

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari has accorded his approval to Finance Bill 2024 on the advice of the Prime Minister under Article 75 of the Constitution. The Finance Bill will be effective from July 01, 2024, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release on Sunday. On June 28, the National Assembly passed the Finance Bill, 2024 with certain amendments, adopting the financial proposals.



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Israeli tanks advance into areas in north, south Gaza

GAZA (AFP): Heavy battles and bombardment hit Gaza City's Shujaiya district for a fourth day on Sunday, months after Israel declared Hamas's command structure dismantled in the northern area.

Tens of thousands of Palestinians have fled the devastated neighborhood, where the army said it has fought Palestinian militants both "above and below ground" in tunnels.

Months of on-and-off talks toward a Gaza truce and hostage release deal have meanwhile made little progress, with Hamas saying Saturday there was "nothing new" in a revised plan presented by US mediators.

The Israeli military said ground and air forces had carried out raids on compounds used by militants and "eliminated several terrorists" over the past 24 hours.

It also reported clashes in central Gaza and the southern Rafah area, a week after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared that the "intense phase" of the war raging since October 7 was nearing an end.

The United Nations humanitarian agency OCHA estimated that "60,000 to 80,000 people were displaced" from Shujaiya since new fighting broke out there on Thursday and the army issued evacuation orders.

For those who remain, "our lives have become hell," said 50-year-old

Shujaiya resident Siham Al-Shawa.

She told AFP people were trapped as strikes could happen "anywhere" and "it is difficult to get out of the neighborhood under fire."

"We do not know where to go to protect ourselves."

Netanyahu said Israeli "forces are operating in Rafah, Shujaiya, everywhere in the Gaza Strip."

According to a statement from Netanyahu's office, he told his cabinet that "dozens of terrorists are being eliminated every day."

"The war started with Hamas's October 7 attack on southern Israel which resulted in the deaths of 1,195 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli figures.

The militants also seized 251 hostages, 116 of whom remain in Gaza including 42 the army says are dead.

Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed at least 37,877 people, also mostly civilians, according to data from the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza.

Six people were killed in an air strike at dawn targeting a house in Rafah, said medics at Nasser Hospital where the bodies were taken.

Artillery shelling also rocked parts of the city, witnesses said.

The Israeli military launched a ground operation in Rafah in early May, leading to the closure of a key aid crossing.

United Nations and other relief agencies have voiced alarm over the dire humanitarian crisis and threat of starvation the war and Israeli siege have brought for Gaza's 2.4 million people.

"Everything is rubble," said Louise Wateridge from UNRWA, the UN agency supporting Palestinian refugees, speaking Friday from the city of Khan Yunis.

"There's no water there, there's no sanitation, there's no food. And now, people are living back in these buildings that are empty shells."

In Israel, thousands of protesters again took to the streets of Tel Aviv on Saturday, demanding greater efforts to return the remaining captives, and calling for early elections.

Former hostage Noa Argamani, 26, who was rescued in a June 8 raid, said in a video address that "we can't forget about the hostages who are still in Hamas captivity, and we must do everything possible to bring them back home."

About a month after US President Joe Biden outlined a truce plan, Washington last week presented "new language" for parts of the proposed deal, according to US news site Axios.

A Hamas official in Lebanon, Osama Hamdan, confirmed that the Islamist movement had received the latest proposal but said it presented "no real progress

in the negotiations."

Hamdan labelled the proposals "a waste of time" that aimed to give Israel "additional time... to practice genocide."

Hamas has called for a permanent ceasefire and full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, demands repeatedly rejected by Israel.

Netanyahu on Sunday said "Hamas is the only obstacle to the release of our hostages."

With military and diplomatic "pressure... we will return them all," he said.

The Gaza conflict has also led to soaring tensions on Israel's northern border with Lebanon, where the army has traded cross-border fire with the Hezbollah movement, an Iran-backed Hamas ally.

Threats of a full-blown war have escalated this month.

Iran's mission to the UN, on social media Saturday, said it "deems as psychological warfare" Israeli "propaganda about intending to attack Lebanon."

It also warned its arch foe that, "should it embark on full-scale military aggression, an obliterating war will ensue" that could draw in more Tehran-aligned armed groups in the region.

Hezbollah on Sunday claimed several attacks on Israeli military positions, and Lebanese official media reported Israeli strikes in the border area.

The Shiite Muslim movement announced three deaths among its ranks.



GAZA: Mourners react next to the bodies of Palestinians from Zourof family who were killed in an Israeli strike, at Nasser hospital in Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip, Sunday. — Reuters photo

Election to be held in 2029 : Tarar

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information, Broadcasting, Culture and National Heritage Attaullah Tarar on Sunday said that the general election would only be held in 2029 upon completion of the constitutional tenure of the incumbent government.

While reacting to Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) chief Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman's presser, he said the Parliament was an appropriate forum to do politics in the current circumstances.

"Solution to all the problems in politics lies in negotiations and dialogue," the minister added. Tarar termed Maulana a "seasoned" and "respected" politician, urging him to appreciate the government's economic policies that drove an increase in the foreign exchange reserves, and took the stock exchange to historic high-level.

He lauded the government for strengthening the rupee and reducing trade deficit significantly.

Suicide bombers kill at least 18 in Nigeria

MAIDUGURI, Nigeria (BBC): At least 18 people have been killed and 30 injured in a series of deadly blasts in Nigeria thought to have been carried out by female suicide bombers.

One of the bombings is reported to have killed six people and injured others at a wedding ceremony on Saturday, in the northeastern Borno state.

The state's emergency management agency said the co-ordinated attacks targeted a wedding, the victims' subsequent funeral and a hospital in the town of Gwoza, close to the border of Cameroon.

President Bola Tinubu condemned the attacks calling them "desperate acts of terror".

He vowed stern action against those responsible for the killings in the town of Gwoza and insisted that the incident had not undermined recent gains made against jihadists.

"The president declares that the purveyors of wanton violence shall have a certain encounter with justice, and that these cowardly attacks are only but an isolated episode as his government will not allow the nation to slither into an era of fear, tears, sorrow, and blood," a statement issued by his spokesperson on Facebook said.

No-one has admitted carrying out the attacks, but the Nigeria-centred Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) insurgents have previously claimed deadly bombings in Borno.

Authorities said 18 deaths had been confirmed on Saturday, a toll that included children, adults and pregnant women.

Govt steps to strengthen economy yielding positive results: Aurangzeb

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb said on Sunday that the measures introduced by the incumbent government have led to a significant improvement in the economy, which will be translated into sustainable growth and development.

Addressing a press conference, the minister said that macroeconomic indicators observed resilience during the fiscal year ending on June 30, 2024, adding it was a prerequisite for achieving sustainable economic growth and development as well as for social prosperity.

During the period under review, the minister said that the foreign exchange reserves of the country reached \$9 billion, and the inflation rate came down from 38 per cent to 12 per cent, adding that by the end of May and the start of June 2024, all the backlog of international companies including their profit and dividends were cleared, which was a positive sign of the macro stability.

Regarding the international finance corporations, the minister said that the World Bank had approved \$1 billion for the construction of the Dasu Dam project, adding that IFC also approved \$400 million for PTCL in the context of acquisition financing, adding that it was another benefit of the macro stability.

The minister resolved to take the macro stability forward towards performance to put the economy in the positive direction of fast-track economic development and progress. He said that it was also vital to encourage and attract local investment as well.

The minister expressed optimism that the Federal Board of Revenue would also achieve its revenue targets fixed for the current fiscal year as FBR collected Rs9.3 trillion revenues so far, adding that the revenue collection witnessed about 30 per cent growth on year on year basis.

Highlighting the salient features of the federal budget for the fiscal year 2024-25, the minister said that the government was determined to increase tax to

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Nationwide protests erupt over power outages

KARACHI (INP): Citizens across various cities in Pakistan, including Karachi, have taken to the streets in protest against prolonged power outages and erroneous billing practices. Despite sweltering temperatures, residents express frustration over receiving exorbitant electricity bills despite enduring extensive periods without electricity. Enduring 14 to 16 hours of load shedding daily, citizens lament the unpredictable nature of power cuts, which disrupt daily life multiple times a day.

They criticize utility providers for sending bills despite inadequate service, compounding their hardships. Sindh Energy Minister Nasir Shah has assured that measures to reduce load shedding will be implemented within the next 3 to 4 days, offering a glimmer of hope amid widespread discontent.

Karachi continues to face extreme heat waves, with temperatures soaring to 42 degrees Celsius and humidity levels peaking at 70%. The Meteorological Department predicts relief with the onset of sea breeze in the evening.

From Karachi to Lahore and Swabi, protests escalate against costly electricity and irregular power supply, highlighting widespread dissatisfaction with the current administration's energy policies.

Jamaat-e-Islami's Ahmed Salmaan Baloch criticizes the government for burdening citizens with high electricity bills amid economic challenges, warning of further inflationary pressures. As protests intensify, citizens and organizations demand immediate government action to alleviate power shortages and address billing discrepancies, urging sustainable solutions to stabilize the electricity supply nationwide.

FBR collects Rs9306b in 2023-24, exceeds target

F.P. Report

KARACHI: FBR has collected Rs. 9,306 billion in Financial Year 2023-24 against the target of Rs. 9,252 billion thereby exceeding the yearly target by a significant margin of Rs. 54 billion. The revenue is expected to further increase after reconciliation of figures. The growth in revenue collection is 30% as compared to the last year. This was possible due to historic collection throughout the current financial year. It is a striking fact that FBR has added Rs. 2,142 billion during the year as compared to the last year collection of Rs. Rs. 7,164 billion and Rs. 1,183 billion in the month of June 2024 alone. The target was achieved despite the fact that the imports were further compressed from \$

55 billion to \$ 53 billion whereby all the shortfall was to be recovered from domestic taxes.

In addition to exceeding the annual target, the Tax System of Pakistan saw significant structural improvements which were direct result of the interest of the honorable Prime Minister and Finance Minister. This is a direct consequence of policy shift with increased focus on domestic resource mobilization, more direct taxation from the rich and affluent and facilitating businesses and exporters by prompt issuance of refunds.

* Under the Honorable Prime Minister's directives, the FBR disbursed refunds amounting to Rs. 469 billion during the FY 2023-24 as compared to Rs. 331 billion during the FY 2022-23 which is 42%

more than last year.

* Due to focus on direct taxes of the government, the revenue collection target was achieved mainly due to growth in direct taxes which led the way by contributing 47% to the revenue collection.

* The domestic taxes also improved significantly and overall, FBR collected Rs. 6,128 billion in domestic taxes and Rs. 3,178 billion in import taxes thereby depicting a growth of 37% in domestic taxes and 18% in imports despite import compression from \$ 55 billion last year to \$ 53 billion during the current year.

* The composition of domestic taxes in total revenue collection is 65% which used to be less than 50% two years ago.

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CAIRO, EGYPT: Visitors visit the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization on June 30, 2024 in Cairo, Egypt.



PPP leader criticises US House resolution

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leader and Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Shehla Raza has criticised a resolution, recently passed by the US House of Representatives, and termed it an interference in Pakistan's internal affairs.

She was speaking to the media after offering condolences to Hussain Tirmizi of the Peoples Youth Wing on the death of his mother on Sunday. She emphasised the distinct differences between the PPP and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) manifestos, asserting that those differences were the reason the PPP not becoming part of the incumbent government. She expressed the party intent to participate in committees to monitor government activities.

Govt decides to recruit 30,000 schoolteachers

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab government has decided to recruit 30,000 new schoolteachers, as students were facing shortage of teachers. The Punjab Education Department official sources told APP on Sunday that in order to improve the quality of education and overcome shortage of teachers, Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has recently given task to the Punjab education minister to recruit new teachers.

The recruitment process is being carried out after seven years, the sources said. The recruitment process will be carried out through the Punjab Public Service Commission (PPSC) in phases. Sources said the recruitment process was likely to be completed during the summer vacation 2024.

Punjab health minister reviews monsoon preparations

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique has announced that Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) camps have been established in various areas to manage monsoon-related issues.

He held a meeting on Sunday with WASA officials to discuss strategies for constituency PP-153. The meeting took place at the Department of Primary and Secondary Healthcare. He emphasised provision of water bowlers to ensure adequate water supply in PP-153 and stated that he plans to visit the constituency soon to assess the arrangements personally.

"The authorities have been instructed to enhance drainage systems and increase workforce deployment in PP-153 to tackle any standing water problems effectively," said the minister. During the session, the minister also reviewed ongoing development projects and the overall performance of WASA. Detailed briefings were provided by WASA officials, including XEN Tajpura Zohaib, XEN Fatehgarh Kashif Rasool, Rifat Hussain, and Syed Ikhlaz.

Police intensify crackdown on drug-peddlers

LAHORE (APP): On the directions of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, the police have intensified crackdown on drug-peddlers under the 'Drug-Free Punjab' campaign.

The police are carrying out raids on hideouts of drug-dealers and smugglers across the province including Lahore.

According to a spokesperson for Punjab Police, 289 raids were conducted on hideouts of drug-dealers in one day, in which 141 suspects were arrested, while 135 cases were registered. The police recovered 50-kg hashish, 1-kg heroin, half-a-kilogram ice and 1,563 litres of liquor from the accused.

During the ongoing anti-narcotics operations since February 26, the police teams conducted 33,572 raids, in which more than 16,000 suspects were arrested, and 15,693 cases registered.



LAHORE: Chairman Ulema Pakistan Council Allama Tahir Ashrafi addressing a press conference at Press Club. —APP Photo

K-Electric officials assured reduction in load-shedding

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Minister for Energy Syed Nasir Hussain Shah made a surprise visit to the Central Load Dispatch Center (CLD) of K-Electric late night the other day to give relief to the people and review the load shedding.

According to the press release issued by the provincial Information Department, the provincial minister made a detailed visit to the Center and ascertained the details from

the concerned officers.

The minister was given a detailed briefing regarding the Central Load Dispatch Center and assured that there would be a reduction in load shedding for the citizens of Karachi. After the energy minister's directive, there has been improvement in some areas, but there will be further decline in three to four days.

Provincial minister Nasir Shah said that the

purpose of his visit to K-Electric was to review the arrangements of the utility regarding the city's electricity demand. He added that due to load-shedding, the people were suffering from severe and extreme heat. Nasir Shah said that K-Electric was also facing several challenges. The Sindh Government will extend full cooperation and all possible assistance to K-Electric to provide relief to the people, he said.

CM grieves over deaths in bus accident near Maripur

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah, has expressed his grief and sorrow over the loss of lives in a bus accident near the Maripur area of the metropolis.

Seven people, including two women and four children, have died and many others were injured when a bus going on a picnic overturned due to high speed near Maripur.

The CM said that he was deeply saddened by the loss of human lives. He directed the Civil Hospital, Trauma Center, and Jinnah Hospital administrations to provide the best medical treatment to the injured persons.

The Chief Minister directed the IG Police to prepare a detailed report on the Maripur traffic accident. He said the traffic police should take strict measures to prevent accidents.

The license of drivers who run vehicles fast even on busy highways should be cancelled, he said, adding that the high speed had destroyed the houses in the accident.

Rs 720,000 fine for flour hoarding

LAHORE (APP): In a province-wide operation to ensure availability of high-quality flour at affordable prices, the Punjab Food Department inspected a total of 523 flour mills, dealers, and retail shops over the last 24 hours.

The inspections resulted in fines totaling Rs 720,000 for offences such as hoarding, incomplete labeling, and poor management. Additionally, warning notices have been issued to several businesses.

Inspections were carried out across various divisions: 24 locations in Lahore, 43 in Faisalabad, 33 in Sahiwal, 61 in Rawalpindi, 77 in Sargodha, 38 in Multan, 35 in Bahawalpur, 89 in DG Khan, 85 in Gujrat, and 37 in Gujranwala.

Punjab Food Minister Bilal Yasin emphasised that cases would be registered against those involved in hoarding and artificial inflation. He assured the public that those attempting to create artificial shortages or raise flour prices despite ample stock would be exposed and penalised.

Ashrafi urges religious, political leaders to unite nation

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) Chairman Hafiz Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi said on Sunday that political and religious leadership must play their proactive role to forge unity among the nation.

Addressing a press conference at Lahore Press Club, he stressed the need for combined efforts from all stakeholders to bring peace, stability and development in the country. He said that today the PUC was issuing a joint code of conduct comprising 12 points to maintain peace during Muharram-ul-Haram. It was consulting with all other stakeholders,

he said and urged religious leaders to extend their full support to the government authorities and follow the guidelines of code of conduct. The code of conduct aimed to promote harmony between all schools of thoughts during Muharram-ul-Haram and to annihilate the menace of extremism, terrorism and intolerance.

The PUC chairman expressed that all political and religious parties should adopt joint agreed upon policy to restore peace and stability in Pakistan, which would also help full to bring foreign investment in Pakistan. Ashrafi said the unso-

olicited interference from the US House was neither welcome nor acceptable. It is also an unsolicited interference in Pakistan's domestic affairs. "We believe that bilateral relations between countries should be based on mutual respect and sovereign equality," he said.

In a passionate call for unity and mutual cooperation, he urged local religious and political leaders and authorities to have an effective collaboration and liaison to usher in positive changes in society. He underlined the principles of Islam that laid full emphasis on social peace, cohesion and security.

Mushahid acclaims China for spearheading 'alternative global order'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senator Mushahid Hussain has acclaimed China for laying the basis for an 'alternative new global order based on equality and justice'.

He made these remarks at the International Conference convened in Beijing by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to mark 70 years of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, which was attended by over 200 political leaders, scholars, intellectuals, economists and journalists from over 50 countries, a news release said.

Senator Mushahid Hussain, who is Chairman of the Pakistan-China Institute & Co-Chairman, International Conference of Asian Political Parties (ICAPP), the largest organisation of political parties in Asia, also thanked President Xi Jinping for bestowing on him the prestigious 5 Principles of Peaceful Coexistence Award, as he is the first and only Pakistani politician and parliamentarian to be given this honour by China. He was given this Award by President Xi Jinping at a special ceremony during the Chinese President's State Visit to Pakistan in April 2015.

Mushahid Hussain termed President Xi Jinping's speech at the function as truly significant, having far-reaching historical significance, as China has taken political ownership of the 5 Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, which today are the foundation of the new emerging global order, as well as a 'Code of Conduct' for the Global South, that is now being led from the front by China.

Senator Mushahid Hussain, in his speech, said, "the Beijing Conference has a three-fold relevance for contemporary international politics. First, China's initiative for 5 Principles of Peaceful Coexistence as well as its continuity through President Xi Jinping's vision of a 'Community for Shared Future for Mankind' are visions rooted in Asian Wisdom which springs from centuries old civilisations. Second, this is the first non-Western vision of a new global order that rejects hegemony, militarism or dictat of any one power-based military might.

Third, today the Global South, comprising countries of Asia, Africa & Latin America, are the World's Majority, and given the international consensus behind China's initiatives of 5 Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and 'Community of a Shared Future for Mankind', these are now the philosophical foundations for Global South,

which will drive economic and political developments in the future". Giving examples from China's contribution to Asian wisdom, which is based on peace, harmony, equality and inclusivity, he cited the Chinese philosophy of 'Seek Truth from Facts' and 'Socialism with Chinese characteristics', adding that China is the only country in history to rise peacefully, without conquest, colonisation, invasion, occupation or aggression. Appealing to the West to discard notions of a New Cold War or 'containment' of China, Senator

Mushahid Hussain concluded his speech with a famous quotation from the ancient Chinese philosopher Confucius: 'do not do to others what you do not want others to do to you'. Earlier, Senator Mushahid Hussain was leader of a group of 30 prominent 'Friends of China' who were specially invited by the Chinese Peoples Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries for a friendly interaction by the Association's Chairman, Minister Wang Yanning and in this capacity, he addressed the special banquet referring to his 50-year plus relationship with China, when he first visited China as a 17-year old college student leading a youth friendship delegation in the early 1970s.

Medical camps to be set up in all 41 jails: IGP

LAHORE (APP): Talking to APP here on Sunday, he said the initiative aimed to address the healthcare needs of prisoners, particularly focusing on their vision and dental health, which are often neglected due to limited resources and specialised facilities.

Main Farooq said that the eye and dental camps would be provided with the necessary medical staff and equipment to conduct thorough examinations and treatments. "This will include routine check-ups, prescription of corrective lenses, treatment of dental

issues such as cavities and gum diseases, and other essential healthcare services," he mentioned. DIG Lahore Region Naveed Rauf Langrial said he was visiting all jails regularly and checking implementation of the IGP's directives.

Senior Superintendent of Central Jail Kot Lakhpat Lahore Chaudhry Ijaz Asghar and Camp Jail Lahore Superintendent Zahir Ahmad Virk told APP that dental camps would start working from Monday, in collaboration with the Health Department.

Iranian universities students visit PU

LAHORE (APP): A delegation comprising students of different Iranian universities visited the Punjab University, here on Sunday.

Heads of different universities, teachers and researchers were also part of the delegation, led by Iran's University of Religions and Denominations Board of Trustees Chairman Dr. Seyyed Abolhasan Navvab.

PU Vice-Chancellor Dr. Khalid Mahmood welcomed the delegation in his office. Deans of various faculties and heads of departments were also present.

