

Zubair quits PML-N
ISLAMABAD (INP): Former Sindh governor Muhammad Zubair on Sunday announced to part ways with Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). Muhammad Zubair announced his decision to quit Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz. In support of his decision, Muhammad Zubair said he had differences with the party leadership on the no-confidence move against Imran Khan.

7 Pak Army soldiers embraced martyrdom in Lakki IED blast



F.P. Report
RAWALPINDI: In a devastating attack on Sunday, an improvised explosive device (IED) hit security forces vehicle in Lakki Marwat District. The explosion resulted in the tragic loss of seven valiant soldiers, including a captain.
Those who embraced martyrdom include Captain Muhammad Faraz Ilyas, aged 26, resident of Kasur District. Alongside him, Subedar Major Muhammad Nazir, aged 50, from Skardu District, Lance Naik Muhammad Anwar, aged 34, from Ghanchi District, Lance Naik Hussain Ali, aged 36, from Ghizer District, Sepoy Asad Ullah, aged 33, from Multan District, Sepoy Manzoor Hussain, aged 27, from Gilgit District, and Sepoy Rashid Mehmood, aged 31, from Rawalpindi District, made the ultimate sacrifice and embraced martyrdom.
According to a press release issued by ISPR, sanitization of the area was being carried out to eliminate any terrorists present in the area and perpetrators of this heinous act will be brought to justice. "Security forces of Pakistan are determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve," the ISPR press release added.
President expresses grief over shahadat of security forces personnel
President Asif Ali Zardari on Sunday expressed grief over shahadat of personnel of security forces who lost their lives after their vehicle reportedly hit an improvised explosive device (IED) in District Lakki Marwat.
The president paid tribute to the martyred Jawans of Pakistan Army and prayed for the high ranks of the departed souls. President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release.
He also condemned the IED attack by the terrorists and reiterated the resolve of the entire nation to root out the cancer of terrorism.
Paying tribute to the sacrifices and valour of shaheed Jawans, the president said the nation would never forget the sacrifices of its sons and

Appointment of VCs in KPvarsities Kundi flays ‘false statement’ by KP govt in SC

F.P. Report
PESHAWAR: The Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, has voiced his concerns regarding statements made by the provincial government's legal counsel in the Supreme Court regarding the appointments of Vice Chancellors. It was stated that the selection of Vice Chancellors has been completed and summaries have been sent to the Governor for approval.
However, the Governor has halted the process, asserting that no such summaries have been presented to the Governor House. Expressing his dismay, the Governor has requested the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court to take notice of the matter, stating that erroneous statements of this nature before the esteemed judiciary of the country could have serious repercussions.
The Governor highlighted discrepancies in the appointment of Acting Vice Chancellors at seven prominent universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Orders were issued against the law, and later, their summaries for approval were withdrawn from the Governor House due to legal objections raised by the provincial government.
The state of the education system in the province is deeply concerning. Furthermore, the Governor emphasized the need for expeditious appointments despite the completion of selections by the Academic Search Committee in 24 universities.
He urged the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to swiftly finalize appointments to alleviate the administrative and educational crises in universities. Regarding budget allocations, the provincial government has earmarked 3 billion rupees for 35 universities in its budget.
The Governor had previously corresponded with Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, urging him to continue financial grants to universities, a request that was graciously accepted, ensuring financial support for universities across the country. In a special address at the annual convention of Allama Iqbal Open University in Peshawar, the Governor commended the university for offering free education to the children of martyrs and war heroes. He hailed the university's unique education system as a significant national contribution.
He lauded Allama Iqbal Open University for providing extensive educational services to marginalized segments of society, enabling them to fulfill their dreams of overcoming illiteracy and poverty.
The establishment of 54 regional campuses and model study centers by the university stands as a testament to its faculty and administration's continuous efforts. Allama Iqbal Open University has produced over 500,000 graduates in its 50-year educational journey, a milestone deserving of celebration. During the convention, Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Naseer Mahmood expressed gratitude to the Governor of KP for his presence and presented a report on the institution's performance.
Additionally, degrees were conferred upon 250 students, while 40 students received gold medals for their outstanding academic achievements. The Governor extended his congratulations to the successful students, their parents, and faculty members.

Pakistan, IMF disagree on key loan program points

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are still grappling with several key issues as they negotiate the terms of a new loan program. According to sources within the Finance Ministry, disagreements persist on tax exemptions for former FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas) regions and the tax treatment of various income groups.
A major sticking point appears to be the continuation of tax breaks for Pakistan's former FATA territories. While the IMF pushes for their immediate removal, the Finance Ministry argues that a one-year extension is crucial to support development efforts in the region. This includes tax breaks on imported machinery and income tax relief.
One area where progress has been made is income tax on exporters. Both sides have reportedly agreed to a revised system that calculates taxes based on exporters' income and expenses, replacing the current flat rate of 1%.
However, negotiations remain deadlocked regarding income tax rates for salaried and non-salaried individuals. Additionally, the IMF's proposal to impose an 18% sales tax on the agriculture and health sectors faces resistance from Pakistan.
The Finance Ministry has signaled its openness to taxing pensions exceeding one lakh rupees per month. Meanwhile, discussions are ongoing regarding the creation of a national tax authority or council to streamline federal and provincial tax collection.
The IMF has reportedly linked the loan program's terms to Pakistan's new budget and is unwilling to budge on Parliamentary approval of these conditions. This signifies a potentially difficult road ahead for the government, as implementing these measures could face public backlash.

The Frontier Post



NEW YORK: Indian players celebrating at the end of the match to beat Pakistan in Group A match of the ongoing T20 World Cup.

Israel keeps pounding central Gaza

Palestinian death toll in hostage rescue raid rises to 274
CAIRO (Reuters): Israeli forces pounded central Gaza anew on Sunday, a day after killing 274 Palestinians during a hostage rescue raid, and tanks advanced into further into Rafah in an apparent bid to seal off part of the southern city, residents and Hamas media said.
Palestinians remained in shock over Saturday's death toll, the worst over a 24-hour period of the Gaza war for months and including many women and children, Palestinian medics said.
In an update on Sunday, Gaza's health ministry said 274 Palestinians were killed — up from 210 it reported on Saturday — and 698 were injured when Israeli special force commandos stormed into the densely populated Al-Nuseirat camp to rescue four hostages held since October by Hamas militants.
Sixty-four of the dead were children and 57 were women, the Hamas-run Gaza government media office said on Sunday.
Israel's military said a special forces officer was killed in exchanges of fire with militants emerging from cover in residential blocks, and that it knew of "under 100" Palestinians killed, though not how many of them were fighters or civilians.
In central Gaza on Sunday, separate Israeli airstrikes on houses in the city of Deir Al-Balah and in nearby Al-Bureij killed three Palestinians in each location, while tanks shelled parts of Al-Nuseirat and Al-Maghazi, medics said.
Al-Maghazi, Al-Nuseirat and Al-Bureij are historic, urbanized refugee camps often caught up in the current war.
The Israeli military said in a statement its forces were continuing operations east of Al-Bureij and Deir Al-Balah, killing a number of Palestinian gunmen and destroying militant infrastructure.
Israel sent forces into Rafah in May in what it called a mission to wipe out Hamas' last intact combat units after eight months of war, in which Israeli forces have bombed much of the rest of Gaza to rubble while advancing against fierce resistance from militants embedded in crowded cities and built-up camps.
Israeli tank forces have since seized Gaza's entire border strip with Egypt running through Rafah to the Mediterranean coast and invaded many districts of the city of 280,000 residents, prompting around one million displaced people who had been sheltering in Rafah to flee elsewhere.
ISRAELI TANKS ADVANCE FURTHER IN RAFAH
On Sunday, tanks advanced into two new districts in an apparent effort to complete the encirclement of the entire eastern side of Rafah, touching off clashes with dug-in Hamas-led armed groups, according to residents trapped in their homes.
As of June 5, all but around 100,000 displaced people who took refuge in eastern Rafah after taking flight from Israeli offensives further north in Gaza had left, according to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees UNRWA.
"All UNRWA shelters in Rafah have been vacated. Many of the people who were based in Rafah have fled up the coast seeking safer locations in both Khan Younis and the middle area (of Gaza)," UNRWA said in a statement. Palestinian medics said an Israeli airstrike on a house in Tel Al-Sultan in western Rafah killed two people.
The Israeli military said troops of its 162nd division were raiding some districts of Rafah where they had located "numerous additional terror tunnel shafts, mortars, and (other) weapons" belonging to Palestinian Islamist militants.

India's Modi sworn in as Prime Minister for third term

NEW DELHI (Reuters): Narendra Modi was sworn in as India's prime minister on Sunday for a third term, after a shock poll setback that will test his ability to ensure policy certainty in a coalition government in the world's most populous nation.
President Droupadi Murmu administered the oath of office to Modi at a ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, the president's palace in New Delhi, attended by thousands of dignitaries, including the leaders of seven regional countries, Bollywood stars and industrialists.
"Honoured to serve Bharat," Modi posted on X, minutes before he was sworn in, referring to India's name in Indian languages.
Supporters cheered, clapped and chanted "Modi, Modi" as the name of the 73-year old leader, dressed in a white kurta tunic and blue half jacket, was called to take his oath.
Modi was followed by senior ministers in the previous government: Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, Nitin Gadkari, Nirmala Sitharaman, Subrahmanya Jaishankar, and Piyush Goyal, among others. Their portfolios are expected to be announced after the swearing-in.
Modi, who started as a publicist of the Hindu nationalist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the ideological parent of his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), is only the second person after independence leader Jawaharlal Nehru to serve a third straight term as prime minister.
Modi secured the third term in elections that concluded on June 1 with the support of 14 regional parties in his BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA), unlike in the previous two terms when his party won an outright majority.
The outcome is seen as a big setback to the popular leader as surveys and exit polls had predicted BJP would secure even more seats than in 2019.
Coalition challenges
Modi delivered world beating growth and lifted India's global standing but appeared to have missed a step at home as a lack of enough jobs, high prices, low incomes and religious faultlines pushed voters to rein him in.
When Modi was the chief minister of the western state of Gujarat from 2001 to 2014, BJP enjoyed strong majorities, allowing him to govern decisively.
Modi's new term as prime minister, therefore, is likely to be fraught with challenges on building consensus on contentious political and policy issues in the face of different interests of regional parties and a stronger opposition, analysts say.
Some analysts worry that the fiscal balance in the world's fastest growing economy could also come under pressure due to demands for higher development funds for states ruled by the NDA's regional partners and a possible push by BJP to spend more on welfare to woo back voters it lost in this year's election.
While the broad focus on building infrastructure, manufacturing and technology could continue, "contentious reforms could be delayed," said Samiran Chakraborty, Chief Economist, India, at Citi Research.
"The BJP's major coalition partners are politically unpredictable, sometimes working with the BJP and sometimes working against them," added Rick Rossow, the Chair in US-India Policy Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.
"The larger parties that will be a part of his coalition are mostly agnostic on national-level issues and should not be applying a brake on economic reforms or security ties with the United States, Japan, and other key partners," he said.
Modi, whose election campaign was marked by religious rhetoric and criticism of the opposition for allegedly favouring India's 200 million minority Muslims, has adopted a more conciliatory tone since the shock result.
"We have won the majority ... but to run the country it is unanimity that is crucial ... we will strive for unanimity," he said on Friday after the NDA formally named him coalition head.

CM orders restructuring of govt depts

LAHORE (APP): A revolutionary decision has been made by the government to bring an overwhelming change in the government and governance system in Punjab.

For the first time in the history of Punjab, a decision has been made to undertake massive reshuffling of ministries and departments in Punjab under which downsizing of surplus, inept and deficit-prone institutions will be carried out. Additional institutions working for similar assignments will be abolished.

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif approved the restructuring project. The performance of official affairs will be eased by reducing the number of ministries and those institutions which work for similar assignments will be merged. By undertaking the restructuring and downsizing process, the performance of institutions and public service mechanisms will be made simple, easy and swift.

Restructuring and downsizing will accrue savings worth billions of rupees. A fiscal space will also be created by carrying out massive reduction in the annual expenditures of the government.

CM congratulates PM on successful China visit: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has congratulated Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on undertaking a successful visit to China.

In her message on Sunday, the CM paid tributes to Shehbaz Sharif for his endeavours undertaken for the progress and prosperity of Pakistan. "Under the guidance of PML-N President Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, the national economy is treading on the road to progress and prosperity and the completion of CPEC projects will be expedited," she said.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif after undertaking a successful visit to the UAE, paved the way for the country's progress and prosperity by virtue of excellent diplomacy in China as well, she expressed.

The CM added that time has proved that China and other countries repose their complete trust in the leadership of PML-N, adding that the willingness of Chinese investors to contribute their valuable partnership to uplift Pakistan's economy will open new avenues of economic progress. Pak-China relations are stronger like a cliff. The resolve of Pakistan and China to work in unison for peace and stability along with attaining progress and prosperity is highly praiseworthy.

By the grace of Allah Almighty, the country is moving ahead by leaps and bounds towards better economic conditions. The reduction in the prices of flour, bread and other essential edibles is welcoming. Under the dynamic leadership of Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, the PML-N government is working day in and day out for the economic prosperity of the people of Pakistan, she added.

Police on high alert at churches across Punjab

LAHORE (INP): Punjab Police have been put on high alert and ordered to enhance security measures at churches across the province. IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar has directed RPOs and DPOs to personally inspect security arrangements at churches and sensitive locations.

Additional police personnel and snipers will be deployed at sensitive churches, while Dolphin Squad, PRU, and Elite Teams will conduct effective patrolling around churches. The police chief has also urged religious scholars, Christian community leaders, and peace committee members to promote interfaith harmony and ensure peaceful religious gatherings.

Last year, a mob attacked, vandalized multiple churches and torched homes belonging to the Christian community in Jaranwala, Faisalabad over blasphemy allegations. The Jaranwala police registered terror cases against more than 600 people for "vandalizing multiple churches and torching homes belonging to the Christian community".

CCPO Lahore orders action against mobile snatchers, motorcycle thieves: Capital City Police Officer Bilal Saddique Kamyana directed to tighten the noose around mobile snatchers and motorcycle thieves, emphasizing the need for decoy operations in plain clothes to control crime. He was presiding over an important meeting to review the performance of the Civil Lines and City Divisions at his office here on Sunday. The meeting discussed an action plan for the rehabilitation of drug addicts and the eradication of drugs.

The CCPO issued orders to intensify ongoing crackdown on drug dealers. He directed to fully utilize Punjab Safe Cities Authority's network to prevent crimes and urged officers to focus on professional policing. He highlighted the importance of teamwork, joint planning and combined operations to ensure the elimination of crime. Furthermore, he stressed the need for effective information sharing and coordination between other police units.

The CCPO mentioned that issues faced by women are being resolved on a priority basis at the Virtual Women Police Station. He encouraged officers and personnel to use their professional skills to deliver justice to the oppressed and contribute positively to the department's image building. DIG (Investigation) Zeeshan Asghar, DIG (Operations) Muhammad Faisal Kamran, SSP (Admin) Atif Nazir, SSP (Investigation) Anosh Masood Chaudhry, SSP (Operations) Tasawur Iqbal, alongwith SPs, ASPs, Circle Officers, SHOs, and Investigation Incharges from Civil Lines and City Divisions also attended the meeting.

PPP embraces youths with open arms: Murtaza

LAHORE (APP): Syed Hassan Murtaza, General Secretary of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Central Punjab, emphasized his party's dedication to youth representation, declaring it the true party for young Pakistanis.

Speaking at a ceremony at the People's Secretariat on Sunday, Murtaza underlined that the PPP, led by its young chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, continues to champion the voices of the youth at every level. The event celebrated the induction of prominent young leaders Husnain Anwar Rajput, Muhammad Adeel Khan Kamoka, and Rana Waqas Tanveer, along with their colleagues, into the PPP. These figures, previously associated with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Youth Wing, announced their switch to the PPP Youth Wing.

"We welcome these dynamic young leaders who have chosen to join our ranks. The PPP, with its commitment to youth empowerment under Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, is dedicated to enabling the youth to take the reins of the nation," said Murtaza. Key party figures including Secretary Records and Events Ahsan Rizvi, PPP Youth Vice Presidents Zeeshan Shami, and Hasan Ashraf Bhatti were also in attendance, demonstrating a united front in welcoming the new members.

In a related development, PPP USA Vice President Safdar Qureshi met with Syed Hassan Murtaza to discuss the current political and economic landscape of Pakistan, further solidifying the party's international engagement and strategic planning. This influx of young leadership into the PPP marks a significant step in the party's ongoing efforts to engage and empower the next generation of Pakistani leaders.

NOTICE INVITING E-BIDDING
(Single Stage Single Envelop Procedure)

Tubewells Irrigation Division Peshawar Irrigation Procurement Department, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, invites electronic Bids from the eligible firms / contractors in accordance with KPPRA procurement rules 2014 on single stage single envelop procedure for the following works: -

S#	Name of Work / Sub Works	E/Cost In Million	2% Earnest Money+ Stamp duty	PEC Relevant Code
Name of Work: Rehabilitation of Irrigation Tubewells / Lift Irrigation Schemes & Solarization in Tubewells Division Peshawar ADP No. 2039/160282 During 2023-24.				
1	Solarization of Existing / Augmentation Tubewells in Kheskhi Section District Nowshera	18.30 (M)	406000/-	CE-09 CE-10 EE-11

TERMS AND CONCITIONS

- Bid Solicitation Documents containing all the terms and conditions and other relevant instructions for works can be downloaded from the department and or KPPRA websites (www.irrigation.gkp.pk) / (www.kppra.gov.pk) For each package separate bid solicitation documents are to be submitted by the interested bidders.
- Electronic bidding shall be done on "above / below system" on BOQ / Engineer's estimate.
- All bidders are required to have registration with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority.
- The bidder shall submit 02% bid security, of the estimated cost as mentioned above, in the shape of deposit at call (Original) along with their bid before closing date and time.
- Notifications issued by KPPRA pertaining to procurement process issued from time to time shall be applicable and notification no S.R.O (14)/Vol: 1-24/2021-22, dated 10-05-2022/6058-71.
- If the evaluated electronic bid costs of two or more bidders are equal, then the successful bidder will be declared on performance basis.
- Pre-bid meeting will be held 25/06/2024 at 11:00 AM in the office of the Executive Engineer Tubewells Irrigation Division Peshawar.
- The Last date & time for Submission of the Bid along with relevant documents is 01/07/2024 up to 2:00PM which will be opened on the same day at 2:30 PM in the office of the undersigned in presence of Contractor and their representatives who wishes to attend.
- Bid security of 1st, 2nd and 3rd responsive lowest bidders will be retained by the employer till the approval of bids by the competent Authority.
- All Government Notifications/ Rules/Taxes updated from time to time shall be applicable.
- Any further information regarding the above tender can be obtained from office of the undersigned on any working day prior to bid opening date.

INF(P)1257/24

Executive Engineer

100 camels to be sacrificed on Eidul-Adha at Governor House

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori on Sunday said that 100 camels would be sacrificed on Eidul-Azha at the Governor House.

He stated this while talking to Central Ruet-i-Hilal Committee Chairman Maulana Abdul Khabeer Azad, who called on him at the Governor House.

They discussed the role of Ulema in national unity, formation of welfare state and other issues. It was agreed that an Interfaith Harmony Conference would be held in August at the Governor's House.

Later, Chairman Ruet-i-Hilal Committee along with Sindh Governor visited IT marquee of the Governor House.

Concern over children's deaths at Sahiwal hospital


LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Central Punjab Information Secretary Shehzad Saeed Cheema expressed deep concern over the death of children at a Sahiwal hospital.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, he stated that this tragic incident has exposed the hospital's inadequate safety measures and called for an immediate determination of those responsible for the deaths of innocent children.

He emphasized that a fire in the children's ward, a critical area, raises serious questions about the hospital administration's performance. He urged the provincial health minister to visit the site personally and conduct thorough investigations.

Additionally, he stressed the need for a solid strategy to prevent such incidents in the future and called on the Punjab's Chief Minister to audit the safety measures of hospitals across the province.

He condemned the negligence and incompetence of the hospital administration, stating that the loss of innocent lives is unacceptable and that the government must take immediate action in this regard.



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LAHORE: A large number of people visiting Greater Iqbal Park to spend their holiday in Provincial Capital. —APP Photo

Governor, PML-N to work for uplift of Sindh

KARACHI (APP): A five-member delegation of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) led by PML-N Central Senior Vice President Shah Mohammed Shah called on the Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori.

According to a Governor House communiqué on Sunday, the delegation included PML-N President of Business Forum Ishtiaq Baig, Jam Karam Ali, Jam Qaim Ali and Khalid Sheikh.

The governor and PML-N delegation agreed to work together for the development of the Sindh province. Governor Tessori said that all the stakeholders had to work for the development of the province beyond politics.

The PML-N Central Senior Vice President Shah Muhammad Shah said that Kamran Khan Tessori is the Governor from Karachi to Kashmore. He said that the initiatives of the governor for the development of the province are commendable.

Drive against transporters charging extra fares from today

E.P. Report

KARACHI: On the instructions of Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon, a campaign against transporters charging excessive fares will start tomorrow, Monday.

The Transport Department has issued instructions to take action against those who collect excessive fares on the occasion of Eid-ul-Adha. A letter has been sent to the IG Sindh, all Commissioners, DIGs, and DCs on behalf of the Transport Department.

Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that the government of Sindh is determined to provide all kinds of relief to the people.

Those who harass passengers will not be forgiven, and strict action will be taken against transporters and operators who arbitrarily increase fixed fares.

He mentioned that the aim of the campaign is to provide relief to the people and prevent any unnecessary financial pressure on passengers.

Sharjeel Inam Memon issued instructions that all RTAs and DRTAs should ensure the provision of relief to the public. Concerned authorities should take immediate action against transporters on complaints of charging excessive fares.

IESCO issues list of defaulted govt institutions

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Sunday issued list of defaulted government institutions which have pending payments of over Rs 71.16 billion.

The defaulter institutions were also directed to clear their pending dues within a week to ensure uninterrupted power supply, said a press release issue here.

