation in the region. Central to this equation is the recognition that lasting security and stability for both Palestinian and Israeli citizens can only be realized through the implementation of a two-state solution.

What do Palestinians in Gaza want?

Dr. Ramzy Baroud

WHAT is taking place in the Occupied Territories is not a conflict but a straightforward case of illegal military occupation, apartheid, ethnic cleansing and outright genocide.

Those who insist on using "neutral" language when depicting the crisis in Palestine are harming the Palestinian people beyond their seemingly innocuous words.

This morally noncommittal, middle-ground language is now particularly at work in Gaza. Here, the harm of this "impartiality" is greatest.

"If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor," the late South African anti-apartheid activist Archbishop Desmond Tutu once said. His wisdom will always ring true.

While most countries and peoples around the world are certainly not taking the side of the Israeli oppressor, some, wittingly or otherwise, are.

There are those who are taking Israel's side by directly fueling and funding the Israeli killing machine in the Gaza Strip, while blaming the Palestinians for the war and its devastating impact.

But supporting Israel does not only take place in the form of weapons, trade or shielding it from accountability before international law.

Ignoring Palestinian priorities and spotlighting Israel's political discourse and expectations is a form of support for Israel and denigration of Palestine.

Almost immediately following the start of the Oct. 7 war, questions began arising about what Israel wants in Gaza.

On Nov. 7, while vowing to destroy Hamas, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that Israel was set to maintain "security responsibility" over the Gaza Strip for "an indefinite period."

The Americans agreed. "There is no coming back to the status quo," US President Joe Biden said on Oct. 26, which "means ensuring that Hamas can no longer terrorize Israel and use Palestinians civilians as human shields."

Even the Europeans, who had often presented themselves as equal partners to both Israel and the Palestinian Authority, had a similar attitude. EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, for example, set out a proposal for Gaza, including a "reinforced" version of the current PA, "with a legitimacy to be defined and decided upon by the (UN) Security Council" — not by the Palestinian people themselves.

Even those who admonished Tel Aviv for having unrealistic expectations failed to ask the obvious question: What do Palestinians want?

As soon as it was obvious that the Palestinian resistance was far too strong to allow Israel to achieve any of its lofty objectives, government officials, experts and media analysts began warning Israel that no military victory was possible in the Strip.

They contended that Israel must also develop a "realistic" strategy to govern the Strip after the destruction of the resistance there.

Some of these statements were celebrated even by pro-Palestinian Arab and Middle Eastern media outlets as an example of the changing Western narrative on Palestine.

In actuality, the narrative has remained the same. What has changed is the unprecedented degree of Palestinian steadfastness, known as "sumud," which has inspired the world and warned Israel's allies of the grim scenarios awaiting Tel Aviv should it suffer an outright defeat in Gaza.

Even though many among Israel's Western allies may have seemed critical of Netanyahu, they were still behaving out of concern for Tel

Aviv, never love or respect for Palestinians. This is not new.

Since the destruction of the Palestinian homeland, the Nakba, in 1948, two narratives emerged.

The Israeli one, which was fully embraced by the West's mainstream media, politicians and academics, who became invested in misrepresenting the "conflict."

They depicted Israel as a "Jewish state" that was fighting for survival among competing Arab interests and factional and disunited Palestinians, who only agreed on one thing: wanting to destroy Israel.

And the Palestinian one, which argued that justice is indivisible and that the cornerstone of any lasting peace in Palestine is the restoration of dispossessed Palestinian refugees to their homeland — what is known as the right of return.

After Israel occupied the rest of historic Palestine in 1967, it was only natural that ending the Israeli military occupation and dismantling the apartheid system became a critical Palestinian demand, without ignoring the original injustice that had befallen all Palestinians in 1948.

Israel's allies in the West used the occupation as an opportunity to distract from the root causes of the so-called conflict. With time, they reduced the conversation on Palestine to that of the illegal settlements, which Israel began constructing, contrary to international law, after completing its military occupation.

Any Palestinian who contended that the conflict was not actually a conflict at all and that the root causes of the crisis go back to the very foundation of Israel was — and continues to be — deemed as radical, or worse.

This reductionist thinking is now being applied to Gaza, where every historical reference is intentionally pushed aside and where the Palestinian political discourse is shunned in favor of Israel's deceptive language.

But no matter how often the Western media speaks about "Palestinian terrorism" and the need to release Israeli hostages and prioritize Israeli security, while ignoring Israeli terrorism and Palestinian detainees and political aspirations, there will be no resolution to this war, or any future wars, if Palestinian rights are not respected.

Gaza is not an independent territory from the rest of historic Palestine. Neither its past nor its future can be understood or imagined without appreciating the Palestinian struggle in the whole of Palestine — Palestinian citizens of Israel included.

This is not an opinion but the very essence of the political discourse emanating from all of Gaza's political groups.

The same assertion can be made about the political discourse of Palestinians in the West Bank, throughout historic Palestine and those in "shatat," or the diaspora.

Israel and the US can try to imagine whatever future they wish for Gaza and they may also try to achieve that future through missiles, dumb bombs and bunker busters.

But no amount of military might or firepower can alter history or redefine justice.

What Gaza ultimately wants is the acknowledgement of historical injustices, respect for international law, freedom for all Palestinians and legal accountability for Israel.

These are hardly radical positions, especially when compared to Israel's practical policy of destroying Gaza, annexing the West Bank and ethnically cleansing the Palestinian people. Will Washington and its Western allies finally acknowledge this fact?

— Arab News

Watching the watchdogs: How US media messed up campus protests coverage

Rami G Khouri

A great, novel experiment in political physics is under way in the United States, as the unstoppable moral force of youth-led protests against Israel's genocidal war in Gaza runs into the immovable object of the American power elite's support for it.

In this clash, two critical forces have been weaponised: the US mainstream media that heavily disseminates Israeli propaganda and shapes many local, state and national policies, and the scourge of anti-Semitism that has been unfairly used to demonise and silence Palestinians and shift attention away from the US-enabled Israeli genocide in Gaza.

Since Israel launched its assault on Gaza, President Joe Biden's steadfast support for it has galvanised young Americans and pushed them to mobilise.

They have formed decisive coalitions with Muslim and Arab Americans, Jewish, Black, Hispanic and Native communities, labour unions and churches. They have given notice that if the US continues to support the war, they will abandon Democratic candidates in the November elections, which would likely be fatal for the party.

The American power elite largely ignored the initial criticisms of the young and the marginalised, until student encampments started springing up at universities across the country three weeks ago. The students demanded an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, a halt to US government financial and military aid to Israel, and the divestment of university investments from military industries that enable the Israeli genocide.

The mainstream media's coverage of the campus encampments and the violence against them has exposed it as a central actor in the power elite that sustains Israel's war and simultaneously tries to silence Palestinians and criminalise anyone who supports them.

As I closely followed US media outlets in recent weeks, I was shocked to see reporters, commentators and hosts use the exact same words and phrases that Biden and US and Israeli officials have used

to smear the protesters. The mainstream media gives the impression of circling the wagons with Israeli and American officialdom to prevent at all costs an open, honest, comprehensive and contextualised public discussion on Israel's behaviour while trying instead to focus public attention on spurious accusations.

The mainstream media has widely condemned students and accused them of using "hate speech and hate symbols" (in the words of the US president), endorsing terrorism, advocating for Israel's destruction, resorting to anti-Semitic slurs and threatening and frightening Jewish students. Everywhere they look in the student protest encampments, the media oracles have seen "terrorists" in training, "anti-Semites" at work, "Jew-haters" being groomed, universities collapsing, and "Nazi mobs" in the making.

Prominent TV hosts have unleashed passionate, vicious diatribes against the students who have camped out to demand an end to America's role in Israel's genocide against Gaza, and peace and justice for all in Palestine.

MSNBC's Morning Joe show – reportedly a Biden favourite – is one glaring example of systematically biased TV programming that sometimes veers into incitement against the student protests and the university administrators. One of its hosts, Joe Scarborough, has claimed that students want "to wipe out all Jews", "they are Hamas on college campuses", and they are "not helping those of us who want to fight fascism in America". His co-host Mika Brzezinski has said that the campus protests "look like January 6", referring to the riot by Donald Trump supporters on Capitol Hill in January 2021.

Such unsubstantiated allegations against the protesters are common to varying degrees across all the major networks, including ABC, CNN and NBC.

Most of the "expert" analysts I have heard on mainstream TV in the last few weeks commenting on the protests have been former US

government or security officials, or people close to the Israeli viewpoint, including former Israeli officials. They have also offered variations on the themes of terrorism, radicalisation and anti-Semitism.

Except for some interviews I have seen on MSNBC, networks have avoided inviting Palestinians and knowledgeable Americans who could explain the actual meaning of expressions that the media and officialdom find offensive or threatening, and could address the actual nature and extent of the fears of those Jews who sincerely worry about how the protests impact them.

Unsurprisingly, most media outlets have covered US officials' statements against peaceful protesters on campuses without much scrutiny as well.

This was apparent, for example, when Republican Speaker of the House Mike Johnson and heads of several key congressional committees gave a press conference on April 30 where they threatened universities for allegedly allowing anti-Semitism to thrive on campus.

"We will not allow anti-Semitism to thrive on campus, and we will hold these universities accountable for their failure to protect Jewish students on campus," Johnson said.

By reporting the many accusations against the protesters without seriously questioning or verifying them, the mainstream media itself appears to adopt the conflation of anti-Semitism with valid criticism of Israeli policies, which many scholars have warned is a dangerous practice.

Israeli policies that warrant criticism include patently illegal ones that contravene international law, like expanding settlements, laying siege to Palestinian territories, and carrying out the genocidal attack on Gaza.

While mainstream media has struggled with its biases in covering the campus protests, there have been reports and commentaries by serious and knowledgeable people who actually have spent time among the defiant students, understood their motivations and their

cause, and have not been beholden to domestic or foreign lobbies. Everyone I encountered – in person at universities or in the more honest, independent and progressive media outlets that do not see their job as supporting the power elites' war-making frenzies – has reported calm, harmonious, often joyous gatherings of many faiths, aiming for a common goal of equal justice for all.

The alignment of mainstream media with the American political elites' stance and all the exaggeration, misinterpretation, hysteria, lies and hallucination is unprecedented. It begs the question, why American officials and media leaders who traditionally parroted the Israeli line and simply ignored Palestinian voices are all up in arms now? Why would a gentle old man like Biden knowingly transform the Arabic word "intifada" (uprising) into what he calls "tragic and dangerous hate speech"?

I suspect this fanatical rhetoric reflects the power elite's fear of being challenged in the domestic political arena for the first time ever by an issue related to Palestinian rights that also exposes and opposes Israel's military extremism and genocide. They fear the growing coalition of Americans who are not afraid to challenge the falsehoods and distortions of staunch Israel supporters or ignore biased media offerings. They should worry, as a CNN poll last week suggested that 81 percent of Americans aged 18-35 disapprove of the American-backed Israeli war policy in Gaza.

Many young protesters have spoken of the US-enabled genocide in Gaza as "the moral issue of our age". They feel they cannot stay silent in the face of Israeli-made starvation and American-made bombs ravaging Gaza.

But when this principled stance is distorted by the US mainstream media into an "anti-Semitic" and "pro-terrorist" frenzy, then it becomes clear that the commitment to truth-telling in large swaths of the media is far weaker than their desire to be close to the imperial seats of war-making power in the US and the Middle East.

inherited real estate in desirable locations.

Nghe An's capital and a few other communes are becoming increasingly crowded with fancy new multi-storey houses and expensive new cars – belonging to the families of earlier migrants who have paid off their migration debts and now send remittances back. And tremendous global inequality means a cash-in-hand job at a nail salon in the UK for well below minimum wage (and up to 60 hours/week) still pays at least £300/week, which is 10 times more than low-skilled workers can hope to earn in Vietnam.

Europe is not the only destination for Vietnamese people looking for a way out of poverty, inequality and lack of social mobility. Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan are the main destinations in Asia for Vietnamese migrants under the bilateral "labour export" agreements – a strategy the government counts on to eradicate poverty and generate resources for the economy at home. Recently, thousands of people from Nghe An queued for up to five days for the opportunity to sign up for one of these work abroad schemes – an indication of their eagerness to leave by all available routes. Many people we spoke to there said if they fail to take part in one of these schemes, they would be willing to pool familial resources and get into huge debts to fund irregular migration to Europe, risking arduous and even life-threatening conditions.

Many governments in the Global South encourage transnational labour migration as a panacea for high local unemployment levels and a lack of relatively well-paid jobs. Remittances can help pay for education, housing or healthcare for individual families, but this may result in long-term dependency on migration.

While migration is a human right, it can also become "an individualistic solution to a systemic crisis of inequality". This happens when migrant-sending governments shift their responsibility for national prosperity onto remittance-sending migrants instead of investing in infrastructure and stimulating local economic development in poorer regions.

People we spoke to in Nghe An were driven by the need to "vuon len (to rise up the social ladder)", to exert all their efforts and energies progressing the prospects of their family, and to avoid the shame of being "left behind" among the poor. One lady, whose son left for the UK 10 years ago, put it this way: Life has always been hard here; nowadays, there is enough to survive, but if you want to save, invest, or achieve social mobility, then migration is the only option.