Addressing the meeting, Dr. Seyyed Abolhasan Navvab said he was promot-

ing relations with the universities of Pakistan and was also keen to promote relations with Pakistan at the cultural level. He said that the Iranian government was developing excellent relations with Pakistan and it would have been better if the relations with Pakistan had been stronger in the past. He said that Pakistanis were living all over the world.

The participants in the delegation said that thousands of foreign students were studying in Iran and "we wish to increase the number of Pakistani students in Iranian universities". They said that centres had also been established at Iranian universities to pro-

mote academic dialogue between Iran and Pakistan.

Addressing the ceremony, Dr. Khalid Mahmood said that agreements have been made with Iranian universities to promote relations. He appreciated Dr. Abolhasan for playing an excellent role in promoting relations between Pakistan and Iran.

He said that he wanted to promote cooperation in the field of research with the universities of Iran.

The Iranian delegation visited various departments of Punjab University. During the visit, the Iranian delegation showed special interest in various fields of education and research.

PHA reports record Rs. 2.35bn revenue

LAHORE (APP): The Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) has increased its own-source revenue to Rs 2.35 billion in the outgoing financial year, a substantial rise from Rs 1.60 billion, earned in the fiscal year 2022-23, through various commercial agreements.

PHA Director General Muhammad Tahir Wattoo told the media on Sunday that the department had ambitiously set its revenue generation target at Rs 2.32 billion, up from Rs 1.44 billion in the fiscal year 2022-23. He attributed the revenue growth to various business measures, including digital streamers, LED advertisement screens, shop boards' fees, commercial nurseries, flower shops, and revised no-objection certificate (NOC) fees for housing societies, among

other agreements.

The DG highlighted that the marketing directorate, responsible for managing outdoor commercial advertisements, alone achieved a turnover of 1.44 billion, up from 1.19 billion. Income from the marketing directorate accounts for more than 60 per cent of revenue. He noted that these ventures now contribute more funds to the department than the government.

"Strong revenue growth has established a sustainable platform from which we can invest to expand the department's reach, impact on the environment, and revenue," he added. "My team has worked tirelessly to optimise our resources and maximise our revenue potential, ensuring that we are not solely dependent on government funding."

The PHA has diversified its activities by venturing into new domains such as sports and arts, including organising three tent pegging championships to promote the traditional sport and inaugurating an art gallery in the historic Nasir Bagh. Separately, the department has initiated the development of a state-of-the-art botanical garden in Murree. Spanning 10 acres against the backdrop of the Himalayan foothills, the garden will feature Japanese Sakura and perfume gardens, a giant water lily pond, and a Wisteria tunnel showcasing various colors and varieties.

The project, the first of its kind in Pakistan, will also include public facilities like a children's play area, zip lines, skybridges, a glow-in-the-dark garden, and ample parking.



KARACHI: People drinking water at relief camp established by Edhi Foundation at Tower area due to scorching hot weather in Provincial Capital. —APP Photo

Saif denys military operation in KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Information Barrister Saif categorically denied rumors of a planned military operation in the province, stating that neither a decision has been made nor any measures have been taken in this regard.

He attributed the confusion to certain elements attempting to create a rift between the army and the public on the issue of the "Azm-e-Istehkam" operation.

Dr. Saif emphasized that terrorism is a national issue that affects the entire country, and its eradication is the responsibility of the federal government.

He clarified that the provincial government



has not taken any decision on launching an operation, and any such decision would require the approval of the provincial assembly as per legal requirements.

Regarding negotiations with the Taliban, Dr. Saif

revealed that the Afghan Taliban had offered to mediate between Pakistan and the TTP, with the goal of ending the conflict in the region.

He stated that a few meetings had taken place, and the efforts were

aimed at persuading the TTP to lay down their arms and start a new life.

However, the process was halted due to a drone attack in Kabul, which led to a deterioration in relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Dr. Saif expressed disappointment over the suspension of talks, stating that the government had been keen to resolve the issue through dialogue.

Special Assistant reiterated the government's commitment to maintaining peace and stability in the province, assuring the public that no action would be taken that could jeopardize their security.

He urged the people to remain calm and not believe in rumors and false propaganda, emphasizing that the government values the trust placed in it by the people.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur administering oath to the newly elected office bearers of Private Secretaries and Stenographers Association

Extensive awareness campaigns against drug abuse stressed

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Participants of a seminar held in regard with creating awareness against drug abuse and illicit trafficking have laid stress on holding of such sessions round the year for protection of people especially young generation from this menace.

The "Drug Awareness Seminar" was jointly organized by Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) and Anti-Tobacco and Drug Control Committee of Khyber Medical University (KMU).

The event was attended by Brigadier Mazhar Hussain, Regional Director Commandant (RDC) KP, DPO Khyber, Saleem Abbas Kulachi, Member Anti-Tobacco and Drug Control Committee KMU, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi, Chairman

Anti-Drug Control Committee KMU, Dr. Haji Bahadar, Deputy Director ANF KP, Wajid Yousaf, students of different schools and people from different walks of life.

The participants were also holding play cards inscribed with slogans against drug abuse and demand for measures for curbing of this menace.

Speaking on the occasion, Member Anti-Tobacco Drug Control Committee KMU, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi said such activities regarding awareness creation among masses should be held on regular basis throughout the year.

He said the hazard of drug use is increasing at an alarming level, affecting our young generation and there is dire need of taking strict measures for prevention.

Zia Sarhadi also appreciated constitution of Task Force by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government against drug trafficking besides declaring a state of emergency.

"This is a right step in right direction and was need of the hour which KP government took," Zia Sarhadi commented.

Director ANF, Brg. Mazhar Hussain highlighted that youth are the most affected segment of society when it comes to drug abuse.

He pointed out that these drugs are primarily smuggled from neighboring countries, often using minors for transportation.

Emphasizing the importance of the domestic environment in combating this issue, he noted that the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) is conducting intelligence-based operations and maintain-

ing a strict watch on drug peddlers. To date, 96% of smuggling attempts have been thwarted, and assets worth at least 7,000 narcotics smugglers have been seized.

Chairman Anti-Drug Control Committee KMU, Dr. Haji Bahadar apprised participants that as part of its commitment to combat drug abuse, KMU has adopted the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Policy on Drug and Tobacco Abuse in Higher Education Institutions.

This policy mandates continuous awareness campaigns throughout the academic year, including seminars, workshops, and lectures, in collaboration with the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and professionals from reputable rehabilitation centers.

Governor KP urges for pivotal role of parliamentary democracy

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Sunday delivered a message on the occasion of World Parliamentary Day, emphasizing the pivotal role of parliamentary democracy in state progress and public welfare.

Governor Kundi hailed the parliament as a sacred

institution and a cornerstone of democracy in Pakistan. He underscored the sacrifices made by leaders like Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto in strengthening the supremacy of parliament in the country.

"Parliament holds the key to ensuring robust democracy and real

development for the people," Governor Kundi asserted, echoing the sentiments shared by former President Asif Ali Zardari and Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, who both championed the cause of parliamentary sovereignty and national unity.

Governor Kundi concluded by calling upon all political forces to unite in reaffirming their commit-

ment to uphold the supremacy of parliament for a prosperous future of Pakistan.

The commemoration of World Parliamentary Day serves as a reminder of the enduring importance of parliamentary institutions in safeguarding the rights and aspirations of the populace towards genuine progress and democratic stability.

Chife Secretary visits fire site in Nothia

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Nadeem Aslam Chaudhary, visited the site of the recent fire in Nothia. During the visit, Deputy Commissioner of

Peshawar, Afaq Wazir provided a detailed briefing to the Chief Secretary on the damage caused by the fire.

Traders affected by the fire also met with the Chief Secretary to discuss the extent of the damage. The Chief Secretary

expressed solidarity with the business community in their time of grief.

He assured that, following the directives of Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur, all possible support and cooperation will be extended to the fire victims.

Cop injured in firing attack on Police

PESHAWAR (APP): A Policeman was injured in a firing attack by some unidentified gunmen in the jurisdiction of the Pandu Police Station, SP Faqirabad Osama Amin Cheema told media men here on Sunday.

He said the Policeman was carrying a detained suspect involved in the murder case to appear in the court and all of sudden some unknown gunmen started firing on the detained suspect involved in the murder case as a result of which one Policeman was injured while the detained suspect in Police custody was safe.

The policeman was taking the detained suspect involved in the murder case to appear in the court, SP Faqirabad informed.

As a result of firing a policeman was injured by the firing of the suspect, the suspect in custody was safe, Osama Amin Cheema confirmed.

The injured policeman shifted to hospital, raids started to arrest the accused involved in firing.

Operations against adulteration mafia 650 liters of substandard milk discarded 2000 liters fake beverages seized

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority, in collaboration with the Livestock Department, conducted joint operations in Peshawar, D.I. Khan, and Nowshera.

During these operations, checkpoints were established at the Peshawar Motorway Toll Plaza and Bhakkar Bridge in D.I. Khan, resulting in the seizure of hundreds of liters of substandard milk and beverages.

According to details released by the Food Authority spokesperson,

the Food Safety teams, along with Livestock Department officials, conducted early morning checkpoints at the Peshawar Motorway Toll Plaza and Bhakkar Bridge, inspecting vehicles transporting food items, particularly milk tankers.

The spokesperson further stated that samples of milk, ice cream, and other food items were collected and examined using a mobile testing lab.

In Peshawar, 650 liters of milk, and in D.I. Khan, over 400 liters of milk were found to be substandard and hazardous, leading to their

disposal.

Additionally, the Nowshera team, during a checkpoint on GT Road, seized over 2000 liters of fake and substandard branded cold drinks from a vehicle.

Heavy fines were imposed on the owners for violating hygiene standards, and further action has been initiated under the Food Safety Act.

Director General Food Authority Wasif Saeed, while commending the successful operations, said that strict measures will be taken against those endangering the health of citizens, especially children.

Food items smuggling undermines local manufacturing industry

PESHAWAR (APP): The rising population bulge has negatively impacted food services items including perishable and non-perishable edibles affecting gross domestic product (GDP) besides opening gates for smuggling.

With the country's population growing at about 2.4 percent rate crossing the psychological barrier of 242.8 million this year, has created problems including corruption, delay in justice, deteriorating education and healthcare services and rampant food items smuggling through grey channels.

The smuggling of perishable and non-perishable goods including packaged milks, oil, ghee, sugar, poultry meat, eggs black tea, dry fruit, wheat flour, rice, pulses, grapes and vegetables have mostly retarded growth of local food manufacturing

industries and shatter confidence of the local investors and manufacturers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that was situated in disadvantage location in terms of business point of view due to its nearly 1500 km distance from Karachi sea port.

The Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI) research report 2023 has revealed that \$2.63 billion was being lost per year in Pakistan owing to smuggling of food items and grey imports. Similarly, the total value of smuggle-prone food items had been reported to be about USD 9 billion which is equal to nearly three percent of the GDP in the cash starved Pakistan.

Professor Dr Zialkat Ali Malik, former Chairman, Economics Department, University of Peshawar told APP that Pakistan suffers from one

of the highest levels of illicit trade in Asia due to its complex and long porous border with Afghanistan, and tax evasion since 1947.

Underlying the need of regulating the Afghans Transit Trade (ATT), he said the combined value of smuggling, under-invoicing, mis-declaration of imports, counterfeiting, tax evasion, adulteration in food items as reported by Pakistan Business Council (PBC) was estimated at US\$ 68 billion or 20% of the formal economy, which should be a matter of great concern for the financial managers of the newly elected government.

"Informal economy is estimated at about the same size as the formal economy, therefore, illicit trade represents 10% of the total economy," he said, adding the estimated annual tax loss from illic-

it trade as reported by PBC is about Rs. 8 trillion, which is amounting to 85% of the tax revenue target for ongoing financial year.

Dr Zilakat Malik said the International Trade Centre (ITC) revealed that there was a \$7.5 billion disparity between the export value declared by four countries including China, Singapore, Germany and UK to Pakistan.

He said the trade and commerce ministry has issued an order through SRO-237, requiring imported packaged food products to have 66 pc shelf life at the time of import with an ingredients mentioned in both English and Urdu languages and have halal certification from prescribed accredited authorities along with logo and labelling in a specified format.

He said it also disal-

lowed the use of stickers to mention these details to ensure that the imported products are quality standard compliant and brought in through legal channels.

Implementing the order immediately resulted in reduced grey imports of packaged food products and instated incentives for the manufacturers to produce and market their local substitutes, fully compliant with local regulatory requirements and health safety standards for benefits of people.

Many small food manufacturers, including home businesses, found a business opportunity for them, and new and small enterprises mentioned in both shelves of supermarkets and departmental stores, selling at a rescannable rate than smuggled products.

Dr Zialkat said the foreign food manufacturers operating in Pakistan

have also introduced their brands to test the market by legally importing their products from their facilities in other countries, compliant with the ministry's order and requirements which was a good sign for the country's food exports base.

He also underscored the need for a broader mechanism to curb illegal trade and smuggling of food items.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority carried out a major operation in Dera Ismail Khan on Monday last and seized over 3000 liters of adulterated and substandard milk being smuggled in two vehicles from Punjab to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The Spokesperson of the authority said that the smuggling attempt was thwarted at Qureshi Mor check post connecting DI Khan with Bhukkar dis-

trict. He said these smuggled goods were immediately discarded, and heavy fines were imposed against the accused.

Director General of the Food Safety Authority, Wasif Saeed said that food safety teams were instructed to adopt zero tolerance against adulteration and smuggling of food items. He emphasized that strict action would be taken against those supplying substandard food and no leniency would be shown towards the violators.

Secretary Food KP, Zareeful Mani said that joint check posts comprising representatives of various departments were set up in border districts to monitor the transportation of essential food commodities and curb smuggling of wheat, sugar, poultry and milk etc.

Close liaison was being established among food,

home, agriculture and industries' secretaries, as well as various commissioners and deputy commissioners to counter smuggling of food items in the province.

Directives were issued to the relevant authorities to take strict action against hoarding of food items besides monitoring the stock of dealers. Mani said that measures were taken to control the supply of essential commodities and also take action against excessive stocking of food items.

The Secretary said that a control room would be established at the commissioners and DC offices to curb the smuggling of essential food items, adding these measures demonstrate the government's strong commitment to ensure availability and accessibility of essential commodities for the public at affordable rates.



In brief

Three of a family killed

SHEIKHUPURA (INP): Three people of a family including a child were killed when an over speeding mini truck hit a motorcycle near Gujjar Chowk here on Sunday, rescue sources said. According to details, the accident took place on Kala Khatai road in tehsil Murdike of Sheikhupura where a reckless mini truck ran over a motorcycle. As a result of accident, 8-year-old child among three family members died on the spot. The driver responsible for the accident fled the scene. The deceased included 60-year-old Riasat Ali, his son Haider Ali 30, and eight-year-old grandson Hassan. The bodies were shifted to hospital. The police impounded the mini truck and after registering a case against driver at large started raids for his arrest.

24 cops suspended

FAISALABAD (INP): On corruption charges, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Patrolling Faisalabad on Sunday suspended 24 police officials patrolling post Pansara on Sunday. According to the report, SSP Patrolling Mirza Anjum Kamal, in a sting operation, suspended all the staff of Patrolling Post Pansara, including the sub-inspector, ASI, and constables. The SSP had received information about the corruption of Pansara post officials. Mirza Anjum Kamal did the checking along with DSP Nasrullah. Evidence of corruption among officials on the night shift was found. Officials were taking bribes instead of taking action against overloaded trolleys. SSP Mirza Anjum Kamal said that corruption and dishonesty will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Groom held in Khairpur

KHAIRPUR (INP): Police have arrested a groom from marriage function before marrying a 10-year-old girl in the limits of Ahmadpur police station of Khairpur. Police also arrested the father of the minor girl Maria Milano. The police received a tip-off that a young girl was being married off in Malana village of Ahmadpur police station. On which the Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Khairpur Zabair Nazir Ahmad Sheikh took strict notice of the marriage of a 10-year-old girl bride Maria Milano. On the orders of SSP, SHO Ahmadpur police station and his team arrested the 32-year-old groom Muhammad Alam Milano while the girl was taken into police custody. The minor girl and the groom will be produced in court today for further legal action, said SSP Zubair Nazir Shaikh said.

Police arrest armed men

OKARA (INP): Police in Okara have apprehended seven individuals armed with a significant amount of weapons near a church on GT Road. The suspects were traveling in a Vigo van and were apprehended after displaying their weapons publicly. The arrest was made by B Division's police station. According to police sources, the suspects were spotted driving around with government-issued lights on their vehicle and filming videos while brandishing their weapons. When police requested their weapon licenses or permits, they were unable to produce any. The Vigo truck and the suspects were subsequently taken into custody.

Three inactive water filtration plants Minister wants plants to be functional

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Law and Finance Aftab Alam Afridi Advocate visited Khushal Garh along with Tehsil Gumbat Chairman Sajid Iqbal and local PTI leader Ishtiaq Qureshi in Kohat on Sunday where he was apprised of the problems and difficulties faced by the area.

He on this occasion alongwith the Chairman Khushal Garh Sabir Aziz Awan inspected the under-

ground water tank of Khushal Garh water scheme and directed to clean it immediately to make it usable.

Similarly Aftab Alam Afridi also directed the authorities concerned of Public Health Department to immediately repair and activate the inactive 3 water filtration plants.

Meanwhile, the Minister Law held his public day in TMA Gumbat alongwith Tehsil Chairman Sajid Iqbal where he listened to the problems of the people. Most of the problems were

solved on the spot while remaining were sent to relevant departments for redressal.

On this occasion, the minister said that the people have fulfilled their duty by giving a clear mandate to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, now it is our responsibility to work together day and night for their problems.

Therefore, PTI will not harm the trust of the people and will fulfill the promises made to them and will try hard to come up to their expectations, he concluded.



MULTAN: A view of sewerage water and garbage in the vegetable market needs the attention of the concerned authority.

22nd meeting of Fata varsity syndicate held

F.P. Report

KOHAT: The 22nd meeting of the Syndicate of FATA University was held on under the chairmanship of Dr. Maqsood Haider, Vice Chancellor of FATA University.

Members including Professor Dr. Qibla Ayaz Former Chairman Islamic Ideological Council, Mohammad Mohsin Khan Designated Chairman, Higher

Commission Islamabad, Jamshed Khan Deputy Secretary Establishment, Masood Ahmad Jan Deputy Secretary Finance, Muhammad Akbar Amin Registrar FATA University, Ms. Hina Treasurer FATA University, Dr. Sharifullah Jan Deputy Treasurer FATA University, Dr. Bilal Khan Deputy Registrar Academic FATA University, Dr. Aamir Murad Deputy Registrar

Meetings FATA University and Muhammad Saeed Khalil Lecturer Department of Political Science attended the meeting.

All items included in the agenda were discussed in detail and final decisions were taken.

FATA University Vice Chancellor Dr. Maqsood Haider pledged to take all appropriate steps for the betterment of FATA University.

Kalasha Museum draws tourists, archeology lovers



CHITRAL (APP): Kalasha Museum where every statute speaks of Ghandhara civilization here Sunday attracted a substantial number of tourists and archeology lovers after the weather turned pleasant after rainfall.

Nestled in the breathtaking Bamborait Valley here, Kalasha Dur Museum drew tourists, archeologists, historians and architecture lovers in droves where they explored the rare artifacts and statues of the Ghandhara Civilization amid hide and seek between sun and clouds.

Located in the heart of Bamborait Valley in the lap of Trich Mir mountain peak, the museum's unique architecture, sculptures, antiquities and Ghandhara art masterpieces was a great source of attraction for tourists, adventurers and Bhuddha art lovers.

The museum where every statute speak of its glorious civilization becomes even more captivating against the backdrop of snow-capped mountains by offering visitors a truly magical experience in the Hindukash mountains range.

"Chitral is my favorite tourists place due to its diverse culture especially Kalash, archeological significance and adventure sports.

The Kalasha museum is a good edition in Chitral that impress me the most," said Riaz Khan, former school

teacher while talking to APP.

He said such unique treasures needs to be promoted through digital technology to attract tourists and archeology lovers from world besides bolstering economy of the Chitral, Dir and other districts of Malakand division.

Madaklast and Bomborait are the beautiful valleys of Chitral, awaiting KP government patronage to build its infrastructure imperative to promote archeology, ecotourism and adventure sports in Chitral district.

"Kalasha Museum and Madaklast valley carried a unique tourism, archeological and cultural significance that always remained centre of attraction for tourists due to its nearby three famous historic valleys and famous Kalash culture," said Bakhtzada Khan, senior research officer of archaeology department while talking to APP.

He said the foundation of Kalasha museum commonly Known as Bamborate museum was laid in 2001 and completed in 2005.

There are about 1300 objects exhibited which are of Ethnological interest from the Kalasha tradition and from the traditions of the wider Hindu Kush area.

The building was composed of two floors; the ground floor has the Ethnological collection of the Kalasha culture and the wider Hindukush

area and the other floor houses a school of Kalasha culture with a library of books written on the valley, and also a hall for professional training of local crafts.

"The history of Kalash culture was as old as the history of Chitral. In 18th century, about seven to 12 people migrated to Chitral from Northern parts of subcontinent (now Pakistan) for trade and establish their base camps in various places for residence and finally settled in Kalash and Madaklast."