According to the details, the IESCO has outstanding dues against government of AJK stood at Rs 54,862 million, Ministry of Defence Rs 5,295 million, CDA (Pak Secretariat) Rs 1,065 million, CDA (Cabinet Secretariat) Rs 116 million, CDA (Chairman Senate) Rs 68 million, Cantt Board Chaklala Rs 1,642 million, Cantt Board Rawalpindi Rs 256 million, WASA Rs. 967 million, Ministry of Railways Rs 295 million, Hospitals under Federal Government Rs 279 million, Pakistan PWD Rs 260 million, Federal Police Rs 251 million, TMA Rawal Town Rs 190 million, TMA Murree Rs 162 million, Ministry of Interior Rs 143 million, Punjab Police Rs 135 million, Parliament Lodges Rs 118 million, Punjab Jail and Convict Settlement Rs 116 million, Ministry of Health Rs 76 million, PBC Rs 75 million, Ministry of Culture and Sports Rs 75 million, GM Hydai Rs 66 million, Punjab Health and Welfare Department Rs 54 million, Chief Commissioner Islamabad Rs 51 million, Ministry of Education Rs 48 million, TMA Hassan Abdal Rs 46 million, FIA Rs 32 million, District and Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Rawalpindi Rs 28 million, AG Maintenance (DP) Rs 28 million, Ministry of Hajj and Auqaf Rs 25 million, Health District Government Rawalpindi Rs 24 million, Ministry of Environment and URB Rs 23 million, Balochistan House Rs 23 million, Cantt Board Attock Rs 21 million, Islamabad High Court Rs 20 million, District Government Rawalpindi Rs 19 million, Health District Government Jhelum Rs 18 million, TMA Potohar Town Rs 18 million, FBR/CBR Rs 16 million, District and Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Attock Rs 16 million, TMA Jhelum Rs 15 million, Director General Special Education Rs 14 million, Meteorological Department Rs 12 million, Ministry of Local Government Rs 12 million, Intelligence Bureau Rs 10 million, NHA Rs 10 million and Sindh House Rs 10 million.

The IESCO administration has asked the heads of all defaulting government institutions to pay their outstanding electricity bills and to contact the relevant revenue office or the Commercial

Mastermind of 'ATM dacoit gang' busted

KARACHI (INP): Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Intelligence Wing arrested the mastermind of the gang that robbed the citizens leaving the bank ATMs in Karachi, reported on Sunday. According to CTD spokesperson, the arrested accused was identified as Asad Sajjad.

The arrested accused informed that his accomplices deprived about a dozen citizens who left the bank with cash on Saturday apart from this they also tried to rob the citizen in Defence area. During the incident, the police reached the spot and an accused was killed in the encounter.

The spokesperson said that the accused was arrested a few months ago by CTD on the charge of robbing a courier van. The arrested accused was recently released from jail on bail. After getting bail, the accused formed a new gang and started robberies. Further investigation is going on regarding other accomplices of the accused. The arrest of accused Asad Sajjad was carried out with the help of CCTV footage, spokesman CTD said.

Around 72 unauthorized cattle sales points closed

LAHORE (APP): In an ongoing crackdown against illegal cattle markets, Metropolitan Corporation Lahore (MCL) has shut down 72 unauthorized sale points in the provincial capital over the past three days.

MCL Administrator and Deputy Commissioner Rafia Haider told media on Sunday that a comprehensive operation has been initiated against illegal cattle markets in all nine administrative zones of Lahore.

During the last three days, 15 cattle sale points were closed down in Allama Iqbal zone, 16 in Wagah zone, 12 in Ravi zone, 9 in Samnabad zone, 4 in Shamilar zone, 12 in Aziz Bhatti zone and 4 points of illegal cattle markets were eliminated in Data Ganjh Buksh zone. FIRs were also registered against 16 individuals for resistance.

The DC said that illegal cattle markets severely disrupt traffic flow on the roads, adding that the sale and purchase of animals was prohibited outside the designated cattle markets.

اشتہار نیلام عام

ہر خاص و عام کو بذریعہ نوٹس بذریعہ مطلع کیا جاتا ہے کہ کنٹونمنٹ بورڈ مردان اپنی 55 عدد دکانا ت واقع مردان کیٹ ماہانہ کرایہ داری کی بنیاد پر نیلام کرنا چاہتا ہے۔ نیلام مورخہ 25-06-2024 بروز منگل نیلام کر رہا ہے۔ نیلامی منسوخ یا مسخر ذبوتے کی صورت میں دوبارہ نیلامی مورخہ 26-06-2024 بروز بدھ اور سہ بارہ نیلامی مورخہ 27-06-2024 بروز بھارت ہوگی۔

نمبر شمار	تفصیل پراپرٹی	ذریعہ
1	55 عدد دکانا ت (56 تا 110) واقع پوسٹ منڈیم فٹ فلور	Rs. 200,000/- فی دکان

- بولی سے قبل بولی دہندہ ہر دکان کیلئے درج بالا رقم کا کال ڈیپازٹ بحق کنٹونمنٹ ایگزیکٹو آفیسر مردان بمعدہ نوٹس کی قومی شناختی کارڈ اور نوٹس کی کال ڈیپازٹ جمع کرے گا۔
- کامیاب بولی دہندہ کو منسلک 02 لاکھ زر ضمانت (قابل واپسی سکیورٹی) اور 06 لاکھ کرایہ بطور ایڈوانس جمع کروانا ہوگا۔
- بولی کی قومی منظوری تاخیر کنٹونمنٹ بورڈ ہوگی۔
- زیر دستخطی یا بورڈ جو تائے بغیر کسی بھی بولی کو منظور یا مسخر کرنے کا حق محفوظ رکھتا ہے۔
- کیٹ بورڈ کے ذمہ دار بولی میں حصہ لینے کی اجازت نہ ہوگی۔
- یہ اشتہار PPRA ویب سائٹ پر بھی دستیاب ہے۔
- باقی شرائط و قری ایام میں دفتری اوقات کار میں معلوم کی جاسکتی ہیں اور دفتر کے نوٹنمبر 9230262-0937 پر بھی معلومات حاصل کی جاسکتی ہے۔

کنٹونمنٹ ایگزیکٹو آفیسر مردان کیٹ

PID(P) No. 170/24

PCP Celebrates World Club Foot Day



F.P. Report
PESHAWAR: Paraplegic Center Peshawar (PCP) organized a grand event to mark World Club Foot Day at Hayatabad, distributing gifts to children with clubfoot children and allowing their parents to share their experiences regarding the treatment and performance of the center. Director General of Peshawar Development Authority (PDA), Capt (R) Khalid Mehmood, attended the event as the chief guest. He interacted with the children, their parents and distributed gifts and sweets among them. Capt Mehmood was delighted to note that effective and free treatment was being provided at the Paraplegic Center, which enabled children with clubfoot to recover in just a few years and participate in normal activities, including sports and education. He praised the excellent services provided at the center and congratulated the staff for their successful efforts. He also commended Dr. Ilyas Syed for organizing much more for free treatment and rehabilitation of spinal cord injury patients, establishing a state-of-the-art factory for manufacturing assistive devices, and setting up a clinic for children with speech and autism spectrum disorders. Additionally, Dr. Syed launched Doctor of Physiotherapy (DPT) and Occupational Therapy (OT) degree programs. Capt Mehmood assured the center of his full support in this regard. Dr. Syed Mohammad Ilyas, Chief Executive of Paraplegic Center, and Dr. Amir Zeb, Director of Rehabilitation and Club Foot Program Coordinator, elaborated the free treatment program and announced plans to establish more Club Foot clinics in various cities and districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Dr. Ilyas stated that since 2018, the Paraplegic Center Peshawar has provided free treatment to children with clubfoot, including complete rehabilitation from initial casting to 4-5 years of follow-up. Even transportation expenses are covered for deserving families to ensure no child is left untreated due to financial constraints. DG PDA also lauded that, 3,666 children with clubfoot have been treated or registered in this program in short period since 2018. Besides clubfoot clinics have also been established in major hospitals across the province, including Khyber Teaching Hospital Peshawar, Saidu Group of Teaching Hospitals Swat, and Ayub Teaching Hospital Abbottabad. A clinic is also operational at the National Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine in Islamabad. Dr. Ilyas emphasized the importance of International Clubfoot Day in raising awareness about this birth defect, which affects millions of people globally but is completely treatable with timely intervention. The day aims to encourage children undergoing treatment and honor the medical professionals dedicated to this cause, he added. He highlighted that 8.9 million children worldwide are born with clubfoot, with 7.8 million living with permanent disability due to lack of treatment. Almost 200,000 children are born with clubfoot annually, but over 95% can fully recover with timely treatment, he asserted. Dr. Ilyas mentioned about Miracle Feet (MF), an organization committed to treating clubfoot by partnering with local health institutions. He said MF utilize the Ponseti technique, which includes weekly plaster casts and a simple Achilles tendon tenotomy, followed by the use of special DB shoes during sleep times of clubfoot children for 4-5 years to prevent recurrence. He said since its establishment in 2010, Miracle Feet has opened 433 clinics in 37 countries, treating over 95,000 children with clubfoot. Capt (R) Muhammad Khalid, Dr. Syed Muhammad Ilyas, and Dr. Amir Zeb mingled with the children and their parents, distributing gifts and sweets amongst them to celebrate the occasion.

PMDC conducts second Talent Scholarship Test



PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar Model Degree Colleges on Sunday conducted the second phase of the Goodwill and CUSIT Talent Scholarship Test over 1500 matric students from private and public schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The test was held at PMDC Boys and Girls Dalazak Road Peshawar, PMDC Boys and Girls Hayatabad, and PMDC Boys and Girls Mardan to highlight the remarkable talent and potential of our youth. By providing scholarships to deserving students, this program empowers them to pursue their academic dreams and achieve their full potential.

Training workshop on quality assurance held

PESHAWAR (APP): On the special instructions of Vice Chancellor Emeritus Prof. Dr. Jahan Bakht of Agriculture University Peshawar, Director of Directorate of Quality Assurance (DQA) Associate Prof. Dr. Khurram Nawaz Saduzai has suggested "Effective Quality Assurance and Accreditation Bodies" for the Heads of University Departments and Focal Persons. On the invitation of Director QAC, former Dean of Agriculture University Peshawar and Swat Professor (Rtd) Dr. Farmanullah was the resource person of the workshop. Prof. Dr. Idris Khattak, Director of Teaching, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Azim Khan and HODs of all departments were also present on this occasion. The objective of the workshop was to guide the chairpersons, HODs and their respective focal persons on the self-accountability process of preparing self-assessment documents to assess effective quality assurance and accreditation in educational programs as recommended by the Higher Education Commission (HEC). A large number of chairpersons, directors, HODs and focal persons participated on this occasion.

In memory of Khawaja Mohammad Amin Lone

Saleem Tariq Lone
MY late father, Khawaja Mohammad Amin Lone, had been my role model in my professional career. He was a man of great character and professional excellence as a Lawyer Magistrate who joined the PCS in the year 1947 in the Punjab.

Late Chief Justice of Lahore High Court, and the Federal Ombudsman, Honourable Justice Sardar Muhammad Iqbal expressed his deep sense of appreciation for my father's professional work, in the following words in the year 1964, in response to a letter written to him by my father inviting him to attend a dinner in Gujranwala Officers club.

Extract from Honourable Justice Sardar Muhammad Iqbal's letter."

I still remember the happy days when as an advocate I used to appear before you.

And you never failed to exhibit a real judicious approach in all the matters that appeared before you for adjudication.

"He left for his eternal abode in the year 1980. May Allah swt bless his soul in the highest level of Jannatul Firdous. Aameen summa Aameen



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi giving away degrees to graduating students at the Convocation of Allama Iqbal Open University.

Foreign investment coming back to Pakistan under PM's leadership: Engr Amir Muqam

PESHAWAR (APP):Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) and Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan Affairs Engr Amir Muqam here on Sunday said that huge foreign investment had again started coming to Pakistan due to successful policies of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Government that had restored confidence of the international investors. Addressing party workers here at Malam Jabba, the federal minister said that important MoUs and agreements were signed during the successful visit of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif to the brotherly country of China that would largely benefit the people of Pakistan. Engr Amir Muqam said that investments were also coming from brotherly Islamic countries including Saudi Arabia and UAE which strongly reflected investors confidence in the economic and foreign policies of Shehbaz Sharif Govt. He said that vast opportunities for investment were existed in agriculture, mines and mineral, tourism and Information Technology in Pakistan especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Owing to the prudent economic, fiscal and trade policies of PML-N Govt, he said that prices of daily use commodities were significantly decreased and the value of rupee against dollar stabilized. He said that Opposition leaders were victimised during PTI Government and fake cases were registered against PML-N leadership. He said that PML-N leadership had faced all the cases with steadfastness and were acquitted by the courts of law. On the other hands, he said that PTI leadership was making tall hallow slogans in a bid to instigate people and putting pressure on institutions to release PTI founder arrested in corruption cases. He said that these negative elements were provoking people to repeat the May 9 gory incidents.

Political actors deceive people on budget: Faiq

F.P. Report
PESHAWAR: Muhammad Faiq Shah, founder and chairman of the Amun Taraqqi Party said political actors deceive people on budget, salaries, employment and Roti, Kapra and Maakan and people easily come into these deceit tactics. The ATP chief said his party wants to make people empowered and provide them justice at their doorstep. He said empowered strong people would strengthen democracy and the country. Rulers/politicians are weakening these two things for the sake of fascism, personal interests and power, he added. Shah, talking to a group of reporters here on Sunday said what is happening in parliament, national institutions, media everyone is seeing it. Film is being run and deceived the people for another five years, he added. He said public awareness is crucial for reforms in the system. The party leader said the budget is also a part of acting. He added a fictional script of a budget document, which was read out and betrayed the people. Faiq mentioned the budget, in which no importance was given of education, health and agriculture, its call a mere drama. He continued to say that poverty, unemployment and inflation have sharply risen up. Half the population is in great trouble to eat bread and butter for one time, he added. When few percent elites are plundering national wealth and making decisions for people by remaining in power so the situation would further get worse and couldn't be controllable, Shah said. Shah demanded ATP proposed agenda/program should be enforced to empower the people and provide them justice, and the country will lead to sustainable progress.

New reservoirs imperative to avert looming water crisis

PESHAWAR (APP): With country's population crossing over 220 million figures, mounting pressure on water resources dropped down Pakistan's per capita water availability to 908 cubic meters ringing alarm bells for policy makers, also posing serious challenges of food security. Non-construction of new mega water reservoirs after Tarbela and Mangla, changing weather pattern as well as natural hazards had seriously impacted our economy, agricultural produce, livelihood, lifestyle and social fabric. As per the data of Population Census Organization Pakistan per capita water availability of 5,260 cubic meters in 1951 had dropped down to 2129 cubic meter in 1981, 1611 cubic meters in 1991 and then 908 cubic meters in 2016. Besides, non-availability of required water reservoirs, the population that rose to 220 million in 2022 from 34 million in 1951, could be another mattering factor in drop of per capita water availability with years from 1991 to 2016 witnessing massive population growth from 111 million to 197 million respectively. Lack of water reservoirs also resulted in severe floods and droughts inflicting losses of billions of dollars on poor people as experts urged to devise a concrete plan to roll out a water pricing regime to address the water scarcity issue.

"Every year we waste around 29 million acre-feet (MAF) water due to absence of storage facilities as no mega project was built after commissioning of Tarbela and Mangla dams in 1970s," stated former WAPDA Chairman Shams ul Mulk. "If wasting one MAF cost us Rs six billion, then one can easily understand what could be magnitude of our loss in terms of water wastage." Shams ul Mulk has cautioned that unchecked population growth, lack of water conservation and storage facilities would be bringing about much harder days ahead. Former Chairman Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources, (PCRWR) and Water expert Dr Muhammad Aslam Tahir also regretted non-construction of mega dams. "China, India, Japan and Iran constructed so many dams but unfortunately we could not build more mega dams like Tarbela and Mangla even after lapses of decades."

He pleaded that shrinking river water resources and massive pumping out of groundwater was another challenge that needed long term planning and implementation of proper policies. "If groundwater depletion continues at current rate, we shall face widespread water scarcity in future. Therefore, efficient water management should be at the heart of our policies in developing agricultural and industrial sector projects." As the situation aggravated with every passing year and respective government strived hard to cope with looming water scarcity challenge, the desired results are yet to be achieved. "We need timely steps to ensure water management in agriculture, domestic and industrial sectors through an awareness campaign, adoption of technology and imposing restrictions," suggested Dr. Muhammad Ashraf, former Chairman PCRWR. He advocated to control our population and water wastage by using the latest technologies and said, "if our population continues to grow at the same pace and water resource remains constant, we would be touching absolute water scarcity level by 2025." Dr. Ashraf said, widespread urban sprawl and erasing watershed areas was also resulting in diminishing rains and urban flooding. "Therefore, we directly need strict water conservation strategies and charge consumers as per water usage. "For me, water is gold. Everything has an alternate except water and we shall have to conserve it today for our better tomorrow," he remarked. "At this moment 60% of our population lacks access to quality drinking water with the country fearing 30% further water downfall by

heart of our policies in developing agricultural and industrial sector projects."

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2030." Dr Ashraf recommended agricultural zoning for irrigation, improve on-farm water usage efficiency, governance and legislation, site-specific solutions and mainstreaming of youth. According to Pakistan Water Gateway, a non-governmental water-research portal, groundwater levels in the country were also dropping by a meter per annum. "If groundwater depletion continues at this rate, the country would surely head towards widespread water poverty in next few years."

Water Gateway recommended planning for water resource management through broader coordination and cross-sector policies and projects. While the experts are drawing attention of the state organizations towards is fast approaching challenge, the Spokesman of Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) mentions to implementing the largest development portfolio comprising eight mega projects in water and hydropower sectors. "These projects would revolutionize economic landscape of the country with much needed water and economical hydel power," he said and mentioned to under-construction projects including Diamer Basha Dam, Mohmand Dam, Dasu Hydropower Project, Tarbela 5th Extension, Kurram Tangi Dam Stage 1, Nai Gaj Dam, Kachhi Canal Extension and Greater Karachi Bulk Water Supply Scheme (K-IV). Scheduled for completion in a phased manner from 2024 to 2029, the WAPDA statistics reveal that these projects will double its hydel generation from 9,500 MW to 19,500 MW with an addition of around 10,000 MW clean, green and low-cost hydel electricity to National Grid. These projects will also add 9.7 Million Acre Feet (MAF) to gross water storage, sufficient to irrigate another 3.9 million acre land and provide 950 million gallons per day for drinking purpose to Karachi and Peshawar besides generating around 35,000 job opportunities.



In brief

Ayub terms govt 'puppet' F.P. Report

H A F I Z A B A D : Opposition Leader and Central Leader PTI Umer Ayub said that present government is Puppet government and no thing in its control whereas present rulers kept their properties in abroad and they come Pakistan to suck blood of farmers and poor. While addressing a Kisan Convention at village Burj Dara residence of MPA Zameer-ul-Hassan Bhatti last night, he said that one person was standing against them only who is prisoner No. 804. He said that present rulers were damaged our homes and spread terrorism and IG Punjab was their tout and all touts would be accountable when we would come to power. He said some befool people were thinking that Imran Khan would be get back from his stance to put him jail which was a crude fantasy. He said rulers were chasing our social media team. He said that during PTI government tenure, electricity price was Rs.16 per unit while presently it soured to Rs. 85 per unit and dollar would be reached at its highest price of Rs. 350. Addressing the convention, Former Federal Minister Hammad Azhar said that present rulers imported damaged wheat from Ukraine in lust of commission and cut the neck of farmers while due to unnecessary import of wheat local market was crashed and farmers was deprived of receiving justify return of their hardworking.

Three die as car falls into river

DIR UPPER (INP): At least three people died and another critically injured when a vehicle fell into a river here on Sunday. According to details, a vehicle carrying wedding guests after hitting a hill skidded off road at Kamrat road in Belo area of Sheringal in district Upper Dir plunged into River Panjgora. As a result of accident three people including car driver Amanullah s/o Nadir Khan, Sherinada s/o Gulfray and Haris s/o Tajullah died on the spot while Ehtisham s/o Tajullah was injured. The local people, volunteers of rescue and civil defence reached the scene, pulled out the bodies and injured from river and shifted them to RHC Sheringal.

Two killed in car-truck collision

MIRPUR (INP): Two including a woman were killed and two others injured in collision between over speeding car and a truck here on Sunday. According to details, a speedy car collided with a truck in Kakra Town of district Mirpur of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). As a result of accident, two including a woman was killed on the spot while two others sustained injuries. The police and rescue personnel reached the scene and shifted the bodies and injured to hospital. The deceased and injured hailed from Dinga area of district Gujrat.

Three robbers arrested

OKARA (INP): The police arrested three members of a notorious robber gang along with ringleader and recovered weapons here on Sunday. The Okara Police on a tip-off regarding presence of robbers launched a crackdown. During raid, three members of dangerous 'Sajju Gang' including ringleader Sajid alias Sajju, Shajar Gul and Ahmed Akram were arrested. The police recovered arms from possession of the detainees wanted in various criminal cases and street crimes.

Tourists enjoy gleeful activities in spring festival

F.P. Report

HANGU: The tourists and local residents enjoyed the gleeful activities during the three-day Orakzai Spring Festival as the mega event concluded with much funfair on Sunday.

Organized by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) in collaboration with the Tourism Wing for Merged Districts, district administration, Orakzai Scouts, the paramilitary wing of Pak Army, the event showcased traditional and non-traditional sports competitions and cultural and music shows for the tourists and local people.

Orakzai Scouts Commandant Col Syed Sadat Hassan was the chief guest while Project Director for Tourism Wing for Merged Districts Ishtiaq Khan, Orakzai Deputy Commissioner Tayyab Abdullah, civil and military officials, local elders and youths attended the event in great number.

The members of Youth Committee and local volunteers played a pivotal role in making the joyful gala a success.

Besides music and comedy shows, the organizers also displayed huge fireworks that lit up the sky in the night with different eye-catching colours.

A number of artistes, including Imran Khan, Rashid Ahmad Khan, Shaukat Mehmood, Shahzad Khayal, Jalil Shabnum, Kabal Jan and others sang traditional and folk songs and mesmerized the audience with their melodious voices.

The audience delighted as the famous comedians Said Rahman Shino

and Zafar Khan presented comedy skits full of satirical and humorous dialogues.

Held at the scenic Kharashakhwa Storikhel area in Orakzai tribal district, the festival featured jeep, cycle, motor-cycle races, tug-of war, arrow shooting, boat races, truck pulling, tractor pulling, stone lifting, mud wrestling, kabaddi, paragliding, archery, local traditional games, cricket, football, volleyball, inter-seminaries volleyball, inter-school cricket league, horse and camel dances, slingshot and various other traditional sports competitions.

Cultural stalls from all four provinces, including Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, were also part of the festival.

Over 500 students of a local school made a big flag of Pakistan and waved it during the event to show their love for the motherland. The KPCTA had opened camping pods and a rest area to provide comfortable and affordable accommodation to the tourists at Samana Top.

Orakzai tribal district has enormous natural beauty and scenic spots to attract foreign and domestic tourists that include Kalaya, Samana Top, Gulistan Forte, Ferozkhel, Ziarah, Landoka, Nanwar Cave, Toi Khala Waterfall, Sikh Monument, Spinkai and other scenic sites.

The event was aimed at attracting tourists besides involving the local people in tourism and cultural activities so that promotion of tourism, employment opportunities and economy of local residents could be strengthened.

Secretary Energy visits flood-hit Daral Khwar Powerhouse

F.P. Report

SWAT: The devastating floods in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during the year 2022 and the current year 2024 caused severe damage to the 36.6 MW Daral Khwar power station in Swat district, after which the department of Energy and Power and its subsidiary Pakhtunkhwa Energy Development Organization (PEDO) restored the affected power plant on an emergency basis.