— Aljazeera

Electoral comeuppance for moral leadership failures

Baria Alamuddin

IN Britain, America and much of the Western world, there has been much nervous talk about the "Muslim vote."

In last week's local council elections in England, the Labour Party significantly underperformed in some urban areas where voters, angered by the party's position on Gaza, turned out in favor of independent candidates. In US states such as Michigan and Pennsylvania, the Democratic Party is nervous about turnout in November's presidential election because of very similar demographics, including progressive and Black voters.

Commenting on one particularly close contest in England, a Labour Party source was widely condemned for telling the BBC: "It's the Middle East, not West Midlands that will have won ... Hamas are the real villains." Labour suffered the surprise loss of control of Oldham Council in north-west England, where it lost several seats to pro-Palestinian independent candidates. Labour's Sadiq Khan, meanwhile, comfortably secured a third term as mayor of London after unambiguously calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, in notably more forceful language than the leadership of his party.

However, the reason that Gaza is such a threat to mainstream political parties is that it is not a "Muslim" or an "Arab" issue. It is a foreign policy and defining humanitarian issue in which the vast majority of ordinary voters are uncomfortable with official policy, even though certain demographics — young people and students, ethnic minorities, those with Middle East connections — feel particularly strongly. Even among right-leaning Conservative voters I speak to, there is horror at what Benjamin Netanyahu has been allowed to get away with.

Within Western politics, it has tended to be an article of faith that serious politicians who desire to rise to the top must be unstintingly pro-Israel, their views enforced by aggressive and well-funded lobbyists who can be brutal with those who fail to toe the line.

The Labour Party's previous leader, Jeremy Corbyn, and others on the party's left flank were perpetually under fire for their pro-Palestinian sentiments. Corbyn's successor, Keir Starmer, participated in a disastrous interview early in the Gaza crisis, when he appeared to justify collective punishment by agreeing

that "Israel has the right" to withhold power and water from Palestinians. Although the Labour Party rowed back from those comments, the damage was done with many traditional Labour voters, who may never forgive Starmer.

In the case of both Starmer and US President Joe Biden, their right-wing political rivals are obviously even more staunchly supportive of Netanyahu. But many voters perceive both of these dominant options as fatally compromised on foreign policy ethics and consequently are inclined to vote for alternative candidates, or refrain from voting at all. Cosmetic token gestures do not go nearly far enough to start winning such voters back. There is a failure to recognize the massive irreversible shift in global public opinion around human rights, largely resulting from Netanyahu's flagrantly genocidal campaign. These younger and increasingly diverse demographics are, by definition, the voters and decision-makers of the future. This is not a temporary "problem" with a few Muslim-heavy political constituencies, but a permanent tectonic transformation in geopolitical realities.

News broadcasts have been dominated by increasingly militarized and brutal crackdowns against US campus protests, with 2,300 people arrested over the past two weeks as the movement spread to more than 150 colleges in the US alone. In the UK, there has been notable activism in locations such as University College London and Goldsmiths University. The Conservative Party has urged an "extremely strict response" to campus protests. Meanwhile, every weekend, dozens of buses transport tens of thousands of people into London and other cities for mass protests. Efforts to stigmatize such demonstrations as a "Muslim" issue are just one step away from demonizing those involved as "antiseismic radicals" and extremists.

While Britain's Conservative Party nevertheless appears destined for near annihilation at the general election this year, a collapse in support from key Labour demographics could produce a split result. In the US, the outcome looks far more precarious, with the Democrats' loss of Michigan and Pennsylvania likely to herald a Donald Trump administration.

Governments in Spain, Ireland and Greece have

been in the vanguard of European leanings toward a more pro-Palestinian stance, advocating unilateral recognition of a Palestinian state. Colombia has joined a growing list of Latin American states to sever ties with Israel, following Bolivia and Belize, while Chile and Honduras have recalled their ambassadors. Türkiye has, meanwhile, suspended its \$7 billion-a-year trading relationship with Tel Aviv.

Leading Western political parties share some of the blame due to their collective failure to follow through with efforts for a two-state solution in the face of disruptive tactics by Netanyahu and his ilk. Part of this is a failure of vision in anticipating crises and taking measures to prevent conflicts. The international community's absolute failure to take any tangible action to address the Sudan catastrophe is a case in point.

A UN Humanitarian Affairs spokesman has warned that an Israeli military incursion into Rafah in southern Gaza could be a "slaughter of civilians" and an "incredible blow to the humanitarian operations." The World Food Programme described the situation in northern Gaza as a "full-blown famine," which is "moving its way south ... it's horror." Among these horrors is the increasingly prevalent technique of performing surgery, including Caesarean sections and amputations, without anesthetic, leaving patients "to scream for hours and hours," as one doctor related.

Netanyahu's extreme-right cabal has continued its slide further from democratic principles with a law allowing the banning of foreign media organizations, with Al Jazeera already the first victim. Journalists have mostly been prevented from accessing Gaza. Meanwhile, UNESCO last week dedicated its press freedom award to all Palestinian journalists, more than 90 of whom have been killed covering the conflict.

One of the benefits of democracy is that politicians, if they desire to win elections, must align with the sentiments of voters. This major realignment in global public sentiment toward greater support for the humanitarian principles underpinning the Palestinian cause is already starting to enforce a change in international political rhetoric. Politicians who fail to get on board by adopting ethical and just policies will ultimately learn painful lessons at the ballot box.

Sino-French exchanges have a robust future

Benoit Vermander

THE first Western translation of The Analects of Confucius, and two other Confucian classics, appeared in Paris in 1687. Dedicated to King Louis XIV of France, the Latin-language volume spread throughout Europe. One of its editors, the Jesuit Philippe Couplet, was impressed by the philosophy of Confucius, as evidenced in his remark: "We can say that the ethical system of the philosopher Confucius is sublime. It is at the same time simple, sensible, and derived from the best sources of natural reason."

During the same period, several French Jesuits, later described as "Mathematicians of the King" arrived in Beijing, and became the mathematics teachers of Emperor Kangxi (1654-1722) of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). Their success in curing Kangxi of fever by administering quinine earned them the gift of a plot of land on which were later built an astronomical observatory and other buildings. Within 15 years of the five Jesuits' arrival, 40 other French Jesuits would travel to China. The end of the 17th century and the first half of the 18th century were indeed a golden age of interaction between China and France, a heritage on which both nations can continue to build up.

One of the "Mathematicians of the King", Joachim Bouvet (1656-1730), corresponded with German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), suggesting to him the connection between the binary system of arithmetic and the Yi Jing Hexagrams.

Jean-François Gerbillon (1654-1707) was one of two Jesuits sent to assist Chinese ambassadors at the signing of the Treaty of Nerchinsk, and he proved to be an eminent cartographer. His work was continued by Joseph-Anne

Mailla (1669-1748), who labored 18 years to produce maps of the empire upon the request of Emperor Kangxi, who in turn made him a "mandarin".

Joseph de Premare (1666-1736) was remarkably well versed in the Chinese language, and, once the manuscript was rediscovered, his language textbook became the basis of all the Chinese grammars published afterwards in Europe. Antoine Gaubil (1689-1759) was an excellent astronomer and historian. One of his pupils, Joseph-Marie Amiot (1718-93), became the pioneer of ethno-musicography and provided very detailed information on Chinese ritual music and dances. The tradition of French Sinology was to continue and flourish. Today, the Belles Lettres publishing house hosts a book series of annotated, bilingual Chinese classics, in which one can find the works as diverse as the Classic of Tea by Lu Yu (about 733-804), the 1895 Manifesto of Kang Youwei (1858-1927), and a treatise on painting techniques authored by Shen Zhongqian (about 1721-1803).

The popularity of this book series is made even more remarkable by the fact that the same publishing house was known first for the unparalleled critical editions of Latin and Greek classics that it had started more than 100 years ago. Through a renewed emphasis on the reading of classics, ages and civilizations are meeting at a deeper level.

On the Chinese side, from the middle of the 19th century onward, the Chinese intellectuals, artists, scientists and political leaders who received higher education or training in France are too numerous to be listed. Their posterity is thriving: several Chinese universities maintain joint programs with leading French academic institutions so their best students can prepare for

research and write their doctoral theses in France.

The richness and length of the Chinese-French cultural interaction have allowed (and will continue to allow) both countries to overcome the frictions and misunderstandings that usually happen in any long-term relationship. When observing history from some distance, the alternation between "warmer" and "frostier" relations among societies and cultures appears with a clarity that makes the phenomenon much less pre-occupying. A sense of distance helps to maintain normalcy, so as to ensure that continued dialogue and mutual learning prevail over emotional ups and downs.

At the same time, the past can never be repeated. Inventiveness brings about changes in relationships and helps them grow. What will make Chinese-French exchanges even more lively and meaningful today is a focus on common, global challenges. When it comes to the reinvention of our educational models, to articulate the relationship between humankind and nature, to build a peace culture and to find ethical answers that the emergence of biotechnology and artificial intelligence calls for, both China and France are endowed with cultural resources harnessed by a cross-reading of their classics and traditions. From one culture to another, answers to such challenges will differ, but, in all cases, they will be fostered by a dialogue with the other. Such a dialogue leads each of us to appreciate one's specificities anew in the light of the interpretation delivered from another perspective. Almost 350 years after it started, Chinese-French cultural exchanges not only remain alive but also are providing remarkable resources for the endeavor through which different societies and cultures can find interconnected solutions to common challenges and seize the shared opportunities.

Who is left behind from Vietnamese migration to the UK?

Sen Nguyen and Seb Rumsby

OVER the past 10 years, a growing number of Vietnamese people have been migrating to Europe with hopes of a better life. This has taken place largely under the radar, but in 2019 the horrific Essex 39 tragedy in the United Kingdom, where 39 Vietnamese bodies were found in the back of a lorry, drew global attention to the trend. Since then, reporters have exposed several smuggling networks which facilitate irregular border crossings – from the Netherlands to Malta – with the UK often seen as the target destination. In fact, the UK's Home Office has reported a ten-fold increase in Vietnamese nationals arriving in small boats in 2024 so far.

The majority of recent Vietnamese migrants to Europe hail from a handful of provinces in North and North Central Vietnam. Despite widespread knowledge of the dangers involved in crossing the English Channel and risks of exploitative working conditions in nail salons or cannabis farms, many young people have come to believe that leaving their homeland behind, where they see no future, is the only way to secure one.

But what impact does transnational migration have on the left-behind communities? Let's take a look at Nghe An, the province which the majority of Essex 39 victims hailed from.

Nghe An has a proud nationalist history. Vietnam's legendary independence hero, Ho Chi Minh, was born there. Today, however, the story of Nghe An is largely about economic migration.

The province has countless new mansions funded by remittances. Yet look behind the affluent facade and you'll see a much darker reality. Local communities are "hollowed out" as most young, working-age people have left the village, leaving only the elders and children.

Migration has always been a collective endeavour. The whole household (and sometimes wider relatives) pool their resources to facilitate one person's travels abroad, who in turn is expected to repay the investment in the future. In Nghe An, it is striking to see so many children of long-term emigrants being cared for by older siblings, aunts and grandparents.

Minh* was only one year old when his mother and father left to find work abroad; eventually they ended up in the UK. Minh was nurtured by his paternal grandparents, while mum and dad sent back remittances to pay for his upkeep and education. Now Minh is 16, and his parents still have not been able to return to Vietnam due to fears they would not be able to get back to the UK. He has never met his five-year-old brother, although they speak on the phone regular-

ly. Minh would like to move to the UK and be reunited with his parents, but they do not have UK residency status so it will be difficult.

Vietnamese concepts of kinship stretch far beyond the nuclear family, and the ability of relatives (or sometimes even neighbours) to pick up childcare responsibilities for extended periods has been essential for facilitating the vast numbers of

Research shows that it is economic inequality, rather than poverty, which makes people unhappy and discontented. Even if we are better off than our parents were, living through rising inequality makes us feel excluded and frustrated by not being able to keep up with those further up the socioeconomic ladder. When combined with no obvious pathways for social mobility, a policy infrastructure that encourages overseas migration, and a robust migration brokerage industry, this creates a very powerful incentive for migration. According to Oxfam, the richest man in Vietnam earns more in a day than the poorest Vietnamese earns in 10 years.

labour migration journeys out of Nghe An.

At the same time, migration takes its toll on family and community coherence. Many marriages break down when someone moves abroad and finds a new partner, sometimes leaving children destitute back home. One man described the situation in his home village as "turmoil" as traditional family structures are torn apart, and the elderly are left to pick up the pieces.

In contrast to the optimistic, government-backed vision of remittance-funded development, here we see the dark side of migration: the depletion of Nghe An's social fabric, which is replaced by rising inequality as remittances enrich some households but not others. Ironically, transnational migration threatens to undermine the very bonds of kinship which enabled it in the first place.

What are they leaving behind? Since the end of the Vietnam War, Vietnam has managed to escape desperate poverty in a generation, an economic miracle for what used to be one of the poorest nations in the world. However, prosperity has not been equally distributed nationwide. Vietnam's impressive sustained national GDP growth figures mask the rapidly increasing income inequalities. In recent years among Vietnam's 58

provinces, just 12 including and surrounding Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City have received almost 60 percent of Vietnam's Foreign Direct Investment, leaving very little for the rest of the country.