While staying at Madaklast, a visitor could easily explore the three famous Kalasha valleys including Bamburet (Mumuret), Rumbur and Biri (Birir) that take tourists in lap of serenity.

Kalash culture where its members select life partners in festivals during celebrations was a unique identity of Chitral that draw tourists from across the country and world.

Bakhtzada said the underrated Madaklast and Kalash valleys could prove the best summer sports destinations due to its trekking and snowfall features.

He underlined the need of improvement of roads infrastructure and showcasing Madaklast and Kalash's mesmerizing natural beauty through digital and social media to bolster rural economy and promote adventure tourism here.

These hidden treasures requires to be projected through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other digital media tools with small videos to promote the country's tourism potential.

The experts said the proposed Kumrat-Madaklast cable car if constructed would turn Chitral a hub of tourism besides bring direct foreign investment.



NEWSHERA: Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Social Welfare and Women Empowerment Mashal Azam Yousafzai arriving at Social Welfare Office.

Mashal for enhancing public services

F.P. Report

NEWSHERA: Chief Minister's Advisor on Education, Social Welfare, and Women Development, Mushtaq Ahmed Yousafzai, has intensified efforts to improve public service delivery in Nowshehra, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. During his recent visit, he inaugurated the Directorate of Social Welfare Office and inspected special schools for individuals with disabilities and shelters for orphaned children.

Yousafzai conducted a detailed review of operations at the Directorate of Social Welfare Office, discussing service provision with officials and checking staff attendance. He also met with the District Education Officer of Nowshehra to discuss the functioning of educational institutions under the Social Welfare Department.

The advisor visited a special school dedicated to individuals with disabilities, assessing the facilities and services available. He expressed concern over any deficiencies in facilities and immediately issued directives to address them.

During his tour, Yousafzai reaffirmed his commitment to fulfilling Prime Minister Imran Khan's vision of ensuring no one sleeps hungry and everyone has access to essential services in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He instructed officials to promptly address any technical shortcomings or service delivery issues reported from various sections.

"We are striving to continue the journey of public service improvement across the province, as per the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan," Yousafzai remarked.

The advisor's visit underscored the government's dedication to enhancing welfare services, particularly for vulnerable populations, in Nowshehra.

Power outages causing water shortage

HYDERABAD (APP): The Hyderabad Water and Sewerage board Corporation (HWSBC) has said that prolonged power outages were causing the water shortage in many parts of Hyderabad, as the agency's filtration plants and pumping stations were affected by the power outages.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, the Corporation's spokesman lamented that the officials of HWSBC had requested the officials of Hyderabad Electric Supply Company (HESCO) to resolve the issue of extensive load shedding and unscheduled outages. He acknowledged that during the prevailing hot and humid weather, the Board could not ensure uninterrupted supply of water because of the outages. According to him, three water filtration plants were being supplied electricity through two alternate feeders but the outages occurring during the same hours had turned the dual supply useless.

The spokesman reiterated that once the water shortage was created in the city, it took HWSBC from 2 to 3 days to restore the normal supply. However, he deplored, the ongoing outages were not allowing the corporation to restore the normal supply even after 3 days.

Uplift projects for Lachi in pipeline: Shahryar

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Former federal Minister and Senior PTI Leader Shehryar Afridi MNA has revealed that a huge irrigation project costing Rs. 5.5 Billion from the Indus River is in the pipeline that will irrigate more than one and a half lakh acres barren land of Lachi Tehsil.

Similarly, the project of construction of 5 check dams on the big khor of Lachi costing more than Rs. 25 Million to raise the water table in Lachi is also in the final stages. Solarization of Lachi and Shakar Dara Hospitals and Upgradation of Girls High School Lachi have also been approved, he added.

He made these revelations while addressing the inaugural ceremony of Solarization of drinking water project completed at a cost of Rs.20 Million in

Tehsil Lachi of Kohat district on Saturday evening.

Member of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Daud Shah Afridi Advocate and Tehsil Nazim Lachi Muhammad Ehsan also addressed the ceremony.

As usual the inauguration of Solarization project was made from party workers.

Shahryar Afridi said that basically the purpose of inaugurating development projects from the party workers is in the recognition of their exemplary sacrifices in the past years.

He said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf unprecedented sacrifices for the survival and security of Pakistan have no example in the history of the country, for which all the credit goes to the party leaders and workers.

Shahryar Afridi said that even today our

beloved party leader Imran Khan and others like Shah Mehmood Qureshi and Yasmin Rashid are serving solitary confinement in false cases for the sake of Pakistan and its people and are not ready to bow down under any circumstances.

He said that even today, if our leader deviates from his public stance, it will not take even a second to release him, but he has been doing all this for Pakistan and for us only.

The former federal Minister called upon the people to show unity and shun their petty for the cause of their land as big projects worth billions of rupees are knocking on Kohat.

This present period of PTI government will prove to be an ideal period in the history of Kohat in terms of development.

Zhob-Dhanasar section of N- 50 reopened for traffic

QUETTA (APP): On the direction of Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti, the blocked highway was restored and reopened by removing stones through heavy machinery at Dhanasar area.

The National Highway Authority (NHA) along with District Administration, Levies and Police personnel reopened the Zhob-Dahanasar section of Dera Ismail Khan-Quetta Highway (N-50) for

all kinds of traffic which was affected due to landslides at Dhanasar.

Spokesperson of Balochistan government on said on Sunday that the NHA crew, district administration, Levies and Police personnel removed the heavy landslides and reopened the blocked road.

Now the national highway N-50 Zhob - Dahanasar was open for all kinds of traffic. A heavy landslide occurred at the Zhob-Dhanasar sec-

tion of N-50 which blocked the highway with large stones.

The Balochistan Chief Minister has congratulated the NHA team, district administration, levies and police personnel, the spokesperson said.

During the closure of the highway, the district administration provided cold water and food items to the passengers, Deputy Commissioner Sana Majabain said.

Urban flooding alert issued as monsoon arrives

FAISALABAD (INP): Faisalabad Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) has intensified the process of cleaning rain drains throughout the city to mitigate the risk of flooding.

Faisalabad is known as Manchester of Pakistan due to its industrialization and large scale labour market. The Faisalabad district came into existence in 1904 named as Lyallpur back then which was a Tehsil of Jhang district earlier.

As soon as the alert was issued, WASA deployed

teams to various parts of the city to accelerate the cleaning of storm drains. The proactive measure aims to ensure the smooth flow of rainwater and prevent blockages caused by silting and household waste.

Assistant Director of WASA Owais commented on the efforts: "Teams have been set up to clean the channels, reducing our silting and more household waste that blocks the flow of water."

Despite these measures,

citizens have voiced concerns regarding the drainage of sewage water in the streets. One resident remarked, "When the rains start, it becomes a torment for us. The water accumulates and it becomes difficult to get out."

WASA has also established a customer care center aimed at resolving citizens' problems in a timely manner. With the monsoon season bringing heavy rains, Faisalabad is on high alert for potential urban flooding.



HYDERABAD: Sewerage water accumulated on the main Kacha Qila Road creating problems for the commuters.



Hurricane Beryl is forecast to become a Category 4 storm

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Hurricane Beryl is forecast to strengthen into a powerful Category 4 storm as it approaches the southeast Caribbean, which began shutting down Sunday amid urgent pleas from government officials for people to take shelter.

Hurricane warnings were in effect for Barbados, St. Lucia, Grenada, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Beryl's center is expected to pass about 70 miles (112 kilometers) south of Barbados on Monday morning, said Sabu Best, director of Barbados' meteorological service.

"This is a very serious situation developing for the Windward Islands," warned the National Hurricane Center in Miami, which said that Beryl was "forecast to

bring life-threatening winds and storm surge."

Beryl strengthened into a Category 3 hurricane on Sunday morning, becoming the first major hurricane east of the Lesser Antilles on record for June, according to Philip Klotzbach, Colorado State University hurricane researcher.

Beryl is now only the third Category 3 hurricane ever recorded in the Atlantic in June, following Audrey in 1957 and Alma in 1966, said hurricane specialist and storm surge expert Michael Lowry.

"Beryl is an extremely dangerous and rare hurricane for this time of year in this area," he said in a phone interview. "Unusual is an understatement. Beryl is already a historic hurricane and it hasn't struck

yet."

Hurricane Ivan in 2004 was the last strongest hurricane to hit the southeast Caribbean, causing catastrophic damage in Grenada as a Category 3 storm.

"So this is a serious threat, a very serious threat," Lowry said of Beryl.

Beryl was located about 420 miles (675 kilometers) east-southeast of Barbados. It was a Category 3 storm with maximum sustained winds of 115 mph (185 kph) and was moving west at 21 mph (33 kph). It was expected to pass just south of Barbados early Monday and then head into the Caribbean Sea as a major hurricane on a path toward Jamaica. It is expected to weaken by midweek but still remain a hurricane as it

heads toward Mexico.

Forecasters warned of life-threatening storm surge of up to 9 feet (3 meters) in areas where Beryl will make landfall, with up to 6 inches (15 centimeters) of rain for Barbados and nearby islands.

Long lines formed at gas stations and grocery stores in Barbados and other islands as people rushed to prepare for a storm that has broken records and rapidly intensified from a tropical storm with 35 mph winds on Friday to a Category 1 hurricane on Saturday.

Warm waters were fueling Beryl, with ocean heat content in the deep Atlantic the highest on record for this time of year, according to Brian McNoldy, University of Miami tropical meteorology researcher. Lowry

said the waters are now warmer than they would be at the peak of hurricane season in September.

Beryl marks the farthest east that a hurricane has formed in the tropical Atlantic in June, breaking a record set in 1933, according to Philip Klotzbach, Colorado State University hurricane researcher. If Beryl's winds reach 125 mph, it would be the second earliest such storm in the Atlantic on record, surpassing Audrey in 1957, he said.

"We have to remain vigilant," Barbadian Prime Minister Mia Mottley said in a public address late Saturday. "We do not want to put anybody's life at risk."

Thousands of people were in Barbados for Saturday's Twenty20 World Cup final, cricket's

biggest event, with Mottley noting that not all fans were able to leave Sunday despite many rushing to change their flights.

"Some of them have never gone through a storm before," she said. "We have plans to take care of them."

Mottley said all businesses should close by Sunday evening and warned the airport would close by nighttime.

Kemar Saffrey, president of a Barbadian group that aims to end homelessness, said in a video posted on social media Saturday night that those without homes tend to think they can ride out storms because they've done it before.

"I don't want that to be the approach that they take," he said, warning that Beryl is a dangerous

storm and urging Barbadians to direct homeless people to a shelter.

Echoing his comments was Wilfred Abrahams, minister of home affairs and information.

"I need Barbadians at this point to be their brother's keeper," he said. "Some people are vulnerable." Meanwhile, St. Lucia Prime Minister Philip J. Pierre announced a national shutdown for Sunday evening and said schools and businesses would remain closed on Monday.

"Preservation and protection of life is a priority," he said.

Caribbean leaders were preparing not only for Beryl, but for a cluster of thunderstorms trailing the hurricane that have a 70% chance of becoming a tropical depression.

"Do not let your guard down," Mottley said.

Beryl is the second named storm in what is forecast to be an above-average hurricane season, which runs from June 1 to Nov. 30 in the Atlantic. Earlier this month, Tropical Storm Alberto came ashore in northeastern Mexico with heavy rains that resulted in four deaths.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicts the 2024 hurricane season is likely to be well above average, with between 17 and 25 named storms. The forecast calls for as many as 13 hurricanes and four major hurricanes.

An average Atlantic hurricane season produces 14 named storms, seven of them hurricanes and three major hurricanes.

Strong turnout in France's high-stakes elections as support for far right grows

PARIS (AP): Voters across mainland France cast ballots Sunday in the first round of early parliamentary elections that could put the government in the hands of nationalist, far-right parties for the first time since the Nazi era.

The two-round elections that wrap up July 7 could impact European financial markets, Western support for Ukraine and the management of France's nuclear arsenal and global military force.

Many French voters are frustrated about inflation and other economic concerns, as well as President Emmanuel Macron's leadership, seen as arrogant and out-of-touch with their lives. Marine Le Pen's anti-immigration National Rally party has tapped that discontent, notably via online platforms like TikTok, and led in preelection opinion polls.

A new coalition on the left, the New Popular Front, also poses a challenge to the pro-business Macron and his centrist alliance Together for the Republic. It includes the French Socialists and Communists, the greens and the hard-left France Unbowed party and vows to reverse an unpopular pension reform law that raised the retirement age to 64, among other economic reforms.

There are 49.5 million registered voters who will choose the 577 members of the National Assembly, France's influential lower house of parliament.

Turnout at midday Sunday stood at 25.9% according to interior ministry figures, higher than the 18.43% at midday during 2022 legislative elections. The vote was taking place during the traditional first week of summer vacation in France, and absentee ballot requests were at least five times higher than in 2022.

The first polling projections were expected at 8 p.m. (1800 GMT), when final polling stations close. Early official results were expected later Sunday.

Macron voted in Le Touquet, a seaside resort in northern France. Le Pen also voted in the north, her party's stronghold, but in the work-

ing-class town of Hennin-Beaumont.

Voters in Paris had issues from immigration to the rising cost of living on their minds as the country has grown more divided between the far right and far left blocs, with a deeply unpopular and weakened president in the political center. The campaign was marred by rising hate speech.

"People don't like what has been happening," said Cynthia Justine, 44. "People feel they've lost a lot in recent years. People are angry. I am angry." She added that with "the rising hate speech," it was necessary to express frustrations with those holding and seeking power.

She said it was important as a woman to vote since women haven't always had that right. And "because I am a Black woman, it's even more important. A lot is at stake on this day."

Macron called the early elections after his party was trounced in the European Parliament election earlier in June by the National Rally, which has historic ties to racism and antisemitism and is hostile toward France's Muslim community. It also has historical ties to Russia.

Macron's call was an audacious gamble that French voters who were complacent about the European election would be jolted into turning out for moderate forces in national elections to keep the far right out of power.

Instead, preelection polls suggested that the National Rally is gaining support and has a chance at winning a parliamentary majority. In that scenario, Macron would be expected to name 28-year-old National Rally President Jordan Bardella as prime minister in an awkward power-sharing system known as "cohabitation."

While Macron has said he won't step down before his presidential term expires in 2027, cohabitation would weaken him at home and on the world stage.

A 64-year-old voter, Philippe Lempereur, expressed fatigue with politicians from the left, right and center and what he called their inability to work together on issues like ensuring people have shelter and

enough to eat. "We vote by default, for the least worse option," he said. "I prefer to vote than do nothing."

The results of the first round will give a picture of voter sentiment, but not necessarily of the overall makeup of the next National Assembly. Predictions are difficult because of the complicated voting system, and because parties will work between the rounds to make alliances in some constituencies or pull out of others.

In the past, such maneuvers helped keep far-right candidates from power. But support for Le Pen's party has spread deep and wide.

Bardella, who has no governing experience, says he would use the powers of prime minister to stop Macron from continuing to supply long-range weapons to Ukraine for the war with Russia.

The National Rally has also questioned the right to citizenship for people born in France, and wants to curtail the rights of French citizens with dual nationality. Critics say this undermines human rights and is a threat to France's democratic ideals. Meanwhile, huge public spending promises by the National Rally and especially the left-wing coalition have shaken markets and ignited worries about France's heavy debt, already criticized by EU watchdogs.

In the restive French Pacific territory of New Caledonia, polls closed earlier due to a curfew that authorities have extended until July 8. Violence there flared last month leaving nine people dead, due to attempts by Macron's government to amend the French Constitution and change voting lists, which the Indigenous Kanaks feared would further marginalize them. They have long sought to break free from France.

Voters in France's other overseas territories of Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon, Saint-Barthélemy, Saint-Martin, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyana and French Polynesia and those voting in offices opened by embassies and consular posts across the Americas cast their ballots on Saturday.



LYON: Voters wait at a polling station to vote in the first round of the French parliamentary election, in Lyon, central France, Sunday.

American and British voters share deep roots

DARTFORD, England (AP): Distrust has settled over the campaign trails in the United States and United Kingdom ahead of July 4 like a soggy summer haze.

On that day, British voters will choose a new Parliament in an election expected to finish with a Labour government after 14 years under the Conservatives. Americans across the pond, deeply polarized by the rematch between Democratic President Joe Biden and Republican Donald Trump, will mark Independence Day in something resembling unity with barbecues and fireworks ahead of their vote on Nov. 5.

There's much to celebrate on the Fourth of July for one of the world's biggest democracies and the venerable kingdom that gave rise to it, 248 years after they split and set off on slow, troubled journeys toward granting all citizens the right to vote. Both remain rooted in the Magna Carta, the English document signed in 1215. It set in writing the idea that leaders — including kings, presidents and their governments — are not above the law. The nations have become close friends and stalwart allies.

As for how it's going, the run-up to July 4, 2024 — Independence Day for one land, Election Day for the other — offers a snapshot of the stress test facing voters in each country.

"I'm just very disheartened, really, because I don't think any of the parties know what they're doing," said Dartford, England, resident Jacqueline Richards, 77, said of her country's election. "But then looking at yours in America, it's not that great, is it?"

Every democratic election is, at its core, about who voters trust to run their country so they can go about running their lives.

Debates are candidate aptitude tests in real time, never more so than during Thursday's showdown between Biden, 81, and Trump, 77. Biden's halting performance did the opposite of building confidence, even among some of his most loyal supporters. Trump, meanwhile, repeated his lies about the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection and his record as president.

That's only the most recent example of why distrust and a sense of resignation dominate the emotional

landscape in both countries, according to voters interviewed by The Associated Press in recent weeks. From battleground Wisconsin to bellwether Dartford, England, voters said years of misinformation, scandal and lies have drained them of the sort of optimism or excitement they might once have felt about the right to vote or the future.

In Britain, 45% said they "almost never" trust governments to put the nation's interest first, up from 34% in 2019, according to a survey published June 12 by the National Centre for Social Research. The pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine War and the country's cost-of-living crisis affected living standards and the economy, it reported. Two Tory prime ministers were ousted. Also, there was Boris Johnson, who resigned rather than be thrown out of Parliament over boozy parties at 10 Downing Street when the nation was under COVID-19 lockdown.

A vote to turn the Conservative government out of power is not necessarily a vote for Labour, opposition leader Keir Starmer acknowledged during a May 27 debate. Voters, he said, "still have questions about us: Has Labour changed enough? Do I trust them with my money, our borders, our security?"

Starmer's own answer was yes, of course. But British voters told the AP in the weeks before the election that they're far from sure. "They promise and promise and promise and nothing ever changes," said Shane Bassett, 34, the bar manager at a pub in bellwether Dartford, where the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 is said to have started. "No matter who gets in — if it's Labour, if it's Conservative, it's all the same. They all lie."

In the United States, trust has been eroded by deepening political polarization, misinformation and Trump's lies about Biden's victory in the 2020 election — all amplified by social media.

Roughly 2 in 10 Americans say they trust the U.S. government to do what is right "just about always" or "most of the time," according to a recent Pew Research Center survey. About 6 in 10 say they can trust the government "only some of the time" and about 2 in 10 say they can never trust the government

to do what's right.

Nearly three-quarters of American adults blame the news media for dividing the nation, according to a 2023 poll by AP-NORC. Families and friends have learned to avoid discussing politics around Thanksgiving tables and other gatherings. In many places, even celebrations of the Fourth of July — a national holiday when Americans mark the 1776 ratification of the Declaration of Independence from Britain — fall under this practice of restraint.

In Racine, Wisconsin, Rebecca Eisel, 48, wondered how the vast United States, home of 262 million eligible voters and the world's biggest economy, faces a rematch that few Americans wanted. "How did our democratic process result in something that the majority of the population doesn't like?" Eisel, 48, said over a sandwich at the Maple Table restaurant.

The United States: 'The country is struggling'

The last time Kathleen Barker, 64, was excited about a candidate, it was Ronald Reagan, who went on to serve two terms in the 1980s and exited office by referring to the country as a "shining city on a hill."

"He was a very real person, very respectful, family-oriented," she said while walking her dog near the river in Racine. "You could relate to him. He felt like just that average man."

Now, she says, the "nasty back-and-forth" between Biden and Trump — who each insist the other is unfit for office — suggest neither can be trusted to dig into the major problems facing the United States.

"People are poor. The country is struggling. And this is their focus?" she said.

Emmanuel McKinstry, a 58-year-old businessperson, voiced similar frustration. The economy, he said while waiting in line to hear Trump speak in Racine, is his top issue. The next morning, McKinstry said he'd still vote for Trump — with reservations.

"I'm tired of politicians working for themselves and not really getting down and asking people what we really want," McKinstry said. "We're putting you in office. What are you gonna do for us?"

The last presidential candidate to excite high school teacher Marcus T. West, 49,

was Democrat Barack Obama, who went on to serve two terms.

"He got the importance of educators. He had good intentions," West said over breakfast at Mrs. Betty's Kitchen. "He's the last person I felt talked like me, talked to me, passed policies that I liked."

This year, he said of Biden and Trump, "they aren't looking out for us."

Britain: 'Not very optimistic'

In Britain, the distrust is less personal. It's about scandal — think Johnson and "partygate" — and the cost-of-living crisis.