It has been re-connected with the National Grid, however, the construction of the Protection Wall will be completed soon to protect the power plant from future flooding.

In this regard, Secretary Energy & Power KP Nisar

Ahmad Khan paid an emergency visit to Daral Khwar Power Station, Swat.

While giving a briefing on this occasion, it was said that the power station under the supervision of PEDO was successfully completed by a team of Chinese and local engineers in 2021, which is earning Rs. 1.3 billion 30 annually to the province.

However, the power plant suffered severe damage due to the catastrophic floods in 2022 and later in April 2024. Secretary Power Nisar Ahmad Khan, who is also serving as acting Chief Executive Officer PEDO, inspected the spillway, sand trap, power channel, switch yard and other parts of Daral Khwar Power

House, inspected and also issued necessary instructions to keep the power house safe from future flood situations.

Secretary urged the concerned authorities to complete the recruitment process immediately to overcome the shortage of technical staff in the power plant.

Speaking on the occasion, Nisar Ahmad Khan said that Daral Khwar is a profitable asset of the province, which generates billions of incomes annually, so the construction of the protective wall should be completed soon before the next monsoon. He urged that work should be done immediately because even a slight delay may affect the production of the power plant.



DIR: A beautiful view of the scenic Kumrat Valley. Kumrat is one of the fast-growing tourists spot in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

ACS visits jail to check facilities for prisoners

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Additional Chief Secretary Home and Tribal Affairs Muhammad Abid Majeed on Sunday visited District Jail Abbottabad to assess the activities and facilities of the jail, interact with the inmates and especially to assess the skill development programs and factory of the jail.

He was flanked by Hamid ur Rehman, Additional IG Prisons.

The visit commenced with a comprehensive briefing by Superintendent Jail, Muhammad Hamid Azam, who provided detailed insights into the functioning of the jail and its various activities

through a concise presentation.

The ACS and AIG prisons visited different sectors of the jail, including the factory, where they expressed appreciation for the non-woven bags facility.

Noting the potential for improvement, the ACS ordered the provision of a logo-making machine to enhance the efficiency of the bags production system.

Personal interactions were conducted with inmates working in the factory, during which both the dignitaries expressed satisfaction with the inmates' engagement and the quality of work being produced.

The officials also visited the newly established video

link facility, acknowledging its importance in enhancing communication and connectivity for inmates.

Special attention was given to the innovative approach of rehabilitation through art, expressing satisfaction with the initiatives undertaken in this regard.

The august dignitaries especially lauded the novice idea of complaint redressal through an inter come system which directly connects the complainant to the superintendent.

The visit concluded with ACS, Abid Majeed leaving positive remarks in the visitor's book, commending the efforts and dedication of the team at District Jail Abbottabad.



HANGU: Commandant Orakzai Scouts Col. Syed Saadat Hassan inspecting a stall during the Orakzai Spring Festival.

DTT to take up Dir issues with lawmakers

Haleem Asad

LOWER DIR: The Dir Think Tank (DTT), a group of qualified professionals from all walks of life working for the uplift of the area, on Sunday announced to take up the issues of Dir Motorway, establishment of Panjkora Division, functionality of Timergara Medical College and initiatives for tourism development with local lawmakers. The announcement was made during a discussion held here with the DTT chief Rahim Shah Akhunkhel in the chair.

During the discussion the DTT planned to motivate local lawmakers for solution of core issues and initiating mega development projects in both the districts of Lower and Upper Dir. The group members including Rahim Shah Akhunkhel, former deputy commissioner Zubair Niazi, Sheikh Abdul Wahab, social activist Akbar Khan, former tehsil nazim Riaz Muhammad, Dr Nadeem Sheikh, Fayyaz Ali Shah, Faheem Shah, Maulana Ubaidullah Anwar and others discussed projects like the establishment of Dir Division, construction of the Dir Motorway,

establishment of University of Dir, functionality of the Timergara Medical College and upgradation of the district headquarters hospital to the status of a teaching hospital. The DTT is represented by a total of 51 members including development professionals, academia, industrialists, economists, sociologists, health experts, communication specialists, businessmen, educationists and journalists; all hailing from the Lower and Upper Dir with a sole objective of working collectively for the area development.

"Dir Motorway is a game changer for the area and tourism development and the forum should think over it", Zubair Niazi, a former deputy commissioner remarked, adding that concerted efforts and lawmakers' engagements at this crucial stage was the need of the hour.

He suggested the forum should discuss the issues with MNAs and MPAs from the area to move subsequently.

Highlighting the DTT modus of operandi, Rahim Shah Akhunkhel informed the forum that the organization advocated for regional development through

research, highlighting needs and solutions and guiding local lawmakers in shaping policies and monitoring practical initiatives.

The forum agreed to send a delegation to meet the special assistant to chief minister on welfare and development, MPA Malik Liaquat Ali in order to apprise him regarding the proposed development projects in the district. It was decided that Sheikh Abdul Wahab, one of the group members, would arrange meetings with other lawmakers regarding the Dir Motorway, initiating steps for tourism development and the establishment of University of Dir.

Mr Zubair Niazi suggested that media persons, V-loggers and social media activists should be given a grand tour to project the unexplored tourists' spots for tourism development as it was a fast growing industry that would strengthen local economy and peace-building initiatives.

The former tehsil nazim Riaz Muhammad was tasked to get information from the deputy commissioner's office regarding the construction of a separate graveyard for Christian community. The forum was

informed that a meeting had been set with the Aqaf and Religious Affairs department to be held on Tuesday next during which the issue of the graveyard would be taken up as it was lingering for a long time. The Pakistan Tahreek Insaf MPA Azam Khan has been taken into confidence on the matter.

The DTT chief Rahim Shah informed the forum that the issues of Dir Motorway and establishment of Dir division; comprising Lower Dir, Upper Dir, Lower Chitral, Upper Chitral and Bajaur districts, have been prioritized and some progress on it had been made. He said the PTI MNA Sahibzada Sibghatullah from the Upper Dir had assured to work on the projects for which he had sought two weeks' time.

Akbar Khan, another member of the group, said the area was surrounded by lush green mountains and had attractive waterfalls and tourists' spots but it lacked smooth road accesses. He said the construction of Dir Motorway would help national and international tourists to enjoy natural beauties which were still hidden from the world.

KKKUK holds syndicate, selection board meetings F.P. Report

KARAK: The Syndicate of Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak (KKKUK) convened here on Sunday under the convenor ship of Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Muhammad Naseer Ud Din.

The meetings were also participated by prominent members including the HEC nominee and Vice Chancellor University of Peshawar Muhammad Jehanzeb Khan, Registrar Dr Rafi Ullah, Treasurer Hafiz Ismail Khan, Director QEC Dr Muhammad Anwar, Farid Jalal, Prof Ajmal Khan, Rtd Justice Muhammad Daud Khan, Javed Iqbal, Saeed Ullah, Masood Ahmed Khan, Muhammad Rashad Khattak, Abdus Salam, Dr Muhammad Inam ul Haq, Shad Muhammad and Dr Siraj ud Din. The other employees of Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak including Syed Naveed Gul, Sadiq Ullah, Tahir Gul, Muhammad Jan, Muhammad Izhar were also present during the meetings for support.

The University key agenda items included review of the revised budget for the fiscal year 2023-24 and the budget estimates for the upcoming fiscal year 2024-25 and approval of minutes of selection board for promotion of employees. After thorough deliberation, the syndicate provided invaluable recommendations to be forwarded to the Senate for further consideration. It also approved recommendations of the selection board.

In his address to the syndicate, Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Muhammad Naseer ud Din appreciated the syndicate members for their dedication and insightful contributions towards the university's fiscal planning.

Balochistan students dream big

QUETTA (APP): Seeing the pictures of world famous personalities on a wall of Lady Margaret Hall, the University of Oxford, United Kingdom, Sadullah Akhtar, a Quetta-born Pakistani journalist was swayed by excitement as it felt to him like day dreaming.

Hailing from a low-income family, the Chevening Scholarship winner had never imagined to travel to such an honored institution in the London city – an ambition frequently voiced by Pakistan's middle class citizens. "I am very excited to be here in London and more importantly, visiting Oxford University as a journalist was my dream that came true," Sadullah told APP. "What inspired me the most, were the pictures of Oxford University alumni that were hanging on the wall of LMH."

Starting from low level in journalism, Sadullah is now a journalist turned student at University of Westminster – a reward for his hard work to earn name in journalism to a level where he was offered this scholarship. "I am overwhelmed with excitement to be studying for one year at Westminster and visiting Oxford. My hard work finally paid me back."

Earlier, the ordinary students from Balochistan could have rarely thought of joining such world known institutions but things are now changing and a leap forward fulfilling this dream is inking an agreement with Oxford University by Chief Minister of Balochistan Mir Sarfaraz Bugti.

Giving a new hope to many aspiring students of Balochistan, this Memorandum of Understanding would provide opportunities to Balochistan students to receive scholarships from Oxford University through the Benazir Scholarship Program being executed in collaboration with Oxford Pakistan Program (OPP).

Recalling the past, Mir Sarfaraz Bugti commemorated profound legacy of

Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, whose tenure at this historical institution symbolizes a bridge between past and future leadership.

"No one can deny importance of education for a true democratic society and this MoU reflects our commitment to education and nurturing educated generation in Balochistan," Bugti remarked. "This project is hoped to mitigate educational inequalities by improving regional educational standards in collaboration with world known universities."

One who gets enrolled in Oxford must know that he will be following the footsteps of some of the most renowned Oxford qualified political figures in Pakistan, who had even served the country as our Prime Ministers and Presidents. Imran Zarkoon Khan, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Balochistan is also an alumnus of Oxford, who initiated this project with dedication to explore educational opportunities for Balochistan's youth.

"The scholarship, supported by OPP and its benefactors, is a tribute to visionary leadership of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto and continues under the guidance of her son, Bilawal Bhutto," Zarkoon remarked. "It is not only a financial aid but a fundamental commitment to educational transformation and empowerment of Balochistan youth."

Benazir Scholarship Program and OPP is an initiative of its kind to help increase Pakistani students representation at a leading university and its credit goes to all contributors who struggled for better opportunities to Balochistan students. Since its establishment three years ago, OPP has become the single largest Pakistan-focused academic platform outside Pakistan. To address the under-representation of Pakistani and British Pakistani students at Oxford; and to raise the academic profile of Pakistan and Pakistan-related areas of interest amongst Oxford's

faculty are the two major objective of OPP.

OPP Core Committee member, Dr Talha J. Pirzada has informed that this year 11 outstanding scholars spanning a wide range of disciplines have been enrolled in Oxford.

Notably, Jabir Ali, a resident of a small village of Kundal Khokhran in Jhang district of Punjab, is one of the eleven luckiest Oxford Alumni of 2024.

"Alhamdulillah, I have got a scholarship at University of Oxford, for my Ph.D. It was my dream to study at such a university. But, it was a bumpy ride. I was rejected by many universities but finally I got through," said jabir Ali, son of a modest farmer in Kundal Khokhran. Another Oxford Alumni 2024, Minha, is fully aware of how the Oxford brand may assist in fulfilling one's future ambitions.

"The ability to accept the offer at this juncture determines the parameters of your future successes. Such opportunities pave way for your excellence in different arena of life," Minha stated. Malala Yousafzai, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and a distinguished alumna of Lady Margaret Hall, also reaffirmed her support for girls education, highlighting her personal involvement and commitment to quality education for female students. Her role is reflected in establishing two scholarships that assist Pakistani female students in pursuing their academic goals at the University of Oxford.

The launch of Benazir Scholarship Program by Chief Minister Bugti-led Balochistan government is a ray of hope for securing much more opportunities for students across province and forge ahead with a commitment to make the country democratically strong and financially viable. There is no doubt that Pakistan has unmatched talent to serve the nation and it was direly needed to fully materialize this talent for progress and wellbeing of our country.



Election for the European Parliament

Voting in 20 EU countries underway

BRUSSELS (AP): Tens of millions across the European Union voted Sunday in EU parliamentary elections in a massive exercise of democracy that is expected to shift the bloc to the right and redirect its future.

The war in Ukraine, migration, and the impact of climate policy on farmers are some of the issues weighing on voters' minds as they cast ballots to elect 720 members of the European Parliament.

Surveys suggest that mainstream and pro-European parties will retain their majority in parliament, but they will lose seats to hard right parties like those led by Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni, Hungarian leader Viktor Orban, Geert Wilders in the Netherlands and Marine Le Pen in France.

That would make it harder for Europe to pass legislation and could at times paralyze decision-making in the world's biggest trading bloc. "I do hope that we will manage to avoid a shift to the right and that Europe will somehow remain united," voter Laura Simon said in Berlin.

EU lawmakers have a say in issues from financial rules to climate and agriculture policy. They approve the EU budget, which bankrolls priorities including infrastructure projects, farm subsidies and aid delivered to Ukraine. And they hold a veto over the appointment of the powerful EU commission.

This elections come at a testing time for voter confidence in a bloc of some 450 million people. Over the last five years, the EU has been shaken by the coronavirus pandemic, an economic slump and an energy crisis fueled by the biggest land conflict in Europe since the Second World War. But political campaigning often focuses on issues of concern in individual countries rather than on broader European interests. Sunday's voting marathon winds

up a four-day election cycle that began in the Netherlands on Thursday.

An unofficial exit poll there suggested that Wilders' anti-migrant hard right party would make important gains in the Netherlands, even though a coalition of pro-European parties has probably pushed it into second place.

Casting his vote in the Flanders region, Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo, whose country holds the EU's rotating presidency until the end of the month, warned that Europe is "at a crossroads" and "more under pressure than ever."

Since the last EU election in 2019, populist or far-right parties now lead governments in three nations — Hungary, Slovakia and Italy — and are part of ruling coalitions in others including Sweden, Finland and, soon, the Netherlands. Polls give the populists an advantage in France, Belgium, Austria and Italy.

"Right is good," Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who leads a stridently nationalist and anti-migrant government, told reporters after casting his ballot. "To go right is always good. Go right!" After the election comes a period of horse-trading, as political parties reconsider in their places in the continent-wide political alliances that run the European legislature. The biggest political group — the center-right European People's Party (EPP) — has moved right during the present elections on issues like security, climate and migration.

Among the most watched questions is whether the Brothers of Italy — the governing party of populist Meloni, which has neo-fascist roots — stays in the more hard-line European Conservatives and Reformists group or becomes part of a new hard right group that could form the wake of the elections. Meloni also has the option to work

with the EPP.

A more worrying scenario for pro-European parties would be if the ECR joins forces with Le Pen's Identity and Democracy to consolidate hard-right influence.

The second biggest group — the center-left Socialists and Democrats — and the Greens refuse to align themselves with the ECR.

Questions also remain over what group Orbán's ruling Fidesz party might join. It was previously part of the EPP but was forced out in 2021 due to conflicts over its interests and values. The far-right Alternative for Germany was kicked out of the Identity and Democracy group following a string of scandals surrounding its two lead candidates for the European Parliament.

The election also ushers in a period of uncertainty as new leaders are chosen at the helm of the European institutions. While lawmakers are jostling over places in alliances, governments will be competing to secure top EU jobs for their national officials.

Chief among them is the presidency of the powerful executive branch, the European Commission, which proposes laws and watches to ensure they are respected. The commission also controls the EU's purse strings, manages trade and is Europe's competition watchdog.

Other plum posts are those of European Council president, who chairs summits of presidents and prime ministers, and EU foreign policy chief, the bloc's top diplomat. Unofficial estimates are due to trickle in from 1615 GMT. Official results of the polls, which are held every five years, will be given to be published after the last polling stations in the 27 EU nations close in Italy at 11 p.m. (2100 GMT), but a clear picture of what the new assembly might look like will only emerge clear on Monday.



CALIFORNIA: A man inspecting a vintage care during the annual classic car show.

Ukraine says it struck one of Russia's most advanced warplanes

KYIV, Ukraine (AP): Ukraine on Sunday said its forces hit an ultra-modern Russian warplane stationed on an air base nearly 600 kilometers (370 miles) from the front lines, after its Western allies allowed Kyiv to use their weapons for limited strikes inside Russia.

Kyiv's main military intelligence service shared satellite photos it said showed the aftermath of the attack. If confirmed, it would mark Ukraine's first known successful strike on a Su-57 fighter plane, a twin-engine stealth fighter lauded as Moscow's most advanced military aircraft.

In one photo, black soot marks and small craters can be seen dotting a concrete strip around the parked aircraft. According to the Main Intelligence Directorate of Ukraine's Ministry of Defense, the strike took place on Saturday at the Akhtubinsk base in southern Russia, some 589 kilometers (366 miles) from the front line.

It wasn't immediately clear what weapons were used, but the airfield's distance from Ukraine suggests that it was likely hit by drones.

The strike comes after the United States and Germany recently authorized Ukraine to hit some

targets on Russian soil with the long-range weapons they are supplying to Kyiv. Ukraine has already used U.S. weapons to strike inside Russia under newly approved guidance from President Joe Biden that allows American arms to be used for the limited purpose of defending Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city.

The Ukrainian agency said that the plane, which is capable of carrying stealth missiles across hundreds of kilometers (miles), was among "a countable few" of its type in Moscow's arsenal. According to reports by Russian agencies, Moscow's armed forces obtained "more than 10" new Su-57s last year, while 76 are set to be produced by 2028.

Moscow did not immediately comment on the reports. Russia's Defense Ministry on Saturday claimed its forces downed three Ukrainian drones in the Astrakhan region, home to the Akhtubinsk airstrip.

Since Moscow's full-scale invasion more than two years ago, Kyiv has ramped up domestic drone production and used the drones to strike deep inside Russia, including a gas terminal near St. Petersburg that lies over 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) north of the Ukrainian border.

Elsewhere, Ukrainian forces kept up drone attacks on Russia's southern border regions, according to local Russian officials.

Three drones hit Belgorod province late on Saturday, damaging a power line and blowing out windows but causing no casualties, said Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov. Another two drones and a Ukrainian-made missile were brought down over the region on Sunday, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

Across Ukraine's front-line provinces, Russian shelling killed at least three civilians and wounded at least nine others on Saturday and overnight, according to reports by regional officials.

A man died and two women suffered wounds in the village of Khotimlya, east of Kharkiv, Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said. Shelling also damaged the local school, a council building, a shop and private homes, Syniehubov said.

Heavy battles continued in the area as Ukrainian troops try to beat back Russia's invading forces after a weeklong push by Moscow that sparked fears for Kharkiv, located just 20 kilometers (12 miles) from

the Russian border, and a wave of civilian evacuations.

Russia's coordinated new offensive has centered on the Kharkiv region, but seems to include testing Ukrainian defenses in Donetsk farther south, while also launching incursions in the northern Sumy and Chernihiv regions.

The easing of restrictions on the use of Western weapons will help Ukraine protect Kharkiv by targeting Russian capabilities across the border. It is unclear what other impact it may have on the direction of the war, in what is proving to be a critical period.

The move drew a furious response from Moscow, and warnings it could embroil NATO in a war with Russia. But Jake Sullivan, Biden's national security adviser, described it as "common sense."

"What was happening up around Kharkiv ... was a Russian offensive where they were moving from one side of the border directly to the other side of the border, and it simply didn't make sense not to allow the Ukrainians to fire across that border, to hit Russian guns and emplacements that were firing at (them)," Sullivan said Sunday in an interview with CBS's "Face the Nation."

Father of Israeli hostage died day before son's rescue, relative says

GAZA (BBC): The father of an Israeli hostage rescued during a military operation in Gaza died a day before he could be reunited with his son, a relative has said.

Almog Meir Jan, 22, was held in Gaza for eight months after being kidnapped from the Nova music festival on 7 October.

He was one of four hostages who were rescued from central Gaza on Saturday, in an air and ground raid that also killed scores of Palestinians.

In the months before Almog's release, the health of his father Yossi deteriorated and he was "glued to the television", his sister Dina told Israeli broadcaster Kan.

"He was worried that he (Almog) was in the hands of murderers and about

what was happening to him and what he was going through," Ms Jan said.

Yossi Jan is believed to have died of a heart attack.

"My brother died of grief and didn't get to see his son return," Dina Jan said.

The rescue of Almog Jan and three other hostages was met with jubilation and relief in Israel, as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu praised special forces for operating "creatively and bravely".

But the humanitarian toll of the operation, which included a barrage of Israeli airstrikes, has sparked condemnation.

Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry said 274 people were killed in the operation. If confirmed, it would make it one of the deadliest days in Gaza since the beginning of the conflict.

A Israel Defense Forces (IDF) spokesperson said the death toll was fewer than 100.

Qatar's Prime Minister called for an intensification of global pressure on Israel to stop its "barbaric aggression" in Gaza, during a summit in Doha on Sunday. The European Union's top diplomat, Josep Borrell, condemned the killings as "another massacre of civilians".

An Israeli minister said that instead of condemning Hamas for hiding behind civilians, the EU had condemned Israel for saving its citizens.

Israeli forces, backed by air strikes, fought intense gun battles with Hamas in the Nuseirat area, in what the Israel Defense Forces called a "high-risk, complex mission" based on "precise" intelligence.

In addition to Almog Meir Jan, hostages Noa Argamani, 26, Andrei Kozlov, 27, and Shlomi Ziv, 41, were rescued during the operation.

Some 116 people kidnapped in October remain in captivity. More than a third of them have already been confirmed dead, but that number is thought likely to be higher.

Benjamin Netanyahu visited the four returned hostages in hospital, telling one "we didn't give up on you for one moment".

"We expect Hamas to release them all. But if they don't, we will do whatever it takes to get them all back home," Mr Netanyahu said outside hospital.

On Sunday, Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry said 37,084 people had been killed since the beginning of the conflict.

Michael Mosley's wife pays tribute to 'kind' husband

LONDON (BBC): The wife of TV and radio presenter Dr Michael Mosley has paid tribute to her "wonderful, funny, kind and brilliant" husband, whose body was found, four days after he went missing on the Greek island of Symi.

Dr Clare Bailey Mosley said it was "devastating" in a statement confirming his death.

The 67-year-old father-of-four went missing on Wednesday after setting off on a walk from Agios Nikolaos beach.

His body was found on a hillside near Agia Marina beach bar on Sunday.

Dr Bailey Mosley said: "We had an incredibly lucky life together.

"We loved each other very much and were so happy together."

She said she was incredibly proud of of her children and had been "hugely comforted by the outpouring of love from people around the world".

Tributes have been pouring in to the broadcaster and author.

Charlotte Moore, the BBC's chief content officer, said: "He was a brilliant science broadcaster and programme maker, able to make the most

complex subjects simple, but he was also passionate about engaging and entertaining audiences, inspiring us all to live a healthier, fuller life."

And Dr Saleyha Ahsan, co-presenter on Trust Me, I'm A Doctor, told BBC News he was a "national treasure" and a "hugely talented" man.

She also praised his "passion for explaining science to a wider audience", adding he made it "accessible to anyone and everyone, not just a niche scientific crowd".