Nghe An has one of the lowest per-capita incomes of any province, with traditional forms of livelihood like farming and fishing becoming increasingly unprofitable and undesirable – partly because of environmental

disasters like storms and flooding exacerbated by climate change. Most prospective emigrants hail from the 13.6 million whom the World Bank categorises as "no longer poor, but also not economically secure or middle class".

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According to Oxfam, the richest man in Vietnam earns more in a day than the poorest Vietnamese earns in 10 years. Vietnam's national media and social media are inundated with content advertising the lavish, luxurious lifestyles of the super-rich and upper-middle classes of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, which rural and working-class people of Nghe An aspire to but are excluded from because they lack the right social connections, a prestigious higher education, or



PSX witnesses bullish trend, gains 862 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Monday, gaining 862.15 points, a positive change of 1.20 per cent, closing at 72,764.24 points against 71,902.09 points the previous trading day.

A total of 578,388,643 shares valuing Rs 24.518 billion were traded during the day as compared to 452,155,229 shares valuing Rs24.542 billion the last day.

Some 389 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 258 of them recorded gains and 108 sustained losses, whereas the prices of 23 remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Pak Elctron with 48,443,791 shares at Rs 25.13 per share, Fauji Cement with 40,362,811 shares at Rs22.44 per share and K-Electric Limited with

26,775,432 shares at Rs4.41 per share.

Sapphire Textile Mills Limited witnessed an increase of Rs 84.42 per share closing at Rs 1,274.22, whereas runner-up was Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited with Rs 67.52 decline to close at Rs 19,447.50.

Hochst Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 66.13 per share closing at Rs 1,233.87, followed by Sapphire Fibres Limited with Rs 30.25 decline to close at Rs 1,449.50.

Rupee depreciates by 03 paisa against US dollar
Pakistani Rupee on Monday shed 03 paisa against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.23 against the previous day's closing of Rs 278.20.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and sell-

ing rates of the dollar in the open market, however, stood at Rs 277.50 and Rs 280.35 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by 58 paisa and closed at Rs 299.43 against the last-day closing of Rs 298.85, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese Yen went down by 01 paisa and closed at Rs 1.80, whereas an increase of 82 paisa was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound gained 37 paisa and was traded at Rs 349.70 compared to the last closing of Rs 349.33.

The Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal went up by 1 paisa each and closed at Rs 75.75 and Rs 74.18 respectively.

Gold rates up by Rs 2,500 per tola to Rs 240,500

The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs2,500 and was sold at

Rs240,500 on Monday compared to its sale at Rs238,000 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs 1,257 to Rs 206,190 from Rs 204,047 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs 189,007 from Rs 187,043, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs 2,620 and Rs 2,254.80 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$21 to \$2,322 from \$2,301, the Association said.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity was report at the port where seven ships namely, Maersk Nyassa, Jessie, White Peach, Gaslog Geneva, Clyde, Ullswater and African Loon, Container, Cement, Palm oil, LNG, Mogas, LPG and Coal, berthed at Container Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal, Liquid Terminal, Elengy Terminal, Oil Terminal, Sui Southern Terminal and Bulk Terminal respectively on Sunday.

A total of nine ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, Maersk Nyassa and Gaslog Sydney left the port on Monday morning.

Meanwhile another Grain carrier 'Majestic Noor' is expected to sail today afternoon. Cargo volume of 186,619 tonnes, comprising 147,691 tonnes imports cargo and 38,928 tonnes export cargo carried in 3,931 Containers (1,920 TEUs Imports and 2,011 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

A containership ship 'MSC Archemidis' is expected to take berths at QICF.

DH, Engro approve plan

KARACHI (PPI): The Boards of Dawood Hercules Corporation Limited (DH Corp) and Engro Corporation Limited (Engro Corp) have, in principle, approved a proposal to restructure the shareholding between the two companies, aiming to enhance investment opportunities of the enterprise. The restructuring proposal is subject to final Board and shareholder approvals.

The proposed restructuring would enhance investment opportunities by harmonizing the investment efforts of both companies. DH Corp is a capital allocation firm that has experience in deploying funds to a broad range of sectors and assets, while Engro Corp has a successful track record of developing and managing large-scale industrial projects in 5 business verticals. Both companies have clear investment strategies and have delivered healthy returns to shareholders; however, a testing external environment necessitates a wider and more agile investing approach at a time when large-scale investments are challenging to make.

The proposed restructuring aims to enable such an approach. Following a two-step process, it would result in DH Corp being rebranded as Engro Holdings Limited, and Engro Corp becoming a wholly owned subsidiary of Engro Holdings. As a part of this process, Engro Corp's minority shareholders would become shareholders of Engro Holdings in a ratio that preserves their economic ownership of Engro Corp. This exercise would synergise investment efforts at the Engro Holdings level, enabling capital from Engro's businesses to be efficiently deployed to a wider set of opportunities, which is advantageous to shareholders of both companies. Engro Holdings' current shareholders would benefit from frictionless capital movement between the two entities and Engro Corp's current shareholders would benefit from a wider investment mandate, as well from as Engro Holdings' investment expertise.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Belgium to Pakistan, Charles Delehone conferring Grand Cross of Order of Crown, highest civil award conferred by King of Belgium, on Dr. Shahid Rashid Butt.

Dr. Shahid conferred with highest civil award

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A special ceremony to confer the highest civil award of the Grand Cross of the Order of the Crown on the former president of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and renowned businessman Dr. Shahid Rashid Butt by King Philip of Belgium was held at the residence of the Ambassador of Belgium to Pakistan, Charles Delehone.

Dr. Shahid Rashid Butt has been conferred with this high honor in recognition of his invaluable services as a Trade Advisor to the Government of Belgium and the promotion of trade relations between the two countries of Pakistan and Belgium. Dr. Shahid Rashid Butt has become the first Pakistani to receive this highest civil award from Belgium.

The award is given by royal decree for outstanding service in public service and distinguished artistic, literary and scientific achievement, as well as commercial or industrial service in Belgium and Africa.

In the past, this top award has also been given to former French President Nicolas Sarkozy and famous Hollywood filmmaker Stephen Spielberg. Foreign ambassadors, members of parliament, well-known Business, and other important personalities from other walks of life participated in the ceremony in large numbers.

Ambassadors of France, Poland, Finland, Jordan, and Nepal were also among the personalities who participated in the event. Other personalities included well-known businessmen, Umar Shahid Butt, Chaudhry Shahid Shafi, Saleem Saifullah Khan, Masood Khan, Chaudhry Naseer, Malik Manzoor Ahmad, Dr. Shaikat Bangash, Asad Ansari, Fatima Azim, Isfandyar Bhandara, Ghalib

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Nishtar, Zahid Maqbool, Basir Dawood, Dr. Rizwan Uppal Kifayat, Member National Assembly Barrister Aqeel Malik, Malik Rafay, Harris, Butt, Senator Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar, former federal minister Ijaz Durrani, Dr. Zafar Jaspal, Afzal, Wali Barrister Zafarullah Khan and Chaudhry Maqsood were included.

Speaking on this occasion Dr. Shahid Butt said that I am grateful to King Philip of Belgium for awarding me this high honor. I have very good memories of Belgium, the people of Belgium are very hospitable. As a trade advisor, I made great efforts to increase trade cooperation between Pakistan and Belgium. In the 80's Pakistan-Belgium Friendship Society was founded, and through this platform, the business community of Pakistan and Belgium was brought together, and those who

wanted to do business between Pakistan and Belgium were also brought to this platform. I wish for the revival of this association in today's era. I look forward to working in the future for the common development and prosperity of both countries.

Speaking on this occasion, the Ambassador of Belgium said that the purpose of today's event is to honor Dr. Shahid Rashid Butt in recognition of his services. Dr. Shahid Butt had been the Trade Advisor to the Government of Belgium for a long time and in this capacity, he has worked extensively for the promotion of economic and trade relations between the two countries. Even today he is very active and working to promote trade relations between the two countries. I once again congratulate him on being recognized as the rightful recipient of this award.

Saudi investors' presence in Pakistan matter of satisfaction for traders

KARACHI (INP): Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain said that arrival of high-level delegation of investors led by the Deputy Minister of Investment of Saudi Arabia for negotiations regarding investment in Pakistan is matter of great satisfaction of the business community.

Talking to business community on Monday, he said that the 50-member delegation from more than 30 companies has arrived on the instructions of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman which would explore agriculture, mining, human resources, energy, chemicals and maritime opportunities.

Mian Zahid Hussain was

optimistic that the visit of the Saudi delegation will promote trade relations and investment and Pakistani companies can connect with the companies of the friendly country.

Leading companies from both countries will seek investment opportunities, which was expected to increase investment, exports and employment, he added.

The business leader said that agreements and memorandums of understanding will also be signed in this context. After Shahbaz Sharif became the prime minister, Saudi Arabia's relations with China and other countries are improving and their focus is on increasing trade and investment.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has visited Saudi Arabia twice, while the Saudi Foreign Minister has

also visited Pakistan, and now Pakistan is looking forward to the visit of the Saudi Crown Prince.

Mian Zahid Hussain said it was matter of grave concern that wheat scandal has come to light when there was a possibility of massive investment from Saudi Arabia. This was sending a negative message to the whole world, he added.

The economic system of the country was poor and dominated by the mafia. For this reason, the country was always under some scandal that exploits the people, increases poverty, and gives investors a negative message.

It was commonly perceived that nothing was done on merit, but there was a collusion everywhere. In such circumstances, foreign investment in the country's agricultural sector will become problematic.

Mian Zahid Hussain further said that on the one hand, Saudi investors will be evaluating the Pakistani market. On the other hand,

farmers will be running a nationwide movement because every time, the mafia succeeds in defeating the farmers.

He said that the central and provincial governments should try to solve this issue of farmers as soon as possible.

Sale of furnace oil declined

ISLAMABAD (INP): The sale of furnace oil in the country witnessed a decline of 53% on an annual basis in the first 10 months of the ongoing fiscal year. According to the statistics provided by the Oil Companies Advisory Committee (OCAC), a total of 0.87 million tons of furnace oil was sold in the country during the first 10 months of the current fiscal year, marking a significant decrease compared to the same period last fiscal year.

Cheezious Pakistan joins forces with Cola Next

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Cheezious, a renowned and customer-centric Pakistani fast-food brand, partners up with Cola Next Pakistan in order to support and promote local Pakistani enterprises.

Cola Next, a fairly-new beverage venture by Mezan Beverages Private Limited, which also provide a wonderful range like Fizup Next, Rangoo Next, they also have some really original and great tasting fruity flavors like lychee Next and Anar Next, storm for energy as well.

To assist Cola Next in reaching its goals and advancing Pakistani-led enterprises, Cheezious Pakistan has collaborated with the company. As part of this partnership, Cola Next beverages are now accessible at every Cheezious branch, displacing international beverages.

Cheezious is deeply committed to fostering Pakistani enterprises across the nation, prioritizing the sustenance and growth of local businesses.

Through strategic partnerships collaborations, and initiatives, similar to that with Cola Next, Cheezious strives to provide a platform for local businesses to thrive and succeed.

This includes showcasing their products, offering marketing support, facilitating networking opportunities, and providing access to resources and expertise. By championing the growth and sustainability of local businesses like Cola Next, Cheezious aims to contribute to the overall prosperity and well-being of Pakistan and its people.

Zohaib Hassan Head of Marketing for Cheezious Pakistan stated that, 'As a well-established Pakistani

household name, Cheezious recognizes the importance of nurturing and supporting local businesses in Pakistan. This commitment stems from a desire to contribute to the economic development and prosperity of the nation by empowering homegrown enterprises.

Cheezious understands that local businesses play a crucial role in driving innovation, creating employment opportunities, and fostering a sense of community pride.'

Cheezious is a food chain that began its journey in 2014 with a single branch, and it started off, just like any other fast-food chain, to be the best in the game. That's why Cheezious opted for the tagline "Spreading Cheezy Khushiyan". With Over 35 restaurants in Pakistan, it is one of the fastest-growing national fast-food chains.

Sesamum seeds export to China increased

BEIJING (INP): Pakistan's Sesamum seeds export to China crossed \$10.37 million from January to March of 2024, showing a growth of around 29% year-on-year.

This was reported by China Economic Net (CEN) quoting the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC).

According to the data, Pakistan exported 6137.044 tons of sesamum seeds from Pakistan in January-March 2024, worth 10.37 million with an increase of 28.81% while last year in the same period it was \$8.16 million.

Rakesh Pal Khamuani, Director of Export & BD Kanwal Trading Company (Pvt) Ltd Pakistan told CEN that Pakistan has reached \$375 million in exports of sesame seeds in the last 8 months of the fiscal year and it has the potential to grow more, added that the FTA with China helped to increase the export of sesame seeds which have been beneficial for both the countries.

"China will always have a quick transit advantage from Pakistan. This year's estimated average price is \$1750. Punjab province's estimated harvest was 75%

of the total sesame seeds crop contributing about 170,000 MT.