On May 22, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak had good news and a bombshell: Inflation was down to 2.3% for the first time in three years, and he was dissolving Parliament immediately, which started a clock that required an election on July 4.

But the visuals are what's remembered about that day. Rain soaked his suited shoulders as Sunak spoke where his predecessors had stood for 275 years, before the iconic black door of No. 10 Downing Street. No one sheltered him with an umbrella. Protesters nearly drowned out his words by playing "Things Can Only Get Better," a rival Labour campaign song used in the Tony Blair era.

"Things can only get wetter," led the reports on several news sites.

That's what concerns Bassett, the manager at the Wat Tyler Pub, named for a leader of the Peasants' Revolt that started on that site. You're not supposed to talk about politics in British pubs, he says — the counterpart, perhaps, of the American reluctance to stir up trouble on the same topic at parties.

But Bassett looked around at the empty dining room at lunchtime. There were no customers to offend. So he let it fly.

The pub's energy bill last winter jumped from its usual 800 pounds a month (about \$1,000) to 1,200 pounds (about \$1,500). It has struggled since the Christmas season to bring in customers for a beer. He thinks the owners are likely to sell the place only four years after buying it.

"I'm not very optimistic," he said. Thinking of his family members in Canada, Bassett added: "If I could leave the country, I would."

Myanmar central bank denies UN report on weapons transactions

NAY PYI TAW (Reuters): Myanmar's central bank denied a UN report that the country's military government can still access money and weapons for its war against anti-coup forces, saying financial institutions under the bank's supervision followed prescribed procedures.

The Central Bank of Myanmar "expressed our strong objection to the UN Special Rapporteur's report," it said in a statement published in a junta newspaper on Saturday. "The UN report severely harms the interests of Myanmar civilians and the relationship between Myanmar and other countries."

The rapporteur on Myanmar's human rights, Tom Andrews, reported on Wednesday that while international efforts to isolate the junta appear to have dented its ability to buy military equipment, it still imported \$253 million worth of weapons, dual-use technologies, manufacturing equipment and other materials in the 12 months to March.

The report said Myanmar had the help of international banks, including those from Southeast Asian neighbor Thailand, for its purchases.

Facing its biggest challenge since its 2021 coup against Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi's gov-

ernment, Myanmar's military is caught up in multiple, low-intensity conflicts and grappling to stabilize a crumbling economy.

Western countries have imposed multiple financial sanctions on Myanmar's military, banks and associated businesses.

The central bank said local and international banks engaged in transactions with Myanmar have undergone comprehensive due diligence measures for all business relationships and transactions.

"The financial transactions are only for the importation of essential goods and basic necessities for Myanmar civilians, such as medicines and med-

ical supplies, agricultural and livestock supplies, fertilizers, edible oil and fuels," it said.

The UN report said exports from Singapore had plunged to just over \$10 million from over \$110 million in 2022 but that Thai companies in Thailand partially filled the gap, transferring \$120 million worth of weapons and materials in 2023, double from the previous year.

Thailand's foreign ministry said in a statement on Thursday that the country's banking and financial institutions follow protocols like other major financial hubs, adding the government will look into the UN rapporteur's report.



PARIS: Police at work at the scene of the shooting in north-eastern France, which happened overnight during a wedding party in Thionville.

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Middle East at momentous crossroad

TENSIONS between Israel and Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah were effectively eased last week thanks to the mediation efforts that successfully hammered home the point that an all-out war between the two sides will serve no party's interest. That makes more sense if the presidential elections of both Iran and the United States are taken into account.

But the Houthi of Yemen and the Islamic Resistance of Iraq, both backed by Iran, launched at least two joint attacks on Israel's Haifa port last week, and claimed their anti-Israel military collaboration will intensify. So the latest attacks on Haifa indicate Teheran and its regional allies are seeking to put Israel under continued international pressure.

The anti-Israel forces view maintaining their military pressure on Israel from the north and other directions as extensions of the Gaza conflict, and they hope to help drain and distract the Israeli military, and fuel the internal political divisions and build tensions with Israel's allies.

However, as long as the Benjamin Netanyahu government does not change its opposition to Palestinian statehood, the continuous trade of hostility between Israel and its regional rivals will only serve to make the former more determined that violence must be met with violence.

Instead of prompting Tel Aviv to give a serious thought to a truce with Hamas, the looming war to the north with Hezbollah, a much more powerful group than Hamas, is only spurring the Netanyahu government to prepare for an attempt to create a new 10-mile (16.09-kilometer) buffer zone above Israel's current border with Lebanon through a new war.

That means the attempts regional forces have been making to try and force Israel to end its offensive in Gaza have stimulated the situation to go the opposite way, forcing Tel Aviv to reevaluate Israel's security conditions in other directions and act accordingly.

Although the US does not support a war between Israel and Hezbollah, it will by no means sit idle while its closest regional ally faces more security threats than it did before the start of the Gaza conflict. By mooring its amphibious assault ship USS Wasp strike group and the Marine Expeditionary Unit in the Eastern Mediterranean coast of Israel, the US is projecting its military power in a bid to deter Israel's regional rivals.

Anonymous White House officials have already bristled at the "purported logic" of Hezbollah arguing that Israel would see an end to Hezbollah attacks by reaching a cease-fire agreement with Hamas in Gaza, claiming that an elusive cease-fire deal in Gaza would go a long way in quieting tensions on the Israel-Lebanon border.

It is clear that while Hezbollah, Houthi and Islamic Resistance are trying to give support to Hamas in Gaza by coordinating their respective pro-Palestine campaigns, neither Tel Aviv nor Washington buys that, as both of them are intent on addressing threats from these groups separately.

Tel Aviv is now still focused on Gaza seeking to consolidate its gains in the Palestinian enclave as permanent Israeli strategic assets, just as it has done with Palestinian lands that it has occupied since 1967.

Netanyahu will hope to take advantage of his planned visit to Washington this month, when he is due to address the US Congress on July 24, to lobby for more US support for his government to effectively address Israel's security threats, including those from Hezbollah. But Washington might try to convince him that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, as the Republican presidential candidate holds a more pragmatic attitude toward the way in which the Gaza crisis should be settled.

He seems to recognize that the onus will always be on the US to end the Gaza crisis.

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Mounting costs of failing to address climate change

Hafed Al-Ghwel

Even the staunchest of naysayers have to admit that the reality of climate change has simply become impossible to ignore, as life-threatening heat waves around the globe test the very limits of the human capacity to survive.

Several regions have reported record-breaking temperatures recently, while others grapple with devastating heat indexes reaching upward of 52 degrees Celsius. Amid these unprecedented conditions, the world reached an alarming milestone last year as global temperatures hovered at an estimated 1.5 C above preindustrial levels, and as high as 1.8 C in September.

The months since then further revealed a deeply troubling and accelerating trend, as temperatures between June 2023 and May 2024 averaged 1.63 C above historic norms. The implications could not be clearer.

Keep in mind that if the rise in global temperatures is to remain below the critical threshold of 2 C above preindustrial levels, the world needs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 9 percent each year. Yet energy-related carbon dioxide emissions increased by 1.1 percent in the past year alone, a disconcerting upward trajectory that added another 400 million tonnes to an already record high of 37.4 billion tonnes.

As the mercury rises, agriculture — the lifeblood of civilization — faces an existential threat. Unforgiving temperatures, coupled with crippling droughts, have become increasingly common in breadbasket regions. More frequent heat waves are having significant effects on agricultural production through direct impacts on crop yields.

For instance, it is estimated that each 1 C increase in the mean global temperature could result in reductions of 6 percent in crop yields for wheat, 3.2 percent for rice, and 3.2 percent for maize.

These effects are already being felt in regions critical to global food production, as frequent and prolonged extreme heat events diminish agricultural outputs and reduce food availability. As a result, prices soar, exacerbating food insecurity challenges among the poor who are forced to spend increasingly significant proportions of their meager incomes simply to survive.

Elsewhere, we are likely to see more "heatflation," a phenomenon in which sharp increases in the costs of food production as a result of climate-related disruptions cause globe-spanning food price shocks. Elevated food prices exacerbate poverty levels among those least able to adjust or adapt, at the same time as incomes shrink as a result of the collapse of entire agricultural sectors.

The persistent climate-related emergencies we have witnessed offer irrefutable evidence that the window of opportunity for the application of more-moderate remedies has narrowed considerably in recent years.

The prognosis is increasingly grim as soaring heat

indexes, growing carbon dioxide emissions, and the resulting threats to core pillars of survival, such as agriculture, paint a picture of a global threat that demands a unified and decisive response.

Factor in geopolitical tensions, conflicts and regional convulsions and the window for action narrows even further. As a result, climate change interventions require not only urgent policy actions but a societal shift to confront what is the defining challenge of our time. Inaction is a luxury the world simply can no longer afford.

One might assume that given the well-documented risks, the demonstrable

Amid the growing crises and a continuing lack of effective responses, a troubling reality persists.

Much-anticipated larger interventions deemed necessary to steer the planet

away from catastrophic climate disasters remain on the distant horizon, their implementation

obstructed by protracted negotiations and entrenched bureaucratic inertia.

Across the various international forums at which consensus on ambitious climate initiatives is sought,

the discussions are frequently mired in painstaking deliberations that too often devolve into contentious debates

over the minutiae of the language used in joint declarations. This process underscores not only the

complex nature of efforts to agree and implement uniform global action, but also the challenges that persist in

attempting to align disparate national interests and priorities within an

increasingly urgent timeline dictated by escalating tragedies. The gulf

between the rhetoric governments espouse regarding climate change and the tangible policies they actually

implement is widening. This gap is emblematic of the current state of international climate politics, in

which stated intentions and actual outcomes seldom align.

effects, a wide range of proposed solutions, and almost global buy-in, decisive action to tackle climate change would be significant and universal.

However, the recent spate of record-breaking heat waves, prolonged droughts and intense floods are the clearest indictment yet of the slow, bumbling nature of the global response to the climate crisis.

Despite the looming threat and mounting evidence of the risks, decisive action on a global scale remains elusive, hindered by a fragmented approach to climate policy that borders on willful inaction.

Amid the growing crises and a continuing lack of effective responses, a troubling reality persists. Much-anticipated larger interventions deemed necessary to steer the planet away from catastrophic cli-

mate disasters remain on the distant horizon, their implementation obstructed by protracted negotiations and entrenched bureaucratic inertia.

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This process underscores not only the complex nature of efforts to agree and implement uniform global action, but also the challenges that persist in attempting to align dis-

that focus more on form than substance.

While the UN's annual COP climate change conferences, and others like them, can successfully convene world leaders, scientists, and activists in an attempt to forge effective paths forward, very often the outcomes fall far short of expectations due to the delicate dance of diplomatic compromise.

The declarations and joint statements that emerge from these events, while symbolically important, frequently lack the means for enforcement, which is required to precipitate real change. The reliance on voluntary national contributions to reductions in greenhouse gas emissions epitomizes this challenge, creating a scenario in which predictive models of climate mitigation are based less on substance, science and sound deliberation than on political calculations.

Furthermore, glaring disparities between regions in their present vulnerability to climate-induced disasters, and their capacities to respond to them, is probably influencing some key decision-makers to kick decisions on commitments to a credible global plan of action further down the road. In their view, we have yet to reach a "crisis point" and so warnings from scientists and experts are simply dismissed as alarmist climate "doomerism."

However, there is no single "crisis point" that will eventually prompt a unified, global response and the delaying of critical decisions in anticipation of reaching it is already proving disastrous.

On a particularly morbid note, such a stance implies a tolerance for "acceptable losses." In other words certain countries or regions might have to become uninhabitable before the others decide it is time to take substantive action.

The implications of this are troubling. It means that willful inaction and delayed responses to climate change mitigation and adaptation are conscious decisions being taken by some as calculated risks. However, such thinking severely underestimates the threat-amplifying nature of the effects of climate change. Delayed action will not preserve the status quo for some, as they hope, but will rather intensify the future effects from which no region will be spared.

The sweltering temperatures recorded this month are likely to be eclipsed in the coming weeks, setting new records and benchmarks, with tragic results. To see whether or not the toll of this finally leads to decisive global action, we will have to wait until November when the world gathers in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, for COP29.

If precedent is anything to go by, it is unlikely we will see anything significant or groundbreaking between now and then, or at the conference or future gatherings. Instead, the debilitating status quo will persist and, as always, it is the most vulnerable people in the most vulnerable regions that will pay the heaviest price.

Can we envision a world without nuclear weapons?

Yossi Mekelberg

During a week in which Russian President Vladimir Putin concluded a visit to North Korea with the signing of a mutual defense pact between Moscow and Pyongyang that is likely to make the latter's military nuclear program even more brazen, I happened to visit the Japanese city of Hiroshima, the first city to be hit by an atomic bomb.

It left me extremely moved but also contemplative about why on earth we still possess nuclear weapons. On Aug. 6, 1945, at 8:15 a.m., an American B-29 bomber, the Enola Gay, dropped an atomic bomb on the city, instantly killing at least 70,000 people. By the end of the year, the death toll had reached 140,000. The bomb vaporized people almost a kilometer from ground zero, and burned the exposed skin of people kilometers away as a result of the intense infrared energy that was unleashed.

Catastrophic fires ravaged a circular area with a radius of more than 3 km, as the city literally burned to the ground. The results would be similar three days later when the US bombed a second Japanese city, Nagasaki, this time causing 100,000 deaths directly attributable to the initial blast.

The horrific effects of the bombs on the Japanese people and their environment continued to be felt for many years, including premature deaths, lifelong trauma, and a significant

Worse, we have learned the wrong lessons from the fact that, despite the presence of huge arsenals of nuclear missiles with sophisticated delivery systems, these weapons with the power to destroy humanity have, thankfully, never been employed again.

links between radiation exposure and major congenital defects, malformations, stillbirths, and neonatal deaths.

All this leaves no room for doubt about the dangerous futility of humanity's toying with nuclear proliferation. Worse, we have learned the wrong lessons from the fact that, despite the presence of huge arsenals of nuclear missiles with sophisticated delivery systems, these weapons with the power to destroy humanity have, thankfully, never been employed again.

When, in the late 1940s, the US lost its monopoly on nuclear weapons and the Soviet Union joined the nuclear arms race, a fairly stable state of deterrence was established between the two superpowers and their allies. Since then, six other countries have become confirmed nuclear military powers: China, the UK, France, India, Pakistan, and North Korea. Israel is also widely believed to possess such a capability.

We can perhaps learn the lessons of history but we can never, even remotely, assume that they will never repeat themselves. During the bipolar superpower system of the Cold War era, both the US and the Soviet Union understood that the use of their nuclear capabilities would be irrational and could only result in mutual assured destruction (or MAD), and so an extremely high level of deterrence was established.

Neither side ever pushed the button, so to speak, but that is not to say the superpowers did not teeter on the brink of cataclysm, even if ultimately they managed to remain one step clear of the nuclear abyss. For two weeks during the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962, Moscow and Washington came very close to launching nuclear missiles at one another, before common sense prevailed.

Can anyone guarantee that a world with nuclear weapons is truly a safe one? A world that is inherently unstable, as is the current state of international affairs, in which most countries in possession of nuclear weapons suffer from unreliable political systems, with leaders who are increasingly authoritarian and have scant respect for accountability and transparency?

The very concept of deterrence, and especially nuclear deterrence, represents a very pessimistic

view of human nature. Perceptually and practically, it dictates that we live in a state of peace — or, more accurately, that we decide not to go to war with one another — not because it is the right thing to do or out of concern about the immorality that accompanies war, and not even because it might serve our interests as individuals or societies.

Deterrence means that we avoid wars mainly because we fear their consequences, and the fear of nuclear annihilation is our ultimate source of dread. Our fears and predictions of global extinction have prevailed for thousands of years and have yet to be banished.

In recent times, experiments in collective security guided by international law, such as the UN, or globalization as a prevailing paradigm of worldwide cooperation have at best achieved only partial success.

Similarly, the model provided by the EU, which represents a direct challenge to the adversarial concept of the security dilemma and its inevitable outcome in the form of the arms race, is facing severe challenges and has yet to be emulated in other parts of the world.

Meanwhile, wars and conflicts persist and continue to claim hundreds of thousands of lives every year. And nuclear weapons are the ultimate tool of force which, if unleashed, could annihilate humanity altogether.

There is a stark contrast between the social contract that prevails in societies in which law, common values, and behavioral norms regulate relations between people and where trust and mutual respect are pillars of society, and the element of anarchy that continues to prevail in international affairs, in which a concept scholars call the "realist" approach still rules supreme. This approach views war as a mechanism to ensure stability, and the pursuit of gains by force as part and parcel of the kind of world affairs in which nuclear weapons have been a component for decades.

For a brief moment, in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, nuclear disarmament seemed to be the ultimate outcome in a world with no more big power rivalry, and consequently the reduction in nuclear arsenals would be substantial.

This is no longer the case. According to the annual report of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the nine nuclear-armed states continue to modernize their nuclear weapon stockpiles as they deepen their reliance on deterrence.

In a separate report, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons calculated that these countries spent a combined total of \$91.4 billion on their nuclear arsenals in 2023. Meanwhile, Iran is regarded as being a "nuclear threshold" state. A world of nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence is not a safer world but an accident waiting to happen, whether technically or politically.

After nearly 80 years of a nuclear era during which the bomb has not been used since Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we should not be lulled into a false sense of security and assume it will never be used.

In recent years a number of negative precedents have been set, including a permanent member of the UN Security Council invading a neighboring country without provocation and threatening to use nuclear weaponry in the process.

This, and the very existence in the world of about 12,100 nuclear warheads, should deeply concern all of us. After all, in Hiroshima and Nagasaki the world witnessed the horror that "only" two such weapons could unleash when launched, ultimately, on the orders of one person alone.

A golden opportunity for lasting peace in the South Caucasus

For more than three decades, Azerbaijan and Armenia have been locked in a state of war. Sometimes this has been in the form of a frozen conflict with little fighting. At other times the hostilities have been intense, costly, and bloody.

Hopefully, the relationship between these two neighbors in the South Caucasus is finally on the verge of changing for the better.

During the chaotic collapse of the Soviet Union, ethnic Armenians living in Azerbaijan's Karabakh region attempted to secede using extraconstitutional methods. Soon after, Armenian military forces entered Azerbaijan, backing the ethnic Armenian militias, and a bloody war ensued. By 1994, a shaky ceasefire had been agreed.

This remained in place, for the most part, until the second Nagorno Karabakh war in September 2020. At this time, Azerbaijan launched a major military operation to take back the territory lost to Armenia in the early 1990s. By November, a Russia-led diplomatic effort brought an end to the fighting. Azerbaijan had taken back most, but not all, of the territory it had lost to Armenia, which was decisively defeated on the battlefield.

By the end of 2020 more than 2,000 Russian peacekeepers were deployed to the remaining parts of Karabakh that remained under the control of the de facto Armenian authorities.

In September last year, fighting once again broke out, as a result of which Azerbaijan took back the remainder of Karabakh. Fearing a genocide, which in the end did not happen, tens of thousands of ethnic Armenians fled across the border to Armenia. Interestingly, the Russian peacekeepers sat idly by and did nothing during the brief period of fighting.

Fast forward almost a year and peace between Azerbaijan and Armenia is closer than it has ever been.

Last month the two sides opened negotiations in Almaty, Kazakhstan, to reach a lasting resolution to their decades-old conflict. The talks were notable because, for once, there was no Russian, American, or European involvement.

So far those talks have yielded positive results. For example, Armenia returned to Azerbaijan four villages

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The return of the four Azerbaijani villages last month was a step in the right direction but led to the delineation of only 13 km of the border. While large sections will be easy to delineate, hundreds of kilometers remain disputed.

The border delineation process is also affected by the status of four remaining enclaves: the Armenian enclave of Artsvashen inside Azerbaijan, and the Azerbaijani enclaves of Barkhudarly, Yukhari Askipara, and Karki inside Armenia. These are all small parcels of land that were once inhabited by their respective ethnic groups but are now uninhabited and under the de facto control of the other side. How this situation will be resolved remains to be seen but the enclaves will likely feature prominently in future talks. The second issue that needs to be addressed is the Zangazur Corridor. As part of the November 2020 ceasefire agreement, Armenia pledged to “guarantee the security of transport connections” between Azerbaijan and its autonomous Nakhchivan region, an exclave nestled between Iran, Armenia and Turkiye.

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along the border that had remained uninhabited but controlled by Yerevan since the fighting in the 1990s. Even though many Armenians were unhappy with the move, it was an important gesture of peace by Yerevan.

Since the meeting in Almaty there has also been a more positive and optimistic tone in the rhetoric used by both sides when discussing the prospects for peace. But there are still some major issues that need to be resolved.

The first is the final delineation of the border between the two countries. The return of the four Azerbaijani villages last month was a step in the right direction but led to the

Luke Coffey

delineation of only 13 km of the border. While large sections will be easy to delineate, hundreds of kilometers remain disputed.

The border delineation process is also affected by the status of four remaining enclaves: the Armenian enclave of Artsvashen inside Azerbaijan, and the Azerb-

region, an exclave nestled between Iran, Armenia and Turkiye.