Professor Brian Cox said Dr Mosley was a "mentor" to other science presenters.

The Soho Agency, which represented Dr Mosley, said he was a "wise, wonderful and lovely man".

Some BBC News readers have also been sending tributes praising his impact.

Judith, a teacher from Salisbury, said she has used some of Dr Mosley's documentaries to teach GCSE History for the last 16 years.

"He is a History teacher's best friend, and I am not sure if he ever knew it," she said.

Sue said Dr Mosley helped her "get through Covid - just listening to his broadcasts".

"I wish I could have thanked him personally," she added.

"We are all the richer for having him in our lives."

Dr Mosley was reported missing after he left Agios Nikolaos beach to set off on a walk at about 13:30 local time (11:30 BST) on Wednesday.

CCTV footage showed he had walked to the other side of the bay in intense heat and across rocky terrain.

"We're taking comfort in the fact that he so very nearly made it," his wife said in her statement.

"He did an incredible climb, took the wrong route and collapsed where he couldn't be easily seen by the extensive search team."

"Michael was an adventurous man, it's part of what made him so special," she continued. She also thanked the "extraordinary" people on Symi who worked "tirelessly" to find her husband.

Symy's mayor E l e f t h e r i o s Papakaloudouka said the body was found as teams were searching the coastline.

A bar manager found the body, PA news agency reported, after the island's mayor "saw

something" by the fence of the bar and alerted staff.

A police source told BBC News the deceased had been dead "for a number of days".

Dr Mosley was found next to a fence around 30 minutes walk from the village of Pedi where he was last seen. A coroner has examined the body.

Greek authorities had been conducting an extensive search for Dr Mosley amid high temperatures.

A police officer apparently broke his leg as the body was being recovered.

Dr Mosley studied medicine in London and qualified as a doctor, and for the last two decades was working as a presenter, documentary maker, journalist and author.

He was known for his TV programmes including Trust Me, I'm a Doctor, and BBC Radio 4's Just One Thing podcast.

Dr Mosley was also known for popularising the 5:2 and the Fast 800 diets, which advocate intermittent fasting and low-carbohydrate meals.

His diets attracted a lot of attention in the past, both for their methods and scientific accuracy.

LONDON (AP): The decision by British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to leave D-Day commemorations in northern France early has caused a political storm that threatens to derail his Conservative Party's general election campaign.

Though Sunak apologized for not attending Thursday's final commemoration on Omaha Beach in Normandy, his critics said the decision showed disrespect to the veterans and diminished the U.K.'s international standing. Other world leaders including President Joe Biden, French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy were all present.

Keir Starmer, the leader of the main opposition Labour Party, remained to the end and said it was up to Sunak "to answer for his choice" to skip the D-Day event.

With opinion polls giving Labour a commanding lead ahead of the election on July 4, Sunak's gaffe has raised concerns that the Conservatives' support may come under further pressure over coming days.

Campaign gaffes are regular features of British elections. Some have more impact than others.

Here are a few that have lit up campaigns in recent decades: 1974

Following a difficult few years in government that saw oil prices quadruple following the Yom Kippur war between Israel and Arab nations and the miners' strike causing widespread economic pain, then Conservative Prime Minister Ted Heath called a general election a year earlier than necessary for February 1974.

On explaining his decision to hold the election in the midst of a winter when

power was being rationed, Heath said that he sought a mandate from the British people to rein in the power of trade unions. His question to the public was "Who governs Britain?"

Ultimately, the British people decided it wasn't Heath, and Labour's Harold Wilson returned as prime minister.

1983

Following the Falklands War in 1982 in which British forces sailed thousands of miles to the South Atlantic to expel invading Argentine troops, Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was riding high and was widely expected to win the general election she called for June 1983.

Her victory in the election became more or less assured after Labour, which had been riven with divisions over the previous few years, published an election manifesto that one moderate member of the party described as "the longest suicide note in history." The manifesto advocated an array of radical left-wing policies to be funded by higher taxes. It also called for unilateral nuclear disarmament and withdrawal from what was then the European Economic Community — a policy that the Conservatives would embrace decades later.

Thatcher won a landslide and remained in power until 1990 when she was ousted by lawmakers in her own party.

1992

After 1983's big defeat, the Labour Party sought, under the leadership of Neil Kinnock, to move back to the center ground, where historically elections are won.

By the time the election was called for April 1992 by John Major, who replaced Thatcher, Labour was contending again. With a week or so to go before the elec-

tions, opinion polls were moving in favor of Labour, if not quite winning then becoming the biggest party.

A rally was held in Sheffield, a city in the north of England, and optimism was high. It was unlike anything seen before in the U.K. — more like an event seen in U.S. presidential elections.

Kinnock was clearly caught up with the buoyant mood and started shouting a phrase that sounded like "We're all right!" or "Well all right!" several times.

Whatever he actually said, his perceived overconfidence was widely perceived to be one of the reasons why Labour fell way short and the Conservatives won a fourth straight election.

2001

With hindsight, this was one of the most boring post-war elections, with Tony Blair's Labour Party widely expected to be re-elected by a big margin, akin to the one it achieved four years earlier.

The election took place a month later than Blair had planned in June 2001 as a result of an outbreak of foot and mouth disease. Nothing else surprising happened, until Blair's deputy John Prescott punched a man with a mullet harder after he had thrown an egg at him on the campaign trail.

The incident threatened to derail Labour's campaign, but Blair managed to defuse its impact at the following morning's press conference. "John is John," he said, to widespread laughter among the journalists present.

2010

Blair's successor Gordon Brown didn't have his predecessor's natural communications skills and that was particularly evident in the election campaign of 2010. Brown's ratings — and Labour's — had collapsed

in the wake of the global financial crisis and the party, in power since 1997, faced losing to the Conservatives.

With barely a week to go to the May election, 65-year-old Gillian Duffy quizzed Brown while he was canvassing over the state of the economy and the party's immigration policies.

Following her interrogation and still wired up to Sky News when he got into his car, Brown told his advisers that the meeting was a "disaster" and that she was "just a bigoted woman."

The gaffe dominated the rest of the campaign and there was no way back for Labour, though the Conservatives failed to win an outright majority and David Cameron had to enter into a coalition arrangement with the smaller Liberal Democrats.

2017

Theresa May, who succeeded Cameron after he resigned following Britain's vote to leave the European Union in a referendum in June 2016, sought to capitalize on the Conservative Party's big opinion poll lead and called an early general election for June 2017.

Her hope was that a big majority would help her face down critics — both within her ranks and the opposition — in the upcoming Brexit discussions with the EU.

However, her proposal to change the way retirees pay for long-term care was criticized across the political spectrum and was quickly dubbed the "dementia tax." May was forced to make an embarrassing partial reversal. Rather than increase the modest majority that Cameron had secured in the 2015 general election, she lost it. Her premiership never recovered and she was replaced by Boris Johnson two years later.

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It's time serious effort is made to end the war

UNITED Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will be informing the Security Council about the list of countries and organisations placed on the blacklist for targeting children in conflict zones.

His office informed Israeli ambassador to the UN, Gilad Erdan, that Israel's name is on the list. The UN is also including Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad on the blacklist. More than 15,000 children were killed among the 36,000 by Israeli soldiers in its war in Gaza. This is the count of civilian deaths. Israel has reacted vehemently to the UN decision. Both Erdan and Israeli defence minister Gantz claimed that the Israeli army is the most moral in the world. They did not answer the questions whether the Israeli army operations caused the death and maiming of children. Erdan said in his X post: "This is simply outrageous and wrong. I responded to the shameful decision and said that our army is the most moral in the world."

And he went on to attack the Secretary-General, saying "who incentivises and encourages terrorism and is motivated by hatred towards Israel." Gueterres' spokesperson Stephane Dujarric hit back at Erdan for going public with the intimidation given to him about the decision as a courtesy, and said, "It Is done to give those countries a heads-up and avoid leaks" and found Erdan's leak to the social media as "shocking and unacceptable." Senior Palestinian official Riad Malki responded to the UN decision to add Israel to the blacklist, and said, "Now, faced with the catastrophe in Gaza that the world sees its with naked eyes with the genocide that specifically targets children and women, the UN secretary general no longer has excuses not to place Israel on the blacklist." When the secretary-general places the annex listing the blacklisted countries before the Security Council, it is left to the members, with five of the permanent powers with veto power, to take action. As the US is one of the permanent members and it has been supporting Israel, it is expected that no action will be taken against Israel. A similar thing had happened when the UN listed Russia on the blacklist for the violence against Ukrainian children in the war. The others who are on the blacklist include the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Syria and Haiti. Israel has taken a very hostile stance towards the UN, especially with regard to the ongoing war in Gaza, rejecting every observation of the world body, and ignoring every appeal for peace by Secretary-General Guterres with contempt and anger.

After Friday's decision by the UN, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that that the "UN has blacklisted itself." The US, which has remained an unconditional supporter of Israel, has been pushing the Netanyahu government to agree to a ceasefire but to no avail. US President Joe Biden had gone further than any American leader when he said that if Israel did not agree to a ceasefire, then the US arms supply would be halted. There have been reports that Israel and Hamas are being nudged towards truce with conditions, but it has been a slow and lengthy process. Hamas had agreed to the US offer, but Israel had backed out. Later, Israel showed interest in the truce process. Meanwhile, the war in Gaza rages on, with the Israeli army intruding into all parts at will, and destroying schools and hospitals, and residential neighbourhoods. Hamas has a few days back fired missiles into Gaza after the war broke out between the two sides in October last. It showed that Israel had failed to eliminate the Hamas bases in Gaza despite its aim to do so. Well, it is time the blame game stopped and the conflict ended.

Peninsula instability

TENSIONS on the Korean Peninsula are rising markedly, with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea having upped the ante in their confrontation across the border.

The situation took a notable turn for the worse last week after the DPRK started sending hundreds of trash-carrying balloons to its southern neighbor, in what it claimed was a tit-for-tat response to the ROK's years-long practice of sending balloons with anti-Pyongyang leaflets.

ROK officials say they have no legal grounds to ban private citizens from flying balloons to the north, given the country's constitutional court last year already invalidated a law criminalizing such leafleting, on the ground that it violates free speech.

In reaction to Pyongyang's recent balloon campaign, the ROK has fully suspended a 2018 tension-easing agreement with the DPRK, allowing its troops to restart live-fire exercises and anti-Pyongyang propaganda loudspeaker broadcasts in the border area, actions that are certain to prompt the DPRK to take its own military steps as countermeasures. Seemingly eager to add fuel to the fire, the United States on Wednesday flew a B-1B bomber over the Korean Peninsula for its first precision-guided bombing drill with the ROK in seven years.

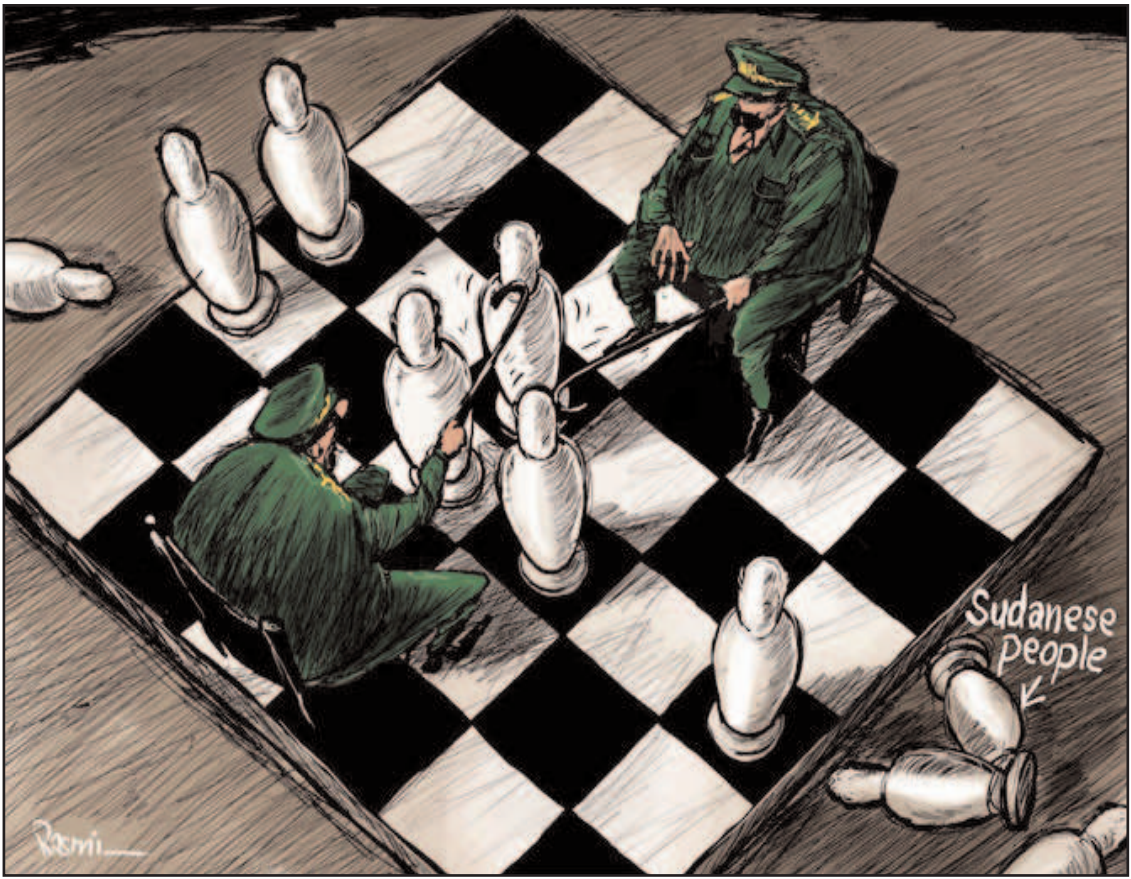
Given the DPRK has previously responded to such flyovers of advanced US aircraft with missile tests, there are growing worries that the Korean Peninsula will again be plunged into a vicious circle of tensions and confrontation, which will pose huge challenges to peace and stability in the region and beyond. Floating balloons across the border, no matter for what purpose, serves no strategic interests for either side on the peninsula. Rather, it will naturally be taken as an act of provocation by the targeted party and thus will only further aggravate the animosity between the two sides and undermine any attempts to build mutual trust. That is why sending anti-DPRK leaflets across the border has even been a controversial issue within the ROK, prompting at times clashes between activists and residents in the border areas fearing their life and business could be disrupted by increasing tensions.

Given the severe consequences intensified tensions on the peninsula will inevitably cause, the two sides need to exercise restraint, and speak and act prudently to prevent the situation from getting even worse.

It is the shared responsibility of relevant parties to make positive efforts for the political settlement of the Korean Peninsula issue. After all, maintaining peace, stability and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula is not only in the common interest of the DPRK and the ROK, it is also in the interest of all countries in the region.

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Biden's ceasefire plan offers a glimmer of hope for Gaza

Yossi Mekelberg

The painstaking efforts to reach a ceasefire agreement between Hamas and Israel in Gaza are inching forward, albeit at a regrettably slow pace. However, after US President Joe Biden last week presented a road map for a possible halt to the deadly hostilities, an end to the war seems closer than it has been until now.

Biden outlined a three-phase proposal that he presented as being an Israeli offer, following months of negotiations through mediators, to which Hamas responded positively, at least in principle. Yet there is always the suspicion that although the two sides might agree to the general principles of such an agreement, they could dig their heels in when the finer details, which for now remain opaque, are being negotiated.

A major obstacle to any deal is that there is not an iota of trust between the two sides. Mutual hatred and the notion of a zero-sum game in which only one side can prevail in the conflict are ingrained in their perceptions of each other. This profound distrust means that whatever both sides might agree to, each will still believe the other will violate it, given the opportunity.

Israeli authorities would like a guarantee that if they halt their military operations and Hamas then fails to release the hostages, they would be free to resume the fighting. Hamas, and especially its leaders, would like assurances, which they most probably will not receive, that Israel will not continue to pursue them by other means.

But the logic behind acceptance of the ceasefire proposal — which rather than being an authentic Israeli offer, as it was presented, seems more likely to be the result of intensive international pressure, especially from Washington — is hard to dispute. After eight months of war there is hardly anything that either side can achieve, militarily.

Hamas, through the atrocities it committed on Oct. 7, provoked Israel into a reaction. But Israel, by declaring its goal to be the complete destruction of Hamas, set itself up to fail, especially since its military strategy of maximum destruction, with little concern for civilian lives, meant it surrendered the moral high ground and left it internationally isolated, with no clear strategy for ending the war.

Moreover, if the Netanyahu government was genuinely interested in seeing the hostages return home alive, it should have acted months ago to advance a deal similar to the one now on the table.

Although not without flaws, Biden's proposal brings an element of rationality to the process of ending the war, as it addresses in its three phases the immediate need to stop the fighting, the release of the hostages, and the reconstruction of Gaza.

It is perplexing why this road map was not presented toward the end of last year or even at the beginning of this year, by which time it

had become apparent that there could be no decisive military conclusion to a war that threatened to drag on interminably while innocent people continued to suffer immensely and the stability of the region was shaken.

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of normality to this hellish situation while negotiations take place during phase two over the "cessation of hostilities permanently," the release of the remaining hostages and a complete Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. This would end the war and allow for phase three, the massive reconstruction project, to begin.

Nevertheless, however smooth the transition from phase to phase might appear on paper, in reality

many hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, in addition to the eventual complete withdrawal of the Israeli army from Gaza and increased deliveries of humanitarian aid, might be just enough to convince it to agree to the deal.

However, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's situation is much more precarious, and the reasons for that are mostly of his own making. First and foremost, the proposal means Hamas would remain a political and military force, albeit one that is badly damaged — an outcome that by Israel's own war objectives would represent a failure.

Even worse, every day brings with it the bitter news of more hostages being killed in captivity. Many Israelis blame their government for this, and rightly so, through its failure to negotiate in good faith for their safe release while this was still possible. The insistence by the Netanyahu government that military pressure would ensure the safety of the hostages proved to be hollow.

Netanyahu knows the three-phase plan is the best available option for Israel, but not necessarily for his own political survival, which is his number one, if not only, priority.

To achieve this, he needs to maneuver between the far-right parties that are threatening to leave his coalition government should he accept the Biden road map, and the National Unity alliance, whose leader Benny Gantz presented an ultimatum to Netanyahu that expired on Saturday, a main demand of which was that the prime minister take action to secure the release of the hostages.

Concurrently, the High Court of Justice is deliberating the drafting into military service of ultra-Orthodox youths, who until now have been exempt from mandatory military conscription. Should the judges order the government to conscript these men, their representatives are likely to abandon the sinking ship of the coalition.

Netanyahu could, in a final act of desperation, accept the ceasefire deal and then call a general election in one more attempt to manipulate the Israeli electorate by persuading them the war has been successful. Whatever happens, the Biden ceasefire proposal is badly in need of elaboration to ensure that the events of Oct. 7, and what followed, can never happen again.

One obvious mistake, moving forward, would be to conclude that a permanent end to hostilities can be achieved without addressing the entirety of the root causes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For now, an end to the fighting, the release of the hostages, and the free flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza would be much-welcomed initial developments.

But the process cannot, and should not, stop there without moving on to agreement of a comprehensive, fair and just peace settlement within a relatively short framework of time.

Fragmented Libya is a hot spot for many emerging threats

Hafed Al-Ghwell

The southern Mediterranean shores are fast becoming a permanent theater for worsening geopolitical tensions and their cumulative impacts on human suffering, especially with Libya's dual crises of arms trafficking and migration. This volatile mix, worsened by the country's protracted political deadlock, has come to reflect the broader security risks facing North Africa, the Sahel, southern Europe, and, by extension, the US.

Historically, the post-2011 destabilization of Libya brought about an alarming proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The raiding of a massive state military arsenal, once among the biggest in the region, led to weapons ranging from pistols to man-portable air defense systems falling into the hands of non-state actors. This proliferation has been linked directly to the enhanced operational capacities of various armed groups, notably impacting conflict dynamics in the Sahel and Sinai. For instance, an influx of firearms and munitions allowed Mali's insurgent factions to increase the intensity of their attacks on state forces, complicating peacekeeping efforts there and, ultimately, leading to an unceremonious French exit from the region.

Recent revelations of Russian military deliveries to Tobruk, defying a decade-old UN arms embargo, are a stark reminder of the surge in illicit activities that continue to thrive in a fractured state. The brazen act signified Moscow's escalating involvement, as well as the impotence of international resolve. An embargo, long-declared "totally ineffective" by a UN panel, has consistently failed to stem the flow of arms, sparking new conflicts and inflaming existing ones, as well as empowering warlords such as Khalifa Haftar. His control over eastern Libya, bolstered by external support, has essentially "green-lit" wide-ranging transnational criminality and created new, complex risks that continue to fester as the world's attention remains fixed elsewhere.

The influx of weaponry worsens an already tenuous security situation across the region. Libya, with its strategic location and porous borders, now functions as a near-permanent hub for trafficking in arms, which feeds conflicts in neighboring countries, such as Sudan, and significantly contributes to the Sahel's endless turmoil.

Following the end of large-scale skirmishes, Libya remains diced up among countless well-armed groups. Not only do they blur the lines between state and non-state actors, they also leverage their military capacities to engage in, and profit from, Libya's trafficking economies. This fragmentation and militarization are now potent catalysts for derailment of the country's fragile political processes and resisting counter-traffic initiatives.

Moreover, the proliferation of arms funds the operations of extremist groups and criminal networks that are deeply embedded in the lucrative smuggling routes crisscrossing North Africa. The ease with which these groups acquire military-grade weaponry is shocking, to say the least — given the impromptu markets for arms on social media, where transactions are openly facilitated. Early this year, for example, munitions ranging from hand grenades to anti-aircraft cannons were being advertised on forums by militants, with some sellers claiming that the origins of some of their lethal wares to be as far away as the Czech Republic, hinting at the transnational contours of Libya's descent into an

open market for the world's small arms. It not only further jeopardizes Libya's already troubled political landscape, but also heightens the risk of dangerous spillovers and cross-border violence, hampering local and international efforts even to gauge the scope of this crisis.

Another growing worry, especially in Brussels and, soon, Washington, is the intersection of small arms proliferation with sprawling human trafficking operations in Libya, which not only violates human rights but also indirectly contributes to the destabilization of both transit and destination countries. Moreover, the black market for arms also provides a significant revenue stream that facilitates the trafficking of contraband and illicit substances, including drugs such as Captagon, dubbed "the poor man's cocaine." This drug has fueled what remains an enduring crisis across the Arab world, disproportionately affecting its most prolific users — the region's youth.

The situation in Libya, serving as a hub for such extensive networks, evidently engenders regional instability and compounds challenges facing local and international stakeholders in their quest to bolster the country's security, governance, and development. The EU's Operation Irbini, launched in 2020 to enforce the arms embargo and stem the flow of weapons, can hardly be called a success. High-profile seizures, including the interception of almost 150 armored vehicles, for instance, hint at the scale of the challenge. However, the operation's focus on larger shipments neglects the smaller, yet equally lethal, consignments of arms and ammunition that continue to slip through to cause havoc elsewhere or to fund it.