Sindh province estimated harvest was 25% of the total sesame seeds crop contributing about 55,000 MT. Punjab produces Farmi, Hybrid, and Black brown varieties. Sindh produces Mix and Desi varieties", he added.

He thinks Pakistan's crop this year is excellent and the total sesame production should surpass 225,000 MT. Sesame seed harvests in Pakistan have never been greater, with an average output of 400 kg per acre expected.

Markets build on rally as jobs data boost rate cut hopes

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Most Asian markets rose Monday after data showing fewer US jobs were created last month rekindled optimism interest rates will be cut this year, while mainland Chinese equities bounced on hopes for fresh government economic support.

A tech rally saw the Nasdaq lead Wall Street up after Friday's non-farm payrolls figures, which helped soothe concerns that forecast-busting inflation figures at the start of the year meant the Federal Reserve would keep borrowing costs at two-decade highs for an extended period.

The 175,000 new jobs in April's NFP report were much lower than the month before and also marked a big miss on expectations, while wage growth was also slightly lower than forecast.

Observers pointed out that while the reading indicated a slowdown in the world's number one economy, it was not seen as a big enough miss to feed fears that a recession is on the horizon.

The news ramped up bets on the Fed cutting rates in September while

investors also lifted their outlook on how many there would be, though the two priced in are still well short of the six envisaged at the start of the year.

"The softer wage growth and a slight increase in unemployment may ease some of the Federal Reserve's concerns about implementing rate cuts this summer," said Stephen Innes at SPI Asset Management.

"The unexpected weakness across the key labour series is a much-needed friendly surprise for policymakers."

The advances on Wall Street on Friday -- and another record for London -- gave Asian investors a healthy lead, and most picked up the baton.

Shanghai was the stand-out performer as mainland investors returned from a long break to play catch-up with a global rally over the past few days.

Traders also cheered a report last week that leaders would look at ways to support China's battered property sector as well as use measures to provide fresh support to the economy.

The tools outlined

encompassed interest rates and the amount of cash banks must keep in reserve, Bloomberg News reported.

"Market sentiment appears to be incrementally improving," Nicholas Yeo, of abrdn, said, pointing to improving traveller figures, market reforms and strong corporate releases.

"More material support via larger-than-expected fiscal spending and additional help for the property market would go a long way to materially improve sentiment in China."

Hong Kong edged up to push recent gains into a tenth successive trading day, while Sydney, Singapore, Taipei and Manila were also up. Wellington and Jakarta edged down.

The dollar rose against the yen, clawing back some of the big losses it suffered Friday in response to the US jobs report.

The Japanese unit endured a volatile time last week after hitting its weakest level in 34 years, leading authorities to reportedly intervene in forex markets Monday and Wednesday.



In brief

LESCO wins Championship

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) has secured the title of Inter-Unit WAPDA Kabaddi Championship. According to LESCO spokesman here Monday, the event was organized by WAPDA sports board with participation of teams from four power distribution companies i.e. LESCO, GEPCO (Gujranwala), FESCO (Faisalabad) and MEPCO (Multan). LESCO and MEPCO teams played the final round of Inter-unit WAPDA Kabaddi Championship in the FESCO region, while LESCO, for the first time, won the final trophy by defeating MEPCO. The LESCO Chief Executive Officer Engineer Shahid Haider congratulated the LESCO Kabaddi team and also appreciated the services of WAPDA Sports Board Chairman Ramzan Butt and General Secretary Mian Mohammad Afzal. He also congratulated the LESCO Kabaddi Team's Manager Rai Masood Khari, LESCO Sports Officer Mansoor Bhutta, Coach Shehbaz Bandesha and Deputy Coach Riaz Jatt. The chief also promised to give cash prizes to the winning Kabaddi team.

ICC say 'robust security plan'

NEW DELHI (Reuters): A robust security plan has been put in place for the T20 World Cup in June, the organisers of the competition said on Monday after reports of a possible threat to the global showpiece surfaced in the Caribbean media. Trinidad & Tobago Prime Minister Keith Rowley told the 'Sunday Express' about a possible security threat to the 20-team event to be co-hosted by West Indies and the United States. "Given the fact that bad actors can choose to misbehave in any way possible it makes it virtually impossible to completely seal off all opportunities," he said. Cricket West Indies and the game's global governing body, International Cricket Council, sought to allay any such fears in a joint statement. "We work closely with authorities in the host countries and cities, and continually monitor and evaluate the global landscape to ensure appropriate plans are in place to mitigate any risks identified to our event," they said. "We want to assure all stakeholders that safety and security of everyone at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup is our number one priority and we have a comprehensive and robust security plan in place." The biggest T20 World Cup will be played across nine venues including six in West Indies.

Nadal to make Rome return

ROME (APP): Rafael Nadal was drawn on Monday with a qualifier in the first round of the Italian Open as the 22-time Grand Slam winner continues his comeback from injury on clay in Rome. Should Nadal get through to the second round in the Italian capital, where he has won the title a record 10 times, he could face world number nine Hubert Hurkacz. Also on Nadal's side of the draw are last year's winner, world number four Daniil Medvedev, and the beaten finalist Holger Rune. The 37-year-old last won in Rome in 2021 and dropped out last year with injury ahead of the tournament. Since making his comeback in April after three months on the sidelines, Nadal, who sits at 305 in the men's ATP tour rankings after hardly playing in 2023, has been knocked out in the second round in Barcelona and reached the last 16 in Madrid.

Babar promises fans to come up expectations

LAHORE (APP): Captain Babar Azam has said that the Pakistan team will do its best to come up to the expectations of the cricket fans at home and abroad and lift the ICC Men's T20I World Cup 2024 trophy.

Talking to the media men during the pre-departure press conference at the Gaddafi stadium here on Monday, he said the team could not reach the podium during the past two attempts in the UAE and Australia, adding that the team has the self-belief and is fully focused to go for the top.

Pakistan Men's team is due to leave for Ireland to play a three-match T20I series on May 7 (tomorrow). The team will face off England in four T20Is during the last week of May and then fly to the USA to take part in the ICC T20I World Cup.

"I have faith in all the players and we will give our 100 percent to bring joy on the faces of our fans by winning the ICC Men's T20I World Cup 2024 in the West Indies and USA," a confident-looking Babar Azam reassured.

Responding to comparison of Haris Rauf with fast bowler Muhammad Ali and all-rounder Aamer Jamal, Babar said Haris Rauf has produced extraordinary performance over the past three to

four years and won matches single-handedly for Pakistan, adding that Muhammad Ali is new-ball bowler and struggled when he played out of Multan Cricket stadium during the recently concluded HBL PSL 2024.

"Sometimes players are thrust into a sport but all depends on the quality of talent. Muhammad Ali needs some time to nurture his talents for the best use for the country." Babar summed up. Babar Azam assured that no player will face injustice, adding that Muhammad Ali is on their radar for selection in future. He further stressed that selection of a player to the side was not his sole discretion as a captain, adding that the selection process involved seven selectors. "I may give my opinion but one has to accept others' views as well," he added.

He said Aamer Jamal has proved himself as a good fast-blowing all-rounder in the test arena, adding that he needs to do well in the T20I consistently to challenge others for a slot in the national side. Babar Azam was confident that Haris Rauf would make a strong impact after quite long rest due to injury.

On wicket-keeper batsman Muhammad Haris' exclusion from the World Cup squad, the stylish batsman Babar said Haris played as a top-order pinch hitter in



the last T20I World Cup 2022 after Fakhar Zaman was sidelined due to injury, adding that there was no room for the batter in the presence of four top-orders batsmen like himself, Saim Ayub, Mohammad Rizwan and Fakhar Zaman.

Babar further said Muhammad Haris is a fine player but did not carry good form in the HBL PSL 9 and the selection committee was conclusive in its opinion that he was needed for the middle order role. On Hasan Ali's selection to the squad, Babar clarified that Hasan Ali was picked as a back-up and not part of the 15-member squad for the ICC event. He said he was picked for his cricketing experience, adding

Zaman Khan is a new ball bowler while the team already has the four new-ball bowlers in Shaheen Shah Afridi, Mohammad Amir, Naseem Shah and Haris Rauf. He dispelled the impression that Hasan Ali was the pick of one member of the selection committee.

On posting 200 runs to win, Babar Azam said, "One cannot score these runs every day and it all depends on the pitch condition and form of the players." He said the Rawalpindi Cricket stadium turfs produced high-scoring fixture but the pitch behaved differently during the three matches against the New Zealand Men's team last month. "Though we take help from data but it is the character of a pitch on the match day which helps us to conclude how many runs can be scored," the skipper added.

On low first power-play scores by Pakistan, Babar Azam disagreed with the impression among the people, adding that he had above 50 runs in the first power-play while playing with Mohammad Rizwan. The T20I captain said that there is always room for improvement and Rizwan, Saim and he, himself, are working in the nets to hit hard and score big runs.

He hailed Chairman PCB Mohsin Naqvi for owning the team and giving

them confidence to go for the marquee event without fear of losing, adding that Naqvi had more rewards for the cricketers in store than 100,000 dollars on winning the ICC T20I WC 2024. On Head Coach Gary Kirsten, Babar said the former South African opening batsman Kirsten is very experienced coach and in close contact with the team. "He is in close contact with the team and daily report is shared with him and his planning is shared with him," Babar added.

"Gary Kirsten is a very experienced guy and know well how to gel with the team," Babar said. Babar said he is ready to listen to the advice of the Head Coach in the collective interest of the team whether it involved him, Rizwan or Saim to switch places, adding that it is not about individual interests but the team comes first. On Kohli, the captain said Virat Kohli is one of the best batsmen in the world, adding that the team strategy against him and the other 10 players will be designed after assessing the conditions in New York. Babar Azam said that the rotation policy to check bench strength was over and a full-strength team will be fielded against the Irish and English teams, adding that the same team combination more or less will play the T20I World Cup.

BCCI says Indian govt to decide on Indian team's visit to Pakistan for Champions Trophy

NEW DELHI (Agencies): The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has put the onus on the Indian government to allow the cricket team to visit Pakistan for the Champions Trophy event, slated to take place next year.

BCCI Vice-President Rajeev Shukla said on Monday that the Indian national squad would tour Pakistan only if the government permits it.

Shukla said that the Indian cricket governing body would follow whatever the government decides about the team's visit.

"In the case of the

Champion Trophy, we will do whatever the government of India will tell us to do. We send our team only when the government of India gives us permission. So, we will go according to the decision of the Indian government," Shukla said.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is shaping up security plans for the Indian cricket team ahead of the Champions Trophy which is to be played in the country in February next year.

The PCB has already put forward three venues, Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi, to the

International Cricket Council (ICC) in the initial draft schedule and the governing body will take feedback from the participating nations on it.

The eight-team tournament is anticipated to span over two weeks, although the exact dates have not yet been confirmed. Pakistan has decided to minimise India's travelling as a security measure, sources told Geo News.

It was further revealed that in the first round, all of India's matches will be held in Lahore. No Indian team has played in Pakistan since the 2008 Asia Cup.

Al-Kabir Inter-Club Karate Championship

PESHAWAR (APP): Under the auspices of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Karate Association, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Club Championship was won by Safi Warriors Martial Arts Academy Peshawar in the Al Kabir All Pakistan Karate Club Championship.

On this occasion, the coordinator of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Karate Association, Coach Shah Faisal, Secretary of Provincial Karate Association, Saif Gold Medalist, Presidential Award Winner, Khalid Noor Samith, and other important personalities were present.

In the second phase of the Al-Kabir All Pakistan Karate Club Championship, a karate hall competition was held at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Club Championship Peshawar Sports Complex in which karate players from various academies of the province participated, including Safi Warrior Martial Arts Academy Peshawar Kent, Friends Shotokan Karate Center.

Karate Karak, Kohat Division team Samith Shaheen Academy of Martial Arts Sarai Norang Bannu Samith Young Fighter Shoto Kan Karate Academy Dera Ismail Khan players participated on this occasion, competitions of various categories were held under the supervision of referee Rajjaserfan Nayab.

Taqir Azam, Asim Chaudhry, Shiraz Awan, Mohammad Tahir, Mohammad Sharif, Habib Nazir Mansoor Ahmed, Shin Gul, Abdul Samad Jamal Khan, Kamran Ali and Saif Ali were selected for the four teams, in which Salman was in the first team. Ibrahim, Murad, Haris, Abdullah, Asim, Shahzeb, the second team included Asrar, Abrar, Atta Al Rahman, Ehtsham Parvez, Muhammad Salim, Abdullah Jr., and Waris Habib, while the third team included Zahidullah, Ehsanullah, Muhammad Fayaz, Karimullah, Wahadullah, Osama Shafiq, Muhammad Adnan Khan while the fourth team includes Abid Ahmed, Saad Shah, Muhammad Anas, Muhammad Ilyas, Junaid, Subhan Ahmed and Waqar Ahmed.

WAPDA, PAF pull off wins in PTF Inter-Department Tennis Trophy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan WAPDA continued their dominance in PTF Inter-Department Tennis Trophy as they defeated Pakistan Army here at PTF-SDA Tennis Complex Islamabad on Monday.

Muhammad Abid of Pakistan WAPDA comfortably breezed out Abdullah Adnan of Pakistan Army in a straight-set competition 6-3 6-4. In the opening set, Abid took the lead 3-1 by breaking 2nd game of Abdullah, but Abdullah came back with a combination of some long rallies and cross-court down-the-line shots and leveled the score 3-3 games.