Three and a half years later, a transport corridor connecting these two parts of Azerbaijan, via Armenia's Syunik province, is no closer to reality. This is a very serious matter for Azerbaijan. Such a transport corridor would allow Baku to avoid

this wording and wants it changed.

A peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Armenia and Turkiye that would likely follow, could have positive effects beyond the South Caucasus.

For example, in recent years there has been an increase in relations between the Gulf Cooperation Council and Central Asia. Peace in the South Caucasus, and new transit routes such as the Zangazur Corridor, could improve trade connections between the Gulf and Central Asia. This is especially true if Turkiye's proposed Iraq Development Road, also known as the Dry Canal corridor, linking Iraq's southern Gulf coast to Turkiye, can be completed.

If the proposed Gulf Railway, connecting the six GCC states, ever becomes a reality the possibilities are even greater. In theory, it would be possible to transport goods by rail from the Gulf to markets in Central Asia, via the Dry Canal corridor and the South Caucasus.

The best thing that could happen to the South Caucasus would be a normalization of relations between Armenia and its neighbors. It is likely that billions of dollars of foreign investment have been denied to the region as a result of the ongoing conflict. A peace deal could change this.

Furthermore, the South Caucasus is becoming increasingly important for transit on the Eurasian landmass. The establishment of diplomatic relations between Armenia and its neighbors would only enhance this.

There is a golden window of opportunity to bring some much-needed stability to the South Caucasus. Let us hope that 2024 is a year of peace in the region, the benefits of which would be felt far beyond.

Macron ‘rolls the dice’ with a gigantic political gamble

Andrew Hammond

much more unlikely scenario, resign as Charles De Gaulle did in 1969.

There is no firm consensus on why Macron chose to call a snap election given the risks that are in play. However, there might possibly be some method to what many consider his political madness.

Firstly, the president has lacked a parliamentary majority since the 2022 election and was heading for a no confidence motion later this year over the budget that would have probably seen his centrist government fall anyway. Macron previously said: “It is better to write history than to submit to it.” From this perspective, his deci-

might even potentially result in the collapse of “Macronism” as a centrist political project.

While Macron's success, or otherwise, in foiling Le Pen's presidential prospects will not be clear until 2027, his election gamble is already having not only political consequences but significant economic ones for France. Markets have been volatile and Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire has warned that a National Rally victory would spark a financial crisis in the eurozone's second-largest economy due to tens of billions of euros of proposed extra borrowing.

Specifically, Le Maire cited the possibility of a “Truss-style scenario.” This referred to Liz Truss, the

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Macron's calculations here might well have been that if National Rally remained outside of power, the party and Le Pen herself might continue to grow increasingly popular and win the presidency, possibly comfortably, in 2027. This would be a massive blow to his legacy, just as the election of Trump was to Obama's in the US. It might even potentially result in the collapse of “Macronism” as a centrist political project. While Macron's success, or otherwise, in foiling Le Pen's presidential prospects will not be clear until 2027, his election gamble is already having not only political consequences but significant economic ones for France. Markets have been volatile and Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire has warned that a National Rally victory would spark a financial crisis in the eurozone's second-largest economy due to tens of billions of euros of proposed extra borrowing. Specifically, Le Maire cited the possibility of a “Truss-style scenario.” This referred to Liz Truss, the former UK prime minister, and the crisis in the bond markets that ultimately led to her departure from 10 Downing Street in October 2022, after only 50 days in office. Meanwhile, the European Commission warned last week that France's economic plans imply spiraling debt levels that demonstrate “high risks over the medium term.”

sion represents a bold, proactive choice to force a dissolution on his own terms.

A second probable reason why Macron decided to call an election is his belief that if the National Rally does win and forms a government with powers over domestic policy, including tax and spending, this could undercut the party's popularity as it faces the reality of wielding power in a tight fiscal context. This might reduce the possibility of a Le Pen presidential victory in 2027.

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former UK prime minister, and the crisis in the bond markets that ultimately led to her departure from 10 Downing Street in October 2022, after only 50 days in office.

Meanwhile, the European Commission warned last week that France's economic plans imply spiraling debt levels that demonstrate “high risks over the medium term.” According to its baseline 10-year projection, the EU expects France's debt ratio to rise to about 139 percent of gross domestic product by 2034, compared with about 110 percent now.

Macron's gamble is therefore a huge one, politically and economically. While the results on July 7 will give the first indication of whether he is vindicated for his roll of the dice or not, a full assessment of the outcomes of his decision might not be clear until the 2027 elections.

How sustainability benefits business performance

Sustainability today is a core consideration in planning for organizational success. With tightening emissions targets and rising environmental awareness, there are tremendous pressures on businesses to become more sustainable.

This transition is not solely about compliance and social responsibility, however. It is about sustainability as a performance enabler — a driver of change that unlocks competitiveness and adaptability across the value chain.

Business sustainability can thus be described as a process of managing business activities in a way that maximizes efficiency without harming future generations.

Environmental sustainability, social responsibility, and corporate financial performance can all be included in the definition of the environmental, social, and governance concept, known in common parlance as ESG.

Sustainable value generation entails those actions that create and sustain growth, profitability, and enhanced value for shareholders in the long term.

There are clear economic benefits to be gained

from greater sustainability. Embracing energy efficiency and reducing waste, for instance, cuts costs in production, while using renewables can minimize vulnerability to fluctuations in the price of fossil fuels.

Sustainable businesses

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The strategic management of environmental impact can bring both short and long-term benefits to organizations, including customer loyalty, reduced legal risks, and reputational capital. Corporate social responsibility refers to the responsibilities that a business has to society and the impact of its operations on communities. To meet these responsibilities, firms are encouraged to respect labor practices and use ethical sources of labor. Cultivating a rapport and engaging with stakeholders, including employees, customers, suppliers, and communities, is an effective way of meeting those responsibilities. Organizations with good social performance can attract talent, encourage return custom, and stave off the possibility of boycotts.

are also able to attract cash from investors who prefer firms with strong ESG disclosures. Other analyses have revealed that a high ESG score reduces capital costs and enhances a firm's performance.

The strategic manage-

Majed Al-Qatari

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social performance can attract talent, encourage return custom, and stave off the possibility of boycotts. Stakeholder engagement is a key factor in this, helping firms develop a robust business model that can easily cope with social shifts.

Why the Trump election camp are celebrating

The Democratic Party in the US wanted the first debate between Joe Biden and Donald Trump to be a historic event in which they contrasted their candidate with his opponent, showing that his age was not an issue and that Trump was not fit to be a president. Hillary Clinton said beforehand that this was a choice between chaos and competence.

The debate on Thursday night was historic indeed. First, it reinforced the perception that Americans have about the president's age. It reminded everybody of Special Counsel Robert Hurr describing him as an “elderly man with a poor memory.”

Second, it sent the Democrats panicking and wondering what to do. Some privately told journalists that they should find another candidate. The Republicans, meanwhile,

were celebrating. Their candidate was on message, ignored most of the questions, said what he wanted to say instead, and sent them looking for a tape to measure the White House for drapes.

The debate will go down in the history of debates as the one that may seal the fate of the Democratic candidate. American media headlines said it all. The New York Times and the Washington Post used the same word to describe the president's performance — they said he “struggled.” Politico was even more dramatic. “Biden is toast,” it said.

The Democrats said it was only one night and they still had five months to recover. Vice President Kamala Harris said Biden had a “slow start but a strong finish,” but in fact the president also struggled in his closing remarks.

Polls before the debate carried a warning to the Democrats. They show the two candidates virtually neck and neck, but in the

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The problem the Democrats now have is, where will the campaign go from here? There are calls for the party to choose a different candidate before the convention, or on the convention floor. Others are calling on Biden to withdraw. What will Biden campaign donors do? Will they stick with the president or abandon him before the election? These are questions that the Democratic party has to deal with, but it is hard to change a candidate at this stage. There are also those in the party who believe that Biden will do better in the second debate, which is closer to the elections. The judge in the Trump “hush money” case set July 11 for sentencing, just four days before the Republican convention, and Democrats hope that will change people's minds. Trump was declared the winner of the debate by his supporters and some early polling, but we need to wait to know the real effect on voters, especially the undecided.

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races that matter — the battleground states that will determine the outcome of

the election — Trump is ahead.

Nate Silver, the doyen of

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polling data analysts, gives Trump a 65.7 percent chance of winning. He also

believes Biden could win the popular vote but lose the election, a repeat of

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what happened to Hillary Clinton in 2016. The problem the

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Trump was declared the winner of the debate by his supporters and some early polling, but we need to wait to know the real effect on voters, especially the undecided. The divisions in the country mean each party will circle the wagons now and support their candidate



Promoting Pak-Indonesia trade ties:

Balochistan can play key role: Senior Diplomat

ISLAMABAD (INP): Charge'D Affaires of the embassy of the Republic of Indonesia to Pakistan, Rahmat Hindiarta Kusuma has said that Baluchistan has a significant role in the promoting bilateral economic and trade relations between Indonesia and Pakistan.

This was stated by him while talking to a delegation of business community from Balochistan led by former President Federation Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry which called on him on Sunday.

Meanwhile Minister Councilor, economic and trade affairs of the Indonesian Embassy, Ingan Malem and Axelsyah R. Miraza from the economic section of embassy and President Chaman Chamber of Commerce and Industry were also part of the bilateral dialogue.

The Charge'D Affaires Indonesian embassy, Rahmat Hindiarta Kusuma

said the volume of bilateral trade between Indonesia and Pakistan was less than its potential, which needed to be further increased and in this regard, businessmen from Baluchistan can play an important role in the economic and trade integration of Indonesia with the Central Asian states.

Pakistan can become a trade hub of Central Asian states for Indonesia in the future, in which both countries can get economic and trade benefits by following comprehensive planning, he added.

The senior diplomat said that Pakistan was a very important trade partner of Indonesia in South Asia, whose importance has always been maintained.

He said that Pakistan is a geo-strategically important country, a natural geo-economic partner of Indonesia and in the future, mutual economic and trade relations between the two countries will increase.

Rahmat Hindiarta said

that for the promotion of bilateral trade between the two countries, not only the market but also sector diversification is needed, which will increase mutual trade. The senior diplomat said that the role of the business community of Baluchistan is very important for the promotion of mutual economic relations with Pakistan.

He said that the role of the local private sector, especially the Chamber of Commerce of Baluchistan, is important in the bilateral economic integration of the two countries. Rahmat said that the business community and chambers in Pakistan should go ahead and promote trade between Indonesia and Pakistan.

Hindiarta said that there is a need for further promotion of people-to-people relations between the two countries so that the people of the two countries come closer to each other.

On this occasion, former president of Federation of

Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Engineer Duro Khan said that the role of Central Asian markets is very important to further increase the bilateral trade relations between Pakistan and Indonesia.

The Charge'D Affaires Indonesian Embassy said that the coastal areas of Baluchistan and the Chaman border are of great importance in regional trade, whose connections extend to the Middle East, Central Asia and the European Union. He said that the business community of Baluchistan will play a major role in increasing economic and trade relations between Pakistan and Indonesia.

He said that he should also participate in the Industrial and Trade Exhibition in Jakarta in the coming month of October 2024, along with the delegation of Quetta and Chaman Chamber of Commerce and Industry.



HUNZA: Workers collecting best quality cherry for first time export to China from Ghilgit Balistan.

SNGPL: 32 connections disconnected

F.P. Report

LAHORE: During the ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, SNGPL continued raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad, disconnecting another 32 connections; Rs0.2 million fine imposed.

In Lahore, the team disconnected 2 connections on illegal use of gas while another 14 on use of compressor.

In Multan the team disconnected 3 connections on illegal use of gas while another two on use of compressor.

The regional team of Rawalpindi disconnected 2 connections on illegal use of gas while another 4 on use of compressor.

In Sahiwal the team disconnected 1 connection on illegal use of gas.

The regional teams of Peshawar and Karak disconnected 4 connections on illegal use of gas and also imposed fine of Rs0.2760 million against gas theft cases. The teams also lodged 1 FIR against gas theft case.

PFC to participate in trade fair

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) will participate in the 27th Rwanda International Trade Fair (RITF), being organised from July 25 to August 15, 2024, at the Gikondo Expo ground in Kigali, Rwanda.

Council Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq mentioned that ChenOne would collaborate with the PFC for this prestigious mega event that offers an excellent platform for the Council to showcase a wide range of products, including general merchandise, textiles, clothing and garments, leather, etc.

He said the PFC presence at RITF underscores its commitment to expanding its global footprint and enhancing the visibility of Pakistani products on the international stage. Buyers to the PFC booth will experience the finest in Pakistani craftsmanship and innovation, reflecting the Council dedication to excellence and quality.

He said the RITF attracts exhibitors and buyers from around the globe, providing an invaluable opportunity for PFC to highlight the craftsmanship and quality of Pakistani products. The PFC aims to strengthen trade relations with Rwanda and other participating countries, explore new market opportunities, and promote the rich heritage of Pakistani furniture and related industries, he concluded.

PIAF calls for solid economic plan

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) has called for solid economic plan from all the stakeholders, terming the economic conditions as the uncertain one in view of deteriorating energy crises following the tough conditionalities of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), making this year more complicated and unstable for the economy.

The PIAF chairman Faheemur Rehman Saigol said all political parties should provide their economic stability plans to avert further losses and delays, warning that numerous global issues are impacting world economies. He said the government should prioritize resolving the energy crisis by providing sufficient and affordable electricity and gas to industries.

He called for a fully-fledged and sound plan with a highly competent team to handle local challenges forthwith, but unfortunately, they have no solid plans or directions. He foresees the new fiscal year full of challenges for businesses and industries in Pakistan due to political uncertainty on global and local fronts. The incumbent government should come up with drastic measures to give confidence to local industrialists-cum-entrepreneurs and foreign

investors through industry-friendly and investment-friendly policies. In this regard, the interest rate should be gradually reduced to boost economic activity and industrialization within the country.

The import bill should be reduced by imposing bans on luxury products. He highlighted controlling inflation to ensure affordable living costs for the masses and containing the cost of production for businesses at a local level. He pleaded for formulating economic plans aimed at reviving growth in large-scale manufacturing, small and medium-sized segments, the service sector, and exports.

He stressed the need for a revisit of the economic policies, as the economic indicators throughout the year remained very depressed amidst high inflation, low exports, depleting foreign reserves and continued uncertain position of the local currency.

Faheemur Rehman Saigol said that almost all indicators of the economy continued to show poor performance, including high exchange rate, unprecedented hike in markup rate, repeated increases in electricity rates, gas shortage, price spiral, mismanagement and bad governance, becoming the hallmarks of the government.

The PIAF Chief urged the policy makers to concentrate on increasing tax-

to-GDP ratio which was the lowest in Pakistan in the region. The PIAF leader warned if the govt failed to take appropriate measures for economic revival, the trade and industry will face a complete shutdown, asking the government to convene a conference, taking the business community onboard.

He observed that besides increasing exports and controlling imports the government will have to take administrative measures, as a large demand of cash dollars are seen in the market. He argued that this devaluation of the currency was dictated by the IMF through prior actions and it has nothing to do with macro-economic fundamentals.

He said that there was a complete breakdown of economic policymaking, as the country's fiscal policy had become subversive to monetary and exchange rate policies. He said that the monetary tightening and exchange rate depreciation resulted in higher inflation, public debt and debt servicing.

The empirical evidence showed that the one percent monetary tightening hiked the inflationary pressure by 1.3 percent in the case of Pakistan, he added. The government needs to devise a strategy on war-footing to increase foreign investment in Pakistan so as to stop the upward trajectory of the dollar, he added.

China's June factory activity contracts again, services slows

BEIJING (Reuters): China's manufacturing activity fell for a second month in June while services activity slipped to a five-month low, an official survey showed on Sunday, keeping alive calls for further stimulus as the economy struggles to get back on its feet.

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) purchasing managers' index (PMI), at 49.5 in June, was unchanged from May, below the 50-mark separating growth from contraction and in line with a median forecast of 49.5 in a Reuters poll.

"Actual industrial activity should be stronger than the data suggests as our observation is that the official PMI fails to fully capture the current export momentum, which has been the major economic driver this year," said Xu Tianchen, senior economist at the Economist Intelligence Unit.

Still, Xu added that external and domestic demand remains relatively inadequate to absorb China's manufacturing capacity and this will prevent a recovery in producer prices.

While a sub-index of production was above 50 in June, other indexes of new orders, raw material stocks, employment, supplier delivery times and new export orders were all in contractionary territory, the NBS survey showed.

China's exports exceeded forecasts in May, but analysts said the jury is still out on whether export sales are sustainable given growing trade tension between Beijing and Western economies. Meanwhile, a protracted property crisis continues to drag on domestic demand.

With consumers wary and the Labour Day holiday boost fleeting, the non-manufacturing PMI, which includes services and construction, fell to 50.5 from 51.1 in May, the lowest since December.

The services PMI sank to 50.2, a five-month low, and construction PMI slipped to 52.3, the weakest reading since July last year.

Analysts expect China to roll out more policy support measures in the short term, while a government pledge to boost fiscal stimulus is seen helping kick domestic consumption into a higher gear.

"The weak PMI figures naturally call for more supportive policies from the Chinese government. However, the room for monetary policy easing is limited for the time being, as the Chinese currency is under pressure," said Hao Zhou, chief economist at Guotai Junan International.

"That said, fiscal policy is likely to take the driving seat, suggesting that the central government will need to issue more debt over the foreseeable future to boost the overall domestic demand."

Garment industry:

Hike in minimum wages to further lift production cost

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Readymade Garments Manufacturers & Exporters Association (PRGMEA) has opposed the proposed minimum wage of Rs.37,000 per month, stressing the need for ease of doing business and urging the policymakers to adopt a more comprehensive approach to address high economic growth agenda instead of focusing solely on raising wages, as it would be additional burden on the industry.

PRGMEA Central Chairman Mubashar Naseer Butt and Regional Chairman Ahmad Hanif, in a joint statement said that the government should work on skills development and infrastructure, investing more in education as well as creating an enabling environment for business growth and job creation to enhance the living standard of the working class.

Mubashar Naseer Butt raised the question over escalation of minimum wages rate despite the government claim that the year-to-year rate of inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index, has come down to only 11.8%

in May 2024. This is close to a single-digit rate, and is the lowest since Nov 2021. So, why do the authorities need to make a hike in wages of workers, he argued.

The PRGMEA Central Chairman also criticized the budget makers for raising wages because they did not run the businesses and never made the payments to their employees. So, they didn't understand as to how the soaring cost of production hit the industry hard, he added. He said that there is need to analyze the factors that have contributed to this sharp decline of inflation. This will enable an assessment as to whether this low rate of inflation will be sustained in coming months. The fact is that the year-to-year rate of inflation has been falling steadily since Dec 2023, when it was 29.7%. The rate of decline has averaged over 3.5 percentage points monthly. However, the decline was exceptionally large at 5.5 percentage points in May 2024, as compared to April 2024.

Showing unhappiness with the budget, Regional Chairman Ahmad Hanif said that the budget has been focused solely on tax and revenue collection

while the whole textile and garment industry has not been taken into consideration, as not a single of industry's proposal was incorporated in the budget.

The PRGMEA regional chief said that the government of the Punjab, in September last year, has issued a Minimum Wage notification adjusting the minimum wage to Rs32,000 per month. Factories in the region promptly complied, raising wages effective from that month. Payments based on this new minimum wage were initiated, incorporating adjustments to various compensation elements such as overtime premiums, paid holidays, leaves, and bonuses.

And now within few months, another huge raise in minimum wage is unfair and unacceptable as it would increase the cost of production further amidst high markup rate, rupee depreciation and escalating energy tariffs, he argued.

Ahmad Hanif added that there is no clear incentive to the industry in the current budget, as the whole budget has concentrated on revenue collection activities. The people in the value-added garment indu-

stry were expecting a lot because there was a lot of commitment by the government. Huge amount of exports have been lost due to lack of funds. The government is under pressure from the IMF because it is forcing to promote revenue collection activities, he added.

Ahmad Hanif called for lowering cost of production, solution of liquidity crunch through early refunds payment, low energy tariff and relaxed import policy for industrial raw material so that industrialization can be promoted and exports can be enhanced. He added that various provincial departments including Employees' Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI), Social Security, Women Welfare, Environment Department should have to facilitate the manufacturers and exporters in a better way. He said that Pakistan's core issue was high cost of doing business which rendered its industrial production uncompetitive, suggesting the government to work on bringing around significant improvements in ease and cost of doing business for the export industry.

Saudia sees 5.6% rise in FDI

RIYADH (Arab News): Saudi Arabia saw a 5.6 percent increase in net flow of foreign direct investment in the first quarter of 2024 compared to the previous year, the official data showed.

According to the latest figures from the General Authority for Statistics, the net flow of FDI reached SR9.5 billion (\$2.53 billion) in the first three months of this year, up from SR9 billion recorded during the same period last year.

This growth underscores Saudi Arabia's continuing appeal to international investors. These figures reflect the Kingdom's ongoing efforts to enhance its investment environment

and support economic growth, in line with the objectives of Vision 2030.

FDI inflows during the first quarter amounted to around SR17 billion, marking a growth of 0.6 percent from the SR16.9 billion recorded in the first quarter of 2023. This moderate increase highlights the sustained confidence of foreign investors in the Saudi market.