Europe's fragmented and often contradictory approach to Libya has only compounded the problem. The lack of a coherent strategy, coupled with individual member states' pursuit of narrow interests, has sustained a lawless environment that benefits malign actors. Take, for instance, the EU's reliance on Libyan factions to curb migrant flows, often through dubious deals with local militias. These not only failed to address the root causes, but also legitimized and empowered groups that now benefit both from Brussels' "generosity" and keeping those very same trafficking routes operational.

Benghazi has become a new source of worries for the US.

The city, controlled by Haftar and his Libyan National Army, is witnessing a concerning increase in chartered flights to Nicaragua, intended to facilitate the illicit passage of migrants to the US, by crossing multiple countries, enabled by criminal networks and the tacit approval of involved states. This route has been operational since 2021, with more than 1,000 charter flights landing in Nicaragua, predominantly from regions linked to conflict or economic hardship.

The absence in Libya of a unified government and stable institutions creates a fertile ground for the proliferation of illicit economies and further external meddling. Without concerted efforts to forge an "acceptable" settlement, any attempt to curb trafficking in arms or manage migration will be akin to treating the symptoms rather than the disease.

Key stakeholders must acknowledge that a durable solution lies in robust support for mediation efforts and credible roadmaps, which should prioritize strengthening what remains of Libya's still-functioning institutions of governance.

How Iraq’s ‘Development Road’ project can deliver stability

About two months ago, amid rising regional tensions resulting from tit-for-tat military exchanges between Israel and Iran, Iraq presented a new vision for logistical connectivity in the Middle East.

On April 22, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, during his first visit to Iraq in 13 years, signed a memorandum of understanding with Iraq, Qatar, and the UAE for construction of the “Development Road” project, a multimodal transport corridor that would connect the Arabian Gulf with Turkiye through road and rail links across Iraq.

The project will cover a distance of 1,275 km and is expected to cost about \$20 billion. Starting from the Iraqi port of Al-Fao, at the mouth of the Shatt Al-Arab, it will consist of roads to carry goods and passengers, and freight railway lines that connect with Turkish road and rail networks at the border town of Faysh Khabur. Factories and workshops will also be built along the new road and rail routes.

The first phase of port development is expected to be completed by early next year. Within three years, the railway system is expected to carry 3.5 million cargo containers and 22 million tonnes of bulk cargo, with exponential increases in subsequent years. The project aims to reduce the delivery time from Shanghai to Rotterdam from 33 to 15 days.

It represents a major effort by Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani to instill fresh vigor into his conflict-ridden country through a project with considerable economic and strategic value. The country obtains 90 percent of its revenues from oil sales, which means national finances are totally dependent on the vagaries of global oil prices, the quantities of oil it is permitted to sell under OPEC-mandated quotas, and the safe functioning of

the pipeline to transport it to Turkiye.

The issue of pipeline safety is linked to the federal government’s relations with the Kurdistan Regional Government, which frequently asserts full control over oil exports from its territory and denies the central government the revenues from such sales.

The Development Road initiative will therefore help to diversify national

Talmiz Ahmad

counterpart to operate Al-Fao port and develop an economic zone alongside it.

Turkiye also backs the project, as it complements Ankara’s own interest in positioning itself as a regional economic hub, and would help to link the country not only with Europe to the west but also China to the east, through Central Asia.

to Iraq, even creating drought conditions on occasion. The latest agreements should ensure closer cooperation on the use of irrigation technology for the efficient use of this scarce resource.

The project still needs to successfully confront some important challenges. Iraq is emerging from four decades of domestic and regional conflicts and so, not surprisingly, its techni-

regional foes, without fear of government sanctions.

In recent months, against the backdrop of the war in Gaza, PMU militants have launched nearly 200 attacks on US targets in Iraq and Syria, inviting strong retaliatory fire. Such activities create an environment of insecurity and instability that could undermine the implementation of the nation’s ambitious infrastructure project.

Another scourge that has reemerged in Iraq is Daesh. Though the organization had been defeated through military action by December 2017, its surviving fighters went underground. These militants have been carrying out sporadic hit-and-run attacks in remote areas, including a bombing in Kirkuk in December 2022 that killed nine police officers. In May, Daesh militants attacked an army site in eastern Iraq and killed several soldiers, including the commanding officer, a colonel. US military sources estimate there could be about 1,000 Daesh fighters in Iraq, and 1,500 in Syria.

Aside from these domestic sources of insecurity, Iraq also has to bear the brunt of Turkiye’s periodic air attacks against militants belonging to the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, also known as the PKK, who have sought sanctuary in northern Iraq. In October last year, a PKK-linked suicide attack in Ankara, the first since 2016, resulted in Turkish air strikes on PKK targets in Iraq. Further attacks by the group on targets in Turkiye have meant Turkish retaliation in northern Iraq has been a regular feature since then.

Several lethal sources of conflict are therefore still present in Iraq. These will need to be effectively tackled if the Development Road project is to succeed in its aim of radically transforming the nation’s economic and political situations and improving the lives of its beleaguered people.

British infantryman Wilf Todd wrote to his wife of the pre-dawn hours of June 6: “I prayed that night as I have never prayed in my life... My heart was beating like a triphammer.”

As a historian, when I look back, like most of my peers I can see that the odds on D-Day overwhelmingly favored Allied success. The Americans and British deployed an awesome superiority of planes, tanks, warships and men. Many of the “Germans” manning the coastal defenses were, in reality, Poles, Russians and Ukrainians dressed in Wehrmacht uniform.

Steven Spielberg’s terrific D-Day movie “Saving Private Ryan” depicts Hitler’s forces deploying their biggest panzer tanks against American troops, yet during the first battles ashore, the only German tanks then on the western flank were recycled French and Czech models. So successful were Allied deception operations — much more influential than the air attacks on French railways — that into July, Hitler kept some of his best formations in the Pas de Calais region, over 300 kilometers north, awaiting a second invasion.

But all this was not known back then to Allied warlords and their soldiers, so fearful of the huge prospective consequences of failure. “Why are we trying to do this?” cried then-British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in a February 1944 spasm of alarm about the planned invasion that caused him to momentarily propose an alternative landing in Portugal.

I have always believed that, had it not been for the ironclad determination of the US chiefs of staff, there would have been no D-Day until 1945.

As it was, minutes after midnight on June 6, one British and two American airborne divisions began to jump into Normandy and almost immediately to fight. Paratrooper James Byrom spoke French and was thus tasked by comrades to knock on the front door of the first house they reached: “At the sight of the motherly, middle-aged peasant, the gulf of the years disappeared and I might have been back in 1939, an English tourist on a walking tour dropping in to ask for a glass of cider and some camembert: “Excusez-nous, Madame. Nous sommes les parachutistes anglais faisant partie de Debarquement Allie (Excuse us, madam. We are British paratroopers from the Allied landing).”

“There was a moment of scrutiny, then the woman folded me in her arms. The tears streamed down her face, and in between kisses, she was shouting for her husband, for lamps, for wine... We found ourselves — an evil-looking group of camouflaged cutthroats — surrounded and overwhelmed by the pent-up emotion of four years.”

Two hours after dawn, the infantry stormed ashore on five beaches across an 80-km front. The American “Bloody Omaha,” where the invaders encountered the toughest resistance from Germans entrenched on bluffs above, still commands much of the popular attention, influenced by the aforesaid Spielberg portrayal. But we should never forget that overall Allied casualties on the day — including those on Omaha — proved to be only a fraction of what the planners had feared.

Though one National Guard unit, A Company of the 116th Infantry, lost 100 men, American dead in the first 24 hours totaled 1,465, including losses to the 82nd and 101st Airborne. The overall Allied figure was around 3,000 killed, about the same number of fatalities as Allied bombs and shells inflicted upon French civilians on June 6.

The generals were naive about the inevitable grogginess of most of the tens of thousands who waded ashore, weakened by seasickness. Commando Finlay Campbell recalled that his legs continued to feel “wobbly” for two days.

French commando Robert Piage, who was 24 and whose mother lived in the coastal town of Ouistreham, hurled himself into water that proved chest high in his eagerness to lead. He had advanced only about 10 meters up the beach when a mortar bomb exploded, killing his closest mate and riddling Piage with fragments which he carried to

Why we commemorate D-Day, 80 years later

Max Hastings

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French commando Robert Piage, who was 24 and whose mother lived in the coastal town of Ouistreham, hurled himself into water that proved chest high in his eagerness to lead. He had advanced only about 10 meters up the beach when a mortar bomb exploded, killing his closest mate and riddling Piage with fragments which he carried to

his grave. “I began to cry. Not out of sorrow for myself, nor because of my wounds, but at the great joy that I felt at being back on French soil,” he recalled. Not for long: He slept that night in an English hospital.

One of the romantic legends of D-Day was created by a local French teenage girl who moved around Sword Beach attempting to succor the wounded, accompanied by wolf whistles from the invaders around her. She had cycled from her home to fetch a swimsuit that she had carelessly left by the sea on the previous day. Her name was Jacqueline Noel, and she married a British soldier whom she met a few days later.

Her D-Day experience was shadowed by family tragedy, because her sister was killed by British Royal Air Force bombs falling on nearby Caen. She cherished a kaleidoscope of memories: “The sea with all the boats was something that you just can’t imagine if you have not seen it. It was boats, boats, boats and more boats, boats everywhere. If I had been a German, I would have looked at this, put my weapon down and said ‘That’s it. Finished.’”

One of Hitler’s defenders who surrendered, indeed, said later: “At first I was rather depressed. I, an old soldier, was a prisoner after a few hours of invasion. But when I saw the materiel behind the enemy front, I could only say, ‘Old man, how lucky you have been!’”

Despite the carnage that seemed so terrible to those in its midst, the invasion had succeeded. A secure beachhead was established, and in the days and weeks that followed, far more men died than the 3,000 who perished in the landings.

Our parents’ and grandparents’ generations viewed D-Day as the supreme event of World War II and the struggle for northwestern Europe as the decisive campaign. My father, an eyewitness, sincerely believed that Britain won the war, with the Americans supplying the chewing gum and the Russians somewhere in Eastern remoteness doing heaven-knew-what.

Modern historians, no longer nationalist fantasists, recognize that the Red Army did most of the dying and killing necessary to smash Hitler’s Wehrmacht. They were sustained by American rations and equipment — the Russians marched to Berlin wearing US-made boots.

Yet D-Day was assuredly the decisive military event of war in the West. Moreover, for the British people, it represented the moment of redemption after suffering so much and enduring so many defeats and humiliations on the long road since the war began on Sept. 3, 1939.

The Normandy landings constituted a supreme feat of organization, planning, skills and courage. We are right to commemorate the towering achievement while the last handful of its survivors remain alive to share the memories.

Fighting desertification and land degradation for future generations

Floods, heat waves, wildfires and the recent global coral bleaching event are all stark reminders that climate change is not a distant threat but rather an immediate crisis that is reshaping our world. One symptom of this crisis is desertification.

Desertification, a term that may be unfamiliar to many, is a growing problem. In simple terms, it is the process by which once-fertile land turns into desert as the quality of the soil degrades over time.

Every second, the equivalent of four football fields of healthy land is degraded, totaling 100 million hectares a year, according to the UN. This is already having a catastrophic effect on communities, ecosystems, food security and water resources, especially in the world’s poorest countries.

And, as desertification spreads into new geographies, the effects are set to worsen. According to the UN, 3.2 billion people are already impacted by deser-

tification and 50 million could be displaced in the next 10 years, making it one of the most serious environmental problems facing humanity.

The UN has also said that more than 24 billion tons of fertile soil disappear every year. Two-thirds of our planet is currently undergoing desertification. If no action is taken, 1.5 million sq. km of farmland, equivalent to the entire arable land of India, will be lost by 2050.

As the UN Environment Programme has stated, ours is the first generation to fully comprehend the enormity of the threat posed to our land and we may well be the last to have the opportunity to reverse the course of its destruction.

Therefore, it is vital that businesses, governments, communities and non-governmental organizations urgently work together to prioritize the restoration of land ecosystems by replanting forests, rewetting marshes and reviving soils.

That means coming

Raed Albasseet

together to push and promote coordinated land-use planning, including the management of water resources, livestock and agricultural activities, and preserving vegetation cover, which plays a key role in protecting the soil from wind and water erosion.

Reforestation is also vital to regenerate vegetation cover, reactivate moisture circulation and generate biodiversity. So is rotational grazing, which limits pressure to a particular area while others regenerate through the coexistence of crops that allow for more efficient nutrient cycling.

It is also important to remember that, while tackling desertification, drought and land degradation will undoubtedly require the use of novel, innovative and cutting-edge methodologies, nature often already provides the best solution.

At Red Sea Global, we have established a mangrove nursery to aid us in

our goal to plant as many as 50 million mangrove trees by 2030.

We have already planted 1 million and will plant a further 2 million before the year is out. These mangroves will provide shelter for a diversity of wildlife and will sequester carbon, with the capacity to absorb up to five to 10 times more than other plants.

The power of mangrove forests to store carbon, manage flooding, stabilize coastlines and provide shelter for fish and other organisms makes them one of nature’s super ecosystems.

At more than 1 million sq. meters, our landscape nursery is the largest in the region. It will contain more than 30 million plants, reducing our reliance on imported foreign species and allowing native ones to thrive.

Looking specifically at this year’s World Environment Day, which fell on June 5, it is encouraging to see plans to accelerate the commitments made in the UN’s Decade

on Ecosystem Restoration resolution.

Restoration efforts, like those in Kenya, offer a glimmer of hope. The Kenyan government has pledged to rehabilitate 5.1 million hectares of degraded land by 2030. This will improve the lives of Kenyans who rely on land resources for their livelihoods, while also curbing the country’s carbon dioxide emissions by 3.7 percent and safeguarding its biodiversity.

As the host of this year’s World Environment Day, Saudi Arabia launched a campaign to combat desertification and build drought resilience. The Kingdom is already restoring huge swathes of arid and semi-arid land to its original green and wild state and leading the G20 Global Land Initiative.

Nature is our greatest asset. But nature needs nurture. Now is the time to come together to push the planet onto a path of sustainability and resilience, and to ensure we protect it for future generations.

Ray Hanania

and anti-Muslim rhetoric of his Republican Party’s leadership.

We have all heard the extremist rhetoric of some GOP politicians, like former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley or Reps. Max Miller and Brian Mast. Haley’s hatred toward Arabs and Muslims was reflected in her decision last month to write the words “finish them” on an American-made artillery shell before it was used by Israel on Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Do not forget. The people in Gaza are not just Palestinian. They are Arabs too.

Meanwhile, Miller called for turning Gaza “into a parking lot” and Mast compared “Palestinian civilians” to “Nazi civilians” in a speech

Democratic candidates who embrace issues of freedom, justice, and compromise between Israel and Palestine.

As a consequence of all of this, all three leading candidates for president — Biden, Trump and third-party candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. — support Israel’s interests over those of the Arab and Muslim worlds, making voting in November a difficult choice.

But if you set aside the political rhetoric of each candidate and instead look at the consequences of victory for each of them, you can see a clear and effective political path emerge for Arabs and Muslims. They have no choice but to support Trump, despite his past policies (whether exaggerated or not) and the virulently extremist anti-Arab

itself.

Another major factor is that most Israelis understand American culture and society far better than most Arabs or Muslims. As a consequence, they better understand the nuances of American politics, fueling Israel’s political successes.

For Arab and Muslim Americans, this creates a quagmire in the country’s two-party system that is difficult to navigate. When it comes to America’s Middle East policies, especially on Palestine, there is no substantive difference between Republicans and Democrats, or even most major third-party candidates.

That is ironic considering that Arabs and Muslims share many of the same conservative values as the Republican Party, although they often lean toward

Arab and Muslim Americans’ best election strategy is obvious

Arab and Muslim Americans face a critical moment on Nov. 5. If Joe Biden wins the US presidential election, they lose. Donald Trump might not be a great alternative, but he may be their only choice.

Pro-Israel political action committees pour millions of dollars into the campaign funds of both Republican and Democratic candidates and officials — a system where money means more than ethics.

Israel’s lobbying is unrivaled in its ability to influence and inform Congress, while efforts by the Arab world and the Arab American community do not even come close to having the same impact. There are no comparable pro-Arab PACs, so the pro-Israel lobby has the political football field all to

self from the pro-Israel community, which can do far more harm to him than the ineffective pro-Arab American community.

Arab and Muslim voters have one goal in the presidential election on Nov. 5. That is to prove that they cannot be taken for granted, as President Biden and his party have done. They must prove their value by showing Democrats the consequences of the party shunning their needs, as Biden has done during Israel’s war on Gaza.

It is better to elect Trump, an inconsistent politician and convicted felon who they may be able to reason with, than to allow Biden and the Democrats to realize that they do not need to listen to the concerns of the country’s Arab and Muslim communities.



Federal Budget-2024-25:

Steel melters, re-rolling millers want incentives

LAHORE (APP): The steel melters and re-rolling millers should be given special incentives in the upcoming federal budget to strengthen this industry.

A steel industry tycoon and Vice President of Gold Ring Economic Forum (GREF), Meher Kashif Younis, told media men here Sunday that steel industry in Pakistan is a cornerstone of economic development, providing vital raw materials for construction, infrastructure, and various manufacturing sectors.

Representing a significant segment of the national industrial base, he mentioned the Pakistan Steel Melters and Re-rolling Mills Association (PSMRMA) also emphasized that

strategic support is essential for the sector's growth and sustainability, and called for subsidized financing options to modernize and upgrade existing mills.

Meher was of the view that access to low-interest loans and grants would facilitate the adoption of advanced technologies, improving efficiency and product quality. He also stressed the need for improved infrastructure including reliable power supply and transportation networks, which are critical for the smooth operation of steel plants.

Though this industry has been facing numerous challenges such as rising production costs, outdated technology, and competi-

tive pressures from imported steel, these demands are genuine and aimed at addressing the industry's current challenges and set the stage for sustainable growth.

By incorporating the steel melters and re-rolling millers' demands into the upcoming federal budget, the government can significantly contribute to the revitalization and competitiveness of Pakistan's steel industry.

Meher also called for reduced duties on raw material imports including scrap metal, which constitutes a primary input for steel production. Lowering these duties would reduce the cost burden on domestic producers, enabling them to

compete more effectively with foreign counterparts, he maintained.

He said the PSMRMA also suggested tax relief measures of low corporate tax rates and exemptions from certain levies for a specified period. These fiscal incentives would enhance the financial viability of steel producers, encouraging investment and expansion, he remarked.

He underscored the importance of government-led initiatives to stimulate demand for domestically produced steel and this could involve prioritizing local steel in public sector projects and infrastructure development, thereby ensuring a steady market for domestic producers.

APBF suggests soft financing for SMEs with minimum markup

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF) has asked the government to announce soft financing with minimum possible markup and without any collateral for SMEs in the upcoming budget 2024-25 to support them in line with the rest of the world, which has been providing loans at very nominal interest.

The APBF office-bearers in their Board meeting forwarded several recommendations to be incorporated in the federal budget so that the small industry could deal with the challenges posed by the present economic crisis, saying mere statements would not work unless solid measures are taken by the government, including a sizable reduction in fuel prices, bringing down key policy rate to sin-

gle digit, regionally competitive energy rates and substantial cut in duties and taxes.

It is unfortunate that the State Bank, in August 2017, had introduced a financing scheme for Small and Medium Enterprises, enabling them to get loans without collateral but it was never implemented in its true spirit.

The scheme was launched to improve the SMEs' access to finances in collaboration with the government aimed at enabling the businesses that cannot offer security or collateral to access bank finance.

The APBF meeting was held here with a view to deliberate the federal budget 2024-25 and called for concrete steps to keep industrial wheels running, especially of SMEs, saving the livelihood of millions of

workers associated with the small and medium industries.

The APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood urged the central bank to announce a soft loan with minimum mark-up rate, especially for SMEs to bailout their struggling businesses.

The forum called for significant cuts in import duties and waiver of sales tax, income tax and additional income taxes, which are still being charged in this time of grave crisis.

Maaz Mahmood asked the government to take concrete steps to keep the industrial wheels running especially of SMEs, to save the livelihood of millions of workers associated with the small industries.

The APBF Chairman Ibrahim Qureshi said that we should keep our focus

on support for cash flow management for SME sector and the government may prioritize its incentive preferences under the growth and importance for the economy. He suggested that the authorities should reduce sales tax to at least 10% to improve demand generation, besides announcing interest-free loans to pay employees' salaries.

The APBF President said that to save the economy from the impacts of the slow growth, the government should announce special incentives for a cash-strapped small and medium industry, which represents more than 90% of around 3.2 million business enterprises in Pakistan, contributing 40% to GDP, employing more than 80% of non-agricultural workforce, and generating 25% of export earnings.

PIAF urges Finance Ministry to focus on small industries

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) has said that the government with a view to help grow the businesses will have to take solid measures in the upcoming Federal Budget 2024-25 to strengthen the industry, especially the SMEs, saving the livelihood of millions of workers associated with the small industries. The government will have to make a visible reduction in taxes in the budget to help grow the businesses, particularly the SME sector, as Pakistan needs millions of jobs annually.

It said that mere statements will not work unless the government takes solid measures. A sizable reduction in fuel prices, a major cut in the key policy rate, regionally competitive energy rates, quick refunds payment, and relaxation in duties & taxes are need of the hour.

The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) Chairman Faheemur Rehman Saigol put forward these recommendations while chairing

a joint meeting of various trade and industrial sectors held here to review the budget proposals for the upcoming fiscal year, urging the finance ministry to make focus on greater relief to the documented and registered SMEs.

Unveiling the budget proposals, the PIAF Chairman said that the PIAF has submitted comprehensive proposals for the upcoming federal budget with main objective to bring liberal investment policy, infrastructure development, broadening of tax base and creating jobs through industrialization. The budget proposals were compiled in an unbiased and transparent manner, incorporating feedback received from business community on hosts of sectors from all over the country.

The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) Chairman proposed the budget makers to reduce tax rates with a view to widen the tax base and curtail parallel economy, also providing a competitive edge to Pakistan's products in global markets.

He said that the SMEs

are the major victims of corona pandemic; therefore, the government should introduce supportive policies. He said that the small and medium enterprises are backbone of the economy and their role was crucial for economic development.

He said that major issue of the SMEs is limited access to the financing, as just 5-7% of the total lending to the private sector was being given to them while the number of SME borrowers are below 0.2 million, which should be increased.

Faheem Saigol called for introducing soft policies for SMEs including special financing schemes where they can get credit at low markup rates with no collateral requirement. Moreover, there should be a holiday for all taxes and levies for five years for the newly registered companies, especially SMEs.