The experienced Abid once again broke the 8th game of Abdullah to build up the lead 5-3 and finished the set 6-3 by hitting an ace in the 9th game. In the second set, which was marked with aces and long rallies the score went up to 4-4 games all. Abid once again was able to break the game of Abdullah to build up the winning lead 5-4 and in the 10th game, he exhibited excellent tennis

and won the set at 6-4.

In the second singles, seasoned Aqeel Khan of WAPDA outclassed proficient Muzammil Murtaza, also from Pakistan Army in a straight set match 6-2 6-4. In the first set, seasoned Aqeel Khan took a flying start and built up a winning lead 4-1 by breaking 2nd game of Muzammil. He and did not allow his counterpart to settle down and again broke the 8th game, wrapping up the set at 6-2.

In the second set, Muzammil changed the game plan and played some excellent cross-court down-the-line shots with the combination of long rallies and score went up 4-4 games all, but Aqeel Khan with the help of his long experience captured Muzammil in the 10th game, and forced him to hit the ball outside court area. At the score of 15-40, Aqeel returned excellent cross-court landed on the line to finish the set and match 6-2 6-4. The match lasted 1 hrs 7 minutes.

In the doubles match, Army team comprising

Muzammil Murtaza and Abdullah Adnan proved too good against WAPDA's duo of Shahzad Khan and Heera Ashiq, winning the marathon match 6-4 7-6(2).

In another battle between Pakistan Air Force (PAF) and Pakistan Navy at PTF Tennis Court, Islamabad, the former pulled off a comfortable win.

In the 1st singles, Yousaf Khalil of PAF did not allow his opponent Faizan Fayyaz Khan of Pakistan Navy to settle down and finished the match at 6-2 6-2. In the second singles, Muhammad Shoaib of PAF won his encounter against upcoming youngster Zaman 6-3, 6-1. In his pursuit of victory, he added his foot speed and topspin making him a force to be reckoned with.

In the doubles match the pair of Shoaib and Hamza (PAF) did not allow their opponents Asad and Faizan (Navy) on the court and knocked out th with the score of 6-2 6-3. The finals and closing ceremony will be held at 4:00 PM on Tuesday.

RMI Inter-College Male, Female Games begins in a colourful opening ceremony



PESHAWAR (APP): Rehman Medical Institute (RMI) on Monday launched its second inter-college sports gala, a week-long sporting event featuring over 300 students from five colleges in six different Games.

The inaugural ceremony was attended by prominent international players - national cricketer Muhammad Haris - dignitaries, and students, nine times national gold medalist in Badminton Murad Ali, international athlete Tameen Khan Gandapur, international athlete Sami Ullah, international Table Tennis Paralympic player Ibrahim Khan, two times gold medalist of the Asian Games Asad Iqbal, national athletes Saqib Iqbal, Nouman Khan, Inam Khan, players, officials and large number of students spectators were also present.

The event kicked off with a torch relay and a beautiful March Past of all the five contingent including Rehman College for Nursing, Rehman Medical College, Rehman College of Rehabilitation Sciences, Rehman College of Allied Sciences and Rehman College of Dentistry. The gala features over

100 matches in cricket, basketball, volleyball, futsal, badminton, and table tennis, providing a platform for students to showcase their sporting talent and compete in a healthy and friendly environment. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs Mattiullah Khan, who was the chief guest at the inaugural ceremony, commended RMI for organizing the mega sports event. He said that everyone knows RMI produces top-notch medical professionals and it is very encouraging that RMI is also promoting students to participate in extracurricular activities.

In his address, Khan stressed the importance of sports in promoting a healthy lifestyle and developing a winning spirit among students. He said the contribution of RMI in the sports sector is vital and giving importance to sports means RMI surely wants to nurture the upcoming young talent.

Director Sports RMI Dr. Muhammad Bin Afsar Jan highlighted the importance of sports events in instilling a sense of competition and teamwork among students. He also

appreciated the efforts of RMI's Sports Directorate in organizing the event and promoting sports in the institution. He said the team of manager Sports RMI Dr. Bilal along with Dr. Shamaal Khattak, national athlete Muhammad Nouman, Sports Coach Inam Ullah, and other supporting staff worked hard to make the opening ceremony memorable.

CEO RMI Shafique Ur Rehman said that Pakistani youth grapple with obesity for which he said sports activities are the perfect antidote to this concerning trend, urging everyone to prioritize their health and well-being. He spoke passionately about the dangers of a sedentary lifestyle and the importance of finding a healthy balance in life. He then discussed the role of sports in mental health, highlighting its therapeutic benefits of participating in healthy activities.

The Games would continue up till May 14, the day of the presentation and prize distribution ceremony wherein the position holders athletes would award medals, trophies and cash prizes.

Peshawar, Rawalpindi, Karachi win matches in 9th round of National Women's Tournament

FAISALABAD, (APP): Sidra Nawaz struck a magnificent century to help Peshawar beat Quetta in the ninth round of the National Women's One Day Tournament 2023-24 at Bohranwali Ground, here on Monday.

Sidra took 86 balls to score an unbeaten 106 laced with 16 fours as Peshawar chased the 185-run target in 28.4 overs with seven wickets in hand.

Earlier, Quetta's opening batters Khadija Chishti (80, 120b, 11x4s) and Komal Khan (39, 88b, 4x4s) propelled their team to a modest score in 50 overs. Peshawar's Momina Riasat and Mahnoor Afzab picked up three wickets apiece.

Lahore copped their first

loss in the tournament at the hands of Karachi after they were all out for 113 in 39 overs at Iqbal Stadium. Maham Manzoor picked up four wickets while Omaidha Sohail dismissed two batters. In reply, Omaidha continued her brilliant batting form, striking an undefeated 49 off 60 balls including six fours. Karachi chased the total in 36.3 overs while losing five wickets.

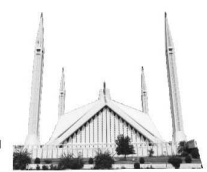
At Jawad sports Complex Ground, Rawalpindi romped to a thumping seven-wicket victory over Multan. Humna Bilal wreaked havoc with the ball as she returned with figures of five for 11 to bundle out Multan for a mere 39.

Despite two early blows

by Tasmia Rubab, Rawalpindi knocked off the target in 13.5 overs with seven wickets in the bag. Scores in brief: Rawalpindi Women beat Multan Women by seven wickets at Jawad Sports Complex Ground Multan Women 39 all out, 32.1 overs (Aleena Masood 10; Humna Bilal 5-11) Rawalpindi Women 40-3, 13.5 overs (Laiba Mansoor 13, Fajar Naveed 11 not out; Tasmia Rubab 2-14) Karachi Women beat Lahore Women by five wickets at Iqbal Stadium Lahore Women 113 all out, 39 overs (Amber Kainat 28, Dua Majid 19; Maham Manzoor 4-10; Omaidha Sohail 2-20). Karachi Women 114-5, 36.3 overs

(Omaidha Sohail 49 not out, Syeda Aroob Shah 19 not out; Quaratulain 2-30). Peshawar Women beat Quetta Women by seven wickets at Bohranwali Ground. Quetta Women 184-9, 50 overs (Khadija Chishti 80, Komal Khan 39; Mahnoor Afzab 3-32, Momina Riasat 3-27). Peshawar Women 186-3, 28.4 overs (Sidra Nawaz 106 not out, Aleena Shah 30; Kalsoom Kakar 2-40).

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



In brief

CDA chief directs to repair MRI machine

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Chief Commissioner of Islamabad, Chaudhry Muhammad Ali Randhawa Monday directed to repair the Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) machine of the Capital Hospital shortly and submit a detailed report. During his surprise visit to the Capital Hospital, he emphasized the need for improvement in the sanitation system of the hospital. Expressing dismay over cleanliness issues, Chairman CDA directed to improve the cleanliness issues of the Capital Hospital. Muhammad Ali directed to further improve the medical facilities for the patients of the Capital Hospital. Earlier, Chairman CDA also paid a visit to Rescue 1122 where he responded to a call on Rescue 1122, arranging for an ambulance.

IRSA releases 141,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 141,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 179,700 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1465.79 feet and was 51.79 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 34,400 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1166.00 feet, which was 116.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 58,500 cusecs and 35,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 72,500, 59,300, 45,100 and 10,200 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 64,500 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 13,100 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

AIOU to hold Int'l moot

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) is hosting a three-day international conference on "Ijtihad Bil-Maqasid" from May 22 to May 24. This conference is being organized by the Department of Islamic Thought, History, and Culture, Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies, AIOU. Several international and national religious scholars and academicians will present papers on the importance, scope, and objectives of Ijtihad during the conference. Dean of the Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Prof. Dr. Mohyuddin Hashmi, said that such conferences are urgently needed to promote unity, end extremism, and foster brotherhood among Islamic countries. Vice Chancellor of AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, stressed organising an international conference on this topic and we planned this conference in May which will also be a part of the ongoing Golden Jubilee celebrations of AIOU.

Man arrested for killing friend

RAWALPINDI (APP): In a significant breakthrough, police have successfully solved a blind murder case, leading to the apprehension of the suspect involved in the heinous crime. The perpetrator, identified as Hamza, is accused of murdering his friend, Nadeem in the jurisdiction of Race Course Police station. The investigation revealed that Hamza, along with an accomplice, administered a drug injection to Nadeem, resulting in his untimely death.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan while addressing the ceremony on the launch of Report "State of youth entrepreneurship ecosystem in Pakistan".

Climate-induced challenges mount for Islotees

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad's idealized life is increasingly undermined by the looming specter of climate-induced health crises, necessitating concrete actions to protect the health and vitality of its residents. Seasonal allergies, such as pollen, monsoon and skin, intensify with erratic weather patterns, while poor air quality, fueled by carbon emissions aggravates respiratory ailments.

"It's not the pollen allergy alone but the capital's idealized life is increasingly undermined by the looming specter of climate-induced health crises, necessitating urgent action to protect the health and vitality of its residents," Professor Dr. Nasir Ali, a cardiologist at PIMS hospital said.

Renowned climate change expert Dr. Naseer Memon underscoring the myriad impacts of climate change on human health said, "Climate change is no longer a distant threat; it's a present reality affecting the health and well-being of our communities."

He also noted its effects on productivity, particularly for outdoor workers during extreme weather events. Economic losses, compounded by temperature variations, can augment mental stress and potentially incite violent behaviors. Acknowledging

Pakistan's minimal contribution to environmental pollution, Dr. Memon emphasizes the necessity for a dual approach of mitigation and adaptation to combat climate change. While federal and provincial governments have formulated policies to address its impacts, there's a critical need for sector-specific plans to integrate climate change considerations into actionable strategies. Preserving green spaces and eliminating non-native flora in Islamabad are crucial steps to mitigate environmental risks and safeguard public health, asserts Dr. Memon.

A climate researcher Bushra Iqbal, highlighting the adverse impact of water pollution on public health, said changes in temperature and precipitation patterns increase vector-borne diseases such as dengue fever and malaria, expanding the geographical range of disease vectors like mosquitoes. "Islamabad is no exception to all these challenges," she remarked. Bushra also noted that the contaminated water sources can serve as breeding grounds for pathogens, leading to widespread illness and even fatalities. Therefore, she stresses for the capital's civic body's urgent attention for ensuring clean drinking water for its residents.

A health expert Dr. Iram,

noted the health risks associated with heat-related illnesses such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke, affecting vulnerable demographics like the elderly and children. Moreover, fluctuations in temperature contribute to gastroenteritis during peak summer months. Air pollution, primarily driven by vehicle emissions and industrial activities, further adds to health hazards, leading to respiratory issues such as asthma and bronchitis. The Islamabad Traffic Police must take decisive action against owners of smoke-emitting vehicles to ensure clean air for its dwellers," she suggested.

Another reputed medical practitioner Dr. Azhar Khawar highlights the prevalence of skin allergies amidst changing weather patterns, urging proactive measures to mitigate health risks. Dr. Azhar also reported an increased number of patients in recent years in Islamabad due to climate change factor. An Agricultural Scientist at Pakistan Agricultural Research Council underscores the repercussions of climate change on agricultural productivity, emphasizing its implications for food security and malnutrition, particularly in vulnerable communities.

Crackdown continues against elements involved in illegal currency exchange

ISLAMABAD (APP): A nationwide crackdown against elements involved in hundi and illegal currency exchange continues.

According to the spokesperson of Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), during the last 4 months, 267 raids were conducted against the elements involved in the illegal exchange of hawala and hundi and illegal currency exchange businesses.

269 cases were registered and 327 accused were arrested while an Investigation of 36 inquiries were also completed.

During the last 4 months, Peshawar zone registered 107 cases and arrested 116 accused, Kohat zone registered 21 cases and arrested 21

accused, Lahore zone registered 25 cases and arrested 36 accused, Gujranwala zone registered 39 cases and arrested 52 accused, Faisalabad zone registered 19 cases and arrested 29 accused, Multan zone registered 16 cases and arrested 18 accused, Islamabad zone registered 6 cases and arrested 7 accused, Karachi zone registered 16 cases while arrested 27 accused, Hyderabad zone registered 7 cases and arrested 10 accused, Balochistan zone registered 13 cases and arrested 11 accused in the hawala hundi business.