Conversely, FDI outflows during the first three months of this year totaled about SR7.5 billion, representing a decrease of 5.1 percent compared to SR8 billion in the first quarter of 2023. This decline in outflows indicates a stronger retention of foreign capital within the Kingdom.

In accordance with the goals set out in the National Investment Strategy and Vision 2030 targets, Saudi Arabia has enacted substantial legal, economic, and social reforms aimed at stimulating inflows of foreign direct investment.

Launched in 2021, NIS looks to develop comprehensive investment plans across various sectors, such as manufacturing, renewable energy, and transport as well as logistics, tourism, digital infrastructure, and healthcare.

Furthermore, it aims to increase annual FDI flows to over \$103 billion and boost annual domestic investment to more than \$453 billion by 2030.

According to the World Investment Report released earlier this month by the UN Conference on Trade and Development, Saudi Arabia attracted \$65.1 billion in FDI in the three years post-pandemic until 2023, placing it among West Asia's top recipients.

The Kingdom's FDI outflows totaled \$73.1 billion over the same period, with \$16 billion recorded last year alone. This ranks Saudi Arabia among the top 20 global economies for FDI outflows, placing 16th.

The UN report also noted a 55 percent annual increase in the value of international project finance deals in the Kingdom in 2023, reaching \$22 billion.

BMP rejects up to 355% rise in fixed power charges for industry

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has rejected the unprecedented increase of up to 355 percent in fixed charges of electricity for industrial consumers, beside showing dismay over imposition of high capacity charges on consumers stating that high cost will make Pakistani products completely out of competition in the international market.

Businessmen Panel (BMP) Chairman and FPCCI former president Mian Anjum Nisar held an emergent meeting of stakeholders on higher electricity tariffs, stating

that NEPRA's latest forecast for power purchase prices for the current fiscal year reveals a substantial financial burden, with consumers to bear 300% of costs for fixed capacity payments. He was of the view that substantial fuel costs, particularly petroleum imports, potentially pose extreme volatility and strain on foreign exchange reserves.

Businessmen leader said the unprecedented increase in fixed charges was tantamount to destruction of industries and burying people alive. The traders warned of the government for launching an agitation campaign. They also made it clear that if in case, the decision couldn't be with-

drawn immediately, aggressive and harsh steps would be taken against unfair and unjust hike in fixed charges, and government and relevant authorities will be responsible for any unfortunate incident, he added.

Mian Anjum Nisar said the government should prioritize resolving the energy crisis by providing sufficient and affordable electricity and gas to industries. The import bill should be reduced by imposing bans on luxury products. He highlighted controlling inflation to ensure affordable living costs for the masses and containing the cost of production for businesses at a local level.

He stressed the need

for a revisit of the economic policies, as the economic indicators throughout the 2024 remained very depressed amidst high inflation, low exports, depleting foreign reserves and continued uncertain position of the local currency.

He said the government and NEPRA had made a whopping increase in fixed charges up to 355 percent for industrial consumers, which was completely unjust, unfair and pushed industry to further destruction and was tantamount to putting the last nail in the coffin of this important sector. Attempts are initiated to add the ordeals of the business community, which is highly con-

demnable, he said. He vowed the business community will strongly resist anti-industry and business policies and be forced to widely agitate.

Owing to flawed policies of the government, he added, the industrial growth has slowed down and a number of units were shut down in the province. He warned industries will completely close and trigger further unemployment so it is essential to revisit overall policies and let industries and economy flourish.

The BMP chief further stated that residential consumers are unable to pay their electricity bills. On an average, residential and commercial consumers pay 15-20% extra in the

form of uniform quarterly adjustment; fuel price adjustments and additional surcharges.

Residential consumers pay an extra 20-25% in the form of electricity duty, sales tax, and income tax. Residential consumers are subjected to pay Rs35.57 per kWh for off-peak load and Rs41.89 per kWh for peak load. These charges exclude taxes, fuel cost adjustments, uniform quarterly adjustments, and additional surcharges, according to Sheikh.

Commercial consumers are also subject to further tax and extra tax in addition to electricity duty, sales tax and income tax. In current bills, commercial con-

sumers are paying 37-40% of the total electricity charges in taxes and duties," he said.

He explained that a commercial consumer with electricity consumption of 5000 kWh is subject to pay a hefty Rs381,785 rupees in electricity bill. It is astonishing to note that around Rs135,994 rupees will go into the government pockets in the form of taxes and duties not including additional surcharge and fuel cost adjustment."

He asked the government to negotiate with power plants to increase the debt payment period to reduce the capacity component in the power tariff. We urge the government to halt the imposition of sales tax

for 8 months in order to reduce the cost of doing business, he said, adding that businesses could not survive with provision of unaffordable electricity.

He said it is totally incomprehensible that consumers are already paying charges on units and there is no justification for imposing fixed charges on consumers, he added.

The immediate solution to reduce the power tariff is to reduce the operational costs of all power distribution companies, i.e. withdraw the provision of free electricity to WAPDA employees; reduce transmission & distribution (T&D) losses, and eliminate electricity theft," he said.

COURT NOTICE

In The Court of Miss Dua Mehreen Civil Judge VI Kohat
Suit no.22/1 Date of hearing 01-07-2024
Titled:- Mubeen Janan Vs Waheed Rehman
Notice against:- Meen Badshah Son of Ghami Khan R/o Tappi Tehsil & District Kohat Presently R/o (now.in.Abroad Qatar).(Defendant) Whereas the above plaintiff has instituted a civil suit against you Defendant in which date of hearing 01-07-2024 is fixed for your appearance Since your intimation/service is not possible through ordinary means/mode therefore you Defendant is intimated through this publication to appear before this court by person or by pleader on date fixed 01-07-2024 otherwise court shall be proceeded in accordance with law order Issued on.27-06-2024.(Court of C.J VI Kohat)



In brief

Asjad, Awais Munair qualify

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani cricketers Asjad Iqbal and Awais Munair have qualified for pre-quarters of the ACBS Asian 15Red U21 & 6Red Men's Snooker Championship 2024 at Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. According to details, on Day 4, Awais Munir (Pak) beat Kritsanut Lertsattayathorn (Thai) 4-3 (0-58(58), 69-0(69), 21-33, 31-53, 35-20, 40-0, 45-07); Asjad Iqbal (Pak) beat Arman Dinavand (Iran) 4-1 (43-0(40), 33-05, 02-43, 69-0(69), 65-0) and Asjad Iqbal (Pak) beat Ahmed Abul (Kuwait) 4-0 (71-0(71), 59-01(59), 42-04, 63-0). In 6Red Men's pre-quarters, Asjad Iqbal (Pak) would face Ayman Alamri (Iran) while Awais Munair (Pak) will be up against Chau Hon Man (Hong Kong). In U21 15 Red, Both Pakistani players Ahsan Ramzan and Hasnain Akhtar have directly qualified for quarterfinals.

Pak Army bag title

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Netball Championship concluded with the Pakistan Army clinching the men's title and the Cosmopolitan Netball Academy securing the women's title here at Liaquat Gymnasium of Pakistan Sports Complex on Sunday. The championship's closing ceremony was attended by Pakistan Netball Federation Patron Captain (R) Zafar Iqbal, Chairman Mudassar Arain, President Samin Malik, and from the Kaiser Khattak, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Inter Provincial Coordination, Shahid Islam, Deputy DG Pakistan Sports Board, Director Fida Muhammad Khan, Organizing Secretary Riaz Ahmed and other officials. In the men's event, the Pakistan Army defeated Pakistan Navy 29-19 in the final, while Wapda secured third place by beating Pakistan Police 47-9. In the women's competition, the Cosmopolitan Netball Academy edged out Pakistan Army 21-19, with Sindh claiming third place by defeating Punjab 28-9. Trophies, medals, and certificates were distributed among the winning teams, celebrating their achievements.

Cash prizes awarded

KARACHI (APP): Commissioner Karachi Syed Hassan Naqvi has said that the Sindh government is dedicated to promoting cultural and sports activities for the youth in Karachi. These initiatives aim to engage young people in positive and healthy pursuits, showcasing their talents, he said while speaking at the prize distribution ceremony of cycle race at his office here Sunday. The Commissioner said the festival featured various sports, including the popular donkey cart and cycle races, which are integral to Karachi's cultural heritage. He promised to include more sports in future festivals. The sports festival has effectively promoted the government's efforts to foster cultural and sports activities, essential for the city's peace and youth development. The city administration will continue to provide opportunities for young people to engage in sports and cultural activities, with a better-organized festival planned for August-September, he expressed. Cash prizes were awarded to the winners, with the top winner receiving Rs 20,000, the second winner receiving Rs 15,000, the third winner receiving Rs 10,000, and the fourth winner receiving Rs 5,000.



Kohli, Rohit and Jadeja retire from T20 int'ls

BARBADOS (Agencies): India legends Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma and Ravindra Jadeja have retired from T20 internationals following their World Cup triumph in Barbados.

Kohli was man of the match for his 76 and Rohit became the first India captain to lift a World Cup since 2011 following the captivating seven-run defeat of South Africa.

Rohit, 37, and 35-year-old Kohli are number one and two respectively on the all-time list of T20 international run-scorers.

"I've loved every moment of this," said Rohit. "I started my India career playing this format. This is what I wanted. I wanted to win the cup and say thank you."

On former captain Kohli, Rohit said: "He's been a champion player without a doubt. We all know what he has done for us."

"At some point everyone has to say goodbye to the game and Virat was very clear that this is what he wanted to do."

Jadeja, 35, wrote on Instagram on Sunday: "Like a steadfast horse galloping with pride, I've always given my best for my country and will continue to do so in other formats."

"Winning the T20 World Cup was a dream come true, a pinnacle of my

T20 international career. Thank you for the memories, the cheers, and the unwavering support."

All three men will continue to be available for India in Tests and one-day internationals.

Kohli had endured a difficult World Cup, with only 75 runs in seven innings before his important knock in the final lifted India to 176-7.

South Africa needed only 30 runs from the final five overs, but they wilted in the face of some superb India death bowling, and Suryakumar Yadav's all-time great catch to remove David Miller in the 20th over effectively sealed the match.

Clearly emotional on receiving his player-of-the-match award, Kohli said: "This is my last T20 game playing for India, my last World Cup I was going to play."

"I wanted to make the most of it. And this was our aim. We wanted to lift the cup."

"I'm really grateful I was able to get the job done for the team when it mattered the most."

Kohli ends with 4,188 runs from 125 T20 internationals, just behind Rohit's tally of 4,231. Rohit's 159 caps is also the most for any man and his five centuries is also a record, shared with Australia's Glenn

Maxwell.

Left-arm spinning all-rounder Jadeja has made 74 T20 international appearances, taking 54 wickets at an average of 29.85 and scoring 515 runs at a strike rate of 127.16.

Rohit and Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan are the only men to feature in every T20 World Cup, the first edition of which was held in 2007, which India won.

India's last World Cup success in any format came in the 50-over version in 2011.

They have lost two finals in the past year: the World Test Championship final to Australia at The Oval last summer, then the 50-over final on home soil in Ahmedabad to the same opponents in November.

"It was very emotional, I wanted this badly," said Rohit. "I was very desperate for this in my life so I'm happy we crossed the line this time."

"This has to be the greatest time, only because how of desperately I wanted to win this."

"All the runs that I've scored in all these years, it does matter, but I'm not big on stats and all of that. Winning games for India, winning trophies for India, that is what I look forward to all the time."

Russell gifted Austrian victory after Verstappen in late collision

SPILBERG BEI KUNITZELFELD (AFP): George Russell claimed a dramatic victory for Mercedes on Sunday after a sensational late collision between series leader Max Verstappen of Red Bull and his nearest rival Lando Norris of McLaren in the closing laps of an action-packed Austrian Grand Prix.

It was the British driver's second career victory, endorsing the improved form of the Mercedes team in recent races, as he made the most of Verstappen's impulsive and aggressive move against Norris, to finish 1.9 seconds clear of Oscar Piastri in the second McLaren. "Incredible!" said Russell, who had registered Mercedes' last win in Brazil in 2022.

"I think it was a tough fight out there at the beginning of the race just to hold on to that third place and I saw on the TV that Max and Lando were getting pretty close -- and I knew Lando would want to try to get that race win."

"The team has done an amazing job to put us in this fight and you've got to be there in the end to pick up the pieces."

Carlos Sainz finished third for Ferrari ahead of seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton in the second Mercedes and Verstappen,



who was fifth, despite collecting a 10-second penalty for causing the crash with Norris, who was forced to retire his damaged car.

On a hot day in the Styrian Alps, with air temperatures touching 29 degrees and the track at 49, Verstappen made his now customary flawless start from pole. Russell also made a good start from third and fought Norris for second on the opening lap.

Verstappen pitted on lap 23, followed by Norris and the rest, passing the race lead to Piastri until he pitted on lap 25. Piastri rejoined sixth and order was restored with everyone on hards, except Russell who took a second set of mediums. "He launched straight into me -- I couldn't turn right into the box," said Norris, complaining about Verstappen's alleged

unsafe release by Red Bull. "Yeah, we're on it," came the reply. By lap 41 Verstappen was grumbling about his tyres. "I don't know what's happening," said the champion who had only a fresh set of hards or used mediums left to run.

10 second penalty

By lap 44, Verstappen's lead was down to 6.4 seconds before Russell, also struggling, pitted for fresh hards, re-joining sixth. He swiftly set a fastest lap and passed Sainz for fifth behind Hamilton, who was behind the two McLarens.

With the leaders extending their stints to make a two-stop strategy work, back-markers like Leclerc in 12th on three stops were faster on track, but stuck behind Verstappen until he pitted again with Norris on lap 51. The Dutchman suffered a slow stop due to a

'sticky' left rear and Norris on fresh mediums was only 2.2 behind as they rejoined in P1 and P2. Verstappen was on used mediums, delivering the prospect of a thrilling duel to the flag.

Norris was three-tenths adrift before passing him on lap 59, but ran wide and off-track. He gave the position back and received a warning for exceeding track limits before attacking again only for Verstappen to run wide and rejoin. The battling pair eventually collided on lap 63 at Turn Three where Verstappen moved across to hit Norris's car and both suffered punctures, gifting the lead to Russell as they limped back to the pits.

Verstappen's front left was damaged and Norris's right rear, with sufficient damage for the McLaren to retire as Verstappen rejoined in fifth, only to receive a 10-second penalty for causing the crash which led to a brief Virtual Safety Car. Nico Hulkenberg came home sixth for Haas ahead of Sergio Perez in the second Red Bull, Kevin Magnussen in the second Haas, Daniel Ricciardo of RB and Pierre Gasly of Alpine. Leclerc finished 11th in the second Ferrari after a race of four pit-stops following a first lap incident.

No Messi, no problem as Argentina down Peru; Canada advance



MIAMI (AFP): Argentina shrugged off the injury absence of Lionel Messi to maintain their perfect start at the Copa America on Saturday with a 2-0 victory over Peru in Miami.

Lautaro Martinez scored twice at the Hard Rock Stadium to seal a win that ensured Argentina advance to the quarter-finals as Group A winners.

With Messi sidelined after complaining of a sore right hamstring, and coach Lionel Scaloni serving a one-game suspension, Argentina made nine changes to their starting XI at the Hard Rock Stadium.

But despite the makeshift-looking line-up, Argentina were always in control against a disappointing Peru side who managed just one shot on goal during a one-sided encounter.

Martinez's first goal came just

after half-time. A sublime through ball from Angel Di Maria released the Inter Milan forward, who calmly lifted a deft finish over advancing Peru goalkeeper Pedro Gallese.

Argentina had a chance to double their lead in the 72nd minute after Jesus Castillo handled in the area to concede a penalty. But Leandro Paredes crashed his ensuing spot-kick against the woodwork to leave the score at 1-0. Martinez then grabbed a second in the 86th minute, latching on to a long pass forward before finishing past Gallese.

Replays indicated Martinez appeared to shove defender Aldo Corzo in the build-up but referee Cesar Ramos waved Peru's protest and the goal stood. "It was tough in the first half because they were

defending deep, but the first goal opened up the game," Martinez said afterwards. "There's a lot more to come from us." Martinez has now scored in four consecutive appearances for Argentina and is relishing his hot streak.

"Every time I put on this shirt, every training session, every meal, every team talk, I enjoy it," Martinez said. Argentina will now face the runner-up from Group B in the quarter-finals in Houston next Thursday, most likely either Ecuador or Mexico.

In Saturday's other Group A game, Canada held 2015 and 2016 Copa America champions Chile to a 0-0 draw in Orlando, which was enough to see the Canadians into the last eight.

Chile needed a victory to leapfrog the Canadians into the knockout rounds but were left with a mountain to climb early in the game when Gabriel Suazo was dismissed for a second yellow card after only 27 minutes. "It took a lot of hard work -- it's our first time in this competition and it's not easy," Canada captain Alphonso Davies said about his team's advance to the last eight.

"There's a lot of good teams in this competition and a lot of good players. But we stuck to our plan and we played well. We showed a lot of fight. We had to show our teeth at times, but overall we did well." Canada will play the winners of Group B in the quarter-finals.

Nida to lead Pakistan for ACC Women's T20 Asia Cup

ISLAMABAD (APP): Nida Dar has retained captaincy of Pakistani team for the ACC Women's T20 Asia Cup, to be held in Dambulla, Sri Lanka, from 19 to 28 July.

The squad was confirmed following a four-day camp, which concluded in Karachi on Saturday, said a press release.

Other members of the squad are - Aliya Riaz, Diana Baig, Fatima Sana, Gull Feroza, Iram Javed, Muneeba Ali, Najiha Alvi (wk), Nashra Sundhu, Omaira Sohail, Sadia Iqbal, Sidra Amin, Syeda Aroob Shah, Tasmia Rubab and Tuba Hassan.

Ayesha Zafar, Natalia Parvaiz, Rameen Shamim, Sadaf Shamas, Umm-e-Hani and Waheeda Akhtar, who were part of the 17-member squad that toured England last month, have been left out. Instead, the selectors have named Iram Javed, Omaira Sohail, Syeda Aroob Shah and Tasmia Rubab.

Iram's 53rd and last T20I appearance was against Bangladesh at Chattogram in October 2023, Omaira played her 48th and last shortest format match against New Zealand in Queenstown in December 2023, while Aroob's seventh and last appearance in a T20I was in Karachi against South Africa in September 2023.

Tasmia Rubab, the 22-year-old left-arm fast bowler, is the only uncapped player in the side. She played for Pakistan A against West Indies A and Thailand in November 2023. Representing Multan in the recently held National Women's One-Day Tournament 2023-24, Tasmia scored 86 runs and took 12 wickets. Tasmia also took four wickets at an economy-rate of 6.36 in the National Women T20 Tournament 2023-24.

Meanwhile, a training camp of the Pakistan women's national cricket team for the ACC Women's

T20 Asia Cup will commence in Karachi from July 5 and will continue until the side's departure on 16 July. Head coach Muhammad Wasim will supervise the camp and will be supported by Abdur Rehman (spin bowling coach), Junaid Khan (assistant coach - bowling) and Hanif Malik (assistant coach - fielding).

Hina Munawar, Rabia Siddiq and Waleed Ahmed have already been confirmed as the team manager, physiotherapist and analyst, respectively.

Pakistan is placed in Group 'A' along with India, Nepal and UAE, while Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Thailand and Malaysia are in Group 'B'. The top two teams from each group will play in the semi-finals on July 26.

Pakistan will take on India on the opening day of the tournament on July 19, while their matches against Nepal and UAE will be on July 21 and 23, respectively.

Murray not '100%', will make Wimbledon decision on Monday

LONDON (AFP): Andy Murray will decide on Monday if he can play singles at his final Wimbledon, admitting he still does not have "100% feeling" in his leg following back surgery.

Two-time champion and former world number one Murray underwent surgery to remove a cyst from his spine last week.

"The operation on the back wasn't insignificant," said 37-year-old Murray who will train again on Monday before deciding if he is fit enough to play his scheduled first round match on Tuesday.

"I don't have 100% feeling and sensation in my leg yet but it's getting better every day."

He added: "I want to give it every single chance that I can to get there. I'm going to play another set again tomorrow. I'm doing some physical testing in the morning to see sort of how far off I am. Then I will probably make a decision tomorrow evening."

Murray explained that the cyst compressed nerves and caused him to lose most of the control in his right leg.

"It's kind of like if you sleep on your arm funny, you wake up and you've got a dead arm," he said.

Murray is due to face

Czech world number 38 Tomas Machac on Tuesday.

If he can't make that date, he still hopes to play doubles with brother Jamie before bringing the curtain down on his Wimbledon career which began 19 years ago.

"Obviously with doubles, although you're covering less distance and less court, you still need to be able to move pretty explosively," said Murray.

"I'm hoping that with each day that passes the likelihood of me being able to play will increase. It's impossible for me to say because I also want to go out there and be able to play to a level that I'm happy with."

Murray claimed his first Wimbledon title in 2013, ending Britain's 77-year wait for a men's champion, with a straight sets victory over career-long rival Novak Djokovic.

That was a triumph that did not lack a bump or two as Murray needed to come back from two sets down to defeat Fernando Verdasco in the quarter-finals.