There should also be exemption from audit for the newly registered SMEs in this period. He said that with a view to save the economy the government should announce special incentives for a cash-

strapped Small and Medium Industry, which represents more than 90 percent of around 3.2 million business enterprises in Pakistan, contributing 40 percent to the GDP, employing more than 80 percent of non-agricultural workforce, and generating 25 percent of export earnings.

He asked the government to take solid measures, as a significant cut in fuel rates, a major cut in the key policy rate, regionally competitive energy rates, quick refunds payment, and relaxation in duties & taxes are need of the hour.

He added that promoting foreign direct investment, increasing the share of direct taxes and slashing the slab of indirect levies topped the proposals presented by the Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) for the federal budget 2024-25.

He said that the PIAF, in its budget proposals, also urged the government to reduce sales tax to single digit and also cut corporate tax to make the upcoming budget business-friendly.



ISLAMABAD: People busy in purchasing vegetables from vendor in weekly Sunday Bazaar.

PHHSA for timely steps

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan needs to take timely measures to offset emerging challenges of fast decreasing area of arable land and looming water scarcity, which poses a serious threat to food security especially rice cultivation in the country.

Talking to the media here Sunday, Pakistan Hitech Hybrid Seed Association (PHHSA) Chairman Shahzad Ali Malik said that rice is a staple food crop and a critical component of Pakistan's agriculture sector, contributing substantially to the national economy and food security. However, increasing urbanization, industrial expansion, and climate change are progressively reducing the area of arable land and water available for agriculture/farming.

The PHHSA chief suggested that in order to mitigate these issues, it is imperative to adopt advanced agricultural technologies and sustainable practices that can enhance productivity while conserving resources. He mentioned, development and adoption of drought-resistant and high-yielding Guard hybrid rice seed varieties through genetic modification and traditional breeding techniques play a crucial role.

He claimed that these varieties could thrive in less water-intensive conditions and are more resilient to the impacts of climate change. Investing in research and development to innovate such crops is essential, he said, asserting that collaborative efforts between the farmers and agricultural research institutions, including Guard Agricultural Research and Services Division, are crucial in implementing these research technologies and practices effectively. Imparting training and resources to farmers can facilitate the transition to these new methods, ensuring sustainable rice production in Pakistan amidst dwindling land and water resources.

SNGPL's gas theft crackdown:

71 connections disconnected

F.P. Report

LAHORE: During the ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, SNGPL continued raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad, disconnecting another 71 connections; Rs 0.91 million fine imposed.

In Lahore, the team disconnected 8 connections on illegal use of gas and also imposed a fine of Rs 0.51 million against gas theft cases.

The team also lodged 1 FIR against gas pilfer.

In Multan the team disconnected 09 connections

on illegal use of gas while another 03 on use of Compressor.

In Peshawar the company disconnected 39 connections on account of direct use and illegal use of gas and amount of Rs 0.07 million have been booked against gas theft cases.

The regional team of Shiekhupura disconnected 04 connections on illegal use of gas and also booked an amount of Rs 0.19 million against gas theft cases.

In Faisalabad the team disconnected 02 connections on illegal use of gas and also imposed a fine of

Rs 0.07 million against gas theft cases.

In Karak the team disconnected 01 connection on illegal use of gas and also booked an amount of Rs 0.07 million against gas theft cases.

In Bahawalpur the team disconnected 01 connection on illegal use of gas while another 01 on use of the compressor.

The regional team of Sahiwal disconnected 02 connections on illegal use of gas.

In Gujrat the team disconnected 01 connection on illegal use of gas.

Long-term loans on low markup vital for farmers

F.P. Reort

ISLAMABAD: Stressing the need for a long-term loan scheme on low markup for the farmers, the business community has said that the provincial government's decision to launch a green tractor scheme will boost agriculture economy in Punjab and help stimulate national economy which is already showing signs of stability with stable value of the rupee, reduced inflation, and expected reduction in the interest rates.

Appreciating the government plan of providing subsidies to the peasants for the purchase of tractors, the Pakistan Association of Automotive Parts & Accessories Manufacturers Chairman Abdur Rehman Aizaz said that the tractor subsidy schemes have been introduced in the past as well but last for one year, which creates a boom in the industry followed by a bust

in the following year, which is detrimental for the industry.

Mumsahd Ali, SVC Paapam and a tractor parts manufacturer was of the opinion that both the federal and provincial budgets should function in unison to support the industry and the farmer. The federal government is likely to impose GST on tractors, and this should be offset by the provincial governments through reduced markup long-term loans, which should continue for at least five years.

He was of the opinion that a one-time heavy subsidy on tractors would put the industry in overdrive for the coming financial year, followed by a sharp drop in orders in the next financial year.

This trend has been observed several times in the past 20 years. Sustainance of growth is more beneficial than a boom and bust cycle.

Ali also advocated full support to the farmer to improve the agri yield and profitability of the farmers, which will come through low input costs and continuous improvement in irrigation infrastructure and technology, along with locally developed agri technology solutions from sowing to harvest and handling and storage of agri products.

It is pertinent to mention here that two top tractor plants are situated in Punjab with over 200 SME tractor parts industry mainly operating in the Lahore region, creating jobs for thousands of people.

The association has also decided to write to the CM Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif with regards to the mode of support to the farmer for the procurement of tractors, with a view to elaborate the role and impact of the tractor parts industry on the national and provincial economy.

Malik for resolving Pak-India conflicts to spur regional economic growth

LAHORE (APP): SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry's former President Iftikhar Ali Malik Sunday pointed out that long pending unresolved conflicts between Pakistan and India hinder economic growth and overall prosperity in the region.

In a media statement

here Sunday, he noted that increased trade and economic collaboration between India and Pakistan could lead to significant advancements in technology, infrastructure, and overall economic development.

He called on both the governments to prioritize peace and stability, sug-

gesting that joint efforts in trade and commerce could pave the way for a more prosperous and harmonious South Asia.

Ifitikhar Malik urged the new Indian leadership to hold constructive dialogue with Pakistan, emphasizing that diplomatic efforts are essential to overcoming

historical grievances and building a future based on mutual respect and cooperation.

He hoped that India's new government will address the Kashmir dispute and also reflect a broader vision for regional peace and economic development.

BMP endorses Pak-China consensus on CPEC advancement

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Businessmen Panel (BMP) of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) has announced to endorse the Pak-China consensus on up-gradation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and advancing the high-quality development to the second phase, especially the shifting of the Chinese manufacturing units to Pakistan, demanding the government for equal opportunities to Pakistanis in CPEC projects.

The FPCCI former president and BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar said the government needs to provide equal facilities to the local business community, as are given to the Chinese investors, endorsing the PM Shehbaz Sharif and

Chinese President Xi Jinping resolve to further deepen cooperation across diverse fields ranging from political and security to economic, trade, and people-to-people exchanges.

The Businessmen Panel chief declared to endorse the Pak-China agreement to set a new direction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor for future cooperation in high economic impact areas, especially the shifting of the Chinese manufacturing units to Pakistan.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that the relocation of Chinese industry to Pakistan and providing Chinese financing facilities for future projects are the welcome steps and if we could put all energies and provide enabling environment, the newly-agreed framework has the potential to transform the

country from low-income to a middle-income country in the next few years. He asked the government to focus only on those projects that had a high impact on Pakistan's economy.

According to reports, the decisions to expand the CPEC scope were taken during PM Shehbaz meeting with Chinese representatives. He said the meeting was fruitful and the agreed framework was promising, as it had set a new direction for the CPEC and hoped that the second phase of CPEC would yield tangible progress towards a shared goal of making this project a resounding success.

He said that high consideration should be given to socio-economic and industrial cooperation in the second phase of CPEC. He underscored that bilateral economic cooperation

should proceed as planned for the mutual benefit of both the brotherly countries. It was decided to expand the CPEC to copper, gold, oil, gas and affordable housing sectors, as the copper and mineral development would benefit both the countries since China remained one of the largest copper importers.

Mian Nisar said that only the oil and gas sectors have the potential to attract up to \$10 billion Chinese investment. He maintained that the revival of Pakistan Steel Mills with the help of China could also reduce the import bill by \$4 billion.

He said that Pakistan's security challenges had roots in its neighborhood and to meet the challenges, there was a need to completely fence the country's borders with Afghanistan and Iran.

He said that the CPEC will be a gateway of progress and prosperity for a bright future. He added that next year would prove to be a significant year for China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, as several significant milestones will be achieved by the end of the year.

It is to be noted that the top leaders of the friendly countries also reaffirmed the time-honored 'All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership. PM Shehbaz held a long and in-depth discussion in meeting with President Xi. Chief of the Army Staff General Asim Munir was also present in the meeting. The two leaders were accompanied by the federal ministers and senior officials. This was the premier's first meeting with the president of China since

assuming office in 2024.

The meeting was marked by traditional warmth reflective of the ironclad friendship and close strategic ties between the two countries.

PM Shehbaz thanked President Xi for the warm and gracious welcome accorded to him and his delegation in China.

Commending President Xi's visionary Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Global Development Initiative (GDI), the prime minister underscored that as the flagship project of BRI, CPEC had significantly contributed to Pakistan's socioeconomic development. The two leaders reaffirmed the consensus for high-quality development of CPEC and timely completion of major ongoing projects.

PM Shehbaz reaffirmed

Pakistan's commitment to the high-quality development of CPEC and to foster synergy between the development strategies of the two countries through close coordination. He underlined Pakistan's commitment and full support for the safety and security of Chinese nationals, projects and institutions in Pakistan.

Shehbaz briefed Xi on Pakistan's policies for economic reform and sustained growth, industrial development, agricultural modernization and regional connectivity and the critical role played by CPEC in the country's development. He underlined that the Pakistan government's agenda for people-centric, socio-economic development resonates with the concept of 'shared prosperity' embraced by China.

The Chinese president

also hosted a banquet in honour of PM Shehbaz, where another round of discussion on different matters of mutual interests was held.

Pakistan and China will also continue to consult closely on issues of regional and global significance and multilateral fora, especially during the two-year tenure of Pakistan as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council.

The delegation-level talks were followed by an MoU signing ceremony, witnessed by PM Shehbaz Sharif and Premier Li Qiang, where both signed 23 MoUs and agreements deepening cooperation in transport infrastructure, industry, energy, agriculture, media, health, water, socio-economic development and others of mutual interest.



In brief

PBBF trails on June 28

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF) one day trials for the selection of Pakistan team to compete in the 6th Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games 2024 in the 3x3 format (Men) would be held on June 28. The trials would be held at the Government College University Basketball Courts in Lahore, said a press release issued on Sunday. The affiliated units of PBBF have been directed to nominate budding, talented and upcoming players for the trials. The nominated sportsperson must be below the age of 23 years on Dec 31, 2024. The National Basketball Training Camp would be sponsored by the Pakistan Sports Board and qualified coaches will impart training to the players. The PBBF was also exploring possibilities that selected team also undertake training cum competitions tour of neighbouring countries before participation in the Indoor Games.

Brazil sink Mexico 3-2

COLLEGE (APP): Teenage striker Endrick headed home an injury-time winner as Brazil defeated Mexico 3-2 in a warm-up friendly ahead of this month's Copa America on Saturday. The Brazilians looked to be cruising to victory after goals from Fulham's Andreas Pereira and Arsenal's Gabriel Martinelli fired the South American giants into a 2-0 lead at Kyle Field in College Station, Texas. But Mexico staged an unlikely late fightback after Julian Quiñones pulled a goal back in the 73rd minute. Guillermo Martínez looked to have secured a draw for Mexico in the third minute of time added on, lashing in a rebound from his own header after a corner to make it 2-2. Yet Mexico barely had time to regroup before Brazil took the lead again. Vinicius Jr lofted an inviting cross into the penalty area from wide on the left and his new Real Madrid team-mate Endrick timed his jump to perfection to glance in a header past Mexico goalkeeper Julio Gonzalez for 3-2. The victory extended Brazil's unbeaten record under new coach Dorival Junior, who oversaw 1-0 win over England at Wembley in March followed by a 3-3 draw with Spain. Brazil face the United States in a friendly in Orlando on Wednesday in what will be their final game before they open their Copa America campaign against Costa Rica on June 24.

South Africa hold Nigeria

UYO (INP): South Africa held Nigeria for a 1-1 draw at Godswill Akpabio International Stadium to keep the Super Eagles without a victory in the FIFA World Cup 2026 Qualifier. The stalemate saw Nigeria drop to fourth in Group C with three points from six matches with South Africa third on four points. Minnows Lesotho ranked 149th in the world, are top of the Group C standings with five points on the back of a 2-0 win over Zimbabwe earlier on Friday. Rwanda are second with four points and a better goal difference than both Benin and South Africa. Friday's match in the southern Nigerian town of Uyo was a repeat of the 2024 Africa Cup of Nations semi-final in the Ivory Coast, which also ended 1-1 before Nigeria won on penalties.



NEW YORK: Virat Kohli of India makes his way off after being dismissed during the ICC Men's T20 Cricket World Cup West Indies & USA 2024 match between India and Pakistan.

Pakistan lose to South Africa 3-4 in bronze medal match

POLAND (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan lost their bronze medal match to South Africa 3-4 in the FIH Hockey Men's Nations Cup in Poland. The first quarter of the game went without a goal. The second quarter went with the scores of 1-1 as Samkelo Mvimbi of South Africa scored the first goal followed by Abubakar Mahmood scoring a goal through a penalty corner for Pakistan lev-

elling the score 1-1.

Mustapha Cassiem scored the second goal for South Africa through a penalty corner in the third quarter of the match followed by another goal for Pakistan by Abdul Rehman which levelled the score once again.

In the fourth quarter, Keenan Horne scored the third goal for South Africa and Cassiem followed with another goal in the 58th minute of the game taking

the scorecard to 4-2.

Hannan Shahid tried to save the game with a last-minute goal taking the score to 3-4 but to no avail as the opponents were one goal ahead when the match came to an end.

The last time Pakistan and South Africa played against each other in a hockey game was back in 2022 in the first edition of the FIH Hockey Men's Nations Cup and South Africa won that game.

Pakistan grabs 2nd gold medal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan bagged the second gold medal in the Asian Road Cycling Championship, with top cyclist Ali Alyas winning the Road Scratch Race at Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Ali Alyas completed a distance of 61.4 km in one hour and 26 minutes, showcasing his exceptional endurance and speed. The championship, witnessed an impressive performance from Alyas, solidifying his status as a leading cyclist in the region. His back-to-back gold medals mark a significant milestone for Pakistani cycling on the int'l stage.

Syed Azhar Ali Shah, President of the Pakistan Cycling Federation (PCF), lauded Ali Alyas and the entire Pakistani team for their outstanding performance. He praised Alyas's dedication and skill, highlighting the significance of these victories for the sport in Pakistan. This is a proud moment for Pakistan," said Shah. "Ali Alyas has not only made history but has also inspired countless young athletes across the country.

Pak football team to face Tajikistan in June 11

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan football team is set to play its final away match of the FIFA World Cup Qualifier Round 2 against Tajikistan on June 11 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. However, the team's travel schedule has faced significant disruptions due to unforeseen circumstances.

A private airline flight, initially scheduled to transport the team, was canceled following a bird strike incident, causing two delays before the eventual cancellation, said a press release.

As a result, the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) has reached out to Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) for a chartered flight. Currently, 8 out of the 35-member squad have arrived in Tajikistan. The PFF is trying its best to facilitate the travel of the remaining squad members to ensure they reach Tajikistan in time for the crucial match. The PFF remains committed to overcoming these challenges and is exploring all possible avenues to ensure the smooth travel of the players.

Pakistan to feature in Asian Squash C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): A seven-member Pakistan contingent would be participating in the 22nd Asian Squash Team Championship to be held at Dalian, China from June 12 to 16. A group of 14 teams from all over Asia would participate in the Men event, said a press release. Pakistan contingent includes Muhammad Asim Khan, Noor Zaman, Nasir Iqbal, Farhan Mehboob (Players); Fahim Gul (Coach); Waseem Umar (Physical Trainer) and Air Cdre (R) Amir Nawaz (Manager). The teams have been divided into four pools. Pakistan team has been placed in Pool C along with Korea, Chinese Taipei and China.

Five-wicket Hosein shines as Windies thrash record-low Uganda

PROVIDENCE (AFP): Left-arm spinner Akeal Hosein's career-best figures of five for 11 decimated an inept Ugandan batting line-up as the West Indies romped to a 134-run victory in a Group C match of the T20 World Cup at the Guyana National Stadium on Saturday.

Set a daunting target after the tournament co-hosts posted 173 for five batting first, the World Cup debutants looked completely out of their depth in being routed for 39 off 12 overs. The score equalled the record of the Netherlands against Sri Lanka at the 2014 tournament for the lowest innings total in the T20 World Cup.

West Indies' second win in as many matches pulls them level at the top of the table on points with Afghanistan although the Afghans remain in first position by virtue of a better net run-rate. Now regularly entrusted with the responsibility of opening the bowling for the Caribbean team, Hosein felt the spectacular success on the night was just reward for continuous hard work and improvement.

"I needed this. In the nets and in the previous series we've played I felt the ball was coming out nicely but I just wasn't getting the rewards," he said after collecting the "Man of the Match" award.

"It's a lot of hard work, especially when you start getting success. The way the game is moving, guys are going to study and come up with different plans, so you have to keep



working to stay one step ahead of them every time." Just four days after an historic victory over Papua New Guinea, the Africans were made acutely aware of the yawning gap in class in the batting department, even if their bowlers still emerged from the match with considerable credit.

Opener Johnson Charles led the West Indies batting effort with a top score of 44 off 42 balls (four fours, two sixes), yet none in the celebrated power-hitting middle-order were able to cut loose. Captain Brian Masaba earned the two important wickets of Nicholas Pooran and opposite number Rovman Powell with his wrist-spinners, while seamers Cosmas Kyewuta and Juma Miyagi impressed with their pace and accuracy.

It was left to Andre Russell with a 17-ball unbeaten 30 (six fours) to the West Indies innings late acceleration.

"It's a very steep learning curve for us, especially in the batting department and we have to learn from this experience and understand

what we need to do to keep ourselves in the game," said Masaba in assessing the overall effort of his team. "It's a huge challenge (this World Cup debut) but it's something we're enjoying and we understand if we are going to get better we need to be playing against opposition like this a bit more and over time we will be able to narrow the gap."

For West Indies captain Rovman Powell, the improvement from a scrappy opening victory over PNG nearly a week earlier was particularly pleasing.

"That last game we were a little bit flat so coming into this game we just wanted to improve as a team and I think we're up to 70-80 percent now and it's good to see guys getting performances under their belts because moving forward it's going to get tougher," he noted. "We have been playing good cricket as a team for the last 12 months or so it's just for us to continue to improve because we understand the conditions and cricket isn't easy in the Caribbean."

Paolini beaten again as Gauff, Siniakova win



PARIS (AFP): French Open singles runner-up Jasmine Paolini suffered another defeat in Sunday's women's doubles final as she and partner Sara Errani lost 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 to Coco Gauff and Katerina Siniakova.

Gauff, the reigning US Open singles champion, won her first Grand Slam doubles title. The 20-year-

old American was a losing finalist at the 2021 US Open and 2022 French Open in doubles.

Siniakova, 28, captured her eighth Grand Slam doubles crown and third at Roland Garros. She claimed the other seven titles with fellow Czech Barbora Krejčíková.

"Today is tough to accept," said Paolini, who

was beaten in straight sets by world number one Iga Świątek in Saturday's singles final.

Gauff entered into a last-minute pairing with Siniakova after Jessica Pegula pulled out due to injury.

She said she hadn't expected to play in the doubles -- let alone win it.

"I definitely didn't think it would happen to me, to be frank," said Gauff, who made the last four in the singles before losing to Świątek.

"I think that was, like, one of the few times in my life after I lost the first two finals, I thought, well, 'Okay, I reached that point, maybe I should focus on singles.'"

"It's just one of those things that when you least expect it to happen, it happens."

Sindh, Balochistan win in T20 Cricket League

ISLAMABAD (APP): Sindh and Balochistan earned victories in the 7th edition of the PBCC Blind Cricket T20 Super League at APS School Cricket Ground Abbottabad.

In the first match, Sindh beat KPK by 6 wickets. KPK batted first and posted a challenging total of 249/9 in their allotted 20 overs. The innings was anchored by Muhammad Rashid, who played an explosive knock of 87 runs off 46 balls, including 13 fours and 1 six, with a strike rate of 189.13. Contributions from Ahtisham Ul Haq (33 off 23 balls) and Badar Munir (25 off 15 balls) further bolstered the KPK total.

Despite a strong start, KP Blind's middle order faltered against a disciplined Sindh bowling attack, resulting in frequent wickets during the latter part of their innings. For Sindh, Muhammad Irfan and Muhammad Noman claimed two wickets each while Muhammad Idrees took 1.

In reply, Sindh Blind chased down the formidable target of 250, finishing at 251/4 in 19.2 overs to secure a remarkable 6-wickets victory. Sindh's chase was spearheaded by a magnificent century from Ayoub Khan, who remained unbeaten on 103

off 62 balls, featuring 13 fours at a strike rate of 166.13. His masterclass innings, combined with strong support from Muhammad Saifdar (41 off 26 balls) and Idrees Saleem (26 off 14 balls), guided Sindh to a successful run chase. Fakhar Abbas and Muhammad Sohail claimed a wicket a piece.

In the second match, Balochistan defeated Punjab by 7 wickets. Punjab Blind batted first and posted an impressive total of 211/8 in their allotted 20 overs.

Moeen Aslam led the charge with a quick-fire 40 off 21 balls, including six boundaries, at a strike rate of 190.48. He was well-supported by Akmal Hayat Nasir, who contributed a crucial 37 off 21 balls. Other notable contributions came from Anees Javed, who retired out after scoring 32 off 28 balls, and Mati Ullah, who added 28 off 21 balls.

Balochistan bowlers, despite initial onslaught, managed to put up a commendable effort. Muhammad Shahzeb was the standout performer, taking three key wickets for 33 runs in his 4 overs. Kamran Akhtar and Shahzaib Haider also chipped in with one wicket

each, conceding 36 and 45 runs respectively in their 4-over spells.

In reply, Balochistan started their innings with a determined approach, chasing down the target in just 16.2 overs with a score of 213/3. Kamran Akhtar was the star of the innings, playing a scintillating knock of 100 not out off 51 balls. His innings was laced with 15 fours and one six, maintaining a strike rate of 196.08. Kamran's explosive performance set the tone for Balochistan's successful chase.

Naseeb Ullah provided excellent support with a powerful innings of 82 off 47 balls, hitting 13 fours. The opening partnership between Kamran and Naseeb was crucial, adding 196 runs for the first wicket, laying a solid foundation for the chase.

Punjab bowlers struggled to contain the aggressive batting of Balochistan Blind. Israr Ul Hassan was the most economical bowler, taking 1 wicket for 32 runs in his 4 overs. Mati Ullah managed to pick up 2 wickets but conceded 27 runs in his 2 overs. The rest of the Punjab bowlers were unable to make significant inroads, allowing Balochistan Blind to chase down the target.