The arrested accused were involved in currency exchange without a license.

During the last 4 months, a total of more than 62 crore

38 lac rupees worth of domestic and foreign currency was exported.

28,9036 US dollars, and other foreign currency worth more than 171.2 million rupees were included in the currency exported.

The exported currency included more than 371.7 million Pakistani rupees

A number of shops were also sealed during the nationwide raids.

The assistance of law enforcement agencies was also obtained for the arrest of the accused.

In light of the directives of Director General Ahmed Ishaq Jahangir, all resources were being used to arrest the accused while International agents involved in illegal currency trading were also being targeted.

Govt committed to address problems of farmers on priority basis: PM Coordinator

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister's Coordinator Rana Ehsan Afzal Monday assured that government was taking all possible steps to protect the rights of farmers on priority and formulating fruitful policies for the welfare of farmers which will improve crops to enhance productivity. Talking to a private news channel, he said that all necessary steps regarding the purchase of wheat and said that there should not be any delay in the procurement of wheat so the farmers can get reward for their hard work.

The authorities concerned strictly directed by PM to complete the procurement of wheat from farmers, he said, adding, the wheat procurement target was also increased from 1.4 million tonnes to

1.8m tonnes. A strict inquiry committee was constituted to prob a wheat import scandal which will submit its report to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, he said, adding, after getting details we will take further decisions.

Replying a question, he said that the inflation falling towards the lowest level which was a sign of improvement in the economy. To another question, he said present government was trying to reduce the prices of other essential items and flour price control committees had been reactivated along with finalizing a comprehensive price control policy. He also expressed government's resolve to continue heading in the same direction to improve people's lives and to control further inflation.

Randhawa directs to make Islamabad Model Jail operational in 100-day

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Chief Commissioner Islamabad Muhammad Ali Randhawa Monday directed to make Islamabad Model Jail fully operational within 100-day.

While chairing a meeting on development and construction work of Islamabad Model Jail, he said that more delay in the construction work will not be tolerated. Muhammad Ali said the construction work of the jail should be completed into three shifts. During the briefing, he was informed that 73 percent of the administrative block, 98 percent of the boundary wall, and 42 percent of the male barracks have already been completed. The meeting was attended by Inspector General of Islamabad Police Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi and officials from the Public Works Department. Muhammad Ali said that a site inspection is scheduled on May 8 (Wednesday) to evaluate the ongoing construction work at Islamabad Model Jail.

Govt. committed to ending red tape, says Dr. Musadiq Malik

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Petroleum, Dr. Musadiq Malik, said on Monday that the government led by Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif is committed to ending red tape and facilitating the business community for sustainable economic growth.

Addressing a press conference alongside Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan and Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attallah Tarar Tarar, Dr. Malik said, "Prime Minister has issued instructions to eliminate red-tapism and reduce regulations to provide a conducive environment and level playing field for all investors."

Minister for Petroleum, Dr. Musadiq Malik said that Saudi Arabian companies have established separate desks, and Pakistani companies are engaged in negotiations to enhance their business at the international level.

The minister expressed optimism that several companies would finalize business and investment deals during the business-to-business (B2B) sessions, fostering greater economic cooperation between Saudi Arabia and

Pakistan.

He highlighted the presence of over 100 Pakistani companies at the investment conference, negotiating cooperation with Saudi companies across various sectors including agriculture, mining, human resources, energy, chemicals, maritime, IT, religious tourism, telecom, aviation, construction, water, and power generation.

Minister for Petroleum, Dr. Musadiq Malik believed that the Pakistan-Saudi Arabia investment conference would promote bilateral trade and investment, ushering in a new era of growth and prosperity and creating job opportunities for young people to start small businesses with Saudi Arabian companies.

He said that the investment conference would provide new directions and hope for Pakistan.

Minister for Petroleum, Dr. Musadiq Malik thanked Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan for his leadership in appointing coordinators for each company that arrived in Pakistan to facilitate their engagement.

Shaza calls for equipping youth with latest technological advancements happening globally

ISLAMABAD (APP): State Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima Khawaja Monday underscored the importance of equipping the country's youth with the latest technological advancements happening globally.

"Everything now revolves around technology, and we have to adapt as quickly as possible. We must ensure that our young people are well-versed in the technological advancements happening globally, whether for social or economic development," she said during the launch of the State of Youth Entrepreneurship Ecosystem report. She highlighted the transformative opportunities available to the youth in the digital age, where advancements like artificial intelligence (AI) are reshaping industries.

The minister mentioned how platforms like meta AI (used in WhatsApp and other meta platforms) were introduced in Pakistan before globally, showcasing the potential and capacity of Pakistani youth.

"We are pushing for a startup ecosystem

under the vision of Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif and the government is embarking on a journey of national digitization, aiming to digitize government processes, the economy, and society," she elaborated. The minister outlined the government's goal of creating digital identities for every citizen, which would enhance living standards and interactions with the government. She emphasized the role of fintech in formalizing the economy, noting the shift towards digital payments even among street vendors. She informed about the evolution of Pakistan's economy, with street vendors accepting digital payments through platforms like EasyPaisa, highlighting how this formalization of the economy benefits the country.

Shaza Khawaja stressed that the government's vision is to let the private sector drive this transformation, leading to capacity building, increased demand, and employment opportunities for young people. "This transformation will genuinely make life easier for everyone," she concluded, highlighting the significant impact of digitalization on Pakistan's economy and society.

Teachers criticize imposed digital teaching strategy for elementary students

ISLAMABAD (APP): A significant number of teachers responsible for educating children up to grade-5 have raised concerns over a newly imposed teaching strategy mandated by inexperienced instructors of the National Institute of Excellence in Teacher Education (NIETE).

The NIETE has recently started a training program to train elementary school teachers of the ICT educational institutions.

The teachers, who possess decades of extensive experience and expertise in the field of education, express frustration over being compelled to adopt methodologies they deem ineffective and detrimental to the educational development of young learners.

The main point of concern lies in the implementation of a teaching approach advocated by the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE), which emphasizes digital solutions, facilitated through the NIETE portal. However, teachers argue that this shift towards digital platforms, online materials, and mobile-based instruction fails to meet the needs of young students and is merely a wasteful expenditure of public funds.

The burden of managing a large number of students alongside the

technical requirements of the new method proved overwhelming for both teachers and students. Technical issues further compounded the challenges, with teachers' cell phones struggling to cope with the demands of large files and materials.

A teacher at Islamabad Model College for Girls I-10/4 while talking to APP highlighted the inadequacy of the instructors appointed to oversee the transition.

She asserted that the appointed instructors were predominantly young females lacking sufficient experience in elementary education, fall short in understanding the workings of classroom dynamics and effective pedagogical techniques.

A teacher at a school in sector F-8 lamented, "We pride ourselves on engaging students through hands-on, practical learning experiences, fostering their curiosity and understanding of the world around them.

However, the current teaching style distracts us with digital platforms and irrelevant materials, detracting from authentic learning opportunities.

This teaching technique, rather than enhancing the educational process, only added to the chaos,

exacerbating existing issues of poor management.

According to a teacher, the lesson plans and techniques provided on the portal do not match the time constraints.

Furthermore, instructors have unrealistic expectations, like trying to cover extensive material within unreasonable timeframes, which overlook the developmental needs of young learners. "It's absurd to expect young children to grasp complex concepts within such compressed timelines," remarked the teacher. "Pushing them beyond their capacity only serves to hinder their holistic development and undermine their confidence."

A teacher at IMCG I-8/4 said that the imposed digital teaching strategy prioritized quantity over quality, neglecting the fundamental principles of effective education.

Furthermore, the undue pressure placed on young students may have detrimental effects on their psychological well-being and overall personality development.

Teachers urge the education ministry to prioritize pedagogical approaches rooted in best practices and customized to suit the distinct requirements of elementary students.



ISLAMABAD: A worker shifting parrots to other place in Birds Aviary at Lake View Park.

Goods via rail cross Tehran

KABUL (Ariana News): Ten wagons of Afghanistan's goods bound for Turkey have passed through Tehran and are now on the way to the Razi border in Iran on Monday. Ministry of Roads and Urban Development of Iran, said that Afghanistan Rail Development Consortium dispatched the consignment without going through legal procedures, including obtaining permits from border guards and customs, as well as without obtaining permission from the Iranian Railway Authority.

Museum showcases artifacts

KABUL (TOLONews): Officials at the National Museum of Afghanistan reported that more than 900 Ai-Khanoum artifacts are at the national museum. According to officials at the National Museum, these artifacts include pottery and building materials. Mohammad Yahya, deputy of the National Museum, said: "Currently, there are about 945 large Ai-Khanoum artifacts in the museum, some of which are on display, and these include statues and decorative items."

Rains, flooding claim 14 lives, destroy homes

KABUL (TOLONews): The State Ministry for Disaster Management Affairs reports the death of 14 individuals due to flooding in the country.

Janan Saiq, the spokesperson for the ministry, said that as a result of the floods and rainfall in 14 provinces, 140 residential homes have been destroyed, and over 2,000 livestock have perished.

"In the last three days, due to the rain, approximately 14 of our fellow citizens have died, and one person is missing. 140 homes have been either completely or partially demolished," Janan Saiq

said.

Simultaneously, Mohammad Ashraf Haqshenas, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Public Works, said that some roads in the provinces of Badakhshan, Takhar, Ghor, and Nuristan have been temporarily blocked due to landslides and floods.

"Several paths in the provinces of Takhar, Badakhshan, Ghor, and Nuristan, which have been temporarily closed to traffic due to the ongoing floods and landslides, are being urgently cleared by the Ministry of Public Works," he added.

Residents of various

provinces report significant financial losses due to these floods and are calling for the government to address their challenges.

A resident of Farah said: "It took children, destroyed lands, and bridges."

A resident of Ghor stated: "Our expectation is that the government helps our fellow citizens who are trapped, and assists those whose possessions have been damaged."

The State Ministry for Disaster Management Affairs reported May 1 that due to rainfall and floods on a single day, five people had died, and another was injured.

Increase in visitors at Qargha Dam

KABUL (TOLONews): Several residents of the capital are talking about the recent rise in the water levels at Qargha Dam, stating that the increase in water also led to more visitors.

"It has a nice climate. The water level has also risen. It's a great season, it's spring, so we came here for photos and to enjoy ourselves," said Mohammad Aref, a resident of Kabul.

Visitors who have come from various provinces also expressed their happiness about the increased water in the dam.

"I myself have come from Kandahar to enjoy the scenery and relax. Our friends are here with us for taking photos and videos," said Mohammad Haseeb, a resident of Kandahar.

"We had visited before, but the water was not as high as it is now. The weather is excellent and the water has increased," said Hamed, a resident of Ghazni. A number of restaurant owners and businesspeople in the area are also optimistic about the increase in water and visitors to this recreational spot, saying that the previous decrease in water levels at Qargha Dam had reduced the number of visitors.

"We are optimistic that people will come to enjoy themselves this year, and we will host them, although it wasn't this much in previous years," said Mohammad, a restaurant manager.

"We also hope that friends come to visit, to see the restaurants and the dam area, and, God willing, we hope to serve them well," said Mohammad Khaled, another restaurant manager.

Qargha is a famous recreational spot in the city of Kabul, surrounded by low hills and earthen mounds. Qargha Dam was constructed as a recreational site during the reign of Mohammad Zahir Shah in 1330 (1951).

Deputy PM meets WHO Regional Director

— stresses need for cooperation

KABUL (Ariana News): Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs Abdul Salam Hanafi met with WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, Hanan Balkhy, and called for the organization's cooperation including in the establishment of clinics in remote areas and training of specialists.

According to a statement released by his office, Hanafi pointed out that since the Islamic Emirate in Afghanistan regained power, there has been progress in various fields, including the fight against drug production and trafficking, the roundup and treatment of drug addicts, the eradication of corruption and nationwide security.

He asked the WHO to hand over Afghanistan's seat to the representative of the Islamic Emirate and restore Afghanistan's membership in meetings of the executive board and leadership meetings of the Mediterranean region.

Hanafi also called for the cooperation of international



organizations in providing alternative livelihoods for poppy farmers and in providing assistance to flood victims.

While stressing that the eradication of polio is one of the priorities of the Islamic Emirate, Hanafi asked the WHO to activate polio diagnosis laboratories and supply vaccines, establish a cancer treatment center, prevent malnutrition among children and provide safe drinking water.

According to the statement, WHO official Balkhy said in the meeting that the health issue is non-political and one of the priorities of the organization.

She pointed to the achievements of the Islamic Emirate in various fields and expressed hope that better conditions will be provided for Afghans in the health and education sector.

Balkhy explained that WHO, together with other international organizations

and the European Union, has a three-year project that includes the establishment of health centers in different provinces of Afghanistan.

She also expressed her appreciation for the efforts of the Islamic Emirate in the fight against polio and added that she will discuss the issue of providing alternative livelihoods for Afghan farmers with the WHO and other relevant organizations.