"One more time"

Murray added a second Wimbledon title for good measure in 2016 with a straight sets triumph against Milos Raonic.

It was his third Grand Slam title, having picked

up his first major at the US Open in 2012, just weeks after having lost to Roger Federer in his maiden Wimbledon final.

However, since his 2016 All England Club triumph, Murray has not passed the quarter-finals.

He missed the 2018 tournament with injury while 12 months later sat out the singles after undergoing hip surgery. That year, he played men's doubles as well as mixed with Serena Williams.

Injury has been a constant problem for Murray in the twilight of his career.

He has played with a metal hip since 2019 while this season saw him damage ankle ligaments in Miami when he went down to defeat to Machac.

Murray made his Wimbledon debut in 2005, reaching the third round where he took a two sets lead before losing in five to 2002 runner-up David Nalbandian.

"Everyone has their idea of how they want to finish their career, how they would want to go to," he said. "I probably would have seen that happening probably at Wimbledon. Obviously I have the Olympics coming up. But, yeah, I would love the opportunity to play here one more time."

England drop Bairstow for first two Tests against the West Indies

LONDON (AFP/APP): England left out Jonny Bairstow from their squad announced Sunday for the first two Tests of next month's three-match series against the West Indies, with wicketkeeping duties set to be taken over by the uncapped Jamie Smith.

There was no place in the squad either for Ben Foakes, the first-choice wicketkeeper in a Surrey team where the 23-year-old Smith is often deployed as a specialist batsman.

Smith was one of three uncapped players included in a 14-man squad, with promising seamers Gus Atkinson and Dillon Pennington included as England look to rebuild ahead of the 2025/26 Ashes series in Australia.

But Jack Leach was omitted, with Somerset team-mate Shoaib Bashir the lone specialist spinner in the squad.

Bairstow won his 100th cap in England's previous Test, against India in Dharamsala, but a top score of 38 in 10 innings leaves him battling to salvage his career in the five-day game.

Since spending nearly a year out of the game following a horrifying leg break in a freak accident on a golf course, Bairstow has struggled to regain top form.



He averages 50 in the County Championship this season for title-holders Surrey and made a stunning 155 in 179 balls against Warwickshire earlier in the campaign. The first Test at Lord's starts on July 10, with the match set to be England great James Anderson's last before the 41-year-old paceman retires from the format.

With fellow new-ball

bowler Stuart Broad having already retired after last year's drawn home Ashes series, England must now decide how to replace two bowlers who have taken a monumental 1,304 Test wickets between them.

The experienced Chris Woakes was recalled Sunday for the first time since being named player of the series in the 2023 Ashes against Australia.

Injuries, however, have deprived England of several rising stars. But Sussex seamer Ollie Robinson, given repeated warnings about his fitness, was still omitted on Sunday -- just days after being hit for a record 43 in an over by Leicestershire's Louis Kimber. Durham's Matthew Potts has been recalled, having taken an encouraging 23 wickets at under 30 in six Tests following a debut in 2022.



In brief

Passenger bus catches fire

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a distressing event, a Vehari-bound passenger bus caught fire near Toba Tek Singh on Sunday. According to private news channel, the rescue sources said that Vehari-bound passenger bus from Islamabad caught fire near Toba Tek Singh, which the Motorway Police quickly extinguished. Luckily, 46 passengers were safely evacuated from the fire-affected passenger bus.

Son held for torturing mother

RAWALPINDI (APP): The police apprehended a person for torturing his mother within the jurisdiction of the Naseerabad Police Station on Sunday. According to a police spokesman, the victim woman filed an application detailing the torture and threats to her life by her son, Kashif. The police registered a case under the Parental Protection Ordinance and took the culprit into custody. SP Potohar, Nasir Nawaz, has assured that all necessary legal procedures would be followed to ensure justice for the victim. He emphasized that violence against elderly parents is both unimaginable and deplorable.

CDA retrieves 3 kanal land

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) on Sunday has retrieved over 3 kanal precious land from the land grabbers in the area of Sangjani. Following the instructions of Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa, the Authority has launched operation in the area and successfully removed illegal structures. Indiscriminate actions are being taken against illegal encroachments and constructions. The anti-encroachment operation in Sangjani resulted in the demolition of several rooms constructed on government land. The operation was conducted with the participation of CDA's Enforcement Directorate, Revenue staff, and other departments.

ITP intensifies action

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has intensified action against smoke emitting and pressure horns vehicles aiming to curb increasing environmental pollution in the federal capital. A spokesman of ITP told APP on Sunday that following the special directions of the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, the traffic police have intensified the crackdown against vehicles causing environmental pollution and using pressure horns. In this regard, Chief Traffic Officer Islamabad Muhammad Sarfraz Virk directed all Zonal DSPs to take stern action against vehicles involved in polluting the environment. Mobile squads of Islamabad Police have been formed to implement the campaign against the smoke-emitting vehicles. These squads patrol in various areas and important boulevards of the city and are directed to take legal action against those vehicles involved in noise and smoke pollution. Special squads had been constituted as per the directions of CTO Islamabad in order to conduct regular checking and issued fine tickets against vehicles involved in noise or other environmental pollution in the city. The purpose of this whole practice is to provide a clean environment to citizens and to ensure safety of their health.



ISLAMABAD: CDA worker busy in showering water on plants in front of Parliament House. —APP Photo

Measures underway to combat potential floods: Romina

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Romina Khurshid Alam has said that comprehensive measures were being taken to prepare for potential floods ahead of the upcoming monsoon season. In a statement on Sunday, she said, "These proactive efforts aim to minimize the impact of floods on vulnerable communities." She said, "The ministry is serving as a collaborative platform for all relevant departments to assess flood vulnerability in prone areas and develop a unified strategy to mitigate the effects of potential floods on livelihoods." She said, "This coordinated approach ensures a robust response to flood risks from the government departments."

"This proactive

approach demonstrates the government's commitment to preparedness and resilience in the face of potential floods", she added. She said, "The ministry has convened three weekly task force meetings focused on global warming and heat waves, bringing together representatives from key agencies in June."

She said, "These institutions like Ministry of Climate Change, National Disaster Management Authority, Ministry of Science and Technology, Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, Pakistan Meteorological Department, and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting are working together to support each other to achieve same goal."

"These meetings have facilitated the sharing of

expertise and inputs on effective flood impact reduction measures," she stated. "Following the safety of affected individuals, the primary concern is ensuring the provision of essential amenities at relief camps, including shelter, food, portable drinking water, medical supplies, and animal care," the Coordinator emphasized.

"These relief camps will be strategically established in easily accessible locations and widely publicized through various communication channels, including regular, conventional, and digital media." Romina Khurshid Alam also highlighted the critical importance of monitoring and addressing illegal tree cuttings, as forest ecosystems play a vital role in comprehensive flood risk management strategies.

Authorities directed to finalize all arrangements

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Commissioner of Rawalpindi Division, Engineer Aamir Khattak, has directed the relevant authorities to finalize all the arrangements for Monsoon.

According to the Commissioner, "About 30 percent more rainfall is predicted this year in the monsoon."

The relevant authorities had been directed to complete the dredging and desilting project for Nullahs, particularly Nullah Lai, as soon as possible. Section-144 would be fully implemented to prevent the dumping of garbage and solid waste in nullahs, he said, adding that the damages from natural calamities could be reduced by early measures.

Solid steps were being taken regarding pre-monsoon rains, he ordered. All the arrangements would be finalized as soon as possible to prevent possible flooding, Engineer Aamir Khattak said.

He further directed that

the Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) in Rawalpindi had also been directed to timely clean the 11 main nullahs of Rawalpindi, which fall into Nullah Lai. The relevant officers were instructed to clean the drains to improve the sewerage system across the city.

The sewage system would be activated before the start of monsoon rains, he said, adding that a proper water drainage system would be maintained.

There should be no complaints of blocked drains anywhere in the city; he directed that the Municipal Corporation keep the banks of the drains free from encroachment. The Provincial Disaster Management Authority should keep its alert system updated and keep the citizens informed about the weather situation in time, he directed.

Engineer Aamir Khattak ordered the WASA authorities to keep the roads and streets clear during rains, and

the stagnant rain water should be removed within the shortest possible time frame.

Special attention should be given to all vulnerable areas, particularly low-lying localities including Rattaamral, Katarian, Tippu Road, Dhoke Naju, Gawalmandi, and Zia ul Haq Colony, where the risks of being affected by flood water during monsoons are high. "Gawalmandi, which is the most vulnerable area near Nullah Lai, should be given special attention," he directed.

The Commissioner ordered the relevant authorities of all the government departments to fully cooperate with the Rescue-1122 personnel and WASA in the pre-monsoon measures.

The health department should finalize all the arrangements to ensure the provision of adequate medical facilities to the citizens in case of any untoward situation, he instructed.

4 policemen killed in road accident

ISLAMABAD (APP): At least, four policemen were killed on Sunday and three injured in a road accident at the Indus Highway near Kandhkot. According to a private news channel, the police officials said that a police van of SSP Kashmir's squad met an accident after its tyre busted at the highway leaving four policemen dead on the spot and three critically injured.

The dead bodies were identified as Ghulam Yaseen, Waqar, Ismail and Talib, while the three injured policemen identified as Zahoor Ahmed, Lala Shahid and Abdul Hafeez Ogahi, were shifted to Kandhkot Civil Hospital, the police officials said.

The dead bodies have also been transferred to the civil hospital. "Deceased four policemen's bodies will be sent to their native villages for burial after funeral prayers," SSP Kashmir said.

PCP Chairman expresses commitment

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman of the Press Council of Pakistan (PCP), Arshad Khan Jadoon, on Sunday said that the PCP is undergoing a systematic revival to leverage its extensive influence and critical resources in combating fake news and addressing journalists' issues.

While inaugurating PF 92 TV in Paris, he expressed the PCP's unwavering commitment to supporting journalists in every circumstance, said a news release received here.

He underscored the significance of timely truth and the importance of speaking out against incumbent dignitaries when necessary. "Labeling anyone as a liar without evidence is unjustifiable. Journalists should refrain from reporting social media news without verification," he urged.

Hamza Taj, CEO of FP92 TV, said that FP92 TV aims to highlight the cultures and news interests of both France and Pakistan, as well as to share the perspectives of the Pakistani community in France and the EU region.

of Rawalpindi, Engineer Aamir Khattak said.

He further said that efforts are underway to provide better educational facilities by giving top priority to the Education Department, adding that apart from the flagship schemes of the Education Department, Divisional Public Schools had also been started in all the districts.

He informed that the Government Islamia Higher Secondary School No.1 Murree Road had organized special classes for transgenders for the first time. So far, 63 students had been enrolled, he added. Engineer Aamir Khattak said that 57 small dams were completed and made functional in Rawalpindi division.

Gilani calls for fostering dialogue

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on Sunday called for working tirelessly towards fostering dialogue, promoting mutual respect, and advancing legislative agendas that benefit societies.

In his message on International Day of Parliamentarism, he said, "The day serves as an evocative reminder of the critical role that parliamentary institutions play in shaping democratic governance worldwide."

He said that the occasion also coincides with the anniversary of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), extending warm greetings to all parliaments globally. He said that parliaments stand as the cornerstone of democ-

racy, representing the voices and aspirations of the people they serve.

"They embody the principles of transparency, accountability, and inclusivity, ensuring that decision-making processes are both participatory and representative," Gilani said.

He stressed the importance of reaffirming the commitment to upholding the values of parliamentary democracy. He commended parliamentarians for their dedication and service, and said, "Your unwavering commitment to parliamentary excellence is instrumental in shaping a brighter future for generations to come."

The chairman highlighted the need for a collective approach to tackle common challenges such

as climate change, terrorism, extremism, and conflicts. He called for unified action, and said, "Parliament of Pakistan joins legislatures across the globe in moving forward with hope to promote peace, development, and prosperity."

Gilani expressed his commitment to continue working with the IPU and parliaments worldwide to pursue and realize commonly cherished ideals of parliamentary excellence, democratic strengthening, mutual respect, dialogue, and parliamentary connectivity.

He stressed the need for addressing common challenges and exploiting mutually beneficial opportunities for the common good of all peoples.

Raisani for strengthening democracy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Nawabzada Jamal Khan Raisani, Secretary General of the National Assembly Young Parliamentarians Forum (YPF), emphasized the importance of the parliamentary system, stating that it strengthens democracy. He highlighted that this system allows people to participate in government through their elected representatives.

Raisani urged the youth to actively engage in politics to fortify parliamentarism in Pakistan. He pointed out that 64% of Pakistan's population is comprised of young people, who represent the golden

future of the country. Educating the youth about the democratic system and involving them in the parliamentary process is essential, he stressed.

He mentioned that Pakistan's parliamentary history began with its independence in 1947. Raisani acknowledged that the parliamentary system in Pakistan has faced various challenges, including martial law, military dictatorships, and political instability however, the system has also achieved significant success.

Raisani noted that the implementation of the 1973 Constitution and the estab-

lishment of democratic governments are notable achievements of the parliamentary system. He added that the events of Pakistan's independence in 1947, the establishment of the Constituent Assembly, the enactment of the first constitution in 1956, and Benazir Bhutto's electoral victory in 1988, made her the first female Prime Minister in the Muslim world, are significant milestones in the history of parliamentarism. He emphasized that the parliamentary system is a crucial pillar of Pakistan's democratic future and needs to be further strengthened.

Rahi contributions to art world acknowledged

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Art Gallery (IAG) organized a condolence reference in memory of Mansoor Rahi, a celebrated artist whose recent passing left an indelible mark on the Pakistani art landscape.

The reference was attended by prominent artists and former Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, Jamal Shah, Curator Gallery 6, Arjumand Faisal and prominent artists including Asma Abbasi, Hassan Raza, Munir Ahmad, Farah Mehmood, Amna Shah, Hajra Mansoor wife of Mansoor Rahi (late) with her daughter Saima and Danish Rahi son of Legend

Artist (late) Mansoor Rahi.

On the occasion, a number of artists and art lovers shed light on Rahi's life and career. To commemorate his legacy and contributions to the world of Art, Chairman of IAG, prominent artist and Former Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Jamal Shah said that IAG organized a special event for the remembrance of Mansoor Rahi and to pay tribute to his contributions.

Paying tribute to him, Jamal Shah said that Mansoor Rahi was the leading figurative abstract painter of Pakistan and his teaching and influence have led to the emergence of a larger number of prominent

artists than any other teacher artist. Jamal Shah said that cultural departments like PNCA and Culture Division should have taken the lead to organize a tribute to legendary artist Mansoor Rah.

"I feel my moral duty as an artist to take this initiative which was thankfully attended by a large group of people today", he said. Hajra Mansoor spoke about over five decades of her life with Mansoor Rahi and his contributions. She was very sad about the way his work was taken away by their son without his and her consent. She said that all the work was supposed to be displayed in Rahi Museum which was the biggest wish of Rahi.

RDA takes action against illegal housing schemes

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) on the directives of the Divisional Intelligence Committee has launched operation against illegal housing schemes.

According to a RDA spokesman, the Task Force had accelerated its ongoing operation against illegal housing schemes.

The RDA Enforcement Squad while conducting

operation in Taxila took action against eight illegal housing schemes namely Aroura Housing Scheme, Al-Khan Enclave, Land Sub-Division, Wah Residencia, Fahad Builders (office of illegal schemes Education Town/Wah Hills), Al-Madina Land

Sub-Division, Education Town/Wah Hills/Kashmir Town and Khawas Town.

The schemes are located in Mouzas Lab Thatho, Niko, Bhoti Pind, Buddu, Gari Afghana, and Bajjar, Tehsil Taxila, District Rawalpindi. The Enforcement Squad sealed and demolished the site offices and land sub-divisions of the illegal housing schemes, the spokesman informed.

The operation was conducted on the orders of Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Muhammad Abdul Aamir Khattak, Director General RDA, the Additional DG RDA, the Deputy Commissioner, Rawalpindi and the City Police Officer, Rawalpindi.

The spokesman informed that despite warnings to cease illegal advertisements, booking of the plots, and development work, the owners of the housing schemes were operating booking offices in violation of the rules.

He said that under the Commissioner's orders, the crackdown on illegal housing societies would continue to prevent fraud and protect the citizens from exploitation.

The spokesman said that the RDA had advised the citizens not to invest illegal housing schemes and visit the RDA website www.rda.gov.pk to check status of all legal and illegal housing societies.

DC calls for emergency measures against

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon has chaired a weekly performance review meeting, which was attended by all Deputy Commissioners and Assistant Commissioners here.

The meeting focused on the anti-dengue campaign, following recent reports of dengue larvae in 53 locations and nine confirmed dengue cases in the city.

The concerned officers provided updates on their

actions and the measures taken against business centers where dengue larvae were detected. The DC emphasized the need for urgent steps to combat dengue, particularly with the forecast of upcoming rains, which could lead to an increase in dengue cases.

Addressing the participants, the DC expressed concern about the potential rise in cases due to the rains. The DC directed that data on dengue cases should be collected from all

hospitals and laboratories. He directed to strengthen the efforts, and the administrations of Rawalpindi and Islamabad would collaborate on countermeasures. An anti-dengue working group would be established to target the boundary areas of the twin cities, he added.

Assistant Commissioners have been instructed to intensify anti-dengue operations in their respective areas, ensuring a comprehensive approach to control and prevent the spread of dengue.

18,000 Surgeries Performed

KABUL (BNA): The Ministry of Public Health has announced that in the past year, over 18,000 surgeries were performed at the National and Specialized Hospital of Istiqlal. According to the ministry's statement, in the past year, 18,047 surgeries across various healthcare fields were successfully performed by experienced Afghan doctors. Outpatient services were provided to 186,581 patients, and 29,272 patients received inpatient care.

DAB team to attend meeting

KABUL (BNA): Hedayatullah Badri, the acting head of Da Afghanistan Bank, led a delegation to Djibouti to participate in the 22nd annual meeting of the Islamic Financial Services Board. This annual meeting, scheduled for the 1st and 2nd of July, is organized by the Islamic Financial Services Board and the Central Bank of Djibouti. During the meeting, the board's performance and financial reports from the past year will be discussed and subsequently approved.

Bamyan's women-only handicraft bazaars thrive amid market challenges

BAMYAN (TOLONews): Noorzai Aminzada, the head of industry and commerce of Bamyan province, announced that there are six handicraft bazaars (markets) in the province, four of which are exclusively for women.

Aminzada added that hundreds of women are engaged in producing handicrafts in these bazaars.

He said: "We have three bazaars in the center of Bamyan, two of which are exclusively for women and one is for men. Men are prohibited from entering women's bazaars, and women are also prohibited from entering men's bazaars. There is one handicraft bazaar in Yakawlang district and one in Kahmard."

The Art Bazaar in the center of Bamyan is the largest center for the display and sale of handicrafts

in this province, with more than twenty active shops exclusively for women.

Zainab Karimi, who has been active in this bazaar for more than ten years, is engaged in producing handmade clothes, Sarpatloni (a type of local clothing), Khamak embroidery, and fifty other types of handicrafts.

She said that Bamyan's handicrafts should be marketed both domestically and internationally.

She told TOLONews: "In this shop, I produce and sell handmade women's and men's clothes, rugs, tablecloths, and fifty other types of handicrafts."

"Customers come to these handicraft shops to buy handmade embroidery, handmade clothes, and other handicrafts, but recently the sales market has declined," said Najia, one of the shopkeepers.

Some of the women producing handicrafts in these bazaars are worried about the decline in the market.

Customers who come to Bamyan from various provinces praise the high quality of Bamyan's handicrafts.

"There are many handicrafts in Bamyan's Art Bazaar. With its historical sites and unique handicrafts, Bamyan is a suitable place for shopping," said Khadema, one of the customers. "I came to the handicraft bazaar to buy some products as gifts to take to Mazar-e-Sharif," said Hafezullah Akrami, another customer.

In addition to handicrafts, Bamyan, with its natural attractions and ancient and historical sites, annually hosts domestic and foreign tourists who buy handicrafts for their friends and relatives.

Expo for Afghan products to be held

KABUL (Ariana News): The Ministry of Industry and Commerce announced that an expo of Afghanistan's domestic products will open tomorrow (Tuesday) in the Uzbekistan capital Tashkent.

The ministry said in a statement that the expo will be held under the Islamic Emirate's economic policies and it aims to strengthen and expand economic, trade, transit, and investment relations between Afghanistan and Central Asian countries, market the country's products in foreign markets, provide the necessary facilities for the private sector and strengthen business activities abroad.

The event will be attended by 250 industrialists and traders from Afghanistan, who will showcase carpets, handicrafts, precious and semi-precious stones, dried fruits, soft drinks, pressure cookers, and other Afghan products for three days.

The Ministry of Industry and Commerce added that a business forum and talks among private sector representatives will also be held on the sidelines of the expo.

IE officials embrace public suggestions and inputs, says Hanafi

KABUL (BNA): The Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs, in a meeting with a group of esteemed scholars and elders from Paktika, stated that the officials of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan welcome the suggestions and opinions of citizens.