China's Shi clinches first Indonesia Open

JAKARTA (AFP): Badminton world number two Shi Yu Qi clinched his first Indonesia Open title on Sunday after triumphing over Danish shuttler Anders Antonsen in three games.

The Chinese ace eventually overcame the world number five on the courts of capital Jakarta's Istora Senayan arena, winning 21-9, 12-21, 21-14 in a 71-minute final to secure the prestigious Super 1000 event.

Shi won the first game with relative ease before the Danish shuttler fought back to take the match to a third game. The 28-year-old was delighted to be the first Chinese men's singles player to win the tournament since the 1980s before setting his sights on Olympic gold in Paris next month.

"I am very happy to have won today. This proves that the efforts of the Chinese men's singles team are very strong right now," he said after his vic-



tory. "This tournament is seen as a practice before the Olympics. I still don't know how far I will go, but I will do my best to become a champion there."

In the women's singles final, Olympic women's badminton champion and Chinese star Chen Yu Fei beat South Korea's An Se-young in a three-game thriller. World number two Chen toppled world number one An 21-14, 14-21, 21-18 in 82 minutes.

"In this match, I didn't focus too much on the outcome but prioritised the

process. That was the key to my victory this time," Chen said via an interpreter after her win.

Olympic men's badminton champion Viktor Axelsen this week pulled out of the tournament due to an ankle injury.

The Dane rolled his right ankle during last week's Singapore Open, which forced him to withdraw from his semi-final, weeks before he defends his title at the Paris Olympics.

The Olympic badminton tournament begins on July 27 in Paris.



In brief

391 kg drugs recovered

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting seven operations across the country managed to recover over 391 kg drugs and arrested 18 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman. He informed that 195.6 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of four suspects rounded up in two operations near Lakpas Toll Plaza Mustang. In an operation, 57.6 kg opium and 70.8 kg hashish were recovered from five suspects including a woman arrested in two operations at Sangjani Toll Plaza Islamabad. 34 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of four drug smugglers netted in Hyderabad while 18 kg hashish was recovered from two suspects held in G-15 Islamabad. 15.6 kg hashish was recovered from three accused arrested from Haripur. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused while further investigations are under process.

Polio drive in Pindi

RAWALPINDI (APP): As many as 906,011 children under five years had been covered against Polio during a Week-long Second Sub National Immunization (SNID-II) drive that concluded here on Sunday. District Superintendent Vaccination Dr Muhammad Nadeem while talking to APP said that the 100 per cent Polio vaccination target had been achieved successfully during the campaign started on June 3. He informed that 2,834 mobile teams, 677 area in-charges, 269 fixed points and 192 Union Council medical officers participated in completing the task of inoculation. Dr Nadeem added that children were also immunized at 125 transit points in the district. The health officer informed that all the refused or unattended cases had also been covered on the last day of the drive.

268,000 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 268,000 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 224,600 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1459.93 feet and was 61.93 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. The water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 82,800 cusecs and 115,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1187.60 feet, which was 137.60 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 43,800 cusecs and 55,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 179,600, 152,400, 134,700 and 71,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 60,700 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 7,500 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Zero electricity shortfall

ISLAMABAD (APP): The electricity demand in Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Sunday stood at 1,997 megawatts (MW) at 06:00 pm against the allocation quota of 2,100 MW from the national grid system. According to Chief Engineer Operation Director Muhammad Aslam Khan, currently there was zero shortfall of electricity in IESCO and zero load management was being observed across all the six circles including Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Smooth and uninterrupted power supply was being supplied in Islamabad, Rawalpindi City.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor displaying sacrificial animals to attract the customers at along IJP Road in connection with upcoming Eid ul Azha. —APP Photo

Australian HC highlights education and trade cooperation with Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan Neil Hawkins on Sunday emphasized Australia's commitment to investing in Pakistan's future through education and trade. In an exclusive interview with the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP), he said, "By investing in the people of Pakistan, particularly the young people who study in Australia, we hope they will return with valuable skills to contribute to Pakistan's future," Hawkins stated.

He highlighted the sustained efforts to offer scholarships, focusing on women in executive leadership, climate change and agriculture. "Gender equality and climate change are major focuses for us," he said, underscoring the shared climate challenges between the two nations and the potential for cooperative efforts.

The environmental focus, particu-

larly on water and agriculture, remains a critical aspect of their support, with Hawkins noting his recent visit to northern Pakistan to witness climate change impacts firsthand.

Regarding trade, Hawkins noted a significant increase from the 2.5 billion dollars trade volume in 2022, with a 30 percent rise this year. Key exports include agricultural products like cattle, wheat, and canola, with nearly 90 percent of Pakistan's canola sourced from Australia. "If you're enjoying chana or chickpeas for breakfast, they're likely from Australia as well," he added. This dialogue was part of an event celebrating the achievements of 60 Pakistani scholars who completed their studies in Australia through the prestigious Australia Awards scholarship program. These scholars, including 21 men and 39 women, were recognized for their academic excellence and dedication.

"I am proud to join the celebrations with these Pakistani scholars who have completed their studies funded by Australia," Hawkins said. "I congratulate them on their hard work and dedication. I am confident their newly acquired knowledge and skills will contribute to the development of Pakistan. It's an investment by Australia in Pakistan's future."

The Australia Awards scholarship program is a key component of the Australian Government's development assistance to Pakistan. The program equips scholars with the expertise needed to drive progress in Pakistan. High Commissioner Hawkins said, "We're keen to ensure representation from across all regions in Pakistan and to ensure we support the empowerment of women - promoting gender equality is central to Australia's foreign policy."

Railways earn over Rs 70 bln till May

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has achieved an unprecedented earning of over Rs. 70 billion till the month of May (FY 2023-24) despite facing a financial crisis due to floods in the monsoon season.

"The department is expecting to generate revenues up to Rs. 80 billion by the end of this financial year through the consistent efforts and hard work of the Railway workers," sources in the Ministry told APP.

The department has witnessed a historic increase in revenue in the current financial year as during the last financial year (2022-23), it earned around Rs. 40 billion. The sources said that out of Rs 70 billion, the revenue was derived from passenger and freight trains while other sectors of the department also contributed to the total revenue.

At present, they said that Pakistan Railways is operating around 96 passenger

trains, more than the previous year when 86 trains were running. Similarly, during the previous year, on average it operated 3.75 freight trains while the number reached seven freight trains this year.

The sources said the department emphasized that the issue of delay in payment of salaries to employees has now been resolved and things will be more streamlined, once work on the Mainline-I (ML-I) project kicks off.

To a question, they said that Pakistan Railways has beefed up precautionary measures to reduce passenger train accidents and only six minor accidents with no causality took place on the entire railway network in the country during the last three months.

The drastic decrease in accidents has been witnessed due to the efforts being undertaken to reduce trespassing at unmanned

level crossings and unauthorized locations, they added. "Our staff is continuously monitoring the railway tracks across the country and conducting thorough inspection of the trains as the safety of the passengers is the top priority of the department," the sources said.

Around 537 train accidents reported during last five years: Around 537 train accidents of different classifications have been reported during the last five years including 313 leading to loss of life or serious injury.

"A decline has been witnessed in train accidents during the past four years and all railway accidents were probed to avoid recurrence at various competent tiers of management including the highest level of Federal Government Inspector of Railways," an official told APP. He said that Pakistan Railways during the past five

years has operated approximately 2,03,717 trains with average of about 40,750 trains/year and with an average of 107 accidents/year.

The official said that Pakistan Railways has an elaborate system of accident mitigation, relief mechanisms, and inquiries.

He said that a total of 159 accidents occurred in 2019 followed by 145 in 2020, 87 in 2021, and 62 in 2022 while a surge was witnessed in 2023 and 84 accidents were reported. The official said the factorial analysis suggests that 32 percent of accidents are at the unmanned level crossing for which the road users are mainly responsible.

During the five years of reporting, a total number of 259 employees were held responsible in various degrees and were taken up and punished under the Efficiency and Discipline Rules of the government of Pakistan, he added.

Ashrafi urges Hujjaj to avoid political, sectarian activities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) Chairman, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Sunday underscored the importance of maintaining the sanctity of Hajj as a purely religious duty and urged pilgrims to refrain from engaging in political and sectarian activities during their pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia.

In a media talk, he specifically advised pilgrims to avoid carrying political flags, banners, or pictures, and to steer clear of political gatherings or communal debates.

Ashrafi emphasized that adherence to Saudi laws and regulations was crucial for a successful and respectful pilgrimage. Highlighting the scale of this year's pilgrimage, he mentioned that between 68,000 government-sponsored pilgrims and an additional 90,000 private pilgrims were expected to perform Hajj. He noted that all operations related to Hajj would be completed by June 12.

He also reminded

prospective pilgrims that performing Hajj required official permission and those intending to perform Umrah or holding an Iqama must secure the necessary approvals to participate in Hajj.

Ashrafi announced his full support for the recent Fatwa issued by the Supreme Council of Ulema of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, "which mandates that performing Hajj without official permission is impermissible."

He appealed to all Muslims to strictly adhere to the rules and regulations set by Saudi Arabia regarding Hajj. "The Fatwa of the Council of prominent Ulema of Saudi Arabia is clear: Performing Hajj without the required permissions is a sin. We urge all intending pilgrims to respect this ruling to avoid legal complications," Ashrafi stated.

He said the leadership of Saudi Arabia had previously warned that all Hajj arrangements must be made through approved companies, and they had announced heavy fines and

legal consequences for those attempting to perform Hajj without proper authorization. He reiterated this warning and encourages all pilgrims to comply with these regulations to ensure a peaceful and lawful pilgrimage.

Ashrafi also emphasized the importance of booking Hajj only through companies authorized by the Saudi government. Unauthorized bookings and travel arrangements would be considered illegal, and violators would face severe penalties, he added.

He further addressed an unfortunate incident involving Pakistani beggars in Haram, calling it a source of national shame and urging better conduct from all pilgrims.

Ashrafi expressed gratitude to the Saudi government for their exceptional Hajj arrangements, specifically thanking Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and the Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan, Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki, for the 'Route to Makkah' programme.

PML-N govt decides to continue PTI's ten billion tree initiative

ISLAMABAD, June 09 (INP): The PML-N-led federal government has decided to continue Ten Billion Tree Tsunami project, initiated by the Pakistan Treelife-e-Insaf (PTI) government, a private news channel citing sources said on Sunday.

The government has decided to increase the budget for the Ministry of Climate Change by Rs11.82 billion for the fiscal year 2024-25, with aiming at mitigating the effects of global warming and promoting sustainable development.

The budget includes a significant allocation of Rs15.62 billion for the Green Pakistan initiative, previously known as the Ten Billion Tree Tsunami - a project initially launched in 2018 by PTI. The project aims to plant

trees across the nation and combat the adverse effects of climate change.

The government has also proposed a new project to combat climate change, details of which are yet to be disclosed. It has also been proposed to provide Rs1.019 billion to the Ministry of Climate Change to enhance its technical capacity and effectively implement climate change projects.

The budget also allocates Rs15.775 billion for four ongoing schemes, aimed at promoting sustainable development and environmental conservation. Furthermore, the government has proposed Rs100 million for the Pakistan Biosafety Clearing House.

In a move to improve water quality monitoring capabilities, the government has allocated Rs30 million for the purpose.

IESCO notifies power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Sunday notified two-day power suspension programme for Monday and Tuesday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work.

According to IESCO spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period on Monday From 07:00 AM to 10:00 AM, Rawalpindi City Circle, Katarian feeder, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Media Town-II feeder On Tuesday From 07:00 AM to 10:00 AM, Rawalpindi City Circle, F-Block Feeder, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, CBR-I Feeder and surrounding areas.

448 drug peddlers netted

ISLAMABAD (APP): On the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, the Islamabad Police is actively running the special "Nasha Ab Nahe" movement to rid the federal capital of drugs and protect the youth from the menace of drug addiction.

Addressing a press conference at Rescue-15 field office in this regard, SSP Investigation Hassan Jahanghir Wattoo on Sunday said that the Islamabad Police teams conducted extensive crackdowns across different areas of the city and arrested 448 drug peddlers including 85 former jailbirds during the movement.

He further said that the police teams also recovered 23 kilograms of ice, 146 kilograms of heroin, 60 kilograms of hashish, and 2338 liters of liquor from their possession. The arrested accused were involved in drug trafficking in various parts of the city, while 438 cases have been registered against them in different police stations, he told.

To ensure public awareness and a robust crackdown against drug dealers, he said the Islamabad Police has also continued its awareness campaign through various social media channels.

The SSP Investigations said that the Islamabad Police was conducting targeted operations on a daily basis to eliminate the scourge of drugs from the city. He further

emphasized that "Nasha Ab Nahi" was not just a campaign but a movement aimed at eradicating drugs from society and rooting out drug dealers. He assured that no element would be allowed to endanger the lives of the youth. The Islamabad Police is committed to bringing those involved in the heinous business of drug trafficking to justice, he expressed.

He urged the citizens to play their part in this mission by reporting any such activities in their areas to their respective police stations, the emergency helpline "Pukar-15", or via "ICT-15" app, so that together we can cleanse our society of this abominable trade and secure the future of our youth.

First sample collection point for Newborn Screening launched at HFH

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Zahra Beau Welfare Foundation (ZBWF) has launched the first sample collection point for Newborn Screening at Holy Family Hospital (HFH) here Sunday.

Vice Chancellor of Rawalpindi Medical University, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Umar officially inaugurated the free Newborn Screening, recognizing it as a fundamental right for all newborns, a news release said.

Dr. Shabina Assistant Director Medical Facilities of the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations, and Coordination was invited to grace the occasion with

their presence.

In collaboration with Rawalpindi Medical University, The ZBW Foundation has initiated a program to provide free newborn screening services at three major public hospitals: Holy Family Hospital, Benazir Bhutto Hospital, and Rawalpindi Teaching Hospital.

Holy Family Hospital serves as the starting point for this initiative. These hospitals, with the highest birth rates in the twin cities, will screen all newborns for Congenital Hypothyroidism, a leading cause of intellectual and physical disabilities in Pakistan.

Since 2016, the Zahra Beau Welfare Foundation (ZBWF) has been the pioneer in introducing the Newborn Screening (NBS) program in Pakistan. To date, the organization has screened over 64,000 newborns nationwide. The NBS test enables the timely detection and diagnosis of certain disorders that are not apparent at birth, thereby preventing long-term health issues and reducing mortality in newborns. ZBWF is registered as a non-profit organization with the SECP under section 42 of the Companies Act, 2017, and is certified by the Pakistan Center for Philanthropy (PCP).

Rwp district admin taking solid steps to control use of plastic bags

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi district administration is taking solid steps to control the use of plastic bags and promote the use of paper and cloth-made bags in the markets and bazaars.

According to Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rawalpindi, Dr. Hassan Waqar Cheema, the polythene bags were creating environmental issues. "The bags have been causing havoc in urban and rural areas, besides damaging the sewerage system, polluting soil, causing water pollution, and endangering aquatic life."

"The district administration is implementing the ban on plastic bags from June 5 on the directives of the Punjab government," he said. In that regard, the administration had started work to ensure the replacement of plastic bags of less than 75 microns in the shopping malls of the city, he added. Dr. Hassan Waqar Cheema informed us that the teams had been formed under the supervision of Assistant Commissioners and members of the Punjab Environment Department. He said the teams would confiscate plastic bags of less than 75 microns (polyethylene, non-woven polypropylene) from retailers in commercial areas. The environment department would start registering producers, distributors, recyclers, and collectors.

He said the registration of producers and distributors would be accompanied by an affidavit stating that they would not produce or distribute plastic bags of less than 75 microns and would phase out their stock in 45 days in an environment-friendly manner. After 45 days, he said, the existing stock of producers and distributors would be confiscated. "Producers, distributors, recyclers, and collectors who do not register themselves in 15 days from June 5 will be sealed on June 21," he said, adding that the Punjab government had imposed a ban on the manufacturing, sale, and use of polythene and plastic bags.



RAWALPINDI: A blacksmith busy in sharpening knives to be used for slaughtering sacrificial animals during upcoming Eid ul Azha. —APP Photo

Afghanistan sold crude oil

KABUL (BNA): Spokesman for IEA Zabihullah announced on his X page that the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum has sold 130,000 tons of crude oil from the Amu Darya oil field to domestic investors over the past ten days, amounting to more than \$71.6 million USD. Moreover, the ministry is auctioning an additional 20,000 tons of crude oil today, June 9th. This marks the first time Afghanistan has sold 150,000 tons of crude oil within a two-week period.

Ministry repairs vehicles

KABUL (BNA): The Ministry of National Defense has announced the repair and readiness of hundreds of various weapons and vehicles in the 207th Al-Farooq Army Corps. According to a statement released by the ministry, over the past year, the support battalion of the 207th Al-Farooq Army Corps has repaired 380 different types of weapons, 90 Humvee tanks, 48 Russian armored tanks, 40 International trucks, 35 strike tanks, and 5 cranes.

Ministry to collect vehicle seats not meeting safety code

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation announced a new plan to collect non-standard and extra seats from vehicles in Kabul city and provincial areas.

Imamuddin Ahmadi, the ministry spokesperson, said that this plan has been initiated by the Urban Transport Directorate and is set to be implemented on all routes in Kabul city as well as inter-provincial routes.

The spokesperson for the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation said: "It is observed on the roads that drivers have placed extra seats in their vehicles, which causes inconvenience and harassment to people. The Urban

Transport Directorate of Kabul city has begun the collection of extra and non-standard seats."

Ahmadi stated that the purpose of this initiative is to prevent drivers from breaking the law and to provide convenience for citizens, adding that this process will also be carried out on inter-provincial routes leading to Kabul.

Imamuddin Ahmadi also said: "Vehicles traveling to Kabul have terminals and checkpoints here. Our technical team visits to inspect the vehicles, not only those with extra seats but also those with technical problems are checked."

Some citizens have requested the Ministry of

Transport to also monitor the fares of urban passenger vehicles.

"A seat is for four people, but they make five people sit, which in this hot weather sometimes causes fights and disputes," said Ikramuddin, a resident of Kabul.

"It's a good initiative, it brings convenience to people, and they should also pay attention to the fares of the vehicles," said Ahmadullah, another resident of Kabul.

The lack of city buses, traffic congestion, and transport disorder in Kabul city are challenges that the capital's residents have continuously complained about in recent years.

Legacy of Chahardehi district in Kabul

KABUL (TOLONews): Chahardehi is one of the oldest districts in Kabul, and was once the site of festivities for kings, high-ranking officials, and Kabul residents.

This ancient valley of Kabul accommodates more than 38 small and large villages.

Deh Dana, Deh Murad Khan, Chahar Qala, Gulkhana, Deh Qalandar, Sar Asiyab, Chehlston, Qala-e-Muslem, Qala Fatu, Seh Bangi, Qala-e-Wahed, Qala Kashif, Qala Qazi Fazel Beyk, Enchi Baghban, Guzargah Qarya Bahadur Khan, Pakhchak Mohammad Hayat, Saber, Chitgari, Jabbar Khan, Babu, Qala-e-Wazir Akhund, Ainullah, Mohammad Amin, Farash, Sar-e-Qol, Ali Mardan, Azad-Meer, Ghazab Khwaja Mullah are among the villages that make up Chahardehi of Kabul.

This old part of Kabul was named Chahardehi during the reign of Timur Shah Durrani.

Historical sites such as Darul Aman Palace, Taj Beg Palace, Chehlston Palace, Bagh-e-Babur, the harem of Ibrahim Beg, the King of Bukhara, and hundreds of historical castles and gardens are located in this area.

Chahardehi of Kabul had the status of a district during the reign of King Mohammad Zahir Shah; later it was annexed to Kabul, but now this historic area has been divided into five zones.

"The people of Chahardehi were very brave and hospitable, and many scholars lived in this place," said Mohammad Farid, another resident of Chahardehi.

Chahardehi of Kabul has ancient castles with a history of more than two hundred years in its alleys.

Pakhchak Castle is one of the oldest castles in this part of Kabul.

"This castle is more than 120 years old. Six families live here. The name of this castle is such because the person who built it was short in stature," said Mohammad Ashraf, a resident of Chahardehi.

"It is called Chahardehi because it is made up of four villages: at first, Chahar Qala, Deh Murad Khan, Chahar Asiyab, and the Kampany area were part of it," Agha Shirin Rasouli, a resident of Chahardehi, said about the naming of the area.

Hanafi discusses security, development with elders

KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, the Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan met with a group of esteemed elders from Samangan province.

During the meeting, Qasim Pacha Khan, representing the elders, briefed the Deputy Prime Minister on social, economic, and security issues in the province. He expressed satisfaction with the stability and security established in the country.

He noted that after years of suffering from insecurity and instability, the residents of the province now enjoy peace and tranquility, a result of the efforts and sacrifices of the Mujahideen and officials of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

He further remarked that the people of Samangan,



who supported the Islamic Emirate during the jihad against occupiers and the establishment of an Islamic system, are now ready to cooperate in strengthening and maintaining the current system, offering their full support.

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi praised the support and cooperation of the Samangan residents during the jihad against occupiers. He emphasized that the Islamic Emirate of

Afghanistan has been established through the sacrifices of scholars, Mujahideen, and the youth of the country, and it belongs to all citizens. Supporting the Islamic Emirate is a religious and national duty for every individual.

Qomi urges IEA not to see advice as interference

KABUL (Ariana News): Iran's special representative for Afghanistan, Hassan Kazemi Qomi, said that advising Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) does not mean interference in its internal affairs, adding that the Tehran meeting was a good platform for the IEA which declined to attend.

Qomi stated this in a press conference after the second meeting of the regional contact group for Afghanistan between the representatives of Russia, China, Pakistan and Iran in Tehran. The envoy emphasized that no country in the world has acted as much as Iran in supporting the people of Afghanistan and engaging with the Islamic Emirate.

He pointed out that Afghanistan's neighbors

are looking to prepare a "comprehensive road map" for rebuilding the country.

Referring to the first and second UN-sponsored Doha meetings on Afghanistan, Qomi said that what was discussed in the meetings was not something that would help Afghanistan.

He mentioned that one of the issues was the appointment of a special representative by the United Nations for Afghanistan, while UNAMA is present in Afghanistan.

The diplomat also noted that Tehran will help any initiative that paves the way for the Islamic Emirate as a responsible government, but if something is to be imposed or has no result, it will not support it.

He said that efforts are

underway to change the agenda of the upcoming third Doha meeting, and the policy is that the Islamic Emirate attend the meeting.

The Islamic Emirate has confirmed that it was invited to the meeting in Tehran, but did not accept it.

Zakir Jalaly, Director of the Third Political Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, said that the Afghan government expects that meetings on Afghanistan should be held through the existing mechanisms, not new ones.

He added that the Afghan government is engaged in discussions with relevant sides about the upcoming third Doha meeting.

The third Doha meeting on Afghanistan is scheduled to be held on June 30.