Afghanistan Embassy confirms Zakia accused of gold smuggling

KABUL (Khaama Press): Zakia Wardak, Afghanistan's Consul General in India, resigned from her diplomatic position after a significant amount of gold concealed under her customized jacket was intercepted at Mumbai airport.

The Embassy of Afghanistan in India also confirmed that Ms Wardak had been accused of smuggling 25 kilograms of gold. In its initial response to reports indicating Zakia Wardak was the first foreign diplomat in India to be accused of smuggling a large amount of gold, the Embassy of Afghanistan confirmed the accusation in a statement that Ms. Wardak acted under her

diplomatic capacity from the Taliban regime and had no connection to the previous government's mission in India.

According to Indian media reports, Zakia Wardak concealed 25 bricks of gold (each weighing one kilogram) under and between her clothes during a flight from the United Arab Emirates to Mumbai late last week (Friday, April 25th), which was intercepted by Mumbai airport security forces.

The Times of India reported that she might be the first foreign diplomat to smuggle such a quantity of gold using a diplomatic passport that grants immu-

nity. It is worth mentioning that Zakia Wardak, due to her possession of a diplomatic passport granting immunity to diplomats, has not been detained at least for now, but Indian media reports indicate that a gold smuggling case has been filed against her.

Zakia Wardak resigned from her diplomatic position shortly after reports of gold smuggling surfaced, but her resignation letter did not mention the gold smuggling issue. However, the Embassy of Afghanistan in India has introduced her as a representative of the Taliban administration.

The embassy stated that the diplomatic presence of

the Embassy of Afghanistan in New Delhi officially ended in November 2023 due to what is interpreted as the rejection of visa extensions for diplomats in India, and those who have been active as diplomats in India since that date, including Zakia Wardak, have followed the orders of the Taliban.

The Taliban regime also confirmed its communication with the Embassy of Afghanistan in New Delhi in late November last year, stating that Afghan diplomats in India follow the orders of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but this ministry has not yet commented on Zakia Wardak's gold smuggling.

Nearly 1,000 Afghan migrants deported, says Afghan Ministry

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation Affairs states that close to a thousand Afghan migrants returned to the country after being expelled by Pakistan.

According to a newsletter released by the ministry on Sunday, 913 Afghan migrants residing in Pakistan have entered the country.

According to the newsletter, the migrants who had been expelled returned to the country.

The Ministry of Migrants Affairs has stated that the expelled individuals returned to the country twice through the Torkham and Spin Boldak border crossings.

This comes as both Pakistan and Iran have recently intensified the expulsion of Afghan citi-



zens from their territories, with hundreds of Afghans, including families and individuals, entering the coun-

try daily through various border crossings.

Pakistan and Iran consistently cite the lack of legal

documentation for residency in their countries as the primary reason for the expulsion of Afghan migrants.

Arous-e-Kohha attracts tourists

SAR-E-PUL (TOLONews): The recreational area of Arous-e-Kohha in Sar-e-Pul province is attracting many domestic tourists recently. A number of domestic tourists who have come to this area for fun and recreation said that the current security has made it possible for them to visit more areas.

Arous-e-Kohha, located in the village of Adrang in Sar-e-Pul province, boasts beautiful landscapes, lush nature, and pistachio forests, attracting the gaze of every viewer. "The beauty of this mountain is that it has fields of flowers, pistachio trees, almond trees, and beautiful nature, and people come from all corners of Sar-e-Pul and other provinces for tourism," said Mahtabuddin Haydari, a tourist.

"This is a truly beautiful and popular mountain, and on this mountain, there are pistachios, fields, and water. Because of its beauty, many people come here, especially on Thursdays and Fridays," said Wahidullah Rahmani, another tourist.

"This is the tallest moun-

tain in Sar-e-Pul, known as Pistachio Mountain. Previously, there was no security, but now we come here with friends and family to visit, thankfully now there is security, and everyone comes here to visit," Mohammad Yasin, a tourist, told TOLONews.

Local officials in Sar-e-Pul said that hundreds of domestic tourists from various parts of the province visit daily, and they are striving to provide more facilities.

Ayamuddin Yuldash, the head of information at the department of Information and Culture in Sar-e-Pul, said: "There are very good places and tourist attractions, and there are also many historical sites. People from different provinces come here for tourism, especially during certain seasons, benefiting from the security provided by the Islamic Emirate."

With the arrival of spring and the greening of plains and valleys and the blooming of various flowers, thousands of citizens go to historical and recreational areas and enjoy the spring atmosphere.

Exports \$145m worth of goods by air corridors

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Industry and Commerce said that in 1402 (solar year), exports worth \$145 million were transported via air corridors.

Akhundzada Abdul Salam Jawad, the spokesman of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce of Afghanistan, said that the most important export items through the air corridors include heng, saffron, dried fruits, fresh fruits, and carpets.

According to the spokesman, the most exports through the airfields were conducted to countries like India, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Iran, Uzbekistan, Germany, and Canada.

The spokesperson for the Ministry of Industry and Commerce of Afghanistan Akhundzada Abdul Salam Jawad said: "Afghanistan's exports through the country's airfield in the year 1402 amount to 247 tons worth \$145 million, consisting of heng, dried and fresh fruits, precious and semi-precious stones, clothes, chickpeas, carpets, saffron, kitchenware, and goat and cow hides."

The Chamber of Commerce and Investment said exports through air corridors are important for economic growth and emphasized that the cost of transportation through air corridors should be reduced.

Tawakal Ahmadiyar, the head of the Chamber of Commerce and Investment, said: "Before, they would give us a subsidy so that we could learn a method that would make our productions recognized in the world and also make it cheaper for us."

A number of businessmen considered the resumption of flights by international aviation companies beneficial for increasing exports through airfields.

"Since international flights have resumed in Afghanistan, our request is that the Islamic Emirate provide us with a subsidy so that we can also export abroad," said Zalmay Azimi, a businessman.

Based on the information from the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, in 1402 (solar year), exports worth \$1.8 billion were conducted outside the country, part of which was through air corridors.

10 killed, 9 others injured in Afghanistan last week

KABUL (Pajhwok): The World Bank (WB) and European Union announced \$116 million in support to Afghanistan last week when UN Special Rapporteur on Situation of Human Rights Richard Bennett called on the caretaker government to fulfill its international commitments.

However, Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) chief spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid slammed Bennett's observations as prejudiced.

Casualties: Ten people were killed and nine others injured in Afghanistan in separate incidents of violence last week. Six people were killed and one wounded in an attack on a mosque by unknown gunman in western Herat province. Mufti Abdul Matin Qani, spokesman for the Ministry

of Interior (MoI), told Pajhwok Afghan News the deadly incident took place when a gunman opened fire on worshippers in Guzra district. Daesh claimed responsibility for the attack.

Local officials said unknown gunmen killed a man in Kandahar province. A child was killed and four others were injured in an Explosive Remnant of War (ERW) blast in Ghazni province.

In central Kapisa province, a man was killed in a mine explosion. In Nangarhar, a man killed his brother mistakenly while four people were injured over a land dispute in Parwan province.

In the previous week, seven people were killed and seven others injured in different incidents of violence in Afghanistan.

Before the regime

change in Afghanistan on August 15, 2021, hundreds of civilians and members of warring parties were killed and injured every week.

Engagement with IEA: Principal deputy spokesperson for the US Department of State Vedant Patel said interaction with Afghan rulers was important to support the Afghan people and defend American interests.

With this in mind, the US would remain engaged with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), he said. Patel the US used this opportunity to "fight terrorism and defend human rights" and also have a direct dialogue with IEA on "the release of American citizens who are imprisoned in Afghanistan."

US Chargé d'Affaires Karen Decker told The New Humanitarian' that

Washington was in a position where it must "very carefully navigate the non-recognition policy" and interaction with the interim government in Kabul.

The US diplomat said Washington would continue to be engaged with the IEA on "pragmatic issues", with humanitarian assistance and human rights being her primary areas of concern.

The IEA has not commented on this. However, it has repeatedly evinced an interest in positive interaction with the world on the basis of mutual respect and improved relations.

Human rights: According to a BBC report, an assessment of the human rights situation in Afghanistan was presented at a meeting of the United Nations Human Rights Council. The participants

called on the caretaker government to allow girls and women to study and work.

The IEA insists all people in Afghanistan have been given their rights in the framework of Shariah law and women's rights were protected in accordance with Islamic principles.

But Bennett stated the interim government in Afghanistan was not prepared to be accountable for its actions concerning human rights issues. The UN's Special Rapporteur for Afghanistan once again called on the Islamic Emirate to fulfill its commitments to the world regarding human rights.

"Bennett's remarks do not need a reaction. He is a biased individual who, given the security and stability we have under the regime ruling Afghanistan,

is merely venting his frustrations, which we should not regard as significant," commented Mujahid.

A delegation of Afghans based in European countries, visited Kabul for 12 days and discussed with IEA officials a number of issues, including girls' education and the establishment of a viable social system.

A report about the outcome of the visit said IEA leaders agreed with the delegation on many issues.

Infrastructure projects: Construction work on three road projects was launched at a cost of nearly one billion afghanis in Kabul.

In addition, five check dams are being built at a cost of 10 million afghanis in Dara-i-Noor, Behsud, Dur Baba, Koz Kunar and Shinwari districts of Nangarhar. Similarly, the

rest of work on Pashdan dam in Herat also resumed.

According to reports, this dam has the capacity to store about 45 million cubic meters of water, irrigate 13,000 hectares of land and generate two megawatts of electricity.

Continuation of humanitarian aid:

The EU allocated 30 million euros in aid for combating climate change and malnutrition, while the World Bank contributed 84 million US dollars to the implementation of community resilience and livelihood project in Afghanistan.

Donated by various organisations, 92 tonnes of vital medicines arrived in Kabul to treat about 675,000 people, including 400,000 children, with life-threatening but preventable diseases.

Safia wins competition

KABUL (Khaama Press): Safiya Milad, an Afghan poet, won the "Rabia Balkhi" statue in the literature section by the highest vote from the jury in Vienna.

She emphasized on her social media platform X on Sunday, May 5th, that the ceremony for awarding the Rabia Balkhi statue in Vienna, the capital of Austria, has concluded.

Milad stated, "I did not attend the statue award ceremony in Vienna, and according to the jury's previous decision, the Rabia Balkhi statue was awarded to the second person present at the ceremony."

Safiya Milad completed her secondary and high school education at one of the schools in Kabul and has also been involved in media activities in cultural and civil affairs.

Judge warns Trump of potential jail time

NEW YORK (Reuters): The judge in Donald Trump's criminal trial fined him \$1,000 and held him in contempt of court for a 10th time on Monday for violating a gag order and warned that further violations could land the former president in jail.

Justice Juan Merchan said the nine \$1,000 fines he had imposed so far did not seem to be deterring the wealthy business mogul from violating the order, which bars him from speaking publicly about jurors and witnesses in the first criminal trial of a former U.S. president. "I do not want to impose a jail sanction and have done everything I can to avoid doing so. But I will if necessary," Merchan said before the jury entered.

Imprisonment would be an unprecedented step in the historic trial, which stems from a hush money payment made to porn star Stormy Daniels in the final weeks of the 2016 election. After Merchan's ruling, jurors heard testimony from a former Trump employee that could bolster prosecutors' case that Trump falsified business records to cover up the hush money payment. Trump has pleaded not guilty and denies wrongdoing.

As he imposed the fine, Merchan said he considered jail time "truly the last resort" as it would disrupt the trial, pose extraordinary security challenges and complicate the 2024 presidential election, in which the Republican Trump seeks to win the White House back from Democratic President Joe Biden. But he said Trump's "continued, willful" violations of the gag order amounted to a "direct attack on the rule of law." Merchan imposed the 10th \$1,000 fine on Monday for an April 22 broadcast interview in

which the former president said: "That jury was picked so fast - 95% Democrats. The area's mostly all Democrat."

Merchan found that other statements flagged by prosecutors that mentioned witnesses Michael Cohen and David Pecker did not violate the order. The gag order prevents Trump from making statements about jurors, witnesses and families of the judge and prosecutors if meant to interfere with the case. Violations are punishable by fines of up to \$1,000 or jail time of up to 30 days.

Last week Merchan fined Trump \$9,000 for nine social media posts that he ruled had violated the gag order. Trump complains frequently that the gag order limits his ability to make his case to voters in his comeback White House bid. "He's taken away my constitutional right to speak," Trump told reporters outside the courtroom before the start of the 12th day of trial.

Prosecutors on Monday later showed jurors business records that documented payments totaling \$420,000 from Trump to Cohen, his former fixer and personal lawyer. Those payments were listed as legal fees, but prosecutors say they were actually meant to reimburse Cohen for paying \$130,000 to Daniels to keep quiet about a sexual encounter she says she had with Trump in 2006.

Trump denies ever having had sex with Daniels. Prosecutors say the \$420,000 paid by Trump was meant to cover the \$130,000 Cohen paid to Daniels, along with \$50,000 in other expenses he had incurred. Trump doubled that total to account for taxes and also included a \$60,000 year-end bonus, they say. A former controller in Trump's organization, Jeffrey McConney, testified

that he was not aware of any other instance in which the Trump Organization reimbursed someone so generously.