During the meeting, scholars and elders informed the Deputy PM about the social, economic, and security issues in Surobi district, Paktika. They expressed satisfaction with the local administration's efforts in ensuring security, tranquility, and service delivery by the officials and mujahideen of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

They requested that the officials of the Islamic Emirate focus on improving schools, health clinics, transportation routes, and



developmental projects in the district.

Meanwhile, Deputy PM Hanafi stated that the officials of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan welcome

citizens' suggestions and opinions, and view providing services to the people in various fields as their main duty and responsibility.

As the meeting concluded,

ed, the Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs mentioned that the officials strive to address the demands of the people to the best of their ability.

Positive engagements boosting IE's global ties



KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, stated that as a result of positive interactions, the relations of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan with the world are expanding.

Mawlawi Abdul Kabir made these remarks during a meeting with Khalifa Sirajuddin Haqqani, Acting Minister of Interior, and Mawlawi Abdulhaq Wasiq, General Director of Intelligence of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

In the meeting, Khalifa Sirajuddin Haqqani and Mawlawi Abdulhaq Wasiq discussed the situation in Afghanistan and the region. They described their recent trip to the United Arab Emirates and meetings with officials there as important for developing relations, noting that many countries are interested in strengthening ties with the IEA.

Furthermore, they highlighted their efforts to ensure permanent security, mentioning that good coordination between departments and a comprehensive security plan have provided reliable security for the people.

In addition, Mawlawi

Abdul Kabir emphasized the importance of good and positive interactions with all countries, stating that in light of a comprehensive political policy, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan seeks to engage and expand relations with all countries.

He added that the relations of the Islamic Emirate with the international community are expanding due to positive interactions, indicating the political progress of the Islamic System.

In the end, the Deputy PM for Political Affairs issued necessary instructions to the Acting Minister of Interior and the General Director of Intelligence of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan on related matters.

Islamic system's policies guided by Islam and national interests:

The Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs, in a meeting with the Afghan Consul General in Peshawar and number of citizens, stated that the domestic and foreign policies of the Islamic Emirate are conducted under the shadow of Islam and based on national interests.

Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, the Deputy PM for Political Affairs of the Islamic Emi-

rate of Afghanistan, recently met with Hafiz Mohibullah, the Afghan Consul General in Peshawar, and a large number of citizens at the Sapidar Palace.

In this meeting, tribal elders and scholars praised the efforts of the Deputy PM in uniting the people and listening to their voices, stating that Afghans are willing to cooperate with the government at any level necessary.

They considered the foreign policy of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan successful and suggested that more use be made of ethnic structures to strengthen the Islamic System.

Similarly, Hafiz Mohibullah, the Afghan Consul General in Peshawar, provided information about his official duties to the Deputy PM stating that service delivery has improved compared to the past and that all related affairs are proceeding normally.

Deputy PM Kabir stated that IEA represents all ethnic groups within the country and the domestic and foreign policies of the Islamic Emirate are guided by Islamic principles and national interests, and that public consultation is essential for implementation.

15-20% increase in wheat yield reported

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock announced that despite severe floods this year, wheat yields have increased by 15-20% compared to last year.

Sadr Azam Osmani, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock, told TOLONews that one of the significant reasons for the increase in wheat cultivation and harvest is the ban on poppy cultivation and farmers turning to wheat cultivation.

Statistics from the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock show that 6% more land has been planted with wheat in the current solar year (1403) compared to last year.

Osmani added: "Wheat production and cultivation have increased by 15 to 20 percent last year, one of the reasons being the reduction in poppy cultivation."

According to him, the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock has assigned various committees in different parts of the country to identify lands damaged by recent floods and take steps to rehabilitate them. Osmani added that this year, the ministry distributed 33,000 metric tons of wheat to farmers and plans to distribute 60,000 metric tons of wheat in the coming year.

The deputy minister of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock, said: "Last year we distributed 33,000 metric tons of wheat to farmers, and this year we plan to distribute around 60,000 metric tons of wheat."

Deputy Interior Minister reacts to opposition meeting in Europe

KABUL (TOLONews): Mohammad Nabi Omari, the deputy minister of Interior of the Islamic Emirate, said he did not consider the recent meetings of the political opposition of the Islamic Emirate in European countries to be beneficial for Afghanistan.

He said this during the introduction ceremony of the new governor of Khost.

He added that the participants in these meetings cannot represent the people of Afghanistan.

He added: "Some want to make the country insecure again, bring corruption and problems, but God willing, this will not happen. These corrupt individuals are not representatives of Afghanistan and will be humiliated again. There is security and a government in the country, and the Emirate rules over the

entire geography of Afghanistan. If anyone threatens us and sends messages, they should take a lesson from America and its allies, and the people will stand against them and sacrifice for this system and the homeland."

He emphasized that the Islamic Emirate has complete control over the entire country and will not allow the opposition to rise.

In this ceremony, the new governor of Khost, Abdul Qayoom Rohani, pledged to address the demands of the people of the province. He said: "We also hope that we can serve you. On the last day that we step down from this responsibility, pray for us. For now, pray that we succeed in this responsibility."

The tribal elders of Khost asked the new governor to strengthen tribal



structures and implement reconstruction projects in this province.

"The people of Khost support anyone who adheres to the interests of Khost, its culture, customs, and unity," said Torayalai Mangal, one of the tribal elders.

"When dam projects, roads, and other projects begin, ordinary people who are impoverished will also

find work opportunities and provide for their families," said Qader Khan, another tribal elder.

Earlier, Besmillah Abdullah was serving as the governor of Khost, who has been appointed as the Administrative Deputy of the General Directorate of Intelligence of IEA by the order of the leader of the Islamic Emirate.

Foreign Ministers' meeting of Afghanistan's neighbors discussed

KABUL (Ariana News): China's special envoy for Afghanistan, Yue Xiaoyong, has met with the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan Akhmed Gurbanov, in Ashgabat, discussing the fight meeting of foreign ministers of countries neighboring Afghanistan.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, the parties also discussed the state and prospects for the development of Turkmen-Chinese interaction. Key aspects of the international and regional agenda were reviewed.

The progress of preparations for the 5th meeting of



the foreign ministers of countries neighboring Afghanistan, which will be held in Turkmenistan this

year, was discussed.

The parties confirmed that Turkmenistan and China will continue to provide full

support for Afghan economic recovery, adhering to the principles of friendship and good neighborliness.

8 killed, 3 injured in Afghanistan last week

KABUL (Pajhwok): Last week, Russia called the UN-led Doha meeting on Afghanistan important to revive close and constructive cooperation between the international community and Afghan authorities.

The United States said their representatives committed to participation once they secured clarity regarding the agenda and, more importantly, confirmed that there would be meaningful engagement at the conference with Afghan women and members of Afghan civil society.

IEA chief spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid says they will participate in the third UN-convened meeting for the sake of interaction with the international community and solving existing problems in the country.

Casualties
Last week, eight people were killed and three others wounded in different incidents of violence across Afghanistan.

The intelligence department said two alleged mili-

itants were killed during an operation by security forces in northern Baghlan province.

It said: "Our operatives killed two militant commanders Abdul Samad and Hamza during an operation in Nahrain district on Friday."

The militants had spoken in a video clip on the third day of Eid-ul-Adha of militant presence in the province and fighting against the government.

The commander of the 4th platoon of 209th Al-Fath Brigade was mistakenly killed by his son in northern Sar-i-Pul province. In Parwan, armed robbers snatched a taxi car and killed its driver.

According to reports, unidentified gunmen killed a civilian in Farah, while a man was arrested for allegedly killing his wife in the Khulam district of northern Samangan province.

A man gouged out his son-in-law's eyes with a knife in southern Kandahar province. One man was

found dead and another killed due to personal enmity in Ghazni.

According to sources, 10 people were killed and three others injured in Afghanistan in the previous week.

Before the regime change in Afghanistan on August 15, 2021, hundreds of civilians and members of warring parties would get killed and injured every week.

Doha conference

The UN-led meeting, to be attended by special envoys for Afghanistan and other officials, is scheduled for June 30 and July 1 in the capital of Qatar.

A delegation from the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, led by Zabihullah Mujahid, will participate in the Doha meeting.

UN Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo will chair the third meeting on Afghanistan in Doha on June 30 and July 1.

Last week, US State

Department spokesperson Matthew Miller told a press conference: "Both our special representative for Afghanistan, Tom West, and our special envoy for Afghan women, girls and human rights Rina Amiri will be attending the Doha meeting."

"But I should note they only committed to participate once they secured clarity regarding the substantive agenda and, more importantly, confirmed that there would be meaningful engagement at the conference with Afghan women and members of Afghan civil society," he added.

Russian Special Presidential Representative for Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov said the Doha meeting would be useful in reviving close and constructive cooperation between the international community and the Afghan authorities.

A delegation from the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, led by Zabihullah Mujahid, will participate in the two-day

conference.

Mujahid told reporters in Kabul the interim government hoped the Doha meeting would lead to solving the country's existing problems.

He commented: "Our trip does not mean enmity with any side, we intend interaction with the world and want to take advantage of every single opportunity for the development of the country."

Mujahid urged the international community not to leave Afghanistan alone and assist the Afghans in areas where they deserved assistance.

He said the Doha huddle was aimed at conveying IEA messages, not at making decisions.

Prior to this, Minister of Foreign Affairs Maulvi Amir Khan Muttaqi discussed the agenda of the meeting and related issues with UNAMA head Roza Otunbayeva in Kabul.

Kabul's reaction
Last week, neighbor country claimed that members of the Tehreek-e-

Taliban were hiding in Afghanistan. If necessary, he warned, they would attack terrorists' hideouts inside Afghanistan.

But the interim government spurned the neighbor country's remarks regarding attacks on hideouts inside Afghanistan.

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) in Kabul wrote on its X handle: "The neighbor country's remarks are an attempt to muddy the water. We call on the neighbor country leadership not to allow anyone make such provocative statements."

The ministry warned: "Anyone violating our borders on any pretext will be held responsible for the consequences."

The head of the IEA political office in Doha, Suhail Shaheen, said: "We won't allow anyone to harm us. We neither harm anyone nor allow anyone to harm us. We do not interfere in anyone's internal affairs; as per our policy.

"Any adventurer, before looking at our proud land with ill intentions, should

thoroughly study the history of invaders and consider consequences."

Nicaragua ambassador

Nicaragua has named Michael Campbell as its ambassador to Afghanistan. "We thank the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, that people, that government, for the blessing they have given to our comrade Campbell," Nicaraguan Vice President Rosario Murillo said.

Opposition figures in Vienna

The Vienna conference is attended by a number of opponents of the IEA and ex-government officials who left the country before and after the IEA takeover. Participants of the fourth round of the Vienna conference, which started Monday in Austria, called for the formation of a government based on the will of the people of Afghanistan and intra-Afghan talks.

Referring to the Vienna conference, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) official Zakir Jalali wrote

on X those who had no plan for the country and enjoyed no domestic support but hoped for global backing were doomed to fail.

Jalali wrote: "Such desperate figures don't know they are no more welcome in the field of politics and no one is ready to count on them or accept such meaningless utterances."

Opium production

In its annual report on narcotics, a large part of which is allocated to Afghanistan, the UN said there had been a 95 percent decrease in opium production in the country.

In Kabul, the Ministry of Interior said on World Anti-Narcotics Day that since the re-establishment of IEA, more than 217,000 hectares of land with poppies had been destroyed, 115,000 addicts rehabilitated and 1,315 drug production labs destroyed.

Continuation of aid

Australia announced \$2.6 million in aid to Afghanistan last week.

6 die as rain and landsliding wreak havoc in Koh-e-Sulaiman

QUETTA (INP): Heavy rains in the Koh-e-Sulaiman range of eastern Balochistan have triggered landslides, blocking major highways and stranding numerous vehicles. The death toll from five days of continuous rainfall in the province has risen to six, with 25 others injured.

The landslides occurred near the Dana Sar range on the Quetta-Chaman-Zhob-Mughalkot section, blocking the Quetta-Dera Ismail Khan highway and the N70 highway, which connects Balochistan to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) has advised vehicles from Peshawar, Swat, Islamabad, and Rawalpindi to stop at Dera Ismail Khan. Transport heading towards Zhob and Qila Saifullah has also been halted.

Rescue and relief teams have been dispatched to assist stranded passengers, and efforts are underway to clear the debris.

The heavy rains have also caused flooding in Awaran district, cutting off the district from Jhau. The Awaran-Turbat road has also been closed due to flooding in the Wahli River.

Meanwhile, in Lahore, temperatures dropped after rainfall, bringing relief to residents. Strong winds are also being experienced in the city.

The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has predicted more rain for today. Six children were injured in Kot Lakhpat due to an electric shock, while one person was killed and three others injured by lightning in Badin.

The PMD has forecast hot weather for most parts of the country. However, there is a possibility of rain with thunderstorms in parts of upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, north-eastern Punjab, upper Sindh, and Kashmir.



PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron and his wife Brigitte Macron leave the voting booth before voting in Le Touquet-Paris-Plage, northern France, Sunday.

For the first time in Pakistan Sindh Excise holds number plates auction

Rs675m generated to be used for flood victims: Sharjeel



F.P. Report

KARACHI: For the first time in Pakistan's history, the Sindh Excise Department held an auction for number plates at a local hotel in Karachi.

During the auction, the Sindh government's excise department collected 675.4 million rupees from the sale of 40 number plates. In the auction, bids were made for premium number plates: No. 1 at Rs. 100 million, No. 5 at Rs. 53 million, No. 7 at Rs. 46 million, No. 8 at Rs. 41 million, and No. 9 at Rs.

40 million.

Sindh Senior Minister for Information, Transport, Excise, and Taxation, Sharjeel Inam Memon, has said that the proceeds from the auction will be devoted to the construction of houses for flood victims.

He stated that a total of 2,251 houses will be constructed for flood victims with the funds.

The Sindh government is continuously striving to help those affected by the floods and rebuild their lives.

Senior Minister Sharjeel

Inam Memon said that the second phase of the auction of premium number plates will be launched very soon.

The upcoming auction is expected to generate additional resources to further support the ongoing reconstruction efforts.

He mentioned that the government's comprehensive approach includes not only the construction of new houses but also the maintenance of necessary infrastructure, provision of medical assistance, and support for economic recovery.

PTI forms 19-member committee for rally

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Barrister Gohar Khan has announced the formation of a 19-member central committee to oversee the upcoming Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) rally scheduled for July 6 in Islamabad. The decision comes amidst ongoing legal proceedings regarding the rally's venue.

The committee, headed by Barrister Gohar Khan and convened by Islamabad President Amir Mughal, includes prominent figures such as Umar Ayub, Shibli Faraz, Rauf Hassan, and Asad Qaiser.

Notably, Shoaib Shaheen, Ali Bukhari, Khalid Khurshid, and Malik Taimur will handle administrative matters related to the rally.

In light of the absence of a No Objection Certificate (NOC) for the rally at Tarnool Chowk, advocates Shoaib Shaheen, Ali Bukhari, and Niazullah Niazi will pursue the case in the High Court to secure necessary permissions.

Following directives from the Islamabad High Court, discussions between PTI representatives and the district administration led to the selection of Tarnool Chowk as the rally venue. The decision was finalized after consultations with DC Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon.

PTI Islamabad President Amir Mughal has instructed party workers in Rawalpindi and Islamabad to prepare extensively for the event, anticipating a massive turnout of supporters.

The PTI rally is poised to feature addresses from central leadership, aiming to mobilize significant public participation amid ongoing logistical and administrative preparations.

FBR collects Rs9306b

Continued from Front Page

For the FY 2023-24, FBR collected income tax amounting to Rs. 4,528 billion as compared to Rs. 3,270 billion during the same period last year, depicting an increase of 38.4%.

Similarly, under the head sales tax Rs. 3,098 billion was collected as compared to Rs. 2,593 billion and under the head FED Rs. 576 billion was collected as compared to Rs. 370 billion.

The revenue collection under the head of Customs Duty was Rs. 1,104 billion as compared to Rs. 931 billion last year.

In spite of all odds and issues faced by the organization as a whole, the officers and officials of FBR have remained dedicated and committed to their primary role i.e. achievement of the assigned revenue targets under all circumstances.

The economic growth of Pakistan is intrinsically linked with the achievement of revenue collection targets, and the employees of FBR are fully determined and ready to cope with the challenges and depict further wins in the years to come.

It is also reiterated that for the assigned revenue collection target for the FY 2024-25 the team FBR is ready to deliver and put in their best efforts to achieve it and serve the nation.

20 inmates escape from Rawalakot jail after taking cops hostage

RAWALAKOT (INP): Over 20 inmates escaped from Rawalakot District Jail after taking the police personnel hostage.

As per details, the police officials stated the prisoners opened fire on cops, injuring one inmate who was arrested later.

The escaped prisoners include dangerous criminals, according to police. A shootout exchange occurred between police and prisoners on the outskirts of the city, killing one inmate.

Most of the escaped prisoners were serving life sentences or facing death penalties. The police are working to track down the fugitives and restore order in the area.

The police have released a list of the escaped prisoners and a heavy contingent has been deployed in the area. A search operation is underway to recapture the fleeing inmates, SSP Rawalakot said.

According to police, the deceased prisoner was arrested in a drug trafficking case. The district jail staff has

been taken into custody, and an investigation is underway.

In a separate incident, several inmates escaped the prison in Balochistan's Chaman after overpowering guards when they were allowed out of cells for Fajr prayers.

The incident unfolded as the inmates of barrack No. 4 were being led out for prayers. Seizing a moment of opportunity, the prisoners launched a sudden and coordinated attack on the prison guards, overpowering them and taking control of the situation.

A private call of top Democrats fuels more insider anger about Biden's debate

NEW YORK (AP): A sense of concern is growing inside the top ranks of the Democratic Party that leaders of Joe Biden's campaign and the Democratic National Committee are not taking seriously enough the impact of the president's troubling debate performance earlier in the week.

DNC Chairman Jaime Harrison and Biden campaign manager Julie Chavez Rodriguez held a Saturday afternoon call with dozens of committee members across the country, a group of some of the most influential members of the party. They largely ignored Biden's weak showing Thursday night or the avalanche of criticism that followed.

Multiple committee members on the call, most granted anonymity to talk about the private discussion, described feeling like they were being gaslit — that they were being asked to ignore the dire nature of the party's predicament. The call, they said, may have worsened a widespread sense of panic among elected officials, donors and other stakeholders.

Those best positioned to replace him — Vice President Kamala Harris, California Gov. Gavin Newsom and Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer among them — reiterated their support for Biden after the debate.

Many are anxiously awaiting the first major round of post-debate public

polling to determine their next steps. Polls from CNN and 538/Ipsos conducted soon after the debate found that most debate-watchers thought Trump outperformed Biden. But the two men's favorability ratings remained largely unchanged, just as they did in the aftermath of Trump's conviction on charges in New York that he illegally participated in a hush money scheme to influence the 2016 election.

In a subsequent appearance on MSNBC, Harrison downplayed the significance of the conference call, which he said was part of a regularly scheduled communication "to talk about the state of the race" and the upcoming national convention with the DNC's many elected members across the country.

Biden and his campaign have sought to project confidence in the days since Thursday's debate in which the president, who already faced serious concerns about his physical and mental stamina, offered a performance punctuated by repeated stumbles, uncomfortable pauses, and a quiet speaking style that was often difficult to understand.

Just after Saturday's DNC call, the Biden campaign released a memo from senior adviser Jen

O'Malley Dillon insisting that the debate had no tangible impact on the election.

"On every metric that matters, data shows it did nothing to change the American people's perception, our supporters are more fired up than ever, and Donald Trump only reminded voters of why they fired him four years ago and failed to expand his appeal beyond his MAGA base," O'Malley Dillon wrote.

She added, "If we do see changes in polling in the coming weeks, it will not be the first time that overblown media narratives have driven temporary dips in the polls."

Meanwhile, Biden spent much of Saturday courting wealthy donors in New York's famed wealthy enclave of the Hamptons.

"I didn't have a great night, but neither did Trump," Biden said of the debate at one gathering in East Hampton.

Of Trump, Biden said, "The big takeaway was his lies."

Harrison reinforced the president's message on the DNC call, which spanned roughly an hour. Hannah Muldavin, a DNC spokesperson, said the discussion was a regularly scheduled quarterly conference call with the committee's membership.

North Korea says it fired a new weapon

PYONGYANG (BBC): A weapons test this week has become the latest point of contention between North and South Korea, with Pyongyang saying they fired an advanced multiple warhead missile and Seoul accusing them of lying.

Hours after North Korean state media lauded the "success" of their test and ran pictures as proof on Thursday, the South called it "deception and exaggeration" and released their own evidence pointing towards failure.

Analysts meanwhile remain uncertain about the truth of the North's claims. The dispute underscores the complexities of verifying North Korea's weapons development, which continues to advance despite severe international sanctions.

If North Korea's latest claims are true, it would represent significant progress in their missile programme. Multiple warhead missiles are difficult to defend against and the technology is challenging to develop. Currently only the US - which first developed it in the 1960s - as well as the UK, France, Russia and China are known to have these capabilities. Pyongyang is now trumpeting that they are a step closer to achieving it as well. For some time now, experts have floated the possibility of North Korea eventually developing MIRV capabilities.



MAIDUGURI: A man who was injured in a suicide bombers attack lies at a hospital in Maiduguri, Nigeria on Sunday.