Governor welcomes Uzbek investment plans

KABUL (BNA): A group of Uzbek businessmen has expressed their keen interest to invest in various sectors in Afghanistan during a meeting with Balkh Governor Mohammad Yousuf Wafa.

In the meeting, Nader Rustam, representing the businessmen from Uzbekistan's Surkhandarya province, expressed gratitude to the Islamic Emirate for addressing the issues faced by traders and providing necessary facilities.

He mentioned that the businessmen from Surkhandarya are interested in establishing factories in Balkh for the production of milk, plants, construction materials, clothing, and electricity from coal.

Meanwhile, Governor Mohammad Yousuf Wafa thanked the Uzbek businessmen, emphasizing the



efforts made by traders from both sides for the economic development of the country.

He assured them that the current conditions in Afghanistan are conducive and favorable for investment.

Governor Mohammad Yousuf Wafa further added that the Islamic Emirate is steadfast in its commitment to resolving any issues faced by the traders, ensuring a supportive and stable environment for their business endeavors.

NSIA distributes 67,000 national ID cards in Daikundi province

KABUL (BNA): The National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA) reported the distribution of 43,731 electronic and 23,228 paper identification cards in Daikundi province last year.

According to a statement from the authority, the departments are operational

in all districts of the province, including the center.

Last year, these departments provided services to 3,028 individuals for corrections in paper identification cards and to 6,916 individuals for life events, issuing 6,146 birth certificates and 770 death certificates.

Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, said that in this meeting, the two sides discussed the dispatch of skilled workers, sharing experiences in social security, and launching capacity-building programs for the ministry's staff.

Ebrahimi added, "They discussed strengthening commercial and economic relations, and in this meeting, the acting Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, said that in this meeting, the two sides discussed the dispatch of skilled workers, sharing experiences in social security, and launching capacity-building programs for the ministry's staff."

Meanwhile, some economic experts believe that expanding commercial and economic relations with regional countries, especially Russia, is impactful for the country's economic growth.

Abdul Nasir Rashtia, an economic expert, said: "The government should provide all facilities and conveniences to initiate projects, whether in the foreign sector or private sector, to create job opportunities and address the problems of poverty, unemployment, and migration."

Abdul Salam Hanafi, the Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, met with a group of esteemed elders from Samangan province. During the meeting, Qasim Pacha Khan, representing the elders, briefed the Deputy Prime Minister on social, economic, and security issues in the province. He expressed satisfaction with the stability and security established in the country.

He noted that after years of suffering from insecurity and instability, the residents of the province now enjoy peace and tranquility, a result of the efforts and sacrifices of the Mujahideen and officials of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

He further remarked that the people of Samangan,

who supported the Islamic Emirate during the jihad against occupiers and the establishment of an Islamic system, are now ready to cooperate in strengthening and maintaining the current system, offering their full support.

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi praised the support and cooperation of the Samangan residents during the jihad against occupiers. He emphasized that the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has been established through the sacrifices of scholars, Mujahideen, and the youth of the country, and it belongs to all citizens. Supporting the Islamic Emirate is a religious and national duty for every individual.

7 killed, 8 wounded in Afghanistan last week

KABUL (Pajhwok): Last week, five acting ministers had foreign trips, as the United Nations temporarily lifted a travel ban on four senior officials. Russia once again emphasised on interaction with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, with Kazakhstan delisting IEA as a banned organisation.

Casualties

Last week, seven people were killed and eight others injured in various incidents of violence in Afghanistan.

According to reports, two persons lost their lives and three others were injured in mortar shell blasts in Logar and Kapista provinces. Four individuals were wounded as a result of a landmine explosion in Kunar.

Local officials say unidentified gunmen shot dead two workers of a private company in Jawzjan. A man stabbed to death his wife in Sar-i-Pul.

A local journalist was killed and another person injured in a clash between two families in Uruzgan.

Separately, a man gunned down in the same province.

In the previous week, according to sources, 11 people had been killed and two others injured in various incidents of violence nationwide.

Before the regime change in August 2021, hundreds of people, including civilians, insurgents and security forces, would get killed and injured every week.

Haqqani's visit to UAE

Acting Interior Minister Khalifa Sirajuddin Haqqani, during a visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), discussed strengthening the bilateral relationship and support in different areas, including health, infrastructure, investment and security.

It was Haqqani's first foreign visit after the re-establishment of IEA. Haqqani met ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and other officials.

The United States urged countries to take permission for the travel of the

IEA officials placed on the no-fly list.

States Department spokesman Matthew Miller said: "I would like to say that countries that host IEA officials banned by the United Nations from traveling must obtain permission for their travel."

He said it was essential for UN member states to follow these laws.

The UN Security Council (UNSC) lifted the travel ban on the deputy prime minister, two acting ministers and the General Directorate of Intelligence chief.

According to media reports, the UNSC announced in a statement on Wednesday that the travel curbs had been removed on Maulvi Abdul Kabir, Sirajuddin Haqqani, Abdul Haq Wasiq and Noor Mohammad Saqib.

Foreign trips

The acting minister of labour and social affairs attended the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) in Russia.

Acting Minister of

Education Maulvi Habibullah Agha also travelled to Russia to participate in an international forum.

Acting Minister of Hajj and Religious Affairs Dr. Noor Mohammad Saqib travelled to Saudi Arabia to participate in the conference of ministers of hajj from Islamic countries.

Kazakhstan delists IEA as banned group

Kazakhstan President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev announced the removal of IEA — also known as the Taliban movement — from the list of terrorist organisations. Zabihullah Mujahid, chief spokesman for IEA, told Pajhwok Afghan News Kazakhstan's move was crucial.

The development marked the entry of Kazakhstan and Afghanistan into a new phase of positive interaction, commented Mujahid, who believed barriers to the bilateral relationship had been removed.

The Kazakh deputy prime minister says his country plans to develop an

alternative route through Turkmenistan to increase trade with Afghanistan from the current \$1 billion to \$3 billion.

Serik Zhumangarin was quoted as saying on Wednesday: "Currently, the annual trade volume with Afghanistan is around \$1 billion. Our goal is to increase it to \$3 billion, but it won't be possible until all necessary logistical issues are addressed."

Russia-IEA ties

Russian President Vladimir Putin has been urged for Taliban movement's removal from the list of terrorist outfits.

Putin's Special Representative for Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov said the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Justice had communicated their position to the Russian leader.

Last week, Moscow said it would support Afghanistan's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) if the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan EA was recognised.

TASS quoted Russia's Special Representative for Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov as saying IEA's recognition: "I think we will. However, it's not only about recognition."

IEA officials called such statements a positive step and said the expansion of economic and diplomatic ties could be the only way to solve issues between Afghanistan and regional countries.

Maria Zakharova, spokesperson for the Russian foreign ministry, said the purpose of establishing contact with the interim government to address the challenges created by the United States and NATO members in Afghanistan.

Doha meeting

Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs Amir Khan Muttaqi in a meeting with EU Representative for Afghanistan Thomas Nicholson said IEA would soon announce its position on the third UN-convened meeting on Afghanistan in Doha.

IEA's policy interaction

with all countries and wanted meaningful participation in the Doha gathering, he added.

UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths said at a press conference he was hopeful the agenda for the international community's engagement with the "Taliban" would be clarified at the third Doha meeting.

The head of UNAMA, Roza Atenbayeva, said in a meeting with Muttaqi her team was working on an agenda of the third Doha huddle that was acceptable to all sides.

The NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security has underlined the need for full, meaningful and equal participation of women in the Doha huddle and other discussions related to Afghanistan.

Contact group meeting in Tehran

Tehran hosted the second meeting of the Regional Contact Group on

Afghanistan on Saturday.

The group had been created in the framework of the Moscow Format on Iran's initiative in January this year to help address concerns about Afghanistan.

Special representatives from Iran, Pakistan, China and Russia attended the meeting, whose agenda included consultations on Afghanistan's future.

The IEA chose to stay away from the regional consultations in Tehran. The decision on skipping the Moscow Format contact group's meeting was announced by the director of the Third Political Division at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Zakir Jalaly wrote on X the interim government had declined the invitation to the meeting, which should be held under existing mechanisms, not new ones.

IEA was in discussions with relevant parties on the third meeting on Afghanistan in Doha, scheduled for June 30 and July 1, the official said.

G7 plans to warn small Chinese banks over Russia ties

WASHINGTON (Reuters): U.S. officials expect the Group of Seven (G7) wealthy democracies to send a tough new warning next week to smaller Chinese banks to stop assisting Russia in evading Western sanctions, according to two people familiar with the matter.

Leaders gathering at the June 13-15 summit in Italy hosted by Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni are expected to focus heavily during their private meetings on the threat posed by burgeoning Chinese-Russian trade in the fight in Ukraine, and what to do about it.

Those conversations are likely to result in public statements on the issue involving Chinese banks, according to a U.S. official involved in planning the event and another person briefed on the issue.

The United States and its G7 partners - Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan - are not expected to take any immediate punitive action against any banks during the summit, such as restricting their access to the SWIFT messaging system or cutting off access to the dollar. Their focus is said to be on smaller institutions, not the largest Chinese banks, one of the

people said.

Negotiations were still ongoing about the exact format and content of the warning, according to the people, who declined to be named discussing ongoing diplomatic engagements. The plans to address the topic at the G7 were not previously reported.

The White House did not respond to a request for comment. The U.S. Treasury Department had no immediate comment, but Treasury officials have repeatedly warned financial institutions in Europe and China and elsewhere that they face sanctions for helping Russia skirt Western sanctions.

Daleep Singh, deputy national security adviser for international economics, told the Center for a New American Security this week that he expected G7 leaders to target China's support for a Russian economy now reoriented around the war.

"Our concern is that China is increasingly the factory of the Russian war machine. You can call it the arsenal of autocracy when you consider Russia's military ambitions threaten obviously the existence of Ukraine, but increasingly European security, NATO and transatlantic security," he

said.

Singh and other top Biden administration officials say Washington and its partners are prepared to use sanctions and tighter export controls to reduce Russia's ability to circumvent Western sanctions, including with secondary sanctions that could be used against banks and other financial institutions.

Washington is poised to announce significant new sanctions next week on financial and nonfinancial targets, a source familiar with the plans said.

This year's G7 summit is also expected to focus on leveraging profits generated by Russian assets frozen in the West for Ukraine's benefit.

Washington has so far been reluctant to implement sanctions on major Chinese banks - long deemed by analysts a "nuclear" option - because of the huge ripple effects it could inflict on the global economy and U.S.-China relations.

Concern over the possibility of sanctions has already caused China's big banks to throttle payments for cross-border transactions involving Russians, or pull back from any involvement altogether, Reuters has reported.

That has pushed

Chinese companies to small banks on the border and stoked the use of underground financing channels or banned cryptocurrency. Western officials are concerned that some Chinese financial institutions are still facilitating trade in goods with dual civilian and military applications.

Beijing has accused Washington of making baseless claims about what it says are normal trade exchanges with Moscow.

The Biden administration this year began probing which sanctions tools might be available to it to thwart Chinese banks, a U.S. official previously told Reuters, but had no imminent plans to take such steps.

In December, President Joe Biden signed an executive order threatening sanctions on financial institutions that help Moscow skirt Western sanctions.

The U.S. has sanctioned smaller Chinese banks in the past, such as the Bank of Kunlun, over various issues, including working with Iranian institutions.

China and Russia have fostered more trade in yuan instead of the dollar in the wake of the Ukraine war, potentially shielding their economies from possible U.S. sanctions.



BERLIN, GERMANY: Supporters of the German Social Democrats (SPD) react at SPD headquarters to initial election results in the European parliamentary elections which currently show the SPD in third with 14 percent of the votes, on Sunday in Berlin, Germany.

Eid Al Adha holidays announced in UAE

ABU DHABI (Khaleej Times): Sharjah has announced the Eid Al Adha holiday dates for public sector employees. The break will start from June 15 until June 18. This would mean a 5-day break for Sharjah government employees, combined with the Friday weekend.

Earlier, the Dubai government announced the Eid Al Adha holiday for government employees, starting from Saturday, June 15, until Tuesday, June 18, with official work resuming on Wednesday, June 19.

Abu Dhabi has also announced Eid Al Adha holidays for public sector employees, starting from June 15 until June 18. Official work will resume on June 19.

According to the holiday circular, exceptions apply to authorities, departments, and institutions whose employees work in shifts or are involved in public service or the management of public facilities. These organisations will set working hours for these employees based on operational needs to maintain the smooth operation of their facilities during the holiday period.

The Federal Authority of Human Resources had announced that the dates of the holidays for the public sector will be from Saturday, June 15, until Tuesday June 18.

Holidays for the private sector will be from Saturday, June 15, to Tuesday, June 18, the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization (Mohre) was announced after the crescent of the month of Dhul Hijjah 1445 was photographed from Abu Dhabi on Friday, June 7.

Arafah Day, the holiest day in Islam marked on Dhul Hijjah 9, falls on June 15 — while the three-day Eid Al Adha holiday (Dhul Hijjah 10 to 12) will officially be marked on June 16 to 18. Thus, the break is four days long.

Eid Al Adha, or the Festival of Sacrifice, is an important Islamic holiday celebrated by Muslims worldwide.

Aid is delivered to Gaza

WASHINGTON (AP): The first aid from an American-built pier arrived in Gaza since storm damage required repairs to the project, the U.S. military said, relaunching an effort to bring supplies to Palestinians by sea that had been plagued with problems.

The pier constructed by the U.S. military was operational for only about a week before it was blown apart in high winds and heavy seas on May 25.

A damaged section was reconnected to the beach in Gaza on Friday after being repaired at an Israeli port.

About 1.1 million pounds (492 metric tons) of humanitarian aid was delivered to Gaza through the pier on Saturday, U.S. Central Command said in a statement. It reiterated that no U.S. military personnel went ashore in Gaza.

The U.S. Agency for International Development works with the U.N. World Food Program and their humanitarian partners in Gaza to distribute food and other aid coming from the U.S.-operated pier.

Iran approves six candidates to run for president

TEHRAN, IRAN (Reuters): Iran's Guardian Council, which oversees elections and legislation, has approved six candidates to run for president in snap elections to be held later this month after the death of President Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash, Iran's State TV reported on Sunday.

On the list are Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, Iran's parliament speaker and former Revolutionary Guards commander, Saeed Jalili, a conservative, who was former chief nuclear negotiator and ran Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's office for four years and Tehran's conservative mayor Alireza Zakani, according to State TV.

The list, announced on state TV by the Election Office spokesperson, also includes Masoud Pezeshkian, a reformist lawmaker; Mostafa Pourmohammadi, a former interior minister; and Amir-Hossein Ghazizadeh Hashemi, a conservative politician.

"With the announcement of the final list of candidates, their electoral activities start officially," state TV said.

The election is due to take place on June 28.

The Council disqualified former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and former parliamentary speaker Ali Larijani, a prominent conservative, state media said.

Aljazeera adds: The 62-year-old Ghalibaf, a former commander of the air force of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), has been parliament speaker for four years, was the mayor of Tehran from 2005 to 2017, and the chief of police

before that. He ran for president in 2005, 2013 and 2017, when he withdrew in favour of Raisi.

Jalili, who is Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's direct representative to the country's Supreme National Security Council, withdrew from the 2021 election in favour of Raisi, who won virtually unchallenged.

Most prominent among those disqualified are Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the populist ex-president, as well as moderate candidate and former three-time parliament speaker Ali Larijani - both of whom did not qualify to run in 2021 as well.

Iran was slated to have its presidential election in 2025, but the vote was brought forward after Raisi died on May 19 in a helicopter crash in northern Iran. The 63-year-old Raisi was expected to secure another term in office and was a top name associated with the succession of Iran's 85-year-old supreme leader.

Seven others, including Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian, were also killed in the crash, which the army said in a preliminary report last month did not occur as a result of criminal activity.

Zakani, who became Tehran mayor after withdrawing in favour of Raisi in the 2021 race, said in a post on X following his qualification on Sunday that he wishes to "continue the path" of the late president.

Parliamentarian Masoud Pezeshkian, former interior and justice minister Mostafa Pourmohammadi, and Amirhossein Ghazizadeh Hashemi, the head of Iran's Martyrs Foundation, cap the list of the six approved candi-

dates.

The 70-year-old Pezeshkian, a veteran five-term lawmaker and former health minister, is the only candidate representing significantly weakened moderate and reformist factions of Iran's political landscape.

Eshaq Jahangiri, the former first vice president in the administration of moderate President Hassan Rouhani, was among those disqualified by the Guardian Council, along with former central bank chief Abdolnaser Hemmati, who had been allowed to run in 2021 and got 8 percent of the total vote, or 2.42 million votes.

The other candidates represent the conservative and hardline political factions, which have increasingly gained prominence since the breakdown of Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers after the unilateral withdrawal of the United States in 2018.

Ghazizadeh was also approved in 2021 and received 3.45 percent, or less than a million votes. Raisi won the presidency with almost 18 million votes for a 48.8 percent turnout.

The nuclear programme and Iran's economy challenged by high inflation and sanctions are expected to be some of the issues to be discussed during five rounds of four-hour debates that state television plans to host in the run-up to the election.

Turnout has been steadily declining in presidential and parliamentary elections since 2020, with the March 2024 parliamentary election seeing 41 percent participation, the lowest since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

PM Shehbaz visit boosts Pak-China relations: Top Chinese firms

BEIJING (APP): Chinese companies operating in Pakistan expect better opportunities for the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) following Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif recent visit to China.

World leading Chinese engineering and power companies such as CMEC and POWERCHINA Pakistan aimed to enhance investment and undertake new projects across various sectors.

Talking to the Chinese media, Dai Bao, Vice General Manager of China Machinery Engineering Corporation (CMEC) Pakistan has expressed strong interest in collaborating with the Pakistani government during the second phase of the CPEC.

He acknowledged the recent high-level meeting between President Xi and Prime Minister Shahbaz

Sharif.

The initial phase of the CPEC laid a robust foundation for Pakistan national destiny and established a pivotal framework for further bilateral cooperation. This progress paves the way for the next steps, and both sides eagerly anticipate the new phase of CPEC. The Prime Minister visit to China signaled the beginning of this transformative stage.

The company senior representative highlighted that both nations aspire to witness fresh achievements and embrace a renewed outlook of the joint corridor. China, drawing from its experience with reform and openness, extends a friendly hand of support to Pakistan. Notably, CMEC became the first Chinese state-owned company to operate in Pakistan since 1981.

"Having closely

observed Pakistan progress, we are confident that both countries will reap benefits from this new chapter," Dai Bao said.

"Our company has diligently prepared for this moment over the past five years, formulating comprehensive plans encompassing industrialization, agricultural modernization, trade, healthcare, education, poverty alleviation, and more."

"With unwavering support from both governments, we are committed to contributing significantly to this milestone project," he added.

During his recent meeting with PM Shahbaz Sharif, Ding Yanzhang, Chairman POWERCHINA assured that his company was ready to actively participate in hydro-power, new energy, and other fields in Pakistan, promoting the optimization of local energy structure and

green development.

The Power Construction Corporation of China would seek further investment, engineering and construction opportunities in collaboration with relevant international partners, taking full advantage of the rich water, wind, solar, and mine resources in Pakistan.

Previously, it has implemented several major projects, such as Port Qasim 2-660 MW Coal-fired Power Plant, Dawood Wind Power Project, Haveli Bahadur Shah 1,230 MW Combined Cycle Coal-fired Power Project, Tarbela 4th Extension Hydropower Station (Civil Works). While presently constructing several projects, including some solar and wind power projects in Sindh, like the Tarbela 5th Extension Hydropower Project (Civil Works) and the mega project Diamer Basha Dam.

Directorate of Drug Control highlights reform efforts

E.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In response to recent story of Frontier Post regarding allegations of corruption and misuse of authority within Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Directorate of Drug Control and Pharmacy Services, officials have issued a robust defense, highlighting the validity of their operations and ongoing reforms.

The Directorate, established under the Rule of Business 1985 and Article 139 of the Constitution of 1973, has been accused of numerous irregularities and corruption.

However, officials, including the Deputy Secretary Drugs, have dismissed these claims as baseless and politically motivated attacks by

detractors facing serious charges themselves.

The Directorate asserts that the confusion and propaganda are orchestrated by a small group of drug inspectors under investigation for serious misconduct.

These inspectors, they claim, are attempting to disrupt ongoing inquiries and influence political pressure to remove honest officials from their positions.

In contrast to the accusations, the Directorate's leadership, including the DG Drugs and Deputy Secretary Drugs, is reputed for their integrity and credible service record.

The Deputy Secretary Drugs emphasized that their reforms have significantly reduced corruption and increased public con-

fidence in the drug control and pharmacy services sector. Key reforms introduced include the issuance of online drug licenses, which has eliminated corruption previously rampant under manual issuance.

Additionally, an online reporting system has been implemented to prevent fake reporting and misuse by drug inspectors, and all data from the Pharmacy Council is now available online, synchronized with systems in Punjab and ICT. Despite these reforms, the Directorate faces continued resistance from those under investigation.

These individuals have reportedly used every means, including filing baseless complaints and manipulating court processes, to discredit the

Directorate's officials.

The Deputy Secretary Drugs noted that multiple writ petitions and complaints lodged by these inspectors have been dismissed by both the Peshawar High Court and NAB for lack of merit. The allegations are seen as part of a broader attempt to undermine the Directorate's work.

The Deputy Secretary Drugs also highlighted that amendments made to the Drug Rules, 1982, a milestone achievement after 36 years, have been crucial in regulating the drug business to protect public interest.

These amendments have not been well-received by corrupt elements who previously exploited loopholes for personal gain.

PTI to challenge Punjab defamation law in court

LAHORE (PPI): The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Sunday decided to challenge the Punjab Defamation Act 2024 in court.

This announcement was made by Malik Ahmed Khan Bhachar, the opposition leader in the Punjab Assembly, in a statement. Commenting on the Punjab government's performance, Bhachar said that turning the Punjab Defamation Act 2024 into law and compounding problems for farmers by not purchasing wheat from them were the Punjab gov-

ernment's achievements in its first 100 days of governance.

The PTI leader also slammed the PPP, saying that it claimed to be a democratic party, but allegedly facilitated the signing of the defamation act into law.

According to Bhachar, both the PML-N and PPP were two sides of the same coin.

The PTI leader said that his party stood with the journalist fraternity and would challenge the defamation law in court.

Bhachar said that the

Punjab government announced Rs30 billion for the establishment of a cancer hospital, but allocated funds of just Rs300 million which, according to him, were insufficient even for a stretch of five-kilometre road.

He further said that health cards and farmer cards were projects of the PTI, but the PML-N was presenting them as their own.

Bhachar questioned whether the PML-N had actually initiated any projects, adding that the Punjab government was

merely placing their plaques on projects in hospitals that had originally been launched by the PTI.

He stated that the Punjab government also renamed the farmer card as the Nawaz Sharif card. The opposition leader asserted that taking action against the PTI was the PML-N's overall consideration.

Bhachar said that his party has demanded a 10 percent increase in the wages of government employees, noting a 25 percent increase in inflation in the past three months.