He said he was told by the company's top finance official Allen Weisselberg that the payments were reimbursements, not legal fees. He said he never spoke with Trump about the payments. Prosecutors also showed jurors ledger entries that payments to Cohen had not been listed among legal expenses the company paid to outside lawyers. Most of the jurors appeared to look intently at the email messages displayed on the screens in front of their seats as McConney testified.

Prosecutors say Trump's payment to Daniels corrupted the 2016 election by keeping the news from voters, at a time when his treatment of women was a central issue in his campaign against Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton. They say the altered business records covered up election-law and tax-law violations that elevate the 34 counts Trump faces from misdemeanors to felonies punishable by up to four years in prison. If found guilty, Trump could face up to four years in prison, though defendants typically face fines and probation.

The main players in the case have yet to testify, including Cohen and Daniels, whose real name is Stephanie Clifford. The case features sordid allegations of adultery and secret payoffs, but it is widely seen as less consequential than three other criminal prosecutions Trump faces. It is the only one certain to go to trial before the Nov. 5 presidential election. The other cases charge him with trying to overturn his 2020 presidential defeat and mishandling classified documents after leaving office. Trump has pleaded not guilty to all three.

IHC orders to place Elahi under house-arrest

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday ordered to place the former chief minister of Punjab and PTI president Pervaiz Elahi under house arrest within 15-day.

As per details, Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir announced the reserved verdict on plea filed by Qaisara Elahi, wife of Pervaiz Elahi. The court directed that Pervaiz Elahi be shifted to the sub-jail within 15 days and be kept under house arrest, considering his age (78) and health issues. The court also instructed the authorities to ensure proper medical care and facilities for Pervaiz Elahi during his house arrest.

It is pertinent to mention here that Pervaiz Elahi was earlier rushed to Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) by Islamabad police after his health deteriorated in Adiala jail. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf President Pervaiz Elahi suffered bone fracture after slipping in Adiala jail's washroom on March 17.

Adiala jail deputy superintendent presented Elahi's medical report in court during the hearing of a case against the latter related to illegal recruitment in the Punjab Assembly. The jail official apprised the court that Elahi slipped in the washroom and suffered a slight fracture. Read more: Pervaiz Elahi rushed to PIMS after health 'deteriorates' in Adiala jail

Mandokhail takes oath as Balochistan Governor

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz's (PML-N) Sheikh Jaffar Mandokhail took oath as the 24th Governor of Balochistan on Monday, marking a significant development in the province's political landscape.

Chief Justice of Balochistan High Court Hashim Khan Kakar administered the oath to Mandokhail in a ceremony held at the Governor House. The ceremony was attended by Chief Minister Sarfaraz Bhugti, cabinet ministers, and provincial assembly members.

Mandokhail, who has held several key positions in the Balochistan government including Finance Minister, Minister for Planning and Development, Minister for Education, and Minister for Revenue, brings a wealth of experience to his new role. The appointment was approved by President Asif Ali Zardari, based on the recommendation of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and in accordance with constitutional provisions outlined in Article 101 (1).

US envoy Blome meets PTI's leaders

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: US ambassador to Pakistan Donald Blome Monday called on Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Omar Ayub Khan and discussed with him the country's political situation.

PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, Asad Qaiser and Rauf Hassan were also present at the meeting, which was held in the opposition leader's chamber. During the meeting, the participants discussed a broad range of issues important to the bilateral relationship, including U.S. support for continued economic reforms, human rights, and regional security.

Highlighting the importance of long-term reforms for sustainable economic growth for a stable and secure future for the people of Pakistan, Ambassador Blome underscored the United States' support for Pakistan to engage constructively with the IMF on its reform program. The Ambassador highlighted the importance of the two countries' shared interests and the many opportunities to advance our shared goals, including accelerating projects addressing climate change under the Green Alliance framework.

Speaking to the media after the meeting, Ayub said that the delegation had a productive discussion with the US Ambassador about the importance of upholding the rule of law in Pakistan.



QUETTA: President Asif Ali Zardari was received by Governor Balochistan, Jaffar Khan Mandokhail and Chief Minister, Mir Sarfraz Bugti at airport.

SC expresses annoyance over Faizabad commission report

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa on Monday censured a "very disappointing" Faizabad sit-in inquiry commission report, saying that he was "surprised" after reading the document. The CJP made these comments as a three-member bench — headed by himself — resumed the hearing of the federal government's review petition after the inquiry commission, formed to probe the Faizabad sit-in, submitted its report.

The bench also comprised Justice Irfan Saadat Khan and Justice Naeem Akhtar Awan. As the hearing began, Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Usman Awan read the inquiry commission's report. "What did the commission do? It just wasted time. The commission is just making speeches," said CJP Isa during the hearing. "I am surprised to read the report, they should have constructed the sentence correctly as to who had committed the violation," said the CJP, adding that the report "doesn't seem to be serious".

The CJP said that the commission did not provide any "finding", questioning the commission's input. "Had the verdict been implemented in the Faizabad sit-in case, the May 9 incident would not have taken

place," he observed. CJP Isa asked the AGP if anyone belonging to the Tehreek-e-Laibbaik Pakistan (TLP) was summoned. At this, the AGP replied in the negative. "The TLP people might have helped if they were summoned. They were a party in this case and their point of view was important," said the chief justice.

Expressing his anger over the report, the CJP said that the commission just submitted the report with idioms in it. He questioned how many times ex-spymaster Lt-Gen (ret'd) Faiz Hameed was referred to. "It seems that all this was done just to exonerate General Faiz," he observed. The CJP asked how many times Gen (ret'd) Faiz was summoned, to which, the AGP said "once". AGP Awan said that they had sent a questionnaire to Gen (ret'd) Faiz and he had sent his answers.

At this point, the CJP said: "Army is a part of this government. How did it become sacred?" Later, Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority's (Pemra) former chairman Absar Alam came to the rostrum, saying he was also mentioned in the report. The CJP said that Alam had said Gen (ret'd) Faiz contacted him. However, he added, the report says there is no evidence of contact between the two. "If he [Alam] is saying that he

was contacted, then the commission should have summoned Gen (ret'd) Faiz. The commission should have questioned them and written down the result," said the CJP.

The chief justice said that it was not right to accept one statement and reject the other. Justice Akhtar said that the commission took Alam's statement on oath but is not taking Faiz's statement. "We have not endorsed the commission's report yet," said CJP Isa. The attorney general sought two weeks' time to inform the court about the government's response to the report. The top court said that the commission members, if they wish, can respond to preliminary observations of the court. "The commission members can clarify their position in writing or by appearing in court if they wish," added the SC.

"Maybe the commission members will convince us that it has given a very good report," the apex court added. In the short order issued after the hearing, the court directed the AGP to submit a report on the government's behalf, stating if the government wants to make this report public. It also directed the government to inform the inquiry commission about the court's observation on the document. The court ordered the members of the commission to respond to the observation in written or in person by appearing before the court.

IHC confirms hearing bail pleas in NCA scam case

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) Aamer Farooq has confirmed to the defence lawyer that he would fix the hearing of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan and Vice-Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi's bail pleas in the £190m NCA scandal case a day after tomorrow (May 8).

A two-member bench of the IHC — comprising Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Miangul Hasan Aurangzeb — heard the appeals against the conviction of both PTI politicians in the cipher case on Monday. At the outset of the hearing, defence lawyer Latif Khosa told the IHC chief justice that the hearing of bail petitions in the NCA scandal case was still pending.

To this, CJ Farooq remarked that he would fix the hearing on May 8 as the previous cause list of the regular was suspended owing to his unwellness. He added that he was not in good health today but conducting today's hearing due to the importance of the cipher case. The prosecutor of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Hamid Ali

Shah also appeared in the hearing. He apprised the high court bench that all cipher telegrams with "classified stamp" are disposed of after six months, even if these are "declassified".

The National Security Committee (NSC) had decided to demarche on March 31, which marked the completion of the prescribed procedure for the classified document, except for sending back its copies to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hamid said. He apprised the court that all cipher copies had been sent back to the foreign ministry, except the one with the former prime minister Khan. Later, the foreign office disposed of all copies of the classified telegram, he added.

"Can an accused be defended in the absence of a defence lawyer or it would lessen the importance of the defendant's testimony?" questioned CJ Farooq. The FIA prosecutor replied that there was no need to ensure the defence lawyer's presence during a testimony under Section 342 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC). The IHC CJ also questioned the legality of the sentence on both charges of

"willful" and "negligent" loss of the classified document.

The FIA prosecutor defended the outcome as both charges would be imposed on the accused persons' moves on separate occasions. He went on to say that the diplomatic cable cannot be taken away from its dedicated place as the authorities need to make special security arrangements for the container where the cipher is placed. Justice Aurangzeb questioned whether ex-PM Khan's principal secretary Azam Khan personally signed the confirmation receipt after receiving the classified document. To this, the prosecutor replied that Azam's staff had received the cipher's copy and later, he handed over the same copy to the former premier.

Hamid told the IHC that he will conclude his arguments this week. The high court observed that the case outcomes should be treated separately, if the defendant is acquitted or penalised in one scenario then it should be meant to be fully acquitted or penalised in other scenarios. Later, the IHC adjourned the hearing till Wednesday, May 8.

PHC orders Haleem Adil to appear in person

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Waqar Ahmad ordered former opposition leader Sindh Assembly and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Member Provincial Assembly Haleem Adil Sheikh to appear in person on next hearing in a contempt of court case, on Monday.

The counsel Mazzam Butt advocate argued that despite the PHC granted bail to Haleem Adil Sheikh on September 23, 2023 but he was arrested by the Sindh Police. Justice Waqar Ahmed inquired why the police arrested him despite the court's order.

Investigative Officer Firozabad Police Station Karachi appeared before PHC and informed that he didn't arrested Haleem Adil Sheikh but rather another police station had made the arrest. However, the petitioner's lawyer requested PHC to summon police officer who had arrested Haleem Adil Sheikh.

Justice Waqar Ahmed directed the investigative officer to provide his email address so that he could be informed about the case's progress. PHC ordered Haleem Adil Sheikh to appear in person before the court while adjourned further hearing.

Meanwhile, PHC's Chief Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim ordered Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Inspector General Police and Attorney General, to submit reply within 7 days regarding recovery of social media activist of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Kamran Khan.

The counsel Syed Sikandar Hayat Shah and Malik Samiullah advocates argued that Kamran has been missing for 7 days while First Information Report (FIR) has been registered at the East Police Station

The lawyer further argued that after passage of 7 days, no progress has been made in the case. The CCTV footage showing Kamran being taken away from outside a hospital is also available, the counsel added.



ISLAMABAD: Leader of Opposition in Senate Syed Shibli Faraz talking to media persons at KP House.

Putin orders tactical nuclear weapon drills to deter West

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russia said on Monday it would practice the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons as part of a military exercise, after what Moscow said were threats from France, Britain and the United States. Since Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, Russia has repeatedly warned of rising nuclear risks — warnings which the US says it has to take seriously, though US officials say they have seen no change in Russia's nuclear posture.

Russia says the US and its European allies are pushing the world to the brink of confrontation between nuclear powers by supporting Ukraine with tens of billions of dollars of weapons, some of which are being used against Russian territory. Russia's defence ministry said it would hold military drills, including practicing the preparation and deployment of non-strategic nuclear weapons. President Vladimir Putin ordered the exercises, the ministry added.

"During the exercise, a set of measures will be carried out to practice the issues of preparation and use of non-strategic nuclear weapons," the ministry said. It added that missile forces in the Southern Military District, aviation and the navy will take part. The exercise aims to ensure

Russia's territorial integrity and sovereignty "in response to provocative statements and threats by certain Western officials against the Russian Federation", it said.

Russia and the US are by far the world's biggest nuclear powers, holding more than 10,600 of the world's 12,100 nuclear warheads. China has the third-largest nuclear arsenal, followed by France and Britain. Russia has about 1,558 non-strategic nuclear warheads, according to the Federation of American Scientists, though there is uncertainty about exact figures for such weapons due to a lack of transparency. No power has used nuclear weapons in war since the United States unleashed the first atomic bomb attacks on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

Major nuclear powers routinely check their nuclear weapons but very rarely publicly link such exercises to specific perceived threats in the way that Russia has. US President Joe Biden said last year that he felt there was no real prospect of Russia using nuclear weapons, but CNN reported that top US officials did contingency planning for a potential Russian nuclear strike against Ukraine in 2022. Some Western and

Ukrainian officials have said Russia is bluffing over nuclear weapons to scare the West, although the Kremlin has repeatedly indicated that it would consider breaking the nuclear taboo if Russia's existence was threatened.

"We do not see anything new here," said Andriy Yusov, a spokesperson for Ukrainian military intelligence. "Nuclear blackmail is a constant practice of Putin's regime." The defence ministry, run by long-term Putin ally Sergei Shoigu, did not say which specific Western officials it was referring to in its statement. The Kremlin said it was in response to remarks by French President Emmanuel Macron, British officials and a representative of the US Senate.

Macron has publicly raised the idea of sending European troops to fight Russia in Ukraine, while British Foreign Secretary David Cameron said that Ukraine had a right to use the weapons provided by London to strike targets inside Russia. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Western statements about sending Nato soldiers to Ukraine amounted to "a completely new round of escalation of tension — it is unprecedented, and of course it requires special attention and special measures".